

CHAPTER IX

The Virtue of Prudence in the Most Holy Queen of Heaven.

531. Since the acts of the understanding go before the acts of the will and direct them on the way, the virtues pertaining to the exercise of the understanding also precede those of the will. Although the proper sphere of the intellect is to recognize the truth and comprehend it, thereby perhaps causing a doubt whether it can be classed as a virtue (for virtue of its very nature consists in tending toward and practicing the good), yet it is certain there are also intellectual virtues, the practice of which is praiseworthy in proportion as they conform to reason and truth, for these are the proper good of the intellect. When therefore it proposes truth to the will and instructs the will to follow its guidance, then this act of the intellect is theologically good when matters of faith are concerned, and morally good when, for example, in the exercise of prudence the operations of the appetites are regulated. Hence the virtue of prudence comes first as pertaining to the proper use of the understanding. It is as it were the root of the other cardinal and moral virtues, for these are praiseworthy when accompanied by prudence and faulty and reprehensible when devoid of it.

532. The sovereign Queen Mary possessed this virtue of prudence in supreme excellence and in proportion to the height of her other virtues already described and yet to be described. Due to her wonderful prudence the Church calls Her the *Virgin most prudent*.^{*} And since this first cardinal virtue is that which governs, rectifies and commands all the works of the other virtues, and as this entire History treats of the exercise of these virtues in most holy Mary, all of what little I can say and manifest of this sea of prudence shall be nothing else than a continual implied reference to her prudence, and all of her works shall show the splendor of this virtue. Therefore I shall speak here more in general of the prudence of the sovereign Queen, exhibiting the different parts and qualities of prudence according to the common teaching of the Doctors and Saints so we may thereby obtain a greater understanding of it in her regard.

533. Of the three kinds of prudence, the first called political prudence, another purgative prudence, and the third the prudence of the purged soul, or purified and perfect, none was missing in our Queen, and they were hers in the highest degree; for though all her faculties were most pure and perfect, or in other words had no need of being purified from sin or anything opposed to virtue, yet they could be purified regarding the lack of natural knowledge and in progressing from the good and holy to the most perfect and most holy. Of course this must be understood only of her own works as far as they are compared with each other, and not insofar as they are compared with the works of others, for in comparison with the other saints there was no work less than perfect in this City of God, whose *foundations are in the holy mountains* (Ps. 86:1). But in her own works, since they grew in charity and grace from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception, some of them, though in themselves most perfect and superior to all the works of the saints, were less perfect in comparison with other acts of a later period in her life.

534. Political prudence in general is that which ponders and weighs all that is to be done and reduces it to the dictates of reason, avoiding all that is not just and good. Purgative or purifying prudence is that which disposes and selects all things in such a way as to rectify the heart by divine contemplation toward all celestial things. The prudence of the purified or perfect soul is

^{*} cf. Litany of the BVM; also *Antiphon at the Magnificat*, 1st Vespers of the Assumption (Aug. 15) [Ed.]

that which directs and centers all the affections upon the highest Good, as if no other object existed. All these kinds of prudence existed in most holy Mary so She could distinguish and know without fail, and direct and accomplish without remissness or tardiness, whatever was most perfect and excellent in the fulfillment of her works. Never did the judgment of this sovereign Lady in the whole range of her activity dictate or attach itself to anything which was not the best and most proper. No one ever equaled Her in disposing and directing all visible or worldly matters in order to make them useful for divine contemplation; hence, having perceived them so intimately and in so many different lights of knowledge, She was united in such a manner to the highest Good by divine love that no preoccupation or hindrance ever prevented Her from resting completely in the center of her love.

535. It is also apparent that all the component parts of prudence existed in consummate perfection in our Queen. The first is *memory*, which retains in the mind things already experienced in the past. From past experiences are drawn many rules for proceeding and acting in the present and the future. Because prudence concerns itself with particular actions, and since there cannot be a general rule for all of them, it is necessary to draw special rules from many past examples and experiences stored up in the memory. Our sovereign Queen was so endowed with it that She never experienced the natural defect of forgetfulness, for that which once She had understood and learned was ever present and immovable in her memory. In this blessing most pure Mary transcended the whole human race and even the angelic order, because God made Her a summary of what was most perfect in both of them. In general, regarding human nature She possessed not only what was essential, but of that which is accidental She possessed what was most perfect and far removed from guilt, and necessary for Her merit; and She possessed, by a special grace, many of the natural and supernatural gifts of the angelic nature, and in a higher degree than the angels themselves. One of these gifts was a fixed and constant memory, incapable of forgetting what She had apprehended; and as She excelled the Angels in prudence, so also did She surpass them in this component part of memory.

536. In only one aspect did the humble purity of most holy Mary mysteriously limit this blessing, for if the images of all things were to be fixed in her memory it was unavoidable that also much that springs from the vileness and sinfulness of creatures would fill its sacred precincts. Therefore the most humble and pure Princess besought the Lord for the full gift of memory to not extend itself toward the preservation of these images, but only insofar as was necessary for the exercise of fraternal charity towards her neighbor and for the practice of other virtues. The Most High granted this petition more in testimony of her most humble purity than due to any danger to which these images could expose Her, for the sun is not harmed by the impurities upon which it may shine, nor are the angels disturbed by our vileness, since to the pure all things are pure (Titus 1:15). Yet in this favor the Lord of the Angels desired to grant this privilege to his Mother more than to them, tolerating in her memory only those images which pertain to the highest sanctity, honesty, cleanliness, the most amiable purity, and what was most pleasing to Himself. Thus her most holy soul in regard to these things was without blemish, and her memory was adorned with the representations of all that is most pure and desirable.

537. Another component part of the virtue of prudence is *intelligence*, which principally concerns itself with what is to be done in the present moment; it is a correct and profound understanding of the reasons and the principles according to which virtuous actions are to be performed. It reduces this understanding into action, not only to give a comprehensive knowledge of the excellence of virtue in general, but also to direct our activity in the proper channel for performing then and there each particular work in a virtuous and perfect manner.

Thus when I have a deep understanding of the precept “do nothing unto others what thou dost not wish to be done unto thyself,” I will at once know that I should not do this or that particular injury because it would seem a wrong if done to me or someone else. This kind of intelligence most holy Mary possessed in so much the higher degree than all the rest of creatures as She excelled them in knowledge of the moral virtues, in profound penetration regarding infallible rectitude, and in participation of the divine righteousness. In the light of this intelligence, derived from the splendors of the Divinity himself, there could be no deceit, ignorance, doubt, or mere opinions, as is the case with other creatures, for all truths (especially in the practical matters of the virtues) She understood and penetrated in general and in particular as they are in themselves, and to this incomparable degree did She possess this part of prudence.

538. The third component part of prudence is called *providence*. It is the most important of all the parts of prudence, for in human actions it is most important for the present to be well ordered toward the future so all may be governed with rectitude, and this is done by providence. Our Lady and Queen practiced this part of prudence in a degree even more excellent (if possible) than all the other parts of prudence, for besides the vivid memory of the past and the profound understanding of things present, She had an unerring knowledge and understanding of many future events, to which She extended her well-ordered providence. By this notice and infused light She arranged events in such a manner that they were a preparation for the future, and nothing could come upon Her suddenly or unexpectedly. All things were by Her foreseen, considered and weighed beforehand in the sanctuary of her mind, illumined by infused light. Thus without a shadow of doubt or uncertainty, such as is the lot of other men, She awaited the events before their arrival with unerring certitude, and thus for all things She found a place, a time, and opportune circumstances, directing them all toward the good.

539. These three parts of prudence comprehend the activity of the intellect in the practice of this virtue, for they secure the good order of our actions in regard to the past, the present, and the future. However, when we consider this virtue under another aspect, namely insofar as it perceives the proper means for the practice of virtue and the direction of the will to employ them rightly, the teachers and philosophers mention five other points or different kinds of activities of prudence, namely *docility*, *reasoning*, *shrewdness*, *circumspection* and *caution*. *Docility* is the good judgment and readiness of the creature to be taught by others better informed than himself, and a disposition not inflated by his own knowledge and not resting unduly on his own insight and wisdom. *Reasoning*, which is also called *discursive reasoning*, consists in reasoning with certitude from generally understood principles to the particular course of action in each single case. *Shrewdness* is a diligent attention and practical application of our activity to that which happens (as docility is attention to that which we are taught), enabling us to judge rightly and follow the best course of action. *Circumspection* is a just consideration of the circumstances connected with each good work, for it is not sufficient that the end of our actions be good, but it is also necessary to consider the opportuneness of the circumstances. *Caution* is a discreet attention to dangers or impediments, so when they occur under the cover of virtue or unexpectedly we may not be found rash or unprepared.

540. All these complements of prudence existed in the Queen of heaven without any defect and in their ultimate perfection. *Docility* was hers as the legitimate daughter of her incomparable humility, since having received the plenitude of science from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, and though She was the Teacher and the Mother of true wisdom, She nevertheless allowed Herself to be taught by her elders, by her equals, and by those below Her, esteeming Herself as lower than all of them and seeking to be a disciple of those who in comparison to Her

were most ignorant. This docility She exhibited like a most simple dove during her entire life, disguising her wisdom with a greater prudence than that of a serpent (Mt. 10:16). As a child She accepted instruction from her parents, her teacher in the temple, and her companions, and later on from her spouse St. Joseph and the Apostles. From all creatures She wanted to learn, being a prodigy of humility as I have said elsewhere (404, 470).

541. The prudent reasoning or *discursive reasoning* of most holy Mary can be easily inferred from what St. Luke says of Her, that She kept and pondered in her Heart the mysterious events in the life of her most holy Son (Lk. 2: 19, 51). This pondering was the reasoning which She employed, comparing cause with cause in the order in which they occurred and happened, and by this comparison She formed for Herself most prudent counsels which enabled Her to act with the perfection peculiar to Her. Although She very often understood many things without the discourse of reasoning by a simple intuition and intelligence which exceeded all human understanding, yet as far as the actual exercise of the virtues was concerned She applied this process of reasoning from the abstract principles of virtue to her own practice of them.

542. In regard to *shrewdness* and the diligent application of the rules of prudence the sovereign Lady also was highly privileged, for She was not weighed down by the heavy load of human passion and corruption; hence She did not feel debilities and tardiness in her faculties, but She was always alert, ready, and very skillful in noticing and attending to all that could serve to make a correct judgment and sound counsel in the works of the virtues in whatever case occurred, attending with promptitude and speed to the happy medium of virtue and its operation. Equally admirable was most holy Mary in her *circumspection*, for all her works were accomplished so no point of perfection was missing, and all of them stand forth in the highest perfection possible. And since the greater part of her actions were works of charity towards her neighbor, and all of them most opportune, therefore in all her teaching, admonishing, consoling, beseeching and correcting of her neighbor the efficacious sweetness of her reasonable and pleasing manners met with full success.

543. The last complement of prudence, called *caution*, which meets and evades the impediments of virtue, was necessarily possessed by the Queen of Angels in greater perfection than in these spirits themselves, for her exalted wisdom and the love which accompanied it incited Her to such caution and foresight that no event which could be an impediment in the exercise of the most perfect virtue found Her unprepared and unprovided with a counter remedy. And since the enemy, as will be described later on (*Inc.* 353), was so vigilant in placing exquisite and uncommon obstacles in her path of virtue, being unable to move her passions, the most prudent Virgin had occasion to practice this caution many times, thereby exciting the wonder of the Apostles. Because of the cautious discretion of most holy Mary the demon pursued Her with a terrified wrath and envy, burning with desire to know by what power She foiled such powerful machinations and cunning snares as he devised in order to hinder Her or draw Her away, for in every instance he was vanquished and had to be witness of the most perfect exercise of all that is virtuous in all her undertakings and works.* After having mentioned and described the parts and complements of prudence, let us also examine the different species or kinds into which it can be divided according to the object or the ends to which it is applied. Prudence can be used either in

* N.B. In the original English edition Rev. Blatter here inserts a new paragraph, number 546, which added to the new par. he inserted in par. 129 and 463 causes all his paragraph numbers from 547 - 769 to be three greater than in the Spanish edition of Most Rev. Samaniego which he took verbatim from the original handwritten manuscript of Ven. Mary. I have corrected these paragraph numbers for this New English Edition. See the footnote for par. 769 for further anomalies in this regard. [Ed.]

our own actions and affairs or for the affairs of others, and thus arise two kinds of prudence, directing the activity which concerns ourselves and that which concerns our neighbors. That which governs one's own particular activity is called *enarchic*, and in reference to the Queen of heaven it is not necessary to say more in proof of her having exercised this kind of prudence than what has already been said above about the manner in which She regulated her own life. The prudence which teaches the government of many is called *polyarchic*; this is subdivided into four kinds according to four different ways of governing others. The first kind is called *regnative* prudence, which facilitates the government of countries by just and useful laws; it is proper to kings, princes, monarchs, and all those whose authority is supreme. The second kind is called *political* prudence, which has its name from the fact that it teaches the right government of cities or republics. The third is called *economic* or *domestic* prudence, which shows how to govern and manage domestic affairs of the family or particular homes. The fourth is *military* prudence, which teaches how to govern in war and rule armies.

544. None of these different kinds of prudence was lacking in our great Queen; all were given to Her as habits at the instant of her Immaculate Conception and sanctification so no grace, virtue or perfection which could exalt and beautify Her above all creatures would be missing in Her. The Most High made Her an archive and depositary of all his gifts, and an example to all the rest of creation, thus giving an exhibition of his power and greatness so in the entire heavenly Jerusalem it would be known what He could and would do for a mere creature. And in most holy Mary these sublime habits of virtue were not idle, for She exercised all of them in the course of her life on the many occasions which presented themselves. As regards *economic* or *domestic* prudence it is well known how incomparable was the government of her domestic affairs when living with her spouse Joseph and with her most holy Son, for in learning from Him and serving Him She acted with such prudence as was befitting the most hidden mystery which God entrusted to men, as I shall show in its place (*Inc.* 418ff., 653ff., 702ff.) according to my understanding and ability.

545. She exercised also *regnative* or monarchical prudence as the sole Empress of the Church, teaching, advising and directing the sacred Apostles in the primitive Church in order to set it up and establish in it the laws, rites and ceremonies most necessary and useful for its propagation and firmness. Though She obeyed the Apostles in particular matters, and consulted especially St. Peter as the Vicar of Christ and the head of the Church, and St. John as her chaplain, yet they and the others asked her advice and followed it in the general and particular matters relating to the government of the Church. She also taught the Christian kings and princes who approached Her for counsel, for many of them sought to know Her after the Ascension of her most holy Son into heaven. Among them especially can be mentioned the three magi Kings when they came to adore the Child; She responded to their questions and instructed them in all they must do for their states with such light and clearness that She was their star and guide on the way to eternity. They returned to their countries enlightened, consoled and astonished at the wisdom, prudence and sweetness of the words which they had heard from the mouth of a tender Maiden. And in testimony of all that could be said in this regard, it is enough to hear the Queen herself, for it was said of Her: *By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things; by me princes rule* (Prov. 8:15-16).

546. Neither was the use of *political* prudence lacking in Her, for She taught the republics and nations, and the primitive faithful in particular, how to proceed in public acts and government, how they must obey temporal kings and princes, and in particular the Vicar of Christ and head of the Church, as well as their prelates and bishops, and how the Councils, definitions and decrees

they were to enact must be arranged. Even *military* prudence found a place in the sovereign Queen, for also in this direction She was consulted by some of the faithful, and She instructed and taught them what was required to carry out a just war with their enemies in order to conduct them according to the justice and pleasure of the Lord. Here can also be mentioned the courage and prudence with which this powerful Lady vanquished the prince of darkness, teaching us thereby how we must battle with him, for She overcame him by an exalted wisdom and prudence greater than that shown by David in his combat with the giant (I Kg. 17:50), or by Judith with Holofernes (Judith 13:10), or by Esther with Aman (Esther 7:6). Even if all these kinds of prudence had not been needed for the actions mentioned, yet it was proper for this Mother of Wisdom, besides their being appropriate ornaments of her most holy soul, to possess them because She was the Mediatrix and sole Advocate of this world. Since She was to procure by her intercession all the blessings which God would bestow upon the human race, and since none of them were to be granted without her intercession, it was necessary for Her to know perfectly all the virtues which She was to obtain for men, and for these blessings to flow from Her as from an original source next to God, their uncreated beginning.

547. There are other helps which are attached to the virtue of prudence and which are called potential parts, being as it were instruments with which prudence works. They are *synesis*, or the aptitude and readiness to form sane judgments; *eubulia*, the faculty of giving and suggesting good counsel; *gnome*, which teaches what exceptions can justly be made to general rules; and this latter is necessary for the use of *epikeia*, which enables us to judge what particular cases are to be decided by rules higher than the ordinary. All of these perfections and excellences adorned the prudence of most holy Mary, and hence no one could give such unerring counsel in all possible contingencies, nor could anyone (not even the most exalted angel) form such correct judgments in all matters. Above all our most prudent Queen was skilled in the higher principles and rules of action, and such as were above the ordinary and common laws, but it would require a long discourse even to mention the instances here. Many of them shall be understood in the progress of her most holy life. In order to conclude this chapter on her prudence, it is only necessary to say that the rule by which it is to be measured is none other than the prudence of the soul of Christ our Lord, for it was conformed and assimilated entirely to his, since She was to be the Coadjutrix in all the works of wisdom and prudence performed by the Lord of all creation and Savior of the world.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

548. My daughter, I desire all thou hast written and understood in this chapter to be for thee an instruction and reminder of what I have taught thee for the government of thy actions. Write in thy mind and keep fixed in thy memory the knowledge thou hast been given of my prudence in all I have thought, desired and executed. This light shall guide thee in the midst of the darkness of human ignorance so thou mayest not be disturbed and confounded by the allurements of the passions, and much more by that which thy enemies, with highest malice and vigilance, labor to introduce into thy understanding. Not obtaining knowledge of all the principles of prudence is not culpable in the creature; yet once learned, to be negligent in applying them in order to be advised in all things as necessary is a grave fault and the cause of many deceptions and errors in their works. From this negligence springs the loss of control of the passions, impeding and destroying prudence, particularly disorderly sadness or pleasure, which pervert correct judgment in the prudent consideration of good and evil. From this is born two dangerous

vices: Impulsiveness in our actions without considering the proper means of success, and inconstancy in good resolutions and works once begun. Both uncontrolled anger and indiscreet fervor cause hastiness and lack of perseverance in many exterior actions done without moderation and counsel. Rash judgment and lack of firmness in doing good cause the soul imprudently to desist from what it has begun, since it concedes to contrary circumstances which occur, being now easily pleased with the true good, and later with what is apparent and deceitful which the passions demand and the demon portrays.

549. Against all these dangers I desire thee to be warned and prudent, which thou shalt be if thou dost attend to the example of my works, and keep the rules and counsels of obedience from thy spiritual fathers, without which thou must do nothing in order to proceed with counsel and docility. Be assured the Most High shall communicate to thee copious wisdom, for a meek, docile and submissive heart shall oblige Him superabundantly. Always remember the misery of the imprudent and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:12), who by their careless negligence disregarded prudent and wise counsel when they should have taken it; and when afterwards they sought to make up for it they found the door of their remedy shut against them. Seek, my daughter, to unite the sincerity of the dove with the prudence of the serpent (Mt. 10:16), and thy works shall be perfect.