

that intellects grow vigorous and new trains of reasoning are evolved. These things need scarcely be said, were it not that the writer is aware of such insinuations having been made against some of the foremost champions of revealed truth, to the detriment of the new university. And as the same tongues still wag, it were well to be cautioned against them. The establishment of a Catholic university in England is too serious an affair to allow its progress to be impeded by straws. The real difficulties are too numerous to admit of imaginary ones. It is regarded as a test of the Church's vitality. Catholic charities and Catholic intellects built up the glory and reputation of seventeen out of the twenty colleges of Oxford. Catholic charities still flow, and Catholic intellects still shine.

THE POSITION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY.

I.

WHY WE HONOR HER.

THE sincere adorers and lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ look with reverence on every object with which He was associated, and they conceive an affection for every person that was near and dear to Him on earth. And the closer the intimacy of those persons with our Saviour the holier do they appear in our estimation; just as those planets partake most of the sun's light and heat which revolve the nearest around him.

There is something hallowed to the eye of the Christian in the very clay of Judea, because it was pressed by the footprints of our Blessed Redeemer. With what reverent steps we would enter the cave of Bethlehem, because *there* was born the Saviour of the world. With what religious demeanor we would tread the streets of Nazareth when we remembered that *there* were spent the days of His boyhood. What profound religious awe would fill our hearts on ascending Mount Calvary, where He paid by His blood the ransom of our souls.

But if the *lifeless* soil claims so much reverence, how much more veneration would be enkindled in our hearts for the *living* persons who were the friends and associates of our Saviour on earth? For,

we know that He exercised a certain salutary and magnetic influence on those whom He approached. "All the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him and healed all,"¹ as happened to the woman who had been troubled with an issue of blood.²

We would seem indeed to draw nearer to Jesus, if we had the happiness of only conversing with the Samaritan woman, or of eating at the table of Zaccheus, or of being entertained by Nicodemus. But if we were admitted into the inner circle of His friends, of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, for instance, the Baptist, or the Apostles, we would be conscious that in their company we were drawing still nearer to Jesus, and imbibing somewhat of that spirit which they must have largely received from their familiar relations with Him.

Now, if the land of Judea is looked upon as hallowed ground, because Jesus dwelt there; if the Apostles were considered as models of holiness, because they were the chosen companions and pupils of our Lord in His latter years, how peerless must have been the sanctity of Mary, who gave Him birth, whose breast was His pillow, who nursed and clothed Him in infancy, who guided His early steps, who accompanied Him in His exile to Egypt and back, who abode with Him from infancy to boyhood, from boyhood to manhood, who during all that time listened to the words of wisdom which fell from His lips, who was the first to embrace Him at His birth, and the last to receive His dying breath on Calvary. This sentiment is so natural to us that we find it bursting forth spontaneously from the lips of the woman of the Gospel, who hearing the words of Jesus full of wisdom and sanctity, lifted up her voice and "said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck."

It is in accordance with the economy of divine Providence; that whenever God designs any person for some important work, He bestows on that person the graces and dispositions necessary for faithfully discharging it.

When Moses was called by heaven to be the leader of the Hebrew people, he hesitated to assume the formidable office on the plea of "impediment and slowness of tongue." But Jehovah reassured him by promising to qualify him for the sublime functions assigned to him: "I will be in thy mouth, and I will teach thee what thou shalt speak."³

The Prophet Jeremiah was sanctified from his very birth, because he was destined to be the herald of God's law to the children of Israel: "Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew

¹ Luke vi. 19.

² Matt. ix. 20.

³ Exod. iv. 12.

thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee."¹

"Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost,"² that she might be worthy to be the hostess of our Lord during the three months that Mary dwelt under her roof.

John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb."³ "He was a burning and a shining light,"⁴ because he was chosen to prepare the way of the Lord.

The Apostles received the plenitude of grace; they were endowed with the gift of tongues and other privileges⁵ before they commenced the work of the ministry. Hence, St. Paul says: "Our sufficiency is from God, who hath made us *fit* ministers of the New Testament."⁶

Now of all who have participated in the ministry of the Redemption, there is none who filled any position so exalted, so sacred, as is the incommunicable office of Mother of Jesus; and there is no one consequently that *needed* so high a degree of holiness as she did.

For if God thus sanctified His Prophets and Apostles, as being destined to be the bearers of the word of life, how much more sanctified must Mary have been, who was to bear the Lord and "Author of life."⁷ If John was so holy, because he was chosen as the pioneer to prepare the way of the Lord, how much more holy was she who ushered Him into the world. If holiness became John's mother, surely a greater holiness became the mother of John's Master. If God said to His priests of old: "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord;"⁸ nay, if the vessels themselves used in the divine service and churches are set apart by special consecration, we cannot conceive Mary to have been ever profaned by sin who was the chosen vessel of election, even the Mother of God.

When we call the Blessed Virgin the Mother of God, we assert our belief in two things: 1st. That her Son, Jesus Christ, is true man, else she were not a *mother*. 2d. That He is true God, else she were not the *Mother of God*. In other words, we affirm that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word of God, who in His divine nature, is from all eternity begotten of the Father, consubstantial with Him, was in the fulness of time, again begotten, by being born of the Virgin, thus taking to Himself from her maternal womb, a human nature of the same substance with hers.

But it may be said: the Blessed Virgin is not the Mother of the Divinity. She had not, and could not have any part in the gener-

¹ Jer. i. 5.

² Luke i. 41.

³ Luke i. 15.

⁴ John v. 35.

⁵ Acts ii.

⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

⁷ Acts iii. 15.

⁸ Isaiah lii. 11.

ation of the Word of God. For, that generation is eternal; her maternity temporal; He is her Creator; she His creature. Style her, if you will, the Mother of the man Jesus, or even of the human nature of the Son of God, but not the Mother of God.

I shall answer this objection by putting a question. Did the mother who bore us, have any part in the production of our *souls*? Was not this nobler part of our being the work of God alone? And yet who would for a moment dream of saying, "the mother of my body," and not "*my* mother?"

The comparison teaches us that the terms parent and child, mother and son, refer to the persons and not to the parts or elements of which the persons are composed. Hence, no one says: "The mother of my *body*," "the mother of my *soul*;" but in all propriety "my mother," the mother of me who live and breathe, think and act, *one* in my personality, though uniting in it a soul directly created by God, and a material body directly derived from the maternal womb. In like manner, as far as the sublime mystery of the Incarnation can be reflected in the natural order, the Blessed Virgin, under the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, by communicating to the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, as mothers do, a true human nature of the same substance with her own, is thereby really and truly His Mother.

It is in this sense that the title of *Mother of God*, denied by Nestorius, was vindicated to her by the General Council of Ephesus in 431; and in this sense, and in no other, has the Church called her by that title.

Hence, by immediate and necessary consequence follow her surpassing dignity and excellence, and her special relationship and affinity, not only with her divine Son, but also with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

Mary, as Wordsworth beautifully expresses it, united in her person "a mother's love with maiden purity." The Church teaches us that she was always a Virgin, a Virgin before her espousals, during her married life, and after her spouse's death. "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God . . . to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, . . . and the Virgin's name was Mary."

That she remained a virgin till after the birth of Jesus is expressly stated in the Gospel.¹ It is not less certain that she continued in the same state during the remainder of her days; for she is called a Virgin in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed, and that epithet cannot be restricted to the time of our Saviour's birth, but must be referred to her whole life, inasmuch as both creeds were compiled long after she had passed away.

¹ Luke i. 26, 27.

² Matt. i. 25.

The Canon of the Mass, which is very probably of Apostolic antiquity, speaks of her as the "glorious *Ever Virgin*," and in this sentiment all Catholic tradition concurs.

There is a propriety which suggests itself to every Christian in Mary's remaining a Virgin after the birth of Jesus, for, as Bishop Bull of the Protestant Episcopal Church of England remarks, "It cannot with decency be imagined that the most holy vessel which was once consecrated to be a receptacle of the Deity, should be afterwards desecrated and profaned by human use." The learned Grotius, Calvin, and other eminent Protestant writers hold the same view.

The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is now combated by Protestants as it was in the early days of the Church by Helvidius and Jovinian, on the following grounds :

1st. The evangelist says that "Joseph took unto him his wife, and he knew her not *till* she brought forth her firstborn son."¹ This sentence suggests to dissenters that other children besides Jesus were born to Mary. But the qualifying word *till* by no means implies that the chaste union which had subsisted between Mary and Joseph up to the birth of our Lord was subsequently altered. The Protestant Hooker justly complains of the early heretics as "abusing greatly these words, gathering, against the honor of the Blessed Virgin, that a thing denied with special circumstance doth import an opposite affirmation when once that circumstance is expired." To express Hooker's idea in plainer words, when a thing is said not to have occurred until another event had occurred, it does not necessarily follow that it did occur after that event took place.

The Scripture says that the raven went forth from the ark, "and did not return *till* the waters were dried up upon the earth,"² that is, it never returned. "Samuel saw Saul no more *till* the day of his death."³ He did not, of course, see him after death. "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand *until* I make thy enemies thy footstool."⁴ These words apply to our Saviour, who did not cease to sit at the right of God after His enemies were subdued.

2d. But Jesus is called Mary's *firstborn* Son, and does not a firstborn always imply the subsequent birth of other children to the same mother? By no means; for the name of firstborn was given to the first son of every Jewish mother, whether other children followed or not. We find this epithet applied to Machir, for instance, who was the only son of Manasses.⁵

3d. But is not mention frequently made of the brethren of Jesus?⁶

¹ Matt. i. 25.

² Gen. viii. 7.

³ 1 Kings xv. 35.

⁴ Ps. cix.

⁵ Josue xvii. 1.

⁶ Matt. xii. 46; xiii. 55, 56.

Fortunately the Gospels themselves will enable us to trace the maternity of those who are called His brothers, not to the Blessed Virgin, but to another Mary. St. Matthew mentions, by name, James and Joseph among the brethren of Jesus;¹ and the same Evangelist and also St. Mark tell us that among those who were present at the crucifixion, were Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Joseph.² And St. John, who narrates with more detail the circumstances of the crucifixion, informs us who this second Mary was, for he says that there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen.³ There is no doubt that Mary of Cleophas is identical with Mary who is called by Matthew and Mark the mother of James and Joseph. And as Mary of Cleophas was the kinswoman of the Blessed Virgin, James and Joseph are called the brothers of Jesus, in conformity with the Hebrew practice of giving that appellation to cousins or near relations. Abraham, for instance, was the uncle of Lot, yet he calls him brother.⁴

Mary is exalted above all other women, not only because she united "a mother's love with maiden purity," but also because she was conceived without original sin. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is thus expressed by the Church: "We define that the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin."⁵

Unlike the rest of the children of Adam, the soul of Mary was never subject to sin, even in the first moment of its infusion into the body. She alone was exempt from the original taint. This immunity of Mary from original sin is exclusively due to the merits of Christ, as the Church expressly declares. She needed a Redeemer as well as the rest of the human race, and therefore was "redeemed, but in a more sublime manner."⁶ Mary is as much indebted to the precious blood of Jesus for having been *preserved*, as we are for having been *cleansed* from original sin.

Although the Immaculate Conception was not formulated into a dogma of faith till 1854, it is at least implied in Holy Scripture, it is in strict harmony with the place which Mary holds in the economy of redemption, and has virtually received the pious assent of the faithful from the earliest days of the Church.

In Genesis we read: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head."⁷

¹ Matt. xii. 46; xiii. 55, 56.

⁴ Gen. xiii. 8.

⁵ Ibid.

² Matt. xxvii.; Mark, xv.

⁶ Bulla Dogmat. Pii Papæ IX.

⁷ Gen. iii. 15.

³ John xix. 25.

All Catholic commentators, ancient and modern, recognize in the seed, the serpent, and the woman, types of our Saviour, of Mary, and the Devil. God here declares that the enmity of the Seed and that of the woman towards the Tempter were to be identical. Now the enmity of Christ or the Seed towards the evil One was absolute and perpetual. Therefore the enmity of Mary, or the woman, towards the Devil, never admitted of any momentary reconciliation, which would have existed if she were ever subject to original sin.

It is worthy of note that as three characters appear on the scene of our fall, Adam, Eve, and the rebellious Angel, so three corresponding personages figure in our redemption, Jesus Christ, who is the second Adam,¹ Mary, who is the second Eve, and the Archangel Gabriel. The second Adam was immeasurably superior to the first, Gabriel was superior to the fallen angel, and hence we are warranted by analogy to conclude that Mary was superior to Eve. But if she had been created in original sin, instead of being superior, she would be inferior to Eve, who was certainly created immaculate. We cannot conceive that the mother of Cain was created superior to the mother of Jesus. It would have been unworthy of a God of infinite purity to have been born of a woman that was even for an instant under the dominion of Satan.

The liturgies of the Church being the established formularies of her public worship, are among the most authoritative documents that can be adduced in favor of any religious practice.

In the liturgy ascribed to St. James, Mary is commemorated as "our most holy, immaculate, and most glorious lady, mother of God and ever Virgin Mary."²

In the Maronite Ritual she is invoked as "our holy, praiseworthy, and immaculate lady."³

In the Alexandrian liturgy of St. Basil she is addressed as "most holy, most glorious, immaculate."⁴

The Feast of Mary's Conception commenced to be celebrated in the East in the fifth, and in the West in the seventh century. It was not introduced into Rome till probably towards the end of the fourteenth century. Though Rome is always the first that is called on to sanction a new festival, she is often the last to take part in it. She is the first that is expected to give the keynote, but frequently the last to join in the festive song. While she is silent, the notes are faint and uncertain; when her voice joins in the chant, the song of praise becomes constant and universal.

It is scarcely necessary for me to add that the introduction of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

² Bibliotheca Max. Patrum, t. 2, p. 3.

³ De sac. ordinat., p. 313.

⁴ Renaudot. Lit. Orient.

the Festival of the Conception after the lapse of so many centuries from the foundation of Christianity, no more implies a novelty of doctrine than the erection of a monument in 1875 to Arminius, the German hero who flourished in the first century, would be an evidence of his recent exploits. The Feast of the Blessed Trinity was not introduced till the fifth century, though it commemorates a fundamental mystery of the Christian religion.

It is interesting to us to know that the Immaculate Conception of Mary has been interwoven in the earliest history of our own country. The ship that first bore Columbus to America was named Mary of the Conception. This celebrated navigator gave the same name to the second island which he discovered. The first chapel erected in Quebec, when that city was founded in the early part of the seventeenth century, was dedicated to God under the invocation of Mary Immaculate.

In view of these three great prerogatives of Mary, her divine maternity, her perpetual virginity, and her Immaculate Conception, we are prepared to find her blessedness often and expressly declared in Holy Scripture. The Archangel Gabriel is sent to her from heaven to announce to her the happy tidings that she was destined to be the mother of the world's Redeemer. No greater favor was ever before or since conferred on woman, whether we consider the dignity of the messenger, or the momentous character of the message, or the terms of respect in which it is conveyed. "And the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin, . . . and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore, also, the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."¹

"*Hail, full of grace!*" St. Stephen and the apostles were also said to be full of the spirit of God. By this, however, we are not to understand that the same measure of grace was imparted to them which was given to Mary. On each it is bestowed according to each one's merits and needs; for "one is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars, for star differeth from star in glory;"² and as Mary's office of

¹ Luke i. 26-35.

² 1 Cor. xv. 41.

mother of God immeasurably surpassed in dignity that of the protomartyr and of the Apostles, so did her grace superabound over theirs.

"The Lord is with thee." "He exists in His creatures in different ways; in those that are endowed with reason in one way, in irrational creatures in another. His irrational creatures have no means of apprehending or possessing Him. All rational creatures may indeed apprehend Him by knowledge, but only the good by love. Only in the good does He so exist as to be with them as well as in them; with them by a certain harmony and agreement of will, and in this way God is with all His saints. But He is with Mary in a yet more special manner, for in her there was so great an agreement and union with God, that not her will only, but her very flesh was to be united to Him."¹

"Blessed art thou among women." The same expression is applied to two other women in the Holy Scripture, viz., to Jahel and Judith. The former was called blessed after she had slain Sisara,² and the latter after she had slain Holofernes,³ both of whom had been enemies of God's people, and in this respect these two women are true types of Mary, who was chosen by God to crush the head of the serpent, the infernal enemy of mankind. And if they deserved the title of blessed for being the instruments of God in rescuing Israel from temporal calamities, how much more does Mary merit that appellation, who co-operated so actively in the salvation of the human race?

The Evangelist proceeds: "And Mary, rising up in those days, went . . . into a city of Juda; and she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."⁴

The usual order of salutation is here reversed. Age pays reverence to youth. A lady who is revered by the whole community honors a lowly maiden. An inspired matron expresses her astonishment that her young kinswoman should deign to visit her. She extols Mary's faith and calls her blessed. She blends the praise of Mary with the praise of Mary's Son, and even the infant John testi-

¹ St. Bernard.

² Judges v.

³ Judith xiii.

⁴ Luke i. 39-45.

fies his reverential joy by leaping in his mother's womb. And we are informed that during this interview Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, to remind us that the veneration she paid to her cousin, was not prompted by her own feelings, but was dictated by the Spirit of God.

Then Mary breaks out into that sublime canticle, the Magnificat: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."¹ On these words I will stop to make one reflection.

The Holy Ghost, through the organ of Mary's chaste lips, prophesies that all generations shall call her blessed, with evident approval of the praise she should receive.

Now the Catholic is the only Church whose children, generation after generation, from the first to the present century, have pronounced her blessed; and of all Christians in this land, they alone contribute to the fulfilment of the prophecy.

Therefore it is only Catholics that earn the approval of heaven by fulfilling the prediction of the Holy Ghost.

Protestants not only concede that we bless the name of Mary, but they even reproach us for being too lavish in our praises of her.

On the other hand, they are careful to exclude themselves from the "generations" that were destined to call her blessed, for, in speaking of her, they almost invariably withhold from her the title of *blessed*, preferring to call her *the Virgin*, or *Mary the Virgin*, or *the Mother of Jesus*. And while Protestant churches will resound with the praises of Sarah and Rebecca and Rachel, of Miriam and Ruth, of Esther and Judith of the Old Testament, and of Elizabeth and Anna, of Magdalen and Martha of the New, the name of Mary the mother of Jesus is uttered with bated breath, lest the sound of her name should make the preacher liable to the charge of superstition.

The piety of a mother usually sheds additional lustre on the son, and the halo that encircles her brow is reflected upon his. The more the mother is extolled, the greater honor redounds to the son. And if this is true of all men who do not choose their mothers, how much more strictly may it be affirmed of Him who chose His own Mother, and made her Himself such as He would have her, so that all the glories of His Mother are essentially His own. And yet we daily see ministers of the Gospel ignoring Mary's exalted virtues and unexampled privileges, and parading her alleged imperfections, nay sinfulness, as if her Son were dis-

¹ Luke i. 46-48.

honored by the piety, and took delight in the defamation of His Mother.

Such defamers might learn a lesson from one who made little profession of Christianity.

“Is thy name Mary, maiden fair?
Such should, methinks, its music be.
The sweetest name that mortals bear,
Were best befitting thee.
And she to whom it once was given,
Was half of earth and half of heaven.”¹

Once more the title of *blessed* is given to Mary. On one occasion a certain woman lifting up her voice, said to Jesus, “Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck.”² It is true that our Lord replied: “Yea, rather (or yea, likewise), blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.” It would be an unwarrantable perversion of the sacred text to infer from this reply that Jesus intended to detract from the praise bestowed on His mother. His words may be thus correctly paraphrased: She is blessed indeed in being the chosen instrument of My incarnation, but more blessed in keeping My word. Let others be comforted in knowing that though they cannot share with My mother in the privilege of her maternity, they can participate with her in the blessed reward of those who hear My word and keep it.

In the preceding passages we have seen Mary declared blessed on four different occasions, and hence in proclaiming her blessedness, far from paying her unmerited honor, we are but re-echoing the Gospel verdict of saint and angel, and of the Spirit of God Himself.

Wordsworth, though not nurtured within the bosom of the Catholic Church, conceives a true appreciation of Mary's incomparable holiness in the following beautiful lines:

“Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrossed
With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
Woman! above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
Purer than foam on central ocean tost,
Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn
With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon
Before he wane begins on heaven's blue coast,
Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,
Not unforgiven, the suppliant knee might bend
As to a visible power, in which did blend
All that was mixed and reconciled in thee
Of mother's love with maiden purity,
Of high with low, celestial with serene.”

¹ Oliver W. Holmes.

² Luke xi. 27.

To honor one who has been the subject of divine, angelic, and saintly panegyric, is to us a privilege, and the privilege is heightened into a sacred duty when we remember that the spirit of prophecy foretold that she should ever be the unceasing theme of Christian eulogy as long as Christianity itself would exist.

“Honor he is worthy of, whom the king hath a mind to honor.”¹ The King of kings hath honored Mary; His divine Son did not disdain to be subject to her, therefore should we honor her, especially as the honor we pay to her redounds to God, the source of all glory. The Royal Prophet, than whom no man paid higher praise to God, esteemed the friends of God worthy of all honor: “To me, Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable.”² Now the dearest friends of God are they who most faithfully keep His precepts: “You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you.”³ Who fulfilled the divine precepts better than Mary, who kept all the words of her Son, pondering them in her heart? “If any man minister to me,” says our Saviour, “him will My Father honor.”⁴ Who ministered more constantly to Jesus than Mary, who fulfilled towards Him all the offices of a tender mother?

Heroes and statesmen may receive the highest military and civic honors which a nation can bestow, without being suspected of invading the domain of the glory which is due to God. Now, is not heroic sanctity more worthy of admiration than civil service and military exploits, inasmuch as religion ranks higher than patriotism and valor? And yet the admirers of Mary’s exalted virtues, can scarcely celebrate her praises without being accused in certain quarters of Mariolatry.

When a nation wishes to celebrate the memory of its distinguished men, its admiration is not confined to words, but vents itself in a thousand different shapes. See in how many ways we honor the memory of Washington. Monuments on which his good deeds are recorded, are erected to his name. The grounds where his remains repose on the banks of the Potomac, are kept in order by a volunteer band of devoted ladies who adorn the place with flowers. And this cherished spot is annually visited by thousands of pilgrims from the most remote sections of the country. These visitors will eagerly snatch a flower, or a leaf from a shrub growing near Washington’s tomb, or will strive even to clip off a little shred from one of his garments, which are still preserved in the old mansion, and these they will bear home with them as precious relics.

I have always observed when travelling on the missions up and

¹ Esther vi. 11.

² Ps. cxxxviii. (In Protestant version, Ps. cxxxix.)

³ John xv. 14.

⁴ Ibid xii. 26.

down the Potomac, that whenever the steamer came to the point opposite Mount Vernon, the bell was tolled, and then every eye was directed towards Washington's grave.

And the 22d of February, Washington's birthday, is kept as a national holiday, at least in certain portions of the country. I well remember how formerly the military and the fire companies paraded the streets, how patriotic speeches recounting the heroic deeds of the first President were delivered, the festivities of the day closing with a social banquet.

As the citizens of the United States manifest in divers ways their admiration for Washington, so do the citizens of the republic of the Church love to exhibit in corresponding forms their veneration for the Mother of Jesus.

Monuments and statues are erected to her. Thrice each day, at morn, noon, and even, the Angelus bells are rung to recall to our minds the Incarnation of our Lord, and the participation of Mary in this great mystery of love.

Her shrines are tastefully adorned by pious hands, and are visited by devoted children who wear her relics, or any object which bears her image, or which is associated with her name.

Her natal day and other days of the year, sacred to her memory, are appropriately commemorated by processions, by participation in the banquet of the Eucharist, and by sermons enlarging on her virtues and prerogatives.

As no one was ever suspected of loving his country and her institutions less because of his revering Washington, so no one can reasonably suppose that our homage to God is diminished by fostering reverence for Mary; for, as our object in eulogizing Washington is not so much to honor the man, as to vindicate those principles of which he was the champion and exponent, and to express our gratitude to God for the blessings bestowed on our country through him, even so our motive in commemorating Mary's name, is not merely to praise her, but still more to keep us in perpetual remembrance of our Lord's Incarnation, and to show our thankfulness to Him for the blessings wrought through that great mystery in which she was so prominent a figure. And experience sufficiently demonstrates that the better we understand the part which Mary has taken in the work of Redemption, the more enlightened becomes our knowledge of our Redeemer Himself, and that the greater our love for her the deeper and broader is our devotion to Him; while experience also testifies that our Saviour's attributes become more confused and warped in the minds of a people in proportion as they ignore Mary's relations to Him.

The defender of a beleaguered citadel concentrates his forces on the outer fortifications and towers, knowing well that the capture

of these outworks would endanger the citadel itself, and that *their* safety involves *its* security.

Jesus Christ is the citadel of our faith, the stronghold of our soul's affections. Mary is called the "Tower of David," and the gate of Sion which the Lord loveth more than all the tabernacles of Jacob,¹ and which He entered at His Incarnation.

So intimately is this living gate of Sion connected with Jesus, the temple of our faith, that no one has ever assailed the former without invading the latter. The Nestorian would have Mary to be only an ordinary mother, because he would have Christ to be a mere man.

Hence if we rush to the defence of the gate of Sion, it is because we are more zealous for the city of God. If we stand as sentinels around the tower of David, it is because we are more earnest in protecting Jerusalem from invasion. If we forbid profane hands to touch the ark of the covenant, it is because we are anxious to guard from profanation the Lord of the ark. If we are so solicitous about Mary's honor, it is because "the love of Christ" presseth us. If we will not permit a single wreath to be snatched from her fair brow, it is because we are unwilling that a single feature of Christ's sacred humanity should be obscured, and because we wish that He should ever shine forth in all the splendor of His glory, and clothed in all the panoply of His perfections.

But you will ask: Why do you so often blend together the worship of God and the veneration of the Blessed Virgin? Why such exclamations as, *Blessed be Jesus and Mary*? Why do you so often repeat in succession the Lord's prayer and the Angelical salutation? Is not this practice calculated to level all distinctions between the Creator and His creature, and to excite the displeasure of a God ever jealous of His glory?

Those who make this objection, should remember that the praises of the Lord and of His Saints are frequently combined in Holy Scripture itself.

Witness Judith. On returning from the tent of Holofernes, she sang: "*Praise ye the Lord, our God, who hath not forsaken them that hope in Him, and by me His handmaid, He hath fulfilled His mercy which He promised to the house of Israel And Ozias the prince of the people of Israel, said to her: Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord the most high God, above all women upon the earth. Blessed be the Lord who made heaven and earth. . . because He hath so magnified thy name this day, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men.*"²

Witness Ecclesiasticus. After glorifying God for His mighty

¹ Ps. lxxxvi.

² Judith xiii.

works, he immediately sounds the praises of Enoch and Noe, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Moses and Aaron, of Samuel and Nathan, of David and Josias, of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and other Kings and Prophets of Israel.¹

Elizabeth in the same breath, exclaims: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."²

And Mary herself under the inspiration of heaven, cries out: "My soul *doth magnify the Lord*, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. . . . For, behold from henceforth all generations *shall call me blessed.*"³ Here are the names of Creator and creature interwoven like threads of gold and silver in the same woof, without provoking the jealousy of God.

God jealous of the honor paid to Mary! As well might we imagine that the sun, if endowed with intelligence, would be jealous of the mellow, golden cloud which encircles him, which reflects his brightness, and presents in bolder light his inaccessible splendor. As well imagine that the same luminary would be jealous of our admiration for the beautiful rose, whose opening petals, and rich color and delicious fragrance are the fruit of his beneficent rays.

Hence in uniting Mary's praise with that of Jesus, we are strictly imitating the Sacred Text; and as no one ever suspected that the encomiums pronounced on Judith and the virtuous Kings and Prophets of Israel detracted from God's honor, so neither do we lessen His glory in exalting the Blessed Virgin. I find Jesus and Mary together at the manger, together in Egypt, together in Nazareth, together in the temple, together at the cross. I find their names side by side in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed. It is fitting that both should find a place in my heart, and that both names should often flow successively from my lips. Inseparable in life and in death, they should not be divorced in my prayer. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

II.

WHY WE INVOKE HER.

The Church exhorts her children not only to honor the Blessed Virgin, but also to invoke her intercession. It is evident from Scripture, that the Angels and Saints in heaven can hear our prayers, and that they have the power and the will to help us.⁴ Now if the angels are conversant with what happens on earth; if the prophets, even while clothed in the flesh, had a clear vision of

¹ Eccles. xliii. *et seq.*

² Luke i.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Gen. xlviii. 16; Tobias xii. 12; Luke xv. 10; Zach. i. 12, 13.

things which were then transpiring at a great distance from them; if they could penetrate into the future, and foretell events which were then hidden in the womb of time, shall we believe that God withholds a knowledge of our prayers from Mary, who is justly styled the Queen of Angels and Saints? For, as Mary's sanctity surpasses that of all other mortals, her knowledge must be proportionately greater than theirs, since knowledge constitutes one of the sources of celestial bliss.

If Stephen while his soul was still in the prison of the body, "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God;"¹ if Paul "heard secret words"² spoken in paradise, is it surprising that Mary hears and sees us, now that she is elevated to heaven, and stands "face to face" before God, the perfect Mirror of all knowledge? It is as easy for God to enable His Saints to see things terrestrial from heaven, as things celestial from earth.

The influence of Mary's intercession exceeds that of the Angels, Patriarchs, and Prophets, in the same degree that her sanctity surpasses theirs. If our heavenly Father listens so propitiously to the voice of His servants, what will He refuse to her who is His chosen daughter of predilection, chosen among thousands to be the Mother of His beloved Son? If we ourselves, though sinners, can help one another by our prayers, how irresistible must be the intercession of Mary, who never grieved Almighty God by sin, who never tarnished her white robe of innocence by the least defilement, from the first moment of her existence till she was received by triumphant angels into heaven.

In speaking of the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, we must never lose sight of her title of Mother of our Redeemer, nor of the great privileges which that prerogative implies. Mary was the Mother of Jesus. She exercised towards Him all the influence which a prudent mother has over an affectionate child. "Jesus," says the Gospel, "was subject to them,"³ that is, to Mary and Joseph. We find this obedience of our Lord towards His Mother forcibly exemplified at the marriage feast of Cana. Her wishes are delicately expressed in these words: "They have no wine." He instantly obeys her by changing water into wine, though the time for exercising His public ministry and for working wonders had not yet arrived.

Now Mary has never forfeited in heaven the title of Mother of Jesus. She is still His Mother, and while adoring Him as her God, she still retains her maternal relations, and He exercises towards her that loving willingness to grant her requests which the best of sons entertains for the best of mothers.

¹ Acts viii. 55.

² 2 Cor. xii. 4.

³ Luke ii. 51.

Never does Jesus appear to us so amiable and endearing as when we see Him nestled in the arms of His Mother. We love to contemplate Him, and artists love to represent Him in that situation. And it appears to me that had we lived in Jerusalem in His day, and recognized, like Simeon, the Lord of majesty in the form of an Infant, and had we a favor to ask Him, we would present it through Mary's hands, while the divine eyes of the Babe were gazing on her sweet countenance. And even so now. Never will our prayers find a readier acceptance than when offered through her.

In invoking our Lady's patronage, we are actuated by a triple sense of the majesty of God, our own unworthiness, and of Mary's incomparable influence with her heavenly Father. Conscious of our natural lowliness and sins we have often recourse to her intercession in the assured hope of being more favorably heard :

“ And even as children who have much offended
A too indulgent father, in great shame,
Penitent, and yet not daring unattended
To go into his presence, at the gate
Speak to their sister and confiding wait
Till she goes in before and intercedes ;
So men, repenting of their evil deeds,
And yet not venturing rashly to draw near
With their requests, an angry Father's ear,
Offer to her prayers and their confession,
And she in heaven for them makes intercession.”¹

Do you ask me, is Mary willing to assist you ? Does she really take an interest in your welfare ? Or is she so much absorbed by the fruition of God as to be indifferent to our miseries ? Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the fruit of her womb ?² Even so Mary will not forget us.

The love she bears us, her children by adoption, can be estimated only by her love for her Son by nature. It was Mary that nursed the Infant Saviour. It was her hands that clothed Him. It was her breast that sheltered Him from the rude storm and from the persecution of Herod. She it was that wiped the stains from His brow when taken down from the cross. Now we are the brothers of Jesus. He is not ashamed, says the Apostle, to call us His brethren.³ Neither is Mary ashamed to call us her children by adoption. At the foot of the cross she adopted us in the person of St. John. She is anxious to minister to our souls as she ministered to the corporal wants of her Son. She would be the instrument of God in feeding us with divine grace, in clothing us with the garments of innocence, in sheltering us from the storms of temptation, in wiping away the stains of sin from our soul.

¹ Longfellow's "Golden Legend."

² Isaiah xlix. 15.

³ Heb. ii. 11.

If the angels, though of a different nature from ours, have so much sympathy for us as to rejoice in our conversion,¹ how great must be the interest manifested towards us by Mary, who is of a common nature with us, descended from the same primitive parents, being bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and who once trod the thorny path of life which we tread now!

Though not of the household of the faith, Edgar A. Poe did not disdain to invoke our Lady's intercession, and to acknowledge the influence of her patronage in heaven.

“ At morn—at noon—at twilight dim—
Maria! thou hast heard my hymn!
In joy and woe—in good and ill—
Mother of God, be with me still!
When the hours flew brightly by,
And not a cloud obscured the sky,
My soul, lest it should truant be,
Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;
Now, when storms of fate o'ercast
Darkly my present and my past,
Let my future radiant shine,
With sweet hopes of thee and thine.”

Some persons not only object to the invocation of Mary as being unprofitable, but they even affect to be scandalized at the confidence we repose in her intercession, on the groundless assumption that by praying to her we ignore and dishonor God, and that we put the creature on a level with the Creator.

Every Catholic child knows from the catechism that to give to any creature the supreme honor due to God alone is idolatry. How can we be said to dishonor God, or bring Him down to a level with His creature by invoking Mary, since we acknowledge her to be a pure creature indebted like ourselves to Him for every gift and influence which she possesses? This is implied in the very form of our petitions.

When we address our prayers to her, we say, *Pray for us sinners*, implying by these words that she is herself a petitioner at the throne of divine mercy. To God we say, *Give us our daily bread*, thereby acknowledging Him to be the source of all bounty.

This principle being kept in view, how can we be justly accused of slighting God's majesty by invoking the intercession of His handmaid?

If a beggar asks and receives alms from me through my servant, should I be offended at the blessings which he invokes upon her? Far from it; I accept them as intended for myself, because she bestowed what was mine, and with my consent.

Our Lord says to His Apostles: “I dispose to you a kingdom,

¹ Luke xv. 7.

that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and may sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."¹ And St. Paul says: "Know you not that we shall judge angels, how much more things of this world?"² If the Apostles may sit at the table of the Lord in heaven without prejudice to His majesty, surely our Lady can stand as an advocate before Him without infringing on His rights. If they can exercise the dread prerogative of judges of angels and of men without trespassing on the divine judgeship of Jesus, surely Mary can fulfil the more modest function of intercessor with her Son without intruding on His supreme mediatorship, for, higher is the office of judge than that of advocate. And yet while no one is ever startled at the power given to the Apostles, many are impatient of the lesser privilege claimed for Mary.

III.

THE INFLUENCE OF HER EXAMPLE.

But while the exalted privileges of Mary render her worthy of our veneration, while her saintly influence renders her worthy of our invocation, her personal life is constantly held up to us as a pattern worthy of our imitation. And if she occupies so prominent a place in our pulpits, this prominence is less due to her prerogatives as a mother, or to her intercession as a patroness, than to her example as a saint.

After our Lord Jesus Christ, no one has ever exercised so salutary and so dominant an influence as the Blessed Virgin on society, on the family, and on the individual.

The Mother of Jesus exercises throughout the Christian commonwealth that hallowing influence which a good mother wields over the Christian family.

What temple or chapel, how rude soever it may be, is not adorned with a painting or a statue of the Madonna? What house is not embellished with an image of Mary? What Catholic child is a stranger to her familiar face?

The priest and the layman, the scholar and the illiterate, the prince and the peasant, the mother and the maid, acknowledge her benign sway.

And if Christianity is so fruitful in comparison with paganism, in conjugal fidelity, in female purity, and in the respect which is paid to womanhood, these blessings are in no small measure due to the force of Mary's all-pervading influence and example. Ever since the Son of God chose a woman to be His mother, man looks up to woman with a homage akin to veneration.

¹ Luke xxii. 29, 30.

² 1 Cor. vi.

The poet Longfellow pays the following tribute to Mary's sanctifying influence:

“ This is indeed the blessed Mary's land,
Virgin and Mother of our dear Redeemer!
All hearts are touched and softened at her name;
Alike the bandit with the bloody hand,
The priest, the prince, the scholar and the peasant,
The man of deeds, the visionary dreamer,
Pay homage to her as one ever present!
* * * * *
And if our faith had given us nothing more
Than this example of all womanhood,
So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure,
This were enough to prove it higher and truer
Than all the creeds the world had known before.”¹

St. Ambrose gives us the following beautiful picture of Mary's life before her espousals: “Let the life,” he says, “of the Blessed Mary be ever present to you, in which, as in a mirror, the beauty of chastity and the form of virtue shine forth. She was a virgin not only in body, but in mind, who never sullied the pure affection of her heart by unworthy feelings. She was humble of heart, serious in her conversation, fonder of reading than of speaking. She placed her confidence rather in the prayer of the poor than in the uncertain riches of this world. She was ever intent on her occupations, . . . and accustomed to make God rather than man the witness of her thoughts. She injured no one, wished well to all, revered age, yielded not to envy, avoided all boasting, followed the dictates of reason, and loved virtue. When did she sadden her parents even by a look? . . . There was nothing forward in her looks, bold in her words, or unbecoming in her actions. Her carriage was not abrupt, her gait not indolent, her voice not petulant, so that her very appearance was the picture of her mind and the figure of piety.”

Her life as a spouse and as a mother was a counterpart of her earlier years. The Gospel relates one little circumstance which amply suffices to demonstrate Mary's supereminent holiness of life, and to exhibit her as a beautiful pattern to those who are called to rule a household. The Evangelist tells us that Jesus “was subject to them,”² that is, to Mary and Joseph. He obeyed all her commands, fulfilled her behests, complied with her smallest injunctions. In a word, He discharged towards her all the filial observances which a dutiful son exercises towards a prudent mother. And these relations continued from His childhood to His public life; nor did they cease even then.

¹ Longfellow's “Golden Legend.”

² Luke ii. 51.

Now Jesus being the Son of God, "the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance," could not sin. He was incapable of fulfilling an unrighteous precept. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from these facts is, that Mary never sinned by commanding, as Jesus could not sin by obeying; that all her precepts and counsels were stamped with the seal of divine approbation, and that the Son never fulfilled any injunction of His earthly Mother which was not ratified by His eternal Father in heaven.

Such is the beautiful portrait which the Church holds up to the contemplation of her children, that studying it they may admire the original, admiring they may love, loving may imitate, and thus become more dear to God by being made "conformable to the image of His Son," of whom Mary is the most perfect mirror.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

THE condition of the people of England at the beginning of the sixteenth century was not favorable to the preservation of liberty. The sanguinary struggle so long continued between the rival houses of York and Lancaster had ended in the accession to the throne of the Earl of Richmond under the title of Henry VII., and the union of the two factions had been consolidated by the marriage of the King with the daughter and heiress of Edward IV. Civil war was at an end; its effects remained. Fire and sword leave ashes and scars as mementos of their presence, and so it was that when peace revisited the land, it found the nobility mutilated in all its houses, the spirit of the people broken, the nation exhausted.

Poets and historians oftentimes portray the same characters with very different pencils. Shakspeare's Earl of Richmond, victorious at Bosworth, praying God to "enrich his subjects with smooth-faced peace, with smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days," is not the rapacious and remorseless tyrant which the truth-loving pen of John Lingard gives us. "His mind," he says, "was dark and mistrustful; he was capable of employing the most unprincipled agents, and of descending to the meanest artifices. There was nothing open in his friendship, nothing generous in his enmity," and "his rapacity fed with equal appetite on his friends and enemies." Dur-

¹ Heb. i. 3.

² Rom. viii. 29.