

The Mystical City of God

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

Mary Most Holy
Repairer of the Sin of Eve and
the Mediatrix of All Graces

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

Sister Mary of Jesus

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

Saint Francis

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

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NEW ENGLISH EDITION

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

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

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

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The Mystical City of God

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

Volume 1

The Conception

First of Four Volumes

Part I of III Parts

Books 1 and 2 of 8 Books

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The Conception

Books 1 and 2

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

1. Whoever shall come to understand (if perhaps anyone shall understand it) that a simple woman, by her condition ignorance and frailty itself, and by her sins is most unworthy, in these last ages when the holy Church our Mother has such an abundance of teachers and most learned men, so rich in the doctrine of the holy Fathers and sacred Doctors, and at such an inopportune time,* when beneath the holy zeal of prudent and wise persons those who follow the spiritual life find themselves disturbed and uneasy, and this way is looked upon by the world as suspicious and the most dangerous path of the Christian life: Whoever at such a juncture shall come to consider as blind and unworthy of further attention, and immediately condemn as more than audacious, frivolous and presumptuous, a woman such as myself who dares and determines to write of divine and supernatural things, would cause me no surprise if there was not found an excuse in the work itself and its attempt; for these matters are so exalted and superior to our desires, and unequal to human capacities, that to undertake such a work is born either of faulty judgment, or is moved by the power of another greater and more powerful cause.

2. As faithful children of the holy Church we must confess that all mortals, not only with their natural powers, but even together with those of common and ordinary grace, are insufficient, ignorant and mute for such a difficult undertaking as to explain and record the hidden mysteries and magnificent sacraments which the powerful arm of the Most High wrought in that creature, who in order to make Her his Mother has made Her an impenetrable sea of his graces and gifts, and deposited in her the greatest treasures of his divinity; hence how incapable must the ignorance of our weakness acknowledge itself to be, when the angelic spirits themselves do the same, and confess themselves as halting when speaking of this matter so far above their thoughts and capacity? For this reason the life of this masterpiece of the works of God is a book so sealed up that none is found among all the creatures of heaven and earth who worthily could open it (Apoc. 5:3). Thus it is quite clear that only the powerful Lord himself, who made Her more excellent than all the creatures, can unseal it, and also the Lady herself, our Queen and Mother, who was capable of receiving such ineffable gifts and was worthy to acknowledge them. And in order to reveal them when, how, and as much as shall for the service of her onlybegotten Son, the choice of proportionate instruments most suitable for his glory is in her hand.

3. I would willingly maintain that these instruments are the teachers and learned men of the Catholic Church, or the doctors of the schools, who have all taught us the way of truth and life. Yet the thoughts and judgments of the Most High are exalted as far above ours as heaven is exalted above earth (Is. 55:9), and no one knows his mind, or can give Him counsel in his works

* Spain in the middle of the 17th century was disturbed by numerous false visionaries and revelations, engendering dangerous and even heretical spiritual practices, especially Quietism. [Ed.]

(Rom. 11:34). He it is who holds the scales of the sanctuary in his hand (Apoc. 6:5), and who weighs the winds (Job 28:25), who grasps in his palms all the orbs (Is. 40:12), and by the equity of his most holy counsels disposes all things with weight and measure (Wis. 11:21), giving each one its opportune time and place. He dispenses the light of wisdom (Ecclus. 24:37) and by his most just goodness distributes it, and no one can ascend to the heavens to bring it down (Baruch 3:29), or take it from the clouds, or know its ways, or investigate its hidden paths (Ib. 31). He alone holds it in Himself, and as the vapor and emanation of his immense charity (Wis. 7:25), the brightness of his eternal light, and the spotless mirror and image of his eternal goodness (Ib. 26), transfuses it through holy souls among the nations in order to make them friends of the Most High and constitute them as prophets (Ib. 27). The Lord himself knows why and for what purpose He roused me, the most lowly creature, called and raised me, disposed and directed me, obliged and compelled me to write the Life of his worthy Mother, our Queen and Lady.

4. It cannot enter prudent judgment that without this impulse and force of the powerful hand of the Most High the thought of such an undertaking could enter into a human heart, or a similar determination into my mind. For I acknowledge and confess myself to be a weak woman and lacking in virtue; yet just as by my judgment I could not think of it, I also must not stubbornly resist it by my will alone. And because a sound judgment must be made in this, I shall recount with truthful simplicity something which has happened to me regarding this matter.

5. In the eighth year after the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my life, obedience imposed upon me the office of abbess which I unworthily hold at the present day. I found myself troubled and afflicted with great sorrow and discouragement, because my age and my desire urged me not to govern or command, but to obey and be governed; and the knowledge that in order to invest me with this office a dispensation had been requested, and other just reasons, increased my fears with which the Most High has crucified my heart during my entire life by the continual dread, which I cannot explain, whether my path is safe, and whether I would lose or retain his friendship and grace.

6. In this tribulation I cried out to the Lord with all my heart to help me, and that I would be freed from this danger and burden if it was his will. And though it is true that some time before His Majesty had prepared me and commanded me to accept the office, and though when I made excuses out of cowardice He always consoled me and manifested this command was for his pleasure, I nevertheless did not cease my petitions, but rather multiplied them. For I understood and saw in the Lord something well worthy of consideration; it was that although He showed this to be his holy will, which I could not restrain, nevertheless I understood at the same time that He left me free to withdraw and resist, doing what I needed as a weak creature, recognizing how great my insufficiency was anyway, and that thus prudent are the interactions of the Lord with us. Knowing this consent, I made many efforts to excuse myself from such an evident danger, so little recognized by infected nature and its vices and concupiscible disorders. Yet the Lord always repeated that it was His will that I accept, and I was consoled by Him and by the holy Angels, who admonished me to obey.

7. I fled in this affliction to the Queen my Lady, as to my only refuge in all my cares, and having manifested to Her my ways and desires She deigned to answer me in these most sweet words: "My daughter, console thyself, and let not this labor disturb thy heart; prepare thyself for it, and I shall be thy Mother and Superior whom thou shalt obey, and the same I shall be to thy subjects. I shall compensate for thy faults, and thou shalt be my instrument through whom I shall accomplish the will of my Son and my God. In all thy temptations and labors thou shalt come to me in order to confer about them and take my counsel, which I shall give thee in all things. Obey

me, and I shall favor thee and be attentive to thy afflictions.” These were the words the Queen addressed to me, as consoling as they were beneficial to my soul, by which I was encouraged and comforted in my distress. From this day forward the Mother of Mercy multiplied her counsels with me, her slave, because from then on her communication with my soul was more intimate and continuous, receiving me, hearing me, and instructing me with ineffable condescension, giving me consolation and counsel in my affliction, filling my soul with the light and doctrine of eternal life, and commanding me to renew the vows of my profession in her hands. Finally, after that event this our most amiable Mother and Lady revealed Herself more fully to her slave, withdrawing the veil from the hidden and most exalted sacraments and magnificent mysteries which in her most holy life are enclosed and concealed from mortals. And although this benefit and supernatural light has been continuous (and especially on her feast days, and on other different occasions in which I learned many mysteries), yet it was not with the fullness, frequency and clarity with which She afterwards taught me, many times adding the command that I write them as I understood them, and as Her Majesty would dictate and instruct me. Particularly on one of these feast days of most holy Mary the Most High informed me that He had many hidden sacraments and benefits which He had wrought with this heavenly Lady as his Mother during her pilgrimage among mortals, and it was his will to manifest them so I could write them as She herself would instruct me. And this will of His most exalted Majesty I had known continually for a period of ten years during which I resisted, until I began to write this divine History for the first time.

8. Conferring about this task with the holy Princes and Angels whom the Almighty had appointed to guide me in this work of writing the History of our Queen, and manifesting to them my disturbance and affliction of heart, and how halting and mute was my tongue for such an arduous undertaking, they repeatedly replied that it was the will of the Most High that I write the Life of his most pure Mother and our Lady. And especially on one day, when I gave them a lengthy reply, representing my difficulty, incapacity, and great fears, they spoke to me these words: “With good reason, O soul, art thou fearful and disturbed, doubtful and hesitant in a matter in which we Angels ourselves would do the same as inadequate to declare such high and magnificent doings as the powerful arm of the Omnipotent wrought in the Mother of Mercy and our Queen. Yet take notice, dearest soul, that the firmament, the whole mechanism of the world, and all that has being will pass away before the word of the Most High fails; and many times He has revealed to his creatures, and in his Church it is recorded in the Holy Scriptures, that the obedient shall sing of victories over their enemies (Prov. 21:28), and shall not be blameworthy in obeying. When He created the first man, and imposed on him the precept of obedience not to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen. 2:16), He thereby established the virtue of obedience, and swearing an oath He gave greater assurance to man, which the Lord is accustomed to do as with Abraham, when He promised that from his lineage the Messiah would descend, giving him the assurance of an oath (Ib. 22:16). He did the same when He created the first man, assuring him that the obedient shall not err. He also repeated this oath when He ordained that his most holy Son would die (Lk. 1:73); and He gave assurance to mortals that those who would obey this second Adam, imitating Him in the obedience by which He restored what the first Adam lost through his disobedience, shall live forever, and in his works the enemy shall have no part. Take notice, Mary, that all obedience originates from God as from the principal and primary cause, and we Angels obey the power of his divine right hand and his most righteous will; for we cannot go against it, nor are we ignorant of it, since we see the immutable being of the Most High face to face, and know his will is holy, pure and true, most righteous and just. Now this

certainty which the Angels have through the beatific vision, mortals have individually as viators by those words which the Lord himself spoke concerning prelates and superiors: *He that heareth you, heareth Me** (Lk: 10:16), and he who obeys you, obeys Me. And in virtue of the fact that it is God who is obeyed, who is the principal Cause and Superior, it is incumbent upon his powerful providence to ensure the success of the obedient when that which is commanded is not a sinful matter. All this the Lord assures by an oath, and He will sooner cease to exist (this being impossible, for He is God) than fail in his word (Mt. 24:35). Hence as children proceed from their parents, and all the living from Adam, multiplied in the posterity of his nature, so also all prelates proceed from God, as the supreme Lord, for whom we render obedience to our superiors, those of the human nature to their living superiors, we Angels to those of a superior hierarchy of our nature, and both one and the other in their superiors obey the eternal God. Now remember, soul, that all of these have directed and commanded thee to do what thou dost doubt. And if, desiring to obey, it is not proper for thee to undertake this work, the Most High would do with thy pen the same as He did with the obedient Abraham when he was sacrificing his son Isaac (Gen. 22:11), when the Lord commanded one of his angelic spirits to hold back his arm and knife; and He does not command us to hold back thy pen, but has ordered us with swift flight to guide it, listening to His Majesty and directing thee, enlightening thee, and helping thee.”

9. These reasons and instruction were given me by my holy Angels and masters on that occasion. On many other occasions the prince St. Michael has declared to me the same will and command of the Most High. And by continued enlightenments, favors and instruction of this great Prince I have understood magnificent mysteries and sacraments of the Lord and of the Queen of heaven, for this holy Archangel was one of those who guarded and assisted Her with the others who for her guardianship were delegated from all the orders and hierarchies of the Angels, as I will relate in its place (201-206); being both universal patron and protector of the holy Church, he was a special witness and most faithful minister of all the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. I have often understood this regarding this holy Archangel, by whose protection I have received singular benefits in my labors and battles, and has promised to assist me and instruct me in this work.

10. Above all these mandates, and others to which it is not necessary to refer, and in addition to what I shall say further on, the Lord himself has directly commanded me and declared his approval of this undertaking many times, and in words which I shall now repeat. His Majesty said to me one day on the feast of the Presentation of most holy Mary in the temple: “My spouse, there are many mysteries I have manifested in my Militant Church pertaining to my Mother and the Saints; yet many are still hidden, especially regarding their interior lives and secrets, which I desire to manifest for thee to write down as thou art instructed, and especially those pertaining to most pure Mary. I shall declare and reveal them to thee; for by the hidden judgments of my wisdom I have kept them in reserve, because the time for revealing them was not suitable or opportune to my providence.[†] Now it is, and it is my will for thee to write them down. Obey, soul.”

11. All these facts which I have mentioned, and more which I could declare, were not powerful enough to subdue my will to an enterprise so arduous and foreign to my condition, if they were not joined to obedience to my superiors, who have governed my soul and taught me the way of

* The Editor has throughout these four volumes placed verbatim Scripture quotes (Douay-Rheims version) in *italics*. [Ed.]

[†] cf. *Transfixion* 794. [Ed.]

truth; for my mistrusts and fears were not of a kind which would allow me to be assured in such a difficult matter, when in other easier matters, though supernatural, obedience does much to quiet me. As an ignorant woman I have always sought this north star, for it is an obligation to examine all things, even if they seem more lofty and without suspicion, by the approbation of the masters and ministers of the holy Church. All this I have sought to procure for the direction of my soul, and more so in this undertaking of writing the Life of the Queen of heaven. I have worked very hard for my superiors to not be moved by what I relate to them, concealing many things as much as I could, and imploring the Lord with tears to give them light and success (and many times desiring this cause to be removed from their minds), and that they would not let me err or be deceived.

12. I also confess that the demon, availing himself of my natural dispositions and fears, has made great efforts to prevent this work, seeking means to terrify and afflict me; and without doubt I would have been overcome and abandoned it, if the skill and invincible determination of my superiors had not encouraged me in my cowardice, also giving occasion for the Lord, the most pure Virgin, and the holy Angels to renew their light, signs and wonders. Yet even with all this encouragement I delayed, or more correctly, I resisted obeying them all for many years (as I will relate further on), not daring to attempt the execution of something so far beyond my strength. And I believe this was not without the particular providence of His Majesty, since during this time so many events have happened to me, which I would call mysteries and difficulties so extraordinary and various, that because of them I would not have been able to possess the serenity and tranquility of spirit necessary to receive this light and instruction; for not in any state whatsoever, though it is very exalted and favorable, can the summit of the soul be suitable to receive such an exalted and delicate influx. And besides this reason I discovered another; it is, with such a long delay I could inform and assure myself by the new light earned over time and the prudence acquired by varied experience, and also by the perseverance of the Lord, of the holy Angels, and of my superiors, insisting that by such continued obedience I could calm and assure myself, overcome my fears, timidity and perplexity, and trust to the Lord what I would not trust to my weakness.

13. Thus in reliance upon this great virtue of obedience I resolved in the name of the Most High and of the Queen my Lady to give up my resistance. I call this virtue great not only because by it is offered to God as a holocaust and sacrifice the most noble faculties of a creature, which are the mind, the judgment, and the free will, but also because no other virtue assures success more than obedience; for by it the creature no longer acts on its own, but also as an instrument of the one who governs and commands. This assured Abraham when he overcame the force of the natural love and law regarding his son Isaac (Gen. 22:3); and if it was powerful for this, and to detain the sun and the heavens in their swift course (Josue 10:13), it is certainly sufficient to move the earth. If Oza had been governed by obedience, perhaps he would not have been punished as audacious and rash in touching the ark (II Kg. 6:7). Well do I realize that I am more unworthy to stretch out my hand to touch, not the lifeless and figurative ark of the ancient law, but the living Ark of the New Testament wherein is contained the manna of the Divinity, the original tablet of grace, and his holy law. Yet if I keep silent, I fear with good reason to disobey so many commands, and I could say with Isaias (6:5): *Woe is me because I have held my peace!* Thus, O my Queen and Lady, it is better for thy most benign compassion and mercy, and the favor of thy generous hand, to shine forth through my lowliness; it is better to give me thy favor in order to obey thy orders, than to fall into thy displeasure. It shall be a work worthy of thy clemency (O purest Mother) to raise the poor one from the earth, and make a weak and unfit

subject an instrument for such difficult works, by which thy grace and the favors communicated to Thee by thy most holy Son shall be magnified; and Thou shalt thereby exclude the deceitful presumption which could imagine that by human ingenuity, or earthly prudence, or the force and authority of disputation this work is accomplished, but by the power of divine grace Thou dost awaken anew in the hearts of the faithful, drawing them toward Thee, the fountain of compassion and mercy. Speak therefore, O Lady, that thy servant may hear (I Kg. 3:9) with an ardent will to obey Thee as I ought. Yet how can my desires reach or equal my debt? A worthy recompense shall be impossible; yet if it was possible I would desire to give it. O powerful and exalted Queen, fulfill thy promises and declarations, manifesting to me thy graces and attributes, so thy grandeur may be made known and magnified among all nations and generations. Speak, O Lady, for thy servant heareth; speak and magnify the Most High in the powerful and wonderful works which his right hand wrought for Thee in thy most profound humility. Let them flow from his hands which are *turned and full of hyacinths* (Cant. 5:14) into thine, and from thine to thy devotees and servants, so the Angels may bless Him, the just magnify Him, the sinners seek Him, and so all may have a model of consummate sanctity and purity, and I may have this mirror and efficacious guide by which I can compose my life. This is to be the primary intention of my solicitude in writing thy Life, as Your Highness has repeatedly told me, condescending to offer me a living model and mirror without stain or spot,* in which I could see and adorn my soul in order to be thy daughter and a spouse of thy most holy Son.

14. This shall be my entire aspiration and intention; therefore I shall not write as a teacher, but as a disciple, not in order to teach, but to learn, knowing it is the duty of women to be silent in the holy Church (I Cor. 14:34) and listen to the teachers. Yet as an instrument of the Queen of heaven I shall manifest what Her Majesty deigns to teach and command me, for all souls are capable of receiving the Spirit which her most holy Son has promised to send upon persons of all conditions without exception (Joel 2:28; Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26); and they are also obliged to manifest it in a suitable manner, as they receive it, when the higher authority ordains it with Christian providence, as in this case I judge my superiors have ordered. To err is possible for me, consequent upon being an ignorant woman, but not in obeying, and neither would it be willful; therefore I submit and subject myself to those who guide me, and to the correction of the holy Catholic Church, to whose ministers I have recourse in any difficulty. And I desire my superior, master and confessor to be a witness and a censor of this doctrine which I receive, and also a vigilant and strict judge of how I put it into practice, or fail in the fulfillment of it and of my obligations measured by this benefit.

15. By the will of the Lord and the command of obedience I have written this divine History for the second time; for in the first writing, since the light by which I knew its mysteries was abundant and fertile, and my limitation great, the language was insufficient, and my pen not swift enough to express everything. I omitted some things,[†] and with time and new insights I now find myself better disposed to write, though there always remains much to say regarding what I

* cf. Cant. 4:7 [Ed.]

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

understand and have known, because to say all will never be possible. In addition to this another reason was made known to me in the Lord, namely in my first writing my attention was very much focused on the material* and order in this work, and the temptations and fears were so great, and the tempests of reasonings and suggestions which battled me were so excessive, that deeming it temerity to have attempted such an arduous work, I submitted to the order to burn it. And I believe this was not without the permission of the Lord, for in a state of such turbulence I could not convey to my soul the suitable disposition and what the Most High desired, writing in my heart and engraving in my spirit his instruction, as He now commands me to do, and as can be inferred from the following event.

16. One day on the feast of the Purification of Our Lady, after having received the most holy Sacrament, I desired to celebrate this holy festival (because it was the anniversary of my profession) by rendering gratitude and a surrendered heart to the Most High, who without my merit had accepted me as his spouse. And while exerting these affections I felt in my interior an efficacious change with most abundant light, which led and urged me strongly and sweetly (Wis. 8:1) to the knowledge of the being of God, his goodness, perfections and attributes, and the disillusionment of my own misery. These different concepts, which were placed in my understanding at the same time, produced in me various effects: The first, riveting my entire attention and will; and the second, annihilating me and binding me with the dust, as if returning me to my original nothingness,[†] and I felt a most vehement sorrow and contrition for my grievous sins with a firm purpose of amendment and of renouncing all the world has, raising me above all that is earthly to the love of the Lord. In these affections I was consumed, and the greatest pain was consolation, and death was life. The Lord, taking pity on my affliction, solely by his mercy said to me: “Be not dismayed, my daughter and spouse, for in order to pardon, wash, and purify thee from thy sins, I shall apply to thee my infinite merits, and the blood I shed for thee. Aspire to the perfection thou dost desire by the imitation of the life of my most holy Mother; write it the second time so thou mayest supply what was lacking, and impress her instruction on thy heart. Do not provoke my justice any more or disoblige my mercy by burning what thou shalt write, lest my indignation deprive thee of the light which without thy merit has been given thee in order to know and manifest these mysteries.”

17. I immediately saw the Mother of God and of mercy, who said to me: “My daughter, thou hast not yet gathered the fruit suitable for thy soul from the tree of life^Δ of my History thou hast written, nor reached the essence of its substance; thou hast not collected enough of its this hidden manna, nor attained the final disposition of perfection required so the Almighty may accordingly engrave and imprint in thy soul my virtues and perfections. I am to give thee the proper capability and adornment for that which the divine right hand is to work in thee. I have solicited Him that by my hand and intercession, and through the most abundant grace conferred upon me, He give me permission to adorn thee and compose thy soul, so thou mayest return to the writing of my Life without attending to the material in it, but to the formal and substantial; and with docility and without placing any obstacle in receiving the current of divine grace which the Almighty has poured upon me,[▲] allow that part which the divine will disposes be channeled to thee. Do not curtail or limit it by thy timidity and imperfect behavior.” Then I recognized that the

* rather than the spiritual [Ed.]

[†] *de manera que se deshacía mi ser* [Ed.]

^Δ cf. Apoc. 22:2, 14 [Ed.]

[▲] cf. Ps. 45:5 [Ed.]

Mother of Mercy clothed me in a garment whiter than snow and more resplendent than the sun. She then girded me with a most precious cincture,* and said: “This is a participation of my purity.” I asked for the infused science of the Lord, which would serve me as most beautiful hair for my adornment, and for other precious gifts and adornments, which although I saw they were great, I acknowledged my ignorance of their value. After this adornment the heavenly Lady said: “Work faithfully and diligently to imitate me, and to be my most perfect daughter, engendered of my spirit and raised at my bosom. I give thee my blessing so in my name and with my direction and assistance thou mayest write my Life a second time.”

18. For greater clarity, this entire most holy Life is divided into three Parts. The first Part shall relate what pertains to and touches upon the first fifteen years of the Queen of heaven, from her most pure Conception until the eternal Word assumed flesh in her virginal womb, and what the Most High did for most holy Mary during these years. The second Part comprises the mystery of the Incarnation, the entire life of Christ our Lord, his Passion and Death, and his Ascension into heaven, being the time in which the heavenly Queen lived with her most holy Son, and what She did during this time. The third Part shall be the remainder of the life of this Mother of Grace, after She was left alone in the world without Christ our Redeemer, until the hour of her happy death, Assumption, and Coronation as the Empress of heaven, in order to live eternally as the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. These three Parts I have divided into eight Books so they may be easier to handle, and always be the object of my understanding, the stimulus of my will, and my meditation day and night.

19. In order to state at what time I wrote this divine History, it must be noted that my father, Brother Francis Coronel, and my mother, Sister Catharine de Arana, founded in their own house this convent of the discalced nuns of the most pure Conception by the divine disposition and will declared by a special light and revelation to my mother, Sister Catharine. This foundation took place on the octave of the Epiphany, the thirteenth of January, 1619, when my mother, my sister and I took the habit. My father went to the Order of our seraphic father St. Francis, joining two sons who were already religious, where he took the habit, made his profession, lived as an example to all, and died a most holy death. My mother and I received the veil on the day of the Purification of the great Queen of heaven, on the second of February, 1620. Because she was not old enough, the profession of the second daughter was delayed. The Almighty (solely by his goodness) favored our family in that all of us were consecrated to Him in the religious state. In the eighth year of the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my age, in the year of our Lord 1627, obedience conferred upon me the office of abbess, which today I unworthily hold. Ten years of this prelacy passed during which I received many commands from the Most High and from the great Queen of heaven to write her most holy Life, and with fear and trembling† I resisted these heavenly commands during all that time until the year 1637, when I began to write it the first time. Upon finishing it, due to the fears and tribulations I mentioned, and by the counsel of a confessor who directed me (during the absence of the principal confessor who governed me), I burned all the writings containing not only this sacred History, but many others written about grave and mysterious matters; for he told me women should not write in the holy Church. I obeyed him promptly, and afterwards received very harsh reprehensions from the superiors and the confessor who knew my whole life. Anew they threatened me with censures to move me to write it a second time; and the Most High and the Queen of heaven repeated new

* cf. paragraph 434 below [Ed.]

† cf. Philip. 2:12 [Ed.]

commands that I obey. During this second writing the light I received from the divine Being was so copious, the benefits which the right hand of the Most High communicated to me were so abundant (directing my poor soul to renew and vivify itself in the teachings of the heavenly Mistress), so perfect were the instructions, and so exalted were the sacraments, that it is necessary to write a separate book in connection with this History, the title of which is: “Laws of the Spouse, pinnacles of his chaste love, and fruit gathered from the tree of life of most holy Mary, our Lady.”[†] By the divine favor I begin to write this History on the eighth of December, 1655, on the day of the most pure and Immaculate Conception.

[†] cf. *Transfixion* 25 [Ed.]