

# *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.

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## 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 1

*The Conception*

First of Four Volumes

Part I of III Parts

Books 1 and 2 of 8 Books

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# *The Conception*

## Books 1 and 2

*The Sacramental Mysteries wrought by the Most High in the Queen of Heaven from the Time of Her Immaculate Conception until the Incarnation of the Word in Her Virginal Womb, and How Much Merit She Herself Acquired through Divine Grace by Profiting from the Favors Conferred upon Her During those First Fifteen Years of Her Life.*

# INTRODUCTION

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

*Reason for Writing It, and Other Circumstances Relating to This.*

1. Whoever shall come to understand (if perhaps anyone shall understand it) that a simple woman, who by condition is ignorance and frailty itself, and who by her sins is most unworthy, in these last ages when the holy Church our Mother has such an abundance of teachers and most learned men, so rich in the doctrine of the holy Fathers and sacred Doctors, and at such an inopportune time when beneath the holy zeal of prudent and wise persons those who follow the spiritual life are disturbed and made uneasy, and this way is looked upon by the world with great suspicion and as the most dangerous path of the Christian life; whoever in such circumstances shall come to consider as blind and unworthy of further attention, and as more than audacious, imprudent and presumptuous, a woman such as myself who dares and determines to write of divine and supernatural things would seem to be justified, and it shall not surprise me if I am condemned as such. If the work itself does not contain an excuse for its attempt, since these are matters which are so exalted and superior to our desires, then to undertake such a work which is so far beyond all human capacities is either born of faulty judgment, or is moved by the power of a much greater and more powerful cause.

2. As faithful children of the holy Church we must confess that all mortals, not only with the use of all their natural powers, but with the simultaneous use of all the common and ordinary graces, are but incapable and as it were mute and ignorant weaklings for so difficult an undertaking as to explain and describe the hidden mysteries and magnificent sacraments which the powerful arm of the Most High has wrought in that creature; who in order to make Her his Mother has made Her an impenetrable sea of graces and gifts, and the Depository of the greatest treasures of the Divinity. How incapable must our weakness acknowledge itself to be when even the angelic spirits confess that words fail them when attempting to describe that which is so far above their thoughts and capacities. The life of this phoenix among the works of God is a book so sealed up that none is found among all the creatures of heaven and earth worthy to open it (Apoc. 5:3). It is evident then that only the powerful Lord can unseal it, He who made Her more perfect than all the creatures; or the Lady herself, our Queen and Mother, who was worthy to receive and properly to appreciate her ineffable gifts. It is in her power to select suitable instruments, and such as for her glory seem capable of manifesting these gifts in the proportion, at the time, and in the manner serviceable to her onlybegotten Son.

3. I would willingly maintain that these instruments could be none other than the teachers and learned men of the Catholic Church, or the doctors of the schools, who have all taught the way of truth and life. But the thoughts and judgments of the Most High are exalted as much above our own as heaven is exalted above the earth (Is. 55:9), and no one knows his mind or can counsel Him in his works (Rom. 11:34). He it is who holds the scales of the sanctuary in his hands (Apoc. 6:5), and who weighs the winds (Job 28:25), who grasps in his hands all the orbs (Is. 40:12), and by the equity of his most holy counsels disposes all things with weight and measure (Wis. 11:21), assigning to each one its opportune time and place. He dispenses the light of

wisdom (Ecclus. 24:37) and by his most equitable bounty He distributes it, and no one can ascend to the heavens to draw it down (Baruch 3:29), or fetch it from the clouds, or know its ways, or investigate the hidden paths thereof (Ib. 31). He alone observes it as it is in itself, and transfuses it as the vapor and emanation of his immense charity (Wis. 7:25), as the brightness of his eternal light, as the flawless reflection and image of his eternal bounty (Ib. 26), all through holy souls among the nations in order to make them friends of the Most High and constitute them as prophets (Ib. 27). The Lord alone knows why and for what purpose He thus prepared me, the most vile creature, and why He thus called and raised me, obliged and compelled me, to write the Life of his most holy Mother, our Queen and Lady.

4. It is beyond the prudent surmise of any man that without this influence and power of the Most High the thought of such a work could enter into a human heart, or such an enterprise take shape in my mind. For I acknowledge and confess myself to be a weak woman, lacking in all virtue; hence it should be far from my thoughts to approach such a work, but equally as far from me to refuse it on my own account. And in order to make possible a sound judgment in this matter, I shall recount something of that which has happened to me regarding this cause.

5. In the eighth year after the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my life, obedience imposed upon me the office which I unworthily hold at the present day, namely that of abbess of this convent. I found myself much troubled, sorrowful and discouraged, because my age and my desire inclined me neither to govern nor command, but rather to obey and be governed; and the knowledge that in order to invest me with this office a dispensation had been obtained, and other just reasons, augmented my fears with which the Most High has crucified my heart during all my life by the continual dread which I cannot explain, namely whether my path is secure, and whether I would lose or retain his friendship and grace.

6. In this tribulation I cried to the Lord with all my heart for Him to help me, and if it be his will that I would be freed from this danger and burden. Although it is true the Lord had prepared me sometime beforehand and commanded me to accept the office, and although when I tried to excuse myself due to my lack of resolution He always consoled me and reiterated his command, I nevertheless did not cease my petitions, but rather augmented them. For I perceived and understood in the Lord that although He showed this to be his holy will which I could not hinder, yet I was aware at the same time that He left me free to retire and resist and, if I wished, to act according to my weakness as a creature and in the consciousness of my total insufficiency. Such is the prudence of the Lord in his dealings with men. Relying on this kindness of the Lord, I increased my efforts to be relieved from this evident danger, which is so little estimated by our human nature with its bad habits and disorderly passions. The Lord, however, repeated continually that it was His will, and He consoled me, admonishing me through his holy Angels to obey.

7. I fled in this affliction to our Queen and Lady as to my only refuge in all my troubles, and after I had manifested to Her my way of life and my desires She deigned to answer me in these sweetest of words: "My daughter, console thyself, and let not this labor disturb thy heart; prepare thyself for it, and I shall be thy Mother and Superior whom thou shalt obey, and the same I shall be to thy subjects. I shall compensate for thy faults, and thou shalt be my attendant through whom I shall work the will of my Son and my God. In all thy temptations and labors thou shalt come to me in order to confer about them and take my counsel, which I shall give thee in all things. Obey me, and I shall favor thee and be attentive to thy afflictions." These were the words of the Queen, as consoling as they were soothing to my soul. From that day on the Mother of Mercy multiplied her mercies toward me, her slave, for She became more intimate with me and

continued her communication with my soul, receiving me, listening to me, teaching me with ineffable condescension, giving me counsel and encouragement in my affliction, filling my soul with the light and knowledge of eternal life, and commanding me to renew the vows of my profession in her presence. Finally, this our most amiable Mother and Lady revealed Herself still more fully to her slave, withdrawing the veil from the hidden sacraments and magnificent mysteries which are contained, though unknown to mortals, in her most holy life. And although this blessed and supernatural light was uninterrupted (and especially on her feast days, and on other occasions when I was instructed in many mysteries), yet it was not so full, frequent and clear as that which She afterwards taught me, many times adding the command that I write them as I understood them and as Her Majesty would dictate and inspire me. Particularly on one of these feasts of most holy Mary the Most High informed me that He had in reserve many hidden sacraments and blessings which He had conferred upon his heavenly Mother in the days of her pilgrimage, and it was his intention to manifest them to me so I could write them down according to her guidance. And this will of His Majesty most high I have known continually for the space of ten years, though I resisted it until I began to write for the first time this divine History.

8. Conferring about this care with the holy princes and Angels whom the Almighty had appointed to guide me in this work of writing the History of our Queen, and manifesting to them how great was my disturbance and affliction of heart, and how stuttering and mute was my tongue for such an arduous task, they replied over and over again that it was the will of the Most High that I write the Life of his most pure Mother and our Lady. On one day especially, when I made many objections and declared to them my difficulties and my incapability and great fears, they spoke to me these words: "With good reason, O soul, dost thou fear and art disturbed, dost thou doubt and hesitate in a matter in which we angels ourselves would do the same as considering ourselves unable worthily to describe the high and magnificent doings of the Omnipotent in the Mother of Piety and our own Queen. But remember, beloved, that the firmament, the whole machinery of the world, and all things created will sooner fail than the words of the Most High fail. Many times He has promised to his creatures, and in his Church it is recorded in the Holy Scriptures, that the obedient man shall speak of victories over his enemies (Prov. 21:28) and shall not be reprehensible in obeying. When He created the first man and gave him the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen. 2:16), He established the virtue of obedience, and swearing He swore, in order to give greater assurance to man. The Lord has repeatedly given such an oath; for instance, when He promised to Abraham that the Messiah would descend from his race, He added thereto the assurance of an oath (Ib. 22:16); the same He did when He created the first man, assuring him that the obedient shall not err. He also repeated this oath when He ordained that his most holy Son would die (Lk. 1:73), and He gave a like assurance to men that those who would obey this second Adam, imitating Him in the obedience by which He restored what the first Adam lost through his disobedience, shall live forever, and that the enemy shall have no part in them. Remember, Mary, that all obedience takes its rise from God as from its first and principal source, and we angels obey the power of his divine right hand and his most just will. We cannot contravene or ignore it because we see the immutable being of God face to face and thereby perceive that his will is holy, pure and true, most equitable and just. Now this certainty which the angels possess through the beatific vision mortals also possess in its proper proportion as viators through those words which our Lord spoke concerning prelates and superiors: *He that heareth you, heareth Me* (Lk: 10:16), and 'he who obeys you, obeys Me'. And in virtue of the obedience rendered because of God, who is the principal Cause and Superior, it is the responsibility of his almighty providence to accept the consequences of obedience whenever

that which is commanded is not materially sinful. Accordingly the Lord assures us of these things by an oath, and He will sooner cease to exist (though this is impossible, for He is God) than fail in his word (Mt. 24:35). In the same way as children proceed from their parents, and all the living from Adam, multiplied from his natural being in his posterity, so also all prelates proceed from God as from the supreme Lord, on whose account we render obedience to our superiors, human beings to their living superiors, we angels to our higher hierarchies of the same nature, and both one and the other in their superiors obey the eternal God. Now remember that all of these have directed and commanded thee to do that about which thou still dost hesitate. If thou now shouldst begin to write by mistake, intending thereby to fulfill his commands in obedience, then the Most High would do with thy pen the same as He did with the knife of Abraham when he was about to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22:11), for on that occasion the Lord commanded one of us angels to withhold the arm and the knife. He did not thus command us to withhold thy pen, but has ordered us with lightest breath to speed it on, and while gazing on His Majesty to direct and assist thee by illuminating thy intellect.”

9. Such encouragement and instruction my holy Angels and lords gave me at this time. On many other occasions the prince St. Michael informed me of the same desire and command of the Most High. By the continual enlightenments, favors and instructions of this great Prince I have understood great sacraments and mysteries of the Lord and of the Queen of heaven, for this holy Archangel was one of those who guarded and assisted Her and who were delegated from the angelic choirs, as I will relate in its place (201-206). He is at the same time the general patron and protector of the holy Church. He was a special witness and faithful minister of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. This I have often heard from St. Michael himself, who showed me singular favors in my troubles and dangers, and has promised me his assistance and direction in this undertaking.

10. In addition to all this, and other facts which need not be mentioned here, and in addition to what I shall say further on, the Lord has directly in his own Person commanded and manifested to me his will many times, and in words which I shall presently repeat. He said to me one day on the feast of the Presentation of most holy Mary in the temple: “My spouse, many mysteries pertaining to my Mother and the Saints have been made manifest in the Church Militant; but many are still hidden, especially their interior lives and secrets, and these I desire now to make known, and I desire thee to put them down in writing according as thou art guided, and especially by most pure Mary. I shall reveal and explain them to thee, for until now I have, according to the hidden designs of my wisdom, kept them in reserve, because the time for revealing them was not befitting or opportune to my providence. Now it is, and it is my will for thee to write. Obey, soul.”

11. All these facts which I have mentioned, and many more which I could mention, would not have been urgent enough to rouse my will to an enterprise so arduous and so foreign to my condition if to them had not been added the motive of obedience to my superiors, who have governed my soul and taught me the way of truth. For certainly my mistrusts and fears were not so unimportant as to permit me to come to a full decision without their commands in so great a matter, when in resolving upon others, also supernatural and vastly less difficult, I rely so much on the guidance of obedience. As an ignorant woman I have always sought this north star, for it is a duty incumbent on all to test all things, even though they seem to be most noble and excellent beyond suspicion, by the approbation of the teachers and ministers of the holy Church. Such assurance I have been solicitous to procure for the direction of my soul, and more particularly in this undertaking of writing the Life of the Queen of heaven. I have frequently tried

to prevent my superiors from being moved by any accounts of my interior experiences, disguising as much as I could many things, and in tears begging the Lord to enlighten them and fill them with mistrust against me, to watch over them lest they be deceived or permit me to be deceived or misdirected. Many times I have desired that the very thought of allowing me to engage in this enterprise would fade from their minds.

12. I will also confess that the demon, availing himself of my natural dispositions and fears, has made great efforts to hinder this work by seeking to terrify and afflict me. He would no doubt have succeeded in keeping me from it if the zeal and persistence of my superiors had not counteracted my cowardice. In this persecution the Lord, the most pure Virgin, and the holy Angels often took occasion to renew their enlightenment, their tokens and wonders. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, I deferred, or to speak more appropriately, I resisted this undertaking many years; I refused compliance, as I will describe further on, not having the boldness to attempt the execution of something so far above all my powers. And I believe this was not without the particular providence of His Majesty, for in the course of those years so many things have happened to me, and I may say, so many mysterious and various difficulties intervened, that I would not have been able to preserve the quietude and tranquility of spirit which is necessary for retaining the proper light and information. For not in all states of mind, though they are of the highest and most advanced, can the soul engage in that exalted activity which is necessary to correspond to such exquisite and delicate influences. In addition to this there was still another reason, namely during this protracted delay I could inform myself and assure myself of the truth of these things not only by means of the new enlightenment which grew as time passed on and by the prudence which experience gives, but also by the persevering insistence of the Lord, of the holy Angels, and of my superiors, under whose obedience I lived. Likewise an opportunity was given me to quiet my fears and misgivings, overcome my cowardice and perplexity, and trust that to the Lord which I would not trust to my weakness.

13. Confiding then in the great virtue of obedience, I resolved in the name of the Lord and of the Queen my Lady to lay aside my reluctance. I call this virtue great, not only because by it the most noble activities in the faculties of a creature, namely the mind, the judgment, and the free will, are offered as a holocaust and sacrifice to the Lord, but also because no other virtue ever assures success more unfailingly than obedience, for by it the creature then does not operate of itself alone, but also as an instrument of him who governs and commands. This was the assurance of Abraham when he overcame the force of the natural love for his son Isaac (Gen. 22:3); and if it was powerful for this, and for the sun and the heavens to stop their swift movement (Josue 10:13), it certainly has power to move the earth. If Oza had been governed by obedience, perhaps he would not have been punished as presumptuous and rash in touching the ark (II Kg. 6:7). Well do I know I am more unworthy than Oza in stretching out my hand to touch not the lifeless and figurative ark of the ancient law, but the living Ark of the New Testament wherein is contained the manna of the Divinity, the master copy of grace, and his holy law. But if I remain silent, I fear with good reason to disobey most high commands, and I could exclaim with Isaias (6:5): *Woe is me because I have held my peace!* Thus, my Queen and Lady, it is better for thy most benign goodness and mercy and the blessings of thy generous hand to shine forth through my base and unworthy efforts; it is better for me to experience thy blessings in obeying thy commands than to fall into thy displeasure. It shall be a work of thy clemency, O purest Mother, to raise the poor from the earth and to execute through a weak and unfit instrument a work so difficult, for thereby the graces which thy most holy Son has communicated to Thee shall be magnified; moreover, Thou shalt thereby exclude that deceitful



presumption which might make us imagine that by human effort, or by earthly prudence, or by the force and authority of dispute this work is accomplished, but rather by the virtue of divine grace Thou dost awaken anew the hearts of the faithful, drawing them toward Thee, Thou fountain of kindness and mercy. Speak therefore, O Lady, that thy servant may hear (I Kg. 3:9) with an ardent desire fully to obey Thee. But how can my desires ever reach or equal my indebtedness? A befitting response on my part will be impossible, but if it were possible I would desire to give it. O powerful and exalted Queen, fulfill thy promises by manifesting to me thy graces and attributes so thy greatness may be made known and heralded through the nations and generations. Speak, O Lady, for thy servant heareth; speak and magnify the Most High in the powerful and wonderful works which his right hand performed for Thee in thy most profound humility. Let them flow from his hands which are turned and filled with hyacinths into thine (Cant. 5:14), and from thine to thy devout servants, so the angels may bless Him, the just magnify Him, and the sinners seek Him. Let all of them see the example of thy highest sanctity and purity, and by the grace of thy most holy Son let me be favored with this mirror and efficacious rule by which I can set my life in order, for this is to be the principal purpose and first object of my solicitude in writing thy Life. This Thou hast repeatedly intimated to me, condescending to offer me a living pattern and a mirror without flaw, in which I could see my soul and according to which I could adorn it, in order to become worthy to be thy daughter and the bride of thy most holy Son.

14. This shall be my whole object and intention, and therefore I shall not write as a teacher, but as a disciple; not as one instructing, but as one trying to learn, knowing it is the duty of women to be silent in the holy Church and to listen to the teachers (I Cor. 14:34). But as an instrument of the Queen of heaven I shall declare what She deigns to teach me and whatever She commands me, for all souls are capable of receiving the Spirit which her divine Son has promised to pour out over men of all conditions without exception (Joel 2:28; Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26). Souls are also able to communicate it in an appropriate manner whenever the higher authority ordains it by Christian providence, as in this case I judge to have been ordered by my superiors. To err is possible for me, consequent upon being an ignorant woman, but not in obeying, and neither would it be willful; therefore I submit and subject myself to those who guide me, and to the correction of the holy Catholic Church, to whose ministers I have recourse in whatever difficulty I have. And I desire my prelate, teacher and confessor to be a witness and a censor of this doctrine which I receive, and also a severe and vigilant judge of the manner in which I put it into practice or fail in the fulfillment of it and of the obligations measured by this blessing.

15. By the will of the Lord and the command of obedience I have written for the second time this divine History, for during the first writing of it, though the light by which I perceived the mysteries was abundant and fruitful in proportion as my shortcomings were great, my tongue was unequal to the task of finding the proper terms, and my pen not swift enough for a full statement. I omitted some things,\* and with the lapse of time and by the aid of new

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\* Ven. Mary, in obedience to a substitute confessor, had burned the first writing of the *Mystical City of God* (cf. par. 19 below). She rewrote it by the command of her superiors, and when this second writing was compared to a copy of the first (which she had written for King Philip IV) it corresponded *exactly*, except for a few additions which Ven. Mary references here. Pope Benedict XIV in 1748 declared this exact second writing a miracle: "It happened, not without a miracle, that the same work was rewritten by the servant of God without any discrepancy from the one which was burned previously, except for certain unimportant additions." *Magnum Bullarium Romanum*, Luxembourg (1753), in *Comparatio quoque operis*, etc., Const. 46.

enlightenments I found myself better prepared to write it this second time. Nevertheless, there always remains much of what I understood and have seen which I must leave unsaid, since to say all will never be possible. Besides these reasons there was another known to me in the Lord, namely in my first writing my attention was greatly distracted from attending to the matter at hand and the ordering of this work by such great temptations and fears as I had; and the tempests of reasonings and suggestions with which I battled were so excessive that, deeming it temerity to have attempted such an arduous work, I submitted to the order to burn it. And I believe this was not without the permission of the Lord, for in such a state of turbulence it was not possible to present my soul in a state entirely befitting and desirable to the Lord, writing into my heart and engraving into my spirit his doctrine as He now commands me to do, and as can be inferred from the following event.

16. On one of the feast days of the Purification of Our Lady, after having received the most Blessed Sacrament, I desired to celebrate this holy festival (because it was the anniversary of my profession) with many acts of thanksgiving and of total resignation to the Most High, who without any merits of mine had chosen me as his spouse. While I was thus exciting these affections, I felt in my interior a most powerful change accompanied by abundant light which raised me and urged me strongly and sweetly (Wis. 8:1) toward the knowledge of the essence of God, his goodness, perfections and attributes, and to the disclosing of my own misery. And these different things, which were placed before my understanding at one and the same time, produced in me various effects. The first was all the attention of my mind and all my aspirations were raised on high; the other effect was I was humbled in mind to the very dust in such a way that it seemed to take away my own existence. At the same time I felt a most vehement sorrow and contrition for my grievous sins, joined to the determination to amend and to renounce all worldly things, aspiring instead toward complete love of God. In these effects I remained as if annihilated, and the greatest pain seemed but consolation, and death but life. Taking pity on my faintness, in sheer mercy the Lord spoke to me: “Be not dismayed, my daughter and spouse, for in order to pardon, wash, and purify thee from thy sins, I shall apply my infinite merits and the blood which I shed for thee. Animate thyself to desire all perfection in imitation of the life of most holy Mary. Write her Life a second time so thou mayest supply what was lacking, and impress her doctrines on thy heart. Do not again irritate my justice, nor show thyself thankless for my mercy by burning what thou shalt have written, lest my indignation deprive thee of the light which without thy merit thou hast received for the manifestation of these mysteries.”

17. I immediately thereupon saw the Mother of God, who also spoke to me: “My daughter, as yet thou hast not derived becoming fruit for thy soul from the tree of life\* which was offered thee in the writing of my History, nor didst thou enter into the substance of its contents. Thou hast scarcely yet thought of this hidden manna, nor hast thou attained that perfect and ultimate preparation which the Almighty requires in order to engrave and imprint, in a proper manner, my virtues into thy soul. I am to give thee the appropriate qualities and perfections for that which the divine right hand is to accomplish in thee. I have asked Him that through my intercession and through the abundant graces conferred upon me I be permitted to adorn thee and compose thy soul, so thou mayest turn again to the writing of my Life with less attention to the material and more to the spiritual and substantial part of it. Remove the hindrances which oppose the currents of divine grace flowing to thee from the Almighty through me, and make thyself capable of

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\* cf. Apoc. 22:2, 14 [Ed.]

readily accepting the full portion assigned to thee by the divine will. Make sure thou do not curtail or limit it by thy shortcomings and imperfections.” Thereupon I saw that the Mother of Piety clothed me in a garment whiter than the snow and more shining than the sun, and She girded me with a most precious girdle and said: “This is a participation of my purity.” I also asked for the infused science of the Lord, which would serve me as most beautiful hair for my adornment and for other precious gifts and presents, the value of which I saw and knew was great, but which I was not able fully to estimate. After having thus adorned me the heavenly Lady said: “Work faithfully and earnestly to imitate me and to be my most perfect daughter, engendered of my spirit and nourished at my bosom. I give thee my blessing so in my name and under my direction and assistance thou mayest again resume thy writing.”

18. This entire most holy Life of Mary is divided for greater clarity into three Parts. The first Part treats of all that pertains to the first fifteen years of her life, from the moment of her most pure Conception until the moment when in her virginal womb the eternal Word assumed flesh, including all the Most High performed for most holy Mary during these years. The second Part embraces the mystery of the Incarnation, the whole life of Christ our Lord, his Passion and Death, and his Ascension into heaven, thus describing the life of our Queen in union with that of her divine Son, and all She did while living with Him. The third Part contains the life of the Mother of Grace during the time She lived alone, deprived of the companionship of Christ our Redeemer, until the happy hour of her transition, Assumption and Coronation as the Empress of heaven in order to live eternally as the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. These three Parts I have subdivided into eight Books so they may be more convenient for use and always remain the subject of my thoughts, the spur of my will, and my meditation day and night.

19. In order to say something of the time in which I wrote this divine History, it must be noted that my father, Brother Francis Coronel, and my mother, Sister Catharine de Arana, founded in their own house this convent of the discalced nuns of the Immaculate Conception by the command and the will of God which was declared to my mother, Sister Catharine, in a special vision and revelation. This foundation took place on the octave of the Epiphany, the thirteenth of January, 1619, when my mother, my sister and I took the habit. My father took refuge in the order of our seraphic father St. Francis, in which two of his sons had already been living as religious. There he took the habit, made his profession, lived an exemplary life, and died a most holy death. My mother and I received the veil on the day of the Purification of the Queen of heaven, on the second of February, 1620. Because of the youth of the other daughter her profession was delayed. The Almighty in his sheer goodness favored our family so much that all of us were consecrated to Him in the religious state. In the eighth year of the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my age, in the year of our Lord 1627, holy obedience imposed upon me the office of abbess, which to this day I unworthily hold. During the first ten years of the time in which I held this office I received many commands from the Most High and from the Queen of heaven to write her most holy Life, and I continued in fear and doubt to resist these heavenly commands during all that time until the year 1637, when I began to write it the first time. On finishing it, being full of fears and tribulations, and by the counsel of a confessor (who directed me during the absence of my regular confessor), I burned all the writings containing not only this sacred History, but many other grave and mysterious matters, for he told me women should not write in the Church. I obeyed his commands promptly, but because of this I had to endure most severe reproaches from my superiors and from the confessor who knew my whole life. Anew they threatened me with censures so I might write it a second time. The Most High

and the Queen of heaven also repeated their commands that I obey. During this second writing so abundant was the light concerning the divine Being, so copious were the blessings of the divine right hand for the renewal and vivification of my soul in the teachings of my heavenly Mother, so perfect were the instructions, and so exalted were the sacraments communicated to me, that it was necessary to write another book in connection with this History, the title of which is: *Laws of the Spouse, pinnacles of his chaste love, and fruits collected from the tree of life\* of most holy Mary our Lady.*<sup>†</sup> By divine favor I begin to write this History on the eighth of December, 1655, on the day of the most pure Immaculate Conception.

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\* cf. Apoc. 22:2 [Ed.]

† cf. *Transfixion* 25 [Ed.]