

The Writings of
CHARLES DE KONINCK

VOLUME TWO

Edited and Translated by

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EGO SAPIENTIA

The Wisdom That Is Mary



Charles De Koninck

1943

*To my wife Zoé
and to my daughters
Godelieve and Marie-Charlotte*

*I confess my own ignorance and do not hide my own pusillanimity.
And yet, nothing gives me greater joy, but also nothing frightens
me so much, as to speak of the glory of the Virgin Mary.*

— Saint Bernard, *In Assumpt.*, sermo 4

*The excellence of the glorious Virgin is such that every language
is impotent to recount and praise it: Scripture is powerless,
the prophets are powerless, and the parabolic images are also.
That is why the Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of the Prophets,
praises her not only with words but also by figures and
parabolic images: because no parabolic image suffices perfectly
to express her excellence, the similitudes and metaphors have
been multiplied with a view to better celebrate her praise.*

— St. Bonaventure, *De Nativitate B.V.M.*, sermo 3

Preface

How may we truly apply to the Blessed Mary all that is said of Wisdom in the Sapiential Books? In answering this question we are attempting no innovation as will be evident from the constant use made of the Doctors of the Church. Rather, in composing this study, whose main purpose is to assemble a certain amount of pertinent quotations relating to the Mother of God as Wisdom, we have been prompted by the miseries of our times which indicate more than ever our need to keep our eyes steadily fixed upon one of the most outstanding manifestations of the Wisdom and Mercy of God.

Those texts which in their mystical sense the liturgy applies to the Mother of God will be utilized merely to illustrate conclusions deduced from the literal sense of other passages of Scripture. Such an illustration, nevertheless, supported as it is by the liturgy, has a truly illuminating quality.¹

How to express my acknowledgment to all my friends who, without always realizing it, collaborated in this collection? It was Jacques de Monleon who first helped me understand the role of mercy; it was an American Jew who told me of the writings of the Blessed de Montfort; I do not forget the part played by Father Maurice Dionne nor that of Father Alphonse-Marie Parent who undertook the thankless task of correcting my manuscript and the proofs; I think too of all those I cannot name. If this little work has any value, it is uniquely due to a merciful Providence which arranged the fortuitous encounters and confided this work to the most unworthy of the servants of His Mother.

PART ONE

Ego Sapientia

1. Ego Sapientia

*Mary must shine forth
more than ever in these latter times,
in mercy, in strength, and in grace.*

—St. Grignon de Montfort

The words which the Church places in the mouth of the Blessed Virgin are not, “I, the wise,” nor “I, the wisest of all creatures,” but “*I, wisdom—Ego Sapientia.*”² Of a very good person we may say that he is goodness itself, but this attribution is to be understood in a purely metaphorical or parabolical sense. There are only two cases in which one may predicate an abstract term of a concrete term in an essential proposition: when it is a question of God or of the transcendentals. “Abstract things,” says John of St. Thomas, “cannot be truly predicated of concrete things, nor concrete things of abstract things, because of the mode of signifying . . . although sometimes they are really identical, as in divine things Divinity and God, Paternity and the Father.”³ How then can the Blessed Virgin claim the sovereign affinity to God which such a mode of attribution implies?

2. Ut orietur lumen indeficiens

What is proper to wisdom? The adage says, “*Sapientis est ordinare*—It is for the wise man to order.” How are we to understand the term “to order”? Two things are included in the notion of order: distinction and principle. Principle is that from which something proceeds in any way whatsoever. Principle

implies proceeding. Proceeding or procession is a movement from a principle, movement which can be understood in the broad sense of any action, the action of thinking as well as of physical motion. Accordingly insofar as the principle is a principle of place, a principle of time, or a principle of nature, order will be divided into local order, temporal order, and the order of nature. Of these three orders the last is the most profound, since it implies the notion of origination, inasmuch as nature is “that from which is first born the thing which is born—*ex qua pullulat pullulans primo*.” Under another aspect order is divided into universal and particular order according to whether the principle is absolutely first or first in a given genus only.

What order is in question in the adage: “It is for the wise man to order?” It belongs to the wise man to set things in order, says St. Thomas, “because wisdom is the highest perfection of reason, the proper role of which is to know order.”⁴ Since order implies principle, and principle implies relation, the intellect alone can grasp order as order. “Since the intellect (unlike the will) draws things to itself, and proceeds by passing from one to the other, it can compare and formally grasp the relation of one thing to another; the intellect therefore possesses within itself the primary root and cause necessary for ordering things—comparing them among themselves and establishing a relation of one to the other.”⁵ However, the mere knowledge of an order is not, as such, sapiential. Simple apprehension can attain order, and every science involves a certain order. Wisdom alone will be the highest perfection of reason insofar as it implies an order proceeding from a principle which is wholly first. The verb “to order” expresses this origination primacy. “It is not to be ordered,” says Aristotle, “but to order, which belongs to a wise man.”⁶ That is why wisdom is radical. It not only shows the interlocking of one thing with another, but it grasps things in their primary root, wherein all the things that proceed therefrom are, in a certain way, pre-contained; and it grasps this root under its proper formality of origin. If this root were not at the same time origin, the absolutely first principle would be in dependence upon that of which it is the first principle; the multiple would then have, as such, the nature of a first principle.

Wisdom may be predicated substantially only of a thing which in its being and operation is of the nature of the first principle from which all things proceed by way of origination. It would not suffice for it to attain the primary root solely according to knowledge because then it would be wise only, but it must substantially possess the nature of a first principle, and know itself as such.

In order for the Blessed Virgin to be called Wisdom, she must be first principle in this sense. She must be herself first principle, not merely according to intellect and will, but also according to her substance and being. And who is first principle according to his very being except God? To be truly a first principle would not Mary have to be such a first principle even in her relation to God, would she not have to be so close to God that she would somehow participate even in His nature of first principle, be as the root of the universal order, even, in a way, that from which God Himself proceeds in a certain manner, the origin and genetrix of God?

3. *Ecce virgo concipiet*

*Fear not, Mary, for thou has found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever.*⁷ The Virgin gives birth to the God-man, the branch of Jesse has flowered.⁸ She is henceforth truly the *mother of God*,⁹ she who has engendered God.

Generation means vital origin and assimilation. It is the procession of a living thing from within a living thing conjoined as a principle of life which assimilates the product of generation to its proper nature by virtue of this very procession. Generation consists therefore in expressing a likeness propagative of the nature of the generator. The generator draws that which is generated from its own substance while forming it. If the Blessed Virgin is truly a generator, this definition of generation must fully apply to her. Let us here note that although in the act of conception the mother is merely a passive principle which, while properly a nature, does not of itself imply an active and expressive assimilation, nevertheless, considered in her relation to the one engendered, the mother is properly an active principle which vitally assimilates the one engendered. An assimilative action takes place formally in the production of the passive principle of conception, a production which results from the active generative power of the woman, in view of the one engendered. For this reason, the mother participates actively in the vital assimilation of the one engendered. She is properly a genetrix.¹⁰

Birth regards primarily and principally the being of the hypostasis and person. Hence, since the Blessed Virgin is the mother of Christ according to the hypostasis, she is truly the mother of God and of the man, of the God-man.¹¹ In relation to that in Him who is born, the Blessed Virgin is properly cause and origin of God, *causa Dei et origo Dei*.¹²

Being the cause of the cause of all things, the mother of God is consequently the mother of all things. “She is the mother of all things,” says St. Albert, “and God the Father is the origin of all things: but whatever is per se the origin and cause of the cause is per se origin and cause of that which is caused. But she is the mother of Him who is the cause and origin of all things: therefore she is per se the mother of all things.”¹³ Is she not under this aspect an absolutely universal cause? Is there any work of God which is not to be related to her as to its principle?

Insofar as she is the substantial principle of Him who made her—*genuisti qui te fecit*—she fulfills by her divine maternity an essential condition of the appellation “Wisdom.” Since she is truly mother of the Son, and the Son is incarnate Wisdom, she is the mother of Wisdom engendered entitatively both of the eternal Father and the temporal mother. “She is the mother,” says Cornelius a Lapide, “of the eternal Wisdom incarnated in her. Just as the Son is Wisdom engendered and incarnate, so she is the Wisdom which engenders and incarnates.”¹⁴

4. Fiat!

Nevertheless, Wisdom implies knowledge, a procession according to knowledge. In order that the Blessed Virgin be truly Wisdom, she must, even in relation to God, in addition to her divine maternity according to the flesh, attain to the nature of a first principle according to intellect. That is what she declares in her *Fiat*—*may it be done unto me according to thy word*. The *Fiat* of Mary is the echo of the *Fiat* of Genesis, the word whence proceeds the new order to which the ancient had been ordered. *For behold I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things will no longer be remembered, and will no longer come to mind*.¹⁵ “God who made all things,” says St. Anselm, “is Himself made from Mary (*ipse se ex Maria fecit*) and thus all that He made He has made again.”¹⁶

My heart hath uttered a good word. “When the angel had spoken,” says St. Augustine, “Mary, full of faith and conceiving Christ in spirit before conceiving Him in her womb, said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.”¹⁷ “The Blessed Virgin,” adds St. Albert, “would not have engendered Christ in the flesh if she had not first of all conceived and preserved the Word in the ear of her heart (*aure cordis*), bearing Him so to speak in the womb of her heart (*in cordis utero*).”¹⁸

The *Fiat* of Mary—on this word, principle of the Eternal Word by whom all things are made, depends the entire new order. Judge Mary to be wisdom, and the whole universe will be remade. “Hasten, O Virgin,” cries St. Bernard, “to give your answer. O my Sovereign, pronounce the word which the earth, hell, and heaven await. . . . Say but the word, and receive the Word; give your word and receive the divine Word: pronounce a passing word and embrace the eternal Word.”¹⁹ *Be it done unto me according to thy word. Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.*²⁰ Let the Holy Spirit take my flesh and unite it intimately to the Son of God. Let the Word that is the Light become flesh.

M. Olier, in the most express way, tells us that in her *Fiat* the Blessed Virgin imitated the procession of the Son in God according to knowledge.

. . . Just as [the eternal Father] engenders His Word through all eternity by His knowledge, by a return upon and vision of Himself, so He wills that Mary, the supremely perfect and holy image of His virginal fecundity, should engender the Word with knowledge; and for that reason He decrees that she shall give her consent to the generation of the word in flesh in an express and solemn way presupposing knowledge and reason. Whereas other mothers will not know the one who is to be born of them, He wishes that Mary should know previously what manner of son she shall conceive: an angel will make known to her that this son will be the Son of the Most High, both God and man, the Redeemer of the world, and that His reign will endure forever.²¹

5. In columna nubis

This God, whose mother she is, is God the Redeemer who as Redeemer is the final and consequently absolutely first cause of the entire universe, for

Christ was never efficaciously willed as the end of all things except as the Redeemer.²² As Mother of the Redeemer, Mary is inseparably united to this final cause as co-principle. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made any thing from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made.*²³ Mother of Emmanuel, that is to say, of “the Mighty with us,” she is the first one predestined among all pure creatures. “She came from God in the beginning,” says St. Albert, “because from all eternity she was predestined to become the mother of the Son of God.”²⁴

The mother is inconceivable without the Son, nor is the Son and the Redeemer Son conceivable without the mother. She proceeds from Him who made her in order that He might proceed from her. It is as principle that she proceeds from the Principle: her procession from the Principle is ordained in the procession of this same Principle, and she envelops the Principle in her procession from Him, she is held by Him in His procession from her. *I came out of the mouth of the most High, the firstborn of all creatures.*²⁵ In coming out of the mouth of the most High she is herself the mouth which proffers the Word. *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.*²⁶ She proceeds from the true light, from Him who is the unfailing light. *Ego feci ut in caelis oriretur lumen indeficiens.*²⁷ The Son who is in the bosom of the Father, precontains all things, including the Virgin, and causes Himself to be contained in the womb of the Virgin. *He whom the whole universe cannot contain has enclosed Himself in your womb, becoming man.*²⁸ The Son and the mother thus constitute from the very beginning a kind of circular motion wherein the principle is the term, and the term, principle, a motion which is the symbol of Wisdom *which reaches from end to end.*²⁹ This circular motion of Wisdom, which is more mobile than mobile things,³⁰ is like unto play: *playing before him at all times.*³¹

6. A mari abundavit cogitatio ejus

Being truly the mother of God,³² the Blessed Virgin is bound to the hypostatic order in the most intimate way possible for a pure creature. “Hence,” says St. Albert, “since birth primarily and principally has respect to the being of the hypostasis and the person, and secondarily to the nature, the Blessed Virgin is called the mother of Christ according to the hypostasis, which hypostasis is

God and Man, and this is why she is the mother of God and of the man—although she is not consubstantial with God except with respect to His human nature, since consubstantiality taken in itself means nothing other than *convenientia* in substance. Birth, then, belongs primarily and of itself to the person, and to the nature by consequence and secondarily.”³³ She alone among all pure creatures thus occupies the very summit: *I dwelt in the highest places, and my throne is in the pillar of a cloud*, wherein the incarnate Wisdom is hidden.³⁴ Starting out from the summit of heaven, her course terminates upon the same summit. *A summo caelo egressio ejus: et occursus ejus usque ad summum ejus—His going forth is from one end of the heavens, and his circuit ends at the other.*³⁵ She alone has compassed the circuit of heaven, of all mere creatures she alone is the Wisdom which has penetrated into the bottom of the deep. *Gyrum caeli circuivi sola, et profundum abyssi penetravi—I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven, and have penetrated to the bottom of the deep.*³⁶

It would be impossible for a pure creature to be raised any higher. By the grace of her maternity, she exhausts, so to speak, the very possibility of a higher elevation.

The plenitude of the Blessed Virgin deprives her of all emptiness. As long as a vessel can receive anything, it retains some emptiness. That is why every creature includes a certain emptiness, because it can also always receive a greater grace. But she alone is full of grace, because she could have no greater grace. She would have to be herself united to the divinity in order to conceive a grace greater than that according to which that is drawn from her which is united to her. Unless she were herself God, it is impossible to conceive a greater grace than that of being the mother of God.³⁷

7. Gratia plena, in Sion firmata

In order to be praised and glorified in Mary, God was not content to express Himself in her maternity alone, in which Mary herself does not accomplish in the fullness of her being a complete return to the principle. “Thus, maternal parenthood,” says St. Augustine, “would have been of no advantage to Mary if she had not experienced more joy by bearing Christ in her heart than in her

flesh.”³⁸ She was full of grace even before her consent to maternity. The angel called her full of grace before the Holy Spirit had come upon her.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Mary in order that she might be the mother of God, and in order that she might thus attain to the hypostatic order since she was already full of grace. Because she belongs to the hypostatic order which of itself carries with it a higher form of sanctity, her maternal dignity demands sanctity by fittingness and connaturality. If by God’s absolute power there had been maternity without sanctity, then the Holy Spirit would not have descended upon her after the manner of a mission in the absolute sense, because the Holy Spirit would not have dwelt in her, but would have descended upon her in the relative sense according to a mission.³⁹

Fullness of grace in Mary thus becomes the root of her consent to maternity, of the most free and liberal act that a pure creature can accomplish, of the most radical human act, upon which all the works of God are made to depend. *For her thoughts are more vast than the sea, and her counsel deeper than the great ocean—A mari enim abundavit cogitatio ejus, et consilium ejus ab abyso magno.*⁴⁰ Chosen in the beginning of all the works of Divine Wisdom, the strength and sweetness of the power of premotion caused to spring up in her a vast determination wherein she is established and establishes herself as first principle. *There is none that can resist thy will, if thou determine to save Israel—Non est qui possit tuae resistere voluntati, si decrevis salvare Israel.*⁴¹ Because she herself becomes a sapiential principle, it is fitting that in her quality as Wisdom she be imbued with immutability.⁴² *And so I was established in Sion—Et sic in Sion firmata sum.*⁴³ “Confirmation in good was fitting for the Blessed Virgin,” says St. Thomas, “because she was the mother of divine Wisdom, in which there is nothing defiled, as it is said in Chapter 7 of the Book of Wisdom.”⁴⁴

Just as our liberty is so much the more our own since it is received universally both with regard to act and modality (*Deus est qui operatur in nobis et velle, et perficere—For it is God who of his good pleasure works in you both the will and the performance*⁴⁵), so the fact of being first principle, as with the Blessed Virgin since it is entirely received according to this properly divine modality, is all the more truly her own. There is thus established be-

tween the grace of maternity and her sanctification a certain circular motion which it has pleased God to arouse within her. It is God, the origin of all things, who gives her the power of giving herself as origin of God. “Behold all things are subject to the command of God, even the Virgin, behold all things are subject to the Virgin, even God.”⁴⁶ By her free consent to the maternity which properly comes from her nature, God gives the Blessed Virgin the means to raise herself further to the dignity of her maternity which both fittingly (*congrue*) and connaturally demands sanctity.

8. Mitte radices

In this exhaustive superabundance of grace and glory expressed in her, the Blessed Virgin accomplishes the return to the principle under the very aspect of principle of all grace and glory. To her in her quality of Wisdom it has been confided to place in the elect the principle of their conversion to God, to place in them the divine roots. *Then the creator of all things commanded me and said to me: and he that made me, rested in my tabernacle, and he said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect—Tunc praecepit, et dixit mihi Creator omnium: et qui creavit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo, et dixit mihi: in Jacob inhabita, et in Israel haereditare, et in electis meis mitte radices.*⁴⁷ In this Wisdom dwells *all the grace of the way and of the truth, in her all hope of life and of virtue.*⁴⁸

9. Appropinquavit ad mare

A House built by Wisdom — *Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum.*⁴⁹ “Mary is the sanctuary and the place of repose of the Holy Trinity, where God is present more magnificently and divinely than in any place in the universe, not excepting His dwelling above the Cherubim and Seraphim.”⁵⁰ This indwelling is so full and so complete that as Wisdom the Blessed Virgin is the *brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God’s majesty, and the image of his goodness—Candor lucis aeternae, speculum sine macula Dei majestatis, et imago bonitatis illius.*⁵¹ This image is so perfect that it in turn fulfills the function of root and exemplar for all creatures. This image was the sapiential

exemplar that God followed in the composition of all things. *I was with him forming all things—Cum eo eram cuncta componens.*⁵² By this she is united to the consubstantial image of the Father, to the incarnate Wisdom, to the Word by which all things were made, and without whom was made nothing that was made. Being the image of Goodness, she imitates the original in universal diffusion of goodness, and she gives to things their first impetus and motion: as spouse of the Holy Spirit who is compared to the waters, and who *moves over the waters*⁵³ and, herself a spirit of Wisdom, she too can say: *I, Wisdom, have poured out rivers. I, like a brook out of a river of a mighty water; I like a channel of a river and like an aqueduct, came out of paradise—Ego sapientia effudi flumina, ego quasi tramis aquae immensae de fluvio.*⁵⁴ Her diffusion is so universal that she reaches God and imitates the manner in which God Himself is found in every diffusion of His goodness: *And behold my brook became a great river, and my river came near to the sea—Et ecce facta est mihi tramis abundans, et fluvius meus appropinquavit ad mare.*⁵⁵ A mirror of unspotted purity of the majesty of God, this created Wisdom is in its effusion of graces like a formal sign: no limitation is imposed upon her mediation. That is why she is called *subtilis*. “She reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity. She is a vapor of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the almighty God, and therefore no defiled thing cometh into her—*attingit autem ubique et capit propter suam munditiam, vapor est enim virtutis Dei et emanatio quaedam est claritatis omnipotentis Dei sincera et ideo nihil inquinatum in illa incurrit.*”⁵⁶ This same tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, this dwelling built by Wisdom, this holy city, this new Jerusalem, this new heaven which renews the earth, becomes the tabernacle of God with men.⁵⁷

10. Omnia innovat

Order is implied by wisdom. Wisdom is at once one and manifold, steadfast and mobile.⁵⁸ Wisdom may be predicated of the principle of the sapiential order insofar as this principle is the root, and pre-contains the order, of which it is the principle. Together with her Son at the very origin of the universe, she is in a way the root of the universal order: *Ego sum radix—I am the root.*⁵⁹ That which God principally desires in the universe is the good of order. This order is better in proportion as its principle, which is interior to the universe, is the more profoundly rooted in God. But Mary is the purely

created principle of this order, the purely created principle which is nearest to God and the most perfect that can be conceived. As a principle of the sapiential order, she participates in the unity and the unicity of this principle, she is at once an *emanation* and an *indwelling*,⁶⁰ her power extends to all things which take from her their constant renewal. We conceive vital emanation as a constant renewing from within, and in their relation to the first principle things receive being in an ever-new procession. Whatever being they might have of themselves would be nothingness. *One is my dove, my perfect one. And being one, she can do all things, and remaining in herself the same, she reneweth all things—Una est columba mea, perfecta mea. Et cum sit una, omnia potest: et in se permanens omnia innovat.*⁶¹ Daughter of the eternal Father, mother of the Son, spouse of the Holy Spirit, she is rooted in the order of the Trinity, and she links up the order of the universe in a radically new way to the order which is in God according to the processions. *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory—Collum tuum sicut turris eburnea.*⁶²

11. Imago bonitatis illius

As the principle whence comes the good of the universe, as *Regina et Domina* of all things, she is a good separated from the universal order, a good which is properly universal, a good which in its indivisible and superabundant unity is the good of all things. This good is better than the good which exists as a form in the order of the parts of the universe, it is anterior to it and is its principle, as the leader is the principle of the order in an army. Her good does not even imply a material dependency upon the things which are ordained or upon the form that is their order. Being wisdom, *all her glory is from within—omnis gloria ejus filiae regis ab intus.*⁶³ Because she carries with her the notion of the properly universal common good, because she is for us the principle of every spiritual good, it is not enough to love the Blessed Virgin as one loves oneself, nor to love her as much as oneself. Just as it is necessary to love Christ more than oneself, so too it is necessary to love the Blessed Virgin more than oneself.

Each loves himself, after God, more than his neighbor. One must love others as oneself, hence one's own self is so to speak the primary exemplar of those one must love; oneself as participating in the divine glory

and others as associated in this participation. I except, however, the Lord Christ, even as man, and the Blessed Virgin the mother, because they take on the character for us of a principle diffusive of grace and blessedness. Christ as man is the head (*caput*) of glory, and the Blessed Virgin is the mother of this head, and she is the neck through which grace descends from this head down to us, and for this reason we should love them more than ourselves.⁶⁴

12. Circumdata varietate

When from another point of view, we consider the Blessed Virgin as interior to the universe, we can compare her to the intrinsic good of the universe, a good which consists in the form which is none other than the order of its parts. This form is comparable to the visage and the face. In this form consists the highest dignity of pure creation, that is to say, that which by God's will is the most desired for itself and most perfectly ordered to Him. Considered as a separate good of the universe, the Blessed Virgin is more worthy than the order of the universe whose transcendental principle she is. On the other hand, when we consider her as interior to the universe as a part, the dignity of the universe is greater than that of the Blessed Virgin considered, not absolutely, but formally insofar as she is a part, a consideration which in her case is secondary.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that even under this aspect she remains the intrinsic root of the dignity inherent in the universe as a form and at the same time she has the greater share in this dignity. The dignity of the whole depends materially upon the dignity of the parts and upon the relation that these parts have to one another. But the excellence of the inferior parts is contained in a more eminent way in the superior parts themselves. The superior parts are to the inferior parts as form: the splendor that the inferior parts derive from the subordination to the superior is greater than that which they themselves have of themselves absolutely. This derived splendor is foremost in the ordination of the parts to the whole. Considered from the aspect of the parts, the excellence of the principal part is of the nature of a form for all the subordinated parts. Consequently the Blessed Virgin is, as a part, the form and the purely created principal cause of the dignity which or-

dains them most proximately and most perfectly to the dignity of the whole. As the prior and principal part, she draws all the other parts after her toward the dignity of the whole. *Draw me, we will run after thee—Trahe me: post te curremus.*⁶⁵

Among all the purely created parts of the universe, she participates in a greater degree in the order of the universe, and she is invested in a greater way with its splendor and variety. Her splendor is most comparable to that of the whole (*decora sicut Jerusalem—comely as Jerusalem*⁶⁶), she is surrounded with the variety of all the other parts—*circumdata varietate*.⁶⁷ She is that purely created part of the universe thanks to which it can be indued with a great dignity. *A spring rose out of the earth, watering all the face of the earth—Fons autem ascendebat de terra, et irrigabat omnem faciem terrae.*⁶⁸ “Face of the earth, that is to say, dignity of the earth,” St. Augustine comments, “is a name very rightly (*rectissime*) applied to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, she whom the Holy Spirit, who is called in the Gospel by the name of fountain and water, waters so that out of the clay there might be formed the man who is placed in paradise to dress and keep it, that is, in the will of the Father, in order to accomplish it and keep it.”⁶⁹

13. Quasi rota in medio rotae

If she is already so beautiful and so worthy of praise as a part of the universe, *even without that which is hid within—absque eo quod intrinsecus latet*,⁷⁰ how much more so is she as a separate principle and good. Under the latter aspect she is absolutely anterior to her character as part and a principle in relation to this character as a part. Her position as a part is ordained to her position as a separate principle. She is born within to be a separated principle, she is born in the universe to become the mother of all things. That which is without proceeds from that which is within, and that which is within proceeds thence in order to proceed without. As a separate principle she is more within the universe than when considered as a part within it. *Intrinsecus ejus per circuitum—as the appearance of fire round about.*⁷¹ There is thus established a circular motion between her dignity as a separated principle and her dignity as the noblest part of pure creation, a circular motion which embraces the very order of the parts of the universe. The order and dignity inherent

in the universe are thus all the more intimately linked to the separated principle insofar as this principle is at the same time the principal intrinsic part of the universe. This circular motion imitates in a way the circular motion between the incarnate Wisdom and the mother of this Wisdom, which in turn imitates more deeply still the circular motion between the Father and the perfect and consubstantial image of the Father, *as it were a wheel within a wheel—quasi sit rota in medio rotæ.*⁷²

14. De fructu suo cognoscitur

The fact that her Son infinitely surpasses her in privileges and dignity manifests the sovereign dignity of the mother. It is her Son, *the fruit of her womb*,⁷³ the word whom she has drawn from her heart, who surpasses her infinitely.

We grant that her Son surpasses her in all privileges: but this, far from diminishing the praise of the mother, exalts it in that she has not only engendered a Son equal to her, but a Son infinitely better than herself. Under this aspect the goodness of the mother is rendered, in a sense, infinite. Each tree is known by its fruit: hence, if the goodness of the fruit makes the tree good, the infinite goodness of the fruit manifests an infinite goodness of the tree.⁷⁴

15. Mons in vertice montium

In his admirable commentary on the Sapiential Books, Cornelius a Lapide expresses in the most formal way the primary reason for this appellation of Wisdom from the point of view of the end, which is the cause of causes. How can the Blessed Virgin be made to say the things which Wisdom says of itself: *I brought it about that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth—ego in caelis feci ut oriretur lumen indeficiens*—and *I have poured out rivers—ego sapientia effudi flumina?*⁷⁵ To this

I answer, first, that in the mystical sense these words should be understood as follows: I brought it about that in the heavens, that is, in the Churches, Christ should be born, He who is the sun of justice; I have

brought it about that in the Church there should rise the light of faith. Furthermore, the Virgin, comparable to a sea of graces, pours out her rivers upon the Church and the faithful. Secondly, according to the literal sense, one should read: I have been the cause for God to create the light, the heavens, the sea, the rivers and all the universe. The creation of God is ordained, as to its end, to the justification and glorification of the Saints, accomplished by Christ through the Blessed Virgin; for the order of nature was created and instituted for the order of grace. Thus, then, it is because the Blessed Virgin was the mother of Christ that she subsequently becomes the mediatrix of all the other graces instituted by Christ; whence for the same reason, she was the final cause of the creation of the universe. Indeed, the end of the universe is Christ such that His mother and the saints, that is to say, this universe was created in order for the Saints to enjoy grace and glory through the intermediary of Christ and the Blessed Virgin. That is why the final cause of the creation of the universe was the predestination of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints. Although Christ and the Blessed Virgin are parts of the universe and consequently posterior to it in the order of material causality, nevertheless they are anterior to it in the order of final causality. There is thus a certain reciprocal dependency between the creation of the universe and the birth of Christ and the Blessed Virgin. God did not wish Christ and the Blessed Virgin to be born except in this world; nor did He wish that this universe exist without Christ and the Blessed Virgin; on the contrary, it was for them that He created it. He wished that the whole universe, no less than the order of grace, should be referred and ordained to Christ and the Blessed Virgin as to its complement and end. Christ and the Blessed Virgin are thus the final cause of the creation of the universe and at the same time they are its formal, that is, exemplary cause, namely the idea. In effect, the order of grace in which Christ with the Blessed Virgin occupies the first place is the idea and exemplar according to which God created and disposed the order of nature and of all the universe.⁷⁶

16. *Quae est ista?*

Are we not amazed at the supereminent *beauty* of this pure creature, of this purely created Wisdom? Is she not called “Mother most admirable,” that

is, Mother, principle, whose cause is unfathomable? Mary, the most astounding of all mere creatures, allows us, in a manner most proportioned to us, to surmise the incomprehensibility of Wisdom which precedes all things. *Who hath searched out the wisdom of God that goeth before all things?—Sapientiam Dei praecedentem omnia quis investigavit?*⁷⁷ To what purely created work could she be compared? *There was no such work made in any kingdom—Non est factum tale opus in universis regnis.*⁷⁸ Is she not so astounding that, according to St. Bernard, even the princes of the celestial court are filled with astonishment: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, leaning upon her beloved? Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?—quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto; quae est ista quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens pulchra ut luna electa ut sol terribilis ut acies ordinata?*⁷⁹

Nigra sum, sed formosa

17. Universae viae Domini misericordia et veritas

Why does the Holy Virgin tell us “I am black, but beautiful—*Nigra sum sed formosa*”? What connection could there be between the attribution of wisdom and of blackness that signifies a state of inferiority, as can be seen in the term ‘but’? Far from excluding one another, would not these two qualifications have a link of dependence between them? Would there not be a very intimate connection between that blackness the mother of God attributes to herself and her note as first principle?

To gauge the nature of this link, we must go back to the primary motive and to the universal way of God’s communication without—*ad extra*. But this motive is nothing other than the divine goodness insofar as it is diffusive of itself. The root of the primary way of this diffusing and of this manifestation outside is mercy. *All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth—Universae viae Domini misericordia et veritas.*⁸⁰ That is why St. Bernard calls the mercy of God *causalissima causarum—of causes the one that is most cause.*⁸¹ Mercy is the first root, even of justice. “But the work of divine justice,” St. Thomas writes,

always presupposes the work of mercy and is grounded in it. Nothing is owed to the creature save because of something preexisting in him, or pre-considered in him: again, if it is owed to the creature, this will be because of something prior. And since we cannot be involved in an infinite regress, we must come to something which depends solely on the good of the divine will, which is the ultimate end. For example, it is as if we should say that to have a hand is owed to man because of his rational soul; and to have a rational soul, in order that he be man; and he is a

man because of the divine goodness. So it is that mercy shows up in any work of God, as its first root. And its power is saved in everything consequent upon it, and even operates more strongly in it, as the primary cause has a stronger effect than does the secondary cause.⁸²

Mercy, having the meaning of absolute universal root, extends from one end of the universe to the other. Even the sovereign dignity of the Incarnation is willed only with a view to the manifestation of the divine glory by way of mercy and justice. Any dignity other than God's own is only a relative absolute. "The end for the sake of which the glory of God should be made manifest is by way of mercy and justice; hence because the Incarnation can accomplish this effect of manifesting mercy and justice in man's redemption, the motive for willing the Incarnation was not the dignity of the Incarnation taken absolutely, but the Incarnation as bringing about such an effect."⁸³ Since it has the note of the perfectly universal root, "mercy is apparent even in the damnation of the reprobate, not as completely relaxing it, but in a way alleviating it, never punishing beyond what is due."⁸⁴

The concept of mercy includes a quite eminent perfection: it is the virtue of the superior precisely as superior.

I reply that it should be said that a virtue can be the highest in two ways: in one way, taken in itself; in another way, by comparison to the one having it.—In itself indeed mercy is highest, for it pertains to mercy that it flows to the other, and, what is more, that it makes up for the defects of the other; and this belongs most to the superior. Hence to be merciful is said to be proper to God, and in it His omnipotence is especially made manifest.

But with respect to the one having it, mercy is not the greatest, unless he who has it is greatest, having nothing above himself but everything else beneath him. For one who has others above himself it is higher and better to be joined to the superior than to make up the defects of inferiors. Therefore, as for man who has God superior to him, charity, by which he is united to God, is more powerful than mercy through which he supplies what is lacking in his neighbor. But of all the virtues which pertain to the neighbor, mercy is most powerful, as its act too is more powerful, for to supply the lack of another is, as such, the act of one superior and better.⁸⁵

18. Miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus

If mercy is fulfilled in the elevation of the inferior, this elevation will be the more merciful and revealing of the divine goodness and omnipotence when it raises up that which is most inferior. In other words, we can judge the measure in which God has willed to manifest Himself by the degree of merciful raising up that He has chosen to realize.

If the divine mercy is already manifest in creation,⁸⁶ it shines forth even more insofar as it raises others above their defects (*inquantum defectus aliorum sublevat*). *The Lord's mercies are above all his works—Miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus.*⁸⁷ But among all defects, properly speaking evil is the greatest. It is evil, insofar as it has the note of misery, which will be the motive of the plenitude of mercy, of mercy victorious over evil:⁸⁸ “evil is the motive of this mercy.”⁸⁹

19. Angeli fortudine, et virtute cum sint majores . . .

In order to gauge the height and depth of what God has chosen to make manifest outside Himself, we must see the baseness of the nature He has elevated above all other creatures. It is indeed in this that merciful omnipotence most properly shines forth. Let us consider first off the hierarchy of created things in the perfection that belongs to them by nature.

At the summit of creation envisaged from a purely natural point of view are found the angels, pure spirits, beings very perfect with respect to both substance and operation. Their essence being simple, each of them is of itself a complete and individual species, subsisting outside every common natural genus. Each of them exhausts a degree of being. Radically hierarchized, each of the angels occupies in this hierarchy an absolutely determined place. Even the lowest pure spirit constitutes by himself a universe incomparably more perfect than the cosmos and humanity combined.

The cosmos and its most perfect interior term, humanity, are only a remote echo of the spiritual universe—*quaedam resonantia*.⁹⁰ One can show this by considering in a dialectical manner the angelic hierarchy in the sense of its inferior limit. In proportion as the angels are distant from Pure Act, the simplicity of their essence diminishes. The limit of this departure from the note of simplicity is an essence composed of matter, form, and privation.

While pure spirits are immutable in their substance and absolutely necessary, in the sense that they do not contain in themselves any principle of non-being,⁹¹ essences which include privation entail so to speak their own negation. At this level, the species, diffused in individuals, is only maintained by their generation and corruption. It is to matter, insofar as it is deprived of form, that the existence of chance and disorder here below must be attributed, privation which expresses our distance from the first principle who is in Himself always uniform—*semper eodem modo se habente*.⁹² And chance only doubles the fortuitous. We live at the confines of the universe where we are diffused both according to substance and to quantity and according to temporal duration.

Our days and our places are uncertain. Everything here below is variable and decrepit, and it is only by a great effort that we sometimes succeed in impressing on things a momentary direction. It is only by a familiarity that blinds us and a sort of animal resignation that we have become unconscious of the immense confusion in which we live and to which only violence seems able to awaken us. Our substance is truly at the confines of being.

Envisaged in its natural condition, the intelligence of separated substances is always in act. They judge without composition and division; they know the notions of things, one in another, without discourse; intuitively they grasp in a quasi-circular motion the essence from whom they emanate and in the light of which they see. Because the angel is too perfect to be subject to other creatures in his knowing, God infused in him in the morning of his existence intelligible species representative of the universe He had chosen to form, species anterior to the things themselves. Imitating God who knows all things in one unique universal species, the pure spirits, in proportion as they approach Him, know this universe by means of an always smaller number of species. But when we regard the angelic hierarchy in the direction of its distance from the first intelligence, the intuition of essence impoverishes along with the imperfection of that essence and of the intelligence which emanates from it. In order to know other things, this intelligence has need of more and more ideas, its activity is more and more fragmented; the discrete time constituted by the sequence of always increasing thoughts and desires becomes more and more atomized, the present is diffuse, scattered in an ever more distant past and future. The intelligence is more and more remote from itself and from the other things that it knows. At the limit of this declension

there arises an intelligence turned outside himself, in pure potency, similar to prime matter, a blank slate, a non-intuitive intelligence which can only be awakened to its proper act by means of a sensible singular, intelligible only potentially. *Ratio oritur in umbra intelligentiae—human reason emerges in the shadow of intelligence.*⁹³ It can know only in dependence upon a species representing something other than itself. In order to know things in their proper nature, it requires a number of intelligible species equal to the number of the natures it knows; it puts itself in dependence on the senses which need as many species as there are single forms known. On this level, knowledge requires not only a great number of internal and external senses, but a doubling of the intellectual faculty into an intellect which precedes knowledge by penetrating into the penumbra of the sensible world and illumines objects so that they might be assimilable, and another intellect which properly knows and names things. Our intellect can only live in the shadows. The necessity of the shadows of the sensible world has its origin in the weakness of our intelligence. By its nature, our rational life is the least perfect intellectual life it is possible to conceive.

The union of the intellectual nature and sensible nature makes man subject to a certain contrariety. Our sensible nature bears us toward the sensible and private good, our intellectual nature has for its object the universal and the good under the very notion of good, which is found principally in the common good. But, in us, the sensitive life is primary; we can only attain the acts of reason by passing through the senses which, in this respect, play the role of principles. So long as a man is not rectified by the cardinal virtues, he is principally drawn toward the sensible good⁹⁴ against the good of intelligence.⁹⁵ Men for the most part succumb to this attraction, and that for two connected reasons. The good, in fact, demands perfect integrity; evil, on the contrary, results from no matter what defect.⁹⁶ So long as a man has not acquired the virtues which determine him *ad unum* to the correct integrity conformed to reason, his action is uncertain and easily turns from the true good. Hence the adage: *malum ut in pluribus in specie humana.*⁹⁷ Most men follow the inclination to the sensible good and allow themselves to be led by it against the order of reason.

Moreover, considering ourselves in our natural condition compared with pure spirits who are always in act, immutable, and incapable of error or fault in the natural order, we are already black enough: in substance, because

of matter and privation; in knowledge, because of the nocturnal potentiality of intellect and the opacity of sense; in the order of action, because of the contrariety of our composed nature.

That is the order of things envisaged in their natures and the place we have in that order. If we run great risks, we nonetheless have every reason to rejoice in this existence that the divine mercy has deigned to confer on us. “Who has not received this mercy from God,” asks St. Augustine, “first, to exist, to be set apart from the brute animals, to be a rational animal that can know God and, further, to enjoy this light, this air, the rain, fruits, the seasons, the charms of the earth, health of body, the affection of friends, and the welfare of his home?”⁹⁸

20. Orietur in tenebris lux tua.

Et tenebrae tuae erunt sicut meridies

Nonetheless, out of pure liberality, God has chosen to manifest Himself in a manner incomparably more profound by elevating the created intelligence to an end which surpasses infinitely the active nature of this intelligence, to a supernatural life, which has for its term the vision of God as He is in Himself. But the ways in which God can realize this return to Himself under the very note of His deity are still many, some more profound and revealing of His mercy than others.

Elevation to the life of God can come about immediately and without any intermediary condition other than acceptance of the glory promised, as was the case with the angels. But this elevation can also be accomplished in a much more striking manner, namely by the visible sending of a divine person in hypostatic union with a created nature. Descending thus into His creation in order to elevate it from within to the properly divine order, God would already manifest the mercy of His omnipotence in an infinitely greater measure than in the creation alone of intellectual creatures so perfect in themselves or in their immediate elevation.

But this same hypostatic union can in turn be accomplished in different ways, one more merciful than the other, and consequently more profound, insofar as what is elevated is lower. It could be accomplished in the assumption of an angelic nature. Since this nature is the most perfect and most wor-

thy of all created intellectual natures, would it not be better disposed to this elevation? And was it not this apparent fittingness which deceived the prince of darkness?

The hypostatic union can be realized in a more admirable manner in the assumption of the lower nature that is human nature, the least worthy of all intellectual natures. The divine wisdom and power confounds the most powerful spirits.

The assumption of human nature can itself be accomplished in two ways, either immediately, without prior condition, as would be the case if God formed immediately the nature assumed, or by assuming human nature by way of birth, God thus putting Himself in dependence on man and proceeding because of that into the universe itself by way of origination. And the nature itself from which He is born becomes in that way properly the origin of God. Let us quickly note that this most radical communication would in no wise be possible in assuming an angelic nature. God could not proceed from an angelic nature, for this nature is, on the one hand, too perfect to engender in the manner of natural beings, and, on the other, too imperfect to engender as God does. *Perfecta imperfecte, imperfecta perfecte*. It is then thanks to the potentiality of matter, indeed of matter as deprived of form, and thus to the privation that is the weakest, that the Son of God can proceed from within His creation, thus imitating in the most profound way His generation from the eternal Father. *Infixus sum in limo profundi: et non est substantia— I am plunged into the mire of the deep, and there is nowhere to set my foot.*⁹⁹ Happy imperfection of matter that permits such a formation!

This same Son arises from two extremes of the universe, reuniting our baseness with His supreme grandeur—*ima summis*. Here is the degree of communication and merciful elevation that it has pleased God to bring about. *Ecce virgo concipiet, et pariet filium: et vocabitur nomen ejus Emmanuel— Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.*¹⁰⁰ God raises Himself up and causes Himself to be engendered from the most remote limits of His creation. *Aperiat terra, et germinet Salvatorem— Let the earth be opened and bud forth a saviour.*¹⁰¹

Here in the substantial order the *nigra sum, sed formosa* can already be applied. Mary is beautiful because of the divine maternity, but, on the side of the creature herself, this maternity is possible only thanks to the darkness of potentiality and privation. Therefore, it is thanks to that darkness that God

can Himself proceed from a created principle and that a mere creature can be called wisdom. Note this intimate rapprochement of God that permits maternity in virtue of this very passivity in conception. God could not proceed here below from a principle which is active in its fecundation. Such a principle would have to take on the note of a passive principle.¹⁰² It is only in the passive principle of generation, the principle that has the note of malleable matter, that the fecundity of Pure Act can find its echo in an entitative and substantial mode. *Imperfecta perfecte*. Only the woman can have along with God the notion of first principle in the origination of God. If a man could have been the father of God, not only would generation be less perfect, paternity would be possible only insofar as it would imitate maternity: it is the maternity of the woman, and not the Paternity of God, which would be the original of it.

21. Abyssus abyssum vocat

Nigra sum, sed formosa. This proposition expresses at once the two extreme virtues in the realm of spirit: humility, the most fundamental virtue for man, the least perfect intellectual creature possible, the weakest of all; and mercy, the virtue proper to the Almighty. *Sapientia illius erupuerunt abyssi*—*His wisdom has opened the depths*,¹⁰³ one on the other. The abyss of plenitude calls to the abyss of emptiness. *Abyssus abyssum invocat*—*deep calls to deep*.¹⁰⁴ It was because of her humility that the Blessed Virgin was agreeable to God. *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae: ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes*—*Because he has cast his eyes on the lowliness of his servant, behold, because of this all generations will call me blessed*.¹⁰⁵

The humility of the Most Blessed Virgin can in no wise be compared to the act of humility of the most perfect angel before God. His natural condition being most superior, he has that much more reason to humble himself, since he has received from God all that he is.

Notice that there is a divergence among the commentators on Mary's Canticle as to the meaning of the term *humilitas*. Some see it as expressing her natural condition, others understand by it the virtue of humility. The Greek text of the Magnificat seems to favor the first interpretation, for *tapeinosis* signifies abasement, whereas humility properly so called is signified by the term *tapeinophrosune*.¹⁰⁶ Still, the opinions are not mutually exclusive. Before

God Mary recognized the lowliness of her condition, and it is in this that her act of the virtue of humility consists. She did not see the lowliness in which she found herself as a condition contrary to her dignity, as a humiliation afflicted on her and from which she would have praised the Lord for delivering her. Here is where the act of humility of the Handmaid of the Lord attains the most sublime: it attains to the two extremities of the universe. The angel does not have in himself a substance which would permit so profound an act *which extends from one end to the other*.¹⁰⁷

22. Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae

Humility alone among the virtues is unaware of itself, and one who boasts of his humility is proud. The total effacement of the self, it is in this that its character, at once radical and universal, consists. But do we not find in the Cantic of Mary a teaching and exaltation of humility? We must notice that the Blessed Virgin does not glorify humility in an absolute manner, as if the exaltation of humility was a debt founded absolutely on this virtue. The Blessed Virgin submits herself entirely to the omnipotence and mercy of the Lord: her soul magnifies the Lord, and her spirit is transported with joy to God her Savior, to Him who is powerful and whose name is holy and whose mercy extends from age to age.¹⁰⁸ She does not exalt humility in herself but in God. For He has now given Himself to her who is “the immaculate way,”¹⁰⁹ “the path that God has made through the desert,”¹¹⁰ “the holy way which is for us the straight way,”¹¹¹ to comprehend the hidden and properly divine ways of mercy. God has let her know that she is “at the beginning of all His ways,”¹¹² *Viam sapientiae monstrabo tibi duxi te per semitas aequitatis—I will show you the path of wisdom*.¹¹³ She who understood so perfectly that “all the ways of the Lord are mercy—*omnes semitae Domini misericordia et veritas*,”¹¹⁴ how could she have exalted her own humility? It is for the Most High “to exalt the humble,”¹¹⁵ and the humble exalt humility only in the mighty one.

Although it is not the greatest of virtues, humility is nonetheless for us the condition of every other virtue; it makes us malleable to higher perfections. It has, with respect to the other virtues, a maternal role. The person in whom this mother-virtue was most profound has been chosen as the mother of God. “The Blessed Virgin,” Cajetan writes, “recalls that the Lord regarded

her humility as a universal virtue which was most broadly and deeply open (*patula*) to receive the celestial influence of the divine largess.”¹¹⁶ “*He has looked on the lowliness of his servant,*” says John of St. Thomas, “that is, to spread a plenitude of grace as great as that received by the Blessed Virgin, God looked only to the depth of her humility by which she was made capable of receiving, as into the deepest concavity, the immense grandeur of grace.”¹¹⁷ Humility is the truly liberating virtue and is the very principle of the dignity to which God has deigned to call us. “Humility is like a certain disposition to man’s free access to spiritual and divine goods.”¹¹⁸ By her act of humility, Mary was entirely emptied of herself, she was liberated from herself in a total conversion to God.

23. Humiliavit semetipsum

Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb. In her perfect humility, founded on a right understanding of the human condition, Mary comprehended the humiliation to which God chose to submit Himself. “Moreover,” says St. Bernard,

of all the infirmities or of all the human injuries that the divine goodness has taken on for us, I think that the first in the order of time and the greatest with respect to abasement was when the infinite majesty allowed Himself to be conceived in the womb of a woman and to remain there for the space of nine months. Indeed, at what time has God ever so despoiled Himself, or when has He ever been seen to turn so completely away from Himself? All that time, this wisdom spoke not a word, this power did nothing apparent, this majesty enclosed and hidden did not manifest itself by any visible sign. God did not seem this weak on the cross where that which was weak in Him showed itself to be stronger than that which is most powerful among men: when, dying, He glorified the thief and, expiring, He inspired the centurion; when His hours of suffering not only made all the created elements suffer with Him, but also consigned the strong set against Him to the suffering of eternal woe. But in the womb He—He Who Is—was as though He were not, and the Eternal Word was silent.¹¹⁹

And yet in this silence is hidden the most powerful manifestation of the Word: by this silence in the womb of His mother, the Word imitated at the same time in a most striking way His silent procession from the bosom of the Father.

24. Ubi humilitas, ibi sapientia

Ubi humilitas, ibi sapientia—Where there is humility, there is wisdom.¹²⁰ St. Albert says,

This proposition is in theology one known per se: therefore, the greater the humility, the greater the wisdom, and where there is perfect humility, there is perfect wisdom. But, in the Blessed Virgin, humility was incommensurable; therefore her wisdom is incommensurable. The minor is made evident by this passage of the Gospel, “He who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). This proposition too is per se nota, self-evident: therefore, she who is exalted above other creatures in an incommensurable manner is thereby incommensurably more humble than they; exalted above all the choirs of the angels to the fourth hierarchy, the Blessed Virgin, according to St. Jerome, was raised incommensurably above all other creatures; therefore, she was the most humble among men and angels, and thereby surpasses them all in wisdom.¹²¹

Humility touches the same root as mercy. Mercy, indeed, looks to the inferior as such. But “God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble—*Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.*”¹²² Mercy only gives its largess to the inferior that recognizes itself as such, and the lower it is, the more reason for humbling itself it has. But this humility will be fecund only if it is rooted in a knowledge whereby one sees at the same time how little we are and how great the power of Him who is the Lord. This very great humility of the Blessed Virgin has to be based on faith in the omnipotence of God. *Et beata, quae credidisti, quoniam perficientur ea, quae dicta sunt tibi a Domino*—Happy she who has believed, cries Saint Elizabeth, since there will be accomplished the things which were told you by the Lord.¹²³

25. Dominus tecum

“The Lord is with you,”¹²⁴ that is, the Almighty, He who is purely and simply Lord. He before whom Mary humbles herself is at the same time one who can do the most astonishing of things. “[B]ecause it is faith which best disposes to consent to marvelous things, and above all faith in omnipotence: and because he who believes and is convinced that God can do all things, admits that He can also change and command natures. So much so that, in what is the most unexpected of unexpected things (*omnium novorum novissimum*) that is here announced to the Blessed Virgin, it is wholly fitting that the name Lord is used since it designates in an absolute manner the omnipotence of God.”¹²⁵ The handmaid’s faith in omnipotence must be so much the greater that it acts to raise a nature most humble in its natural condition. “O Virgin,” cries St. Bernard, “sublime branch, you raise yourself to the holiest height, to Him who is seated on the throne, to the majesty of the Lord Himself! And why be astonished when you hid in the heights the roots of humility.”¹²⁶ “O humility, by which the woman became the mother of God, by which God descended from heaven to earth, by which souls have been transported from hell to heaven (Genesis 28:12). Behold the ladder that God proposes to you and by which one mounts from earth to heaven. For it is this ladder that our fathers have climbed to the heavens, and it is by means of it that we too as well must climb, since otherwise we shall not rise.”¹²⁷

Only the abyss of humility can envelop the Infinite without limiting it and be in the world an unshakable foundation for the Changeless. St. Bonaventure asks himself,

If [wisdom] had been conceived from all eternity, how can it, after so many centuries, take birth from the Virgin Mary? If indeed it was eternal, it was immoveable, therefore it could not be contained, it could not be circumscribed. So how, without being circumscribed, was it enclosed in the womb of a young woman? How, being without possible limit, could it be conceived by this fragile and delicate child? And yet it is such and so great a Wisdom that the Virgin conceived, according to angelic testimony. At the beginning of St. Luke, the angel says to the virgin, “Behold you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, etc.” and goes on to describe this son, “He will be great,” that is, by His infinity, “and will be

called the son of the most high: because of the immutability of His essence, “and His reign will be everlasting,” because it cannot be limited. The divine Majesty by this conception has been humbled in an astonishing way, and the virginal humility exalted in a marvelous manner.¹²⁸

That is why St. Bernard cries, “Admire these two things, then tell me which ought to astonish the more, the most benevolent favor of the Son, or the most excellent dignity of the Mother! On one side or the other, one is stunned; on one side and the other, one touches on a miracle; and that God should submit Himself to a woman is a humility without equal; and that a woman command God, that is a sublimity without equal.”¹²⁹

26. Felix culpa!

Nigra sum, sed formosa. In fact, mercy is manifested even beyond the assumption alone of human nature by way of birth. Man, whom God had established in a state of original justice infinitely higher than what would have been befitting by nature, succumbed to the temptation to be himself the origin of the dignity to which God had deigned to raise him. *Et homo cum in honore esset, non intellexit: comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis—And man, when he was in splendor, did not understand; he became comparable to the stupid beasts, and has become like them.*¹³⁰ By original sin, this human nature became liable to suffering. We were born into a state of misery properly speaking. *Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum: et in peccatis concepit me mater mea—Behold in iniquity was I conceived and in sin did my mother conceive me.*¹³¹

Sin is not just any defect: it is that which is at the farthest remove from God. Properly speaking, evil is not a simple privation, it is opposed to the good as a contrary. Consequently, the mercy which will face down evil, which will be victorious over it, will also be, in a sense, the greatest possible. The manifestation of the divine omnipotence will be, here, in the universe itself, like a return on itself: it will be the fullness of mercy. Evil (*malum poenae*) is ordered to the greatest manifestation of mercy that could be conceived. *O felix culpa quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!—O happy fault that has won for us such and so great a Redeemer!*¹³²

If according to the ordinary power of God only man could be redeemed, would not that follow from the imperfection of our intelligence, which was also the root of the contrariety of the two natures? The fallen angel, on the contrary, was at once obstinate and confirmed in evil. And this because the angelic intelligence is so perfect that it grasps without composition or division and without discourse whatever we know by understanding principles, by knowledge most difficult to acquire. He seizes his object in an immutable manner, and the adhesion of his will, too, is fixed and immutable. That is why man is more open to mercy because of his very imperfection. Man's free will remains flexible as much after choice as before; that of the angel, on the contrary, flexible before choice, becomes, after that choice, immutably fixed.¹³³

27. Quid mihi et tibi est, mulier?

The merciful one takes on himself the misery of another as if he made it his own. But that can come about in two ways. One can take on the misery of another by affective union. So it is that we suffer the evil that befalls a friend as if we ourselves were afflicted by it. But one can also take on the misery of another by a real union, by undergoing this misery in the same way as it afflicts the one who is the object of compassion. Thus a man might expose himself to illness with a view to easing or curing his neighbor's illness. But that presupposes a proximity, a similitude of nature such that it permits one thus to take on, in a physical manner, the misery of another.¹³⁴ In this way a real union in misery is accomplished. But God has assumed human nature along with its passibility, thus taking on himself our misery in the manner that it affects us, that is, physically; assuming evil (*malum poenae*) in this way—a darkness far more profound than any that comes from our nature, the most profound that God could assume. *Although He was by nature God, He did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave, and being like unto men* (Phil. 2:6).¹³⁵

The principle from which Christ received this passibility through which He accomplished His redemptive passion, and thanks to which God has become our brother in misery, is once more the Blessed Virgin. As Our Lord seemed to insinuate at the wedding at Cana, the mother of mercy will be manifest in the very passion of Christ. “Woman, what is this to me and thee?

My hour has not yet come.”¹³⁶ As if to say: that thanks to which I perform a miracle, that you have not engendered, you have not engendered my divinity: but because you have engendered my infirmity, I will acknowledge you when this infirmity is hung upon the cross.¹³⁷ By doing this, God has placed the Blessed Virgin at the very beginning of His work of mercy, in which both the darkness, communicative of passibility, and the beauty, *formositas*, instrument of redemptive grace, are present.

28. Et macula non est in te

St. Albert asks why the genealogy of Our Lady contains not only good ancestors, but the bad as well. Certainly because the comparison makes one of the extremes stand out the more—*like a lily among thorns*.¹³⁸ The genealogy mentions bad ancestors “in order that the wisdom of God might appear more merciful. Indeed, there is an origination by which good comes from good, and another by which evil comes from evil. In the first way, *God saw all the things he had made and they were very good* (Genesis 1:31). In the second way, *Pride is the principle of every sin*. But there is a third way, according to which evil comes from good, as the woman with whom sin began. And there is a fourth way as well, by which good comes from evil, and this is proper to God alone because His wisdom conquers evil and He attains all things in their beginning and their end—*attingens a fine usque ad finem*.”¹³⁹ Is it not a sovereignly merciful privilege that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin? *Et macula non est in te—There is no blemish in thee*.¹⁴⁰ This should “increase in sinners their confidence, since their mediatrix unites the two extremes in one and the same relationship, namely, just as she is both mother and daughter of God, so she is both our mother and our sister and thus, by nature, inclined to have pity on the sinner.”¹⁴¹ The condition which she herself would have known if she had not been preserved from it, draws her closer to us, and this closeness is more profound and efficacious in that Mary is clothed herself in the greatness of this mercy that preserved her. In this respect, “the Blessed Virgin was dark, not in herself, but in her father Adam who sinned and by sin contaminated all his posterity—with the exception of the Blessed Virgin. Thus she is called dark by extrinsic denomination, as the daughter of a sinner, but in herself she is beautiful, by the fullness of grace that is in her.”¹⁴²

29. Discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde

By communicating to her son human nature with its passibility, Mary is the source of the humble condition of Christ. But her gracious humility is at the same time at the source of the humility of her son, of this wisdom which once spoke, "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." "She knew," says Cornelius a Lapide,

that her Son was going to restore the world at the price of His great humility, and that He had to abase His deity to the point of taking on human flesh, more, even to the scourge of the whip, the cross, death. She had then to adapt herself to the future condition of her Son, and even in a way precede Him and prepare His way; above all because, just as proud mothers inculcate pride in their sons, so humble mothers inculcate in theirs a sweet and submissive spirit. That is why Canisius says in Book Four of his *Mariology*, chapter 8, "The mother in no way degenerates her Son; on the contrary, the Son reproduced rather the character and nature of His mother." In fact, children tend to be closer to their mother than to their father. As St. Ambrose says, "Having to give both to the sweet and humble Christ, Mary had to prefer humility." She knew that the head of the devil, that is, his pride, would be crushed by her humility, according to Genesis, "She will crush thy head." So too St. Idelphonse in his second sermon on the Assumption says, "That is why the humble Christ has come from the humble Virgin in order that from the depths of such humility He might bring the victory of salvation."¹⁴³

30. Et tuam ipsius animam pertransivit gladius

*And a sword will pierce your soul in order that there might be revealed thoughts hidden in a great many.*¹⁴⁴ By her participation in the redemptive passion, of which along with her Son she is a first principle "to suppress the misery of another as if that misery were her own," Mary remains, and in the most profound sense, black but beautiful: black in compassion and sorrow, beautiful in the ineffable merit of compassion.

I am black, but beautiful. Indeed, O most sweet Virgin, you have been, in the night of your most sorrowful compassion, your sadness and affliction, in the whole redemptive passion of your well-beloved Son, you have, I say, been hidden, filled, wounded, even more, pierced by the sword of sorrow, and knew yourself the sorrow of a second birthing. And if the omnipotence of your Son had not preserved you, your heart would have broken with sorrow, and you would soon have died also; but your Son saved you for His Church for the spiritual growth of believers. And yet, in the midst of such tribulation and sorrow, of such shame and such a burden, you remained beautiful, since such compassion and affliction were for you the cause of ineffable merit, by which you gained the power and efficacy to help us all. Thus, if the Apostle could say, “What was lacking in the passion of Christ, I have accomplished in my flesh, for the body which is the church,” with how much more reason can that be said of the most holy mother of Christ? O happiest of queens, your beauty, the charm of your sorrow, the splendor of your patience, your most profound humility, and the holiness of your charity shone forth in this, that in the whole dolorous and ignominious passion of your only and well-beloved Son, you did not feel the slightest urge to indignation, aversion, and impatience toward the persecutors and cruel and criminal torturers of your most precious Son, they who regarded you as vile, iniquitous, deformed, “like the tabernacle of Cedar,” that is, as the unfortunate mother of the most impious seducer, when your soul was as beautiful as the tent of Solomon, adorned with a celestial beauty like the splendor of the true Peaceful One who laid out the firmament like a tent.¹⁴⁵

Just as the Son, dying not miserably but with mercy, had only disdain for the unworthy and unseemly grief given Him, so too His most happy Mother, sharing by love in the death of her Son, and in a sense dying in Him because He was bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, said to us, “Why do you weep for me as if I were a miserable woman and mother of a miserable man? At this hour, I am black, because with my scorned Son I must also be scorned, and with Him who is considered a leper I too must be thought a leper. He is, as the prophet says, my sun, become now like an outlaw in your eyes, and in whom there appears no appearance

of beauty; it is right that I should be conformed to Him, and like Him in the sad and somber aspect of one accused; like the tabernacle of Cedar, like a sinner among sinners, as Honorius says.¹⁴⁶

Note that all our grace is essentially redemptive. But, as Christ is our head insofar as He communicates to us the grace merited by His passion—whereas with respect to the grace and substantial glory of the angels, He is the head only by His authority, as John of St. Thomas says,¹⁴⁷ so the Most Holy Virgin is our queen not only because of her dignity, as she is queen as well of the angels, but even more is our mother with respect to the generation of redemptive grace. *Mater divinae gratiae*.

31. Mater misericordiae

When we call the Blessed Virgin mother of mercy we do not mean only the mercy that is in her by way of an accident and inherence, but we also understand her maternity as the essential origin of mercy. “According to the universal usage of the Church,” says St. Albert, “the Blessed Virgin is called, and is in fact, mother of mercy, something that can be said of no other creature. Sometimes men are called men of mercy, that is, men made humble by mercy, through which they have some relation to mercy, whether in a principal or accidental manner, but the relation she has to mercy is one of essential origin, in the manner of generation (*per modum matris*). This essential conformity surpasses immeasurably the modes of inherence and accident. The Blessed Virgin thus disproportionately surpasses all created persons in mercy.”¹⁴⁸

32. Regina misericordiae

The Queen of Mercy, she is so profoundly rooted in the *causalissima causarum*, that she has the note of “first root,” and consequently her empire over the work of God is absolutely universal. Just as God is merciful even with regard to those who are confirmed in evil, so Mary is queen not only of the blessed angels but also of those who are in the eternal Gehenna. “All those who are under God’s rule,” says St. Albert, “come under His mercy, but not

all who are under God's rule share in His glory, His grace, and His justice; thus only mercy embraces His entire realm and she who rules over the kingdom of God is above all other titles the Queen of Mercy."¹⁴⁹

Mary is Queen of Mercy not only because she is the cause of all the mercy that God chooses to manifest, but, as we have seen, one can attribute mercy to her as a substantial predicate. "If one forms this proposition in an intransitive manner," says St. Albert, "the meaning would be: She is the queen of mercy, that is, of mercy itself, and then she is truly called queen of mercy, and Esther, who is a figure of the Blessed Virgin, is also called Edissa, which signifies mercy. So too Isaiah: And a throne will be prepared in mercy; but the proper place for a throne is the proper place of a kingdom, and mercy is the proper place of the kingdom. But in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, a womb prepared by the Holy Spirit, all the divinity and all the humanity of Christ were placed and established, and it was thus the proper place of the kingdom: therefore she has been mercy itself and at the same time has been, not without reason, queen of mercy, because, possessing it perfectly herself, she has always governed well, for nothing has ever gone out from her that has not been directed."¹⁵⁰ That is why Queen of Mercy is the most proper title of the Blessed Virgin according to her dignity.¹⁵¹

33. *Nigra sum, sed formosa*

Given the immensity of the mercy that the Almighty has chosen to manifest, it is only fitting that the universal royalty of Christ and of His mother was manifested in the Passion. "*Pilate then said to him, You are a king? Jesus replied: Thou has said it, I am a king.*"¹⁵² It is the same Christ who said, "*I am a worm and no man, the opprobrium of men and the castoff of the people,*" and "*I am king, king of kings and lord of lords.*"¹⁵³ It is in the Passion that shines forth in all its profundity and extent the meaning of *Nigra sum, sed formosa*.

Queen of mercy, the Blessed Virgin is so profoundly rooted in the divine omnipotence, that in the issue, in the procession of this power, she participates so to speak in the incomprehensibility of that same power. *Sol in aspectu annuncians in exitu, vas admirabilis opus excelsi*—*Coming forth from God she announces the sun in all her glory, this wonderful vase and work of the Most High.*¹⁵⁴ Was she not herself at the outset troubled by the proximity of

God as announced to her by Gabriel. *She was troubled by these words.*¹⁵⁵ If the most powerful of the blessed angels tremble and humble themselves before the power that raised them high above the dignity due them by nature,¹⁵⁶ how much more profound will be the astonishment and humility of the Blessed Virgin called to sovereign dignity. *Totam habet potestatem—She possesses all power.* This astonishment, this imperfect knowledge of the cause, will remain with us forever. *Admirabilis ero—I will be astonished.*¹⁵⁷ *In plenitudine sancta admirabitur—She will astound the assembly of the saints.*¹⁵⁸

34. Nonne stultum fecit Deus sapientiam hujus mundi?

Because she proceeds so admirably from the incomprehensible abyss of the divine wisdom and omnipotence, is it to be wondered at that the world finds so hard every word that exalts the grandeur and glory of Mary? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Indeed, the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God.¹⁵⁹ How can this mere creature, so weak in her nature, be clothed with all the power that God has deigned to manifest? The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men, and the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of men.¹⁶⁰ Is not the Blessed Virgin for us, in her darkness and in her beauty, the touchstone of divine wisdom? *Cunctas haereses sola interemisti—You have rid us of all heresies.*¹⁶¹

All true and predestined children of God have God for their father and Mary for their mother, and he who does not have Mary for his mother does not have God for his father. That is why reprobates, heretics, and schismatics, who hate or look askance or with indifference at the Blessed Virgin Mary, do not have God for their father, although they glorify themselves in this, because they do not have Mary for their mother; if they had her for their mother, they would love and honor her like true and good children naturally love their mother who gave them life

The most infallible and indubitable sign to distinguish a heretic, a man of bad doctrine, a reprobate, from the predestined is that the heretic and the reprobate regard with indifference the Blessed Virgin Mary, and try by word and example to diminish her cult and the love of her, openly or tacitly, and sometimes with good pretexts. Alas. God the Father has not told Mary to make her dwelling with them because they are Esaus.¹⁶²

35. Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata

This purely created wisdom called *Mater timoris, et agnitionis*—*Mother of filial fear and the beginning of knowledge*¹⁶³ is for us the beginning of wisdom. *Initium sapientiae timor Domini.*¹⁶⁴ But she who has received everything in humility, becomes as well, by her wisdom, by her practical wisdom, her prudence, and by her power, the terrible enemy of the creature that God created most sublime and powerful in nature and who by his pride became the prince of all evil. For him who is the very head of all evils, she who has received the fullness of power is *terrible as an army drawn up for battle.*¹⁶⁵ “God has made and formed but one enmity,” says St. Grignon de Montfort, “but irreconcilable, which will endure and grow even to the end.”¹⁶⁶ And in this enmity, it is the most humble Virgin, the sweetest of mothers, who will conquer. *She will crush your head.*

36. Non serviam!

In order the better to see the greatness and power of the Woman, let us take the measure of him who is the *head and king of all the sons of pride.*¹⁶⁷ The Lord Himself has called him *Prince of the ways of God*—*Ipse est principium viarum Dei.*¹⁶⁸ Indeed, at the beginning he was established as the first and most sublime of all creatures, not only according to nature, but also according to grace, for the separate intelligences receive a grace proportional to the perfection of their nature. *You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and beauty. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created.*¹⁶⁹ It was he who bore the name of light—*Lucifer.*¹⁷⁰ In all creation, *there was no power comparable to his, he has been created to fear nothing.*¹⁷¹ He was like *the cedar of Lebanon, beautiful of branch, of deep shadow, great height, having its top in the clouds.*¹⁷² He who was already so sublime in his nature, *the waters made grow, the abyss made him expand, causing its waters to flow around where it was planted and sending its runnels to all the trees of the field.* Prince who bore the light, he could illumine every intelligence in his realm and they would see in him the most perfect image of their God. *That is why his height rose higher than the trees of the field.* He could reach from one end of the universe to the other. *He was beautiful in his greatness, by the length of his branches, for his roots plunged into abundant waters. No other tree in the garden of God equaled him in beauty.*

But then the most sublime of intelligences is astonished by a new plan of God, a new plan which was also the most ancient. *Ecce ego facio nova—Behold I am going to make a new marvel, it is ready to hatch, do you not recognize it? I will make a road, not in the heavens, but in the desert, and flowers in arid land . . . to water my people, my chosen, the people I have formed for myself.*¹⁷³

Grace, those abundant waters that will make the cedar of Lebanon grow, does not have for its end to increase the excellence of the angelic nature. Principle only of merit, it is ordered to a new life, to a supernatural life where one can do nothing by the powers that belong to us by nature. A purely gratuitous benefit, it must be recognized as such. Without this practical recognition, the grace that is the principle of merit cannot lead to the grace of glory. Compared to the order of nature, the order of grace is radically new. In the former, each intellectual creature conducts himself by himself to his singular good and toward the natural common good. In the new order, this same creature must put himself under a power quite external to his nature; he must allow himself to be drawn beyond himself. In the order of nature, the angel has a right to natural beatitude in virtue of his very creation; in the order of grace it is not owed him. Moreover, grace orders so perfectly to the most universal good that the least worthy creature from a natural standpoint can participate in it in a manner more abundant than the most perfect creature: grace is not tied to the order of natures.¹⁷⁴

Because he was already raised to the supernatural order by grace the principle of merit, the angel could establish a comparison between the two orders. He thus saw his condition of nature in a light he would never have known if he had not been raised up. And he cast a new look on his great dignity and the singularity that was his with respect to his natural good. Whatever belonged to him in that order belonged to him as a matter of right. In the new light he makes the discovery of himself. Has not the first of angels the note of first principle, *the principle of the ways of God*, and is it not in this that he is most like Him? In the new order I will be dethroned and I will have to share with those inferior to me as with equals and even as superiors; I would lose my singularity and my dignity would be bypassed;¹⁷⁵ love would no longer be my right. In this deliberate turn to the self there rose up in him a disordered desire for his own excellence. And he said to himself: *I am a god, I sit on the throne of God in the midst of the seas.*¹⁷⁶ *And his heart was lifted up because*

of his beauty.¹⁷⁷ I will mount into the heavens, above the stars of God I will lift up my throne; I will sit on the mountain of the assembly, in the depths of septentrion; I will climb to the tops of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.¹⁷⁸ I am the principle of the ways of God, and in this order I would always be the principle of all His ways, and it would be contrary to the dignity in which God Himself established me to serve anything that is beneath me. In the new order, He by whom all things have been made will not unite with the most splendid and worthy nature, but to that which is most distant from me. And his neck stiffened and he cried: *Non serviam*—I will not serve.¹⁷⁹

37. Michael?!

But an intelligence very inferior to that of the first of the angels rebelled against the decree of the *prince of the ways of God*, the head of the angelic hierarchies, and he cried out with a cry that is also his name: Michael—Who is like God? In that cry is stated the absolute transcendence of Him who is above all ways. This cry, the echo of humility, intoned the *new canticle*,¹⁸⁰ and it merited for Michael the leadership of the heavenly host. This was, in the order of time, the first appearance of the *new city* where *mercy is above all works*.¹⁸¹ He who had been the prince of the ways of God *perverted his wisdom because of his splendor*.¹⁸² *He fell from heaven like a thunderbolt*.¹⁸³ *It is for this that the Lord Yahweh spoke: Because he was lifted to the heights, because his head had reached almost to the clouds, his heart was filled with pride at his elevation, I have left him to one who is most powerful among the people who will treat him as he pleases*.¹⁸⁴ He who did not wish to serve the creature will be vanquished by the servitude of God *who abased Himself, making Himself obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And that is why God has lifted Him up and given Him a name above every name*.¹⁸⁵ He who made resound his *Non serviam!* and who denied, not directly the negation he is before God, but the negation that involved his submission to grace and to a nature in itself most inferior to his own, he was vanquished by the negation of the things that are, by the *via negationis* that Jesus Himself lived: *He chose the things that are not in order to destroy the things that are—et ignobilia mundi, et contemptibilia elegit Deus, et ea quae non sunt, ut ea quae sunt destrueret*.¹⁸⁶ Everything that will truly be is from now on linked to that which is not.

*Behemoth was the beginning of the ways of God, but the one who made him, that is the one by whom all things were made, turned his sword against him.*¹⁸⁷ That which from the beginning was the instrument of revolt against God will be at the same time *the sword that pierces the soul* of the most humble of all mere creatures whom God has conceived *before making anything else*, and she will vanquish in her sorrow him *who sinned from the beginning*¹⁸⁸ and who is *the original of all those who rally to him*.¹⁸⁹

38. Novissimi primi, et primi novissimi

In the new order, the order of the fullness of mercy, *behold the last shall be first and the first shall be last*.¹⁹⁰ “Thus it is right,” St. Bernard says, “that Mary who was made the last of all when she was the first, was lifted from the lowest to the highest rank; it is right that she became mistress of all, it is fitting that she was elevated above the angels themselves, after having been placed with ineffable sweetness above the widows and penitent sinners, even above the place from which the seven demons were driven out.”¹⁹¹ In this new hierarchy, the creature most humble in natural condition is borne to the top of the universal order. *Quoniam excelsus Dominus humilia respicit: et alta a longe cognoscit*—*The Lord being most high, regards the humble and knows the proud from afar*.¹⁹² The very imperfection of human nature has made it open to a greater elevation. In its dignity as the image of the Most Holy Trinity, it can be elevated to the order of grace. It is true that the angels are more worthy by nature, and “the image of creation,” that which is in every intellectual creature prior to any elevation and which in us is the basis of our being raised, is more perfect in them. But it remains that man is more malleable to supernatural dignity, to the image of grace and glory, not because of any natural dignity hidden in his infirmity, but because of the incommensurable mercy of God. *That which the world takes for foolish, is that which God has chosen to confound the wise; and that which the world holds to be weak, is what God has chosen to confound the strong*.¹⁹³ An excess of power most perfectly joins in an excess of weakness. But it is true that the formlessness of human nature gives it a quite particular affinity with its creator, there is only the excess of divine power going beyond in mercy which can realize this affinity. *Wisdom extends from one end to the other*. It is in the land of mercy that the abyss of fullness calls to the abyss of emptiness, even of misery.

39. Attendite a falsis prophetis

But this affinity will be for man the source of a temptation which will increase in the course of time. Is it not quite fitting that the demon who sinned despite the perfection and infallibility of his speculative knowledge, *who because of his splendor perverted his wisdom*, attacks the new order in awaking in man so feeble in his speculative intelligence a most ignoble pride which will have for an object the very darkness of his nature, under the pretext that it has been assumed by the Son of God. He will press man to seize upon himself, to turn on himself, to identify the power of the weak with the weakness of Him and to see in his nature a right to supreme love and a demand, whereas in truth the power of the weak is nothing other than the merciful omnipotence of God. Man will seek in the awareness of his singularity and in his very weakness a good in itself and for itself in virtue of which he will be judged worthy of a love, even to the abasement of God. Man will thus turn the nature into which God has been incarnated against God, attacked in his condition of humiliation. Thus will the demon accomplish the promise made in the wickedness of his heart: *Sedebō in monte testamenti—I will sit myself upon the mountain that is Christ.*¹⁹⁴ *For the son of perdition will seat himself in the sanctuary of God and present himself as if he were God.*¹⁹⁵ The chief of this simulation of the new order will be announced by men who will cloak themselves in the Incarnation: *For false Christs and false prophets will rise up and they will perform great prodigies and extraordinary things in order to seduce, if this be possible, even the elect.*¹⁹⁶ They will be the more insidious because *they will have the appearance of piety.*¹⁹⁷ Those who openly rise up against God will not be the most dangerous, but those who will come in the name of Christ: *Take care that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name.*¹⁹⁸ They will not want to believe that in becoming man, the majesty of God was made nothing (*exinanivit*) and that it is the things that are not (*ea quae non sunt*) which have been chosen. “It is an intolerable impudence,” says St. Bernard, “for a miserable work of the earth (*vermiculus*), to inflate and puff up himself when the majesty of God itself was made nothing.”¹⁹⁹ *Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis: arguam te, et statuam contra faciem tuam—You have thought, wicked one, that I will be like you: I will chastise you and make you see yourself in all your ugliness.*²⁰⁰

One will be able to recognize false prophets by this sign: they will preach *the great prostitute who sits upon the deep water*, the woman who, she too,

is called a great city—*the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth.*²⁰¹

40. Cantate canticum novum

Let us oppose to “those old canticles of Lucifer, canticles of pride, canticles of detraction, canticles of doubt, canticles of lying and canticles of excuse,” the new canticle that sings the mother of Christ. “Raised up,” an author says,

and more than it is possible to say or to think, placed above the world and all the heavens, she is not raised above herself, but sings the canticle of humility, which is also the canticle of charity, because charity is not puffed up. She draws from her whole inebriated heart a word good and soothing, the new canticle which virgins who come after her should repeat. And what does she say. *My soul doth magnify the Lord.* See how this canticle is opposed to that which the angel sings at the brink of the abyss. The one begins high, so it does not descend, but falls into the deepest abyss. Mary begins with what is low that she might be elevated on high. She magnifies the Lord, she does not magnify herself, although she was elevated in an incomparable manner, fulfilling what was written: the greater you are, the more you will be brought low in all things. Thus, she merits to be placed above the choirs of all the angels. Satan raised himself above the Lord, and thus was justly plunged beneath everything that is. The spirit of the humble Virgin Mary trembles in Jesus her Lord and thus receives more abundantly than her companions the unction of the oil of joy. The foolish angel exalted himself, and thus was justly condemned to perpetual woe. Mary gloried in that her humility had been regarded, but she will have a recompense in the judgment made by holy souls: the angel gloried himself by the sign of his power, and thus he incurred the chastisement of an eternal contempt.²⁰²

41. Infirma elegit, et ea quae non sunt

God has chosen to realize the limit of mercy: He has chosen the things that are not and has exalted the humble. One can see in this how much those who

would wish man to be by nature at least equal to the angels and the woman in everything the equal of man diminish the true scale that God has deigned to give His work of predilection, where the Woman is Queen of the Angels. It is an injury to the sublime humility of the Servant of God. *Quae cum audisset, turbata est in sermone ejus, et cogitabat qualis esset ista salutatio*—*When she had heard, she was disturbed by these words [of the angel Gabriel], wondering what kind of salutation it was.*²⁰³ “She thought to herself,” Cornelius comments, “I see myself unworthy of all grace; how then can the angel call me full of grace? Pauperess, I pass my life with the poor virgins; how then can the angel say that the Lord is with me? I think of myself as the least and most vile²⁰⁴ of all women: how then can the angels announce, You are blessed among women.”²⁰⁵

42. Civitas Dei

Given the growing misery of this world and the grief to which our Holy Mother the Church is subjected, it will be agreed that it is opportune to repeat these truths. The intellectual and moral misery of the contemporary world reveals more than ever the darkness of man, a darkness one ignores more and more. *Et nescis quia tu es miser, et miserabilis, et pauper, et caecus, et nudus*—*Do you not know that you are unhappy, miserable, poor, blind, and naked?*²⁰⁶ Never before has humanity been more deprived of the purely human virtues of wisdom and prudence. Never has it been more mistaken about the nature it exalts. Men retain but the name of science; research becomes more and more an end in itself; we become like those men of the last times, *who are always learning but without ever being able to arrive at knowledge of the truth.*²⁰⁷

As the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* says, never more fundamentally than in our time has the work of Redemption been attacked. And this attack is radical. It touches the work of Redemption at its root—mercy. Insidiously, it masks itself as charity. It turns to the crowd that drew forth the mercy of the Savior: *I have compassion on this crowd!*²⁰⁸ “*Fear, posterity of Israel, for he has not ignored or rejected the cry of the poor.*”²⁰⁹ Some attack this mercy by pushing the masses into extreme necessity where they themselves lose the sense of mercy. “Those who have already attained the extreme of misery, do not fear to suffer more and that is why they are without pity.”²¹⁰ Others, instead of preaching and establishing justice, seek to instill pride in

the miserable, the false power of the weak. But no one is less worthy of mercy than one who is miserable and proud.

But the Church teaches us that along with this growing darkness, the divine mercy will manifest itself more and more in the course of time, and that quite particularly in the more and more explicit revelation of the mysteries of Mary, Mother of Mercy. “The Lord,” says Psalm 58, “will rule in Jacob and in the whole earth; they will be overcome with thirst and will suffer hunger like dogs and they will go around the city looking for something to eat.” “This city,” adds St. Grignon de Montfort, “that men will find at the end of the world in order to convert and give them hunger for justice, is the most Holy Virgin, who is called by the Holy Spirit, the village and city of God.”²¹¹

IN LAUDEM DEIPARAE VIRGINIS
QUAE NON TANTUM OPPORTUNE,
SED ETIAM IMPORTUNE
INTERPELLAT PRO NOBIS.²¹²

NOTES

Here is the original text of two passages cited at the beginning of this little book:

“Fateor, inquit Bernardus, imperitiam meam, pusillanimitatem propriam non abscondo. Non est quidem quod me magis delectet, sed nec quod terreat magis, quam de gloria Virginis Matris habere sermonem” (*In Assumpt. B.V.M.*, sermo 4, n. 5). “Hoc igitur in principio supponamus, quod quidquid laudis dicitur de beata Maria, non hyperbolice dicitur, sed defective, juxta verbum beati Hieronymi: ‘Quidquid humanis dici potest verbis, minus est a laude Dei’” (St. Bonaventure, *De Assumptione B.V.M.*, sermo 3, t. 9, p. 693b).

“Tanta est excellentia Virginis gloriosae, ut si ab ejus narratione et laude deficiant omnes linguae, deficiant Scripturae, deficiant, prophetiae et similitudines parabolicae. Unde et Spiritus Sanctus per ora Prophetarum commendat eam non solum verbis, verum etiam figuris et similitudinibus parabolicis; et quia nulla similitudo parabolica perfecte sufficit ad ejus excellentiam exprimendam, ideo ad ipsius laudem multiformes introducuntur similitudines et metaphorae” (ibid., sermo 2, p. 708a).

1. Cf. Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in Ecclesiasticum*, 24:1, 2 (ed. Crampon, Vivès), t. 9, p. 617b. “Mystice, apte Ecclesia in Officiis divinis B. Virginis haec

omnia (quidquid frustra obstrepat Lutherus, et occlament haeretici) accipi de B. Virgine, idque justissimis et gravissimis de causis.”

2. Ecclus. 24:40 (Sirac).

3. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus philosophicus* (ed. Reiser), t. 1, II p., q. 5, a. 4, 364b: “. . . abstracta non praedicantur de concretis nec concreta de abstractis ex vi modo significandi . . . licet aliquando identice verificentur, ut in divinis est idem Deitas et Deus, Paternitas et Pater, et in transcendentibus idem est unitas et unum, entitas et ens.”

4. St. Thomas, *In I Ethicorum* (ed. Pirotta), lectio 1, n. 1: “Sapientis est ordinare, quia sapientia est potissima perfectio rationis, cujus proprium est cognoscere ordinem.”

5. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus* (ed. Vivès), t. 7, d. 21, a. 1, p. 744b: “Intellectus autem qui trahit res ad se, et ex una procedit in alterum, potest comparare, et attingere formaliter habitudinem unius ad alterum: habet ergo intellectus in se primam radicem et primam rationem ordinandi res; sicut et comparandi et instituendi habitudinem unius ad alteram.”

6. Aristotle, *Metaphysics I*, c. 1, 982a15. *Ou gar dein epitattesthai ton sophon all' epitattein. . .*

7. Luke 1:28–33.

8. Num. 17:8.

9. Luke 1:43.

10. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, q. 32, a. 4. Cajetan's commentary: “Adverte hic quod aliud est loqui de ipso actu conceptionis: et aliud de mensura ipsius actus. In littera non dicitur quod Beata Virgo nihil active operata est in mensura actus conceptionis: sed dicitur quod nihil active operata est in ipso actu conceptionis. Nam Beata Virgo in illo instanti conceptionis materiam ministravit; ac per hoc active operata est; quia materiam ministrare agere procul dubio est. Ita quod in certo tempore praecedente instans conceptionis, Beata Virgo active praeparavit materiam, ut ita in secunda conclusione dicitur: et in instanti terminante tempus ministravit, ut in prima conclusione dicitur, quasi ad terminum suae actionis perveniens. Ad ipsum autem conceptionis actum non concurrit active, sed passive suscipiendo in materia ministrata actionem agentis Spiritus Sancti loco seminis (n. VI). Feminarum enim potentiae ad partem vegetativam spectantes activae procul dubio sunt: sed res facta ab activa potentia feminae materiale est, non activum generationis principium. Ita quod mas et femina conveniunt in hoc quod utrisque potentiae sunt activae, sed different in re facta per illas potentias: nam factum a mare semen est activum generationis principium. Factum vero a femina, quidquid sit illud, menstruum aut semen, materiale est generationis principium (n. VIII). Dic ergo quod potentia generativa feminae est activa, non generationis, sed materiae proximae et propriae ipsius generationis et geniti . . . quia mater est causa effectiva materiae proximae filii. Ideo filius assimilatur matri. Sed falluntur arguentes a negata efficientia respectu actus conceptionis seu generationis in utero, ad inferendum negari omnem efficientiam respectu filii” (n. X).

11. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, q. 35, a. 4. “Concipi autem et nasci personae attribuitur et hypostasi secundum naturam illa in qua concipitur et nascitur. Cum igitur in ipso principio conceptionis fuerit humana natura assumpta a divina

persona, sicut praedictum est (q. 33, a. 3), consequens est quod vere posset dici Deum esse conceptum et natum de Virgine. Ex hoc autem dicitur aliqua mulier alicujus mater, quod eum concipit et genuit. Unde consequens est quod B. Virgo vere dicatur mater Dei. Solum enim sic negari posset B. Virginem esse matrem Dei, si vel humanitas prius fuisset subjecta conceptioni et natiuitati, quam homo ille fuisset Filius Dei, sicut Photinus posuit; vel humanitas non fuisset assumpta in unitatem personae, vel hypostasis Verbi Dei, sicut posuit Nestorius. Utrumque autem horum est erroneum. Unde Haereticum est negare B. Virginem esse matrem Dei.” See John of St. Thomas, *Cursus philosophicus*, t. 1, p. 569a45: “Et ita sicut actio generativa ordinario illud esse proprium et naturale animae communicat corpori, et hac ratione dicitur formalissime mater hominis et personae subsistentis in humanitate, ita generatio Virginis esse et subsistentiam Verbi, quam invenit in anima assumpta, communicavit corpori, et ita formalissime dicitur mater illius hominis seu Personae Divinae ut subsistentis in illa humanitate constante corpore et anima.”

12. Albertus Magnus, *Mariale, sive quaestiones super Evangelium*, q. 141, *Opera Omnia* (ed. Borgnet), t. 37, p. 200a. “. . . mater Dei est causa Dei et origo Dei secundum illud quod natum est.” M.-M. Desmarais, O.P., *S. Albert le Grand, Docteur de la Méditation Mariale* (Paris-Ottawa, 1935) has been our guide in the Mariology of St. Albert.

13. St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 145, p. 206a: “Ipsa est mater omnium, et Deus Pater est origo omnium: quidquid autem per se origo et causa causae est, per se est origo et causa causati: sed ipsa est mater ejus qui est causa et origo omnium: ergo ipsa per se est mater omnium.”

14. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Ecclesiasticum*, 24:1, 2, t. 9, p. 617b: “Ipsa est mater aeternae Sapientiae in se incarnatae. Sicut ergo filius ejus est Sapientia genita et incarnata: sic ipsa est sapientiae gignens et incarnans.”

15. Isa. 66:17.

16. St. Anselm, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, t. 158, col. 956, oratio 52.

17. St. Augustine, *Patrologia Latina*, 7, col. 1074, sermo 215, n. 4.

18. St. Albert, t. 38, p. 158b, *In Lucam*, 11:27.

19. St. Bernard, *De Laudibus Virginis Mariae*, homilia 4, in *Opera Omnia* (ed. Carpenter, Vivès), t. 2, p. 619.

20. Luke 1:38, Canticum 1:1.

21. *Vie intérieure de la Très Sainte Vierge*, a work collected from the writings of M. Olier (Paris, 1875), 5–6.

22. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 8, d. 3, a. 2, n. 52, p. 108b.

23. Prov. 8:22–23.

24. St. Albert, *Sermones de Sanctis*, 38, t. 13, p. 563a.

25. Eccclus. 24:5.

26. Canticum 1:1.

27. Eccclus. 24:6.

28. Mass, *Salve sancta parens*, Gradual.

29. Ws. 8:1.

30. *Ibid.*, 2:24.

31. Prov. 8:30.

32. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, q. 35, a. 4.

33. St. Albert, *In III Sententiarum*, d. 4, a. 5, ad 2 (t. 28, p. 85b).

34. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Ecclesiasticum*, 34:7 (t. 9, p. 623).

35. Ps. 28:7.

36. Ecclus. 24:8.

37. St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 34, par. 4 (t. 37, p. 73a): “Plenitudo beatissimae Virginis privat vacuitatem: quamdiu enim vas potest recipere aliquid, tamdiu habet aliquid de vacuitate. Unde omnis creatura alia habet aliquid vacuitatis: quia majorem gratiam potest recipere. Ipsa autem sola gratia plena, quia majorem gratiam non potuit habere: nisi enim ipsa divinitati uniretur, major gratia non potuit intelligi, quam quod de ipsa acciperetur quod uniretur: hoc enim est, nisi ipsa (esset) Deus, non posset major gratia intelligi, quam quod ipsa esse Dei mater.”

38. St. Augustine, *De sancta Virginitate*, c. 3 (t. 9, col. 398). “Sic et materna propinquitas nihil Mariae profuisset, nisi felicius Christum corde quam carne gestasset.”

39. “Spiritus Sanctus supervenit in Virginem ut esset Mater Dei et attingeret sic ordinem hypostaticum, supponendo illam esse plenam gratia: sic etiam prius Angelus eam gratia plenam nominavit, quam diceret Spiritum Sanctum superventurum in illam, Et sic dignitas maternitatis congrue et connaturaliter exigit sanctitatem, qui pertinet ad ordinem hypostaticum qui de se altiore formam sanctitatis importat. Quod si de potentia absoluta esse maternitas sine sanctitatem tunc non supervenerit in eam Spiritus Sanctus per modum missionis simpliciter, qui non inhabitaret in ea, sed secundum missionem secundum quid” (John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 4, d. 17, a, 2, p. 465).

40. Ecclus. 24:39.

41. Esther 13:9.

42. Ws. 7:23.

43. Ecclus. 24:15.

44. “Confirmatio in bono beatae Virgini competebat, quia mater erat divinae sapientiae, in quam nihil inquinatum incurrit, ut dicitur Sap. 7” (St. Thomas, *Q.D. de veritate*, q. 24, a. 9, ad 2).

45. Phil. 2:13.

46. “Ecce imperio Dei omnia subjiciuntur et Virgo; ecce imperio Virginis omnia subjiciuntur et Deus” (St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, *La vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, n. 76 [Canadian edition, 1940], p. 61).

47. Ecclus. 24:12–13.

48. Ibid., 24:25.

49. Prov. 9:1.

50. St. Grignon de Montfort, *La vraie dévotion*, n. 5, p. 3.

51. Ws. 7:26.

52. Prov. 8:30.

53. Gen. 1:2.

54. Ecclus. 24:40–41.

55. *Ibid.*, 24:43.
 56. *Ws.* 7:24–25.
 57. *Apoc.* 21:2–3.
 58. *Ws.* 7:22–23.
 59. Mass of Mary the Mediatrix.
 60. *Ws.* 7:25, 27.
 61. *Canticle* 6:8 and *Ws.* 7:27.
 62. *Canticle* 7:4.
 63. *Ps.* 44:14.

64. “Post Deum autem, unusquisque magis diligit se quam proximum, debet enim diligere alios sicut seipsum, unde ipsemet est quasi exemplar primum et diligentium, quia se ut participem gloriae divinae alios ut socios in participando. Excipio tamen Christum Dominum, etiam ut hominem, et Beatissimam Virginem matrem, eo quod participant quamdam rationem communicantis nobis gratiam et beatitudinem, est enim Christus ut homo caput gloriae et Beatissima Virgo mater capitis, et collum per quod derivatur gratia, et ideo magis debemus ipsos diligere quam nos” (John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 7, q. 23, p. 403).

65. *Canticle* 1:3.
 66. *Ibid.*, 6:3.
 67. *Ps.* 44:10.
 68. *Gen.* 2:6.

69. “Facies terrae, id est, dignitas terrae, Mater Dominis Virgo Maria rectissime accipitur, quam irrigavit Spiritus Sanctus, qui fontis et aquae nomine in Evangelio significatur, et quasi de limo tali homo fieret, qui constitutus est in paradiso, ut operaretur et custodiret, id est, in voluntate Patris, ut eam impleret atque servaret” (*De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, lib. II, c. 24, t. 3, col. 216).

70. *Canticle* 4:1 and 3.
 71. *Ezek.* 1:2.
 72. *Ibid.*, 1:16.
 73. *Luke* 1:42.

74. “Concedimus etiam quod a Filio suo in omnibus privilegiis suis antecellitur: nec in hoc laus matris suae diminuitur, sed exaltatur in eo quod non tantum genuit sibi filium coaequalem, sed infinitum meliorem. Quod etiam ex hac parte quodammodo infinitat bonitatem matris: omnis enim arbor ex fructu cognoscitur proprio; unde si bonitas fructus bonificat arborem, infinita bonitas in fructu adhuc ostendit infinitatem in arbore bonitatem” (St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 197, p. 287b).

75. *Ecclus.* 24:6 and 40.

76. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Ecclesiasticum*, 24:1, 2 (t. 9, p. 618a). “Dices: quomodo enim veritate aptari possunt B. Virgini illa, quae Sapientia dicit de se, vers. 6: *Ego feci ut in coelo oriretur lumen indeficiens*; vers. 40, *effudi flumina*? Respondeo, primo, mystice, q.d. Ego feci ut in coelis, id est in Ecclesiis, oriretur Christus qui est sol iustitiae, feci ut in iis oriretur lux fidei. Rursum, ipsa, quasi mare gratiarum earum flumina in Ecclesiam et fideles effundit. Secundo, ad literam, hoc sensu, q.d. Ego fui causa, cur

Deus creavit lucem, coelos, mare, flumina totumque universum. Hujus enim creatio ordinata fuit ad justificationem et glorificationem Sanctorum, factam a Christo per B. Virginem, tamquam ad suum finem; ordo enim naturae creatus et institutus est propter ordinem gratiae. Quia ergo B. Virgo fuit mater Christi, ac consequenter fuit medium nostrae redemptionis, ac totius ordinis gratiarum a Christo instituti; hinc pariter fuit causa finalis creationis universi; universi enim finis est Christus, ejusque mater et Sancti; ut scilicet, Sancti in universo hoc per Christum et B. Virginem, gratia et gloria donentur. Quare creationis universi causa finalis fuit praedestinatio Christi, B. Virginis et Sanctorum. Licet enim universi partes quaedam sint Christus et B. Virgo, ideoque eo posteriores in genere causae materialis; tamen in genere causae finalis sunt priores. Quare inter creationem universi et nativitatem Christi et B. Virginis, est mutua quaedam contra-dependentia; nec enim Deus nasci voluit Christum et B. Virginem, nisi in universo hoc; nec vicissim voluit universum hoc existere sine Christo et Beata Virgine, imo propter illos illud creavit. Totum enim universum ad Christum et Beatam Virginem, ordinemque gratiarum, velut ad sui complementum et finem referri et ordinari voluit. Christus ergo et B. Virgo sunt causa finalis, ob quam creatum est universum, ac proinde ejusdem sunt causa formalis, puta exemplaris. Scilicet, idea. Ordo enim gratiarum, in quo primus est Christus et B. Virgo est idea et exemplar juxta quod Deus creavit et disposuit ordinem naturae totiusque universi.”

77. Ecclus. 1:3.

78. 3 Kings 10:20.

79. Canticle 8:5 and 6:9.

80. Ps. 24:10.

81. *In antiphonam Salve Regina*, sermo 1, n. 3 (t. 7, p. 43a).

82. “Opus autem divinae justitiae semper praesupponi opus misericordiae, et in eo fundatur. Creaturae enim non debetur aliquid, nisi propter aliquid in eo praexistens, vel praeconsideratum: et rursus, si illud creaturae debetur, hoc erit propter aliquid prius. Et cum non sit procedere in infinitum, oportet devenire ad aliquod quod ex sola bonitate divinae voluntatis dependeat, quae est ultimus finis. Utpote si dicamus quod habere manus debitum est homini propter animam rationalem; anima vero rationalem habere, ad hoc quod sit homo; hominem vero esse, propter divinam bonitatem. Et sic in quolibet opere Dei apparet misericordia, quantum ad primam radicem ejus. Cujus virtus salvatur in omnibus consequentibus; et etiam vehementius in eis operatur, sicut causa primaria vehementius influit quam causa secunda” (St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 21, a. 4, c.).

83. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 7, d. 3, a. 3, n. 13 (p. 114a): “Finis cujus gratia fuit gloria Dei manifestanda per viam misericordiae et justitiae, unde quia incarnatio valebat ad hunc effectum manifestandi misericordiam et justitiam in redemptione hominum motivum volendi incarnationem fuit non ipsa incarnationis dignitas absolute, sed ipsa incarnatio ut valens ad talem effectum.”

84. “Et tamen in damnatione reproborum apparet misericordia, non quidem taliter relaxans, sed aliquo modo allevians, dum punit citra condignum” (St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, q. 21, a. 4, ad 1).

85. Ibid., IIaIIae, q. 30, a. 4, c.: “Respondeo dicendum quod aliqua virtus potest esse maxima dupliciter: uno modo secundum se; alio modo per comparisonem ad habentem.—Secundum se quidem misericordia maxima est; pertinet enim ad misericordiam quod alii effundat; et quod plus est, quod defectus aliorum subleuet; et hoc est maxime superioris. Unde et miserei ponitur proprium Deo: et in hoc maxime dicitur eius omnipotentia manifestari.

“Sed quoad habentem, misericordia non est maxima, nisi ille qui habet sit maximus, qui nullum supra se habeat, sed omnes sub se. Ei enim qui supra se aliquem habet majus est et melius conjungi superiori quam supplere defectum inferioris. Et ideo quantum ad hominem qui habet Deum superiorem, caritas, per quam Deo unitur, est potior quam misericordia, per quam defectus proximorum supplet. Sed inter omnes virtutes quae ad proximum pertinent potissima est misericordia, sicut etiam est potioris actus: nam supplere defectum alterius, in quantum hujusmodi, est superioris et melioris.”

86. “It is necessary that mercy and truth be found in every work of God; if, however, mercy is understood as an action that puts aside some defect, although not every defect can properly be called a misery, but only a defect in rational nature, which is capable of happiness, for misery is the opposite of happiness. . . . Although nothing, in the nature of things, is presupposed to creation, nonetheless something is presupposed in the knowledge of God. In this respect, even creation takes on the note of justice, insofar as the being of things is produced in a way agreeable to divine wisdom and goodness. It has as well, in a way, the note of mercy, insofar as things pass from non-being to being” (ibid., Ia, q. 21, a. 4, c. and ad 4.

87. Ps. 144:9.

88. “It is the characteristic of fault (*culpa*) that it is voluntary. And in this respect, it is not worthy of pity, but rather of chastisement. But because fault can, in a certain manner, be a punishment, that is insofar as it involves something contrary to the will of the one who sins, in this respect it can have the note of misery. And it is for this reason that we have pity and compassion for those who sin. For as St. Gregory says in a homily, ‘true justice is not a matter of disdain,’ that is to say, of sinners, ‘but a matter of compassion.’ And in Matthew it is written ‘But in seeing this multitude of men (Jesus) was moved by compassion for them, because they had been harassed and buffeted, like a flock without a shepherd’” (St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae, q. 36, a. 1, ad 1).

89. Ibid., IIaIIae, q. 30, a. 1. “. . . sed contra: motivum ad misericordiam est malum” (IIaIIae, q. 30, a. 4). And, in the ad 1 of this same article, the text already quoted: “de ratione culpae est quod sit voluntaria. Et quantum ad hoc non habet rationem miserabilis, sed magis rationem puniendi. Sed quia culpa potest esse aliquomodo poena, in quantum scilicet habet aliquid annexum quod est contra voluntatem peccantis, secundum hoc potest habere rationem miserabilis. Et secundum hoc miseremur et compatimur peccantibus: sicut Gregorius dicit in quadam homilia, quod *vera justitia non habet dedignationem*, scilicet ad peccatores, *sed compassionem*. Et dicit Matthew 9, *Videns Jesus turbas misertus est eis, quia erant vexati, et jacentes sicut oves non habentes pastorem*” (IIaIIae, q. 30, a. 1, ad 1).

90. St. Thomas, *In de divinis nominibus*, c. 7, lectio 2.

91. St. Thomas, *II Summa contra gentes*, c. 30.

92. "Est ergo summa solutionis, quod ordo duo requirit, scilicet ordinatorum distinctionem et communicantiam distinctorum ad totum. Quantum autem ad secundum est quidem ordo indeficienter in aliquibus, quae sunt suprema et proxima primo principio, sicut substantiae separatae et corpora caelestia, in quibus nihil casualiter accidit et praeter naturam: in aliquibus autem deficit, scilicet corporibus, in quibus interdum aliquid accidit casualiter praeter naturam. Et hoc propter remotionem a primo principio semper eodem modo se habente" (St. Thomas, *In XII Metaphysicorum*, lectio 12, n. 2637).

93. St. Thomas, *In II Sententiarum*, d. 3. q. 1, a. 6, c.

94. "... homo est ex duabus contrariis naturis, quarum una retrahitur ab alio a suo corpore" (St. Thomas, *In Matth.*, 25:15).

95. St. Thomas, *In II Ethicorum*, lectio 7, nn. 319–21.

96. "... in natura humana bonum videtur esse in paucioribus, et hujusmodi ratio potest assignari dupliciter. Una est propter corruptionem humanae naturae ex peccato originali. . . . Alia ratio sumi potest ex ipsa natura conditionis humanae" (St. Thomas, *In I Sententiarum*, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, c.). On this question, see John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 6, q. 109, dd. 19 and 20).

97. "... in homine est duplex natura, scilicet rationalis et sensitiva. Et quia per operationem sensus homo pervenit ad actus rationis, ideo plures sequuntur inclinationes naturae sensitivae quam ordinem rationis. Plures enim sunt qui assequuntur principium rei, quam qui ad consummationem perveniunt. Ex hoc autem vitia et peccata in hominibus proveniunt, quod sequuntur inclinationes naturae sensitivae contra ordinem rationis" (St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae, q. 71, a. 2, ad 3).

98. St. Augustine, *In Psalm 35*, verse 6 (t. 5, col. 346).

99. Ps. 68:3.

100. Isa. 7:14.

101. *Ibid.*, 45:8.

102. St. Albert, *Mariale*, c. 141 (t. 37, p. 200): "Quod non posset homo esse pater Dei, sic probatur: Dicit Philosophus, quod masculus est, qui generat in alio: ergo ille qui esset pater Dei, aut generaret in alio, aut in seipso. Si in alio, ergo duo: unus generans in alio, et unus vel una ab altero generans: ergo esset ibi masculus et femina. Si autem ille pater generaret in se: ergo non esset masculus, ergo non esset pater.—Item quae est ratio quare diceretur pater quam mater? . . . Esset nec pater nec mater."

103. Prov. 3:20.

104. Ps. 41:8.

105. Luke 1:48.

106. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Lucam*, 1:48, at the word 'humilitatem,' t. 16, p. 36; *In Proverbia Salomonis*, 8:13, t. 5, p. 210b.

107. Ws. 8:1.

108. Luke 1:46–50.

109. Ps. 17:33.

110. Isa. 63:19.

111. Ibid., 35:8.

112. Prov. 8:22.

113. Ibid., 4:11.

114. Ps. 24:10.

115. Luke 1:52.

116. Cajetan, *In IlamIlae*, q. 161, a. 5, n. xxv: “Unde beata Virgo *humilitatem suam Dominum respexisse*, tanquam universalem virtutem, quia ad supernum suscipiendum divinae largitatis influxum latissime ac profundissime patula erat.”

117. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 8, d. 19, a. 6, n. 27, p. 700a: “Respexit humilitatem ancillae, quia videlicet . . . ad tantam plenitudinem gratiae infundendam, quanta fuit in B. Virgine nihil aliud respexit Deus, quam profunditatem humilitatis ejus, qua reddita est capacissima ad suscipiendam quasi in concavitate maxima immensam gratiae magnitudinem.”

118. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, q. 161, a. 5, ad 4: “Humilitas est quasi quaedam dispositio ad liberum accessum hominis in spiritualia et divina bona.”

119. St. Bernard, *In Annuntiatione Domini*, sermo III, n. 4, t. 7, p. 452a: “Omnium tamen humanarum infirmitatum vel injuriarum quas pro nobis pertulit divina dignatio, sicut tempore primum, sic etiam humilitatem fere maximum existimo, quod in utero concipi, in utero novem mensium tempore majestas illa incircumscripita passa est contineri. Ubi enim sic se exinanivit, aut quando ita penitus a semetipso defecisse visus fuit? Tanto tempore nihil illa sapientia loquitur, nihil illa virtus manifestum operatur: nullo signo visibili majestas quae clausa latet, proditur. Non sic in cruce visus est infirmus, ubi quod infirmum ipsius fuit, statim apparuit fortius omnibus hominibus: quando et moriens glorificat latronem, et expirans inspirat Centurionem: quando horarius dolor passionis ei non solum compati fecit elementa creaturarum, sed etiam contrarias fortitudines subigit aeternorum passioni dolorum. In utero autem sic est quasi non sit: sic omnipotens virtus vacat, quasi nihil possit, et Verbum aeternum sub silentio se premit.”

120. Prov. 11:2.

121. St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 63, p. 119a: “*Ubi humilitas, ibi sapientia*. Prov. XI, 2. Haec propositio est per se in theologia: ergo ubi major humilitas, ibi major est sapientia: ubi summa, ibi summa. Sed in beatissima Virgine impropportionabilis fuit humilitas: ergo impropportionabilis sapientia. Minor patet in Evangelio ubi dicitur: *Qui se humiliat exaltabitur*. Quae similiter est per se: ergo qui impropportionabiliter aliis exaltatur, etiam aliis impropportionabiliter demonstratur humilis: sed beatissima Virgo omnes choros Angelorum in quartam hierarchiam secundum Hieronymum exaltata, impropportionabiliter aliis ascendit: ergo omnium hominum et Angelorum humillima fuit: ergo et omnes in sapientiae transcendit.”

122. James 4:6; Prov. 3:34.

123. Luke 1:45.

124. Ibid., 1:28.

125. St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 165, p. 247b: “quia ad consentiendum in mirabilia maxime disponit fides, et maxime fides de omnipotentia: quia qui credit et advertit

Deum omnia posse facere, acquiescit ipsum posse naturas mutare, et naturis imperare. Unde cum hic omnium novorum novissimum nuntietur beatissimae Virgini. . . .”

126. St. Bernard, *In Adventu Domini*, sermo II, t. 2, p. 571b: “O Virgo, virga sublimis, in quam sublime vertice sanctum erigis! Usque ad sedentem in throno, usque ad Dominum majestatis. Neque enim mirum quoniam in altum mittis radices humilitatis.”

127. St. Bernard, *Tractatus de statu virtutum*, Ia, c. 13, t. 6, p. 314a: “O humilitas, per quam femina mater Dei effecta est, per quam Deus de coelo descendit ad terras, per quam animae de inferno ad coelum translatae sunt. Haec est scala proposita vobis a Deo, per quam ascenditur de terris ad coelum. Per hanc ascenderent patres nostri, per hanc et nos ascendere oportet, alioquin non ascendemus.”

128. St. Bonaventure, *De Annuntiatione B.V.M.*, sermo II, *Opera Omnia* (Quaracchi), t. 9, p. 664a: “Si ab aeterno fuit concepta, quomodo concipi potuit in fine saecularum a Virgine Maria? Si enim eterna erat, ergo immutabilis, ergo incomprehensibilis, ergo interminabilis. Quomodo ergo Interminabilis concipi potuit a juvencula? Quomodo Incomprehensibilis a parvula? Quomodo Immutabilis a fragili et tenella? Et tamen talem et tantum concepit, secundum testimonium angelicum, Lucae primo (v. 31 et seq.), inquit Angelus ad Virginem, *Ecce, concipies in utero et paries Filium, etc.*, et post describit eum: *Hic erit Magnus, scilicet in comprehensione; et Filius Altissimi vocabitur, suae essentiae immutabilitate; et regni ejus non erit finis, sua interminabilitate. Unde in hoc conceptu est divina Majestas mirabiliter humiliata, et virginalis humilitas mirabiliter exaltata.*”

129. St. Bernard, *Super Missus est*, hom. I, n. 7, t. 2, p. 591b: “Mirare ergo utrumlibet, et elige quid amplius mireris, sive Filii begnissimam dignationem, sive Matris excellentissimam dignitatem. Utrique stupor, utrinque miraculum. Et quod Deus feminae obtemperet, humilitas absque exemplo; et quod Deo femina principetur, sublimitas sine socio.” See too hom. II, n. 9, p. 597b: “Porro ibi agnoscitur longitudo brevis, latitudo angusta, altitudo subdita, profunditas plena. Ibi agnoscitur lux non lucens, verbum infans, aqua sitiens, panis esuriens. Videas, si attendas, potentiam regi, sapientiam instrui, virtutem sustentari; Deum denique lactantem, sed angelos reficientem; vagientem, sed miseros consolantem. Videas, si attendas, tristari laetitiam, pavere fiduciam, salutem pati, vita mori, fortitudinem infirmari. Sed, quod non minus mirandum est, ipsa ibi cernitur tristitia laetificans, pavor confortans, passio salvans, mors vivificans, infirmitas roborans. Cui jam illud quoque non occurrat, quod quaerebam? Numquid non facile tibi inter haec feminam agnoscere virum circumdantem, cum Mariam vides virum approbatum a Deo Jesum suo utero circumplecentem.”

130. Ps. 48:13, 21.

131. *Ibid.*, 50:7.

132. Office of Holy Saturday.

133. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 64, a. 2, c; *Q.D. de Malo*, q. 16, a. 5.

134. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, q. 30, a. 2, c.: “. . . cum misericordia sit compassio super miseria aliena, ut dictum est, ex hoc contingit quod aliquis misereatur ex quo contingit quod de miseria aliena doleat. Quia autem tristitia seu dolor est de proprio malo, intantum aliquis de miseria aliena tristatur aut dolet inquantum

miseriam alienam apprehendit ut suam. Hoc autem contingit dupliciter. Uno modo, secundum unionem affectus, quod fit per amorem. Quia enim amans reputat amicum tanquam seipsum, malum ipsius reputat tanquam suum malum, et ideo dolet de malo amici sicut de suo. Et inde est quod Philosophus, in IX Ethic., inter alia amabilia ponit hoc quod est *condolere amico*. Et Apostolus dicit, ad Rom. XII, *Gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus*.—Alio modo contingit secundum unionem realem: utpote cum malum aliquorum propinquum est ut ab eis ad nos transeat. Et ideo Philosophus dicit, in II Rhet, Homines miserentur super illos, qui sunt eis conjuncti et similes, quia per hoc fit eis aestimatio quod ipsi etiam possint similia pati. Et inde est etiam quod senes et sapientes, qui considerant se posse in mala incidere, et debiles et formidolosi magis sunt misericordes. E contrario autem alii, qui reputant se esse felices et intantum potentes quod nihil mali putant se posse pati, non ita miserentur.—Sic igitur semper defectus est ratio miserendi; vel inquantum aliquis defectum alicujus reputat suum, propter unionem amoris; vel propter possibilitatem similia patiendi.”

135. “What the Apostle says is beautiful, *exinanivit*, he emptied himself. The empty is opposed to the full, but the divine nature is fullness itself since in it is found the full perfection of the good. *I will show you every good*. But human nature, the soul, is not full; it only has a potentiality for fullness, since it was created as a *tabula rasa*. Thus human nature is empty. That is why the Apostle says, He has emptied himself: because he has assumed human nature. Thus, of the assumption of human nature he said first off, *Taking the form of a slave*. Man is indeed by his very nature the slave of God, and human nature is the form of a slave” (St. Thomas, *Super Epist. Ad Philipenses Expositio*, c. 2, lectio 2).

136. John 2:4.

137. St. Augustine, *In Ioannem*, tract. VIII, c.9, t. 4, col. 1455: “*Quid mihi et tibi est, mulier? Nondum venit hora mea . . .* tamquam dicens: Quod de me facit miraculum, non tu genuisti, divinitatem meam non tu genuisti: sed quia genuisti infirmitatem meam, tunc te cognoscam, cum ipsa infirmitas pendebit in cruce.”

138. Canticum 2:2.

139. St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 24, p. 53a: “Ut sapientia Dei misericordior appareret. Est enim exitus quo de bono bonum, et exitus est quo de malo malum. De primo, *Vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat: et erant valde bona*. De secundo: *Initium omnis peccati est superbia*. . . Tertius exitus est, ut de bono malum, ut de muliere initium peccati. Quartus exitus est, ut de malo bonum, et hoc solius Dei est proprium, cujus sapientia vincit malitiam, attingens a fine usque ad finem.”

140. Canticum 4:7.

142. St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 24, p. 53a: “. . . ut confidentiam peccatoribus augmentaretur, per quod mediatrix eorum eadem propinquitatem utramque extremitatem conjungeret, ut sicut mater esset et filia Dei, sic esset mater et soror nostra, et sic a natura inclinaretur ad miserendum peccatori.”

142. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Canticum Canticorum*, 1:4, t. 7, p. 495b: “Beata virgo nigra fuit non in se, sed in patre suo Adam, qui peccavit et peccato totam suam posterioritatem (excepta B. Virgine) infecit. Est ergo ipsa nigra per denominationem extrinsecam, quia filia peccatoris; in se tamen est formosa per gratiae plenitudinem.”

143. Cornelius of Lapide, *In Proverbia Solomonis*, 8:13, t. 5, p. 210a.

144. Luke 2:35.

145. Denis the Carthusian, *Enarratio in Canticum Canticorum Salomonis*, 1:5 (Cologne edition), t. 7, p. 324 D: “*Nigra sum, sed formosa*. Fuisti enim, o suavissima Virgo, nubilo dolorosissimae compassionis, tristitiae ac moeroris, in omni dilectissimi Filii tui passione salvifica, cooperta, impleta ac penetrata, imo doloris gladio perforata; eratque tunc in te duplicatus parturientem dolor. Et nisi te omnipotentia Filii tui conservasset, prae doloris vehementia, rupto (ut creditur) corde, mox exirasses; sed reservavit te Filius tuus Ecclesiae suae in magnum profectum credentium. Verumtamen in tot tribulationibus atque doloribus, in tantis angustiis ac pressuris, mansisti formosa; quae et haec tanta compassio et afflictio tua, fuit ipsi ineffabiliter meritoria, et per eam promeruisti facultatem efficaciamque praecipuam succurrendi omnibus nobis. Nempe si Paulo Apostolo dicere licuit, Adimpleo quae desunt passionum Christi, in carne mea, pro corpore ejus quod est Ecclesia: quanto plus sacratissimae Matri Christi hoc dicere fas est? In hoc quoque mansuetudinis tuae, claritas patientiae tuae, profundissima tua humilitas, ac tuae sanctitas caritatis quod in tota tui unici praedelicissimi Filii amarissima et ignominiosissima passione, nullatenus mota est aliqua indignatione, aversio, impatientia adversus crudelissimos scleratissimosque tui pretiosissimi Filii percutores et crucifixores: a quibus et tu reputaberis vilis, iniqua, deformis, sicut tabernacula Cedar, videlicet ut impiissimi seductoris mater infelix, quum esses pulchra in anima instar pellium Salomonis, eo coeliformi pulchritudine perornata, assimilat decori veri Pacifici, qui extendit coelum sicut pellem.”

146. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Canticum Canticorum*, 1:4, t. 7, p. 496a: “Sicut filius non misere, sed misericorditer moriens, hunc indignum et indecorum sibi luctum dedignabatur impendi: sic et mater felicissima pro affectu commoriens filio, et quodam modo in ipso moriens, quia os ex ossibus ejus, et caro ex carne ejus ipse: Quid, ait, fletis super me, quasi miseram mulierem, et matrem miseri hominis? Nigra nunc sum, quia oportet me cum filio despecto despici, et cum reputato leproso leprosam reputari. Ille juxta Prophetam sol meus, nunc factus quasi saccus cillicinus in oculis vestris, et cui non est species neque decor; me quoque decet illi conformari, et pullo atroque habitu reorum assimilari: sicut tabernacula Cedar, quasi aliqua de peccatricibus, ait Honorius.”

147. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 8, d. 10, a. 3, p. 272.

148. St. Albert, *Mariale*, q. 75, p. 131a: “Beata Virgo, secundum universalem usum Ecclesiae appellatur est *mater misericordiae*, quod non convenit proprie alicui alteri creaturae. Dicuntur autem et aliquando viri misericordiae, id est viri humiles misericordiae, et sic habent omnes alii comparisonem ad misericordiam per modum principalem et per modum accidentalem, ipsa vero habet comparisonem ad misericordiam per modum originis essentialis, quia per modum matris: convenientia autem essentialis improportionabiliter excellit modum inhaerentia et modum accidentalem: ergo beatissima Virgo improportionabiliter excedit in misericordia universos.”

149. *Ibid.*, q. 162, p. 236a: “Omnis qui est in regno Dei est in misericordia: sed non omnis qui est in regno, est in gloria, vel in gratiam vel in justitia: ergo sola misericordia comprehendit totum regnum: ergo regina super totum regnum potissime dicetur regina misericordiae.”

150. Ibid., p. 236b: “Si construitur intransitive, sensus erit: ipsa est regina misericordiae, idest, ipsa misericordia: sed adhuc dicitur vere regina misericordiae: unde et Esther quae est in figura beatae Virginis, alio nomine Edissa vocatur, quod est interpretatum *misericordia*. Item, Isa. xvi, 5: *Et praeparabitur in misericordia solium*” sed solium proprie est in proprio loco regni: ergo misericordia est proprius locus regni: sed in utero beatae Virginis vere et proprie requievit et collocata fuit tota divinitas et humanitas ipsi per Spiritum Sanctum praeparato: ergo ipsa proprius locus fuit regni: ergo ipsa fuit misericordia, et cum hoc non immerito regina misericordiae: quia ipsa seipsam perfecte possidendo semper bene rexit, nam ab ipsa numquam aliquid indirectum processit.”

151. Ibid., p. 237a: “. . . propriissimum nomen quod beatissimae Virgini secundum suam dignitatem summa debetur est regina misericordiae. . . . Nec dicitur proprie regina pacis et dilectionis: quia hoc est omnibus sui regni universale. Melius dicitur *regina misericordiae* quam regina potentiae vel sapientiae. In sapientia enim intelligitur potentia, et non e converso. In misericordia sapientiae et potentia, et non e converso: unde misericordia illa omnia tria claudit in se: unde regina misericordiae et regina potentiae et sapientiae, et non e converso.”

152. John 18:37.

153. Ps. 21:7 and Apoc. 19:16.

154. Ecclus. 43:2.

155. Luke 1:29.

156. “A great check is put on our appetite when it tends toward an object surpassing our dignity, and which cannot be attained or retained without another’s gratuitous help. This is why we sing on the subject of the holy angels: *Tremunt Potestates*: the Powers tremble. For, when this gift that they have been given by God, and that they are certain to retain for all eternity, is envisaged with respect to what they are in themselves, as created from nothing, and so on, then one can say that a trembling arises in them for they see nothing in themselves that makes them worthy of this gift; rather one sees that one could be deprived of it, and that the gift was given them in a wholly gratuitous way and without merit on their part” (Cajetan, *In IlamIIae*, q. 161, a. 1, n. IV).

157. Ws. 8:11.

158. Ecclus. 24:3.

159. 1 Cor. 1:20 and 3:19.

160. Ibid., 1:25.

161. Mass *Salve sancta parens*.

162. St. Grignon de Montfort, *La vraie dévotion*, n. 30.

163. Ecclus. 24:24.

164. Ps. 110:10.

165. Canticle 6:3.

166. St. Grignon de Montfort, *La vraie dévotion*, n. 52.

167. Job 41:25.

168. Ibid., 14.

169. Ezek. 28:12, 15.

170. Isa. 14:12.

171. Job 41:24.

172. Ezek. 31:3–8.

173. Isa. 43:19–21.

174. The angel receives grace proportional to the perfection of his nature:

St. Thomas, Ia, q. 62, a. 6. It is otherwise with man, IIaIIae, q. 24, a. 3.

175. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 4, d. 23, a. 3, nn., xvii–xli, pp. 940 ff.

176. Ezek. 28:2.

177. *Ibid.*, 17.

178. Isa. 14:13–14.

179. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, t. 4, d. 23, a. 3, nn. xxvii–xxix.

180. Ps. 32:3; Apoc. 5:9.

181. Ps. 144:9.

182. Ezek. 28, 17.

183. Luke 10:18.

184. Ezek. 31:10–11.

185. Phil. 2:8–9.

186. 1 Cor. 1:28.

187. Job 40:14.

188. 1 John 2:25.

189. Ws. 2:25.

190. Luke 13:30.

191. St. Bernard, *Sermo in Dominica infra Octavam Assumptionis B.V.M.*, n. 11, t. 3, p. 400a: “Merito facta est novissima prima, quae cum prima essent omnium, sese novissima faciebat. Merito facta est omnium domina, quae se omnium exhibebat ancillam. Merito denique super angelos exaltata est quae et infra viduas et penitentes, infra eam de qua ejecta fuerant septem daemonia, ineffabili sese mansuetudine inclinabat.”

192. Ps. 137:6.

193. 1 Cor. 1:27.

194. Isa. 14:13.

195. 2 Thess. 2:4.

196. Matt. 24:24.

197. 2 Tim. 3:5.

198. Luke 21:8.

199. St. Bernard, *In Nativitate Domini*, sermo 1, t. 3, p. 33b: “Intolerabilis impudentia est, ut ubi sese exinanivit Majestas, vermiculus infletur et intumescat.”

200. Ps. 49:21.

201. Apoc. 17:1–18.

202. Additamentum IV ad Opusculum S. Bonaventurae, *Vita mystica*, cc. xxv–xxvi, *Opera Omnia* (Quarrachi), t. 8, p. 203: “Carissimi, vetera cantica sunt haec, canticum superbiae, canticum detractionis, canticum dubitationis, canticum mendacii, et canticum excusationis. . . . Non ita cantavit novi cantici imitatrix mater Christi, verum lilium vere viridentibus foliis redimitum. Vis videre folia ejus? Vis audire canticum ejus? Exaltata, et supra quam dici aut cogitari potest, toti mundo coelisque

praelata, non ascendit supra se, sed cantavit canticum humilitatis, quod et charitatis est, quia charitas non inflatur. Eructavit de corde suo inebriato verbum bonum et suave, canticum novum virginibus cantandum. Et quid ait? *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. Vide, quam contrarium est canticum hoc cantico angeli ruituri. Incoepit ille in alto, ac proinde in ima non descendit, sed corrui. Incoepit Maria ab imo, et in altum sublevaretur. Magnificat haec Dominum, non se; licet inaestimabiliter exaltata, servans quod scriptum est: *Quanto major es, humiliare in omnibus*. Unde et super omnes choros angelorum meruit elevari. Magnificavit se ille supra Dominum, unde infra omne quod est, meruit praecipitari. Exultavit spiritus humilis Mariae in Domino Jesu suo; unde oleo laetitiae prae consortibus suis iniungi promeruit: exultavit stultus ille angelus in se, unde luctu perpetuo meruit condemnari. Glorietur ista humilitatem suam esse respectam, unde habebit fructum in respectione animarum sanctarum: gloriabatur ille in multitudine virtutis suae, unde perpetuam despectionem incurrit.”

203. Luke 1:29.

204. How could the Blessed Virgin possibly humble herself to this degree? Is it not contrary to the truth? We find in St. Thomas (IIaIIae, q. 161, a. 6, ad 1) a response to this difficulty. “Someone can without falsehood believe and affirm that he is the most vile of men by reason of the hidden faults that he recognizes in himself and the gifts of God which exist in a hidden way in others. That is why Augustine says, in his book on virginity: Be convinced that some who are less than you on the outside are superior to you on the inside.” See Cajetan’s commentary on this text.

205. Cornelius of Lapide, *In Lucam*, 1:29, t. 16, p. 19a: “Cogitabat enim intra se: Ego mihi videor indigna omnis gratiae, quomodo ergo angelus me vocat gratia plenam? Ego paupercula cum pauperibus virginibus dego et conversor, quomodo ergo angelus mihi insonat Dominus tecum? Ego aestimo me feminarum omnium minimam et vilissimam, quomodo ergo angelus mihi ait: Benedicta tu inter mulieres?”

206. Apoc. 3:17.

207. 2 Tim. 3:7.

208. Mark 8:2.

209. Ps. 21:25.

210. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, q. 30, a. 2, ad 2: “Illi qui jam sunt in infimis malis non timent se ulterius pati aliquid: et ideo non miserentur.”

211. St. Grignon de Montfort, *La vraie dévotion*, n. 48.

212. St. Bonaventure, “The blessed Virgin intercedes for us, not only in timely but in untimely ways.” *De nocte surrexit deditque praedam domesticis suis, etc.* (Proverbs 31:15). Hoc recte competit Virgini, quae non tantum opportune, sed etiam importune interpellat pro nobis, quod designatum fuit Joannis secundo: Deficiente vino, dicit Mater Jesu ad eum, vinum non habent, Et dicit ei Jesus, quid mihi et tibi est, mulier? (John 3–4) in quo insinuatur anima officiositas et sollicitudo, quam beatissima Virgo habet pro genere humano” (*De nativitate B.V.M.*, sermo 3, t. 9, p. 713a).