

The Mystical City of God

“The Miracle of His Omnipotence and the Abyss of Grace
The Divine History and Life of the
Virgin Mother of God, Our Queen and Our Lady,

Mary Most Holy

**Repairer of the Sin of Eve and
the Mediatrix of All Graces**

Manifested in these Last Ages by the Same Lady to Her Slave

Sister Mary of Jesus

Abbess of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception
of the Village of Ágreda in Spain in the Province of Burgos,
of the Regular Observance of our Seraphic Father

Saint Francis

for New Light for the World,
Joy for the Catholic Church,
and the Encouragement of Mortals.”

[Editor’s Note: In quotes is the verbatim title written by the hand of Ven. Mary.]

† †

NEW ENGLISH EDITION

A corrected English edition of the original English translation of
Rev. George J. Blatter (Fiscar Marison) (1912)

Edited, Largely Retranslated, and Published by Timothy A. Duff, M.S.Ed.
From an authentic copy of the original Spanish edition of Most Rev. José Jiménez de Samaniego
(1670)

the Religious Superior and Biographer of Ven. Mary of Jesus of Ágreda

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The Mystical City of God

by Ven. Mary of Jesus of Ágreda (1602-1655)

Volume 4

The Coronation

Last of Four Volumes

Part III of III Parts

Books 7 and 8 of 8 Books



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The Coronation

Books 7 and 8

*The Divine History and Life of the Queen of Heaven, Mary Most Holy,
Containing the Events from the Coming of the Holy Ghost until the
Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mother of God in Heaven.*

INTRODUCTION

to the Third Part of the Divine History and Most Holy Life of Mary, the Mother of God.

1. In navigating a deep and dangerous sea (Ecclus. 43:26) the navigator is so much the more dangerously faced with its terrors and the attacks of pirates the farther he has penetrated into its wide expanses. His cares are vastly increased due to his weakness and lack of certainty, for he does not know when or whence danger may come, and he is powerless to avert its coming and unable to resist it when at hand. This is just what is now happening to me since I am engulfed in the immense ocean of the excellence and magnificence of the works of most holy Mary, and yet it is a sea full of repose and tranquility as I know and confess. Nor can the fact that I have advanced so far upon this sea of grace, and have finished the first and second Parts of her Life, give me assurance, for in this work I have, as in a most clear mirror, only so much the more clearly perceived my own incapability and vileness, and the deepest conviction forces itself upon me that her History is most impenetrable and incomprehensible to all created understanding. Nor are the enemies, the princes of darkness, ever at rest, for like the most persistent pirates they continue to afflict and discourage me by false illusions and temptations full of iniquity and astuteness above all my consideration. The navigator has no other recourse than to fix his sight upon the north star by which, as his secure star of the sea, he must guide and direct his course amid the waves. I labor to do the same in the torment of my various temptations and fears. Through obedience to my Star of the Sea, most holy Mary, I know I can turn to the north star of the divine will; yet many times afflicted, disturbed and fearful, I cry out from the bottom of my heart and say: "My Lord and most high God, what shall I do in my doubts? Shall I proceed or desist in writing this History? Do Thou, O Mother of Grace and my Teacher, make known to me thy will and that of thy divine Son."

2. I must confess in all truth, and as due to the divine condescension, that God has always answered my clamors and has never denied me his paternal kindness in making known his will in many ways. Although this is sufficiently evident in the assistance rendered to me in the writing of the first and second Parts, yet besides this proof there are innumerable other assurances given to me by the Lord himself, by his most holy Mother, and by his Angels, adding firmness to firmness, and testimony to conquer my fears and cowardice. What is more, the Angels themselves in visible shapes, being the princes and ministers of the Lord in his holy Church, have pointed out and reiterated the divine command, bidding me to believe and execute this commission and continue this divine History. Nor was there lacking to me the light of infused science which sweetly and forcefully called, enlightened and moved my heart to the knowledge of the highest perfection, the most immaculate holiness, the most perfect virtue, and the most desirable of what can be sought by the will, and all of this has been offered to me as enclosed and reserved in that mystical Ark of most holy Mary, like hidden manna (Heb. 9:4), so we may approach to taste and possess it.

3. Nevertheless, in entering upon this third Part in order to begin to write it I experienced new and strong contradictions, not less formidable than those experienced in the first two Parts of this History. I can say without fear that I have not composed a sentence or a word, nor have I brought myself to write the least part of it, without experiencing more temptations than the letters of the

alphabet of which it is composed. Although the hindrances caused by my own fear would have been sufficient (since I know who I am and cannot help being cowardly, nor could ever put more confidence in myself than what my own weakness will warrant), yet neither this nor the magnitude of the undertaking were the real impediments, though these were at first unsuspected. I presented to the Lord the second Part which I had written in the same way as I had presented the first. Under strict obedience I was compelled to begin this third Part, and by the strength which this virtue gives to all who practice it I allayed the fear and faintness of my heart in executing what had been assigned to me; however, fluctuating between my desire and the fear of commencing I was cast about like a vessel combated by violent and contrary winds.

4. On the one hand the Lord bade me proceed in what I had begun since such was his will, nor in my continual prayers have I ever felt impelled to a different course. It is true that for some time I paid no attention to these directions of the Most High and did not manifest them immediately to my superior and to my confessor (not because I wished to conceal them, but in order to act more securely and so they might not suspect I followed only my own insight). But His Majesty, who in his works is so uniform, gave to their hearts new strength in order to command me by their orders and precepts, as they always have. Yet on the other hand the envy and malice of the ancient serpent maligned all that I did or was moved to undertake. He raised up against me tormenting and alluring temptations by which he sometimes sought to inspire me with his own boundless pride; at other times, and very often, he sought to cast me down into the deepest dejection and involve me in most dark and disorderly fears, increasing his efforts as this History progressed, and more so when I was inclined to finish it. This enemy also availed himself of the judgment of some persons who justly could claim my respect and who would not further this work. He also caused disturbances among the religious under my charge. It seemed to me that I had no time to spare and was obliged to attend to the welfare of the community, which is the principal duty of a superioress. With all these molestations I did not attain such interior peace as is necessary and proper for the actual enlightenment and intelligence concerning the mysteries of which I write, for this light cannot be perceived nor is it properly communicated amid the spiritual storms of temptation (III Kg. 19:11-13), but will shine only in the peace and serenity of the faculties of the soul.

5. Afflicted and harassed by such a variety of temptations I ceased not in my clamors. On one day in particular I spoke to the Lord: "Highest Lord and Good of my soul, my sighs and my desire to please Thee and avoid errors in thy service are not hidden to thy wisdom (Ps. 37:10). Lovingly I lament in thy royal presence, for either Thou dost command me, O Lord, what I cannot fulfill, or Thou dost permit thy and my enemies to hinder thy commands by their malice." The Lord answered my complaint, and with some severity said to me: "Remember, soul, thou canst not continue what thou hast begun, nor shalt thou finish writing the Life of my Mother, if thou dost not become altogether perfect and pleasing in my eyes, for I desire thee to gather for thyself the copious fruit of this benefit, and be the first to receive it with the proper plenitude. In order for thee to share its fruits as I desire it is necessary that all which is earthly in thee and savoring of a daughter of Adam be consumed. Thou must be free from the effects of sin with all its evil inclinations and habits." This answer of the Lord excited in me new solicitude and the most burning desire of performing all that it implied, namely not only a common mortification of all the inclinations and passions, but an absolute death of the animal and terrestrial life, and its renovation and transformation into a celestial and angelic state of existence.

6. Desiring to apply my powers to what was proposed to me I examined my inclinations and appetites, circling through the streets and corners of my interior, and I felt a most ardent desire to

die to all that is visible and earthly. For some days I suffered in these exercises great affliction and melancholy, for in proportion to my desires increased also the dangers and occasions of being diverted by paying attention to creatures. The more I sought to withdraw myself from all my surroundings so much the more did I find myself bound and oppressed by what I abhorred. Of all this the enemy availed himself for my discouragement, representing such a life as altogether impossible to me. To this affliction was suddenly added another new and strange disorder: I felt in my body a condition so sensitive that the least exertion, even the most insignificant mortification, became more intolerable to me than the most severe penances had until then. Those which I was accustomed to undergo most willingly required now the most violent exertion, and I found myself become so delicate that they seemed to inflict upon me mortal wounds. To undergo one discipline caused me to swoon to the point of fainting, and each stroke seemed to divide my heart. Without exaggeration I say that merely touching one hand to the other forced out my tears, causing me great confusion and grief at being so miserable. In forcing myself to labor in spite of this infirmity I found my blood oozing from my fingernails.

7. I could not explain this new experience, and in considering it I impatiently exclaimed: "Ah me! What misery is this? What change do I feel within me? The Lord commands me to mortify myself and die to all creatures, and I feel myself much more alive to pain and much less mortified." For some days I suffered in great bitterness and impatience of my soul. In order to moderate my disturbance the Most High consoled me, saying: "My daughter and spouse, let not thy heart be afflicted at the vividness of thy sufferings. I have sought by this means to extinguish in thee the effects of sin, restore thee to a new life, and prepare thee for works more exalted and pleasing to Me. Until thou hast attained this state thou canst not begin to write what remains of the Life of my Mother and thy Teacher." With this response of the Lord I recovered some vigor, for his words are always those of life (Jn. 6:69), vivifying the heart. Although my troubles and temptations were not abated, I prepared myself for labor and battle, yet I continued to mistrust my weakness and inability, and despaired of finding a remedy. I sought it in the Mother of life, and I resolved to ask for her favor with constancy and sincerity as to a unique and ultimate refuge of the needy and afflicted, and She has continually heaped her many favors upon me, the most useless creature in the world.

8. I prostrated myself at the feet of the great Lady of heaven and earth, and pouring out my spirit in her presence I besought Her mercifully to remedy my imperfections and defects. I represented to Her my desire of pleasing Her and her divine Son, and again offered myself for her service, even if I would have to pass through fire and torments and shed my blood. The kind Mother answered my supplications by saying: "My daughter, understand well that these desires, which the Most High again excites in thy heart, are pledges and effects of his love by which He calls thee to his intimate communication and familiarity. It is his most holy will and mine for thee on thy part to correspond to them so thou mayest not hinder thy vocation or retard any longer the pleasure of His Majesty in what He requires of thee. In the entire discourse of the Life which thou art writing I have exhorted and reminded thee of thy obligations connected with this blessing, namely to imprint in thyself the living image of its teachings and of my example according to the graces thou dost receive. Thou hast now arrived at the third and last Part of this History, and it is time thou raise thyself to a perfect imitation of me, clothing thyself with new strength and extending thy hand to strong things (Prov. 31:17, 19). By such a life and behavior thou shalt be able to begin what still remains to be written, for it must be written in such a way that thou put into practice the lessons it inculcates. Without such a disposition thou shalt not be able to write it, since it is the will of the Lord that my History be written more in thy heart than

on paper, so thou shalt feel what thou writest in order to write what thou feelest.

9. “Therefore I desire thy interior to be cleared from all earthly images and inclinations (Ps. 44:11), so having thus put away and forgotten all visible things thou mayest center all thy conversation and communication upon thy Lord (Philip. 3:20), upon me, and upon his Angels; and let all other things be strange and foreign to thee. In the strength of this virtue and purity which I require of thee thou shalt crush the head of the ancient serpent and conquer his opposition to thy writing and laboring. While attending to these empty fears thou art so tardy in responding to the Lord, in entering upon the path He desires thee to pursue, and in placing full confidence in his blessed intentions, that I tell thee now it is precisely for this reason divine Providence has permitted the dragon to be the minister of his justice in punishing thy unbelief and thy lack of submission to his will. That same enemy has concocted schemes to draw thee into some faults by setting before thee his deceits in the garb of good intention and virtuous ends, and by seeking to persuade thee falsely that thou art not destined for such high favors and exalted blessings, and so thou mayest not merit them he has made thee dull and tardy in rendering gratitude for them. Thou hast been taken in by the deceit of deeming these works of the Most High as due to thee in justice and not as works of grace, and thus have neglected to cooperate to the fullest extent with divine grace, and have not corresponded to those thou hast received without any merit of thine. It is time, my dearest, for thee to be assured and believe the Lord and me, for I teach thee the highest perfection, namely the imitation of me. Thus shall be conquered the pride and cruelty of the demon and his head crushed by divine power. There is no reason why thou shouldst impede its effects; rather, forgetting all things consign thyself lovingly into the hands of my divine Son* and mine, for We desire of thee what is most holy, praiseworthy and pleasing in our eyes and estimation.”

10. By this instruction of my heavenly Lady, Mother and Teacher, my soul was replenished with new light and the desire of obeying Her in all things. I renewed my good resolutions, I resolved to raise myself by the help of divine grace, and I strove to prepare myself for the fulfillment of the will of the Most High without resistance. I availed myself of my bodily condition by which (as mentioned above) my sensibility to mortification had been so much enlivened and increased. But the demon did not abate his strife and opposition; he knew the enterprise I was to assume was very arduous, and the state to which the Lord raised me was a refuge, but one far above human weakness and earthly dullness. Gladly do I confess this truth and the slowness caused by my frailty and sluggishness. I acknowledge that the Lord has labored with me during my whole life in order to raise me from the dust and from the dunghill of my vileness,[†] multiplying his blessings and favors beyond all my comprehension; moreover, He has seconded all these blessings by the aid of his right hand in order to gain his end. I cannot at present mention all He did for me, but at the same time it seems unjust to entirely pass it over in silence, since it will show to what misery sin has brought us, what distance there is between the rational creature and the goal of virtues and perfection of which he is capable, and what it costs to restore him to that capacity.

11. Some years before writing this I was repeatedly favored with an extraordinary blessing at the hands of God; it was a sort of death to all the animal and terrestrial operations, like that of civil death, and this state was followed by another, which was one of new enlightenment and more exalted operations. But since the soul always remains clothed in mortal and earthly

* cf. Ps. 54:23 [Ed.]

† cf. Ps. 112:7 [Ed.]

corruption, I always feel this weight of the body overwhelming and pressing down the soul (Wis. 9:15) unless the Lord renews his wonders and favors me with the assistance of divine grace. On this occasion this renewal was accomplished in me through the Mother of Piety, who speaking to me in a vision said: "Take heed, my daughter, that now thou must begin to live not thy own life, but the life of thy Spouse Christ in thee (Gal. 2:20); He is to be the life of thy soul and the soul of thy life. For this purpose I desire to cause in thee the death of thy old life which has thus far operated in thee, and establish in thee the new life which we ask of thee. Let it then today be known to heaven and earth that sister Mary of Jesus, my daughter and servant, dies to the world, and the Most High works this change so this soul may live only for what faith teaches. Just as in natural death all things are left behind, so shall this my daughter, thus freed, by her last will and testament consign her soul to her Creator and Redeemer and her body to the earth of self-knowledge and patient suffering. If she shall obey us promptly my divine Son and I shall take charge of this soul in order to fulfill entirely his holy will. We shall celebrate her obsequies with our courtiers in order to bury her in the bosom of the divine humanity of the Word, which is the sepulchre of those who die to the world while still in mortal life. From now on she must not live in her own self nor for herself after the fashion of Adam, but in all things she is now to manifest in herself the life of Christ, who is her life. I shall beseech Him to look kindly upon this deceased one, receive her soul as his own, and acknowledge her as a stranger and pilgrim, living not on earth but as an inhabitant of the more superior and divine region. I shall instruct the Angels to accept her as a companion and treat and converse with her as if she was freed from mortal flesh.

12. "I command the demons to leave alone this dead one, just as they must leave alone the other dead who are not under their jurisdiction and in whom they have no part, for from this day on she shall be more dead to visible things than those who have passed from this world. I call upon men to lose her out of sight and forget her as they forget the dead, and thus allow her to remain in peace and tranquility. And to thee, soul, I command and exhort to consider thyself as one who has finished life in this world and entered eternal life in the presence of the Most High. I desire thee to imitate the life of the Blessed in faith, since the certainty and assurance of truth is the same for thee as for them. Thy conversation is to be on high (Philip. 3:20); thy communication with the Lord of all creation and thy Spouse; thy conferences shall be with the Angels and Saints; and thou must rivet thy whole attention upon me, thy Mother and Teacher. For all the rest that is earthly and visible thou must have neither movement of life nor any activity, no more than a dead body which shows no feeling of life in response to anything which may happen to it or may be done with it. Difficulties must not disquiet thee, nor flattery or pleasures affect thee; thou must neither respond to injuries nor be elated by honors; let neither presumption inflate thee nor mistrust cast thee down; thou must not give consent to any feeling of concupiscence or anger, because thy model in all these passions must be a dead body, already freed from all of them. Nor must thou have any more dealings with the world than the dead, for the world immediately forgets those whom it has praised in life, and to such an extent that though they be father or brother it hastens to put them out of sight; all this the deceased permit without a murmur or feeling of offense. Nor do the dead make any account of the living, and much less do they attend to them or to anything they may have left among their survivors.

13. "Having thus died to thyself, it remains for thee to consider thyself as the food of worms and the most vile and despicable corruption, that in such a manner being buried in the earth of thy self-knowledge thy senses and passions may not presume to give forth their bad odor either before the Lord or among the living as one being poorly covered and buried, as happens to a dead body. Greater must be the horror (according to thy understanding) which thou wouldst

cause to God and the Saints by manifesting thyself as living in the world, or with thy passions little mortified, than that caused to men by uncovered corpses upon the ground. The use of thy faculties, thy sight, hearing, touch, and the rest in order to serve thy pleasure and delight must be for thee a greater novelty or scandal than if thou didst see a corpse moving about. By this death thou shalt be prepared and fit to be the unique spouse of my divine Son, and my true and most beloved disciple and daughter. Such is the state which I require of thee, and thus high is the wisdom which I am to teach thee in following my footsteps and imitating my life, reproducing in thyself, as far as is granted thee, all my virtues. This should be the fruit of recording the wonders and sacraments of my sanctity manifested to thee by the Lord. I desire these sacraments to not escape the secrecy of thy bosom without having moved thee to the perfect fulfillment of the will of my divine Son and of my own, which tends toward nothing else than thy own highest perfection. Drink then the waters of Wisdom from their fountainhead, which is the Lord himself. There is no reason why thou shouldst remain void and unsatiated of that which thou art to administer to others, nor finish writing this History without deriving the fruits of this blessing. Prepare thy heart then for this death which I urge upon thee and thou shalt attain thy desires and mine.”

14. Such were the words of the great Lady of heaven to me on this occasion, and on many others She has repeated this salutary teaching of eternal life. Of these teachings I have written much in the chapters of the first and second Part, and shall continue to do in the third Part. From all this my tardiness and ingratitude toward such great benefits is very apparent, for though I find myself continually backward in virtue and so alive as a daughter of Adam, yet this great Queen and her powerful Son have so often promised to raise me to a most exalted state and habitation if I die to what is earthly and to myself, which by grace is promised me anew by divine favor. This state is a solitude and a desert* in the midst of creatures without any interaction with them, participating only in the presence and communication with the Lord himself, and with his most holy Mother and the holy Angels, allowing the Lord to govern all my operations and movements by the force of his divine will for the ends of his greater glory and honor.

15. During the whole course of my life from my childhood the Most High has exercised me with certain labors of continual infirmities, sorrows, and other molestations coming from creatures. But with the advance of years He increased also the sufferings of another kind of trial which made me forget much of those already suffered in the past; it was like a two-edged sword which divided my soul and spirit, as the Apostle says (Heb. 4:12). This trial was that constant fear of which I have so often spoken and for which I have been reprehended in this History. Much of it I felt even from childhood, but it developed and rose to the highest pitch since my entrance into religious life and my total application to the spiritual life when the Lord began to manifest more to my soul. Since that time the Lord himself has placed me upon this cross, or into this winepress of the heart, namely permitting me to remain in the continual dread of not being on the right path, of being deceived, or of having lost the grace and the friendship of God. This labor was much augmented by the publicity which some persons incautiously and to my great grief gave to my affairs, and by the terrors with which others filled me at my danger. So deeply rooted in my heart was this terror that it has never ceased, and I could not entirely conquer it despite the satisfaction and security my confessors and superiors have given me, their kind encouragement, their corrections, or the many other means they have used for this purpose. What is more, though the Angels and the Queen of heaven, and the Lord himself, have continually

* cf. Apoc. 12:14 [Ed.]

calmed and tranquilized me, and though I feel myself free in their presence, yet upon leaving the sphere of that divine light the battle then begins anew with incredible force, which I have recognized to be from the infernal dragon and his cruelty by which I am troubled, afflicted and grieved, truly fearing the danger as if I had not just been reassured. This fiend especially assails me whenever I am about to open my heart to my confessors, particularly to the superior who directs me, for nothing does this prince of darkness fear more than the light and power possessed by the ministers of the Lord.

16. In the bitterness of this sorrow, and the most ardent desire of grace and of not losing God, I have lived many years, and the various and numerous happenings amid this constant strife I cannot record. I believe the root of this fear has been holy, but many of its branches have been fruitless, though the divine Wisdom has known how to use them all for his different ends. For this reason permission was given to the enemy to avail himself of the blessings of the Lord for my affliction, for the inordinate fear which hinders the good, though it appears to imitate ever so much the good, is evil and of the demon.* My afflictions have at times reached such a pass that I considered it a great gain not to lose the life of my body, and especially that of my soul. But the Lord, whom the winds and the waves obey (Mt. 8:27), and whom all things serve (Ps. 118:91), who gives nourishment to every creature in opportune time (Ps. 144:15), has desired in his divine condescension to make tranquil my spirit so I could enjoy it with greater respite in writing the rest of this History. It was some years ago when the Lord consoled me and promised me peace and interior quiet before I would die, informing me at the same time the dragon is so furious against me because he suspects there is little time left to him to persecute me (Apoc. 12:12).

17. Toward the purpose of my beginning to write this third Part, the Lord on a certain day, with singular condescension and complacency, spoke to me as follows: “My dearest spouse, I desire to alleviate thy pains and moderate thy afflictions; quiet thyself, my dove, and rest securely in the sweetness of my love and my powerful and kingly word, for I assure thee upon this word that it is I who speak to thee and who have selected thy paths according to my pleasure. I am He who leads thee along these ways; I am at the right hand of the eternal Father and present in the sacrament of the Eucharist in the species of bread. The certainty of my truth I give thee so thou mayest quiet and convince thyself, for I do not desire thee, my dearest, to be my slave, but rather my daughter and spouse, and I desire thee to enjoy my gifts and delights. Thou hast suffered enough of fears and bitterness; let peace and tranquility enter into thy afflicted heart.” One would think such oft-repeated favors and assurances of the Lord would not be humiliating, but rather give only the greatest joy; however, they are of such a kind that they abase the heart to the lowest dust[†] and fill me with solicitude and apprehension regarding my danger. Whoever would imagine to the contrary has little experience and capacity for these works and secrets of the Most High. It is certain I have been instructed in many new things interiorly, and have been much alleviated in the troubles and temptations caused by these disorderly fears; yet the Lord is so wise and powerful that on the one hand He assures and on the other He awakens the soul, infusing new fear of falling, thereby preserving it in the knowledge and humiliation of self.

18. I must acknowledge that by these and other continual favors the Lord has not so much freed me from fears as confirmed me in them, for I live in continual dread lest I disgust or lose Him, show myself ungrateful in corresponding to his fidelity, and fail to fully love Him for Himself as the highest Good, for He well deserves all the love which I can give Him, and even

* cf. Apoc. 21:8; I Jn. 4:18 [Ed.]

† cf. I Peter 5:6 [Ed.]

that which I cannot give. Having these misgivings, and because of my great misery, solicitude, and many faults, I said on one occasion to the Most High: “My sweetest Love, Lord and Master of my soul, though Thou givest me so many assurances to quiet my troubled heart, how can I do away with my fears amid the dangers of this laborious and dreadful life, full of temptations and persecutions, during which I hold my treasure in a vase more fragile and weak than that of any other creature (II Cor. 4:7)?” With paternal condescension He responded: “My cherished spouse, I do not desire thee to lose the just fear of offending Me; yet it is my will for thee not to be disturbed and grieved in a disorderly manner, nor so as to hinder thee from rising to my exalted and perfect love. Thou hast my Mother for a Model and a Teacher, for thy instruction and imitation. I shall assist thee by my grace and support thee with my direction. Tell Me then what thou askest, or what thou dost desire for thy peace and security.”

19. With the greatest resignation I could muster I replied: “Highest Lord and Father, much is that which thou askest, although thy goodness and immense love deserve that I fulfill it all. But I know my weakness and inconstancy, and I shall be satisfied in no other way than by not offending Thee, neither by the slightest thought nor the least movement of my faculties, and I shall rest only when all my actions shall be according to thy pleasure and good will.” The Lord answered: “My continual help and favors shall not fail thee if thou correspond to them. In order for thee to better correspond I desire to perform a work which is in keeping with the love I have for thee. I shall place between my immutable Being and thy littleness a bond of my special providence, and by it thou shalt remain bound in such a way that whenever in the weakness of thy will thou dost execute anything less pleasing to Me thou shalt feel my influence detaining and recalling thee to Me. The effect of this blessing thou shalt know and feel immediately within thyself, just like a slave who is bound in prison so she may not flee.”

20. To the great joy and advantage of my soul the Almighty fulfilled his promise, and among many other favors and blessings (which must not be mentioned and which do not concern my purpose) none has been so precious to me as this one. I perceive it not only in great dangers but in the smallest, and in such a way that if I neglect or carelessly omit any work or ceremony, though it be no more than to humiliate myself in choir or kiss the floor upon entering to adore the Lord (as is common in religious orders), I at once feel a sweet force which draws me and calls my attention to the defect, and which on its part permits not the least imperfection. If sometimes in my weakness I fall into any, this divine force is at once present, causing in me heartrending pain. This pain then serves as a restraint which detains me from any disorderly inclination, and as a stimulus to immediately seek the remedy for the fault or imperfection committed. Since the gifts of the Lord are without regret (Rom. 11:29), He has not only bound me with this mysterious chain, but in his divine condescension on a certain day, namely his Holy Name and Circumcision, I perceived that He tripled it in order to restrain me and bind me still more forcibly, since a triple cord (as the Wise Man says) is difficult to break (Eccles. 4:12). All this was necessary due to my weakness so I might not be overcome by the importunate and astute temptations of the ancient serpent.

21. In the meanwhile these temptations increased so much that in spite of the blessings and commandments of the Lord mentioned above, the demands of obedience, and other reasons not to be mentioned here, I nevertheless hesitated to begin the last Part of this History, for I felt again the fury of the powers of darkness which tried to overwhelm me. I understood this, and I will explain it by what St. John says in chapter XII of the Apocalypse: That the great red dragon shot forth from its mouth a river of water against that heavenly Woman (Apoc. 12:15), whom he had pursued from heaven; and since he could not touch or destroy Her, he turned in great rage against

the remnants and the seed of that great Lady, who are sealed with the testimony of Jesus Christ (Ib. 17) in his Church. During the time of which I am speaking this ancient serpent strained all his wrath to disquiet me and as far as he could to force me to commit some faults which would retard the purity and perfection of life required of me and necessary for writing what I was commanded. While this interior battle continued, the feast of the holy Guardian Angels on the first of March intervened. Reciting Matins in choir I suddenly felt a noise or great disturbance, and I shrank and humiliated myself to the earth in reverential fear. Then I saw a great multitude of Angels which filled the whole choir, and in the midst of them came one of greater refulgence and beauty as it were on a platform and tribunal of judgment. I understood at once it was the archangel St. Michael. Without delay they intimated to me that they were sent by the Most High with special power and authority to judge my negligences and sins.

22. I desired to prostrate myself on the earth to acknowledge my transgressions and humbly to weep before those celestial judges, but since I was surrounded by the nuns I dared not make the presence of the Angels known by bodily prostrating myself. I did what was possible interiorly, bitterly weeping over my sins. In the interim I saw the holy Angels speaking and conferring with each other, saying: "This creature is useless, slow, and not at all fervent in fulfilling the commands of the Most High and of our Queen. She will not come to a full trust in the blessings and the enlightenments which she continually receives at our hands. Let us deprive her of all those blessings, since she does not put them to use, nor earnestly strive to be as pure and perfect as the Lord teaches her to be; nor does she proceed to write the Life of his most holy Mother as He has commanded her to do so many times. If she does not amend it is not just for her to receive so many and such great favors and instructions for such sanctity." Hearing these words my heart was sadly afflicted and I wept the more. Full of confusion and grief I spoke to the holy Angels in the bitterness of my soul, and I promised amendment of my faults and obedience unto death to the Lord and to his most holy Mother.

23. At my humiliation and promises the angelic spirits relaxed somewhat in their severity, and with greater kindness they told me if I would diligently fulfill what I had promised they would assure me of their continual favor and assistance, and admit me as their friend and companion in order to communicate with me in the same way as they converse with each other. I thanked them for their kindness and besought them to present my gratitude also before the Most High. They disappeared, warning me that for the favors they would show me I must imitate them in purity, committing no fault or imperfection willfully, and this they intimated as the condition upon which this promise depended.

24. After these and many other happenings which need not be mentioned I was left in a state of greater humiliation, as was natural with one who had been so severely reprehended for ingratitude, unworthiness, and insensibility toward so many blessings, exhortations and commandments. Full of confusion and sorrow I considered within myself what little excuse or pretext I had for resisting the divine will in view of all I had come to know and its importance for my welfare. I resolved firmly to execute what was commanded me or die in the attempt, and I sought for some powerful and tangible means which would rouse and urge me on to combat my lack of attention, and keep me alert if possible against any imperfection in all my operations and movements so I might always do what is most holy and pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. I went to my confessor and superior and besought him, in all the sincerity and submission of my heart, to reprehend me severely and force me to be perfect and solicitous in the most exact fulfillment of the divine will and in the execution of what His divine Majesty required of me. Although he was most zealous and vigilant as one who took the place of God and knew his will and my

prescribed path, yet he could not always come to my assistance or be present because of the absences required by his duties as a religious and a superior. I resolved therefore also to engage one of the nuns to assist me, asking her to reprehend and advise me often, or warn me and stir me up by threats. All these means and others I sought in the most ardent desire of pleasing the Lord, his most holy Mother my Teacher, and the holy Angels, all of whom were of the same mind in regard to my advance in perfection.

25. In the midst of these sollicitudes it happened to me one night that my holy Guardian Angel showed himself to me as being particularly pleased and said: "The Most High desires to condescend to thy desires and has appointed me to serve thee as a guide to spur thee on. I shall be thy faithful friend and companion in order to advise thee and rouse thy attention, and thou shalt find me present just as now whenever thou shalt turn thy eyes toward me in the desire of pleasing and faithfully serving thy Lord and Spouse. I shall teach thee how to praise Him continually and how to alternate with me in canticles, manifest to thee new mysteries and treasures of his greatness, and give thee deeper understandings of his immutable being and divine perfections. And whenever thou art engaged in outward works of obedience or charity, or when through some negligence thou turnest to earthly and exterior things, I shall call thee and warn thee to attend upon the Lord; and for this purpose I shall use some words of admonition, which often shall be these: *Who is like unto God, who dwells on high* (Ps. 112:5) and in the hearts of the humble? At other times I shall call to thy mind the blessings thou hast received from God and what thou dost owe to his love. At still others I shall remind thee to look upon Him and raise up thy heart to Him. Yet to all these warnings thou must be punctual, attentive and obedient.

26. "The Most High also desires me not to conceal from thee any longer a favor which until now thou hast overlooked among the many conferred upon thee by his most liberal bounty, and for this thou must now begin to thank Him. It is this, that I am one of the thousand Angels who served as a Guardian Angel of our great Queen in this world, and one of those who bear the escutcheon of his admirable and holy Name. Look upon me and thou shalt see it upon my breast." I looked and there recognized the holy Name in refulgent splendor, and I received new consolation and rejoicing of my soul. The holy Angel proceeded and said: "He has also commanded me to call thy attention to the fact that very rarely among us thousand Angels are any appointed as Guardian Angels of souls, and whichever souls thus far have been committed to our care have all been of the number of the saints and none of them of the reprobate. Take heed then, O soul, of thy obligation not to interrupt this series, for if in spite of this blessing thou art lost thy punishment and chastisement shall be of the severest ever inflicted upon the damned, and thou shalt be known as the most unhappy and ungrateful of all the daughters of Adam. That thou hast been favored by having me as thy Guardian Angel, who was one of the Guardian Angels of our great Queen most holy Mary, the Mother of our Creator, was ordained by his most high providence because thou hast been chosen among mortals to write the Life of his most blessed Mother and to imitate Her. I was appointed to instruct thee and assist thee because I was an eyewitness of her divine works and excellences.

27. "This office of a guide will be fulfilled principally by the great Lady herself, but I am to furnish thee with the necessary images in order to elucidate what the heavenly Teacher shall instruct thee, and I am to give thee other enlightenments ordained by the Most High for the clearer recording of the mysteries manifested to thee. Thou shalt experience all of them, although thou shalt not always know the connection and the sacraments hidden under this providential guidance. Thou shalt also perceive that the Lord himself, making use of this special providence

in thy regard, has commissioned me to compel thee with sweetest urgency to the imitation of the most pure Mother and our Queen, and to follow Her and obey Her in her doctrine. From now on I shall execute this mandate of the Lord with greater insistence and force. Resolve then to be most faithful and grateful in regard to these blessings, and seek to scale the highest summits of the perfection taught thee and asked of thee. Remember that even if thou dost reach the perfection of the highest Seraphim thou shalt still be in great debt to the copious and liberal mercy of God. The new mode of life which the Lord asks of thee is contained and made clear in the instructions given to thee by our great Queen and Lady, and in what thou shalt understand and write in this third Part. Listen to Her with a submissive heart, thank Her humbly, and execute her doctrine solicitously and carefully, for if thou shalt do this thou shalt be fortunate and eternally blessed.”

28. Other things which the holy Angel told me need not be mentioned for my present purpose. But what I have related in this introduction I have left written in order to manifest in part the order which the Most High has followed regarding me in order to oblige me to write this History, and also so something could be known of the ends which He in his wisdom has in view for this History. These are not for me alone, but so all who desire may obtain the fruits of this benefit as a powerful means to make efficacious the Redemption, each one for himself. It shall also become evident that Christian perfection cannot be attained without great battles with the demon and incessant labor in vanquishing and subjecting the passions and evil inclinations of our depraved human nature. Finally, so I could begin to write this third Part of her History, the heavenly Mother and Teacher in sweetest kindness said to me: “My eternal blessing, and that of my most holy Son, come over thee, so thou mayest write the rest of my Life, and labor and strive after the perfection we desire of thee. Amen.”