

248, 1594

BEHOLD THY MOTHER;

OR

MOTIVES OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

FROM THE GERMAN OF THE REV. P. ROH, S. J.

SEVENTH EDITION



THE AVE MARIA
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

BEHOLD THY MOTHER;

OR

MOTIVES OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

FROM THE GERMAN OF THE REV. P. ROH, S. J.

SEVENTH EDITION



THE AVE MARIA
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

This admirable Essay on the Blessed Virgin, which appeared some time ago in THE AVE MARIA, is reprinted at the suggestion of the Rt. Rev. Bishop of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Rev. Father Roh, S. J., the author, was a zealous missionary, and one of the most eloquent preachers in Germany in his time. His name is still a household word among the Catholics of the Fatherland. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which it has always been the instinct of hereſy to assail, and which none but Catholics can rightly comprehend, is learnedly and eloquently explained in this little Essay, which we lay at the feet of Her whom all generations shall call blessed.

EDITOR OF THE AVE MARIA.

NOTRE DAME, INDIANA,

Feast of the Holy Rosary, 1876.

Behold Thy Mother; or, Motives of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

“**B**EHOLD THY MOTHER!”* These words contain a testament of the dying Redeemer to His Church.

This Divine Redeemer had already given us all that was His, when, out of love for us, He became a weak child, a poor man, and, according to the declaration of St. Paul, laid aside the glory which He possessed as the Eternal God. Yes, as man He gave us the whole of the time during which He dwelt on earth. He renounced all the goods of this world; He renounced them willingly, that He might suffer for us. He renounced honor when He permitted Himself to be condemned, like the greatest criminal, to an ignominious death, in order to suffer unutterable torments in our stead; hanging on the Cross He gave us His Sacred Blood, even to the last drop; at the hour of death nothing was left Him of this world's possessions save the crown of thorns; and yet—yes, one thing was His, a veritable treasure, a costly jewel of His filial Heart. This was His Virgin Mother, who, with tender mother-love, remained to the last moment faithful to the abandoned One; who had the courage to accompany her Son to the very Cross itself, to place herself at its foot, in face of the raging crowd, thus tacitly proclaiming, “I am the Mother of the Crucified.”

To whom could He confide such a Mother as that? To

* St. John, xix, 27.

whom should He give her as a mother? The heart of John, the faithful disciple, alone had been stirred with the love which won courage to enable him to stand with that Mother at the foot of the Cross. He was the only one, of all the followers of Jesus, who ventured to drink the cup of pain and of shame with Him to the last drop. To this faithful disciple Jesus turned, with the words: "Behold thy Mother!" and to the Mother He said: "Behold thy son!" And he said these words, not only because His Mother lost in Him her only Son, and on this account needed an adopted son for her protection on earth, but hereby He speaks a word that penetrates much more deeply into the very heart of His plan and of His work.

The Church of Christ has always believed that John here represents not his own person alone, but that we see in him the image of all such true Christians as follow Christ and remain faithful to Him, not only to the breaking of bread, but also to the moment when He drains the cup of suffering. John is the perfect Christian, and in his person Christ gave His Mother to be the spiritual Mother of every true and genuine Christian. All true Christians, His true brothers, He has presented as spiritual children to His natural Mother.

If this appears singular, it is nevertheless very simple. Christ, through the Redemption, having become one person morally, with all those who are united to Him in faith, hope, and love, if they form one Christ with Him, manifestly Christ's natural Mother becomes an adoptive Mother, a spiritual Mother for all true brothers of Christ, for all those whom He calls His brethren. And if all those who

are brothers in Christ make in Him and through Him one family in God, then I do not see how it can be reasonably disputed that the Mother of Christ, in the flesh, is the spiritual Mother of this family of God in which Christ is the eldest-born.

The reverence which the Church has manifested for the ever-blessed Virgin, the devotion of which she is the object, has often been regarded as an excrescence of Christianity, as an interpolation, or at the least, as a superstitious exaggeration. But I believe and hope that, with the assistance of the grace of God, I shall be able to demonstrate to every one who is seeking the truth, that the devotion to the Blessed Virgin as taught, recommended, and acknowledged by the Church, is inseparably bound up with the existence of Christianity. I say as taught, recommended, and acknowledged by the Church, because only on such a responsibility as this can any question regarding it be settled by any reasonable man.

The Church can not make herself responsible for anything besides what she teaches, recommends, acknowledges, and practises; and that is what I insist on, that is my meaning, when I say that the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is inseparably connected with the innermost existence of Christianity.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, as taught by the Church, consists in three things:

First: In reverence, esteem, and admiration of the exalted dignity of the Blessed Virgin.

Secondly: In placing a trustful confidence in her intercession.

Thirdly and lastly: In cherishing for her a grateful, filial love.

And now, I repeat, all the veneration which is shown to the Blessed Virgin Mary, as also that taught and practised by the Church, is inseparable from the Christian faith. Having confidence in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary is in perfect accord with Christian hope; cherishing gratitude and love for her is consistent with the most beautiful harmonies of Christian love; and veneration for the Blessed Virgin Mary is in the most beautiful unison with Christian faith.

Christianity teaches that there is but one God; that outside of Himself there is not, and can not be, any like to Himself; and that this God, because He can have none like Himself, either outside of Himself or near Him, must be worshipped with a worship which may be shown to Him alone, and which should not be and must not be offered to any other being. This worship which solely and exclusively is due to God we call Adoration (*Adoratio*). Adoration comprehends the whole of that worship which is due to God and to Him alone. To worship God in spirit, in thought, in faith, means to think of God what is true in itself as God deserves that we should believe.

To worship God with the understanding signifies: God alone is eternal—from Himself, through Himself. God alone is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good, wise, and holy; in other words, God alone is perfect from everlasting to everlasting. To worship God with a heart of faith is to acknowledge that all good comes from God alone, and can come only from Him, because He is the source of all that

can be or is good, beautiful, and worthy of love; and thus in its highest significance it is only in God that we can place our hope; for He alone is Lord of all the heavens, and all things exist through Him alone; consequently, in the last resort all things can be expected through Him alone: To worship God, therefore, signifies to love Him above all things, without limit; for He is infinitely raised above everything that exists, infinitely more perfect, more beautiful, more worthy of love than any other being, whether actual or conceivable.

This is the meaning, the theological signification, of the word worship. We can think in this manner only of God; we can hope in this wise only in God: it is only God whom we love after this fashion. And, my dear readers, between this highest degree of reverence which is due to God alone, and indifference, even when it is not contempt, mockery, hatred—between these two extremes, between the highest and the lowest, there is, if I may so express myself, a great gulf, a broad space, and between these limits exists every legitimate, profitable, reasonable degree of esteem, veneration and love.

God Himself commands us to honor our father and mother; God Himself enjoins us to fear God and honor the king; God Himself by the mouth of His Apostle publishes the edict: "Honor to whom honor is due;" God says to us through our reason that we should acknowledge and value worth wherever we find it and according to the measure in which it exists. Science has its heroes, civilization its great men and benefactors. Here we find recognition, esteem, honor, manifested on every side. But is that adoration?

No, it is not adoration. We honor their merits, but we do not pray to this or to that citizen, to this or that general, to this or that man of science, or to any one of this kind; we place none of them on a like footing with God; we never take anything that belongs to God in order to bestow it upon them.

Among these different kinds of merit, what rank in the Church of Christ, what in the scale of civilization, is occupied by virtue, by sanctity? Manifestly the highest. But, mark well, no claim for adoration can be made on this account. Every created sanctity is but a very weak, reflected ray of God's actual or essential holiness. But, notwithstanding this, it will still be in order in the Church of Christ, which strives to make her members holy, that she should honor holiness in those who have proved their holiness: that the brothers of Christ who struggle according to the revealed way, for truth, righteousness, and perfection—that these, both on account of their sanctity and of the respectful veneration due to it, should ever be held in honor.

Only he who is indifferent with respect to sanctity itself is in a position to be cold and indifferent to the saints, in the same manner that he alone does not value or esteem scientific merit who does not care for science in itself. Therefore, as I have before asserted, the Church proves herself to be holy in that she honors the saints; for thereby she admonishes her children in the most powerful manner to strive after holiness; thereby she places before her children the most perfect examples and models for their imitation; thereby she proclaims aloud that holiness alone has

any real value in her eyes, and this because it furthers holiness in men.

Now, how will a Christian prize the most Blessed Virgin Mary in his inmost soul? Can he even call himself a Christian without truly reverencing the Blessed Virgin on account of the dignity with which God has invested her, on account of the holiness of her conduct on earth, on account of the great graces which she has received from God?

It is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity—and without this fundamental truth there is no Christianity—that God's Son, who is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, became man without ceasing to be God, without suffering any diminution, injury, or breaking off from His unchangeable Godhead; that the Holy Ghost formed Christ as man in the chaste virginal womb of the ever-immaculate Mary without a human father, in like manner as God in the beginning created Adam out of nothing; that God's Son took His human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; that she is thus, according to His human nature, the Mother of Him who, according to His divine nature, is truly God; not, however, a twofold Christ in two persons,—one Christ God, and one Christ man. No: in two natures, one person—God from eternity, and man in time, therefore true God and true man at one and the same time.

Therefore we call her the Mother of God, not as if she had given Him the beginning and source of His Divinity—every Christian child knows that God is from eternity, without beginning and without end,—but we say, by these words, that she, according to human nature, conceived and gave birth to Him who, according to His divine nature, is

in truth God. We call her Mother of God, and everywhere has she been so named where her Son has been acknowledged as God. It is quite true that those who have denied the Divinity of Christ must as a consequence deny that she is the Mother of a Divine Person,—I can understand that; but it is firmly established that all those who hold fast to the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, who have known what Christ is—these have never denied and can not deny, this title to Mary.

Meantime, with that chief article of faith, chief dogma of Christianity, which has given to Mary the titles of Mother of God and Virgin, I have given expression to two of the most beautiful words which ever yet were used to describe a creature—Mother of God and Virgin! How beautiful! Mother and Virgin! We have here manifestly a wonder of divine wisdom, power, goodness, and grace. Such alone could unite these two words and give them as a title to a creature.

Yes truly, Mary is at one and the same time Mother of God and Virgin. With all her privileges and gifts of grace, she yet remains, and will ever remain, a mere creature—in infinite, immeasurable distance from her Divine Son, from God. Never and in no manner whatsoever, even in any one single point, may we think of Mary as we think of God; may we hope in her as we hope in God, may we love her as we love God. No! she remains forever a creature, a creature only; and what she is, she is, in the fullest significance of the words, from the free grace and love of God; in short, all that she is, she is on account of God and her Son.

But all this does not hinder that she is the most beautiful production of the benignity and compassion of God, that she is the creature whom God out of His own free mercy without any merit of hers, raised to the highest dignity, to this exclusive dignity, to be the Mother of God's Son. For it is true, and remaineth true forever and ever, that neither before nor since has God worked the miracle which unites the inviolate, purest virginity with a mother's fruitfulness. It is and remains a truth that no other creature has ever been placed in such a relationship to the Triune God—to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Therefore we are convinced beforehand that God, after He had elected Mary to this high dignity, had conferred upon her such a rank in the creation, as a matter of course prepared for her a soul and body adorned and embellished with all the beauty and loveliness which any son who had it in his power would bestow upon his mother.

Mark this well: Christ was the only Son who existed before His Mother, who chose a Mother for Himself, who not only chose her, but who created her. And I ask each of you—in so far as you had been able to create your mother, in so far as the inexhaustible fulness of riches of the Godhead had been at your disposal, and you had been able to create a mother after your own heart—tell me, would you have been sparing of these gifts in her behalf? Would you not have endowed her with every blessing she was capable of receiving? Would you not have made her so holy and beautiful and lovely that you might have joy in her throughout eternity?

Well, then, God's Son is the Creator. He is the source

of all grace; He it is who has created us all in grace, and who therefore, if He will, can give to each one of us grace, mercy, blessedness—yes, unbounded blessedness. And this Son, He wills His Mother to be Queen of heaven, Queen of angels, and of redeemed men; for this title is due to her as the Mother of the King, of all the redeemed, of all the blessed.

Bethink you now what it is that the Son of God has wrought for such a Mother, and I need not further enlarge on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception: namely, that her soul from the first moment that God created it was blessed, and gifted with a peculiar grace, a supernatural holiness, even as were the souls of Adam and Eve at their creation, and as ours would be if these our First Parents had not sinned. But because our First Parents lost or flung away from them original righteousness, we are born not only as mere natural beings, but also with a nature which sin has corrupted. We have the properties of human nature, but we no longer possess the supernatural dowry of sanctity by which we were rendered capable of supernatural blessedness. Had we been born in a state of righteousness, we were through God's love destined beforehand to supernatural blessedness; now, on the contrary, the being born again, that work of sanctifying grace accomplished in us in the Sacrament of holy Baptism only as a result of the merits of Christ, is the first means whereby we become capable of loving God with a divine, supernatural love.

It is, therefore, by no means an exaggeration if the Church has always believed, and has at length declared it

to be an article of faith, that this dowry of sanctifying grace was imparted to the Blessed Virgin immediately on the creation of her soul, therefore at her conception, because she was destined and elected by God to be the Mother of our Redeemer; that this divine grace was conferred upon her by virtue of the merits of her future Son, while since then the same is imparted to us in Baptism. In very truth it was a great happiness for Mary that she never found herself in a state destitute of grace; that she never was exposed to the anger of God; that she was ever beautiful, and from the very first moment of existence well-pleasing to God. O yes! that was a great happiness; but it was a grace,—a grace granted to her not from her own merits, but on account of the merits of her Son.

However, when we consider the matter closely, she may be said to have some pretension to this distinction. As regards us, we have contributed nothing towards the accomplishment of the work of our redemption. When we ourselves come under consideration with respect to the Redemption, it is as debtors, as sinners; the Blessed Virgin, on the contrary, though not indeed a redemptrix in the sense in which Christ is Redeemer, though she has not blotted out our sins through her suffering and death—that indeed she has not done, that Christ alone has done,—yet it is not the less true that she performed a real part in the work of Redemption.

Christ is for us all a Saviour; yes, Christ alone is our Redeemer; from Him and through Him we expect everything; but it is not the less true that God, so to speak, gave us this Redeemer through Mary. As a child He rested

on her heart, He was nourished at her breast; on account of her Son and our Redeemer she left her native land, she underwent exile and sorrow, she had to bear all the persecution and mockery which her Son suffered; in Mary's heart was echoed every hardship and bitterness that her Son had to bear; and already in the earliest days Simeon through his prophecy plunged the sword into her mother-heart when he said to her: "This child is set for the rise and fall of many in Israel." She knew very well what Israel's prophets had said; she knew His future sufferings; and if she had also her joys, yet must this pain, this fear, I will not say make her unhappy, but in a peculiar sense prepare her whole life for a sacrifice in the service of love.

On these facts are grounded the love, the hope, the trust which we Christians have in the most Blessed Virgin. Christian hope springs from Christian faith. Even as faith tells us that God alone is the highest good and the source of all good, so it also tells us that we may place our hope alone in God, that we may not expect anything good which has not its source in God alone, and that we expect this good solely and exclusively through the merits of Christ, because He alone has purchased for us all the good which comes to us, sinners, from God.

But 'this Christian hope which refers us to God as the source and cause of our blessedness, and to Christ as the only Redeemer, tells us also that our dear God, in order to grant our wishes, in order to content our needs, requires our free, spontaneous action, our co-operation. Our dear God provides in one way for lifeless nature and for animals, in another for men. He requires no co-operation

from those whose action can not be spontaneous. From us, as free, reasonable creatures, God requires more; hence the proverb, "Help yourself and God will 'help you;""* which means, do what you yourself are able to do, and God with His almighty power will come to your assistance when your own power and ability are exhausted.

Now, if we think of how exalted is the object at which we should aim, how difficult it is for us to be real, true Christians in thought, wishes, desires, and actions, in all our intentions and endeavors, then will this truth send a glow of warmth to our hearts. I know right well that when I do what I can, God will do the rest; but the word, Do what thou canst, still remains a hard and difficult word, and seldom will a man be able to say: I have done everything I could.

See, then, the reason why God has not so placed individual men, in this life, that each one should have his own single, separate place; but that, on the contrary, He has united them in community—in families, in congregations, in State and Church—that one may come to the help of the other. And shall it be inconsistent with the Christian hope I feel in God that I cherish and nourish in my heart the thought that one Christian may say to another: "I know well that I must pray, that I must pray in the right manner, perseveringly and with interior recollection, devoutly pray; and that when I have done all that is in my power, God will for such faithful, meritorious prayer, give me all I need?" But, continuing to speak, I

* TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—The English proverb runs: "God helps those who help themselves."

may say: "But I feel that in my prayer I am often much distracted, that such distractions lay hold of me in real earnest, and I constantly feel as if my prayer were not worthy to approach to the throne of the All-Holy; therefore help me to pray,—pray with me and for me."

In saying this, is there anything against Christian faith, against Christian trust, Christian hope in God? I see in it only an act of genuine Christian humility. The man who thus solicits his fellowmen for prayer to God is far from being self-satisfied, and that I think is well pleasing to God. It has ever been thought lovely to see a child ask a sister or a brother who has behaved better than himself to say a good word for him to his father or his mother; this could not have displeased either father or mother; and just as little has it displeased the head of a house when a daughter or a son addressed the mother to plead for her intercession with the father in some affair of the heart, or to effect reconciliation and bring back peace.

But it is exactly on this point that an unworthy artifice has been used—the artifice, namely, of bringing a pitiful play of words into circulation in order to calumniate the Catholic Church. It is really incredible, but yet true, that it has been said that Catholics offer *divine worship* to Mary and the other saints! How has this arisen? For more than three hundred years already have we Catholics protested, millions and millions of times, against this being the case; and yet we see the accusation that we Catholics are absolutely idolaters continually repeated in catechisms, in school-books, and in other forms.

What is the proof of this? Can you see into my heart?

Do you believe that you can perceive what I think in regard to God and Mary, and that in spite of my protest to the contrary, and of my sacred oath, I do actually and in very fact place these two on an equal footing? No! They give quite another kind of proof. It is this: Catholics pray to Mary and to the saints, and consequently they pay *divine worship* to Mary and the saints. Therefore, children, when you ask your mother for a piece of bread, you also are idolaters, abominable idolaters! And you also, my friends, you are often asking your neighbor to lend you this or that, or to render you this or that service,—fie, you are one and all of you idolaters! The holy Apostle Paul has here a great deal to answer for; for, in fact, in every one of the epistles that he wrote at different times to the churches, he always recommends himself to the intercession of all Christians.

With such pitiful accusations as these do they turn the heads of the children; with such insulting and shameful calumnies do they fill the tender minds of childhood. Who will undertake to answer for this before the judgment-seat of human nature? and who before the judgment-seat of God? For before this judgment-seat I summon all my fellow-men who raise an accusation founded on so base a calumny against us. Yes, in very truth, a judgment must one day be spoken in this matter.

Men on earth offer up petitions for one another to Almighty God; well they know, not only that they may do so, but that, according to the ordinance of Christ and the Apostles, it is their duty so to do. As a rule, Christian prayer is a prayer in common, as the Lord teaches when

He says, "In this manner pray ye: Our Father," or Father of us all; and this plural form is continually repeated in "Give us this day," "forgive us," "deliver us": this is manifestly a general and special prayer, a prayer for others, —all for one, one for all.

This mutual intercession takes its rise in the idea of community, which the Church of Christ fosters; and I now ask: If we poor sinners do not pray in vain for one another here on earth, will the saints in heaven, our brothers and sisters who are gone before us, who stand before the Face of God, who no longer are sullied with the slightest stain, and are thus well pleasing to God, will they pray in vain, or can they remain indifferent towards their brothers and sisters who here on earth are beset with so many dangers, who have so many wants, who are so weak and need their prayers in so great a degree? Or will it be objected to us that the saints in heaven know nothing about us any more?

Friends, dear friends, never let such speech as that pass your lips; it is the most frightful that any one can utter when he says that the blessed in heaven know nothing of us or care nothing about us. By saying this you abjure the unity of the Church of Christ, you utter a principle that detracts fearfully from the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of the happiness of heaven. For if it be a fact that the saints in heaven know nothing of us and of the whole creation of God, I might ask, Do they yet live, do they find themselves in the condition of perfect blessedness? I have ever believed the life of the blessed in God consisted precisely in perfect intellectual consciousness,

in the most perfect knowledge of God and of His works. I have always thought that the life of the blessed in God was a life of perfect love, a life which embraces all and every one whom God loves, which sympathizes with everything that has worth before God.

What! the saints in heaven are to know nothing about us! Where is heaven, then, according to this strange idea? How far is it from here? I have always cherished the belief that heaven is in fact everywhere that God is; I have ever believed that the infinite, immeasurable God is present everywhere; and it appears to me therefore that a soul, that a spirit, can enjoy perfect bliss, and enjoy it in every place, only when he is perfectly united with God, and looks on God face to face; and never have I doubted that he who is perfected in God rejoices not only because he sees God, but because he beholds the whole creation; that he feels himself happy in admiring this, while he praises Almighty God in all His works. I beseech you, therefore, hold in adhorrence the speech which intimates that the saints know nothing about us; it falls cold on the heart of man, like an assault of hell; it is no truth; it is an abomination.

On the other hand, it is not to be doubted that we speak in unison with God's will when we say that our father and our mother, our brothers and sisters, who fell asleep in Christ, are with our Father above; but they have not forgotten us; their love has not ceased, but has become purer, more perfect, more interior, more universal; they love us still, and think of us with love; and certainly it is for them a matter of the heart to offer up petitions to God for their poor ardently-loved friends whom they have left

behind, that their life on earth may not occasion for them the loss of eternity, that they may not miss the way which alone can reunite them.

Oh! I feel myself happy in the belief that not only God sees me,—He who indeed is all-merciful, all-benignant, but also all-just and all-holy, my Law-giver and my Judge, and who therefore is to me, a poor sinner, “a fearful God,”—but also that He offers Himself to me to be named my Father. But though well I know that He loves me, I myself, throughout my life, have never been able to say that I am a worthy child of such a Father, and therefore it is a consolation to me to know that I stand not alone, with all my misery and all my failings, before the infinitely holy, the all-holy God. No: there are crowds of good, loving friends in heaven who speak a good word for me; and among these intercessors with God I have special confidence in the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of my Redeemer; for this I know, that she has never sinned, never displeased God,—and, to sum up everything in one word, that the heavenly Father loves this Mother as the Mother of His only Son, and the Son loves her as His own Mother, and the Holy Ghost loves her as His own pure Bride.

Her word to her Son is not precisely a command, for Christ is Lord, Christ is God; but such a Mother need not command such a Son, could not even wish to do so; it is enough for her to say: My Son, they need this or that. This was witnessed at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee. Christ had not yet resolved to reveal His omnipotence, therefore He at first answers, “My hour has not

yet come"; but it is not the less true that He performed His first miracle at Mary's request.

Therefore I venture to pronounce it an incontestable truth that it belongs to the Christian love which should unite us all as members of the Church of Christ, in God and with God, that we should entertain a grateful and childlike love for the saints of God, and above all for the Blessed Virgin Mary. We must not indeed love her as the highest good, as infinite beauty, as boundless perfection. God only is this. Mary in the splendor of her heavenly beauty still remains, and must through eternity remain, far from being this. However high she may stand—the most distinguished among all, the first of creatures, of the works of God—she must ever find herself nevertheless at an infinite, immeasurable distance from God. But He Himself who gave the command, "Thou shalt love God," and so forth, He it was who added "and thy neighbor as thyself"; and this second command is inseparable from the first.

I have been exceedingly pained, in some of the missions at which I have assisted, to meet with men who not only did not honor the Blessed Virgin, but who spoke against her in the most abominable manner. I have had caricatures in my hand which were the expression of the highest degree of these disgraceful insults, and these caricatures were the work of men who would fain pass for Christians. These unhappy beings do not understand that all mockery of the Blessed Virgin recoils of necessity upon Christ Himself, and that a Christian who mocks at Christ deserves to be named the vilest reptile in creation. To call oneself a

Christian, and to mock at Christ! Now, in such a case it must be acknowledged that the spirit of error must have completely mastered, not only the human understanding, but every human feeling; it has led men into insanity.

Dear Christian friends, if we can not reach heaven unless we fulfil the command to love our neighbor in every human being, even were he a Turk or a heathen, even were he base, vile or criminal, how can a man think to win entrance into heaven if he does not love Mary, the Mother of our Redeemer, the Mother of the Heavenly King? If we can find no entrance into heaven unless we are clothed with the wedding-garment of Christian love, with love for God and man; if it is a firmly established truth that we shall be denied immediate entrance to that kingdom if we present ourselves with the least, I will not say enmity, but with the least coldness or indifference in our hearts against any one fellow-being, how were it possible that we should be admitted therein by Christ if we are cold and indifferent to His Mother? Heaven, my friends, is the home of the eternal, perfected peace and love. There, nothing defiled can enter. Far from thence all strifes, all mockeries, all cold, unloving hearts. Every heart that closes itself to the love of God has its home in hell; in heaven it will find no place. Dear readers, I ask you, if you really believe that you owe everything to Christ, if you have no other hope in eternity than in Christ and through Christ, how can you be cold and indifferent to the Mother of Christ, who stood at the foot of the Cross, and was plunged in a sea of bitterness?

Oh! my friends, the early Christians, the Apostles, were

not of this mind towards Mary! We are referred to primitive Christianity: well, then, place yourself in spirit with me in the first days and the first years after Our Lord's Ascension, or during His lifetime here on earth. If you had been amongst the Twelve Apostles, or among Christ's faithful disciples and followers, what would have been your thoughts respecting Mary? In what light would you have looked upon her? How would you have comported yourself if you passed by her or met her? How do you think the Apostles or the early Christians behaved towards the most Blessed Virgin after Christ's Ascension? I see them assembled as children around their mother. She has not indeed, if I may so express it, any peculiar official position among them, but a mother's heart always exercises a power over her children. The Acts of the Apostles show them to us united in prayer with the Mother of Christ when the Holy Ghost descended upon them.

I am convinced that only those who really believe in Christ, in Mary's Son as God, can have a genuine veneration for the Blessed Virgin; and that it is not possible for them to despise her, either in words or thoughts. I am convinced that many of the first Christians uttered towards her the words: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners!" O yes, my dear readers, can you not, then, go back in spirit to those early times, and unite yourselves with us in this beautiful prayer to your Mother?

Once upon a time, in former days, the Angel's Salutation to the Mother of God was taught to all with the prayer made by Our Lord, her Son. It was in the ninth century that your forefathers learned to know the true God, and

to worship Him alone. The saintly Ansgar, spiritual father and teacher of the Danish people, had a great reverence for the saints, and a faithful devotion to the Mother of God. At that time, in accordance with ancient Christianity, every Christian child was taught to utter with reverence, confidence, and love, the name of Mary together with the divine name of Jesus; and when the "Our Father" had been recited, the beautiful salutation was added: "Holy Mary, Mother of God! Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women!"

These are the words of the Angel and the holy Elizabeth; they stand in Holy Scripture. You surely can not do wrong in repeating the words of the Angel and of St. Elizabeth. God will not call you to account, and Christ will not be jealous on the subject; nor will He be jealous if you add: "Holy Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." O happy are they who on the bosom of a pious Christian mother have learned from childhood upwards to call on their Father and Mother in heaven! Happy are all ye children who have learned even from childhood to know your spiritual Mother, the Mother of your Redeemer, of your Brother, and of your God.

Therefore, my dear children—and I speak here to God's great and little children,—never forget that besides a Redeemer, whom alone you must worship, you must also invoke with filial reverence that Redeemer's Mother. Place, then, your whole hope in God; for He is the source of all the good which we can desire and receive. When you have not confidence enough in yourself to deem your own co-operation sufficient, then have recourse to the intercession

of the Blessed Virgin. The Church teaches that it is a pious and a salutary practice to invoke the prayers of the Saints. She does not command it, she does not say that it is necessary; she says only that it is pious, useful, and salutary, yes, indeed, and it will be salutary for you.

On this account, I beseech you, Christian mothers, teach your children this prayer; cherish well this devotion in your hearts. It has till now stood the test, as being a powerful means of keeping alive and effective faith in Christ, her Son; and wherever they have ceased to call Mary the Mother of God, they have also ceased to consider Christ as God. Yes, it is a fact, alas too true! that wherever Mary is no longer held in honor, the worship of Christ has also begun to languish.

On another account, also, we lay much stress on devotion to the Blessed Virgin; namely: this devotion has called forth a higher consciousness in the female sex; it has raised and sustained a purer sense in woman, directing her thoughts to things divine. But if it can truly be said that these beneficial results have been brought about, there is one among them which deserves particular mention. This devotion has everywhere strengthened and confirmed love to the most beautiful of all Christian virtues—purity. Yes, it has brought a rich harvest of happiness and blessing. The pious brotherhoods and sodalities of young people of both sexes, who have placed themselves under the protection of the Virgin of virgins, ever afford a rich source of consolation for many heavily-laden, oppressed hearts, who were nigh unto despair.

Finally, every observer of human nature has certainly

made the remark that those who have the misfortune to lose their mother when young never attain a like development with those who grow up at the side of a pious mother. That which is true of the corporal existence of man is also true of his spiritual development. Father and mother are presupposed for the one as well as the other. We can not do without a mother if we are to attain our proper growth as human beings; and God came to the relief of this urgent need of our human nature when He gave us a spiritual Mother, whose arms are spread out widely enough to embrace all here on earth, to take us all under her protection,—who hears every sigh, because she is always with God, the All-seeing, the All-knowing!

Yes, dear readers, something essential is wanting to religion when there is no mother. I think I may place myself side by side with many other Christians with respect to understanding Christian dogma, and I speak the inmost convictions of my heart when I say that, next to my faith in Jesus as God, I have to thank my devotion to the Blessed Virgin for all the joy, all the consolation, which Christianity has given me; and I bless my pious mother a thousand times, in her grave, for teaching me to say, not only the "Our Father," but the Angelical Salutation. There are many bitter hours in the life of every man, many dangers, great temptations; a heart often finds no sympathy, no compassion amongst its fellows, but Mary never deserts us. The invocation, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners," has ever been a consolation for my heart, and never in vain have I sent up that prayer to her.

O my Mother! to thee I commend all my fellowmen;

take them to thy heart and protect them. I commend to thee all who are earnestly seeking after truth. O pray for them that they may find it; pray for them, that they may come to Christ, and participate in the fruits of His Redemption! O Mother! I specially commend to thee youth and childhood, so susceptible of all noble impressions. O Mother! keep these little children! Protect their innocence; preserve it pure and unspotted! O protect these young people, exposed to so many combats; console those who are of riper age, in their cares and troubles, console the dying; pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death! Amen.

AVE MARIA PAMPHLETS

- How I Became a Catholic.*
By Olga Maria Davin. 47 pp. 10 cts.
- Christian Science and Catholic Teaching.*
By the Rev. James Goggin. 48 pp. 15 cts.
- The House of Mourning.*
By the Very Rev. R. O'Kennedy. 28 pp. 10 cts.
- The Isle of Apple Blossoms.*
By John Talbot Smith. 32 pp. 10 cts.
- The Passion Play at Brixleg.*
By Charles Warren Stoddard. 23 pp. 10 cts.
- Father Jim.*
By J. G. R. 27 pp. 10 cts.
- The Coin of Sacrifice.*
By Christian Reid. 60 pp. 15 cts.
- The Question of Anglican Ordinations.*
By Abbot Gasquet, O. S. B., D. D. 52 pp. 25 cts.
- The Church and Our Government in the Philippines.*
By the Hon. William H. Taft. 60 pp. 10 cts.
- Some Duties and Responsibilities of American Catholics.*
By the Hon. Charles J. Bonaparte. 32 pp. 10 cts.
- Are Protestants Catholics?*
By the Very Rev. R. O'Kennedy. 24 pp. 10 cts.
- The Proof of Miracles.*
By Henry F. Brownson, LL. D. 16 pp. 10 cts.
- Unbelief a Sin.*
By the Rev. Edmund Hill, C. P. 16 pp. 10 cts.
- A City of Confusion.*
By the Rev. Henry G. Ganss. 63 pp. 25 cts.
- Views of Education.*
By the Rt. Rev. J. L. Spalding, D. D. 32 pp. 10 cts.
- What the Church has Done for Science.*
By the Very Rev. Dr. J. A. Zahm, C.S.C. 63 pp. 15 cts.

For distribution and especially for the Church Rack nothing could be better than these pamphlets. All are neatly printed, thread stitched, and supplied with an attractive cover. A special discount is allowed when ordered in quantities.

THE AVE MARIA
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA, U. S. A.

