

CHAPTER XIV

Declaring the Forms and Manners of Divine Visions which the Queen of Heaven Had, and the Effects which They Caused in Her.

612. The grace of divine visions, revelations and raptures (I do not speak here of the beatific vision), though they are operations of the Holy Ghost, must be distinguished from justifying grace and from virtues, which sanctify and perfect the soul in their operations. Since not all the just, nor all the saints, necessarily have visions or divine revelations, it is evident that sanctity and virtues can exist without these gifts. It is also evident that revelations and visions are not dependent upon the sanctity and perfection of those who are thus favored, but upon the divine will. God concedes them according to weight and measure (Wis. 11:21) for the ends which He desires to attain in his Church. God can without doubt grant great and most exalted visions to those who are less holy, and only inferior revelations to those who are of exalted sanctity. The gift of prophecy with others *gratis datos** He can even give to those who are not saints; some of the raptures, moreover, can arise from causes which have nothing to do with moral virtues. Therefore if any comparison is made between the Prophets, their sanctity does not enter into calculation, for that can be estimated only by God (Prov. 16:2); rather, the divine light of prophecy and the mode of receiving it must be made the basis of the comparison regarding whether it is more or less exalted in its different aspects. Thus it happens that charity and virtue, which make their possessors holy and perfect, depend upon the will, while visions and revelations, and likewise some raptures, affect the understanding of the intellectual part of man, the perfection of which does not in itself sanctify the soul.†

613. Despite the fact that the grace of divine visions is distinct from sanctity and virtue, and can be separate from it, nevertheless the divine will and providence very often joins them according to the end and object in the gratuitous gifts of special revelation, for sometimes God ordains them for the public benefit and for the common good of the Church, as the Apostle tells us (I Cor. 12:7ff.). Thus the Prophets, inspired by the Holy Ghost and not filled with their own imaginations (II Peter 1:21), spoke and prophesied to us the mysteries of the Redemption and the evangelical law (I Peter 1:10). When the revelations and visions are of this kind they are not necessarily joined with sanctity, for Balaam was a prophet but no saint.△ But generally it suited divine Providence for the Prophets to be at the same time saints, preferring not to deposit, at least not easily and frequently, the spirit of prophecy and divine revelations in impure vessels (though in certain particular cases He, as the Almighty, acted thus), not desiring to derogate from the divine truth and from his teaching by the bad life of the instrument, and for many other reasons.

614. At other times the divine revelations and visions do not pertain to things of such general import, and they do not concern so much the common good but only the particular advantage of the one who receives them. Just as the former are the effects of the love of God for his Church, so the latter, the special revelations, are the results of his special love for the particular soul. He communicates them in order to instruct his chosen ones and raise them to the highest degree of love and perfection. In this kind of revelations the spirit of wisdom transcends through

* freely given [Rev. Blatter]

† cf. I Cor. 13:2 [Ed.]

△ cf. Num. 22ff. [Ed.]

successive generations of holy souls, making them successively prophets and friends of God (Wis. 7:27). Just as the efficient cause of the revelations is the love of God shown to some particular souls, so also their final cause or object is the sanctity, purity and charity of these very souls, and the blessing of these revelations and visions is the means by which this is achieved.

615. I do not wish to say that revelations and visions are the requisite and absolutely necessary means for making the saints and the perfect ones; many are such by other means, irrespective of these benefits. But even supposing this truth that the concession or denial of these particular gifts depends solely upon the divine will, it is nevertheless also a fact that on our part and on the part of God there may be certain reasons of propriety which induce God to communicate them more frequently to his servants. The first reason among others is this: Regarding the ignorant creature the means most proportioned and proper for raising him to eternal things, introducing him into them, and spiritualizing him in order to arrive at the perfect union of the soul with the highest Good, is the supernatural light concerning the mysteries and secrets of the Most High which comes from revelations, visions and intelligences granted to him in solitude and in the excess of his mind. For this purpose the Lord himself invites the soul with many promises and caresses; of these mysteries Holy Scriptures are full, especially the Canticles of Solomon.

616. The second of these reasons of propriety concerns the Lord, for love is impatient to communicate its favors and its mysteries to the beloved and the friend. I will not now call you or treat you as servants, but as friends (said the Master of eternal truth to the Apostles), for I have manifested to you the secrets of my Father (Jn. 15:15). And Moses says of himself that God spoke to him as a friend with a friend (Ex. 33:11). The holy Fathers, Patriarchs and Prophets received from the Holy Ghost not only general revelations but many other private and particular ones, and these were tokens of the love in which God held them, as is seen from the petition of Moses to allow him to see the face of God (Ib. 13). The same is shown by the names which the Almighty applies to the chosen soul in calling it spouse, friend, dove, sister, perfect, beloved, beautiful, etc. (Cant. 1:14; 2:10; 4:8, 9; etc.). All these titles, though declaring much of the force of divine love and its effects, yet fall far short of that which the supreme King operates in those whom He desires thus to honor; for the Lord is mighty to do all that He desires, and He alone knows how to desire as a Spouse, a Friend, a Father, and as the highest and infinite Good, without limit or measure.

617. This truth is not discredited by not being understood by carnal wisdom, nor by the deceptions of carnal prudence through which some souls have been led into false visions and revelations forged by the angel of Satan in the garb of light (II Cor. 11:14). This deception has been more frequent in women due to their ignorance and passions, yet it has also affected many men who sought to appear virtuous and wise. In all of them it has arisen from an evil root. I do not speak of those who with diabolical hypocrisy have feigned false and apparent revelations, visions and raptures without having them, rather of those who have experienced and received them from the demon, though not without grave sin in consenting to them. Of the first it can be said that they deceive, and of the second that from the beginning they are deceived, for the ancient serpent, knowing them to be unmortified in their passions and little practiced in the interior perception of the science of divine matters, introduces into them with most astute subtlety a hidden presumption that they are much favored by God; he robs them of humble fear, puffing them up with vain desires of curiosity to know high things and revelations, to be favored with visions, and to be distinguished in such things above other men, by which they open the door to the demon, who fills them with deceitful and false illusions, far distant from divine truth yet having the appearance of truth in order to conceal his poison and deceive the soul.

618. The way to avoid such dangerous deceit is to live in humble fear and not to aspire to high things (Rom. 11:20); not to judge our progress in the tribunal of our inclinations, and not to trust in our own prudence; to leave judgment to God, his ministers and well-informed confessors, who will search into the intention of our acts. Then it will soon become known whether the soul desires these favors as a means of virtue and perfection or in order to obtain honor among men. The most secure path will always be not to desire them, and always to fear the danger which at all times is great and more so in the first beginnings, for devotions and sensible sweetness, since they are from the Lord (yet can be mimicked by the demon), are not given because the soul is already capable of the solid food of his greater favors and secrets, but as the food of little ones in order to draw them away with greater earnestness from their vices and induce them to greater self-denial in sensible things, not at all in order to make them imagine they are advanced in virtue. Even raptures which spring from admiration suppose more ignorance than love. But when our love becomes ecstatic, fervent, ardent, noble, consistent, disinterested, impatient of anything else except its Beloved, and if besides all this it has full command over all the affections of the heart, then the soul begins to be rightly disposed to receive the light of mysterious revelations and divine visions, and so much the better will it be disposed toward receiving them the more it esteems itself unworthy of the reception of even much smaller favors. Wise men will not be surprised that women have been so much favored in these gifts, for being more fervent in love God chooses the weakest* because they are the more appropriate witnesses of his power. Women also are more lacking in the acquired science of theology than learned men, except when the Most High infuses that science in order to illumine their weak and uninformed judgment.

619. Having established these principles we must acknowledge that in most holy Mary, even if there were no other special reasons, the revelations and visions of the Most High were more exalted, more wonderful, more frequent and heavenly than those of all the rest of the saints. These favors, just like all the gifts, must be measured by her dignity, sanctity, purity, and the love which her Son and the blessed Trinity cherished towards Her, who was the Mother of the Son, the Daughter of the Father, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. In proportion to the greatness of these prerogatives were also the influxes of the Divinity, Christ and his Mother being infinitely more beloved than all the rest of the holy angels and men. The divine visions enjoyed by our sovereign Queen can be divided into five grades or kinds, and I will describe each one of them as far as has been revealed to me.

*BEATIFIC VISION OF THE DIVINE ESSENCE
EXPERIENCED BY MOST HOLY MARY.*

620. The highest and most excellent of all her visions were those of the *beatific* vision of the divine Essence, for in her state of pilgrimage She many times enjoyed the unveiled vision of the Divinity. I shall mention all these visions in the course of this History according to the time and occasion in which She enjoyed this supreme privilege of a creature.† Some doctors are in doubt whether other saints have reached this state of seeing the Divinity clearly and intuitively while yet in mortal flesh; but whatever may be their uncertainty about such visions in regard to other saints, no such doubt can be entertained in regard to the Queen of heaven, and it would be an injury to Her if we were to measure her favors with the common measure of the saints. Many

* cf. I Cor. 1:27 [Ed.]

† *Conception* 332, 429; *Incarnation* 139, 473; *Transfixion* 245, 760, 812; *Coronation* 62, 494, 603, 616, 654, 685.

more favors and graces than were even possible in them were actually consummated in the Mother of Grace, and it is at least possible the beatific vision can take place in men yet in their pilgrimage, whatever may be the mode in which this happens. The first requisite of a soul who is to see God face to face is a degree of sanctifying grace most exalted and far above the ordinary. Now the degree of sanctifying grace which the most holy soul of Mary reached from the first moment of her existence was superabundant and of such perfection that it exceeded that of the highest Seraphim. In addition to sanctifying grace there must be great purity of all the faculties, without a shadow of guilt or the least inclination to sin. Just as a vessel which has contained any impure liquid and which is to be filled with a different and pure substance must be cleansed, washed and purified until not a taste or odor of the former remains in order not to infect the new substance, so all traces of sin (and much more of actual sin) contaminate and infect the soul. And because all these effects make the soul unfit for the highest Good, it must be prepared before it can be united with God by the intuitive vision and beatific love. It must first be cleansed and purified in such a manner that there does not remain any residual, odor or savor of sins, nor any depraved habit or inclination acquired through them. This applies not only to the effects and stains of mortal sin, but also of venial sin, all of which cause in the soul a special turpitude like to that which, according to our way of understanding such things, ensues when a foul breath covers and obscures the clearness of crystal; all its brightness and purity must first be restored to the soul before it can see God face to face.

621. In addition to this purity, which is as it were the negative cleansing of the nature of him who is to enjoy the vision of God, it is necessary to cauterize the infection of original sin so it is entirely extinct and neutralized as if it had never existed in the creature. Thus all trace or inward cause inclining it to any sin or imperfection must first be done away with, and the entire free will must be made as it were incapable of everything which in any way is opposed to the highest sanctity and goodness; hence, because of what I shall mention afterward, it will be easily understood how difficult it is for the soul to attain the necessary condition for the clear vision of God in mortal flesh, and that it can be conceded to the creatures only with great circumspection, for most important reasons, and after great preparation. According to my understanding there are two kinds of incongruities and divergences of the sinful creature in regard to the divine nature. The first consists in this, that God is invisible, infinite, a pure and simple act, while man is a corporeal, earthly, corruptible and coarse substance. The other incongruity is caused by sin, which is immeasurably distant from the divine goodness, and this entails a greater divergence and alienation than the first. But both of them must be done away with before such extremes can be united, before the creature can rest in this supreme manner in the Divinity, and before it can assimilate itself with God in order to see and enjoy Him as He is (I Jn. 3:2).

622. All the requisites of immaculate purity and transparency, excluding all sin and imperfection, were possessed by the Queen of heaven in a much higher degree than even the angels, since She was touched neither by original nor actual sin, nor by any of their effects. In this regard divine grace and protection could operate in Her more than in the nature of the angels, and in most holy Mary there was no disproportion nor any obstacle of sin which could impede the vision of God. On the other hand, besides being immaculate, the grace given to Her in the first instant of her existence superexceeded that of the angels and saints, and her merits were in proportion to that grace. By her first act She merited more than all the others, even by their most perfect and consummate acts which they have performed in order to reach the beatific vision. Therefore if it is just that in the other saints the reward of glory merited by them be deferred until the end of their mortal life, it does not seem against justice that this law was not followed so

strictly in regard to most holy Mary, and that the most high Ruler could and really did proceed differently with Her during her mortal existence. The most blessed Trinity would not suffer such a long delay in regard to Her and manifested Himself to Her many times, since She merited it above all the Angels, Seraphim and Saints, who having less grace and merits are enjoying supreme beatitude. In addition there was another reason why the Divinity should manifest Himself clearly to Her, namely since She was elected to be the Mother of God it was appropriate for Her to know by fruition and experience the treasure of the infinite Divinity and see Him face to face as her God, whom having enjoyed She was to clothe in mortal flesh and bear about in her virginal womb, and whom She was afterwards to treat as her Son and her God.

623. Even with all the aforesaid purity and cleansing, and with the addition of sanctifying grace, the soul is not yet worthy or capable of the beatific vision, since still other dispositions and divine operations are required. With these the Queen of heaven was furnished whenever She enjoyed this vision, and hence they are much more necessary to any other soul who is to be thus favored in mortal flesh. After the soul has reached the state of purity and sanctification above described, the Lord adds a finishing touch which is like a most spiritual fire, which refines and chastens it as fire does the gold, or as Isaias was purified by the Seraphim (Is. 6:7). It has two effects in the soul: First, it spiritualizes and separates in it (according to our mode of understanding) the dross and earthliness of its present existence and union with the material body; secondly it fills the soul with a new light which scatters I know not what obscurity and darkness, just as the light of the morning scatters the darkness of night. This light takes possession, leaves the soul clarified and replenished with new splendors of a divine fire, producing still other effects in the soul, for if it has or has had faults it bewails them with incomparable sorrow and contrition, with a sorrow that cannot be equaled by any other human sorrow, for all others are very little in comparison with it. At the same time it feels another effect of this light which purges the understanding of all the species of terrestrial and visible or sensible things which have been collected by the senses, for all these images and species acquired by the senses are disproportionate to the understanding, and serve only as a hindrance to the clear vision of the supreme spiritual essence of the Divinity; hence it is necessary to clear this faculty of those earthly semblances and depictions which occupy it. This purification is not only necessary to see God clearly and intuitively, but is likewise necessary for the abstractive vision of God.

624. In the most pure soul of our Queen, since there were no sins to deplore, these illuminations and purifications immediately wrought the other effects, beginning to elevate nature itself and proportioning it so it would not be so distant from the supreme End, nor feel the sensible effects and dependence on the body. In addition to this they caused in this most pure soul new sentiments and movements of humility and knowledge of the nothingness of the creature in comparison with the Creator and his blessings. Thus her inflamed Heart was incited to many other heroic acts of virtue. Similar effects are produced in a corresponding degree in other souls who are to be prepared for the visions of the Divinity.

625. Our curtailed insight might well hold that the foregoing preparations are sufficient for being admitted to the beatific vision, but this is not so, since another quality is lacking, an emanation or light most divine, before the light of glory is imparted. This new purification, though it is similar in nature to those already related, is altogether different from them in its effects, for it raises the soul to a very high and serene state, where in greatest tranquility it enjoys the sweetest peace, which is not felt in the state of the first dispositions and purifications, for in them is felt a certain pain and bitterness of guilt if any remains, or if not, the emptiness of earthly and vile nature itself. These effects are not compatible with the close approach and assimilation

to the supreme blessedness. It seems to me that the first purifications serve to mortify, and that to which I am now referring serves to revivify and heal nature. God proceeds in these matters like the painter who first delineates the image, then applies the ground colors, and at last puts on the finishing touches so the picture comes to light well defined.

626. Over and above all of these purifications, preparations, and the admirable effects which they cause, God communicates the last one, which is the light of glory, by which He elevates, consoles, and finishes proportioning the soul so it can see and enjoy God beatifically. In this light the Divinity manifests Himself, for without this light God cannot be seen by any creature. Since the natural powers of the creature cannot attain this light and these preparations, it is hence impossible to see God by the natural faculties alone, for all this far exceeds the forces of nature.

627. With all this beauty and adornment the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, the Daughter of the Father, and the Mother of the Son was furnished for her entrance into the chamber of the Divinity in order to enjoy from time to time the beatific vision and intuitive fruition. And since all these blessings corresponded to her dignity and graces, it is thus impossible to reduce to reasonings or created thought (and much less by an ignorant woman) what these so exalted and divine illuminations wrought in our Queen. Still less can the joys of her soul be estimated or calculated when it was thus exalted above all that is most supreme in the highest Seraphim and Saints. If in regard to all the just, even the lowest of those who enjoy God, it is infallibly true that neither eye has seen, nor ears heard, nor mind conceived what God has prepared for his elect (I Cor. 2:9), what must be the enjoyment of the greater saints? And if the same Apostle who says this confesses that he cannot repeat what he had heard (II Cor. 12:4), what shall we, in our narrow limitation of powers, be able to say of the Saint of saints and the Mother of the very One who is the glory of the saints? Next to the soul of her most holy Son, who was man and true God, She was the one who knew and saw the greatest mysteries and sacraments in those infinite and hidden immensities of the Divinity. To Her more than to all the Blessed in their entirety were thrown open the infinite treasures and the expansion of the eternity of that inaccessible Being, unlimited by any beginning or end; there the torrent of the Divinity rejoiced and inundated this City of God (Ps. 45:5), overwhelming Her with the impetuous waves of wisdom and grace, and leaving Her entirely spiritualized and deified.

ABSTRACTIVE VISION OF THE DIVINITY WHICH MOST HOLY MARY HAD.

628. The second kind of divine vision enjoyed by the Queen of heaven was the *abstractive* vision, which is very different and much inferior to the intuitive. It was more frequent in Her, though not daily or continual. This kind of knowledge or vision is communicated by the Most High without unveiling Himself directly to the created mind, but through a certain veil or species by means of which He becomes manifest. Because of this intervening medium between the faculty and its object this kind of vision is very much inferior to the clear and intuitive vision. It does not involve the real presence, though it presupposes it intellectually in an inferior way. Although the creature knows it is nigh to the Divinity and discovers the attributes, perfections and mysteries which as in a mirror of the will God desires to show and manifest, yet it does not feel and is not aware of his presence so as to enjoy Him with complete satiety.

629. Nevertheless this is a great, rare, and next to the clear vision a more excellent favor than any other. Although it does not require the light of glory, but only the light appropriate to the species themselves, and not even the ultimate disposition and purification proper to the light of glory, yet all the other preparations antecedent to the intuitive vision must go before it, for by

them the soul enters into the courts of the house of the Lord God eternal (Ps. 64:5). The effects of this kind of vision are admirable, for besides the exalted state which it presupposes in the soul and which raises it above itself (Lam. 3:28), it inebriates the soul (Ps. 35:9) with an ineffable and inexplicable delight and sweetness, inflaming it with divine love, transforming it and causing a forgetfulness of and an aversion toward all earthliness and toward itself, so already the soul does not any more live in itself but in Christ, and Christ in it (Gal. 2:20). Besides all this there remains after this vision in the soul a light which, if not lost by negligence and carelessness, or by some sin, will always accompany it to the highest pinnacle of perfection, teaching it the most secure paths to eternity and resembling the perpetual fire of the sanctuary (Lv. 6:12) or the beacon light of the citadel of God (Apoc. 22:5).

630. These and other effects were caused in our sovereign Queen by abstractive vision, and to such an eminent degree that I cannot give an explanation of my conception in ordinary terms. But some idea will be obtained if we consider the condition of that most pure soul in which there was not the least hindrance, neither of lukewarmness, nor of the least defect, no indolence or forgetfulness, no negligence or ignorance, nor the least inattention, but on the contrary in whom was the fullness of grace and of ardent love, unfailing diligence, perpetual and unceasing praise of the Creator, the utmost solicitude and readiness to give Him glory, and a preparation which allowed the powerful arm of God to operate without any opposition or hindrance. She had this species of vision and benefit in the first moment of her Immaculate Conception, as I have said in its place (228, 236, 311, 382, 388), and afterwards many times in the course of her most holy life, as I shall relate hereafter (*Con.* 731, 739; *Inc.* 6-101; *Cor.* 537).

INTELLECTUAL VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF MOST HOLY MARY.

631. The third kind of divine visions or revelations enjoyed by most holy Mary were the *intellectual* visions. Though the abstractive intelligence or vision of the Divinity may be called intellectual revelation, yet I give it a separate, unique, and more exalted place for two reasons: The first, because the object of abstractive vision is unique and supreme among intellectual things, while these more common intellectual revelations have many and varied objects, extending to spiritual and material things, and the intelligible truths and mysteries. The other reason is because the abstractive visions of the divine Essence are brought about by the most exalted and supernaturally infused species or images of the being of God, whereas the common revelations and intellectual visions take place in diverse ways. Sometimes the intellectual images of the objects revealed are all infused; at other times the subject matter of the revelations is not all necessarily infused, because then the same species or images which the imagination or phantasy already possess are sufficient for the revelation, for the understanding, endowed with a new light and a supernatural power, can apprehend the mysteries of God from imaginary images, as happened with Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 40:12; 41:25) and Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 1:17; 2:19; 4:16; 5:17). This kind of revelation was given to David, and outside the knowledge of the Divinity it is the most noble and secure, for neither the demons nor the good angels themselves can infuse this supernatural light into the understanding, though they can stir the species present in the imagination and phantasy.

632. This form of revelation was common among the holy Prophets of the Old and New Testaments, for the light of perfect prophecy which they possessed terminated in the understanding of some hidden mystery, and without this intelligence or intellectual light they would not have been perfect prophets, nor would they have spoken prophetically. Therefore

those who do or say something prophetic, for example Caiphas (Jn. 11:49) and the soldiers refusing to divide the garment of Christ our Lord (Jn. 19:24), though they are urged to these things by divine impulse, are not prophets in the perfect sense, for they do not speak prophetically, that is with divine intelligence and light. It is even true the holy Prophets, who are prophets in the real sense and who call themselves seers due to the interior light by which they see secret things, can perform some prophetic actions without knowing all the mysteries included therein, or even without knowing any of the mysteries; but in such cases they are not to be called prophets in the same sense as when they prophesy with a supernatural understanding of things. This kind of revelation is of many different grades which I cannot touch upon here; and though the Lord can communicate it devoid of this understanding, and without charity or grace and virtues, yet ordinarily it is accompanied by them as in the Prophets, Apostles and the just, and this happens both when He manifests his secrets to them as friends and also when the intellectual visions or revelations are given for the advantage and greater advancement of those who receive them, as I have said above (614). Therefore these revelations demand a very excellent predisposition in those souls who are to be raised to them, and ordinarily God does not communicate them except when the soul is in the state of quiet and peace, withdrawn from earthly things and well ordered in its faculties for the workings of the divine light.

633. In the Queen of heaven these intelligences or revelations were vastly different from those which are proper to the Saints and Prophets, for Her Highness enjoyed them continually, both in habit and in act, whenever She was not enjoying other more exalted visions of the Divinity; moreover, the clearness and the extent of this intellectual light and all its effects were incomparably greater in most holy Mary, for of the truths, mysteries and sacraments of the Most High She knew more than all the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and more even than all the Angels combined, and She understood more profoundly and clearly, more unerringly and securely, all that She did know. By means of this intelligence She penetrated to the very being of God and his attributes as manifested in the very smallest of his works and creatures; not one of them existed in which She did not perceive the participation of the greatness of the Creator and his divine foresight and providence. Most holy Mary alone could in the fullest sense say of Herself that the Lord had manifested to Her the uncertain and hidden things of his wisdom, as recorded by the Prophet (Ps. 50:8). It is impossible to describe the effects of this intelligence in the sovereign Lady; this entire History must serve in a manner to declare them. In other souls they are of wonderful advantage and efficacy, for they illumine in the highest manner the understanding and inflame the will with incredible ardor; they undeceive, disentangle, elevate and spiritualize the creature, and at the same time they seem to quicken and lighten even the earthly and burdensome body in holy emulation with the soul. The Queen of heaven enjoyed in these visions also another privilege of which I will speak in the following chapter.

IMAGINARY VISIONS OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

634. In the fourth place must be mentioned the *imaginary* visions, which are produced by sensible visions raised or set in motion in the imagination or phantasy. They represent the object in a material or sensitive manner in the same way as are represented those things we see, hear, touch or taste. By means of this kind of vision the Most High manifested to the Prophets of the Old Testament great mysteries and sacraments. Such happened especially with Ezechiel, Daniel and Jeremias, and by the influence of similar visions the evangelist St. John wrote the Apocalypse. Since these visions partake so much of the sensible and corporeal element they are

very inferior to the preceding visions, and because of this the demon may mimic them in appearance, moving the species of the phantasy, yet he does not imitate them in truth since he is the father of lies. Therefore it is very necessary to beware of these visions and to compare them to the certain doctrine of the Saints and masters, for if the demon perceives any longing for them in souls engaged in prayer or devotions, and if God permits, he can easily work deception. Even some Saints, though dreading the dangers of such visions, were nevertheless entangled in them by the demon in his assumed light,* as is related in their lives for our instruction and warning.

635. The one in whom these imaginary visions and revelations were without any danger and entirely secure and divine was most holy Mary, whose interior light could not be obscured or invaded by the astuteness of the serpent. Our Queen was favored with many such visions, for of this kind were those which manifested to Her many of the actions of her most holy Son while absent, as we shall see in the sequence of her life (*Tran.* 258, 271, 279, 447, 452, 497, 508). She also perceived in imaginary visions many creatures and mysteries whenever the Most High so dispensed it according to his will and providence. And since this and many benefits received by the sovereign Princess of heaven were ordained for most exalted ends, not only for the advancement of her own sanctity, purity and merits, but also for the advantage of the Church, of which this great Mother of Grace was to be a Teacher and a Cooperatrix in Redemption, the effects of these visions and her understanding of them were admirable, and they were invariably accompanied by incomparable proofs of the glory of God and of new and increasing gifts and graces in her soul. Regarding the effects of these visions in other creatures I will speak immediately below, for these and corporeal visions are similar as far as their effects in other souls are concerned.

CORPOREAL VISIONS OF DIVINE ORIGIN WHICH MOST HOLY MARY HAD.

636. The fifth and last order of visions and revelations involves that which is perceived by the bodily and exterior senses, and that is the reason why they are called *corporeal* visions, although they can be brought about in two different ways. One kind are truly and properly called corporeal visions, when in a real and quantitative body some being of the other life appears to the sight or touch, be it God, an angel or saint, the demon, a soul, etc., this aerial and marvelous body being formed for this very purpose by the ministry and power of the good or the wicked angels, which though it is not a true or natural body of the thing represented by it, yet is truly a quantitative body constructed from the condensed air in its quantitative dimensions. The other kind of corporeal visions are such in an improper sense, being rather an illusion of the sense of sight, for they are only an image of the object, its coloring, etc., which an angel can make visible by an alteration of the intervening air. The one who sees it thinks he looks upon a real body actually present, though there is no such body but only an empty image by which the senses are imperceptibly fascinated. This kind of illusory visions of the senses is not proper to the good angels nor to divine revelation, although they are possible to God and the angels; such might have been the voice which Samuel heard (I Kg. 3:4). But they are a favorite ruse of the demon because of their deceptiveness, especially in regard to the sight; hence, because the Queen never had this kind of vision, I will speak only of the truly corporeal visions She had.

637. In Holy Scriptures there are many instances of corporeal visions granted to the Saints and Patriarchs. Adam saw God represented in the form of an angel (Gen. 3:8), Abraham saw three

* cf. II Cor. 11:14 [Ed.]

angels (Gen. 18:1), Moses saw the burning bush (Ex. 3:2) and many times the Lord himself. Others who were sinners have had many corporeal and imaginary visions, corporeal like Cain (Gen. 4:9) and Baltassar (Dan. 5:5), who saw the hand on the wall, or imaginary like Pharaoh in the vision of the cows (Gen. 41:2), Nabuchodonosor that of the tree and the statue (Dan. 4:2; 2:1), and others recorded in Holy Scriptures. These instances prove that in order to see corporeal and imaginary visions sanctity is not required in the subject. Yet it is also true that they who have an imaginary or corporeal vision without receiving therefrom any light or intelligence cannot be called prophets, nor can they be said to receive a true revelation, but only those who receive the necessary understanding of the vision as Daniel says (Dan. 10:1). Thus Joseph and Daniel were Prophets, not however Pharaoh, Baltassar or Nabuchodonosor. Moreover those are the more important revelations and visions which are accompanied by a higher intelligence, though to judge from outward appearances others may be called higher, namely those which represent God or his most holy Mother, and the saints according to their degree.

638. It is certain that in order to receive corporeal visions it is necessary for the senses to be prepared. The imaginary ones are often sent by God in sleep, for example most holy Joseph, the spouse of most pure Mary (Mt. 1:20), the Magi Kings (Mt. 2:12), Pharaoh (Gen. 41:2), etc. Others can be perceived while the senses are in their full natural activity, since for this the activity of the senses offers no repugnance. But the most common and connatural manner for these visions, and for intellectual visions, is for God to communicate them during some ecstasy or rapture of the external senses, for then all the interior faculties are more recollected and disposed for the comprehension of high and divine things. Yet the exterior senses are apt to be a hindrance less to the intellectual visions than to the imaginary ones, the latter having more affinity for exterior things than the acts of the intellect. Therefore it often happens that whenever the intellectual revelations are not infused species, or when the affections do not suspend the action of the senses, most high intelligences of great and supernatural mysteries are conferred without the cessation of the activity of the senses.

639. In the Queen of heaven this happened many times and even frequently, for though She was enraptured during many of the beatific visions (which in ordinary mortals is always required), and also during her intellectual and imaginary visions, yet even while She was in the full use of her senses She received higher revelations and intelligences than all the Saints and Prophets in their greatest ecstasies. Neither did the exterior senses of our great Queen hinder her imaginary visions, for her dilated Heart and wisdom were not embarrassed by the effects of admiration and love which are accustomed to take away the sensible activities of the other Saints and Prophets. This was true of her corporeal visions, as is evident from the Annunciation of the message by the archangel Gabriel (Lk. 1:28); and though the Evangelists give no other instance in the course of her most holy life, prudent and Catholic judgment cannot doubt they did happen at other times, for the Queen of heaven and of the Angels was to be served by her vassals, as we shall relate later on (758) when we describe the continuous service of her Guardian Angels and of other Angels appearing in corporeal and visible form, and in another way as we shall see in the following chapter.

640. Other souls must be very circumspect and careful in regard to these corporeal visions, since they are subject to dangerous deceptions and illusions coming from the ancient serpent; those who never seek them avoid a great part of this danger. If the soul is free from such desire and from other disorderly affections, then if any corporeal or imaginary visions do occur one must be very cautious before performing and executing that which is enjoined by those visions, for it is a very bad sign, and proper to the demon, if without any deliberation or counsel one

immediately believes and obeys, since the good angels, who are our teachers in matters of obedience, truth, prudence and sanctity, do not urge such a course of action. There are also other indications and signs generally accompanying the causes and effects of such visions which will securely guide souls regarding their truthfulness or their falsity, but I will not enter into these matters in order not to be led away from my purpose, and besides I submit myself in these things to the Doctors and masters.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

641. My daughter, in the light which thou hast received in this chapter thou hast a certain rule of governing thyself in the visions and revelations of the Lord, and it consists of two parts. One is to subject them with a humble and simple heart to the judgment and censure of thy confessors and superiors, beseeching the Most High with living faith to give them light to understand his divine will and truth in order to instruct thee in everything. The other rule concerns thy own interior, which is that thou must attend to the effects which visions and revelations have within thee in order to discern them with prudence and without error, since the divine power which produces them induces thee, moves thee, and inflames thee with chaste love and reverence for the Most High; to the knowledge of thy lowliness; to abhorrence of earthly vanity; to the desire of being disregarded by creatures; to suffering with joy; to love the cross and carry it with strength and an expanded heart; to desire the last place; to love those who persecute thee; to fear and abhor sin, though it be very slight; to aspire to the most pure, perfect and exalted in virtue; to deny thy inclinations; and to unite thyself to the true and highest Good. These shall be the infallible signs of the truth by which the Most High visits thee by means of his revelations, teaching thee what is most holy and perfect in the Christian law, and in the imitation of the Lord and of myself.

642. And in order for thee, my dearest, to put into practice this doctrine which the Most High has condescended to teach thee, do not forget any of it, nor lose sight of the benefits of having it taught to thee with such love and endearment. Renounce all human attention and consolation, and all the delights and pleasures the world offers. Deny thyself with strong resolution all that earthly inclinations demand, even in small and lawful things; turning thy back on all sensible things, I desire thee to love only suffering. This divine science and philosophy has been, is, and shall be taught to thee by the visits of the Most High, and by them thou shalt feel the force of the divine fire, which must never through thy fault or lukewarmness be extinguished in thy bosom.* Be alert, dilate thy heart, and gird thyself with fortitude in order to receive and work great things, and be able to accomplish them. Have constancy in thy faith regarding these admonitions, believing them, appreciating them, and writing them in thy heart with humble affection and esteem from thy inmost soul as sent by the fidelity of thy Spouse and administered by me, who am thy Teacher and Lady.

* cf. Lv. 6:12; Lk. 12:49 [Ed.]