

and how he exalts this masterpiece of his hands! He who after having drayn the world from nothing, considering all that he had made, was contented with saying it was good: *Vidit quod esset bonum.* Gen i. 10. How different his language after having given existence to Mary! "Thou art beautiful," said he to her, "O my beloved; Thou art all beautiful." *Ecce tu pulchra es amica mea;* Cant. i. 14; *tota pulchra es.* Ib. iv. 7. My eyes that discover spots in the most brilliant stars, and imperfections in the pure intelligences that surround my throne, perceive no defect in thee; *Et macula non est in te.* Ib. iv. 7. Then, addressing himself to the celestial spirits, he glories in the work of his hands. Behold, he says to them this chaste dove! she is unrivalled, alone perfect perfect in the universe: *Una est columba mea perfecta mea.* Ib. vi. 8. Continuing to develop the hidden sense of the most mysterious of Canticles, shall I now show you the celestial spirits hastening at the voice of their God? shall I describe their surprise and rapture at the sight of such beauty? Do you hear them exclaim: Who then is this admirable creature, who unites in herself alone the perfections of all others? *Quæ est ista?* Ib. 9. They compare the lustre with which she shines, sometimes to the soft and benign light of the moon: *Pulchra ut Luna.* Ib. At other times, to the more vivid brightness of the morning starr: *Quasi Aurora consurgens.* Ib. Again, to the dazzling splendor of the sun: *Elicta ut Sol.* Cant. vi. 9. But whence proceeds this sweet odour which charms and attracts them? *Curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.* Ib. i. 3. Is it not from her heart, as from, a precious vase, full of the most exquisite perfumes? *Ex aromatibus myrrhæ, et thuris, et universi pulveris pigmentarii.* Ib. iii. 6.

But let us lay aside this figurative language, which we have borrowed from the holy Scriptures: let us consider what these images represent; that is to say, the qualities, the virtues of the heart of Mary. And first, let us speak of her innocence. This pure heart knew not the irregular propensities of nature, it had no apprehension of ever knowing them; and yet, what precautions to preserve a treasure which she could not lose! what solicitude to fly from the world, and its dangerous occasions! what retirement! what solitude, from her tenderest years! What shall we say of a modesty that is troubled at the sight of an angel? of a chastity of heart, which, without a moment's hesitation, prefers virginity, not to all the grandeurs and joys of the world,—that would be little,—but to the ineffable honour of the divine maternity, which infinitely surpasses all thought or expression! To a purity so heroic is united the most profound humility. See this daughter of David, who reckons so many kings amongst her ancestors, condemn herself to a voluntary obscurity, become the spouse of

an artisan, and devote herself to all the humiliations inseparable from a condition so abject in the eyes of men! Observe all her steps, listen to her words study over her silence, and you will conceive to what a degree she seeks self-abashment and humiliation. A prince of the celestial host salutes her with respect, and announces to her, that she shall conceive in her womb the Son of the Most High: trembling, abashed, as if she feared to receive the title of Queen, she hastens to take that of servant; called to be Spouse and Mother, she places herself in the rank of a slave: *Ecce ancilla Domini.* Luke i. 38. Elizabeth breaks forth into an ecstasy of admiration at the contemplation of the wonders her presence alone operates, and calls her blessed amongst all women. Mary, in the midst of all that is capable of dazzling her, wishes only to contemplate her own nothingness and lowliness: *Respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ;* Luke i. 48; she will ascribe greatness to God alone: *Fecit mihi magna, qui potens est, et sanctum nomen ejus.* Ib. 49. Joseph, ignorant of the cause of her fecundity, conceives dark suspicions; she could by one word undeceive him, but she prefers to bear the weight of this ignominy, rather than reveal to her holy spouse a secret which rebounded to her glory. The law obliged the women of Juda to purify themselves from the stain they contracted in becoming mothers; Mary, though always a virgin, purified herself like them, and covers, under the veil of this humiliating ceremony, the privilege and sanctity of her divine maternity. When has she been seen vainly displaying the favours of heaven? When has she even let the graces and lights with which she was filled, be perceived? When has a word which tended to gain the esteem of others escaped her? What do I say? was not her entire life almost a continued silence? Is she outraged or honoured, she is silent. Let the shepherds and magi adore her divine Son, or the Pharisees, priests, and soldiers overwhelm him with insults; let her Son himself speak in terms of apparent severity: "Woman, what is it to thee or to me?" John ii. 4; yet is she silent, and blesses the decrees of Providence, which seconds so well her desires of humility. O my sisters! how easy is silence to sincerely humble souls, but how difficult to the proud? How vain would it be to undertake to banish from a community, idle, indiscreet, perhaps even sinful conversations, unless the poisonous root of pride is torn up from the heart! Let us return to Mary. Detached from glory even so far as to fear and hate it, she despises riches, she strips herself of them from her youth, to embrace all the rigours and privations of poverty. O! under what an humble roof does she dwell, who will be placed one day above the choirs of angels in the house of God! With what poor and coarse garments is she covered, to whom