

SLAVERY TO THE MOTHER OF GOD

Also known as

Marian Slavery

(1609)

&

Exhortation toward devotion for the Virgin Mother of God
(1618)

by THE FRIARS MINOR OBSERVANT,

FRAY JUÁN DE LOS ÁNGELES

&

FRAY MELCHOR DE CETINA

AN ORIGINAL TRANSLATION BY

ROMAN-SERAPHIC BOOKS

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PREFACE BY THE PUBLISHER

WITH THE MARIAN FRIARS MINOR

 In an ancient yet unstoppable movement of Marian devotion was renewed throughout the entire world in the 19th Century after the re-discovery of St. Louis de Montfort's True Devotion to Mary, a movement which lasted well into the 20th Century and motivated the Church to proclaim without reservation the Dogmas of our Faith concerning the Blessed Virgin.

The treasures we've come across, almost completely forgotten today in the Church, and even more so in the English-Speaking World: *'Marian Slavery'* and *'Exhortation toward Devotion to the Virgin Mother of God'*, are now being published together as "Slavery to the Mother of God" – works which we hope will spark a similar renewal of that movement for the good of Souls.

The first of these, *'Marian Slavery'*(c. 1609) by Friar Juan de los Angeles is a very short but rich synthesis of the Spirituality of Consecration to Mary lived by the Franciscan Conceptionist Nuns of Alcalá, Spain.

The purpose of the work is to commend and give a brief explanation of the essence and spirit of an inspiration received by the Venerable Mother Ines de San Pablo(Ven. Mother Agnes of St. Paul) to found a Confraternity of men and women(Laity, Clerics and Religious) whose ideal is to live Consecrated Unreservedly to the Blessed Virgin Mary as Her "Slaves"¹.

Those familiar with the Spirituality of St. Louis de Montfort(born 98 years after the founding of this Franciscan Confraternity), may recognize some similarities between his works and the devotion being promoted by Friar Juan de los Angeles and the Franciscan Conceptionists of Alcalá.

The similarity and overlap between the two Schools of Marian Consecration is undoubtedly due to the fact that this Franciscan Confraternity and their spirituality spread across all of

¹ An expression found in the Latin Church Father, St. Ildephouse of Toledo, but also integral to the Spirituality of the Franciscan Order, as expressed by St. Bonaventure in his Psalter of the Blessed Virgin: "*Totus Tuus ego sum, Domina saluum me fac*": "I am wholly Yours, O Lady save me".

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Christendom with unprecedented success in the 17th Century thanks to the untiring zeal of Friar Juan de los Angeles to see it established seemingly everywhere.

The “French School” to which St. Louis belonged was in fact introduced to the Spirituality of “Marian Slavery” in the early half of the 17th Century by the Spanish Augustinian, Bartolomé de los Ríos, who was sent to preach and expand the original Confraternity in Belgium and France by the sovereign Lady of the Netherlands, Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia — and this as a means to combat the rise of Protestantism in those countries.

The French School therefore without a doubt owes its “Slavery of Love to Mary” to the labors of the Spanish Slaves, and especially to the “Mystical Current” of Spirituality handed down by the Sons and Daughters of Saint Francis.

However, as the reader may come to realize, though not contradictory to the French School, the simplicity and radicality of the original “Marian Slavery” is very characteristically Franciscan, centered so explicitly on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (Our Lady’s spotless Holiness) as the Motive or Principle behind giving oneself to Mary, and the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union, predestined before all Creation, as the Model or Pattern for perfect and unreserved Consecration as such.

Very much in the spirit of St. Francis, the original Confraternity’s choice of the term “Slave” contains in itself the whole Itinerary of the Spiritual Life, founded as it is on the following text:

“let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant[Slave], being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man.

He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.” - (Philippians 2: 5-8)

In their Franciscan simplicity, these 16th Century Friars viewed the Immaculate Conception as being summarized perfectly by Our Lady’s own words: “Behold the Handmaid[Slave] of the Lord”, said in imitation and conformity to Christ’s Slavery to the Father in the Hypostatic Union, which He expressed by the words “*I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant, the son of thy handmaid*” (Psalm 115, Wisdom

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9) and again through St. Paul: “...*But[He] emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave*”.

This common “Slavery” of Jesus[in His humanity] and Mary to Divinity(that is, the Hypostatic Union itself, and the Immaculate Conception), the Franciscan sees as being perfected and consummated in the words following just afterward: “...*He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*” – and this because in a Franciscan Mind, Christ and Mary were predestined from all eternity² to glorify God through their mediation of Man’s Salvation, a Salvation which is not possible after the Fall of Adam without a Redemption at the cost of Blood and Tears. (Ephesians 1:4-10)

In this two-fold Model for the Spiritual Life we are given a sure roadmap to great Sanctity by the Franciscan School:

-The Immaculate Conception(in Mary) & Hypostatic Union(in Jesus)

The Imitation of which is carried out by a Christian in their absolute and unlimited donation of self to Mary, just as in Her Conception She was donated entirely to Christ as **His Property** – a donation required for Franciscans prior to entering their Novitiate: “*If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor*”(Matthew 19:21), who “*for the love of God...*” will have then “*renounced their own will*” (Rule of St. Francis Chs. 2 & 10).

-Redemption on Calvary(by Jesus) & Co-Redemption(by Mary)

On the part of the Christian, full cooperation with the work of Redemption through a life of continual Sacrifice in conformity to Jesus Crucified constitutes their primary *activity* in the hands of their Queen and Mistress, just as She was fully in the hands of Christ as **His Possession**³ – and this for the Salvation of all souls: “*If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me*”(Matt.16:24, Rule of St. Francis 1221, Ch. 1).

Although this ancient Confraternity and the works of these saintly Friars Minor were completely unknown(as far as we can tell)

² This doctrine, popularly known as the Absolute Primacy of Christ, was endorsed in the Solemn Definition of the Immaculate Conception ‘Ineffabilis Deus’ by Bl. Pius IX thus: “*the very words with which the Sacred Scriptures speak of Uncreated Wisdom and set forth his eternal origin, the Church, both in its ecclesiastical offices and in its liturgy, has been wont to apply likewise to the origin of the Blessed Virgin, inasmuch as God, by one and the same decree, had established the origin of Mary and the Incarnation of Divine Wisdom.*”

³ Friar Juan de los Angeles summarizes this Slavery thus: “*The works of the slave, and all his actions, belong to his owner(Possession), as does the person himself(Property): all belongs to him who purchased him. Who is such of the eternal Father as Christ?*”.

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to Saint Maximilian Ma. Kolbe, any follower of his would have already noticed the near perfect harmony in the heart and mind between his Militia of the Immaculate and the original Slaves of Mary of the 16th Century.

Both of these being organic fruits of an authentically Franciscan Devotion to the Blessed Virgin grounded in the School of thought first handed down by St. Francis, developed by St. Bonaventure, and brought to its perfection in the Theological expression of Bl. John Duns Scotus; the Practical consequences of which we see lived to its fullest application by the great Saints of the Seraphic order such as St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Lawrence of Brindisi, St. Veronica Giuliani, all the way up to the modern day by St. Maximilian Kolbe and St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina.

The second work included in this Translation, ‘Exhortation toward Devotion to the Mother of God’(c. 1618) by Friar Melchor de Cetina is likely one of the most organized collections of the writings of the Church Fathers on the prerogatives, perfections, and the dignity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all of which are considered by the author to be incredibly convincing reasons to choose to have a perfect devotion to Her.

As he explains topics such as the supreme Goodness or Holiness of the Virgin Mary, he will immediately afterward point out to the reader that these facts in and of themselves are reason or motivation enough to give oneself to Her, as if She were a “Divine magnet”(Chapter 1).

His intention in writing it is to provide the Confraternity and those interested in it an exhaustive presentation based on the writings of the Saints and the Fathers of the East and West of the reasons why one ought to be Consecrated to Her as a “Slave”, and to persuade those already consecrated to Her to greater and more perfect fidelity in the service of Mary.

One will find the above work by Friar Melchor to be an endless treasury of material for Spiritual Reading or Meditation on the Blessed Virgin Mary to sustain and strengthen one’s willingness to “*Live, work suffer, be consumed and long to die*”⁴ for the Immaculate Virgin.

⁴ Words of St. Maximilian Kolbe

*“Give ear, my son, and take wise counsel, and cast
not away my advice.*

*Put thy feet into her fetters, and thy neck into her
chains: Bow down thy shoulder, and bear her, and be
not grieved with her bands.*

*Come to her with all thy mind, and keep her ways
with all thy power.*

*Search for her, and she shall be made known to
thee, and when thou hast gotten her, let her not go:*

*For in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her, and
she shall be turned to thy joy.*

*Then shall her fetters be a strong defense for thee,
and a firm foundation, and her chain a robe of glory:*

*For in her is the beauty of life, and her bands are a
healthful binding.*

*Thou shalt put her on as a robe of glory, and thou
shalt set her upon thee as a crown of joy...”*

Ecclesiasticus 6: 24-32

MARIAN SLAVERY

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORDINANCES OF THE CONFRATERNITY: “SLAVES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD”

by Friar Juan de los Ángeles.

DEDICATION

FRAY JUAN DE los Angeles, Apostolic preacher, and Father of the Province of St. Joseph, Discalced of the Regular Observance, To the very Religious Ladies, Abbess, and Nuns of the Convent of St. Ursula, of Alcalá de Henares, Slaves of the Blessed Virgin our Lady, consecrated to Her most clean Conception, wishes health and perpetual happiness.

I give many thanks to my Lord God (dearest sisters) and I ask the Angels, and all the blessed to repay them in time and in eternity, for the mercy that He has done to me, in allowing me to become acquainted with this holy Convent and its Religious, for from the few occasions and short time that I have dealt with your mercies, my soul has received special consolations, and my spirit not small encouragement in the service of this Lord. They have banished much of my laziness, and lukewarmness. Among the many things that have edified me in this holy community, which (without flattery) I will mention here for the glory of God, are these: The peace of all is so uniform; the fraternal life so plain; the recollection is so firm; the prayer is so continuous, the colloquies with the heavenly Spouse are most profitable and so commonplace, the tastes and divine consolations are without limit. There are such rare examples of virtues and such concerted edifying conversations, Charity so on point, Obedience is without hesitation or questioning, and Humility is so profound. For which cause they have now desired, —*having set aside the most honorable title of Spouses of Christ*— to take that of **Slaves** of His most holy Mother.

I confess in truth, that upon hearing this name, my heart melted, and my soul was filled with an unaccustomed joy and an intimate desire to see myself admitted, and inscribed in that holy Brotherhood. But what great joy was mine? No sooner had I expressed this desire, when the Slaves received me as their brother,

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and Slave along with them. An honorable title, a priceless dignity, and one that we should all desire and strive for.

But from whence comes so much honor to such an infamous title in the laws of the world? From the Virgin Herself and of Her Most Holy Son. She took possession of it, at the same moment that the divine Word took possession of Her heart, and cast Himself into Her womb, and became Her Son. She willed that alongside ‘Mother’, which calls for infinite respect, there should walk beside it a title of so great humility, which denotes and proclaims *subjection*.

*Behold the Handmaid[Slave-Woman] of the Lord*⁵. Hardly had the most humble Virgin pronounced these words, when the Holy Spirit worked this most high sacrament of the Incarnation. O great wonder, First a Slave, rather than a Mother? and perhaps She would not be a mother, if She did not confess herself a slave; because it is the humility of the Virgin, full of faith, which conceived the divine Word.

With this *Slavery* She tempers the sovereignty and loftiness of the divine Maternity! How high! *Mother of God*; and how low! *Slave of God*. But what weight of a woman that is not lifted up from the earth by the greatest honor that God could give Her from heaven, for in Motherhood, no greater Motherhood could be found than Mother of God.

She is then, a slave and a Mother, without this title of *Slave of the Lord* impeding the supreme dignity of being Mother of the Creator; on the contrary [by Her humility], She guarded so great a Treasure received and kept such wealth, and enclosed within Her He Whom the Heavens could not contain.

But why is it that the Virgin says: *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, when Her most holy son makes this same confession through His holy Prophet? “*I am thy servant: I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid*”⁶, and repeats it twice, to signify the pleasure He has in being so; and in many other places in Scripture, He takes this surname for Himself: “*Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant [Slave]*”.⁷

He did not say: “*I am your servant, eternal Father (as man), son of your Wife, and daughter*”; but rather, “*of your Handmaid*” for the commendation of this title, and for the honor of the Slaves. That name says, slavery, subjection, obedience, surrender, surrender of

⁵ Luke 1:38

⁶ *Ego servus tuus, ego servus tuus, et filius Ancillae tuae.* Psalm 115: 16, Wisdom 9:5

⁷ Philippians: 2: 6-7

will, abdication of the whole man, and entire renunciation of all his things.

The works of the slave, and all his actions, belong to his owner, as does the person himself⁸: all belongs to him who purchased him. Who is such of the eternal Father as Christ? *"I live by the Father"*. *All my life I refer to my father, because I am his*. And elsewhere. *"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me"*¹⁰. [Saying]: My doctrine is not mine, but of Him, who begot me, who is my heavenly father. And here St. Augustine comments: *"What is so much Yours as You, and what is so much not Yours as You, if what You are, You art of another?"*; all of Christ in so far as He is God, and in so far as He is man, is the Father's; and in His Humanity, He confesses Himself to be His slave. *"I am Thy Servant, and the son of Thy Handmaid"*, and in reason of this, and in conformity to the Son, the Mother is called a Slave; and perchance, in order to be called thus, He willed, and commanded His prophet, that He should be declared to be so, and thus confess of His Mother; for the sons follow the condition of their mothers, who themselves are slaves, if their mothers are, even if their fathers are free.

O Mary, *handmaid* of God, who made my Liberator a Slave! that He who was in the form of God, and who was not by robbery God, but by eternal generation, and therefore as good as his father, equal in all things to him, following your condition, entering into your womb, you made him a slave. A Slave who gave us freedom, and freed us from the slavery of Satan. *"wherewith Christ has made us free"*¹¹. I thank you, Lord, that in order to set slaves free, you entered the world in the form of a slave; and I thank the Virgin Mary, who was the *means* of this slavery, saying, and confessing of Herself, that She was a slave, as soon as She conceived. As if to say: *"Although son of God, and therefore free, My being a slave makes Him a slave."*

Ecce Ancilla Domini. Blessed handmaid, wholly God's, and all for God, who not a thought did the world bring to her, nor an idle word came out of her mouth; nor did She do any work, except in the service of Him who created Her, and chose Her for His Mother. Alas, O chosen virgins of God, if you understood what you've been bound to by calling yourselves slaves: you are no longer your own, but Christ's and the Virgin's.

8 [Translator] For Fr. Juan de los Angeles, Slavery consists of being another's **Property**: *"as does the person himself"* and **Possession**: *"the works...and all his actions"..."belongs to him who purchased him"*.

9 John 6:58

10 John 7:16

11 Galatians 4:31

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The time that you do not think of the Son and the Mother is wasted, as St. Bernard says:

“If the world asks anything of you, or the devil tempts you to sin, (says St. Fulgentius) answer him, that you are not your own, but His who bought you with his precious blood: And Hers, to whom you have given yourselves as slaves, of your own will; let them ask permission, for what they will from your master, for without it you cannot acquiesce to them: and if I so merited to be a slave with these slaves [handmaids], I immediately dismiss my enemies from me, for in nothing can I satisfy their pleasure”.

“My heart, Holy Virgin, is yours: my thoughts, words, and works I consecrate and dedicate to Thee, Queen of heaven, and through Thee, to Thy Most Holy Son, because apart from Thee, how or why would He accept such a small and meager offering?”¹²

S. Maria succurre miseris, juva pusilanimes, refove flebiles, ora pro populo, interveni pro clero, intercede pro devoto faemineo sexu. Sentiant omnes tuum juvamen, quicumque celebrant tuam sanctam commemorationem.
[Holy Mother, aid the unfortunate, help the poor in spirit, comfort those who mourn, pray for your people, intercede for your priesthood, intervene on behalf of your faithful feminine sex; let all realize your help, whosoever keep remembrance of you.]

Farewell virgins of Christ, and Handmaids of the Handmaid of the Lord, and help me in your devout, humble, and fervent prayers, that together and as one we may embrace the Son and the Mother, and enjoy them in heaven and rejoice for all eternity. Amen.

Signed

The Father Fray Juan de los Angeles,
Unworthy Slave of the Mother of God

12 [Trans.] This is the first written Prayer of Consecration to Our Lady for the Confraternity founded by the Conceptionists of Alcalá de Henares, reflecting their theological understanding of donating oneself to God through donation of self to Mary in Her service.

EXHORTATION TOWARD DEVOTION TO THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

DEDICATION

*To the Mother abbess and nuns of the
very religious convent of Santa Ursula, of Alcalá,
Fr. Melchior de Cetina
—perpetual Father of the Province of Castile—
wishes health and supreme happiness...*

That famous preacher of the Hebrew people, *Jesus*, son of Sirach, author (*according to St. Jerome and the common Doctors*) of the book of Ecclesiasticus (*although there are those who, with the other sapiential books, attribute it to the most wise Solomon*), among other salutary writings that he gives in that book for the reformation of customs and good instruction of those who wish to serve God, says in Chapter 6 these words: “*Come to her with all thy mind, and keep her ways with all thy power. Search for her, and she shall be made known to thee, and when thou hast gotten her, let her not go: For in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her...*”¹ Words that are to be understood literally as concerning Wisdom; and since she[wisdom] is the light that is to enlighten us in the knowledge of the virtue that we are to follow and the vices from which we are to depart, in these words the Holy Spirit teaches us to set our affection on wisdom and to love it with all our heart: *Come to her with all thy mind*. And to keep with all our strength the laws of her doctrine: *and keep her ways with all thy power*. And that we seek her with diligence until we find her: *Search for her and she shall be made known to thee*; and that, having gone forth, attaining our goal, we may know how to esteem so great a gift: *and when thou hast gotten her, let her not go*; for by that way eternal rest is attained, which those who possess her enjoy: *for in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her*.

Concerning wisdom, as I have said, these words are understood [in the literal sense]. But following the spirit of the Church, our Mother, who adapts the things said in Scripture about Wisdom in a mystical sense to the Most Sacred Virgin, Our Lady, we can also apply these words to Her, in order to teach those who are devout,

¹ Ecclesiasticus 6: 27-29

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and those devoted to this heavenly Queen to love and serve Her wholeheartedly, to imitate Her divine ways, and to love Her with all their heart, to seek Her and to avail ourselves of Her favor in all our needs, and to take great pride in having Her as Our Lady, so that by this way we may gain Her favor at the hour of death, and after death, attain eternal rest.

These words, very religious ladies, generally address everyone, because, as will be seen in the discourse of this book, there is no one who should lack great interest in having the Virgin and Mother of God as Patroness and Advocate. However, it is as though they had been addressed in particular to each of the religious of that holy house, for so they have taken these words for themselves, obeying and putting into practice this counsel of the Holy Spirit; For, if we look at their profession, in which they consecrate themselves to the most blessed Virgin in reverence of Her most pure conception, leaving the world and all that is coveted in it: freedom, honor, riches and delights, and choosing the things contrary to these, enclosure, poverty, obedience and chastity, I ask, what greater proofs of the love with which they love God and His most blessed Mother can they give?

When the enamored St. John wanted to persuade us to love God and to declare the way to love Him, he said: *Let our love be not of the tongue, but of the heart; not of words, but of works.*²

Words alone are untrustworthy witness for a proof of love; and therefore St. John says that the love of God is not fulfilled by the tongue and words alone, but by works and the heart. For if it is works that give the most complete testimony for proof of love, what greater testimony can be given, holy virgins, than the love with which you love the heavenly Spouse and his glorious Mother. Since, for their love, you have renounced all that the world esteems, without there being anything in it to which you have given any part of your affection, following the advice of the Holy Spirit: *Come to her with all thy mind?* And what greater sign is there than that you wish to imitate the ways of this heavenly Princess and follow Her footsteps *keep her ways with all thy power*, since you trace her footsteps from the first moments of life when She set foot on the earth, which was from Her immaculate conception?

Finding such a great spiritual gift, it has stolen your hearts and taken possession of your devotion, so that you have sacrificed

² 1 John 3:18

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yourselves to honor the purity of the most holy Virgin in Her most pure conception.

Those words of the Song of Solomon in the seventh chapter: “*How beautiful are thy steps in shoes, O prince's daughter!*”³ which some of the expositors attribute to the Bridegroom, others say that they are of the angels who were looking on, counting the very steps of the most sacred Virgin, and who, admiring the first ones with which She entered the world, because they were so different from all the other children of Adam who enter this life broken, looking about and stumbling in original sin, full of astonishment and fright they sang to the Virgin the gala, saying: *Quam pulchri sunt*: how beautiful are your steps, heavenly Princess! There is no ugliness of guilt in them, but rather the beauty and loveliness of the Grace with which God prevented you from falling into sin.

May it be lawful for me to compare these holy virgins with these angels, whom St. Cyprian called equal to them: “*When thou remain Chaste, thou art equal to the Angels of God*”. And St. Ambrose, having compared the virgins with the angels, says: “*Ne miremini, si angelis comparentur, qui angelorum Domino copulantur*”. As though saying: “*Let it not seem to anyone that in saying this I have gone out of my mouth or that I have gone beyond the bounds of reason; no one need be astonished that we should compare with angels those whom the Lord of angels has united with Himself*”. Angels upon the earth are the virgins.

But to return to my purpose: as the angels of heaven, admiring the first steps of the Virgin, Our Lady, broke forth in their praise, so also the angels of earth, these sacred virgins, contemplated the steps and ways of the Virgin, Our Lady, with a desire to trace Her footsteps and follow in Her steps, when they looked at the first steps She took in this life and the gallantry and gentleness She kept in them, not stumbling where all fall nor coming out muddy where we all come out stained.

Since these steps, being so superior to our strength, cannot be imitated, they were at least enraptured by Her greatness, considering in them the Virgin with such abundant grace, which prevented Her from the sin of nature, and so lovable, that when other children of Adam become children of wrath and of the indignation of God⁴, it is then that God places His affection in Her, and the Father chooses Her as daughter, and the Son, as Mother, and the Holy Spirit, as spouse, and the whole Holy Trinity, as the temple of his dwelling.

3 Canticle of Canticles 7: 1

4 [Trans.] i.e at their Conception,...

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When these angels of the earth considered the depth of so many and such admirable mysteries, they did not simply break forth in praise of the Virgin, but they gave to Her their freedom and offered themselves as Her handmaids to be forever occupied in Her service and in Her continual praises.

All the steps that the Blessed Virgin took and all the virtues in which She exercised Herself are well recounted by these Her lovers and handmaids; and from the example of Her life and holy habits they draw the labors of virtue in which they exercise themselves, with which they have so edified the world and pleased heaven. But the first step that the Virgin, our Lady, took in this world snatched their hearts and took these holy virgins to Herself to serve the heavenly Spouse, according to what David said: *After her shall virgins be brought to the king,*⁵ etc. Which to the letter is understood of the most sacred Virgin, Mother of God, and of those who in imitation of Her have consecrated their virginal purity to God.

Our Lady is the one who leads the dance of the virgins who follow the Lamb; and for this reason She is called Virgin of virgins, because She was the first, and the others follow after Her. But before She had taken any other steps, it is the first, which was that of Her most holy conception, that these holy virgins, of whom I am speaking in particular, found reason to follow Her. Fleeing from the dangers of the world, they took refuge in the house of the Most Sacred Virgin to avail themselves of Her favor; and there they found Her, because She does not deny Herself to those who seek Her with diligence: *Search for her, and she shall be made known to thee.* And since in life they have taken the Virgin as Patroness, with this they have received certain pledges of the patronage that She will give them in death and of the rest that after death they will attain through her intercession: *in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her.*

This has these nuns so eager to serve this great Princess, that the more capable they are, the more they serve Her; and to all of them it seems little what they do, with respect to the great desires they have to serve Her. Among other services to the Virgin Mother of God that have been made in this house, in recent years God raised the spirit of a great servant of His and His holy mother, by the name of Agnes of St. Paul, who now rests in peace, to institute in that holy convent a *CONFRATERNITY AND BROTHERHOOD OF SLAVES OF THE VIRGIN, MOTHER OF GOD*, made up of religious and other devout people⁶, to be

⁵ Psalm 44: 15

⁶ [trans.] Early and notable members included the King and Queen of Spain, the Minister General of the Friars Minor, and high Prelates in the Church, particularly Franciscans.

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employed in serving this heavenly Queen with the name of Her slaves. Glorious name for the devotees of this divine Lady, because with the name of slave of the Lord, Her Lady and Patroness responded to the embassy that the angel brought Her, offering Her the highest dignity of Mother of God.

And the Son of God Himself, who, as God, was equal in dignity and power with His Father, *aequalis Patri secundum divinitatem*⁷, as man, offered Himself to Him as a slave, saying by David: “*I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy Handmaid*”⁸. Because he was the Son of the handmaid of God, Christ, as a man, recognized Himself as the slave of His Father, because, as the law prescribes: *servitus sequitur ventrem*: the son of the handmaid is born a slave. Imitating, therefore, Son and Mother, the devout foundress of this holy Brotherhood ordered that the brothers and sisters of hers be called slaves of Our Lady.

Therefore, the entire community received this holy Brotherhood, although at the beginning there was some repugnance, because it was something new; but, as it was something in service of Our Lady, Her devotees easily agreed, and with common consent they made some Ordinances full of devotion and piety, and with the approval of their superiors they received them and by them they lived some years in the service of the heavenly Queen.

Until in the year 1608 the Most Venerable Father Fray Juan de los Angeles, of the Order of our Father St. Francis, and father of the Province of St. Joseph, and who had been Provincial Minister of it, brother of this holy Brotherhood of Slaves of our Lady, reformed the said Ordinances, and put them in better style, and printed them in the form that until now they have been given in a small booklet whose title is *Confraternity and devotion of the slaves and slaves[handmaids] of Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary*.

But in consideration that the nuns of the said convent, slaves of the Mother of God, that their devotion has been the seminary from which so many Brotherhoods have sprung up and that the Slavery of our Lady is so widespread throughout Christendom⁹, they have desired that the said Ordinances be lengthened the more,

7 *Equal to the Father according to Divinity* (Athanasian Creed)

8 Wisdom 9: 5

9 [trans.] this devotion was later brought to France by the Augustinian, Bartolomé de los Ríos, where he spread the spirituality of “slavery to Mary” by his preaching and prolific writings, as a way of combating Protestantism. De los Ríos, having studied theology in Alcalá de Henares, had there embraced this devotion begun by the Conceptionist Convent of St. Ursula. The *French School* of Consecration to Mary in the spirit of Fr. Olier, Cardinal de Bérulle, and St. Louis de Montfort can therefore be seen as a notable fruit of this “*seminary*” of Slaves of the Mother of God.

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to cause devotees of this heavenly Queen to serve Her the more, and that together with them, an exhortation be placed, drawn out from the doctrine of the Saints, to persuade the lukewarm toward devotion for the Mother of God, our Lady; And although in this Brotherhood there are many persons to whom this could have been entrusted who, by their many letters and sufficiency, would give a better rendition of this task than I, I am here entrusted with it.

Finally, as the least of the slaves of the Virgin Our Lady, I have not wished to excuse myself, but to obey humbly, because it is out of service of our Queen and Mistress and by the request of those who together with me are slaves of this heavenly Queen.

With the desire, therefore, to persuade all to Her devotion, I have made this brief treatise, in which, giving the reasons that may move one to the devotion of Our Lady and to the desire to serve Her, drawn from the doctrine of the holy Doctors. I then deal with the Brotherhood that was founded with this intention with the name of Our Lady and I put the Constitutions that in it and in those [confraternities] that will be founded in her imitation are to be kept, adding little to those that were previously received, because the multitude of laws is usually a reason to break them lightly, and being few and easy, our weakness is thus better accommodated to them.

This work, ladies, for a thousand reasons, is due to your mercies, for being requested by the slaves of our Lady it cannot be denied them, because that convent was the first from which this devotion was born and because your mercies, with holy zeal for the service of this great Queen and Lady, wished this treatise to be written and asked me to make it. Receive in it my desires to serve that holy convent, that when the obligations that I have to serve it were not so many, your having received me into your holy Brotherhood as a slave of the Queen of heaven obliges me to serve you all my life. May it please God that this great Queen admit us all as Her slaves and that, as such, She receive us under Her defense and protection, because under Her tutelage we will be safe from the dangers of this life and through Her intercession we will obtain the goods of eternal life.

Signed

Fray Melchior de Cetina,
Slave of Our Lady

CHAPTER I

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD AND THE POWER SHE HOLDS TO DRAW HEARTS TO HERSELF.

The excellencies and prerogatives of the Mother of God, our Lady, are so superior to all human understanding that the most lofty intellects cannot reach them, because our capacity to comprehend such greatness is too small; and thus, he who most presumes to shoot on target, will end up five rings short on this mystery. Thus confesses Cardinal St. Peter Damian in a sermon of Our Lady: *“There are no eloquent words of men that are suitable and sufficient to praise Our Lady; any exaltation of human language is unequal to her greatness”*. And in the second sermon of the same feast, advancing this same thought, he says: *“Is it any wonder that in her praises this ineffable Virgin surpasses the mode of human praise, since in the dignity of her merits She transcends human nature itself?”* To commend her praises worthily, neither the eloquence and dexterity of rhetoricians, nor the subtle arguments of dialecticians, nor the sharp wit of philosophers are suitable and sufficient. Such are the words of the above mentioned cardinal, in which he well declares the shortness of human intellect to worthily praise the Queen of heaven, our Lady.

The glorious Father St. John Damascene, in the second prayer of the Assumption of the Virgin, further raised this consideration by saying: *Not only the tongue of any one man alone, but if all the tongues that are scattered throughout the world were to be united in one, they would not be sufficient to praise Our Lady worthily*. More was advanced in the first sermon of the same feast, for not only does he say that the tongues of men are not sufficient for this effect, but not even those of angels, with which St. Bernard concurs (Serm. 4 de Assumptione) *“What tongue, even the tongue of an angel, can praise the Virgin, who deserved to be a mother, and not just any mother, but the mother of God Himself?”*.

And judging this to be impossible, in the same sermon he calls the Virgin ineffable and unspeakable, because there are no words than equal Her praises so as to worthily speak of Her.

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The mighty hand of God was so generous and liberal with His Mother in granting Her mercies, bestowing on Her privileges and granting Her exemptions over all creatures, that the glorious Father St. Bernard doubted, declaring those words of the angel: *And the power of the Most High shall overshadow Thee*, whether the Virgin Herself could understand the greatness of the gifts that God granted Her. But although the glorious St. Bernard doubted it, St. Augustine did not; and thus, in the Exposition on the canticle of the “Magnificat”, he says: *“I dare say that even the Virgin Herself could not fully explain as much good as She could receive”*. So that regarding the worthy praises of Our Lady, there is neither the tongue of men, nor of angels, nor the Virgin Herself that is sufficient to explain them; only God will be able to do that (as St. Andrew of Crete says in a prayer in praise of Our Lady).

And the reason is clear, because one cannot worthily praise what one cannot entirely know; and hence it is that no pure creature, even of the most supreme seraphim, can worthily praise the Virgin, because for this it would be necessary to comprehend the incomprehensible God, in whom ends the dignity of His Mother, which the Virgin enjoys by singular mercy of God. Hence it follows that only God, who in knowing Himself and in knowing the greatness of His Mother, He alone can worthily praise Her: *“Who only God as such can praise worthily”*¹.

From here were born those reverential fears of St. Bernard when he had to take pen in hand to write or had to preach the greatness of this great Lady, and that is why he said in the sermon 4 *De Assumptione*, mentioned above: There is nothing for me of greater delight than to speak of the Virgin and to occupy myself with Her praises; but after that, there is nothing that more frightens me nor causes me greater disturbance. Love and fear of the Virgin Our Lady vied with each other in this holy Doctor; he delighted in Her praises because of the love that he had for Her, saying to Her with David: *How sweet are thy words to my palate*², etc. But, on the other hand, the reverential fear that he had for Her hindered him and held him back, seeming to him, as we cited above from his own words, that neither the tongues of men nor those of angels are sufficient to praise Her worthily.

But although it is true that all the saints confess the shortness of human ingenuity with respect to the worthy praises of the Virgin, they have not for that reason, ceased to occupy themselves

¹ *“Quam Dei tantum est, laudare pro dignitate”* - St. Andrew of Crete alluded to in the above paragraph.

² Psalm 118:103

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with them, going as far as they could and saying what in part they have grasped, confessing with humility their smallness with respect to the whole of the greatness of this heavenly Princess, which is so great that only God, who gave them to Her, can know and praise them in their entirety.

St. Anselm, amazed at the greatness of the motherhood of God, confesses that it is the greatest highness that can be imagined after God; but, nevertheless, he advises us not to cease to contemplate it and to ruminate on it as best we can; we cannot comprehend it because of its greatness, yet we are not denied the right to ruminate on it in order to attain from its greatness what our littleness can discover. For although it is not given to comprehend, it is not denied to ruminate. This has encouraged me to treat in this little book of the devotion that one should have for Our Lady, and in this chapter, of the excellence of Her sanctity. With respect to such a great subject, I know my insufficiency, for I cannot comprehend the whole of the greatness of the Virgin, yet with rumination on what the Doctors said with the sharpness of their wits and aided by the grace of God that favored them, I will be able to say some part, even the smallest, of what can be said of the greatness of this sovereign Queen.

The Principle of all the gifts and graces that God granted Her and the foundation upon which all the prerogatives and favors that She received from His mighty hand, with which She has astonished angels and men, was the fact that God chose Her as Mother from all eternity. From this followed the supreme sanctity, the inviolable virginity, the copious grace and the excessive glory, and the other privileges of which the Virgin participates. All this was to dispose Her with these gifts so that [by them] She would be the worthy Mother of God.

Speaking of the dignity of the Mother of God, the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, said: Just as this title of Mother of God is admirable, so it [proportionally] requires the totality of the wealth of the riches of sanctity³. And the Parisian canonist Gerson, stating those words of St. Matthew, first chapter⁴ says: *“From these words follows a principle of faith; that the Virgin is Mother of Jesus, who is called Christ, and, consequently, that She is Mother of God, because Jesus Christ is God”*. And from this principle another is drawn: that being Mother of God, it was fitting that Her purity should be such, as St. Anselm said (lib. *De conceptu virginali*, c. 18), that from God below no greater

³ “Hic titulus, ut admirabilis est, ita admirabilis sanctimoniae universae divitias postulat”

⁴ “Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.” St. Matthew 1:16

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could be imagined. From these two principles, says Gerson, as from a copious seminar of praises, those of the Virgin must be deduced, because from here it follows that there is no grace, no privilege, no mercy, no favor granted to any pure creature that is not found with eminence in the Virgin Mother of God, in whom God has gathered together all the good of nature and grace that He has distributed among all. Whatever good there is in angels and in men, everything is in the Virgin with great advantages.

Theologians derive the most excellent gifts of Christ's humanity from this title: that this man, Christ, is the *Son of God*, and because of this it was fitting that His most holy humanity should be adorned with all the heavenly and divine gifts above every creature. In like manner, from this title Theotokos, that is, *Mother of God*, which against the impiety of Nestorius the faith of the Church granted to the Virgin, Our Lady, in the Nicene Council, which after God is the most glorious title, we must infer that it was fitting that after Her Son She should be adorned with every divine grace, as befitted the supreme dignity granted to the pure creature of the Mother of God. Thus says Dionysius Carthusianus (lib. I De laudibus Virginis): *"After the most precious gifts of grace that were granted to the humanity of Christ, those that were granted to his Mother have the first degree of excellence; and thus, in the gifts of grace gratis data as in the gifts, habits and works of grace gratum faciente She has the first place after her Son"*. This is what Dionysius says; from which it follows that She who is so close to God that She participates in His gifts in the first place after Her Son and that She will have such an abundance of these gifts, and to such a heroic degree, that She is a sea of graces, according to the interpretation of Her name, for Maria means sea, and as the sea is a gathering of waters, so Mary is a gathering of graces and a sea of such depth, that there is no human ingenuity that is sufficient to be able to encompass Her.

St. Thomas, in the first part of his Summa, confirms this thought, saying that the humanity of Christ, because it is united with God, and Beatitude, since it is the fruition of God, and the Blessed Virgin because She is the Mother of God, have a certain infinite dignity, which proceeds from the infinite good, which is God. And for this reason, no thing can be better than any of these three, as none can be better than God; this St. Thomas says.

And St. Bonaventure, in the book entitled Mirror of the Virgin, speaking of the dignity of the Mother of God, affirms that the Virgin was such a Mother that God could not make Her better; God could well have made a better heaven and a better world, but a better mother than the Mother of God, He could not make Her;

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the day He made Her such a Mother He tied his hands so that He could not make Her better. And the saint speaks of the Virgin not as a particular person, but as the Mother of God, who cannot be better, because maternity is a relation that looks at the son, and the being that She has is ordered to the son; and as God cannot make a better Son, neither can He make a better Mother. Such, then, is the dignity and excellence of the Mother of God, that in natural graces and gifts She has the first place after Her Son, and in the dignity of the Mother of God She is such that the divine omnipotence does not extend to being able to make Her better.

From this same principle of being the Mother of God it follows also that She is the person most closely united to the person of the Savior, who is the author of grace and glory and the just dispenser of all good things; and, consequently, She will be the one who shares most in them; For as He who is nearest to the sun shares more of its light, and He who is nearest to the fire shares more of its heat, and so of the others, thus His most holy Mother also participates more fully in the gifts of Christ because She is so united and joined to him that neither the understanding is able to divide them nor to consider one without the other.

Nature bestows a very close union and a very tight knot between the soul and the body, but death unties this knot and breaks this bond, and brings the body to the grave and the soul before the tribunal of God's judgment, to be given punishment or glory according to its merits. And even before death comes, love often has the same effect, of whom Aristotle said that the soul sometimes forsakes the body it animates to go and enjoy what it loves⁵. Hence Solomon came to say that *"love is as strong as death"*, because both have the same effect of separating soul and body; however espoused they may be, they divorce the two and separate the one from the other. The union of [Christ's] humanity with the Word was so close, that although in the death of the Savior the soul was separated from the body, the divinity always remained united with both of them; but in the end there is no theologian who denies that if the Word used his absolute power, he could undo this knot and dissolve the union[between His divinity and humanity].

The union between the divine essence and its attributes is greater than the aforesaid [union], because of the supreme simplicity that is in God; hence the Schools came to resolve that: Only among the divine persons is there distinction, because the

⁵ "Amantis anima plus est, ubi amat, quam ubi animat"

⁶ Canticle of Canticles 8:6

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relations that constitute them are different; in everything else there is no division, but unity and supreme peace and concord⁷. But with all this, the understanding is so thinly woven that it finds distinction and difference, and says that although essentially all that is in God is God, yet formally [speaking], justice is not mercy, nor is the understanding the same as the will. And, the actions are different, because with the understanding the Father begets, and not with the will, and with the will he breathes [spirates], and not with the understanding. And so in sum, there is real unity and identity, and none greater than that of the essence with divine persons and attributes. But, with all that, reason still finds distinctions and considers the one without the other; there is in the end no union so close where either nature or at least reason can not find distinction and can make a division.

We will only find that the union that the mother has with the child, and maternity with filiation, and those things similar which exist between relatives are so close, that neither with the understanding can it be undone or separate one relation from the other, for their very being consists in that respect with which one looks at the other. In such a way the son looks at the mother and the mother at the son, that the one cannot be found without the other; neither the mother will be a mother if she has no son, nor the son will be a son if he has no mother. There is between mother and child a union so strong, that no skill or strength is sufficient to undo it.

From this principle we can deduce the excellence of the Virgin over every creature, because if the Mother of God is the most united thing with Her Son, and so much so that not even by the work of understanding can She be divided from Him, and being that the Son is the source of all goodness and holiness and the principle of grace and glory, it follows that after Her Son the Virgin will be the one who participates most in these gifts, the most good, the most holy, the most full of grace, and the one who enjoys the greatest glory, with immense advantages over all angels and men.

From what has been said, we can conclude that there is reason to love the Virgin and to place our devotion in Her, since: if the object of the Will is Goodness, and without that lure of true good, (or at least apparent good) the desire[of the Will] for the beloved thing never lets itself fall into the lover's bonds, [now,] here, where there is the greatest Goodness that is imaginable after God, it

⁷ "In divinis omnia sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio"

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follows that here there is reason enough that after God She be Loved the most.

God, because He is the greatest Goodness, must be loved above all things; but since, after God, the goodness of his Mother is the greatest, She must be, after Him, the most loved; this is the *Power* that the Virgin, our Lady, has of carrying away after Herself hearts captured by Her supreme goodness.

As a magnet stone draws away iron, so Our Lady, like another divine magnet, draws to Herself the hearts of men, however erring they may be; She carries them away; when hearts are harder than steel, the gentleness of the most loving Virgin softens them like wax and imprints in them fervent desires to serve God and Her.

And how much more ought the hearts of men be carried away by the Virgin, if the first one that the Virgin had was God Himself, who in the fourth chapter of the Book of Songs complains that She has wounded His heart: "*Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.*"⁸ God calls His Mother by the name of sister, his bride, in order to make clear, as St. Jerome says of the purity of the love with which He loved Her, which is not carnal, but spiritual. God's love for his bride is not ordered to a bodily marriage, but is a chaste and clean love, such as there is between brothers and sisters.

And of this love the heavenly Bridegroom shows Himself wounded: *Thou hast wounded my heart*, etc. And giving the reason, He says that from one of Her eyes She threw arrows at him, with which the Virgin pierced His heart, and with a strand of hair that fell on His neck She entangled Him and pulled Him behind Her until She made him a man in Her womb: *with one of thy eyes*, by whom St. Cyril Alexandrinus understands the singular faith of the Virgin, according to what St. Elizabeth said when she visited Her: *Blessed art thou who hast believed*, etc. This faith of the Virgin was the pin that nailed God to Her heart: *Thou hast wounded my heart*, etc. *And with one hair of thy neck*, by which this holy Doctor understands the humility of Our Lady, who pulled God to the ground; the common consensus of the Doctors is that at the same instant in which the Virgin said those words of such profound humility: *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord*, etc., at that same instant the divine Word incarnated in Her womb.

From these two virtues of the Virgin, Her faith and Her humility, the heavenly Bridegroom felt wounded: *Thou hast wounded*

⁸ Cantic of Canticles 4: 9

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my heart, etc. Or as Simmacus translated: *Thou hast excited my heart*; the merits of Our Lady were those that excited the heart of God's mercy to become man; of whom Zechariah said: *Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us*. And thus theology says that since the incarnation of God is such a high gift that it does not fall under merit, but that in the saints of the Old Testament, and especially in the merits of his Mother, God found a certain decency which incited Him to become man and hasten the incarnation, because He was wounded by the love of this heavenly Princess: *Thou hast wounded my heart*. And this is what incited Him to become man.

And we can strengthen this thought with the translation of the *Seventy*⁹, who read thus: *Abstraxisti a nobis cor, soror mea sponsa, rapuisti nobis cor, in uno oculorum tuorum, et in uno ornamento colli tui*. Which are words of the whole of the Most Holy Trinity said to the Virgin: *You have taken our heart*, conquered by your singular virtues; understanding by the heart the Eternal Word, as St. Clement Alexandrinus expounds (1. V Stromatum, paulo post principium). *For as the heart is the beginning of bodily life, so Christ is the beginning of spiritual life: In Him was life*¹⁰, etc.; and this heart God says that the Virgin took from Him on the day when the Word came down to incarnate in Her womb.

To return to my purpose, if the Virgin's merits robbed God of His heart, who would be so rebellious as to deny Her his own? Who would not place his affection and devotion in Her, since She was the principle of all our good, through whose intercession we are to enjoy the merits of Jesus Christ?

Let us then, all of us, be overcome by the love of this sovereign Queen, confessing to Her what the angel said to Jacob: *if thou hast been strong against God, how much more shalt thou prevail against men?*¹¹.

Let us be moved to this also, among other reasons that I will discuss later, by the fact that being devoted to the Mother of God is a sign of being predestined for heaven, as will be seen in the following chapter.

⁹ Of the Septuagint.

¹⁰ St. John 1:4

¹¹ Genesis 32:28

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH IT IS DECLARED THAT DEVOTION TO THE VIRGIN, OUR LADY, IS A SIGN OF PREDESTINATION AND A VERY EFFICACIOUS MEANS TO ATTAIN GLORY.

It is the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the book of Ecclesiasticus that man does not know whether he is worthy and deserving of God's love or of His hatred: *man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love, or hatred*¹; nor does he know whether he is in the grace or disgrace of God, nor whether he is of the elect or of the reprobate; this is one of those matters which God reserves for Himself and in which no one can attain any certainty as the holy Council of Trent says (Session 6, Ch. 9). If God does not make it manifest by revelation, as the same council says in Chapter 12, no one can know whether he is predestined for heaven or for hell. But although this *Latin* is so sealed and secret and so hidden that no one can reach it with certainty, God did not wish to leave man so obscure and unlighted concerning this matter, that for man's consolation He would not leave Him without some signs with which He can take some guesses and conjectures concerning those whom God has chosen for heaven, as can be deduced from the divine letters and the doctrine of the sacred Doctors.

Thus the glorious Father St. Bernard says in one of his sermons (among others): *“Although it is true that man does not know whether he is worthy of the love or abhorrence of God, because in this life he cannot have certainty of his election, yet hope consoles us”*, and concludes: *“Hope, says this holy Doctor, is what consoles us in this life; but so that the anguish of this uncertainty does not torment us, God has given us manifest signs and indications of our health”*. The same could be confirmed by other sayings of Doctors who teach the same doctrine. For now let this testimony suffice so that we do not divert ourselves from the main topic.

Among the signs of predestination that the Doctors give, the first place is given to the immaculate life of those who, having examined their conscience, are not found to have mortal sin, or if

¹ Ecclesiastes 9:1

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they have had any, having been reconciled to God through the sacrament of penance, they are preserved for a long time without sinning mortally again. Of such, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in them, is bearing witness that they are children of God and His chosen ones, according to the Apostle's teaching: *"For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God"*². Hence the Apostle himself boasted of the testimony that his good conscience bore to him: *"For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience"*³. And this he said because, having examined it, he found no mortal sin in it: *For I am not conscious to myself of any thing*⁴.

It is also an indication and sign of predestination to hear and obey the word of God, as is clear from what St. Luke says: that when the apostles preached, all those who were predestined and ordained to eternal life heard them: *"and as many as were ordained to life everlasting, believed"*⁵. And the Savior, rebuking the unbelief of the Pharisees, said to them: *"He that is of God, beareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God"*⁶: because you are not of God's nor of the number of his elect, therefore you do not listen to my doctrine: *"Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God"*.

So hearing and obeying the word of God is a sign of predestination. Also, toil endured and endured with patience is a sign of predestination; for, as St. Peter Chrysologus says, with these blows God hews the stones that he will lay in the foundation of the city of Jerusalem. Which is a great consolation to those who suffer labors in this life, for by them they are prepared to enjoy eternal rest in the next.

In St. Matthew, Chapter 5, the Savior declared to us another sign of predestination in those who show mercy to the afflicted and needy, saying: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Additionally there are many other signs of predestination, such as the eight beatitudes which Christ taught in the Gospel, all of which are signs of those whom God has chosen for His glory. And I have left out other signs so as to declare what I intend to do by this treatise, which is to persuade the Christian toward devotion to the Mother of God and to encourage those who claim to be devotees and slaves of this heavenly Queen to serve Her more, by demonstrating that their deep and heartfelt devotion and desire to

2 Romans 8:16

3 2 Corinthians 1:12

4 1 Corinthians 4:4

5 Acts 13:48

6 St. John 8:47

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revere and serve Her are a manifest sign of predestination and that God has chosen such as these for heaven.

Let the first witness in proof of this truth be the glorious St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, great devotee and chaplain of this heavenly Princess, as is testified by the many books he wrote of Her praises; in chapter 4 of the book he entitled *De Excellentia Virginis*, he goes about persuading Her devotees to meditate on the cordial love and endearing charity with which this most sacrosanct Virgin loved and served Her Son; and lastly, he concludes by declaring that sweet and frequent meditation on the life and holy customs of this sovereign Virgin and of the heartfelt services that She rendered to Christ is a sign of eternal health – the meditation of which is proper to the devotees of the Virgin.

St. Antoninus of Florence, stating those words of the antiphon of the *Salve Regina* “*Turn then...Thine eyes of mercy towards us*” quotes St. Anselm himself, who says that “*as it is impossible for those from whom the Virgin turns away Her eyes to be saved, so it necessarily follows that whomever She turns the eyes of Her mercy toward will be justified and that it is they who will be glorified*”. And St. Germanus, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, compared devotion to the Virgin, Our Lady, to the breathing of the natural body; “*That just as in any animal breathing is the sign of life and the beginning of vital functions, so the most holy name of Mary –which is so familiar at all times in the mouths of Her devotees and slaves, calling upon Her for Her favor and saluting Her with the words which the angel saluted Her in the rosaries and crowns which they offer Her– is not only a sign of life and joy of spirit and of the favor and succor of the Virgin, but solicits and achieves these effects*” – in favor of the devotees and slaves of this Queen of mercy.

And the author of the *Pomerio*, in chapter 12 of his *Stellarium*, quotes that famous sentence of St. Bernard of so much consolation for the sinner not to faint nor despair in obtaining a remedy. St. Bernard here says: “*we can arrive at the tribunal of God to invoke his mercy, if we take His Mother as intercessor to the Son, and the Son of God to His Father, because the Mother shows the Son the bosom with which She raised Him, and the Son shows the Father the wounds with which He redeemed us, in order to incline Him to Her supplications. With such sponsors and patrons, man can be sure that he will not be dismissed; where such signs of love are involved, there is no need to fear that his supplications will not be answered and that there is no place for them.* From this aforesaid, the Pomeranian concludes that, if She cannot be dismissed, then it follows that to serve the Virgin is a very certain sign of eternal Salvation.

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Let all this serve as encouragement to the devotee of the Virgin, Our Lady, and to he, who as a sign of his devotion has offered himself to Her as a slave, to reverence and serve Her in all his works (and *in all I say*, because the works of the slave must *all* be of his master), for by serving this heavenly Princess he makes his salvation certain.

Let the slave of the Virgin have for his crown this Slavery, which freed him from the servitude of the devil; and consider this honorable subjection as the freedom of his soul; let him have as manifest signs of his glory this Lady and the branding that as a sign of Her he has so written in his heart.

The name of Slave, in the world, is an infamous name, because freedom is the thing that the world esteems most, "*Not even for all the Gold is liberty well sold*", said the other poet. If one were to buy with a price however much gold comes from the Indies and even how much remains in the mines there, it would be too little to buy a man's freedom. For as freedom is what is most esteemed, so, on the contrary, the servitude with which man sells his freedom, his person, his goods and all his actions (for the slave has nothing of his own, everything belongs to his master) is the thing that the world most despises; but in this kingdom of heaven that Christ founded on earth, where one does not live according to the world, but according to the laws and customs of heaven, to serve God is not infamy, but glory; it is not captivity, but honorable freedom: "*by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free*"; it is not to subdue man, but to make one king: *To serve God is to reign*⁸; and to serve His most holy Mother is to have certain confidence of reigning in Heaven with Her Son; and to salute Her and to engage in Her praises of the mouth by praying Her hours or Her rosary or crown is to begin to engage in exercises of glory even from this life, because the Blessed are occupied in the divine praises: "*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever*"⁹.

In order to now bring this chapter to an end, let it be the last confirmation of the matter, that we take note of what the Blessed St. Alano writes (In psalterio Virginis, c. 11): against those who like untamed bulls run after their inclinations in pursuit of vices and pour out their venom against all exercises of virtue, in order to yield them to reason, let us throw an Alano in their ear. Let the lovers of the world and mockers of the devotees and slaves of the Virgin

7 Galatians 4:31

8 "*Servire Deo, regnare est*"

9 Psalm 83: 5

CHAPTER II

who are engaged in her praises hear what St. Alonso¹⁰ says through the revelation of Our Lady, who often appeared to this saint and had very familiar conversations with him.

“A secret of Divine Providence I want to reveal to you” (said Our Lady to this devotee): *“You will know, then, not only for yourself, but so that you may without delay manifest it to others, that it is a certain sign of eternal damnation to abhor and despise and to be angry at hearing the angelic salutation prayed, for it was the means of reparation for the world. And that for those who had devotion to, it is a great sign of predestination and ordination to glory”*.

Let the revilers be confounded, then, who with the spirit of Satan dare to bark and set tongues against the brotherhoods and confraternities which in the service of Our Lady are received in the Church and against the exercises in which they are engaged in praying their crown or rosary of angelic salutations, for from the mouth of Our Lady they have heard the sentence of their eternal damnation; And let the devotees and slaves of this heavenly Queen be encouraged to reverence and serve Her and to engage in Her praises; for, as we have proved, Her Slavery is a sign of freedom of soul, and Her devotion is a certain pledge of the crown of glory, which, through the intercession of the Mother of God, our Lady, they will enjoy in Heaven.

¹⁰ [Trans.] We were unable to verify who the referenced St. Alano and St. Alonso are, but both these names seem to be referring to Bl. Alan de la Roche.