

# **The De Montfort Way**

## **Of True Devotion To Mary**

By Frank Duff

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A Commendation

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One of the best means of spreading throughout the Christian people a devotion to Mary the universal Mediatrix, and of making understood the full import and the full compass of this title is to broadcast the admirable doctrine of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. That doctrine is the very soul of The De Montfort Way - a work which is the product of deep faith and great fervour.

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort is one of those who have worked hardest in the Church to diffuse knowledge of and devotion to the universal mediation of Mary. Delightfully he shows that she forms the elect, guides them, defends them, and intercedes for them. Little by little, they enter into the sentiments of confidence and love which she herself had while here on earth; and from on high she enables them to see all things somewhat as she herself sees them in Heaven.

This road is an easy and a certain one. In it are met - to be sure - many purifying crosses, many a cross of reparation. But the Blessed Virgin renders such aid to those who trust themselves to her, that this virginal way - as St. Louis-Marie De Montfort terms it - is really a path of roses, in which one forgets the thorns.

Those who propagate this devotion and those who love it have in their lives a sign of predestination. Therefore, all should be grateful to the author of The De Montfort Way for having elucidated it with such profound conviction and with such persuasiveness.

## **The De Montfort Way Of True Devotion To Mary**

Mary is So Immense That Just Appreciation of Her.

Mary, and the place of Mary, as depicted by De Montfort, and with him the Saints and Doctors of the Church, are so immense as to tend to overwhelm. It is variously said of her that she is so far above other creatures that she has nothing entirely in common with them; that she represents an ineffable miracle of the Almighty, approaching as nearly to God as created nature can, exalted above all human and angelic eulogies; that she almost touches the borders of the infinite; in fact, that there is in her something of that infinite perfection which belongs properly to the fruit of her womb; that even she herself does not comprehend her own greatness; that God has conferred on her a species of omnipotence, the omnipotence of a supplication which is always heard; that it is by her, and to whom she pleases, when she pleases, and in the quality and manner she pleases, that all the gifts and virtues and graces of the Holy Ghost are administered; that she is the arbitrix of the salvation of each one of us. So many, so grand are the things that are said of her that not only do

those outside the Church profess themselves outraged, but even a majority of those inside take it for granted that these things represent pious exaggeration.

Is Thought to be Romantic Excess.

The present treatise of De Montfort commonly incurs this imputation. Innumerable of the flights of his genius, expressive of the soundest theological truths, are passed over as being romantic in their nature, not sober fact but the outpourings of loyalty or love. This impression is strengthened by the very beauty of the garment of words in which he clothes his ideas. I fear that to the majority of his readers De Montfort's immortal work means little more than choice dreaming. The word "extreme" sums up their final judgement of the book, and many would not hesitate to add the term "extravagant."

Herein they fall into an error which may justly be described as a fatal one. The diamonds of right doctrine - veritably "gems of purest ray serene" - are given to the poor, who think them only glass and throw away what would have made them rich. For mark it well: Mary is part of the essence of the Faith. Lack of appreciation of her role is defect in faith; and defect in faith means impoverished spiritual living.

And De Montfort's Wonderful Tribute to Her.

De Montfort's book has a place of its own in the Church. There is nothing else quite like it. In its doctrine it is eminently theological and profound. Ordinarily, this would narrow its appeal. He that teaches from the mountain-top will not see around him the weak and the poorly-equipped; they have been unable to struggle up so high. But the "True Devotion" has a character which has forced it on the notice of the people, and made it a special herald of Mary universally received and given hearing. What an asset to the Church a book like that should be, which teaches profoundest doctrine, yet is read by all. It is certain that everyone who studies the "True Devotion" will fall beneath its spell, for the book has everything. It has style, it has fervour, it has intense conviction, solidity, soaring eloquence, the air of authority and inspiration. Every reader will be stirred by the ardent love for Mary which shines forth in the treatise. Many, too, will be moved to enter into the compact of consecration which De Montfort recommends.

Yet, of all its readers, from those who merely thought it beautiful, up the scale to those who entered determinedly on the full practice of the Devotion, how few are found to be giving the book and its teaching any place in their lives after a single year; yes, after far less than a year? In this failure it is not want of good-will which is at work; nor want of natural love for Mary, nor want of desire to love her more. It is that the majority have nothing in their minds to which they can relate his emphatic pronouncements and striking imagery, no soil in which his "Tree of Life" can strike its roots. Even where his book casts a spell, the spell wears off. For most readers never took as literally true the things he said of Mary. All the time their minds were unconvinced.

Outdistances the Devotion.

Consider the following, which I have taken quite at random, and suggest as fairly typical. Propounding motives for the making of the perfect Consecration, De Montfort declares that it is the characteristic of Mary to conduct us surely to Jesus, as it is the characteristic of Jesus to conduct us surely to the Eternal Father. Spiritual persons therefore must not fall into the false belief that Mary can be a hindrance to them in attaining to divine union. Other creatures - however holy - may be, but such cannot be said of Mary. He proceeds to urge that why so few souls come to the fullness of

the age of Christ is because Mary, who is as much as ever the Mother of the Son, and as much as ever the fruitful Spouse of the Holy Ghost, is not sufficiently formed in their hearts. He who wishes to have the fruit well-ripened and well-formed, must have the tree that produces it. He who wishes to have the fruit of life, Jesus Christ, must have the tree of life, which is Mary, etc.

And the Appreciation of Those Who Read It.

I fear that those vivid thoughts, which are so true, and should be potent to widen and enliven our conceptions of the workings of grace in our souls, lead most people nowhere. They simply provoke a series of mental query marks. The minds of those who read do not take it as seriously meant that Mary is the tree of life to them, nor appreciate why she, unlike all other holy creatures, will never retard Divine Union. Consequently, they do not understand, except as a merely picturesque expression, De Montfort's plaint that it is because Mary is not sufficiently formed in the hearts of men that so few of them come to the fullness of the age of Christ. We do not possess the groundwork which he takes for granted. De Montfort is like a man talking of what he sees through a telescope to another who has no telescope and is incredulous.

Our Devotion Is Only Third-Rate

What is the common equipment of knowledge of Mary? It is not an unworthy one. We know her to be the great Mother of God, and that she is also our mother, watching over us always, and to whom we likewise must pray. Yet, between this and what De Montfort insists on as due to her by us, and as necessary to us, if grace is to have its full sway over us, occurs a hiatus. Is it a deep yawning chasm, or is it simply a missing coupling? I venture to assert it is no more than the latter, and that fifteen minutes' thought can put it in its place. Some readjustment of ideas is required in the following directions: (a) the place of Mary in the scheme of God; (b) what the True Devotion really amounts to; (c) the "mechanics" of its practice.

And De Montfort Does No More Than Mirror

Now, the very first thing of which readers must be persuaded is that what De Montfort says of Mary's place and greatness contains not a particle of exaggeration, but mirrors faithfully the declarations of the Saints and the teaching of the Church about her; that is to say, it indicates the very mind of God Himself. God Himself it was Who first began to tell of her and to sketch out for her a destiny unquestionably unique. For all that greatness of hers had a beginning very far back. It began before the constitution of the world. From the first, the idea of her was present to the Eternal Father along with that of the Redeemer, of whose destiny she formed part. Thus far back had God answered the doubter's saying: "What need has God of Mary's help?" God could have dispensed with her altogether, just as He might have dispensed with Jesus Himself. But the course which it pleased Him to adopt included Mary. It placed her by the side of the Redeemer from the very moment in which the Redeemer was Himself decreed. It went further; that Plan assigned to her no less a part than that of Mother of the Redeemer and necessarily, therefore, of those united to Him.

The Divine Idea of Mary

Thus from all eternity Mary was in a position exalted, alone among creatures, and utterly outside comparison, even with the sublimest among them, different in the Divine idea, different in the preparation she received; and therefore fittingly singled out from all others in the first prophecy of Redemption addressed to Satan: "I will put enmities between you and the woman, and your seed and her seed. She shall crush your head." (Gen. 3: 15.) Here is the future Redemption summarized

by God Himself. Definitely, Mary is to be in an order of her own; even before her birth and ever after, the enemy of Satan; below the Saviour, but next to Him, and like Him (Gen. 2: 18), and remote from all others. Not any Prophet - even the Baptist - is thus set with Him, nor King, nor Leader, nor Apostle, nor Evangelist - including Peter and Paul themselves; nor the greatest among the Popes and Pastors and Doctors; nor any Saint; nor David, nor Solomon, nor Moses, nor Abraham. Not one of them! Alone, out of all creatures that will ever be, she is divinely designated as the Co-worker of Salvation.

So Vividly and Unmistakably Revealed in Prophecy.

The course of prophecy continues: "The Virgin," "The Virgin and Child," "the Woman," "Woman and Child," "the Queen seated at the right-hand of the King," the constantly recurring assurance that a woman is to be a prime element of our saving. What sort of future does this foretell of her? Do not such things as those which De Montfort, in union with the Church, tells of her, seem to follow logically on? Hardly do we realize how crushing, how conclusive is the bearing of prophecy on this question of the place of Mary in the Christian religion. A prophecy is a shadow of a thing to come, a glance which pierces time instead of space, a pale outline of a distant prospect. Necessarily, a prophecy must be less vivid, less clear, less real, than the reality of which it speaks. But necessarily, too, it must preserve harmonious proportion with that reality. Prophecy which pictured Redemption as wrought together by a Woman and her Child (and no other with that pair), who crush the head of Satan, would be radically inconsistent with an actual Redemption which relegates the Woman to obscurity.

Thus, if prophecy is truly named, and if Salvation is a life-long working of the Incarnation and the Death of Jesus Christ into the fabric of the human soul (and Holy Church and Holy Scripture jointly so declare), then in the Christian system Mary must be found with Jesus, inseparable from Him in His saving work, the New Eve, dependent on Him but necessary to Him - indeed no other than the Mediatrix of all Graces, as the Catholic Church sums up her glorious office.

Likewise, the Annunciation Shows Her Key-Position.

The culmination of the prophecies arrives. The angel of the Lord is come unto Mary, and the fruition of her age-old destiny is now at hand. It is proposed to her that she shall bring into the world Him who shall save His people from their sins, the man afflicted who will make her the Woman of Sorrows. Her consent is awaited and, as the Church teaches, it is awaited in the place of that of all human nature. That woman has become the representative of the entire human race. At that moment the Eternal Father only regards poor fallen humanity through her. Its fate hangs on her word. The Incarnation, on which rests the whole edifice of religion, and all its figures and prophecies, and all the workings-out of salvation, depend on that consent of hers. Surely heaven and earth and all things quiver in an agony of suspense - But no! It was for that moment that Mary had been lifted out of nothingness, made the subject - as St. Augustine says - of an eternal deliberation and a divine preparation, upraised to a sublimity of grace incomprehensible, unsearchable; so that, though faith and heroism far beyond our ken are needed to ensure a decision favourable to us, nevertheless all is sure. The words proceed from her lips which accomplish the greatest event of all time; the Redeemer is now amongst men. The plan of mercy was safe in her keeping, but only safe because her greatness was so great - almost touching, as it did, infinity. Her fiat was no formal act, though from remote ages God had built on it the structure of the world's salvation.

Her Free Decision and Her Faith Opened Up a Way to God.

That consent of Mary's was necessarily unique and perfect in its character. It was the most free decision ever given by a pure creature. It was indubitably the bravest, purest, tenderest, inconceivably the most meritorious act ever performed under God. We cannot fully understand why this should be. To our dense minds it might seem natural enough that even one of lesser merit would decide as she did. But such would never be the case, as Catholic common sense unhesitatingly asserts. The arguments of theology declare the same. It is God's principle to require in proportion as He has given. It follows that the almost infinite gifts of grace conferred on Mary were adequately, exactly, perfectly reflected by her in continuous and lifelong acts of incomparable nobility, heroism, love, faith. Above all, this applies to the pivot of all her acts, her Fiat to the Incarnation, by which she received the Lord on behalf of all humanity.

Redemption, thus begun, moves swiftly to its consummation. Man for man, maid for maid, and now tree for tree! Jesus hangs upon the tree of the Cross and Mary stands beneath it - ratifying, renewing her offering of her Son for men's sake, and meriting worthily to become, as Pius affirmed, "the Restorer of the lost world and the Dispenser of all the gifts that Jesus purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood."

#### Such a Past Without a Corresponding Future

Who can deny that here is the realization of the first prophecy of Redemption? Here are the Woman and Her Seed, and here has come to pass their crushing of the serpent's head! Together, Jesus and Mary are fulfilling their eternal destiny. Neither in the prophecy, nor in the preparation, nor in the winning of Redemption has she been separated from her Son. Her part has been subordinate to His, but none the less essential, as He ordered things.

But that is not the end. It is only the beginning. Salvation has been won and, so to speak, gathered into the treasury of God. Its grace has now to be administered, applied to each individual soul by acts of virtue and worship. And in that working out of salvation, to use St. Paul's incisive phrase (Epistle to Philippians 2: 12), does Mary simply disappear? Or if she stays, what is her function? Does the past suggest a future for her, and if so, of what description? Now, let those who read De Montfort judge if what he says about her ministry of grace does not attune to what she did as Helper in the winning of Redemption, and constitute as natural and orderly a growth out of that past as does a flower from its roots. Redemption, like that plant, is a perfect unity. Its earning is the root; its application is the flower.

Would be Quite Meaningless.

And on the other hand, can that amazing past, which we have been discussing, be reconciled with the theory and practice of those who deny her any place in their religion, who believe that such part and blessedness as she possessed finished its career at Bethlehem, and was indeed so slight as not to merit a solitary word of thanks from mankind? O, if those doubting ones are right, what an anti-climax! Could we not legitimately complain that God Himself had staged a cruel and elaborate deception - the same as if the Eucharist were only bread!

#### But Her Motherhood of The Mystical Body

Finished at Bethlehem! No more than did the life and mission of her Divine Son finish there! Their joint and indivisible mission was only nine months in progress on that eventful night. All time still stretches out before it. "For," says Jean-Jacquot, "it is true to say that the Son of God, considered in His adorable Person, is in some sort but the half of Himself. The other part of Himself consists of

the souls of men, of all the souls which are called to form His Church; and thus the Church is called the body and plenitude or the complement of Jesus Christ (Eph 1: 23). Hence, the Son of God, when He presents Himself to the Blessed Virgin, presents all those souls to be received with Him."

These words at first sight startle. Yet they are but a rendering of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, which is that Christ and the baptized are united by a bond which resembles, but far exceeds in intensity, the union between the head and the other members of the human body. Thus, all are dependent one upon the other and the same life animates them all. The Head is Christ, the chief, indispensable and perfect path from which the other members derive their powers, their very life. They form part of Christ with such completeness that their sins became His burden, while His satisfactions, the infinite merits of His passion, belong to His members as if the latter had themselves earned them. It is because Christ and His members form together but a single mystical person, that Christ could suffer for men and expiate faults which He had not Himself committed. "Christ is the Saviour of His Body." (Eph 5: 23.)

Constitutes a Worthy Sequel To All That Went Before.

And Mary is the Mother of that Body. (St. John, chapter 19.) In so far as we are members of Christ's Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones (Eph 5: 30), so with equal necessity, and to such extent are we children of Mary His Mother. It is in her bosom, moulded ever more and more admirably to His likeness by her unremitting maternal care, that we grow into the perfect man who is Christ and come unto the measure of the age of His fulness (Eph 4: 13). And without her, this, our sublime destiny, is not achieved; such is the Divine arrangement. Though she is, in comparison to her Maker, veritably as nothing, nevertheless the Eternal Father has thus intimately associated her to His Redemptive scheme, in such way that as no grace proceeds other than by Jesus Christ, so none will be received other than through Mary. She is as definitely part of the Divine dispensation as Our Blessed Lord Himself - subordinate to, and utterly dependent on Him, of course, but none the less an integral and vital portion of the Divine way of grace, an all-important supplement to what we offer, and the invariable channel of what we receive.

Worship is an Essential Complement to Doctrine.

None should be so foolish as to think that the Heavenly Father, having thus given Life to His children through that loving Mother, and continuing through her to afford them all their divine nourishment, will for a moment tolerate from them an undutiful attitude towards her. Worship is a necessary complement of doctrine. Belief without loving service is as a man without memory, or - worse still - without common decency. As our salvation requires that we confess the Lord Jesus Christ, so it requires that we acknowledge the minor but essential office of Mary. As Christian worship is based on going to the Father through Christ, so must that same worship never lose sight of her who is equally the Mother of that Saviour and of those for whom He died. If we omit her, we thereby turn away from God. For she is definitely portion of God's Holy Will in our regard, so that to slight her is to slight Him.

Thus, the symbolism which the Scriptures have put before us to aid to better understanding of the relation between Christ and His Church, is that of the Mystical Body. We have likewise seen that by virtue of her motherhood of Christ, Mary is true mother of the Christian soul, a motherhood which Our Lord Himself proclaimed at the moment when it acquired its full dominion, that is, when it was consummated by Redemption. If we seek to supplement that image by another which will help us to

appreciate the intimacy of the relations of Mary with her children, we have an expressive, though still inadequate one in the life of the unborn babe. That babe is the soul, and its mother is Mary.

Therefore the Soul Must Give to Mary a Devotion

"All the predestinate, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the most holy Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, brought up, and made to grow by that good Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just." This thought forms the central principle of the "True Devotion," but the words are not De Montfort's. They were written by St. Augustine nearly sixteen hundred years ago, and did not even then represent new thinking in the Church. Indeed, as De Montfort says, the Devotion is bound up with the very foundations of Christianity. What is it but the putting into logical and detailed practice of the Church's teaching on the Mystical Body?

Corresponding to the Intensity of Its Dependence on Her

But why should we specify the unborn babe, rather than the infant carried in the mother's arms and nourished with the natural milk? It is for this reason, that the closeness of the relation between the soul and Mary, which De Montfort - with the Church - depicts, would not at all be sufficiently shown by the babe in arms. The latter is dependent on the mother to a very large extent, but not entirely. It can and does live a little life of its own apart from its mother. It does not draw from her the air it breathes; and portions of its nourishment - all perhaps, in certain circumstances - may be gained otherwise than from its mother. And that mother may go away, or that mother may die, and yet the baby life goes on - in complete independence of her, and conceivably it may fare better without than with that mother.

Which is a Constant and An All-Embracing One.

But how different is the case with regard to the soul.

Devotedly, she carries on her mother's work of sanctification. She receives the Divine graces and, like life's blood, she gives them to the soul. Of that blood, not the very last drop, that is to say, not the smallest grace, comes to us of the Mystical Body otherwise than through the heart of Mary. What a picture of all-embracing dependence! The babe owes everything - absolutely everything under God - to the good offices of that Mother. Thus the babe unborn must be the image with which we help our minds to understand the role of the Mother of Divine Grace. But even that image only feebly indicates the true position. We grown-up people, moving at will, living our lives as we think fit, are nevertheless in a state of dependence on her so close, so intimate, that the confinement of the natural womb is in comparison widest liberty.

The True Devotion is Full Acknowledgement

De Montfort's book is only understandable in the light of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. He assumes in the reader a degree of understanding of that doctrine which is not currently possessed; and here, I venture to suggest, lies the explanation of the difficulties which beset the reading of his book, and the reason why it does not yield up the singular treasures which it holds. But if the idea of the Mystical Body and its implications be grasped, not only does the doctrine of De Montfort's "True Devotion" emerge with perfect clearness, but in its train, of course, the whole idea and necessity of what I must - without apology - call "common or garden" devotion to Mary.

## Of Mary's Motherhood, and Also - Strange to Say -

In addition, analysis along those lines should make manifest a conclusion which may stagger the majority. It is that a wholesale form of devotion or offering, at least equivalent to that enjoined by De Montfort, represents in reality the only fully logical and worthy service of Mary. It is true that in relation to the everyday standards it may accurately be described as "extreme." But this is only because those standards are earthbound ones and inappropriate to her who has been borne to the very heights of the finite.

Represents the Very Minimum of What is Due to Her.

True worship, moreover, must reflect the service rendered. It was by Mary that Christianity came on earth, through her that every act of ours was made a Christian act. If that marked all she did for us, it would be only reasonable that likewise every act of ours should bear some impress of acknowledgement and gratitude to her. But, in reality, that was a mere beginning of her motherhood. The Church describes her as the Mediatrix of all Graces, an appellation which sufficiently establishes her position. Her more-than-mother care continues vital to the soul. Therefore, if every act and thought should render praise to Our Divine Lord for what He has done to us, then every act and thought should in a minor key give some acknowledgement to Mary. Gratitude urges this, and the rules of God require it. That acknowledgement of ours does not establish Mary as our Mother. She is our Mother irrespective of the fact of our recognition, and in face of ignorance or thoughtlessness, and even of repudiation. But the life that she offers can only enter our veins in proportion as they expand to receive it. If grace in plenitude is sought, there must be a complete co-operation.

Appreciation is a Vital Element of Worship

Of what sort must that co-operation, that acknowledgement of Mary be? In the first place, it must possess quality, and in the second place, quantity. The first requires that we have a just appreciation of the greatness and the ministry of Mary, and desire to love her and honour her fittingly. This is a vital element, yet not so often found, as is evidenced by the dissent which is evoked by De Montfort's book.

To put it simply, if God desires from us a piece of gold, does it suffice to give Him an equal weight of silver? Or if we prayed endlessly to Our Lord with no higher belief in Him than that He is a holy man in heaven, those prayers would only be a sort of counterfeit. Purity of intention may relieve one from guilt in the tendering of counterfeit, but it does not give the counterfeit the value of the real. No, it is the intrinsic worth, the type and degree of our faith, the intensity of the appreciation, which determine the value of the prayer. We may be praying much to Mary, but only in a copper currency. Whole Rosaries, which are not backed by right ideas of her, may not possess the dynamism of a single Ave issuing from a heart which glimpses what Mary really is, and tries to fill the little prayer with that esteem of her.

And Worship Too Must Not be Meanly Measured.

In the second place, our service of Mary must be substantial, that is, it must take in more than the mere minutes or the stray events of the day. It must be rather a spirit than acts or words which we will offer her. For the spirit contains and bears with it the whole life and not mere bits of it, however numerous. Formal prayers and specific acts must not, however, be thought superfluous. In practice they are indispensable. They are to the spiritual life what the skeleton is to the human body. They

give order, definiteness, solidity - a framework to the day's devotion and prevent it from falling asunder. Generally, the more frequent the prayer, the more comprehensive and true will be the spirit of religion which will inspire the life.

The Whole Life, in Fact, Must Sing its Dependence on Mary.

The precise detail in which this devotion to Mary will be worked out in the life must depend largely on the individual.

As people differ, so will our methods of expression vary. But if there is question of a mode of devotion which will express an exact appreciation on our part of the universal and uninterrupted influence of Mary in our soul, there suggests itself at once as a basis the idea of a Consecration, naturally of the completest sort, which will take into its scope everything about one's life and self which can possibly be so grasped. The act which embodies and inaugurates that Consecration should be formal. It must be understood in all its bearings, and made with earnestness. But it cannot be too much stressed that the important consideration in the Consecration is not the act which initiates it, or even the many acts which may renew it, but the setting up a consecrated state of soul, an attitude of dependence on Mary.

That attitude of dependence on her is the necessary sequel to the moment of the Annunciation, when in effect we were made to depend on her, and God only dealt with us as united to her. We had no other status before Him than as her children-to-be. So now that we are come to her, we must declare that we belong to her. Our daily life is nothing else than the continuation in us of the Incarnation, the formation of Our Lord in us; and as He did of old at Nazareth, now God waits her Fiat and requires our union with her.

The Spirit of Union With Her Must

That union is a life, and just like the common life of the body, it demands the regular beating of the heart, the steady movement of the lungs, the stimulus of periodic nourishment. These are the impulses of prayer, ejaculation, act, practice, thought, and other reminders, which warm and renew the soul and preserve in it the spirit of consecration.

There must be order in the spiritual life. A system must be constituted if reality and perseverance are to be attained. That system, as its very name denotes, must necessarily be automatic or mechanical in some respects. But that is not to say that it is thereby undevotional or minus merit. That would be absurd - it would suggest that as frequency grew and a virtuous habit strengthened, so merit would decline. In general it is the isolated act that thrills with greatest fervour. Remember, too, that God Himself loves system.

Be Preserved by Faithful Thought of Her

Therefore, the times and the events of the day must be bound to certain prayers and observations. So far as is practicable, these will be multiplied, so that God is thought of and referred to more or less distinctly throughout the day. Then that day, methodized for God, must be carefully sub-methodized to ensure that Mary, too, shall never be completely lost to view. The frequent turning of the heart to her will create the spirit of devotion which we seek. That spirit will pervade the thoughts, and even penetrate into the inmost consciousness, so that wherever the immediate attention is - whether in heaven with the Divine Persons, or very much on earth guiding pick and shovel, or immersed in trying household duties - Mary as well as God is present to the mind. And attention need not - cannot always - be deliberate or distinct. The implement which the craftsman

uses accomplishes his work without being consciously viewed all the time. Similarly, attention to Mary the great instrument of the Divine purposes, may be subconscious, yet all the same intense.

Which Need Not Always Be Deliberate or Distinct.

"But surely I cannot do two things at the same time?" Why! you are doing two things at the one time all the whole day long! You are thinking while you are walking, you are praying while you are working, you are eating while you are listening, you are talking while you are seeing. True, you may not be giving to each act an equal degree of attention, but what is given to the lesser is substantial - so much so, that were you to bestow on God Himself, or Mary for God, throughout the day an equivalent amount of general attention, such would constitute you a contemplative of the highest order. De Montfort asks for less for Mary in the practice of the True Devotion. He declares that the habitual attention given to her need not necessarily be more than a general and imperceptible viewing of her.

Two things at the same time! One does not have to be a psychologist to distinguish readily even a third grade of attention, which may be so acute as to declare to be called active attention. For instance, in addition to the processes specified above, you may be simultaneously experiencing pleasure or discomfort of some kind. And then beyond these fairly tangible and active mental operations lies the whole realm of the passive or sub-conscious.

All Given to Mary Belongs Most Perfectly to God.

But, while it is important to show the hollowness of the above objection, which is launched with such a final air, it is not on any idea of divided attention that the principle of devotion to Mary exists. It rests on the principle, in the first place, that every offering to heaven, to whomsoever it may be immediately directed, proceeds through Mary; in the second place, that everything thus given to Mary thereby belongs to God, gaining in its passing through her hands - as De Montfort does not tire in repeating - a vast addition and embellishment of merit; and in the third place, that we must recognize and honour this arrangement, which is a dependent part of Christ's own mediation, and due, accordingly, to the Will of God, a secondary acknowledgement.

But This is Not Rightly Grasped

But no matter what is urged along these lines, misgivings will continue to obtrude themselves. Of these, the crudest one it is which tells the most: "How can I give all this attention to Mary without taking something from God?" The Protestant deems this to represent unanswerable argument. More even than in other points of faith, he sees a practical difficulty, and judges it to be conclusive. It is the old, old story once again: "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?" The doctrine of such persons must always accommodate itself to alleged practical considerations, to the evidence of the senses or of human reasoning.

So That It Causes Perplexity to Many Earnest Souls.

Then, from that extreme down the whole gamut of difficulty, that crude objection busily insinuates itself. In the spiritual lives of many Catholics it is a nagging, irritating influence; and if it causes little trouble in the case of others, it is only because Mary is to them - as Father Faber would say - "so little of a Mary." Their devotion to her is low and thin and poor, a miserable and unworthy shadow, not substantial enough even to arouse an occasional perplexity, far less to inspire their life.

In general, good Catholics realize that devotion of some sort is due by them to Mary. They think they fully satisfy this obligation by drifting with the tide of custom. They say whatever prayers the occasion sets before them. At Mass they may use a Missal or a prayer book. During a visit to the Blessed Sacrament they may have a manual. They may say the Stations of the Cross or some form of Office; and when special forms of prayer are not called for by the time and place, they may say the Rosary. Many people use the Rosary at Mass as well.

#### Crude Ideas Obscure Her Vital Role, So That

In this rough way, undoubtedly it happens that Mary is far from being ignored. The actual amount of prayers which is addressed to her by those who pray at all is by no means inconsiderable. The elements of Christian doctrine, which all have learned, the popular manuals on devotion to her, and the force of tradition, see to that. But almost always in the background is this unsatisfied feeling about her - the "crude objection." A letter appears in some Catholic paper, which simply screams at the idea of saying the Rosary during Mass. It elicits others of the same kind. Surely, it has struck a responsive chord in far too many hearts; for it becomes painfully obvious that the real point is not the Missal or the Rosary at all, but something deep and serious. The Marian background of all those people is defective. The Missal may be better, but not as they use it. Then how feeble is the reply which follows; attack or defence - hardly one appears to realize the capital importance of the ministry of Mary. Doubts are awakened: "How am I to apportion my prayers as between God and Mary? Am I giving her too much? Am I praying to her in the right time and place? And if I am taking from God by praying to her at one time, is there not the chance that I may be taking from Him by praying to her at any time? When and where exactly does prayer to her come into season and go out again?"

#### She Cannot Mould Us to Her Heart's Desire.

And then when De Montfort's noble treatise is read, and it is heard that all should be given to Mary in order that it may go most perfectly to God - Oh! then the difficulty which had been lulled to sleep by the rhythm of habit, gets up and stretches itself to its full length, and says loudly: "Would I not turn away from God were I to direct all my prayers to her?" No longer is there any possibility of just shirking the issue. For they are in the grip of the idea that the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and Mary and the Saints are like so many statues, so that to turn to one means necessarily to turn away from the others. In reality, this is a time of special grace, from which a great servant of Mary might arise after the whole position had been thoroughly thrashed out. But usually our armament of knowledge is not sufficient to bring us triumphantly through that melee. But neither is Mary's hold on our hearts so weak that her cause suffers wholesale defeat. So after a period of bewilderment, perplexity, turmoil, on a scale according to our calibre, we just slip back to the indeterminate state of things which held before that crisis, and which custom had made comfortable. "Mary's man" is not to be!

#### The "True Devotion" Affords a Proper Picture

And all the time the "True Devotion," which so startled them, held the key to that position. It could oust those crude, objection-brewing ideas of the paths of prayer and grace by placing in their minds a different picture - of superior conviction, based on Scripture, and conformed to every teaching of the Church - that picture of Mary as the indispensable mother of the Christian soul. In her we are conceived in grace, that is, made one in Baptism with Jesus Christ, her Blessed and Divine Fruit; and there we grow during life, one body and one spirit with Him, our only cause of grace, till,

through the birth of death, Mary brings us forth to life eternal. The Holy Ghost, pervading Mary, operates with her that growth and sanctification. And over all is the Author of Grace Himself, the Eternal Father.

#### Of the Motherhood of Mary and With it Comprehension

This vivid imagery, drawn from human processes of growth, and forming, as already stated, the basis of the "True Devotion", effectively illustrates the processes of Divine Life in us. It aids to a proper appreciation (which the saints speak of as all-important) of the fact that each Divine Person is intimately concerned in every grace, and under them Mary. It gives an indication of the place of Mary in relation to the Most Holy Trinity and to ourselves, and enables us to visualize how she, though not herself the origin of grace, can be a necessary part of every movement of it, of the prayer which proceeds from us, of the gift of life which flows to us. Our Lord may not be addressed or mentioned or even thought of in a prayer, yet every prayer proceeds - through Him, and derives its efficacy from Him. Similarly, in her own degree, Mary plays a vital part in every prayer, to whomsoever addressed and irrespective of the mention of her name.

#### Of the Processes of Grace and Prayer.

If these ideas be assimilated, there is not a notion or a phrase in De Montfort which a little reflection will not make clear as crystal. Likewise, we find that we acquire a notable facility and degree of freedom in spiritual things. We realize that the main element in prayer is not its form, but that the qualities of soul which it reflects and the solidity of its foundation of Christian truth. Emboldened, we give our prayerful inclinations fullest rein, not unduly concerned as to their immediate destination nor subjecting them to rules of mathematical apportionment.

#### It Can Even Disarm the Violently Prejudiced.

Moreover, does not this imagery, and the devotions built upon it, provide a solution even to Protestant perplexity on the score of Mary? Here is a devotion which derives from the Scriptural image of the Mystical Body; which gives her all due to Mary, yet does not violate the right of God and His Christ; but on the contrary, by bringing their Divinity into bold relief, safeguards those rights; which gives a true conception of Mary's doctrinal position, and at the same time summarily solves the "how much" and the "when" of practice and devotion.

Therefore, does it not afford to those Protestants who possess instinctive love for Mary (and surely there are more than a few of them) a reasonable and simple way of giving her a place in their lives analogous to that she filled at Nazareth and Bethlehem and Calvary, those great Redemptive epochs, where the Woman of Destiny and her Seed fulfilled their prophetic mission in the crushing of the serpent's head?

If those step-sons cannot, at the outset, bring themselves to say any prayer for her, let their prayer to God be made in the spirit of union with her; in some way or other she must be introduced into their spiritual life. Soon enough, she will assert her full maternal rights.

#### Its Practice is the Systematic Recognition of

It has been said above that the acts of attention to Mary should be regular and not infrequent. Definite devotions and prayers directed to her will be incorporated in the daily round. In addition, I will suggest some "devices," the purpose of which is to recall and emphasize the place of Mary in what we might be inclined to look on as our non-Marian devotions. Again, it is insisted that there is

no such thing in Christianity as non-Marian devotion. One might as well talk of a prayer which does not belong to Jesus. But, while the truth that Our Blessed Lord is the life of every prayer is not in the faintest danger of being obscured, there is a very real danger - in fact, there is the probability - that Mary may be imagined to be concerned only with prayer in which her name occurs. But, emphatically, Mary has no province on her own part at all. Under Jesus, her Son and her Lord, the whole Christian life is her realm.

### The God-Assigned Part of Mary

The little devices, which I speak of and which typify De Montfort's method, are just an assertion of that Divine principle. They may be very potent for that reason. They indicate and honour Mary's share in those prayers and parts of our life wherein her name is not specifically mentioned. It is nothing daring, therefore, to say that such a little token of Mary, introduced into a longer prayer addressed to God, may immeasurably enhance its worth. The reason is not that Mary adds anything to God, but that Mary does add something to every prayer to God.

The expedients which I give below will in turn suggest others. One is inclined to make excuses for their childishness, but I recall that in this form of devotion, which we are considering, we are as children - nay, more, as babes. Similarly, many of the examples which De Montfort gives possess an element of the commonplace or human which may not appeal to all. But, as has been wisely remarked, the suitability of the means set at work for the uplifting of humanity must not be estimated according to the nature of God, but according to our own. Let us not forget that the Incarnation itself was made for us and for our salvation.

### In Every Operation of the Spiritual Life.

(a) In your prayer-book or Office-book or Missal keep a favourite picture of Our Lady, which you will cause to project above the pages while you read. Fix certain "landmarks," such, for instance, as the turning of each page, which will occasion a resting of your eye on that representation of her who is at that moment, and all the moments of your life, the essential supplement to your prayer and the channel whereby its fruits are entering your soul. This will be a way of keeping in mind and of acknowledging the faithful love of Mary.

(b) De Montfort suggests the putting of statues and pictures in places where they will arrest the attention, and thus cause the uplifting of the thoughts to God through Mary.

(c) Every prayer or devotion which is not directed to Mary should be followed by an Ave (Hail Mary) or a Marian ejaculation. Intend this to be a formal ratification of the acceptance of Jesus which Mary made on your behalf at the Annunciation. Had you, that night, been excluded from her words of consent, you would now be outside the Redemption. Therefore, your life must endorse her representative capacity. At every giving of His grace, God requires that endorsement, expressed or implied.

(d) Even when not praying to Mary, be fond of holding her beads in your hand. This will serve to remind you that her hands are really always twined in those of you, her child, and that in fact your prayer is always made with her.

(e) Another expedient may prove of value, especially to those who are in the habit of saying an Office, of which but little is actually addressed to Mary. Every time that you repeat the "Gloria," simultaneously cause your finger to form (on the page, or on the prie-dieu, or in the air, anywhere so long as it is inconspicuously done) the letter M, thereby acknowledging the threefold relation of

Mary to the Divine Persons, and signifying that as we receive every grace and blessing from Them through her, so through her we render thanks to Them and give Them glory always.

#### The Belief that the Devotion is an Ultra-Select One

It is the accepted opinion that the "True Devotion" is a select devotion, one for persons of special quality or aided by a special grace - "for oddities and mystics," too many would bluntly put it. Such a current view marks a doubly serious position. Firstly, it instances a defective popular appreciation of Mary; but enough has been already said on that. Secondly, it means that the chances of improvement are being hopelessly prejudiced. Many will be kept even from opening the book, while those who do undertake it will read it through glasses biased and all out of focus. Reflect how human nature, so influenced, operates, and it will be realized what will be the attitude towards the many difficult things encountered, and how very remote is the Devotion's prospect of acceptance.

#### Will be Dispelled by the Diffusion of the Legion

Therefore, of immense interest in this connection is the uprise of the organization known as the Legion of Mary, which is now found widely spread in the world, and which declares itself to be built on a fullness of devotion to Mary which approximates to, or is equivalent to, De Montfort's own special form. The Legion, as it grows, must necessarily dispel false notions on the subject of the "True Devotion." In fact, it should completely turn the tables, and in the end convince the world that the "True Devotion" is a popular devotion, a commonplace of Catholic life. But why should this be hoped for? It is because the Legion is not composed of special souls or unusual types, but of ordinary Catholics living the everyday life of the world. Its membership comprises the learned and the unlearned, labourers and leisured, the unemployed, widely differing classes, colours, races, including not a few whom the world would classify as primitive or depressed. In a word, it represents typical Catholicism, so that what it can do all Catholics of good-will can do.

#### Of Mary, Which Aspires to De Montfort's Spirit

If Mary is vital to common spirituality, how much more so to those who set their hearts on uncommon living, or who aim at an apostolate? Jesus was not originally given to the world - nor is He now - save by Mary. The Legion fully recognizes this. Its title is not intended to be an empty one. The Legion is built, from top to bottom and through and through, on this most potent principle of union with Mary. By a deliberate, full, filial, acknowledgement in thought, word and deed, of that principle, it aspires to attract to itself this fruitful, this necessary, action of Mary, which it will then lavish on souls through the medium of its intensive apostolate.

#### And Seeks to Reproduce It in the Work

So Legionaries complement their title with forms of prayer, ritual, emblems, which express and keep them in mind of the salient principle of the Legion that they must do all their acts in a spirit of union with Mary; in such sort that (as De Montfort, quoting St. Ambrose, puts it) the soul of Mary will be in each of them to magnify the Lord; so much so that they will be able to say to God with confidence, "Behold Mary Your handmaid; be it done unto me according to Your word." From the first meeting they attend, in the first task assigned to them, they learn that they must expect to accomplish anything of worth only in the measure that their service of their neighbour embodies this principle. For - note it well - what they are inclined to call their work, is in reality Mary's own proper and essential work. She was engaged on that work before they were born. She has, in fact, been exquisitely busied on it from the time of the Annunciation to this very day; for Christ and His

Mystical Body are one. Hence, legionaries do not really bring Mary to help them in their service of the other members of the Mystical Body. Mary it is who summons them to assist her. No one can take part save by her gracious permission.

And in the Lives of All Its Members.

Such being the spirit of the whole Legionary work, it will be realized how desirable it is that every legionary - not alone its active members, but likewise each one of its great host of auxiliary members - should, if possible, possess a copy of De Montfort's monumental exposition of the "True Devotion." They should read it again and again, and fully comprehend it and bring it into whole-hearted play in their spiritual life. Only then will they enter into the spirit of the Legion of Mary, to which as the Legion itself declares, Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort is veritably tutor.

To Sum Up, the Devotion Depends On

I have come to the end. Now just a word of summing up.

I have carefully refrained from attempting a commentary or a paraphrase of the book. I felt that something different was needed. In the course of these pages I have referred to the ordinary reader of De Montfort as being like a man in need of a telescope, and by "ordinary reader" I fear I mean almost every reader. I have dearly longed to construct that homely instrument - in which a few lenses are so contrived that they adjust the vision to a new relation - a secret of nature to supplement De Montfort's "secret of grace."

The Mastering of Its Basic Principle.

It will be seen that I have done nothing more than pick out one idea from the book. I have tried to show that it is its central idea, and in fact the key to the book. I have tried to explain that idea, which is part and parcel of the idea of the Mystical Body, and which is crystallized in the extract from St. Augustine which has been quoted. ["All the predestinate, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the most holy Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, brought up, and made to grow by that good Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just."] Finally, it has been my contention that if all the other ideas of the book are brought into relation to that central idea, they take on a simplicity of form which they had not before; or rather everything is as it was before, but we see it differently.

Then, It Will Open Up a New World of Mary.

However clumsily I have performed my labour of love, I cannot help feeling that the effect of this simple "telescope" is startling; that when it is applied to the True Devotion by the "ordinary reader," a new world is opened up to him. Ideas which appeared to be fantastic are discovered to be necessary doctrine. What were thought to be perfervid outbursts have become ice-cold theology. A select devotion is seen to be in reality the practice of a common but pure Catholicism. The almost incomprehensible is shown to be so easy and so logical that I have actually found myself suggesting it as an efficacious means of conciliating the prejudices even of the ultra-prejudiced against Mary.

Deficiencies Which Readers Think They Find In It

My "telescope" is not built upon the book. Other than when dealing with some typical objections, I have hardly quoted from the latter. I could almost have left out De Montfort's name altogether. I have sought in this way to emphasize the fact that this Introduction, though made to point at the

book, is as independent of it as a telescope is of the star. This completely independent treatment of the subject, ending in the same conclusions, gives it some added value as an aid to the book.

Every objection to the True Devotion which I have mentioned in these pages has oppressed myself. I also speak with knowledge of the views of a very great number who have read the book. I am not going to traverse ground already covered. I simply say that some "adjusting-mechanism" is required. I think the lines of mine are generally right, but if it does not work, it is imperative that someone should attempt another. I would have been glad to have something of the kind a score of years ago when first I read the "True Devotion." I still have vivid recollections of that first reading. The book was laid aside. I would not have opened it again but for the dear tyranny of a friend. He exacted repeated readings, which were grudgingly conceded. Then gradually it dawned on me that the book was an inspired production; that it was right and I was wrong; what it said was true and had the character of a special message; the excesses which I thought I found in it were really deficiencies in myself, wide gaps in knowledge and apprehension. I realized that I must try to fill them in, and to some extent succeeded. Ever since, the book has been a source of light to me, so that I add myself to those who bless the day in which it came to them.

Are Really Deficiencies in Themselves.

I must be pardoned for this last-moment lapse into the personal; I would have wished it otherwise. But I desperately desire to assert my kinship of experience with all those countless first-time readers of the "True Devotion," who will consider it "extreme," and may be minded to put it disastrously from them. That kinship entitles me to tell them that the fault is in themselves. They really only look on Mary as a very influential friend, whereas she is the very mother of their soul; not as mother of the born, nor even of the unborn babe, but more intense, far more vital - the mother of our all-dependence, as De Montfort gloriously shows her, - Mother of grace.

Its Reading May be a Time of Destiny.

According to their faith will they receive; so from this point may every reader start in a receptive spirit, and may the princely treatise be to each of them "the fair beginning of a nobler time."

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## HEADLINE SUMMARY

Mary is So Immense That Just Appreciation of Her Is Thought to be Romantic Excess And De Montfort's Wonderful Tribute to Her Outdistances the Devotion And the Appreciation of Those Who Read It

Our Devotion Is Only Third-Rate And De Montfort Does No More Than Mirror The Divine Idea of Mary So Vividly and Unmistakably Revealed in Prophecy

Likewise, the Annunciation Shows Her Key-Position Her Free Decision and Her Faith Opened Up a Way to God

Such a Past Without a Corresponding Future Would be Quite Meaningless

But Her Motherhood of The Mystical Body Constitutes a Worthy Sequel To All That Went Before

Worship is an Essential Complement to Doctrine Therefore the Soul Must Give to Mary a Devotion Corresponding to the Intensity of Its Dependence on Her Which is a Constant and An All-Embracing One

The True Devotion is Full Acknowledgement Of Mary's Motherhood, and Also - Strange to Say - Represents the Very Minimum of What is Due to Her

Appreciation is a Vital Element of Worship And Worship Too Must Not be Meanly Measured

The Whole Life, in Fact, Must Sing its Dependence on Mary

The Spirit of Union With Her Must Be Preserved by Faithful Thought of Her Which Need Not Always Be Deliberate or Distinct

All Given to Mary Belongs Most Perfectly to God

But This is Not Rightly Grasped So That It Causes Perplexity to Many Earnest Souls

Crude Ideas Obscure Her Vital Role, So That She Cannot Mould Us to Her Heart's Desire

The "True Devotion" Affords a Proper Picture Of the Motherhood of Mary and With it Comprehension Of the Processes of Grace and Prayer

It Can Even Disarm the Violently Prejudiced

Its Practice is the Systematic Recognition of The God-Assigned Part of Mary In Every Operation of the Spiritual Life

The Belief that the Devotion is an Ultra-Select One Will be Dispelled by the Diffusion of the Legion Of Mary, Which Aspires to De Montfort's Spirit And Seeks to Reproduce It in the Work And in the Lives of All Its Members

To Sum Up, the Devotion Depends On The Mastering of Its Basic Principle

Then, It Will Open Up a New World of Mary

Deficiencies Which Readers Think They Find In It Are Really Deficiencies in Themselves

Its Reading May be a Time of Destiny.