

ANTONIO ROSMINI

A COMMENTARY  
TO  
THE INTRODUCTION OF  
THE GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO JOHN

*Translated by*  
ANTONIO BELSITO IC

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# Contents

## **Introduction**

.....	9
READING 1	
.....	24
READING 2	
.....	25

## **BOOK 1 OF THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE WORD**

READING 3	
.....	31
READING 4	
.....	35
READING 5	
.....	38
READING 6	
.....	40
READING 7	
.....	42
READING 8	
.....	45
READING 9	
.....	48
READING 10	
.....	51
READING 11	
.....	53
READING 12	
.....	56
READING 13	
.....	58
READING 14	
.....	60
READING 15	
.....	62
READING 16	
.....	63
READING 17	
.....	66
READING 18	
.....	71

READING 19	74
READING 20	83
READING 21	87
READING 22	90
READING 23	97
READING 24	100
READING 25	103
READING 26	106
READING 27	112
READING 28	114
READING 29	118

## **BOOK 2**

### **OF THE CREATION MADE THROUGH THE WORD**

READING 30	121
READING 31	124
READING 32	127
READING 33	129
READING 34	131
READING 35	137
READING 36	140
READING 37	143
READING 38	147
READING 39	152
READING 40	158
READING 41	

.....	161
READING 42	..... 163
READING 43	..... 165
READING 44	..... 166
READING 45	..... 169
READING 46	..... 171
READING 47	..... 173
READING 48	..... 177
READING 49	..... 179
READING 50	..... 182
READING 51	..... 184
READING 52	..... 187
READING 53	..... 189
READING 54	..... 193
READING 55	..... 196
READING 56	..... 201
READING 57	..... 208
READING 58	..... 215
READING 59	..... 226
READING 60	..... 231
READING 61	..... 236
READING 62	..... 241
READING 63	..... 244
READING 64	..... 248
READING 65	..... 253

READING 66	259
READING 67	263
READING 68	271
READING 69	275
READING 70	282
READING 71	288
READING 72	293
READING 73	300
READING 74	303
READING 75	310
READING 76	317
READING 77	320
READING 78	325
READING 79	330
READING 80	334
READING 81	338
READING 82	342
READING 83	346
READING 84	351
READING 85	357
READING 86	363
READING 87	367
READING 88	370
READING 89	376
READING 90	

.....	381
READING 91	
.....	385
READING 92	
.....	389
READING 93	
.....	394
INDEX OF SOURCES USED BY THE AUTHOR	
.....	395

# A COMMENTARY TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

**ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ κρώμεθα  
καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον  
αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ  
καταργουμένου.  
(2Co 3:12-13)**

*“Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great  
boldness,  
not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the  
people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that  
was being set aside”.  
(2Co 3:12-13)*



# INTRODUCTION

## 1- Historical Background

Rosmini started to write the Commentary on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1839, at Stresa. After an interruption of ten years, he returned to the work on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1849 at Naples, during the stormy period of his momentous mission in Rome, soon after the Roman revolution, which had forced the Pope, Pius IX, to abandon Rome and find refuge in Gaeta, as a guest of the King of Naples.

Rosmini, asked by the Pope to follow him to Gaeta, spent the next seven months between Gaeta, Naples, and Caserta, at first as the trusted adviser of the Pope, but soon after as the despised and persecuted enemy of the reactionary political views of Cardinal Antonelli and of others at the Papal court, who felt they had the mission of keeping Rosmini well away from the Pope, and of discrediting him by trying to have Rosmini's works placed in the Index of forbidden books, especially *The Five Wounds of Holy Church* and *The Constitution according to Social Justice*.

Rosmini found himself in the impossible situation of having to stay near the Pope by request of the Pope himself, and of seeing his way to the Pope barred by Cardinal Antonelli and others at the Court, who used all kinds of malevolent and petty ways to ill-treat Rosmini. They were soon joined by the Police, who acted under orders from the King and Cardinal Antonelli: they harassed Rosmini in many ways, trying to force him out of the Kingdom of Naples.

Two very different world-views separated Rosmini from Cardinal Antonelli and his friends. It was Rosmini's view that the Pope would have been better off by moving to Benevento, in his own territory, without having to rely on foreign Powers and on their troops for his return to Rome; from there, he could freely appeal to the Roman population for his peaceful return to the eternal City, with the promise that he would keep in place the Constitution which he had granted to his people. Antonelli's political views, on the other hand, implied reliance on Austria and on its troops to quash the revolution and drive the Pope

back to Rome. This was the reason for his welcoming to Gaeta the Austrian ambassador “like a Messiah”, the saviour of the Pope and of reactionary politics. On his part, the Austrian Ambassador considered Rosmini a formidable enemy and “the evil genie” of the Pope, to be kept well away from Pius IX.

The *Commentary to the Introduction of the Gospel of John* was written to a greater extent during those seven turbulent months. Rosmini’s handwriting, in the original manuscript, is at its most neat and tidy, for over 400 pages. The thoughts are sublime and deep, and philosophy, theology, spirituality, and biblical scholarly interpretation come together with great ease, providing a rich, original, and immensely beneficial insight into the Word of God in Scriptures, in line with the scriptural approach of the great Fathers of the Church, and of St. Augustine and St. Thomas in particular.

It seems clear that Rosmini, from time to time, shut himself off, so to speak, from all anxieties, troubles, difficulties of those days to find refuge in the lofty and sublime words of the “eagle” of the Evangelists, relishing the beauty and the depth of the truths discovered. He continued with his writing until 12<sup>th</sup> July 1849, at which date he abandoned the work, as he made his way back to Stresa and to his brethren.

In the original plan, the completed work was meant to have three books: 1<sup>st</sup> book, “On the Eternal Generation of the Word”; 2<sup>nd</sup> book, “On the Creation made by the Word”; 3<sup>rd</sup> book, “On the Incarnation of the Word”. As it stands, Rosmini completed the first book, and wrote a large section of the second book. The title of the projected third book was not stated by Rosmini, it is a guess with a high degree of probability. Why did he not finish it? The most obvious reason seems to be that, after the condemnation of two of his books by the Roman Congregation of the Index at the end of May 1849, he came to realise that the times were not ready for a more mature, deeper, open, and original discussion on some of the fundamental issues he had dealt with in this book and on the other volumes of *Theosophy* and *Supernatural Anthropology*, works on which he was working at about the same time and which were also left unfinished.

The words he wrote to Padre Giovanni Maria Caroli on 5th July 1849 seem to confirm this hypothesis: *‘I do not intend to publish at present the major works, namely the Theosophy and the Supernatural Anthropology because I see only too well that these are not the right times for their being accepted; this age needs milk; it is not capable of taking solid food.’* The same applies, no doubt, to the Commentary.

The unfinished book was published in 1882, nearly thirty years after his death. Five years later, in 1887, a Decree from the Congregation of the Index, known as the Post Obitum (‘after the death’ [of its author, Rosmini]), condemned 40 Propositions extracted from Rosmini’s works. Ten “propositions” were extracted from the Commentary. The condemnation cast a long shadow over the works of Rosmini, especially over his theological works, contributing to the fact that Rosmini even today is better known as a philosopher than as a theologian.

Scholars have no doubt that both the placing of two of the works of Rosmini on the Index of forbidden books in 1849 and the condemnation of the 40 Propositions in 1887 were the results of a fierce campaign to discredit Rosmini by all means, for political and for theological reasons, judging him to be too liberal, too open to dialogue with the modern world, and not in line with a misguided interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas’ teaching.

All recent Popes have spoken in glowing terms of Rosmini’s holiness of life and of his philosophical, theological, and spiritual teaching, from St. John XXIII to St. Paul VI, from John Paul I, to St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis.

Moreover, a Note from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2001 declared the works of Antonio Rosmini free from doctrinal errors: *“The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, following an in-depth examination of the two doctrinal Decrees, promulgated in the 19th century, and taking into account the results emerging from historiography and from the scientific and theoretical research of the last ten years has reached the following conclusion:*

***The motives for doctrinal and prudential concern and difficulty that determined the promulgation of the Decree Post Obitum with the condemnation of the "40 Propositions" taken from the works of Antonio Rosmini can now be considered superseded. This is so because the meaning of the propositions, as understood and condemned by the Decree, does not belong to the authentic position of Rosmini, but to conclusions that may possibly have been drawn from the reading of his works".***

This admission is certainly valuable and appreciated. However, there is much sadness with it, at the thought that such a bright light has been kept for so long hidden and obscured from the seekers of truth. Pope Francis has often mentioned Rosmini in his homilies and documents, quoting from the book, *The Five Wounds of Holy Church*.

In his homily in St. Martha of 4<sup>th</sup> April 2004, this is what he said: *"Many thinkers in the Church were persecuted, as well. I think of one, now, at this moment, not so far from us: a man of good will, a prophet indeed, who, in his writings reproached the Church for having lost the way of the Lord. He was summoned in short order, his books were placed on the index [the list of works that were banned or restricted to experts because of their problematic, erroneous and even heretical content], they took away his teaching positions – and thus, this man's life ended – and it was not so long ago. [Now] time has passed, and today he is Blessed. How is it, though, that he, who yesterday was a heretic, is today a Blessed of the Church? It is because yesterday, those who had power wanted to silence him because they did not like what he was saying. Today the Church, who, thanks be to God knows how to repent, says, 'No, this man is good!'. Moreover, he is on the way to sainthood: He is a Blessed".*

Even more poignant is the fact that Pope Francis invited all Church Universities, their Professors, and their students to follow closely the directives about formation given by Blessed Rosmini in the Five Wounds, and this in the official Church document *Veritatis Gaudium*.

## **2- The present edition**

Rosmini did not finish the book and, as far as we know, he never went back to it. His faithful secretary Fr Francesco Paoli, who acclaimed the book as “a work of sublime philosophy and theology”, had it published in 1882. A second, revised edition, was published in 1934 for the Edizione Nazionale of the works of Rosmini. The latest revised edition was published in 2009 by Citta’ Nuova Editrice, edited by Samuele Tadini.

The present work, edited by Rosmini Publications, is the first in the English language. The text is a translation from the 2009 Edition in the Italian language. The only difference is the placing of a brief summary at the head of each of the 93 Readings, which should prove helpful, one hopes, to the reader.

The dates of the composition of the various Readings are identical to the dates and places annotated by Rosmini in his manuscript. The reader may also notice that paragraphs are numbered in the first 13 Readings only, and this is how Rosmini left the work.

The translation into English is the work of the editor of the present publication, who is indebted to the late Anthony Dewhirst, who left a draft translation of the book. He also wrote a precious book, entitled “*The Word who is Life: this is our subject*”, which is a commentary on the *Commentary to the Introduction of the Gospel of John*. Another work used in the translation is the book entitled “*Our Life in Christ*”, written by George Elson, a book which contains a selection of pages taken from the *Commentary*. The Rosminian Archives in Stresa also have an early translation of the *Commentary* made by William Lockhart, which, however, was never published.

## **3- The major themes of the work**

St. John of the Cross created some of his spiritual poetical masterpieces, like the *Spiritual Canticle*, as he was languishing for nine months in a Carmelite Monastery prison, a stone room barely large enough for his own small body, with only a tiny window at the top of the room from which he could see the stars at night. His jailers were his own brethren. Great works of

incomparable beauty have often been born during times of great suffering and distress.

Rosmini's *Commentary* was the splendid work produced during the most harrowing and dark period of his life. As he reflected in quiet contemplation on the sublime words of the Evangelist, his mind moved from his profound biblical knowledge, to the substantial commentaries of the Fathers of the Church, to the documents of the Magisterium, and to his own theological intuitions and discoveries.

The book contains pages which are difficult and abstract, written with the presupposition that the reader already has a background knowledge of his philosophical and theological positions. Many other pages, however, seem to be closer to the simple, spiritual pages of the Maxims, of the Constitutions, of his Ascetical Letters, of the Supernatural Anthropology, and of Theodicy.

The Commentary deals with the first four verses of the Introduction of the Gospel of John:

<p><b>1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.</b></p> <p><b>2 He was in the beginning with God.</b></p> <p><b>3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.</b></p> <p><b>4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.</b></p>
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Rosmini's profound meditation on the above verses brought him to dwell on the following themes: the meaning of the word "beginning", the eternal generation of the Word, the difference of the human word and the Divine Word, God's nature as absolute subsistence, the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, the Word as the Exemplar of the world, the Creation of the world, Adam's and Eve's state of innocence before the fall, Satan's victory and the fall of man, the Immaculate conception of Mary, the spiritual combat of the old adamitic man and the new man generated in the waters of Baptism, the mystery of Christ's Passion and Death freely accepted by the Son in obedience to the Will of the Father, the infinite merits of the

innocent Son of Man which gained for man the new glorious and everlasting life, the Word as essentially life and light, the difference between Baptism and the Eucharist, the mysterious Eucharistic life of Christ, the necessity of the Eucharistic life for man before the final glorious resurrection of the body, the Eucharistic life of Christ shared by the Angels and the Saints in Heaven, by the souls in Purgatory, and by those who are incorporated in Christ while on earth, the gift of the Spirit of Christ, and the glorious union of all baptized with Christ, in this life and in the life to come.

As stated above, **10 Propositions** extracted from the Commentary were condemned by the Church in 1887, for no other reason than “they seemed not to be in line with the doctrine of the Church”; it was a sort of “precautionary” measure rather than a clear condemnation. As mentioned above, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2001, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a Nota in which it declared that the precautionary measures were without foundation since they were directed at an erroneous interpretation of the true teaching of Rosmini.

It may be useful to have a list of the 10 Propositions extracted from the Commentary, with a brief explanation of Rosmini’s true teaching.

- 1- *“The Word is that ‘formless matter’ from which the book of Wisdom (11, 18) says were created all things of the universe” (Reading 37).*

According to his critics, Rosmini seems to be favouring pantheism since all things are said to be made by the Word who is the “formless matter” out of which all things are made. Moreover, there seem to be a denial of creation itself, since the Word, as “formless matter” is eternal. However, we must note that the word “matter” as used by Wisdom, is to be taken symbolically, not literally. By “formless matter”, Rosmini means the Word as the eternal reason containing the Exemplar of the world. The world was created by God according to the exemplar of it found in the Word, so that what was invisible in the Word became visible at creation. The architect makes the visible building in line with the invisible project of it in his mind. In a

similar way, God created the visible universe in conformity with the invisible plan or exemplar in the Word.

- 2- *“The soul separated from the body would exist but would have no life. In this state, it would not be possible for it to reflect on itself, nor have any consciousness; its condition would be like a state of perpetual darkness and sleep”* (Reading 69).

According to his critics, Rosmini seems to deny the immortality of the soul. However, far from denying it, he advances a hypothesis about how the immortal soul, deprived of his natural term, the body, can still enjoy consciousness, knowledge, sensations even during the time between death and the final resurrection. In the volumes of Psychology and of Anthropology, he had given plenty of proofs about the indestructibility of the ‘sensitive’ soul, and the immortality of the ‘intellective’ soul, bound for eternity to the idea of being. It is also a requirement of the moral and free soul that it retains the same awareness of itself before and after death. God will certainly provide for it, says Rosmini; his hypothesis about how the existing soul, deprived of the body, maintains full awareness of itself is not only a valid hypothesis, but one which opens up mysterious and profound truths about our incorporation in Christ and the beauty of the mystical Body of Christ.

- 3- *“The Word, in so far as He is object loved, and not in so far as He is the Word, that is, subsistent object per se known, is the person of the Holy Spirit”* (Reading 65).

According to his critics, Rosmini seems to be saying that the three forms of being – real, ideal, moral – in God are the three divine Persons; and that, moreover, he seems to confuse the two distinct Persons of the Word and of the Holy Spirit. Rosmini did not make such serious mistakes. From his works, we are left in no doubt that the three forms of being must not be confused with the three Persons of the Trinity: there is only a very distant trace, an analogy between being and Absolute subsistent Being, between the three forms of being and the three Divine Persons, as both St. Augustine and St. Thomas openly and often proclaimed. Man was created in the image of God: he has *real* existence, has *ideal* knowledge, and loves as a *moral* being. With



regards to the accusation that Rosmini confused the Word with the Holy Spirit, it is clear from the whole context and many other texts that what Rosmini meant is the following: “God, in so far as He is *per se* known and understood is called Word or Son; in so far as He is *per se* loved, is not called Word, but is called Holy Spirit”. This is the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

- 4- *“In the humanity of Christ, the human will was so taken over by the Holy Spirit to adhere to objective Being, that is, to the Word, that it surrendered the direction of the man entirely to the Word, and the Word personally took over its direction, thus becoming flesh. The human will, and the other powers were subordinate to the will of the Word, which, as the first principle of this Theandric being, acted in everything directly, or through the other powers, with its consent. Hence, the human will was no longer personal in the man, and what is person in other men remained nature in Christ. We should note that all these operations of the Holy Spirit, either as a preliminary to the Incarnation, or as the Incarnation itself or hypostatic union, were not successive but simultaneous; completed in an instant, the instant of the Incarnation itself [...]. The Word then, made flesh through the work of the Holy Spirit, extended His union to all His human powers and to flesh itself”* (Reading 85).

According to his critics, Rosmini seems to be falling into two opposite heresies: Nestorianism, which claimed that in Christ there were two natures and two persons, loosely joined by a moral union; and Monothelitism which claimed that Christ had only one will, the will of the divine Person. However, according to Rosmini, in Christ there are two wills – the human and the divine – as there are two natures. The supreme and dominant will is the divine Will, and it is this divine Will which constitutes the one Person in Christ. For all other human beings, the human will does constitute the person, but not for Christ. For Christ, the human will was part of His human nature and did not constitute a person. Rosmini’s position is, therefore, perfectly orthodox, in line with the position of the Church.

- 5- *“... We do not believe the following theory to be alien to Catholic doctrine, which alone is the true doctrine. The substance of the bread and wine has ceased entirely to be the substance of bread and wine and has become Christ’s true flesh and blood at the same instant Christ made it the term of His sentient principle, and so enlivened it with His life, after the manner that occurs in nutrition. In nutrition, in fact, the bread we eat and the wine we drink are assimilated into our flesh and blood and are truly transubstantiated. They are no longer what they were before, bread and wine, but are really our flesh and our blood, because they have become the term of our sensitive principle”* (Reading 87).

According to his critics, Rosmini by using the comparison with human nutrition has distorted and confused and lowered the true concept of transubstantiation, which the Council of Trent called an *“admirable and singular”* eucharistic conversion. However, Rosmini had often defined transubstantiation a *“sublime, ineffable, supernatural, admirable, miraculous, beyond our understanding, unique”* eucharistic conversion, a total transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of JESUS. Moreover, the *term of Christ’s sentient principle* is not the bread and the wine, as some of his critics maintained, but His Body, in the same manner that the term of our sentient principle is our living body, not the food we eat. The comparison with human nutrition is qualified by Rosmini with the words *“it is similar to... not precisely like”*, indicating that he is dealing with an imperfect image, an image used, however, by the St. Thomas Aquinas himself: *“Haec conversio habet aliquam convenientiam cum transubstantiatione nutrimenti”* (In IV Sent.)[“This conversion has a kind of similarity with the transubstantiation which occurs at nutrition”]. Rosmini’s position is, therefore, perfectly in line with Catholic doctrine, both in upholding the miraculous and admirable uniqueness of transubstantiation and the total conversion of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Saviour.

- 6- *“... When transubstantiation occurs, we may infer that some part, which is both inseparable and glorious, is now*

*united and incorporated into His glorious Body” (Reading 87).*

According to his critics, Rosmini seems to be saying that there is something added to the Body of Christ once the species of the bread and wine are converted into His Body and Blood. However, Rosmini had always rejected the view that such addition is to be interpreted quantitatively, as though the Body of Christ would grow and grow, the more pieces of bread and wine are changed into His Body. Rosmini says that the addition is not to be thought of in relation to the external dimensions of the Body of Christ but as a diffusion and extension of Christ’s life in the consecrated bread and wine. The motion is from the life of Christ to the consecrated parts – diffusion and extension of life to the consecrated bread and wine and through the consecrated bread and wine to those who receive them. According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, Christ gives the ‘strength of life’ to bread and wine, changing them into His true flesh and blood.

7- *“... Precisely because the Body of Christ is one and indivisible, it is necessary that where there is a part there is the whole... But not all that Body becomes the term of his sentient principle, but only that part which corresponds to that portion which the substance of bread and wine had in transubstantiation. Moreover, if it is true that, because of the power of Christ’s divine words, this substance of bread and wine is certainly transubstantiated into the Saviour’s Body and Blood; the remainder of His Body and Blood, however, would be united only by concomitance. This inference does not appear to be contrary to Catholic Doctrine” (Reading 87).*

The way the proposition was ‘created’ by his critics, is a travesty of what Rosmini said. It is important, therefore, to read the passage as it is in the text. Rosmini’s critics said that according to Catholic doctrine the consecrated bread and wine is not converted into a small part of the Body of Christ, but in the whole of the holy Body of Christ. The Council of Trent, in fact, teaches that the whole Body is present, not by way of concomitance alone, but by virtue of the words of consecration. Rosmini agrees fully with the Council of Trent and with St.

Thomas: he teaches that the whole and entire Body of Christ is present, not by way of concomitance alone, but by virtue of the words of consecration, the same Body of Christ that was born in Bethlehem, died on the Cross at Calvary, and is now glorious in Heaven. The critics failed to understand Rosmini's – and Thomas' – distinction between the subjective and substantial body and the extra-subjective and external, dimensional body. In the Eucharist, if one speaks of the subjective body, we must say that the Body of Christ is whole and entire "*vi verborum*", that is, by virtue of the words; if one speaks of the extra-subjective and dimensional body, we must say that the Body of Christ is present by concomitance. *Ex vi verborum*, therefore, the whole subjective Body of Christ is present; *per concomitantiam*, that greater part of the extra-subjective Body is present which exceeds the dimensions of the host, as well as the Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ.

- 8- *"If the person who does not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, has no life in himself, and yet, if he who dies with baptism of water or blood or desire, is certain to obtain eternal life, we must say that this eating of the flesh and blood of Christ, which he did not receive in the present life, will be given to him in the next, at the point of death; and in this way, he will have life in himself [...] Equally we may presume that when Christ descended into limbo, He gave Himself to the Saints of the Old Testament under the form of bread and wine [...] and He made them ready for the beatific vision of God"* (Reading 74).

It is difficult to understand Rosmini's critics over this proposition. It is obvious that Rosmini did not consider the Eucharist as *indispensable* to gain eternal life – as he was accused by his critics. He holds dearly to the teaching of the Church that baptism by water, or by blood, or by desire is sufficient to obtain eternal life. Moreover, Rosmini's view about the reception of the Eucharist after death is not to be interpreted as a physical reception of the consecrated bread and wine, but as a reception of the *eucharistic life* 'under the form of bread and wine', that is, not under the '*species*' but '*under the form*' of spiritual, though real, food for the soul. Rosmini quotes from the Council of Trent: "... So that they may, after the journeying

*of this pilgrimage of tears, be able to arrive at their heavenly country, THERE TO EAT WITHOUT ANY VEIL, THAT SAME BREAD OF ANGELS, WHICH THEY NOW EAT UNDER THE SACRED VEILS*" (capital letters as used by Rosmini). St. Cyprian and other Fathers of the Church made the same point. The extent of the mystery of the *Eucharistic life* in which the whole Church participates - the triumphant, the suffering, the militant Church – as well as the extent of the real and most intimate union of the faithful among themselves and with Christ through the *Eucharist* is, perhaps, the finest theological intuition highlighted by Rosmini in the Commentary.

- 9- *"[The devils], therefore, having taken possession of the fruit, thought they would enter into man when he plucked it and ate it. Since the food would be converted into the living body of man, they could enter his animal nature or his subjective life without hindrance and rule him as they wished"* (Reading 63).

Biblical Scholars have produced many interpretations, on the basis of their own exegesis of the texts in Genesis. This is normal practice, and the Church welcomes such interpretations so long as they are in line with the Magisterium. Rosmini produced his own interpretation, which does not depart in the least from the orthodox teaching of the Church about the fall, original sin, and the consequences of original sin. For Adam and Eve, original sin was a personal, wilful act of disobedience to God. It was certainly not a disorder of a physical nature, produced by the poisoning of the devil, and passed on from one generation to the next. It was the corruption of the person in Adam, the corruption of his will, that caused the corruption of his nature as well. This corrupt nature was passed on to all of Adam's children by generation, and it is this corrupt nature which, by distorting the will, causes also the corruption of the person. Rosmini's conjecture is of an exegetical nature and is meant to explain the powerful influence of the devil, of the tempter, on all the children of Adam. At Baptism, the Church uses the Oil of Catechumens to exorcise the child from all forms of evil. In Adam, original sin began with the corruption of his will, which had, as a consequence, the loss of grace and justice, and the psychological and organic disorder of the lower nature. In his

descendants, this disorder of nature or concupiscence which allures man towards sin is the effect of original sin. As St. Thomas said: "*In Adam persona corruptit naturam... in homine qui nascitur ex Adam natura corrumpit personam*" ["In Adam, the person corrupted his nature... in man born of Adam it is his nature which corrupts the person].

- 10-        "*God preserved from original sin a maiden... In order to be preserved from original sin it was sufficient that the tiniest seed in man had remained incorrupt, perhaps overlooked by the devil; from such incorrupt seed, passed down from generation to generation, came forth, at the proper time, the Virgin...*" (Reading 64).

According to his critics, two are the errors contained in this proposition: the first error is that original sin is interpreted as a physical infection, as in the previous proposition; the second error is that Mary, according to Rosmini, had the privilege to be born without original sin more because of a distraction of the devil than by the grace of God. However, Rosmini says very clearly that it was God who preserved Mary: "*God preserved from original sin a maiden*"; He could have accomplished this in many ways. The role of the devil is purely conjectural, incidental. Rosmini advances his own theory about the incorruption of the seed from which Mary was conceived, incorruption due ultimately to God's eternal plan to save humanity from the snares of the devil. Rosmini's critics failed to notice Rosmini's total stress on God's mysterious activity; they concentrated instead on a quite acceptable exegetical interpretation, one among many.

#### **4- Conclusion**

This is the first of the theological works of Rosmini to be published in the English language. The translation of the two volumes of the *Supernatural Anthropology* is well under way, and we hope to be able to complete it by the end of the year.

Scholars and the general public will find the present work well worth reading. Thanks to the Church, the lamp is now on the lamp-stand, ready to give light to the seekers of truth, and to

those who wish to approach the study of theological, philosophical, ascetical issues from a very challenging, profound, original stand. There is no doubt that Rosmini's views on the Eucharistic life, on the dynamism of the mystical Body of Christ, on the centrality of Christ, and on the operations of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in creating, redeeming, sanctifying humanity break new theological ground, solidly based on the Scriptures, on the Fathers of the Church, and on the Magisterium of the Church. The *Commentary* is a book for our times.

A Belsito IC  
Mansfield, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019  
Feast of the Annunciation

Stresa 18<sup>th</sup> October 1839

## Reading I

*[The first two Readings provide an Introduction to the Commentary, and deal with the title, the author, the composition, and the date at which the Fourth Gospel was written. Rosmini shows himself fully aware of the biblical studies of his time, and his knowledge of the writings of the Fathers on the subject is quite impressive].*

### *The Holy Gospel (1) of JESUS (2) Christ (3) According to John (4)*

**I** - *In the beginning (5) was the Word (6), and the Word was with God (7) and the Word was God (8)*

- 1) It is not the Gospel of St. John, but the Gospel of JESUS Christ according to John, because it was JESUS Christ who brought the good news to men (εὐ-αγγέλιον, *good news*).
- 2) ישע Saviour, an abbreviation of יהושע which means ὁ κύριος σωτηρία, *the Lord is salvation*.
- 3) Χριστός, *anointed of God the Father*, that is, consecrated King and Priest 'He who the Father consecrated (that is, the victim consecrated for the sacrifice) and sent into the world' (Jn. 10: 36).



## Reading 2

**II – 4)** John, ܝܚܢܝ *grace, or gift, or mercy of the Lord*; or in Greek: *θεόδωρος* gift of God, was the son of Zebedee and Salome from Bethsaida (Matt 27: 56; Mark 15: 40) in Galilee, called by Christ to the Apostolate at the age of 25 or 26 (*St. Jerome, The Gospel of St. John, I. 14,1; Letter 53 to Paulinus, and Letter 41 to the monk Rufinus*). He was at first a follower of John the Baptist (*St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John, Homily II; and Epiphanius: Against 80 Heresies, Her. 51*) a celibate, beloved of Christ and with his brother James the Greater, called by Christ *Βοανεργές* (Siriatic), *sons of thunder* (Mark 3: 17). In 98AD, and apparently when he was 95 years old, 65 years after our Lord's Ascension, the first of Trajan, he, being the last of the Evangelists, undertook to write his Gospel at Ephesus<sup>1</sup> in Greek, which was common then in Palestine (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews, 18, 20*).

His disciples, the Bishops, and the Churches of Asia (Epiphanius, *Heresy 51, 12*) asked him to do this in order to oppose Cerinthus and Ebion who denied the divinity of the Word (Eusebius of Caesarea, quoting Clement of Alexandria, in his *Ecclesiastical History, 6, 14*; Jerome, in his *De Viris Illustribus*, and in the *Prologue to the Four Gospels*), and to supply what the other Evangelists had omitted. St. Jerome says: *'They say that*

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<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies, III, 1*; Epiphanius, *Heresies, 51*; Victorinus Pictavensis, *Apocalypse*; Various Authors, in *Old and New Testament, 72, to be found in the works of St. Augustine; Sanctum Evangelium secundum Iohannem, in Biblia Polyglottae, Novum Iesu Christi Testamentum*; Theophylactus, *Prologue to the Gospel of John*. Some Greek Manuscripts have the Gospel of St. John written under the Emperor Domitian, others under that of Trajan; some assign it to 30 years after the Ascension of our Lord, others to 31, others to 32. (See *Manuscripti Plures ad calcem Ev. Iohann. Vid. Mill.post. 121; John in Theophylactus*).

The following have it already written at Patmos: Athanasius, *In Synopsis*; Author Unknown, Homily 1, in the Commentary on St. Matthew, in the Works of St. John Chrysostom; Hippolytus, Ms. In Biblioth. Bodl. Dorothe. Theophil. Euthychius; Mss. Plures apud Mill. note in c. XXI, 25, Suidas. Gregory of Tours (*De Gloria Beatorum Martyrum XXX*) adds that in his time [538AD – 594AD] people were shown the place where St. John had written his Gospel on a mountain near Ephesus.

John, having read the volumes of Matthew, Mark and Luke, approved the text and confirmed that what they said was true. But they dealt simply with the story of a year, that in which Christ suffered. So, he did not bother with this year's events related by the other three. He related those of the time preceding this, before John was put in prison' (St. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3, 4; Clement of Alexandria, quoted by Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*, 6, 3, 14; Epiphanius, *Heresies* 51; Theodore of Mopsuestia, In *Cathena Graeca in ead, cat. Anonym.*). There was fasting and public prayers before John began to write: "Et post altam divinarum rerum contemplationem in ipso adhuc colloquii cum Domino calore prima Evangelii sui verba pronunciavit" ['And after thinking deeply on the divine things known from conversation with the Lord and hitherto kept to himself, he eagerly spoke the first words of his Gospel'] (Jerome, *Prologue in Matthew*; Chrysostom, *Homily* 67; Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici* IC; Paulinus, *Epistola* 24; Epiphanius, *Heresies* 73, 7; Augustine, *Sermones*, 135, 8).

Among the errors of the German Biblical scholars there is the one which denied the authenticity of the first three Gospels, which, they say, came from an oral tradition and from one defective primitive Gospel; but they hold John's as the most authentic. (V. Gieseler, *Ueber die Entstehung und die fruhesten Schicksale der schriftlichen Evangelien*; Eichorn, *Einleitung in das N. T.*, t. I, s. 422ff, 453ff; De Wette, *Biblische Dogmatik* 226, 2nd edition). Only Bretschneider (*Probabilia de Evangelii et Epistolarum Jo. Ap. Indole et origine*, Lipsiae 1820) and a few others<sup>2</sup> have the impiety even to doubt whether John is the author of the fourth Gospel.<sup>3</sup> The first mention of this Gospel as

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<sup>2</sup> Vogelius. *Der Evangelist Johannes und seine Ausleger vor dem jungsten Gericht* 1801; Horstius: *Lasst sich die Aechth. Des Johannes Evang. aus Hinlangt Grund. bezweifeln, und welch. ist der wahrscheinl. Urspr. dies Schr?* In the Museum fur Religionswiss. di Henkio, t.I. page 47 and ff.

<sup>3</sup> Bretschneider was refuted by the unorthodox themselves. Schott. *Examinantur dubitationes quaedam de authentia Evangelii Jo. Nuperrime ex prioribus IV Capp. Excitatae*, Senae 1820 - Kaiser, *De Apologeticis Evangelii Johannis consiliis authentiam ejus commonstrantibus*, Erlang. P. 1. 1821, P. 2, 1824, in 4<sup>th</sup>. Olhausen, *Die Aechtheit d. vier canonischen Evangelien*, Konigsb. 1825. Usteri *Commentatio critica in qua Ev. Joann genuinum esse*

the Gospel of John, as far as I know, is found in a passage of Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autolico*, 2) towards the year 172 (see the passages of the early Fathers who mention this Gospel, in De Wette, *Einleitung in d. N. T.*, 76-109). St. Epiphanius calls people who contest the authenticity of this Gospel enemies of the Word (ἄλλοιοι).<sup>4</sup> This Father also says that the Jews had made a translation into Syriac and preserved it jealously in the secret library of Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee (Epiphanius, *Haeres* 50: 3).

St. Peter of Alexandria (mentioned in *Cronicles of Alexandria*, and in *Manuscript, Fragmentum De Paschate* apud Petav. et Usser) says that in his time (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century) the original of this Gospel was preserved by the Church at Ephesus and it is said that it was still there in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The same Father says that St. John made use of the service of Caius, disciple of St. Paul, when he wrote his Gospel and that this is the same person, perhaps, to whom he sent the *Third Letter* (Athanasius, in *Synopsis; Dorothei, et Cod. Ms. Seld.*). Others have said that he sent it to Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, his disciple (Anonym, *In Cat. G. Prolog.*). St Dionysius of Alexandria (apud Eusebium, *Ecclesiasticae Historiae* 7, 25) said that in the Gospel of St. John 'there is so obviously nothing uncouth or unbecoming, much less anything low and coarse, that it appears that God had given him not only light and knowledge but also the gift of expressing his thoughts well.'

Nevertheless, tradition says that St. John was not a cultured

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*ex comparatis IV Evangeliorum narrationibus de coena ultima et passione J. C. Ostenditur*, Taurici 1823. Bengelii *Neues Archiv. Fur d. Theologiae*, t.I. Crome *Probabilia haud probabilia*, ecc Leiden e Leipz 1824. The arguments of Vogel and Horsth, which Giorgio Rosenmuller calls weak, were weakened by Fr. Giul. Schleker in his little work *Versucheiner Widerligung der haupt sachlichen Einwurfe, die un der neusten zeit gegen die Aechtheit des Evangeliums Joannis gemacht sind*, Rostock 1802 - Gableri, *Neuest theol. Journal*, t. X p 35 et foll. Sustind, *Magazin fur Chr, Dogm. U. Moral.* St. 9 - Griethuysen, *Diss. pro Ev. Joann. Authentia*, Hardervici 1806 - J. F. C. Schmidt in the *Biblioth. D. neuest. theol. U. padagog t. V.* p 246 and following. See regarding these controversies among the Protestants. Kuinoelium, *Prolegg. in Evang. Joann. And, Commentar. ad N. T. libros histor. t. III* - Lucke, *Prolegg. ad Joann.* Page 13 and following.

<sup>4</sup> *Haeres*. LI; St. Augustine, *Haeres*. XXX; Irenaeus, *Adv. Gnost.*, 1. III c. II

man (Theophylactus, *Prooem in Johannem*) and this is confirmed by the statement of Grotius (*Prologus in Iohannem*) and of other modern Greeks, who find his Greek to be Jewish and Syriac in style, and rather inelegant. It is necessary however to remember that for these classical grammarians there is nothing necessary or beautiful in language and style unless it is found in the pagan classics. It did not dawn on them that St. John had to express new dogmas, new moral sentiments. To express these, the Greek classical language was too limited, and it needed to take on a new form, new words, new syntax and finally a new emphasis. So, what appears crude in St. John to the ears of finicky philologists I see as sublime and divine, surpassing all beauty of language and style used by men.

Dionysius of Alexandria rightly judged that the writings of our Evangelist are most elegant. Paulus, one of the German rationalists, not being able to understand how St. John could have remembered the long discourses of the Saviour, thought that amongst the officials of the temple and synagogues there were stenographers who gathered them together and that the Christians copied these after the death of Christ (*Comment. 4. S. 275 ff.*).

Bertholdt, another modern heretic, suggested that John had written in Aramaic the discourses he reported, immediately after having heard them from Jesus, and that the notes he took at that time helped him afterwards in compiling his Gospel (*Verosimilia de origine Evangelii Joannis*, opusc. p. 1 and ff.; and *Einleit. in das N. T. S. 1302 ff.* - Wegscheider agrees with this, see *Einl. in Evang. Joann. S. 270.* - Tholuck does not believe that one should exclude the addition of earlier material, *Comm. S. 38*; see also Hugo, 2. 263 ff.); and this appears to have support in the customs of the disciples of the rabbis. But without stating that these conjectures are false it is necessary to observe two facts:

1<sup>st</sup> that to put limits on St. John's memory is a completely gratuitous thing to do. There are so many examples of very retentive memories in antiquity and we believe the poems of Homer to have been handed down from one generation to the next by memory (Josephus, *Contra Apionem*). We know how

words of great import remain, as if carved in marble in the mind of a man of great sensitivity. And who knows how deeply the words of JESUS Christ were impressed on the heart of His beloved disciple, a heart formed by God Himself with a view to being suitable and worthy for the school of such an excellent Master?

2<sup>nd</sup> for all those who believe in the words of Christ, the fact of the Holy Evangelist being able to remember faithfully the long discourses of his Divine Master has been explained primarily by Christ Himself. Christ foresaw in His wisdom that long after His time men would doubt the accuracy of what the Apostles would tell them about His sayings.

Therefore, not least for the consolation of the Apostles and to confirm the faith of those who should believe in them, He said in advance: *'But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all [things] that I have said to you.'* (Jn. 14: 26) But they will object that facts are different from words; and Christ here promises that the Spirit will remind them of the *facts* which He had said to them, He did not say the *words*. We reply that this cannot be denied, and therefore I will say that there is nothing untruthful in saying that the holy writers used words, a language and style of their own. But this must be understood in such a way that it will not contradict the words of Christ, who says that *all things* that He Himself had told them will be recalled to them by the Holy Spirit.

Now we know how close the connection between words and things is, not only words but also their meaning, syntax, syllables, letters. Christ Himself had said that not even one *dot* or even an *iota* which is the least letter of the Jewish alphabet will disappear from the law until its purpose is achieved. (Matt 5: 18). There are, then, even dots and iotas which signify things and if these come from God in the Old Law how much more so in the Gospel.

Whoever wishes to presume that some words, or style, or phrase or sentence did not actually come from the mouth of Christ precisely as it stands, must however hold that the substance of

it came from the mouth of JESUS; and that the new forms, in which it is clothed, in no way affect the truth of what He said. To say that the same divine thing can be signified by words in two different ways both of which are divine, is not absurd. If one of the two ways did not express all that was expressed by the other, it would be sufficient that all that was expressed was contained in the other, and that which is not expressed neither changes nor alters that which is expressed, nothing human being added. Certainly, one cannot say that the Evangelists have expressed all that Christ said; but one can say that all the Evangelists expressed was said by Christ even to the value of a dot and iota.

This is valid also for the variant readings which are found in the various codices. Those which the Church has not rejected or those which cannot be judged erroneous are therefore to be accepted; these are permitted by God who has placed a limit with his Providence; and when of two readings the truth cannot be decided, one has to say that both contain the truth though one may contain more of it than the other.

# Book 1

## On the Eternal Generation of the Word

### Reading 3

*[In Readings 3-4, the expression, “In the beginning” is explained in its deeper meaning. The eternal Word was present at the first moment, in the beginning, when creatures came to be, and, with them, time].*

**III** - In his Gospel, John primarily highlights the divinity of JESUS, which is symbolised by an eagle in the vision of Ezekiel (St. Jerome to Paulino, *Ep.* 24; St. Augustine book 36, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*; Origen, *In Evangelium Iohannis*, etc.); for this reason, we also give the Evangelist the eagle as his symbol. He expresses the aim of his Gospel in these words: ‘*These are written that you may believe that JESUS is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.*’ (Jn. 20: 31)

*‘In the beginning was the Word’*

5) In these words: ‘*In the beginning was the Word*’, the word *beginning* could be understood of the Father who is the beginning of the Word, as some Fathers understood it,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Cohortatio ad Gentes*; Origen, in *Joann. Tract* 1; Cyril, *In Joann* 1 I c. I; Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. ad Simplicium*; Aug., *De Trinit.*, VI II; Theophilus of Antioch, A11., 1 IV; Idacus, *Contra Varimadum*, I, III; etc. - St Athanasius explains the word *in principio* as meaning *in God* (*Orat. contra Arianos*), also he thinks that Origen could be understood in this way (*in*

notwithstanding the fact that the word ‘*was*’ expresses the present in the past (ἦν). The word ‘*was*’ indicates, in fact, such a relation of time that it would not have been used if the word *beginning* was meant to indicate the Father. The words would have been ‘*the Word is in the Father*’ not ‘*the Word was in the Father*’, as if He had ceased to be in the Father.<sup>6</sup> These words then, ‘*in the beginning was the Word*’, mean that the Word existed *before* the world;<sup>7</sup> an expression also used by Holy Scriptures, as where Christ Himself said: ‘*To behold my glory which You have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world*’ (Jn. 17: 24), and also in the *Book of Proverbs*, which has Wisdom saying: ‘*The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work*’ (here too we have the present in the past: *possessed me*) and, as if to explain this *beginning* of his work, there is added ‘*before the beginning of the earth*’ (Prov. 8: 22, 23).

What, then, is this beginning? It is that first moment in which creatures came to be, and with them time began. Genesis says: ‘*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*’ (Gen 1. 1) If God created heaven and earth in the beginning this signifies that He did not create them successively, but created them in an instant, since otherwise He would not have created everything in the beginning. The beginning, then, of which we are talking, is the beginning of created things; and therefore, since time is only a relation that these things have among

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*Joann.* 1, 1, c. 1). Other Fathers for *principio* understand eternity as that from which all things begin as well as our thoughts (Greg. of Naz., *De Filio orat.* II; Ambrose, *De Incarn. Domini Sacram.*, III; Basil, *Hom.* I. h. I; Chrysostom, in *Joann. Hom* II; Nonno, the poet; Severus of Antioch, *Orat.* XVI cit. from the Greek Cat. In *John*; Theophylactus, in *h.1*; Euthim, in *h.1*. And certainly, in the beginning of things there were not yet any things, not even time: so, eternity can be understood as the principle of time and the world.

<sup>6</sup> In confirmation of this interpretation it should be considered that the relationship of the Word with the Father is expressed afterwards by the Evangelist when he says: ‘*Et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Hoc erat in principio apud Deum*’ [and the Word was with God. He was in the beginning with God]; where if he had wished to mean by ‘*in the beginning*’ the Father, he would have said *Hoc erat in principio et apud Deum*, ‘that is, in *Patre et apud Patrem* [in the Father and with the Father].’

<sup>7</sup> St. Hilar. *De Trinit.* I, II - St Aug. in *h.1* and in *Quaestionum ex utroque Testam.*, 122; Bede in *h.1*.



themselves, for this reason the beginning of them is the beginning of time. The Word, then, already was in the beginning of time, and so was before time, which means, was in eternity.<sup>8</sup> This is explained by the Scriptures themselves which use these three expressions: ‘*in the beginning was*’ - ‘*before the foundation of the world was*’ - ‘*from eternity was*’ synonymously or such that one of them explains the others. So, we see all three used freely in the passage we have cited from Proverbs: ‘*the Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways*’: here is the first expression; ‘*before he made anything*’: this is the second expression; ‘*everything was ordered from eternity*’: this is the third which best explains the preceding ones. It is also the most exact: since in the first two the same idea is expressed, but in a way adapted to the capacity of the ordinary person, who could not reach a concept of eternity which is so pure that it is entirely free from any relation with time.

In fact, when one says that the Word ‘*was before time*’ or that ‘*He already was when time began*’, one seems to place a time before time, which would not be exact, moreover it would be absurd. In fact, eternity is not *before time* but is *without time*, and it does not cease to be because there is time, since it has nothing to do with time; it has no relationship with it. And yet these expressions are used by Scripture which wishes to

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<sup>8</sup> St. Thomas observes that, “Signanter Joannes, ubicumque ponit aliquid aeternum, dicit ERAT; ubi vero dicit aliquid temporale, dicit FUIT” [‘*Significantly John, whenever he mentions something eternal, says “erat” [was]; where he mentions something temporal, he says “fuit” [was]*’ (In Jo., lect 1). Before St. Thomas’s time the Fathers observed that the word “erat” [was] here signified eternity, and for this reason was suitably used by St. John in preference to the word “fuit” [was] (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 3; St. Basil in h. 1; St. Cyril, *In Joann.*, c. 1. I. 1; Severus of Antioch, *In Greek Cat.*; Bede, in h. 1.; Alcuin, in h. 1.; Theophilus, in h. 1.; Elius of Crete (*Com. in Orat. de Theolog. Greg. Naz.*) observes that this time “erat” is substantive, or so to speak, υποστατικῶν, not signifying that it is this or that thing, but simply that it is, which is proper to God. Hence the Council of Nicea used this passage of St. John ‘*In the beginning “erat” [was] the Word*’, to refute the Arians who said there had been a time when the Son of God was not. St. Ambrose made use of the same argument later where he wrote against the heretics: “*In the beginning “erat” [was] the Word and the Word “erat” [was] with God, and God “erat” [was] the Word; he “erat” [was] in the beginning with God. Erat, Erat, Erat, Erat, here are four “erat”; where does the impious man find what erat [was] not?* (De fide ad Gratianum, l. I c. V).

communicate its truths to all men. But one cannot say that these expressions do not impress the idea of eternity on the mind; on the contrary they impress it in a most easy way for mankind in general. They impress it in this way. The expression '*before things were*' from the very outset does not put people off and is accepted by the mind without suspicion or fear that it might require intense reasoning to understand it. But once received by their minds, it brings in the germ of truth; they are convinced that this expression signifies a true idea being used by an infallible authority.

It is precisely at this point that the internal and most useful work of the mind begins. The mind separates among the ideas comprised in this expression all those which are accessories, and which do not stand up to a rigorous examination, and it retains the principal and only truth, purified from what is simply a defect of speaking (since Scripture itself uses expressions which are familiar among men, it uses human language). It finds the pure idea, the impressing of which is the aim of the sacred writer or rather the Spirit who directs him.

This is precisely what happens with the expression '*before things were*' which means '*before time was*'. That *before*, in language, commonly expresses a relationship of time, that is, a point in time to which another refers which is expressed by the adverb *after*. The word *before* truly means this when its correlative *after* signifies a point, a part of time. But in our case when we say '*before time*' or '*before the beginning of time*' the word *before* has not for its correlative a part or moment taken in the spectrum of time, but has for its correlative in this case the whole of time itself; so it cannot signify a point of time, since every point of time is in time; but it signifies '*outside time*', and it means a state in which time does not enter, not even an instant of it: and this state is eternity. So human minds are forced to interpret the word *before* in the phrase above-mentioned in the right context, because it would be absurd to give it any other meaning.

## Reading 4

**IV** - We see that the Old Testament begins with the words '*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*', and that the Gospel of St. John, which, as regards the intrinsic order of ideas, must be placed at the head of the New Testament, begins: '*In the beginning was the Word*'. God the Creator (knowledge of Him, His worship) is the principle of the Old Law; the Word Incarnate (knowledge of Him, imitation of Him, and worship) is the principle of the New Law.

**V** - By comparing these two passages, one can penetrate deeply into the meaning of the words '*in the beginning*', provided that one paraphrases the first words of St. John as follows: 'In the beginning, in which God created the heavens and earth, the Word already was'. But, in which beginning did God create heaven and earth? Surely in the beginning of things, in the beginning of time.

However, we encounter here a difficulty, and it is precisely by means of such difficulties - since the Lord gives us the gift to unravel them - that the light of truth is brought to our minds. The difficulty is this: "God acts in eternity and not in time; creation then, this act of God, could not be performed in any instant of time, not even in the first instant; and indeed the first instant, with all those which came afterwards, had to be produced or better co-produced with the act of God creating and not be some form of this act".

We must consider that eternity is really something exempt from time, which is simply the object of the eternal act of God. Therefore, we must not really believe that the eternal act, by which God created everything, began at a certain time infinitely removed from the point, in which things, the effect of this act, began to exist. If we thought this we would fall back into the absurdity that before time, there was another series or infinitely long time. If the act of God had had to wait for an infinite time before its object, the world, came really to exist, it would never have had its effect, because infinite time never ends. We must say, therefore, that the act of creation and its effect are inseparable and not divided by any time: with this difference

only, that that act is eternal, that is to say, of a nature completely exempt from the law of time; whereas its effect, at least the sensible world, is such that one of its forms and laws is time, created with the world in such a way as limitations are made together with the things in which they are inherent. This is what the sacred text is saying: '*God created the world in the beginning*': every thought of distance between the world and the act of God creating is excluded.

But if the act of God creating is conjoined with the world He creates without any distance of time, and with time which is a form of this created world, why is this act said to be performed in the beginning of time rather than at any other instant, since that act had the same relation of intimate union with all instants equally, without any distance, any time, any physical union of cause and effect? I reply that it is very true that this one and most simple act with which the world was created corresponds, and so to speak, coincides not only with the first instant of co-created things, but with any other whatsoever; but only in so far as that act is referred and related to the first instant is said to be *a creating act*, and in so far as it is referred to other instants is said to be *a conserving act*.

The act which creates is the same as that which conserves, but its effects are twofold; these are precisely distinguished in creatures by means of the succession of time, because the effect is clothed, as we have said, with time. If then, the world is considered in its first instant of its existence it is said to be *created*; if one considers it at other successive instants it is said to be *conserved*. The one act of the Creator, who both creates and conserves, is given two relations implied in the two names: it is called *creating*, in its relation with the world in its first instant of existence, it is called *conserving*, in its relation with the world in the following instants. Moses wished to express the effect of creation and not that of conservation and had of necessity to write that God '*created heaven and earth in the first instant*'.

**VI** - But if the creating act is eternal and yet created things in their first instant are conjoined with that act without any distance or separated by time, how does it happen that St. John

says that the Word already was, before things began: *'In the beginning was the Word'*? I reply that this would be very difficult if the words of St. John had to refer to the act of creation; but they simply mean that the Word was before the beginning of the world. *'In the beginning of things, the Word already was'* which means, as we have seen, that the Word is outside time, is eternal.

In order to understand this more clearly, let us consider that we are not comparing the act producing the Word with the act producing the world; but we are comparing the Word produced with the world produced and we are saying that the former is before the latter, which means that the Word is wholly outside time which is a condition and characteristic of the world. We thus see that just as the same divine act, which makes things exist, is intimately united to them equally in every instant; so, the divine act by which the Word exists is intimately united to the Word in eternity.

If the act by which the Word exists is eternal, the Word also remains in eternity. The Word, therefore, remains in that act and so there can be no real difference between the act which produces Him (generation) and He who is produced. One must say, therefore, that the Word is Himself both this very act and the act of the Father, which we then consider under two respects: one, as producing, calling it under this respect, *generation* and the other as produced, calling it under this respect *generated*, or Word. We do this because of our imperfect way of thinking. For the rest, it does not appear difficult even to understand that an act made in eternity has no term distinct from itself, but it is itself its proper term.

For the same reason, then, that the Word, by remaining in the act which produces Him is identical with this act, for the same reason, I say, the creating act is identical with the generating act, neither of them leaving their most simple principle from eternity. Thus, St. Paul says that the Word *'upholds the universe by his word of power'* (Heb. 1: 3), that is, with Himself; and hence also the famous saying of St. Anselm that God *"uno eodemque (Verbo) dicit se ipsum et quaecumque fecit"* [*'by one and the same (Word) pronounces himself and whatever he does'*]

(Monologium, 32).

## Reading 5

*[The Father generates the Word and creates the world with an identical act. The Word as the Exemplar of the world].*

**VII** - Here is yet another matter to consider. God generates the Word and creates the world with an identical eternal act and yet the Word is distinct from the world, because the Word is the divine act itself fulfilled, which remains always within the divine essence, whereas the world is a term of that act, which is distinct from the divine essence. Nonetheless, the world has a relation of analogy with the Word, because it finds in Him its Exemplar. It is true that the Word is not solely the exemplar of the world but is “*the image of the substance of God*”.<sup>9</sup>

It is this same substance, in so far as it is light or truth, and the world finds in it its exemplar, as mud takes its value from the concept of the value of the diamond. However, the divine Word can be considered by our mind (which conceives divine things as capable of being divided by abstraction) under two aspects: either in Himself as *Being manifested to Himself*, the Word; or as the *Exemplar* of the World and eminently such. If, then, the Word as such, that is, the Word conceived by us from the first point of view is compared with the world, we say that He was before it, to express that the former is in eternity and the latter is in time. But if one compares the Word with the world under the second aspect, that is, as Exemplar of the world, then when we say that He was before the world, we express simply the

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<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 1. 3. In this place the Apostle calls the Word ‘the splendour of his glory and the figure of his substance’ and appears to recall the well-known passage of Wisdom 7: 25-26 where the Word is said to be ‘the breath of the power of God and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her, for she is a reflection of the eternal light, untarnished mirror of God’s active power, and image of his goodness’.

relation which the Exemplar has with its copy. Now, in human operations this relationship consists in a priority and posteriority of time, because the sculptor first conceives the idea of the statue, the exemplar of it, and afterwards carves the statue which is the copy of the exemplar. On the other hand, in the simple idea of exemplar and copy this relation of time is not included, it is not absurd to imagine that two things, both the copy and exemplar, co-exist simultaneously.

Nevertheless the copy always depends on the exemplar, in such a way that the exemplar has logical priority over the copy, as the cause has logical priority with respect to the effect, and the father with respect to his son; these are relative terms, so that there can be neither cause nor father unless there is effect and son, the existence of which is intimately connected with causality and generation, and these with the caused and the generated. So, when we wish to explain John's words, "*In the beginning was the Word*" by considering the Word as the Exemplar of the World, we must say that in stating that the Word exists before the world, they express the relationship of logical priority which stands between the Exemplar and the thing exemplified.

It is about this relationship with the world that the Word is mentioned particularly in the Proverbs of Solomon (8: 23-31): '*Ages ago I was set up (when the Word was generated, the world was ordered, order is essential to the Word, not to the world), 'at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth' (here is the exemplar, the concept of the depths logically prior to them); 'when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth; before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first elements of the world' (Here is the exemplar, the idea of springs, mountains, hills, rivers, elements of the world, logically prior to all these things: this Exemplar was born from the womb of God, showing that it is not really different from the divine Son). 'When he established the heavens, I was there' (here the Exemplar is shown to be contemporaneous, co-existent with the act of God creating) 'when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his*

*command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him like a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men’.*

This passage indicates that in the act by which God made things and governed events of all time from eternity, the *idea* of things and of events was with Him; He saw things in His Word and through His Word, and seeing them, He created them. And since things are distributed through time, the passage says that Divine Wisdom was in God’s presence day after day because His eternal act is related to all time, and God is glorified in His own activity. This Wisdom which is related to the world (and which God possesses in his Word to whom the act of creating is related as the artificer relates his work to his concept) is that in which men share, hence the words ‘*delighting in the sons of men*’. And because this communicable wisdom is pre-eminently in the Word, for this reason St. John says that the Word ‘*enlightens every man coming into the world*’.

## Reading 6

*[Why the Evangelist said, “the Word”, and not “the Word of God”]*

**VIII** - The following words deserve our attention. The Evangelist says: ‘*In the beginning was the Word*’, and not ‘*In the beginning was the Word of God*.’<sup>10</sup> To say ‘*the Word*’ without anything else is to speak absolutely; it means ‘*that which is the Word absolutely*’ the Word *per se*, the state of being the Word and nothing else, that which is the Word through its own essence, or whose essence is to be the Word. A word which is uttered is not simply a word, but it is also a sound; a thought, a human assertion is not simply an utterance, but an utterance determined and limited to what is uttered with it.

To say that ‘*the Word was*’ means that the Word, as such, was

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<sup>10</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia had already proposed this question, as we see from the *Catena Graeca*.



complete being; because a thing *is* in so far as it is being. If the Word had not been complete being from the beginning, we could not say absolutely and simply that it was from the beginning. This manner of speaking shows that being, strictly, belongs to it or that its essence is the act of being; therefore, it is God, because God's essence is being.

By means of such an absolute expression, '*the Word*', we distinguish the Divine Word from every other word which needs signifying by something added to it, some epithet, because the latter is not a word *per se* but by analogy with *the Word*, and it is not purely word but something else as well; it is not *the Word* which is complete being because existence belongs to it absolutely, it is not *the Word* without limits, which would take away from it the character of being Word, because in so far as a given word omits pronouncing something, it is not a word. Hence in order that it be purely and fully Word, it is necessary to pronounce everything without excluding anything: and much less did any other word exist from the beginning. If that Word which was at the beginning is the Word *per se*, every word is such through participation in Him. We must now see how this is so.

In order that the Word may be purely and completely Word, He must utter everything, because if He did not, there would be, as a consequence, two elements, that is, the word and its limits, and so it would not be simply word; nor would it be completely *the Word*, because in so far as it does not utter, it would not be *the Word*. Now every other word can only be a repetition of what has already been uttered. Everything has been uttered: this 'everything' is then uttered bit by bit by other words which simply repeat the first in an imperfect way, and for this reason they are not words in the absolute sense but only by participation. And certainly, an intelligent being can only utter what is *utterable*. But what makes a thing utterable? Everything in potency must be reduced to a thing in act; nothing then would be utterable if it were not already uttered by the primeval Word. This primeval Word is what makes things utterable and that in which the possibility of all utterable, partial, accidental, future things is founded. These, by repeating the first, share in it. Finite intelligences, therefore, have their ontological

possibility in the eternal Word.

*Naples 26 January 1849*

St. Thomas Aquinas gives the same reason why our Evangelist in this passage says ‘Word’ absolutely and not ‘Word of God’. ‘Although’, he says, ‘*there are many shared truths, yet absolute Truth is one. This is Truth by reason of its essence, that is, it is the Divine Being itself. It is through this Truth that every word is a word. In the same way, there is an absolute Wisdom pre-eminent above all things, through sharing in which all wise men are wise; and there is only one Absolute word through sharing in which all who use words are called speakers. Now it is the Divine Word which is the Word per se pre-eminent above all things. The Evangelist, then, in order to show this pre-eminence of the Divine Word gives us this Word without adding anything else*’.<sup>11</sup> This seems to be the reason why the Evangelist is not content with saying λόγον but says τὸν λόγον, *the Word*, distinguishing it in this way from any other utterances, as St. John Chrysostom<sup>12</sup> and Theophylactus have observed.<sup>13</sup>

## Reading 7

*[Error of the Platonists who believed that the Word of God was simply the idea of the world].*

**IX** – 6) *Word, Verbum, λόγος* - It seems that originally the external and vocal word denoted what was sensibly experienced. Later, people realised that the external word was simply a sign that expressed an internal thing, an object pronounced by the mind. So, to designate this internal signified thing, instead of giving it a proper name, they used the same expression which signified

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<sup>11</sup> *In John* c.1. Lect. 1

<sup>12</sup> *Hom.* 3

<sup>13</sup> *In h.* 1.

the external *word*, leaving it to the context to clarify when it was necessary to give this expression the ancient signification of *word* to signify the sound uttered with the vocal organs and when it was necessary to give it the new signification of the internal thing signified in the spirit.

This way of extending the signification of old words, little by little, as man extends his cognitions, is more convenient than inventing new words because it requires less mental energy and is adapted to the whole human community. Furthermore, new ideas or cognitions thus retain their relations with preceding ideas or cognitions from which they are derived and so are known better and are used more easily in reasoning; since the connections between them and the more ancient and more familiar notions are present. It is only later, when the mind has already developed and has no further need of such props, that it invents new and particular words for those cognitions which are no longer new. Or else, old words which were common, now become proper, losing their original significance and retaining only the new one.

St. Augustine, in order to make the meaning of this expression: '*Word of God*' understood to his people, began by distinguishing in man the external word from the internal word signified by the former. Then he showed that this interior word preceded the external works of man. '*Because,*' he says, '*before you construct some building, before you begin some big undertaking, the mind generates the plan; the plan is already conceived, and the work is not yet realised; you see clearly what ought to be done, but others do not see this until you have made and constructed the building. When you have built and perfected it, men look at the magnificent building and admire the plan of the architect. They are amazed at what they see and they like what they do not see, for who can see the plan?*'

In this way, St. Augustine makes it clear that the interior word, the plan, is known to men by means of the external actuation of this word, of this plan. He bids his hearers know in some way the word of God, the plan of God, from the external works of creation saying: '*If then at the sight of some great building men praise the human plan, do you wish to see the greatness of God's*

*plan, which is our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, the Word of God? Consider the splendid fabric of this world; see what things are made through the Word, and then you will acknowledge the greatness of the Word. Consider these two parts of the world, the sky and the earth; who can explain in words the splendour of the heavens, and the fruitfulness of the earth? Who can worthily praise the succession of the seasons, and the life-giving power of the seeds? I will not mention many other examples for fear that I may say less than you yourselves are able to think. From this immense fabric of the universe, then, consider what the Word is, through which it has been made; consider also other things which have been made by the Word. All the above-mentioned things are seen, they pertain to the bodily senses. However, made through the Word are also Angels, Archangels, Powers, Thrones, Dominations, and Principalities; all things have been made through the Word, so consider at this point what that Word is' (St. Augustine, *In Evangelium Ioannis Expositio*, Tract. 1: 10).*

In this passage of St. Augustine, we can clearly see a light touch of Platonism clarified by him in other passages and especially in his great work on the Trinity. Indeed, for the Platonists the Word of God was the idea of the world, of the intelligible world as they called it sometimes. This concept of the Word which the Platonists had is not that of St. John, who, on the contrary, wrote his Gospel to refute those errors which had been deduced for the most part from the Platonism of Cerinthus (Jerome. *De Script. Eccles. Id. Proem in Matt.* - Iren. 3: 11 - *Id.* 1: 25 - Tertullian, *De Praescriptionibus*), and Ebion (Epiphanius, *Haeres.* 30 - Irenaeus, 3: 11). A little later there were also the Gnostics, who, although they seem to have taken up this name under the Emperor Hadrian (John being already dead), nevertheless existed with their errors before this, as is related by St. Irenaeus (50: 3, c. 11 - Epiphanius, *Haeres.* 26: 27). Yet there were some Platonists who, not correctly understanding how superior the teaching of St. John was to theirs, seeing his profound reasoning about the Word of God, an expression which they also used, highly commended the beginning of the Gospel of St. John. One of them said that this beginning merited to be written in gold letters on the facade of all the churches (Aug., *De C.D.10:29, ex Simplic. Mediolan. Ep.*). In the same way many other Platonists, among them Amelios, who lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup>

century, never ceased admiring and praising the beginning of the Gospel of John (Eusebius, *Praepar. E.*, 11: 29 - Cyril of Alexandria *in Jul.* 8).

It cannot be denied that Plato, at least in some passages, attributed creation to the Word of God, Λόγος, (In *Timaeus* and *Epinomis* - see the notes of Le Clerc on the first verses of St. John). The Stoics equally use the Λόγος of God to explain creation against the Epicureans who attributed everything to blind chance (Laertius, 7 - Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 21). Philo speaks also of an intelligible world prior to the present one, an exemplar in the mind of God, from which God drew all created things and which he also calls the Λόγος (Philo, *De Opif. Mundi* - *Id.*, *De Allegor.* 50, 2 - *Id.* 50, *Quis rerum divinarum haeres* - *Id.* *De Sommis. et aliis*). It would not be too difficult to find some passages in the Platonists, who flourished after the coming of Jesus Christ, in which they say that *the logos of God is God*; but, rather than being passages expressing their system, these are only fleeting passages of the authors due to their enthusiasm and they are not consistent with their principles.

## Reading 8

*[Idea and word in the human mind: essence and subsistence of  
contingent beings]*

*Naples, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1849*

**X** - '*In the beginning was the Word*'. It is still necessary that we continue to reflect and inquire more in depth into what the Word is, the divine Word, the essential and absolute Word; and we cannot do this in any other way than by ascending to it from the

consideration of the human word.

It is necessary to consider that in the human mind the *idea* is one thing and the *word* is another. Man, with this idea knows the *essence* of the things but not their *subsistence*. For example, when we have the idea of an animal, we know what an animal is, but we do not yet know, by this alone, whether an animal subsists. We only know that an animal subsists if we have *affirmed* within ourselves that it subsists. The act of affirmation is a pronouncement, a judgement, a word of the mind.

If we compare the *idea* with the *word* of the human mind, we find that the *idea* is not a product of the human mind but is given to the human mind; the mind receives it, it does not create it. The idea is being itself contemplated in its essence, which is eternal and therefore above man. On the other hand, the word, that is the *affirmation*, is an act of the mind itself, and the subsistence, in so far as it is *affirmed* or *pronounced* is a product of the mind; so St. Thomas says that: '*De ratione intelligendi est quod intellectus intelligendo aliquid formet; huius autem formatio dicitur verbum*' [‘In every intellection the intellect, as it comes to understanding, it has to CONCEIVE (formet) something, and this conception (formatio) is what is called an interior word, or word’].<sup>14</sup>

**XI** - In the second place, it is evident that the human mind could not pronounce the word, the affirmation of subsistence, if it did not have the *idea* of the thing, if it did not know the essence of it, that is, if it did not know some more or less perfect definition of it because the essence is that which can be expressed by definition; in fact, how can we affirm anything without any knowledge whatsoever of it? This is what caused St. Thomas to say, '*Verbum semper est ratio et similitudo rei intellectae*' [‘the word is always the reason and likeness of the thing understood’].<sup>15</sup>

However, it is more exact to say that the *idea* is the *reason* of the thing which is affirmed, and in some way also the *likeness*;

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<sup>14</sup> *In Joann.* Lect 1, 66

<sup>15</sup> *In Joann.* Lect 1.

and the word must have this reason or likeness before it, so that it can be pronounced.

**XII** - Now we must look for the reason why in the human mind the *idea* and the *word* are so divided that one contemplates the idea with an act of *intuition*, and one produces the word with another act of *affirmation*. This occurs because the natural real objects of the human intelligence are finite, that is, they are contingent things. Now created things, precisely because they are contingent, do not necessarily have *subsistence*, for they can or cannot be; whereas they necessarily have essence, which cannot not be, and therefore is eternal. So, regarding these created things, *essence* is completely different from *subsistence*; they do not subsist through their own essence, but only because a free act of God has made them subsist.

Because then the essence and subsistence of contingent things are, in fact, two distinct and separate things, it follows that the human mind apprehends them with two distinct acts. One of these is *intuition*, which has essence for its term; the other one, that is, *affirmation* (preceded by feeling) has for its term the subsistence of contingent things. And it equally follows that this second act supposes the first: because we do not know the subsistence of a thing if we do not know beforehand (with logical priority) what the thing is, which is having an idea of it, knowing the essence comprised in the idea. Again, it follows that the form of cognition, what illumines the mind, is *essence*, since to know subsistence is simply to know what the essence of the thing is, which is felt and affirmed.

The subsistence, then, of contingent things is not known *per se*, but through the essence which illumines it in our mind and thus makes it knowable. But if it had a subsistence that was known *per se*, that is, was at the same time subsistence and essence, it would be in such a case a single object which could be and indeed must be known by one act of the spirit. Now such an object could not be a contingent one for the reason given but it would have to be a necessary one. Because if the essence is always necessary, this subsistence would also have to be necessary, having in itself its own essence, and forming one being with it. But such a being which is necessary both with

respect to essence and subsistence is God. God is then the only being whose subsistence is his essence.

Now if God subsists through his own essence, it follows that God is *absolute being*. Being absolutely considered, is not universal being, which is simply essence without subsistence, but it is the most real and essential Being. God, then, is the essential Being. That which is through his own essence, cannot not be, cannot not be intelligible, because essence is the intelligible part of things.

## Reading 9

*[In absolute being essence is subsistence, therefore divine subsistence is intelligible per se and understood in itself]*

**XIII** - Now if that being is *per se* intelligible in its own subsistence, if that being must be apprehended by the spirit with one act only, because in Him subsistence is at the same time essence, what is this act of the spirit with which He must be apprehended? This act cannot be a simple *intuition*, because intuition has only *essence* for its term, whereas this being is also subsistence. Is He apprehended with the *affirmation*? The affirmation supposes the distinction between essence and subsistence, because it is a judgement; it is the union which the mind makes of a predicate and a subject, a subject, however, which is not a subject before the affirmation, but which becomes such with it. Being subsisting through its essence, then, that is, God, does not apprehend Himself by an affirmation similar to the one which man makes in the perception of contingent things.

The act with which the mind apprehends absolute being, whose essence is its own subsistence, must be a third act which, although one, unites in itself all that the intuition gives and all that the affirmation gives without being precisely one thing nor



the other. This act can be called *intellectual feeling*, an expression which agrees in some way with what the theologians use when they call the perception of God, *vision*, a word taken from the sense of sight.

Except that the word *vision* which is most suitable for expressing the way in which the Saints in heaven apprehend God, supposes a distinction and a distance between the seeing subject and the object seen and so it does not seem that we can apply it to the way with which God apprehends and understands Himself; whereas the more general expression of *intellectual feeling* seems to be suitable both for the beatific vision and the act with which God comprehends Himself.

**XIV** - From another point of view, however, even the expression *intellectual feeling* is inadequate to signify the way by which God understands Himself. And indeed, if the divine subsistence is *per se* essence, then it is intelligible through itself. But, if it is *intelligible* through itself then it is also through itself *understood* to itself. Because what is intelligible is also understood as soon as it dwells in a subsistent being.

The divine essence, therefore, dwells fully in a subsistent being, because the subsistence of that being is the essence of that being; hence, this subsistence through its own essence is understood and known to itself. There is, therefore, nothing potential about this cognition, there is no faculty of knowing issuing from the act and which is distinguishable from the act; but there is simply an act which is as necessary as is the subsistence of the being of which we speak; nor is there any distinction between this act and the subsistence itself. There is only this subsistence understood through itself, *per se* light, *per se* knowledge, *per se* intellectual object, and such that the knowing act of which we treat is the same subsistence.

**XV** - Divine subsistence, then, understood through itself, has a twofold relationship: that of intelligent subject and that of object understood, but the subsistence is identical and perfectly one. But it is understood through itself in virtue of the intellectual act which makes it understood, a necessary act, because it is necessarily and essentially understood in itself. In so far, then,

that the divine subsistence is *per se* understood by itself, a subject, that is, a person, it is the Word.<sup>16</sup>

From all this, we see, firstly, how correct is the observation made by St. Augustine and St. Thomas. The latter wrote: *Verbum Dei semper est in actu; et ideo nomen cogitationis Verbo Dei proprie non convenit. Dicit enim Augustinus: 'Ita dicitur Verbum Dei, ut cogitatio non dicatur, ne quid quasi volubile creatur in Deo'* [*The Word of God is always in act and therefore the word thought does not pertain correctly to the Word. In fact, St. Augustine*<sup>17</sup> *says, 'He is properly called the Word of God, but cannot be called thought, lest it be believed that there is as it were, something revolving in God,'*<sup>18</sup> *because the word thinking signifies discursive inquiry (discursus inquisitionis) and not a complete and final utterance in the mind.*<sup>19</sup>

**XVI** - We observe, furthermore that the divine Word is not the intellective act of God but the term of that intellective act, that is the divine subsistence itself as understood; therefore, the wisdom which results from the divine intellective act is common to the whole Trinity. Yet, because the intelligent and the understood are correlatives, one can argue from the substantiality or rather from the subsistence of the first to the substantiality or subsistence of the second and under this

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**16** Maldonatus writes: *'Legi apud quemdam Filium vocari Verbum, id est realitatem, veritatem, quod est, quia hebraice, verbum, rem omnem significat'* [*I read in a certain author that the Son is called the Word i.e. REALITY, truth, that which is, because in Hebrew dabar דבר means word, reality.*' In h.1.

**17** *De Trinit.* 15: 16.

**18** *In Joann.* Lect. 1.

**19** One of the subtleties with which the Arians tried to attack the divine personality of the Word, as they tried to shield themselves from the clear evidence which can be extracted from the Gospel of St. John, was that the Word had been from eternity with God not in *actu sed potestate* (S. Athanasius, *Ep. de Sent. Dion. Alex.*). They ignored the fact that God is pure act and that there is no potentiality in him. Furthermore St. John says only of the Word that *apud Deum erat* and that *Deus erat Verbum*, not of contingent things of which he says: *omnia per ipsum facta sunt*, as he said again of the Incarnation: *et Verbum caro factum est*. He would also have had to say when the Word passed from potentiality to act; which he did not say, but instead simply said: *In principio erat Verbum*.

respect the argument of St. Thomas is pertinent. He wrote: 'In Deo autem idem est intelligere et esse; et ideo Verbum intellectus divini, non est aliquid accidens, sed pertinens ad naturam eius. Unde oportet quod sit subsistens: quia aliquid est in natura Dei, est Deus' [*But in God to understand and to exist are the same thing; and therefore, the Word of the divine intellect is not some accident but pertains to his nature. Hence it is necessary that he be subsisting because whatever is in the nature of God is God.*]<sup>20</sup> And indeed we have seen that the divine Word is the same divine subsistence as understood, the same subsistence which is at the same time intelligent *per se* and being *per se*.

## Reading 10

### *"In the beginning was the Word"*

*[The Divine Word, in as much as it is divine subsistence understood per se, includes necessarily also ideas or essences of contingent things; in the divine subsistence there is the possibility of creatures; the distinction between the logical and physical possibility of creatures].*

**XVI** - We have seen that God is absolute *being*, and therefore complete being: that He is subsistent since otherwise He would not be complete and absolute Being: that this divine subsistence is *per se* understood, and that in so far as it has this condition of being understood *per se*, it is the divine Word.

*Naples 29<sup>th</sup> January 1849*

Therefore, the whole of divine subsistence, the whole of absolute being is *per se* understood; divine subsistence comprehends itself totally, it is unceasingly, and through its essence, understood by itself. This comprehension has no limit of any sort and therefore it is simply the Word, through its essence,

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**20** *In Joann*, Lect 1.

and this Word can only be one.<sup>21</sup>

Now *being* could not be totally understood and comprehended in its own essence by itself, unless it included in this comprehension also all the modes in which real and subsistent being can be limited. But since there are no limitations in absolute being, because any limitation would cause it to cease being what it is, that is absolute in its essence, therefore the modes with which being can receive limitations, are the modes by which being can create something different from itself, outside itself, modes by which a limited being and no longer an absolute one, can exist.

The knowledge of these modes is the knowledge of things which can be created, the essences of contingent things, the pure ideas to which subsistence is not necessarily joined, but which is united through the free act of creation. Therefore, the subsistence of being comprehended by itself and through its own essence, that is the divine Word, includes necessarily also the ideas or the essences of creatable and contingent things; otherwise it would not comprehend itself perfectly if it did not comprehend those possible limitations, which would make it cease from being absolute being, from being God, and which constitute limited and relative being, created things.

**XVII** - Now the Word, in so far as it is the divine subsistence comprehending the modes in which it can be limited, united with which it is no longer divine subsistence essentially unlimited, is the *exemplar* of possible worlds, the idea of contingent things. The ideas, then, of contingent things belong to the Word, but not the contingent things themselves which do not subsist except through a free and divine operation which makes them subsist and which is called creation.

**XVIII** - But this must be clearly understood. When we speak of the modes in which the divine subsistence can be limited, this does not mean that the divine subsistence receives limitations,

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<sup>21</sup> Pure being is essentially one. Therefore, there is only one idea of which the others, or better, *concepts* are determinations more or less actuated. Ideal being is truth; whence Origen and other Fathers prove that the Word is one, from the fact that Truth and Wisdom are one.

which it cannot receive. But because it is *being*, and being can be found, in line with its concept, in two modes, that of unlimited and of limited being: unlimited and immutable being is the divine substance; limited being is the created.

In the divine subsistence, then, there is the *possibility* of created things because there is being which *can* be limited; but not the created things themselves. We find the reason why created beings can exist, since there is being which has in its concept the *possibility* of being limited. The *possibility* then of creatures is twofold, that is, *logical* and *physical*. The logical possibility is the idea, or the reason for the existence of created things; the physical possibility is the power or efficient cause for the existence of created things, which is the power of creation.

Absolute being, then, containing in its concept the idea of limited beings, or created things and also the power of positing or rendering real and subsistent this limited being manifested in the idea, has all that it needs to be creator, creator of limited being, that is, of the created being, making it real and subsistent. The divine Word, then, in so far as it is subsistence understood through itself has the idea of contingent things: in so far as it is subsistence it has the power of creating them, hence creation is proper to the divine subsistence which creates according to the ideas which it has in itself in so far as it is understood in itself, or in so far as it is the Word: and therefore creation is an operation which belongs to the whole Trinity which has identical subsistence.

## Reading 11

*[The Word as absolute subsistence per se known, and as principle of cognition of the world, or as its Exemplar; this is not a real distinction but our abstraction, a consideration of the Word itself under two respects].*

*“In the beginning was the Word”*

**XIX** - We must now see in what way the exemplar of contingent things resides in the Word. This exemplar is the intimate knowledge of the power which divine subsistence essentially has in making being in a limited mode exist. It is indeed the divine subsistence which knows intimately and through its own essence both itself and its own power.

It follows, in the first place, that the Word and the exemplar of the world are not two Words, but only one because it is always the divine subsistence which knows and totally comprehends itself; but in so far as it comprehends itself as limitable being, that is, as having in itself the possibility of limited being, it has the role of exemplar of real or limited subsistence.

It is not then a real distinction which we posit in the Word when we consider it at one time as the image of absolute subsistence, that is as absolute subsistence known to itself, and, at another time, as principle of cognition of the world, or as exemplar of it; but it is our imperfect abstraction, a view of the same Word under two respects, that is to say with respect to absolute subsistence and with respect to limited being, that is, to its possibility of subsisting as limited being, a possibility which is, however, contained in absolute subsistence, the source of its wisdom and power.

In the concept of being, then, there is an absolute subsistence and the possibility of limited subsistences. The possibility of these limited subsistences is *logical* because a mere possibility; it is contained without repugnance in the concept of being (idea of the world); and it is *physical* because it is the creative power of the divine subsistence, that is, the power which can make limited subsistence subsist, and not just remaining as a mere possibility. The relation between these two possibilities is this, that the physical possibility or the creative power precedes the logical (or ideal or cognitive) possibility.

The reason is that creative power is a real force which is contained in the depth of creative subsistence. But the divine subsistence is understood *per se* totally; hence its creative power is also *per se* understood. But it is necessary to form a correct concept of this divine potency, without confusing its

nature with the nature of human potency which changes when it passes into act; in God, in fact, there is no change nor passing from potency into act because He is pure act.

**XX** – It is important to observe that although physical possibility of finite beings in itself precedes the logical possibility of them and the latter follows from the former nevertheless these two possibilities do not have the same order in the human mind. The mind, in fact, has first the knowledge of their logical possibility and afterwards the knowledge of their physical possibility. The reason for this is that man, according to his nature, is not and has not subsistence known through itself since being known *per se* only belongs to the subsistence of God. Therefore, man needs logical possibility, that is, *ideas* in order to know finite subsistent beings which are not known through themselves; whereas the logical possibility, the ideal essence, is given to man and is known through itself. Whenever man wishes to know to what the physical possibility of being extends, he must have recourse to logical possibility, that is, he must see what is contained in the idea or concept of being, and all that is contained in it will give him the sphere of physical possibility, or of the creative power of God. Now the concept of being contains all that is not repugnant, all that does not involve contradiction, because being in its concept embraces everything except contradiction.

**XXI** - In the concept of being, then, there is an infinite and necessary subsistence and subsistences of things which are finite and possible to be realised, because the concept of finite beings is not repugnant. But if all this is found in the concept of being, then all this is in being itself otherwise it would not be in the concept, since the concept of being supposes being. In fact, the concept of being is none other than the thought, the knowledge of what is contained in being. So, infinite and necessary subsistence is contained in being and also the physical possibility of finite subsistences, that is, the power of realising them, the power which being has of subsisting in a finite way. Thus, in the concept of being we find a demonstration of the existence of God (already mentioned by St. Augustine, St. Anselm and others) as that which is the indispensable condition of the concept itself of being.

And a second consequence is that we find a demonstration of the power which divine Being must have of creating finite beings, already contained in the concept of being.

**XXII** - Finally a third consequence we deduce is that although the human mind in all its reasoning must move from the concept of being, yet we see on reflection that the concept itself of being presupposes the being from which it proceeds, that is, being as subsistent. So, the relationship which the concept of being and being have in the human mind is one thing, where the former precedes and sheds light on the latter, and another is the relationship which the two terms have in themselves, a relationship through which the concept of being proceeds from subsistent being itself known in itself.

## Reading 12

*[The special limits of contingent things come from the creative power  
belonging to divine subsistence]*

*“In the beginning was the Word”*

*Naples, ai Vergini,  
Casa de' Signori della Missione,  
31<sup>st</sup> January 1849*

**XXIII** - Let us say, once again, that in the concept of being there are three things: 1<sup>st</sup> the unlimited subsistence of being; 2<sup>nd</sup> the possibility of limited being; 3<sup>rd</sup> the power proper to unlimited subsistence to make limited being subsist.



Considering now the limits which limited being can receive, are these limits outlined in absolute subsistence in such a way as to constitute many distinct specific ideas? The answer is no, because absolute subsistence does not admit limits of any sort and it does not admit in itself any multiplicity or real distinction because it is most simple, although at the same time it is most complete.

So, infinite subsistence, the whole of being, comprehends even the possibility of finite being and the power to make it subsist. The possibility of finite being extends to all finite possible being and the power extends to being able to realise all finite possible beings; there are no limits neither to the one or to the other.

**XXIV** - From where, then, do the determinate and special limits of finite being come? From the creative power belonging to divine subsistence. This determines and prescribes them with the act by which it wills to create them.

Hence in the divine Word as such there are not contained, strictly speaking, specific and really distinct ideas of various finite beings, but there is contained solely the *possibility* of finite being, which means the universal idea of being. This idea is *subsistence manifest per se* with respect to divine subsistence as absolute and unlimited being; with respect to finite being not yet subsisting it is simply *idea*.

Now the universal idea of being is communicated to man according to his nature, but not the divine subsistence manifest *per se*; and therefore, the Word is not communicated to him, but a light coming from the Word. In this way, relative to man, being *per se* manifest is limited in such a way that man has only the idea or the simple concept of being, without the subsistence, and hence the notion of the Word and the notion of God are absent, because the Word, and God, is not limited in any way whatever.

## Reading 13

*[The final reason for the Universe is the manifestation of the glory of God and the communication of His divine perfections to creatures]*

*“In the beginning was the Word”*

**XXV** - Two questions naturally arise here. The first is: ‘The divine power proper to divine subsistence and therefore to the whole Trinity, was that which determined the special limitations that the finite being, which was to be created, must have. Now was this determination made completely freely without any reason?’ The second question is: ‘Did the divine power create the world without reason, and in a completely arbitrary fashion?’

To the first question we reply that the divine subsistence, precisely because it is essentially manifest, is most wise, and therefore it could not conceive to give existence to anything unless it were a finite being in which shone the character of the wisdom which conceived it and created it.

Now, what is the characteristic of wisdom? It is order, that is, the disposition of the plurality of things ordered for the perfect and best unity, and unity is best when it is ordered to its best end, which can only be God. The universe, then, cannot have any other final end than God, that is, the manifestation of the glory of God, which is his holiness and blessedness, in other words His perfect and absolute being, one God in three Persons.

This manifestation was a *communication* of His divine perfection to creatures. Everything must tend to this; because God loves only Himself; and finite being, not for itself, but for Himself. But besides the wisdom of this excellent end which fulfilled the whole of the work of creation in the unity of the first Being, this same wisdom had to shine out in the *way* in which the plurality of beings tended to such a unity: and this way consisted in the order with which finite beings had to be linked and interconnected among themselves with the subordination of the

series of secondary causes and with established laws so that all these beings formed one single order, one single universe.

Now, this is where another difficulty arises. In the divine subsistence there is no order other than that of the Persons, there is no multiplicity, no real distinction, so from where could God derive the law of wisdom which prescribes that interconnection of creatures and secondary causes and the stability of laws? We reply that this law is found in the divine subsistence, in so far as this divine subsistence, loving being, that is, itself, infinitely, must necessarily will to produce the greatest finite being possible with the *least* action; from which it follows that this being had to be ordered because where there is order there is more being than where there is not.<sup>22</sup> Hence the connection of beings, the subordination of causes, the stability of laws etc.

Similarly, since the divine subsistence loves itself, it had to will that finite being produced by it should obtain maximum fruit, that is, should share in the greatest possible amount of the divine nature; hence, again the necessity of order. The order then, both in the sphere of nature, and in the supernatural sphere of grace, had to be the characteristic of the wisdom impressed on the work of God.

To this, we can add a third argument, a third reason why God had to will His work to be ordered. This reason is that God did not have, nor could He have, any other exemplar than Himself, nor could finite being be other than limited and therefore subject to multiplicity. It was necessary therefore that in finite being the unity of order should shine out as much as possible, so as to imitate, as much as possible, infinite Being.

From all this teaching it follows that creation could only be one, though resulting from many parts, from many beings. The universe is one and therefore the concept of the universe is one in the divine mind. This concept is wisdom, created from eternity with the act of the creation of the world. Contingent things, therefore, are not known by God through separate ideas,

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<sup>22</sup> See St. Thomas. *Contra Gentiles* III, 77-83.

but through one idea only emerging from the act of creation, which is identified with that act itself, as we shall see presently.

## Reading 14

*[God was moved to create out of love for Himself, through which He loves absolute being and all the modes in which, though limited, being could subsist, imitating, in its own way, absolute being]*

### *“In the beginning was the Word”*

We come to the second question. “Did God choose in a purely arbitrary manner to create the world rather than not to create it, or had He a reason?”

We reply that being is loveable to God, and since God loves Himself by virtue of His essence, He loves being in all its modes. Therefore, not only does He love infinite being, but He loves the subsistence of finite being, which imitates the first as far as it can. If then He loves its subsistence, He has a reason in Himself for making it subsist, that is, for creating it. Ancient writers expressed this by saying that ‘good is of its nature diffusive’.<sup>23</sup>

Since God was moved to create out of love for Himself, through which He loves absolute being and all the modes in which, though limited, being could subsist, imitating, in its own way, absolute being, He had to make finite being subsist.

But it will be said that if this reason is correct there would not seem to be any reason why God decided to create this universe and not many others. But the objection is solved when one considers that God was limited in the quantity of creation by the laws of wisdom which imposed, as we have seen: 1<sup>st</sup> that the universe had unity in its purpose; 2<sup>nd</sup> that it had order and unity in its constitution and connections within itself; 3<sup>rd</sup> that there

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<sup>23</sup> St. Thomas. *Contra Gent.* L. 1. C. 81-88.

was subordination of cause and effects, stability of laws etc.

It must be accepted that these conditions could not be verified in a more sublime way than with that mass of creation which God has brought to subsistence; and that any other combination of possible finite beings would not have shown and confirmed those most wise laws according to which the infinite Creator operates through His nature. Now we can say that with creation He had made to subsist all that was possible to subsist, taking into account the laws of His wisdom and holiness.

It will still be objected that, in such a case, God was not free to create or not create. We reply that the liberty of God is most perfect, because his essential sanctity and wisdom do not limit His power but direct and govern it, and this is the essential perfection of divine freedom. Hence God can do only what is perfect, and has this happy moral necessity of doing it, and the perfection of the divine freedom consists precisely in this.

From these considerations it follows:

1<sup>st</sup> That although finite created being could be greater and more numerous, if one regards only the omnipotence of the Creator; nevertheless, it could not be if one regards the other attributes of wisdom and holiness, and therefore that the finite being which subsists through creation is all the finite being that could subsist, considering these attributes.

2<sup>nd</sup> That God was moved to create for sake of the love which He essentially bears for Himself; and that creation was, therefore, physically free, although morally necessary.

3<sup>rd</sup> That the divine type, or the idea of the universe is one and comprises all that God made.

4<sup>th</sup> That this type is not different in God from the act of creation through which it was made distinct and specific, remaining indistinct in the divine substance all those modes through which finite being could, if it was created more imperfectly, imitate the infinite.

5<sup>th</sup> That, finally, this type itself was not found by God because of reasoning, but that it was always present to Him, and belongs to the divine Word.

These last two propositions demand some explanation.

## Reading 15

*[The eternal act of creation of the world is the act itself of Wisdom which sees the world and makes it subsist at the same time]*

*“In the beginning was the Word”*

How the divine type of the universe is not different from the act of creation but is comprised in it, will be understood if one considers that the divine subsistence is not divided, it has no limits traced in it, and it itself is the power of making finite being subsist. So, the limits of this being are not really outlined in the divine subsistence; one has to deduce them from the divine wisdom which freely lays them down.

Now, there is no progressive discourse in the divine wisdom, but it is always complete and final; its object is always present to that free act of wisdom and intelligence. Since this finite, limited object is not found in the divine subsistence, it is necessary that it be determined by its own subsistence. This subsistence comes only with the act of creation.

So, one must say that the eternal act of creation of the world is the act itself of Wisdom which sees the subsisting world; hence it is an effective act which sees it and makes it subsist at the same time, with the result that the subsistence of the world is the object posited freely by the same creative wisdom. This one act, then, does two things: it sees the world and seeing it, creates it; it finds that finite being which in the best possible way imitates infinite being; and finding it and creating it are the same thing. It finds it without searching for it, or rather it is continually encountered, because from eternity it encounters it, this actual wisdom being essential to God.

From this, we can also see in what way the act of creation is identified with the generative act of the Word. This act is divine subsistence, in so far as understanding itself, it manifests itself, and this is the divine Word. But in manifesting itself, it manifests at the same time finite being, which imitates divine subsistence in so far as it can. Now to make manifest to itself

finite determinate being is to create it, as we have said.

There is however this great difference between the generative act, as such, and the creative act. The former is necessary because divine subsistence is necessarily *per se* manifest, the latter is voluntary, issuing from the love which God has for Himself and for any being which imitates Him. God, therefore, creates the world for love of Himself; however, such love which moves the divine will, is essential to God, and eternal.

## Reading 16

*[In what sense the term 'Word' belongs to the second Person of the Blessed Trinity considering this with respect to the Father]*

*"In the beginning was the Word"*

Having explained, as far as we can, what the nature of the divine Word is, called by St. John with the Greek word **Λόγος** it is necessary now to see how the different meanings of this Greek expression belong to the Word.

Writing to Paulinus, St. Jerome says of this word **λόγος**: "*Graece multa significant. Nam et Verbum est, et Ratio, et Supputatio, et causa uniuscuiusque rei, per quam sunt singular, quae subsistent, quae universa recte intelligimus in Christo*" [**Λόγος** in Greek has many meanings: at times it means "word", at other times it means "reason", and at times "force, or universal cause of all things, through which all receive existence": all these meanings can be rightly understood of Christ'].<sup>24</sup>

It is well known that no human word, that is, a word transferred from human things to express divine things, can be fully suitable to signify them; yet with utmost wisdom the Latin

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<sup>24</sup> St. Jerome, Ep. 53, *ad Paulinum De Stud. Scripturarum* n. 4.

Church used very often and consecrated the word VERBUM to signify what the eagle of the Evangelists expressed with the word Λόγος. And indeed, the term WORD expresses more accurately than any other the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, both as considered with respect to the Father and to creatures. Let us consider it under both aspects.

**A. With respect to the Father** – The term *Word* is primarily applied to signify, as we have seen, a cognitive act of the spirit which is not a simple thought or intuition; but it is a pronouncement, a judgement, an affirmation. It is not a mere ideal notion but is, at the same time, a persuasive adherence of the spirit to the real object. Therefore, the term of this affirmative act is not a mere *idea*, but a *subsistence*. Hence, it is admirably suited to the second Divine Person who is absolute and subsisting being *per se* manifest in virtue of His own act, always complete and co-eternal, which renders Him manifest and so generates Him.<sup>25</sup>

The word *reason*, on the other hand, indicates very often an *idea* used in reasoning to highlight the motive for some phenomenon. It is true that sometimes we find this *reason* in its subsistent cause, whence St. Jerome says that λόγος indicates “*causa uniuscuiusque rei*” [the cause of anything at all]; and in this sense it would be suitable for the second Person of the Holy Trinity.

However, what we must first observe in the Son is not that He

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**25** Many Fathers of the Church say that the Son is called *Word* because He is the *knowledge of the Father* (St. Dionysius from Rome as quoted by St. Athanasius *Ep. De Sententia ipsius* - Athanasius, *L. De definitione* - Eusebius, *De praep. ev.* L. VII, c. IV; *De Demonstr. ev.* L. V. c. V - Hilarion, *De Trinit.* L. II - Augustine, in *Joann. Tract.* I and XIV; *De Trinit.* LXV, c. X, XII, XXVII - Fulgentius, *Ad Monim* L. III; *Ad Th.* L. II - Cyril, *Th.* L. I. c. VII; L. IV, c. III; L. VI. c. I; L. X. c. IV; L. XIII, c. III; *De Trinit.* L. II - Rufinus, *De Expos. Symb.* - Damascene, *De Fide* L. I. c. VI - Anselm, *Monol.* c. XXIX - XXX-XXXII - Rupert, in h.1 - Auctor L, *De Cognit. verae vit.* c. XIV). We must note that to say the Word is knowledge of the Father is the same as saying that He is the knowledge of a subsistence and not of an idea, because the Father subsists and the knowledge of a subsistence is subsistence itself as known and it is known not with an act of mere intuition, but with an act of affirmation and, as we have said before, of an intellectual feeling which includes the affirmation.



is the reason of all things, but that He is begotten of the Father. Furthermore, the word *reason* is used to signify the subjective faculty of reasoning, in which case it is not suitable for the Word except in so far as the Word is the origin of this faculty in us, as we shall say presently, or as St. Jerome says: '*Quae universa recte intelligimus in Christo*' [all these meanings can be rightly understood of Christ].

Some Fathers observe that the word λόγος belongs to the Son because He proceeds from the Father ἀπαθῶς that is *without any passion* or corruption of the generator, precisely as the word proceeds from the mind.<sup>26</sup>

But not every word proceeds from the mind, because ideal words proceed from the idea which gives them to the mind, and the mind receives them. On the contrary, the interior word, that is, the affirmation of subsistent things proceeds from the mind, and therefore the term Word is more suitable for the Son. Nevertheless, it is not altogether true that the word of the human spirit proceeds without effecting any change in the spirit itself, because it proceeds from it as an accident; whereas the Word of God does not effect any change in the Father to whom it is essential.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen and St. Basil observed another analogy between the meaning of λόγος considered in itself and applied to the Word; the analogy is that just as λόγος is intimate to man, so the Son is intimate to the Father. This analogy has greater force if we understand by λόγος the faculty of reason in so far as it is founded on the intuition of being. However, we are still a long way from finding in it a complete resemblance, because ideal being intuited by the human spirit is neither the subsistence of this spirit nor it can be identified with it. The being which informs our spirit is one thing, and our own spirit is another. Whereas the Son and the Father have the same subsistence.

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<sup>26</sup> Gregory Nazianzen. *De Theol., Orat IV* - Basil, *Hom. in h. l* - Ambrose, *De Fide, L. I. C. II* - Chrysostom, *Hom II in Joann* - Aretus. *In Joann. c. XIX* - Theophylactus, in h. L - Eutimius, in hom. 1

## Reading 17

*[Nine differences between the human word and the divine Word]*

*“In the beginning was the Word”*

Before we proceed further, let us gather together the main differences between the human word and the divine Word so that we may form, as far as we can, a precise concept of the Word, without mixing any of our own imperfection with it.

Naples  
12<sup>th</sup> February 1849  
*Ai Vergini*

These differences can be reduced to nine, and they are:

1. The human word is produced by the passage from potency to act. The divine Word does not pass from potency to act but is always in act, always generated from eternity.

2. The human word is an accident of the soul in so far as the human soul could exist without it, and in fact exists before any word is emitted, as in the first instant of its existence. The divine Word is essential to the divine nature, because this nature would not exist without the Word, since absolute Being, that is, God, has, as His own essence, to exist in three forms which are called Persons.

Therefore, one cannot think that in God there is a potency prior to the generation of the Word, not only prior chronologically, but not even logically; because if one could conceive such potency, it would be something prior to God, and one cannot think of anything prior to God, because God is being and nothing can be thought prior to being. Whenever, then, we seem to be able to think of such a potency we deceive ourselves; it is a limited and imperfect thought which does not reach the truth.

Nor can we think of the act of the generation of the Word in that instant (erroneously supposed by us) in which it is *in fieri* and

not yet made and completed; because that instant does not exist. The act of generation is continually full and complete without any passing; it is immanent and simple act; it is first act, that is, the act itself with which it is God; the act consequently which is God Himself. There was nothing before this *completed* act, absolutely nothing which could be conceived or thought; the word *completed* itself is useless and inexact because it supposes that we can think of it uncompleted, whereas the act of which we speak is by reason of its own essence complete without any possibility of an uncompleted state.

3. The human word is simply an internal affirmation which leaves in the soul the persuasion and knowledge of the thing affirmed, so that we distinguish the word which is transient from its immanent effects which remain in the soul for a certain time and even for always. The divine Word is not a mere affirmation, because it has, at the same time, whatever is positive in our intuition and our feeling; nor is it a transient act, nor can it be distinguished from its effects, because it is at the same time both a persuasion and an immanent knowledge, but it is still more than this; and perhaps the expression which is most suitable to use, is what we have called *intellectual feeling*.

Furthermore, the human spirit pronounces many words and the analogy which is made between the divine Word and the human word, as St. Augustine<sup>27</sup> has observed, is particularly pertinent with regard to the human word by which man affirms and pronounces himself, more than with respect to other words by which man pronounces and affirms other things different from himself. The reason for this is that the divine Word is the likeness and image of the Father who pronounces Him and generates Him; and so also the word with which man pronounces himself is that which makes man knowable to himself.

4. The human word is made by the union of the *subsistence* of contingent things with their *essence*, which are, of their nature, distinct and separate, because it is not essential to contingent

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<sup>27</sup> *De Trinit.* 9, 5.

things to subsist. Hence, to know the subsistence it is necessary to affirm it in the essence. This is true even when we affirm and pronounce ourselves, that is, the substantial feeling which belongs to the being that affirms it, since not even we are known to ourselves, but it is the idea or essence of being which makes us known to ourselves.

On the contrary, the divine subsistence is also essence known to itself, without the need of any other thing to make it known; and being known *per se* and affirmed *per se*, is that which constitutes it Word of that essential intellective act through which it is such. There is no need of a synthesis to constitute God as object, a synthesis, that is, between essence and subsistence, because subsistence is already object *per se*. Precisely because of this, the subsistence as object is the Word, without any need of a synthesis; on the other hand, such synthesis is necessary to objectivise contingent realities.

5. Furthermore, when man pronounces his word, the essence which he unites to the subsistence stands before his mind, but it is not his mind; the mind itself, in fact, has need of being illuminated. This essence is foreign to the subject man who pronounces the word, even when he pronounces and affirms himself. On the contrary, God the Father, when He pronounces the Word, does not take from anywhere the essence, which is identical with His own subsistence; hence He pronounces Himself with Himself, He pronounces Himself continually, or rather, it is the divine subsistence which is continually pronounced, rendered incessantly manifest to itself, since it is essentially light to itself.

6. The human word is multiple, that is, man pronounces many words because, being a limited being, he excludes from his subsistence all other limited beings, which are many and exclusive, whence he needs to pronounce many exclusive words, each of which affirming a limited and exclusive being.

On the contrary, the divine Word is one only, who pronounces unlimited and absolute Being, that is divine subsistence. In this, He pronounces also the physical possibility of finite being, as well as the act of His will which makes it subsist, and

therefore its logical possibility, that is, the essence and at the same time the subsistence of finite being in its unity, in its order, which makes it one most orderly entity, and this is the created universe with all its acts. The Divine Word is, therefore, simply Word without limitations, Word in His fulness.

7. The human word, whereby man affirms the finite real existence of things which fall under his feeling, simply produces in him the persuasion or knowledge of their subsistence. It does not produce the things themselves.

On the contrary, the divine Word is constitutive and productive. He is constitutive of the divine subsistence because being Word is essential to it, that is, being *per se* object, *per se* light, *per se* manifest to itself. He is productive of creatures because the act itself whereby He pronounces them and sees them as loveable in Himself, is an act of His will whereby He makes them subsist. Hence St. Paul says of God '*portans omnia Verbo virtutis suae*,' upholding the universe by His word of power'.<sup>28</sup> And the *loveableness* of the most ordered and most complete finite being is the *loveableness* itself of the divine subsistence, which is shared by finite being in so far as it imitates the former, though in a limited way.

8. The human word, which is only *persuasive*, is not *practical*, that is, operative. For man to act rationally, he must make another *word* or practical judgement, by means of which he says to himself that the action he will do is good for him. It is this second voluntary word which is the principle in man of his rational actions. Should this word simply refer to the rational love whereby man can adhere to a thing, one could say that this love becomes one, so to speak, with the *practical word* or is an extension of it, a continuation or, if we wish, a completion. On the other hand, if the thing judged subjectively by man as good with this practical word is an action concerning some other inferior power, in such case the action which follows the word is in fact distinct from the word itself.

All these distinctions are not found in the divine Word, through

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<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 1, 5.

whom God operates. The creation of the world, in fact, although a voluntary and free act of God, nonetheless is determined morally by the loveableness of the world in so far as it imitates, as well as a finite being can, the divine subsistence, loved in its own nature, and in which the world is loved. It belongs, in fact, to the perfection of Divine Being to be essentially moral, and hence to love the world in an essential way. Hence, it is the act itself essential to the divine subsistence, that act whereby the world is created; moreover, with that one act, because there are no other acts in God, divine subsistence does all that it does *ad extra*; and this act is the one Word with which it sees and makes at the same time all finite things.

9. Finally, the word of man receives from the divine Word all the elements of which it is composed. Because, 1<sup>st</sup> man receives the *essence* of things or the possibility of finite being which becomes the light of its reason; 2<sup>nd</sup> man receives the finite *subsistences*, which he affirms with his persuasive word, as well as with the actions, which he affirms to be *good* to himself as subject with his practical word. All of this receives its subsistence by the act of the divine Word; 3<sup>rd</sup> finally, man's subjective act of affirming and judging is created by the Word, in whom and through whom all things are made.

The divine Word, on the other hand, receives nothing from a being greater than Himself, but only from the Father to whom He is equal, because He is divine subsistence *per se* understood, that is, understood through its own act of intelligence, which makes it understood, makes it real object to itself, which is also real subject.

From this point of view, however, the *practical word* of man has a greater analogy with the divine Word than the *persuasive word*, in so far as the former produces *love* and consequently another action; and so, it is in some way productive as a secondary cause, as the divine Word is productive not only of actions but also of substances.

*Deontological* human words, that is, judgements which man makes on the suitability of things, have also a special analogy with the Word which other human words do not have. The

suitability of things, in fact, could not be pronounced by man unless it was first pronounced by God, who sees in his nature what is the most suitable finite being in the complexity of many things and in seeing them, He makes them. Hence, man's deontological words or judgements may be called repetitions of what God pronounced from all eternity when He generated His Word.

## Reading 18

*[In what sense the term WORD is fittingly applied to the second person of the Blessed Trinity, considering this with respect to creatures; the communication which the Word makes of himself to man]*

*"In the beginning was the Word"*

**B. With Respect to Creatures** - We must now consider the Word with respect to creatures and see how even in this relation the expression 'Word' is applied befittingly to the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity.

We have already said that *verbum* or *word* signifies both an internal pronouncement of the human spirit and a pronouncement which is an external expression of the internal one. The first makes known that which is pronounced (thing pronounced) to the pronouncing spirit; the purpose of the second is to complete it, reinforce it and keep the pronouncement before the mind of man in a firmer way and specially to make it known to other intelligences.

We observe here another analogy between the human word and the divine Word. The divine Word, in so far as it is the divine subsistence pronounced, has a relationship with the Father; in

so far as it is the world pronounced by God, it is a fulfilment of the first, since it is still the divine subsistence, which can be and is imitated by finite being, and at the same time it has a relationship with creatures who subsist through the Word; and by imitating, as far as they can, infinite being they express it and manifest it to themselves, that is to finite intelligence.

Indeed, divine subsistence would not be completely pronounced, if in this pronouncement which it makes, it is not contained also the physical possibility of finite being which dwells in it. This same subsistence without the pronouncement of itself, that is, without the Word, would not be complete. For the same reason it would not be complete and perfect if it were not loveable and loved by itself, and therefore if it did not love finite being which imitates it, since it is its characteristic to be imitable; and if it did not pronounce, as a result of such love, finite being in its most perfect order and loved by it, and in pronouncing it, giving it, at the same time, both its specific essence and its subsistence.

Intelligent finite being is the noblest part of creation and all other things are made for him; they can be known and used by him. He is made for God, to know Him and to love Him. The world was made, then, so that God may make Himself known to finite intelligences, and these may praise His greatness; and exulting in the knowledge of such a great and glorious God, they may rejoice in Him and share in His perfection and happiness.

The manifestation of divine things to finite intelligences, however, begins with the act of creating them because intelligences are such as soon as they are given essential ideal being, *per se* manifest. This being, because it is *per se* manifest, is not given in any other way except by manifesting itself. Now ideal being shining in the created subject is an appurtenance of the divine Word because it is the logical possibility of being which dwells in the divine subsistence pronounced by itself.

By means of this essential being *per se* manifest communicated to us, we pronounce our own feeling and everything which falls within it, that is, the agents which operate in it and modify it, and these modifications as determinations affecting us as well



as the agents. In a word, we pronounce all finite existing beings in so far as they belong to our feeling. To pronounce them is to know them, and to pronounce is to say, 'what they are,' and to say what things are is to know their essence. Hence our knowledge of real things lies in referring contingent feeling and what falls within it to the essence; that is, in joining the contingent to the necessary, the temporary with the eternal, the created with the uncreated and divine, so completing it.

This was understood by Nicholas Malebranche as seeing things in God, but the phrase is not accurate, because one does not talk of seeing one thing in another unless one sees the other as well. Therefore, one could correct it in this way: 'to apprehend subsistent things in their essences, which are in God; although they are not seen in God by us.' Now this manner by which we know finite subsisting being through an affirmation or word has a special analogy with the divine Word. Because as God is manifest to Himself and knows all things in Himself, so we know all contingent things in ourselves, that is, in our feeling, in which they are and act: but with this difference, that our feeling is obscure, because it is not essence, and therefore we must see it in essence in order to know it; whereas the divine feeling is essence itself, and therefore is *per se notum*. Hence our knowledge of the world (the subsisting objects affirmed by us) is an analogical manifestation of the divine Word.

But the essence of being intuited by us, although it is an appurtenance of being, nevertheless is not the Word, because it is not actuated being, but in potency; it is not subsistence but pure essence. Not even the known world is the Word, but it has only an analogy with the divine Word.

Man, therefore, does not know the Word by nature, he does not perceive Him through his nature; and therefore, the reflections of natural reason only arrive at a negative and analogical concept. This was the defect of Platonism regarding the doctrine of the Word; this school, in fact, often confused the Word with the ideas. The Word is perceived and known positively only through a communication which He makes of Himself to man. For this reason, such communication is called *supernatural*, because it does not come from finite nature but immediately

from the infinite subsistent Being superior to nature.

The communication of the Word to man is, therefore, a *fact*, and not a reasoning of man; it is an immediate *perception* which humiliates man because it makes him feel and know the deficiency of his nature which is incapable of rising to union with God on its own, as well as the powerlessness of his natural reason to reach positively absolute being. Opposed to this humiliation is the pride of philosophers who believe they possess knowledge because they possess error; the error, that is, of taking the ideas for the Word; neither do they wish to acknowledge and confess their ignorance and so they close the door in the face of the Word who would reveal Himself to them if only they wished to receive Him.

## Reading 19

*[Boundaries between the natural and supernatural orders, between the doctrine of philosophers and the real communication which the divine Word makes of himself to men]*

*“In the beginning was the Word”*

At this point we can sketch the limits between the natural and the supernatural order, between the doctrine of the philosophers and the real communication of Himself which the divine Word makes to men. He communicated Himself fully in the Incarnation, according to the measure of grace which the Word Incarnate communicates to His brothers.

St. Augustine noticed it and described it accurately by means of the splendid words which he addressed to God:

‘You provided for me, by means of a man who was puffed up with immense pride, certain books of the Platonists, which were translated from Greek into Latin. And in these I read not literally

but the same things supported by means of many reasons that: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'

And that the soul of man, though it bears witness to the light is not itself the light but that the Word of God, God himself, 'is the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world' and that, 'He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.' But I did not read, 'HE CAME TO HIS OWN HOME, AND HIS OWN PEOPLE RECEIVED HIM NOT. BUT TO ALL WHO RECEIVED HIM, WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME, HE GAVE POWER TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD.' Likewise, I read that God the Word was 'born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.' But I did not read, 'AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US.'

I discovered in these writings expressed differently and, in many ways, that the 'Son was in the Form of the Father not considering it a robbery to be equal to God because he is one and same God by nature.' But these books did not contain the words: 'HE EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A SERVANT, BEING BORN IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN. AND BEING FOUND IN HUMAN FORM HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF AND BECAME OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS. THEREFORE, GOD HAS HIGHLY EXALTED HIM AND BESTOWED ON HIM THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AND UNDER THE EARTH AND EVERY TONGUE CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER'.

But that your only begotten Son immutably dwells coeternal with Thee before and above all time; and that of his fullness all souls receive, that they may be blessed, and that they are reborn to wisdom by their sharing in the wisdom of the one who remains in them, this I found there. But I did not find there, 'AT

THE RIGHT TIME CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY' and 'HE DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON BUT GAVE HIM UP FOR US ALL'. 'For you have hidden these things from the learned and the clever and revealed them to mere children' so that those 'who labour and are overburdened' might come to him and that he might refresh them for he is 'gentle and humble in heart.' In all that is right he guides the humble, and instructs the poor in his way, he sees our 'misery and pain' and 'forgives all our sins'. But frivolous people with a pompous style as if of a more sublime knowledge do not hear the one who says, 'learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls:' and 'if they know God, they do not honour him as God or thank him, instead they made nonsense out of logic and their empty minds were darkened. The more they called themselves philosophers, the more stupid they grew.' Besides I read that the glory of your incorruption has been changed into idols and into the likeness of a corruptible man, and of birds and four-footed beasts, and of creeping things, that is to say into Egyptian food by which Esau lost his birth right, since the first-born people gave honour to the head of a beast in place of You, having turned in their hearts back to Egypt, and bowing their soul which is your image before the image of a calf eating hay. I discovered these things in those books but did not feed on them".<sup>29</sup>

From this beautiful passage of the great Doctor of Hippo we gather that the human understanding could reason about the internal Word of God; or at least it could receive the divine revelation about the Word without problems, and indeed making it its own, because it is completely in conformity and harmony with the understanding. However, all that pertains to the external Word of God, that is the operations and manifestations of the Word to men, which are not rational in the same way but which must be admitted positively and consequently by means of the obedience of faith due to God who reveals them, were not accepted by proud philosophers who wished to draw everything from their own reasoning, attributing everything to their own talent, and boasting of their findings. This refusal to admit the voluntary and positive revelations of

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<sup>29</sup> *Confessions* book 7, 9.

the Word is the phenomenon which had to occur *in natural man* deprived of grace. Natural man, in fact, does not feel God, and therefore he perceives only the material part of the external revelation of God and not the divine part in which it is clothed. He does not believe it, then, because he does not feel it.

We must observe that the external revelation or communication of the Word to created intelligences is carried out through the Holy Spirit. It was through the work of the divine Spirit that the Incarnation occurred, the greatest communication of the Word to humanity: “*Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi*” [‘The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you’].<sup>30</sup> Through the work of this same Spirit the ancient revelation was made through the prophets of whom St. Peter said: “*Spiritu Sancto inspirati locuti sunt sancti Dei homines*” [‘Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God’].<sup>31</sup> And as the prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit spoke and wrote about the Word of God, so their words could not be understood nor their writings interpreted without the Holy Spirit giving understanding to minds, explaining internally the meaning of the words which they heard externally. Hence St. Peter teaches: “*Omnis prophetia propria interpretation non fit*” [‘No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation’].<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, what the prophets announced about the Word of God and the salvation which He would give to men by coming into the world, though it was inspired by the Holy Spirit and referred to the divine Word, and contained an internal celestial light, nevertheless it did not contain the divine Word himself.

The Word was to be given to men personally with the Incarnation. The former only contained the prophecies about the Word, which could be understood only by means of some general cognition or even of some incipient perception of the Word Himself, which was not the complete and personal perception of the Word. Hence, St. Peter distinguishes these two

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**30** Luke 1, 35.

**31** 2 Peter 1, 21.

**32** *Ibid.*

degrees, or rather these two species of spiritual light, one belonging to the saints of the Old Testament and particularly to the prophets, and the other belonging to the saints of the New Testament and especially to the immediate disciples of the Word Incarnate.

About the former, St Peter says that they tried hard to find out when and what the *Spirit of Christ* meant about the things that would happen among them, including the sufferings and glory of Christ; but at the same time, he said that what was announced was given not for themselves but for future Christians. “*Quibus revelatum est quia non sibimetipsis, vobis autem ministrabant ea quae nunc nuntiata sunt vobis per eos qui evangelizaverunt vobis, Spiritu Sancto misso de coelo, in quem desiderant angeli prospicere*” [‘It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look’].<sup>33</sup>

St. Peter, elsewhere, compares the old light to a lantern lighting up a dark place, and the new light brought by Christ to the morning star: “*Et habemus firmiorem propheticum sermonem, cui benefacitis attendentes quasi lucernae lucentes in caliginoso loco, donec dies elucescat, et lucifer oriatur in cordibus vestris*” [‘And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts’].<sup>34</sup>

The Word, then, is given to man through the internal act of the Holy Spirit, who utters the announcing and the exterior and sensible signification of the Word: but this cannot be understood without a new internal operation of the Spirit who makes it understood. Hence, St. Paul, when speaking of the understanding of the Scriptures, distinguishes between the *letter* and the *spirit*, saying that “*littera occidit*” [‘the written code kills’] (since no understanding is given, nor the power to keep what it says), “*Spiritus autem vivificat*” [‘but the Spirit gives

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**33** I Peter 1, 12.

**34** 2 Peter 1, 19.

life’].<sup>35</sup>

This was precisely what came to pass with the Word Incarnate, since His humanity was visible to all; this was the *letter*. Hence, those who through their own fault saw only the humanity and did not have faith in the divinity, caused their knowledge to bring death according to the prophecy: “*Ecce positus est hic in ruinam*” [“Behold this child is set for the fall”]; whereas those who believed in the divinity turned their knowledge to life: “*Et in resurrectionem multorum*” [‘and the rising of many.’]<sup>36</sup>

This is the reason why Christ, in the Scriptures, is very often compared to a stone used as the foundation stone by those who build on Him as living stones, forming the temple of God, and which is, at the same time, a stumbling block and death to whoever comes into collision with it; a simile which Christ said referred to Him: “*Nunquam legistis in Scripturis: Lapidem quem reprobaverunt aedificantes, hic factus est in caput anguli: a Domino factum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris. Ideo dico vobis quod auferetur a vobis regnum Dei, et dabitur genti facienti fructus eius. Et qui ceciderit super lapidem istum, confringetur: super quem vero ceciderit, conteret eum*” [‘Have you never read in the Scriptures, “The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes?” Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on anyone, it will crush him’].<sup>37</sup>

The twofold being of Christ, that is, the human visible to the eyes of man and the divine which is revealed to souls through the work of the Holy Spirit, is also signified by His titles: *Son of man* and *Son of God*. Hence, Christ’s question to Peter: “*Quem dicunt homines esse filium hominis?*” [‘Who do men say that the Son of man is?’] was explained as follows by St. Hilary: “*Dominus*

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**35** 2 Cor. 3, 6.

**36** Luke 2: 34.

**37** Matt. 21, 42-44 - Ps 117 - Isaiah 8: 14-15; 28: 16; - Acts 4, 11 - Romans 9, 33 - 1 Peter 2: 4-8.

*enim dixerat: Quem me homines esse dicunt, filium hominis? Et certe filium hominis contemplatio corporis praeferibat. Sed addendo: Quem me esse dicunt, significavit, praeter id quod in se videbatur, esse aliud sentiendum: erat enim hominis filius. Quod igitur de se opinandi iudicium desiderabat? Non illud arbitramur quod de se ipse confessus est; sed occultum erat de quo quaerebatur in quod se credentium fides debebat extendere*” [‘The Lord indeed said, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” And certainly, his bodily appearance revealed the Son of man. Therefore, by saying: “Whom do men say that the Son of man is,” he makes known to them that there is something further to be known regarding him besides what he appeared to be; for He was the Son of man. What opinion regarding himself did he seek? Certainly not the title which He had just used about Himself, I think. What he was seeking for was a mystery, something to which the faith of those who believe in him must reach’].<sup>38</sup>

Now this mystery, hidden and invisible to the eyes of man, could only be revealed by the internal act of God; and when St. Peter replied in the name of the Apostles, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ then JESUS gave this magnificent praise: “*Beatus es Simon Bar-Jona, quia caro et sanguis non revelavit tibi, sed Pater meus qui in coelo est*” [‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven’].<sup>39</sup> And so on.

From these words one gathers first and foremost that flesh and blood, that is animal feeling, cannot have the perception of the Word, nor of anything which resembles Him, and for this reason it must come from a supernatural source, since all the natural perceptions of man belong to animal feelings, through which, by applying ideal being, he forms by means of different operations, his natural knowledge. In the second place, we gather that it was the Father who revealed to St. Peter the divinity of the Word incarnate, thus attributing to the Father the work of the Spirit, since the latter proceeds from the Father, as the source and principle of the Most Blessed Trinity. We also learn that St. Peter

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**38** *Comm. In Matt.* 16: 13.

**39** *Matt.* 16: 17.



would not have had the stimulus and occasion of making this act of faith if he had not had the humanity of Christ present to him. Christ's humanity was the external expression of the Word by whom it had been assumed and from whom it had received its divine power. In the same way, St. Thomas would not have confessed the divinity of Christ if he had not seen and, perhaps, touched the glorious wounds of His Passion.

From all this we can conclude:

1. There is the negative and analogical knowledge of the Word which can be acquired by means of the natural reason and the letter of revelation, and there is the positive and perceptive cognition which is given only through the hidden working of the Holy Spirit in the human soul.

2. The work of the Holy Spirit is preceded and accompanied by an external and sensible thing which is the letter in revelation, and the humanity of Christ in the Incarnation. This sign and sensible expression is enlivened and interpreted by the Spirit who operates interiorly in such a way that the soul, united to the Spirit, perceives, at least in some inchoate way, the Word, thus gaining some positive understanding of the Word. This sensible sign interpreted and understood in this way is suitably called the external word of God, *verbum oris* [word of the mouth], which is different from *verbum cordis* [word of the heart].

3. Finally, and this is what our whole argument has been driving at, by being impressed with the divine Word through an operation of the Holy Spirit (who is, as it were, the finger which impresses Him in us; and the Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of Christ, being the *moral* form of Being), this impression has as a result, if we consent to it or if we do not place any obstacle in the way, a moral effect in us through which we are sanctified. And since the *moral* dimension embraces humiliation, mortification and sacrifice, therefore the supernatural and living perception of the Word leads the soul to take delight in the holiness of the Word, and to recognise, love and imitate His self-denial, passion and the glory which comes from this ultimate perfection of virtue, which is fulfilled in patience and sacrifice of natural goods.

This is indeed repugnant to nature and the pride of

philosophers, and therefore all that belongs to the positive, living and holy communication of the Word, as well as the mystical teachings, the holy desires, and the sublime effects which follow from it, are hidden to them. Hence, we see clearly the line of demarcation between natural knowledge and Christian wisdom.

It was St. Augustine who, having observed how many things were lacking to the wisdom of the most famous philosophers, for instance the Platonists, wisely enumerated them in these delightful words: *“Non habent illae paginae vultum pietatis huius, lacrimas confessionis, sacrificium tuum, spiritum contribulatum, cor contritum et humiliatum, populi salutem, sponsam civitatem, arram Spiritus Sancti, poculum pretii nostri (Ps. 2. XI). Nemo ibi cantat: “Nonne Deo subdita erit anima mea? Ab ipso enim salutare meum. Etenim ipse est Deus meus et salutaris meus, susceptor meus, non movebor amplius”. Nemo ibi audit vocantem: “Venite ad me qui laboratis etc.” Dedignantur ab eo discere quoniam mitis et humilis corde (Gal. 2). Abscondisti enim haec a sapientibus et prudentibus et revelasti ea parvulis. Et aliud est de sylvestri cacumine videre patriam pacis, et iter ad eam non invenire, et frustra conari per invia, circumdosidentibus et insidiantibus fugitivis desertoribus cum principe suo leone et dracone: et aliud tenere viam illuc ducentem cura coelestis Imperatoris munitam, ubi non latrocinantur qui coelestem militiam deseruerunt. Vitant enim eam sicut supplicium”*. [‘Their pages show nothing of the face of that love, the tears of confession, your sacrifice, an afflicted spirit, a contrite and humbled heart, the salvation of your people, the city-bride, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the chalice of our redemption. In them no one sings: ‘Shall not my soul be submitted to God? From him is my salvation, He is my God and my saviour, my guest: I shall be moved no more’. And we hear no voice calling: ‘Come unto me all you that labour.’ They scorned to learn from him ‘because he is meek and humble of heart. For “you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to the little ones.” It is one thing to see the land of peace from a wooded mountaintop, yet not find the way to it and struggle hopelessly far from the way, opposed and attacked by hosts of those fugitive deserters from God, under their leader which is lion and dragon at the same time, and quite another to hold to the way

that leads there, a way guarded by the care of our heavenly General, where there are no deserters from the army of heaven to practice their robberies - for indeed they avoid that way as a torment'].<sup>40</sup>

It is now clear, therefore, how much and in what way natural philosophy differs from the science of the saints, a difference expressed in a nutshell by St. Bernard, when he wrote: "*Haec mea sublimior interim philosophia scire JESUM, et hunc crucifixum*" ["This is my more subtle and sublime philosophy, to know JESUS and Him crucified"].<sup>41</sup>

## Reading 20

*[Natural and supernatural knowledge; the principle of natural knowledge is the idea; the principle of supernatural knowledge is the Word, that is, real being manifested per se]*

*"In the beginning was the Word"*

There is, then, natural knowledge and supernatural knowledge or rather supernatural wisdom. What is the principle of each? In other words, what is that first light from which man derives the former and what is that first light from which he derives the latter?

The principle of natural knowledge is the *idea* or ideal being; the principle of supernatural knowledge is the Word, that is, real being *per se* manifest. Holy Scriptures, which contain supernatural knowledge in its external expression, teach us precisely what its principle is, since it is written: "*Fons sapientiae Verbum Dei in excelsis*" ["The source of wisdom is the Word of God in the highest"].<sup>42</sup> In this passage, the words *In*

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<sup>40</sup> *Confessions Book 7: 21.*

<sup>41</sup> *In Cant. Sermon. 42.*

<sup>42</sup> *Eccl. 1: 5.*

*excelsis*’ which we translate ‘*in the highest*’ indicate the supernatural order of knowledge since what is above nature is best expressed as located metaphorically in the highest places, just as that which pertains to nature is found *on earth*. Here we see how suitable it was that the Evangelist began to announce the Word, by going to the principle of all wisdom given to men by JESUS Christ and so laid the Foundation Stone of the theological building, and its first principle.

At this point, it may be appropriate to answer the question which Chrysostom asked: “Why did the Evangelist begin with the Word rather than with the Father, though the Father is the eternal beginning of the Word?” The answer is that the order of the procession of the Persons among themselves is one thing, and the order with which they are manifested to the human mind is another.

In the latter case, the first Person to be revealed is the Word, who is Being *per se* manifest and it is through the Word that one knows the Father. Hence, Christ said: ‘*I have manifested your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world*’.<sup>43</sup> And although the Father draws all men to the Son,<sup>44</sup> nevertheless this ‘drawing’ is in the order of action and not in that of cognition and therefore He remains hidden from man until the latter has known the Son who reveals Him. In the same way, although the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, shows to souls and as it were, forms the Word in them, yet even this operation of the Holy Spirit remains hidden in the order of actions and not of cognitions until man, having known the Word, comes through the latter to know it. Hence St. Thomas says that the Jews before Christ did not know the Father *in ratione Patris sed ut Deus*<sup>45</sup> [not as Father but as God] precisely because *filius ignorabatur*<sup>46</sup> [the Son was not known].

This ignorance the Jews had of the Word, of which St. Thomas speaks, should not be understood as a complete lack of

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<sup>43</sup> John 17: 6.

<sup>44</sup> John 6: 44.

<sup>45</sup> In h. l.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge but a lack of personal and positive knowledge of the Word, which they did not have until that perception which was given to men when the Word personally became flesh. It is certain, in fact, that the Jews had:

First, the rational cognition of the divine Word which, as we have said is negative and ideal; and it seems very probable to us that the Italic and Platonic school had drawn their philosophic doctrines about the Word from the same source, and that the Neo-Platonists had taken them mostly from the Jewish schools which were in Alexandria before Christ, where, among other Jewish philosophers, Aristobulos lived.

Second, that the knowledge the Jews had of the Word was more than philosophical although they had not arrived at the perception of the Word. The reason is that Deiform grace was not lacking in the Jewish church, which gave some perception of the Divine subsistence, as one may be able to argue from the principle that *grace is always proportionate to the words revealed which express it in a sensible manner*. Since the unity of God and his attributes had been revealed, it was fitting that this object of the ancient revelation should be enlivened by the spiritual perception so as to give a supernatural effect to the souls and interpret the letter with the Spirit. From this initial perception of God there had to arise a spiritual and divine influence even regarding rational and natural cognition of the Word of God.

To this it must be added that the ancient Church had a revelation of many dogmatic and moral truths through the ministry of angels<sup>47</sup> who ministered to holy men and the more eminent among the elect chosen by God so that they might communicate them to others. Hence, 'Abraham rejoiced that he was to see the day of Christ; he saw it and was glad.'<sup>48</sup> The same is to be said of others to whom other things were shown. These truths surely cannot be reduced merely to natural cognitions of reason, or natural-historical ones, but must have been accompanied by grace and an interior light which provided an

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<sup>47</sup> Hebrews 2: 2.

<sup>48</sup> John 8: 56.

intellectual perception of those truths which were shown by sensible signs.

The Word, however, to whom Angels ministered, was not the One who spoke to men, neither did He show Himself personally to them, and so men did not have the personal perception of the revealing Word, but only some gifts and insight of Him as the Word revealed. St. Paul taught this clearly to the Hebrews in the first words of the marvellous letter he sent to them, which is still preserved: “*Multifariam multisque modis olim Deus loquens Patribus in Prophetis, novissime, diebus istis locutus est nobis IN FILIO*” [‘In many and various ways God spoke of old to our Fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by the Son’].<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, it was God who *spoke*, though by means of angels who revealed to the prophets *the truths which they, in their turn, passed on to other people*. Because of this, the revealed truths are called the *word of God*. And although there were many truths, they were not called *words of God* but clearly in the singular, *word of God*. And this is most fitting, because the word of God is one, and one is His Word, nor strictly speaking does God say any other word but His one Word. We must say then, that the many truths revealed in the old and new law are all reduced to the Divine Word, are appurtenances of Him and therefore contain some supernatural revelation of the Word Himself; although, by means of revealed truths, the divine Word was not yet personally manifested to men.

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<sup>49</sup> Hebrews 1: 1.

## Reading 21

*[All the special revealed truths are gifts of Christ but still are not Christ expressly revealed to men; they are not the Word who communicates them; revealed truths are appurtenances of the Word]*

We must consider, therefore, that *grace*, consisting in a deiform action which God immediately exercises in the human soul, is divisible. St. Paul speaks often of the *division of graces* and in one place says: “*Divisiones gratiarum sunt, idem autem Spiritus*” [‘Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit’].<sup>50</sup> In another place: “*Unicuique autem nostrum data est gratia secundum mensuram donationis Christi*” [‘But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift’].<sup>51</sup>

*Naples 26<sup>th</sup> February 1849*  
*St. Margaret of Cortona*

All special revealed truths are, therefore, *gifts* of Christ, but are still not Christ, expressly revealed to men; they are not the Word who personally communicates Himself to them. We need to reflect carefully over this truth.

The difference between the special revealed truths, with the moral effects that follow, and the Word, consists in two things:  
1<sup>st</sup> - In these revealed truths there is no communication of the actual *person* of the Word, but only of His gifts.  
2<sup>nd</sup> - Hence, the revealed truths are many, whereas the Word, about whom they speak, is one.

We must explain both these differences, and, when dealing with the second, we must see how the multiplicity of truths and graces have their origin in the unity of the Word.

The special revealed truths are given to man solely in their

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**50** 1 Cor 12: 4 and ff.

**51** Eph. 4:7 - c. f. Rom. 12: 3 - 1 Cor. 7: 17 - 2 Cor. 10: 13.

objective form. Now although the Word is *being per se manifest* and therefore *being per se object*, nevertheless, as divine subsistence, He must be subject and person, so that He is *subject per se object*. But in the specially revealed truths, precisely because they are shown only as object, His subjectivity is hidden, and therefore also the Word as Person. Hence, in the Old Testament the Word was not communicated personally to men. But when He took human flesh and instructed men and, corresponding to His external words, there was an interior grace which gave men the perception of the Word speaking and acting, grace which could be called *Verbiform*, then it was that men apprehended the Person of the Word clothed with humanity which communicated to them its effects.

What are, then, the special truths of the Old and New Testament and the special graces which accompany them? – Surely, they are gifts of the Word, but not the Word Himself. But more than this, they are appurtenances of the Word, which in Him are not divided among themselves, nor divided from His personality, but they are divided in man to whom they are given and in this state of division they are no longer identifiable with the Word so that they may be called the subsisting Word of the Father. However, by reason of their origin, they still maintain some of the divine characteristics, such as immutability, eternity, a certain virtual totality etc. Such characteristics are sufficient for our recognising them as appurtenances of the divine Word, rooted in Him, and which, therefore, may be called also *word* of God.

We must note, however, that there are *natural appurtenances of the Word* and *supernatural appurtenances of the Word*. We must, therefore, see what the difference is.

The difference between natural light and supernatural light was explained by us in this way. The natural light is simply *ideal*, whereas the supernatural light is also *real*, because in this there is the action of the divine subsistence on the human soul. The act of the soul when it receives the natural light is called *intuition*, whereas when it receives supernatural light it is named *perception*. Natural light is *ideal being per se object*, and therefore this can be called an *ideal appurtenance of the divine Word*, whereas supernatural light which accompanies revealed



truths, in which we have faith, is real being, is the divine subsistence, and this must be called a *real appurtenance of the Word Himself*.

It remains to be explained how the special revealed truths are many, whereas the word of God, the Word, is one. To see this, it is necessary to observe how all natural truths, all ideas are reduced to one, namely the *idea of being*, so in a similar way all the supernatural truths are reduced to one, that is, to the subsisting Truth, the real Being subject *per se* object, that is, the Word. Now if the *idea* is one how is it changed into many concepts? This happens for three reasons:

1. The first reason is the multiplicity of created substances, each of which, given their limitations, is exclusively in itself, outside any other. So, when we apply ideal being to know one of them, we do not know the rest, but we have an exclusive knowledge of the one under consideration, wholly separate from the knowledge of all other things.
2. From this multiplicity of finite substances arises a multiplicity also of exclusive relations, each limited to itself. Hence again, there is a multiplicity of concepts by means of the many applications of being to the substances which are compared with one another in order to observe their various relationships.
3. The third reason comes from the multiplicity which is found in each created substance, none of which is perfectly simple, having accidents, passions, actions, modal changes, spatial divisions, temporal succession etc. Each of these things has its own exclusive nature and by applying ideal being, we have as many notions and concepts.

Among the limitations of created substances, the most notable is that their subsistence is not contained in their essence. Hence it is obvious that subsistence which exists exclusively is known by the human spirit with an act different from that with which it knows their essence.

We should furthermore observe that even the intelligent spirit of man is a limited substance, which needs various aids and successive acts to find the matter of its cognitions, since nothing

else is given to it by nature except the reality of its own animality.

Now every single notion is the foundation of a different affection of the spirit conforming to or deviating from the law of morality; hence the plurality of virtues and vices and the multiple accidents of the moral state of man although each moral value can be reduced finally to one moral essence which is love given to being.

If we now move on to consider multiplicity in the supernatural order, we quickly recognise that it depends precisely on the multiplicity mentioned so far in the natural order of intelligence and morality, since grace does not change nature but simply perfects it and ennobles it. The cognitions that man has are many, and the virtues and vices of which he is susceptible are also multiple; it follows, therefore, that God's relations with him are equally manifold, and that many are the means used by God to draw him to Himself since in this lies his perfection and happiness. Equally, the revelation of God is fragmented, so to speak, into many special truths and there are divisions of graces and gifts, yet Christ who bestows his gifts is one; and one is the Spirit who bestows his graces: "*Divisus est Christus? Divisiones vero gratiarum sunt, idem autem Spiritus; et divisiones ministrarionum sunt, idem autem Dominus; et divisiones operationum sunt, idem vero Deus, qui operator omnia in omnibus*" [Is Christ divided?<sup>52</sup> 'Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there is a variety of activities, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone'].<sup>53</sup>

## Reading 22

*[In what way all revealed truths are contained in the simple knowledge of the divine Word; the nature of supernatural knowledge given to men before the incarnation of the Word]*

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**52** I. Cor. 1:13.

**53** *Ibid.* 12: 4-6.

However, we must now see how all the special truths are reduced to a unity, that is, to one sole object, and how this object is an appurtenance of the Word; and how, when this object is revealed to us as subject or Person, it is the Word given to us. We must see the same of the graces given to us, how they are founded and reduced to one grace only, an appurtenance of the Holy Spirit, who is immediately the Holy Spirit Himself when He reveals Himself to us as Person through that grace.

All the special truths which we have from divine revelation are reduced to truths which reveal the divine nature, what God has done, and consequently the duties which we have towards God. Briefly, they concern what we believe and what we do.

Now the truths which regulate our actions are based on truths which we must believe, because a moral act is simply a recognition of the truth understood by the intellect; a recognition which produces well-ordered affections and actions which improve and morally perfect man. Theoretical truths, then, which pertain to the nature and the external actions of God find their cause in the divine nature because God acts only with the act by which He exists. And strictly speaking they are founded on the cognition of the divine Word, because as we have seen earlier, creation and other external actions are done through the Word and they are not distinct in God from that act which constitutes the divine Word.

JESUS reduced the whole Gospel to this unity when He said: *“Haec est autem vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum et quem misisti JESUS Christum”* [‘And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent’].<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the Father is known only through the Son and in the Son, and therefore every cognition and supernatural truth is found included and contained in the cognition of the Word who is called Truth and the source of wisdom on whose spirit *“desiderant angeli prospicere”* [‘the angels desire to gaze’].

All revealed truths, therefore, are reduced to the Word as to their

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<sup>54</sup> John 17: 3.

principle, in whom they are eminently contained, and they are simply so many partial applications to created things of the first supernatural cognition which is that of the Word. But the knowledge that such special truths are contained in the one cognition of the divine Word, has two degrees, which are the following:

1. Either one knows this solely because, *de facto*, such truths are used by us to know something about the divine nature and His actions in the world, without the personal perception of the Word manifesting such truths. This kind of knowledge gives place to *direct knowledge* common to the faithful of the Church of God, and to *reflex* and scientific *knowledge* proper to teachers who reason about revealed truths. Even the Jews had all this knowledge.
2. Or we know that all special truths of which we speak are contained in the Word, while, at the same time, the Word is perceived personally in the act of revealing them to us, not just to our bodily ears which would not be sufficient, but also to the ears of our heart. This is proper only to Christians and can be suitably termed as *seeing the supernatural truths in the Word*. This degree of knowledge, however, can be divided into the two types above mentioned: *direct*, which is based on the perception of the Word, given to all Christians in Baptism, and *reflex* or theological which is proper to those who reflect on such knowledge and draw from it formulated knowledge, which either deals solely with the Word as object and is termed simply, *theology*, or also of the Word who acts in souls as subject and Person *per se* object, and this is accustomed to be called *Mystical Theology*.

But it is necessary to clarify better the supernatural knowledge given to men before JESUS Christ our Lord came on earth. It can be summed up under the following headings:

1. Special revealed truths;
2. Simple insights made known by the various truths about the divine nature. Such truths form a unity in God, all being reduced to different degrees and aspects of the knowledge of the same thing;
3. Since grace is divided according to special truths, this divine nature was perceived as *per se* manifest, real object *per se* manifest, and it was the Word, but only as objectively

understood, not the Word as subject and Person; and therefore, properly speaking, it was the divine subsistence, *per se* manifest but not acting and saying '*I and the Father are one*', in as much as the *manifestation* is distinguished from the *operation*;

4. There was also the promise of the coming into the world of the Word as subject or Person, which did not include an internal communication of this personality, since faith in this mysterious promise was sufficient. Hence, the Person of the promised Word was indicated by the names of 'God', 'God with us', 'Father of the world to come', 'Prince of Peace' etc. and as such Abraham<sup>55</sup> could have seen the glory (*diem*) and David could have known that He would be his Lord,<sup>56</sup> though his descendant, without however, the *personal perception itself*. So, the knowledge of the Word as a Person, given to the people of old, was not positive or the object of perception; but negative, rational, symbolic, mysterious, an object of faith much greater than it is now for Christians because the latter have an initial *perception*; and their *faith* refers only to the complete and unveiled perception which constitutes the beatific vision;
5. Finally, there was reflection and philosophical meditation which, pondering on what was externally and internally revealed, organised these truths into a scientific theory; hence there was the birth of *Jewish Theology*, from which I believe both Platonism and even more the School of Alexandria drew some of their theories.

All these cognitions of the ancient Church regarding the divine Word give us a plausible reason for the fact that the name 'Word' applied to God was in use even before Christ. In the Chaldaic paraphrase of Onkelos (Targum Onkelos), which is probably before Christ, where in the Hebrew text we read יהוה Jehovah, it is frequently translated מִפְּרָא memar, that is, *Word*.<sup>57</sup>

This explains why St. Paul commenting on the text of Deuteronomy: "*Juxta est SERMO valde in ore tuo et in corde tuo*"

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<sup>55</sup> John 8: 56.

<sup>56</sup> Psalm 109: 1.

<sup>57</sup> Genesis 3: 9; 6: 6; 20: 3- V. Grot, *In Joann.* 1: 1.

[‘But the *Word* is very near to you it is in your mouth and in your heart’],<sup>58</sup> and the previous verses, interprets them of Christ. Moses’ words are the following: *“For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, “Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” Neither is it beyond the seas that you should say, “Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?” But the Word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.”*

St. Paul, therefore, enlightened by the spirit of JESUS Christ, who had already come, teaches us that for Christians that particular text of Moses took on a new light precisely because Christ had come; and interprets it according to this new light. Hence, he teaches that in the Mosaic passage justice is mentioned, which arises in us who are redeemed through faith in the mercy and redemption of Christ, the justice for which we would have hoped in vain from our own works not yet made valuable by the merits of Jesus Christ. Hence, the Apostle says: *‘But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? – (that is, to bring Christ down to save you from your sins and give you justice which is from faith in Him)’; or ‘Who will descend into the abyss? – (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead, from whom you gain salvation). ‘But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart, - (that is, the word of faith which we preach).’*<sup>59</sup>

By this, the Apostle means to explain that Christ our Saviour, through faith in His merits which cleanses our works polluted by sin, is not far from us, and is communicated to us through the apostolic preaching and the faith which we give to it. Through faith in the preaching and through Baptism which the Church administers as a result of such faith, is given to man the perception of the Word made flesh; and it is this perception which constitutes the salvation of souls.

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<sup>58</sup> Deut. 30: 14; Rom. 10: 8.

<sup>59</sup> Rom. 10: 6-8.

This perception is given to the soul through an indelible character and through grace, by means of which it is expressed by Christians even by word of mouth, as they speak outwardly what they experience inwardly. From all this we see that what was *sermo* (word, sermon, discourse), *praeceptum* (precept, command), *mandatum* (commandment) *etc.* for the Jews is, for Christians, the Word or Christ, because if those words signify a doctrine revealed by God, objectively considered, the latter word signifies for us Christ Himself, subject and Person who reveals Himself to us, and in knowing Him all that doctrine is abundantly understood.

Thus, that objective doctrine becomes for Christians a subject or divine Person *per se* object, *per se* manifest, who reveals Himself as a Person. So, when the Psalm says: “*Constitue, Domine, Legislatorem super eos*” [‘Appoint O Lord, a lawgiver over them’],<sup>60</sup> in which verse the Hebrew word מורה *moreh* signifies *doctorem*, it prays that the Teacher may come, since the knowledge and perception of Him will contain all doctrine. In so far, in fact, as He is *per se* notum [known], He is *per se* doctrine.

The Fathers of the Church, therefore, who translated and used the expression *sermo* [discourse]<sup>61</sup> instead of the expression *Verbum* [Word] were not universally followed. Since, although the word *sermo* was not unsuitable for expressing the internal word of the Father (except that *sermo* implies a plurality of words or concepts, whence, also for this reason, *Verbum* as we have said, indicates better the unity of the Word of God), nevertheless it was not suitable for expressing the personal

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<sup>60</sup> Psalm 9: 21 (Douai).

<sup>61</sup> Tertullian, *De Trinitate* and *Adv. Hermogenem*. - Cyprian, *Contra Judaeos*, 50: 2 c. 3 & 6 - Hilary, *De Trinitate*, 1. 2 - Lactantius, 1. 4 c. 8 & 9 - Ambrose, *De Fide contra Arianos*, c. 2 *Hexam.* 1. 1 c.4 9; 1. 2 c. 2 - Jerome, in c. 2. *Isaiah*, in c. 1 *Epistola ad Ephesios*; Augustine, in *Joannis Tractatus*, 54 & 108 - Prudentius, *Hymns*, 6, *Cathemerinon* - Remigius, *In Epistola ad Hebreos*, c. 4 - Anselm, in *Monologium*, h. 1 - Lactantius sometimes called the divine Word ‘*voce*’ 1: 4, c. 9 - and Claudianus in the poem *De Christo Servatore* said: ‘*Powerful Christ, Creator of things of the world to come. Voice of the most high and sense of God whom the Father poured out of his supreme mind.*’

revelation of the Word to men, in which the Word is not only doctrine, or the spoken word, but is more, being, at the same time, the Teacher who speaks. As such, He has been given to us in Christ, and has been proclaimed in these passages of the Gospel: “*Unigenitus qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit*” [‘The only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known’];<sup>62</sup> and, “*Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in Coelo, Pater et Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus*” [‘Thus we have a threefold warrant in heaven (*that is in the interior of the soul*) the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost’].<sup>63</sup> And where JESUS Christ is called “*testis fidelis*” [‘*the faithful witness*’]<sup>64</sup> or absolutely, “*Fidelis et Verax*”, [‘faithful and true’] to which is added, “*et vocatur nomen eius Verbum Dei*” [‘and the name by which he is called is The Word of God’].<sup>65</sup> These expressions do not simply express the revealed doctrine as object of the mind, but they reveal the Word of God, who is both doctrine *per se* revealed, and Person.

Hence, one can see how much the doctrine of the Old Testament differed from that of the New. This is suitably summed up by St. Paul in those words: “*Non enim iudicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi JESUM Christum et hunc crucifixum*” [‘For I decided to know nothing among you except JESUS Christ and him crucified’].<sup>66</sup> What was simply doctrine in the ancient church becomes also a Person *per se* known in the new one; and the ancient writings receive a new interpretation in the light of this, the interpretation mentioned by Christ Himself when He said to the pilgrims of Emmaus: “*O stulti et tardi corde ad credendum in omnibus quae locuti sunt prophetae! Et incipiens a Moyse et omnibus Prophetis interpretabatur illis in omnibus scripturis quae de ipso erant*” [‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’]<sup>67</sup> And also: “*Scrutamini scripturas,*

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<sup>62</sup> John 1: 18.

<sup>63</sup> 1 John 5: 7.

<sup>64</sup> Rev. 1: 5.

<sup>65</sup> Rev. 19: 11 & 13.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor. 2: 2.

<sup>67</sup> Luke 24: 25-27.



*quia vos putatis in ipsis vitam aeternam habere: et illae sunt quae testimonium perhibent de me*” [‘You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me’].<sup>68</sup>

And it was only after His glorious resurrection that He gave to His disciples the knowledge of the Old Testament: *“Tunc aperuit illis sensum ut intelligerent scripturas”* [‘Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures’];<sup>69</sup> because only then had they believed fully in the glorified Christ who fulfilled the prophecies by His resurrection.

## Reading 23

*[The natural moral order and the supernatural moral order; the perception of the Word and the communication of the Holy Spirit]*

*Naples 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1849*

Passing now from the intellectual order to the moral order we shall quickly see that the same doctrines can be applied. In the moral order there is, on the one hand, the law, and on the other, the adherence which man gives to the law. We have already shown the reasons why there is a multiplicity of laws and, yet, all these moral laws are not lacking in unity because special laws are reduced to one prime simple law which is: ‘Acknowledge being’. In the same way that being is one and the idea of being is one, so also one is the demand which being makes to be loved, as that which is *per se* loveable to intelligent beings.

And if being is the one object deserving love, the moral necessity of loving is also one; the moral duty, therefore, is one, and one

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<sup>68</sup> John 5: 39.

<sup>69</sup> Luke 24: 45.

is also the moral value of the intellective being, which consists in his unlimited love of being. Every virtue ends at this point, and this is the formal part of every virtuous act.

Since the love of being is always ordered, that is, divided according to the quantity of being, it can show a different appearance and attitude according to the powers which combine in man to bring it into action, as well as the perfection, variety of types, and the effectiveness of these powers; according also to the occasions one has to exercise that act of love towards multiple and limited being, and towards infinite Being, as well as the different cognition of being, and, finally, according to the way in which such love is put into action, in one way or another, with one part, for example, being put into action while the others remaining in a prime virtual act. The result of all of this is that we have a great variety of virtues, special virtuous acts, and different moral conditions in man.

Supposing that man knows God, the Supreme Being, it becomes easier to acknowledge moral unity, since, in such case, human actions acquire one sole end, and all the love towards finite being must be founded, at least virtually, in the love of the absolute being, the source and cause of every being.

Therefore, when this order of love is put into act in such a way that man refers all his actions explicitly to God, then the whole of his virtue becomes love of God: this is the formal part of virtue. Virtue has become religion, holiness. It is one, because love is one in its different human acts, and the object of love is one. If God, however, is known only naturally and therefore negatively, besides the fact that it will be very difficult to achieve such natural holiness, it is still only virtue within the limits of nature.

When the supernatural cognition of God is reached, that is, the infusion of grace, which is a perception of the divine reality, then the whole moral order is elevated and becomes supernatural because moral love acquires as its object, absolute Being positively known, felt and perceived. This immediate communication of God to the soul occurs usually by means of some external manifestation of God, like a revelation, a sign or

a sacrament.

When the Word became flesh, He revealed Himself externally clothed in His human nature, and to this external communication there corresponded the internal and grace-giving perception of the divine person of the Word, which is the principle and foundation of Christian virtue, of Christian perfection, of supernatural virtue.

Every grace is infused through the operation of the Holy Spirit, but, as we said, He does not reveal Himself when He infuses His gifts,<sup>70</sup> and not even when He impresses the Word as person in the soul. But afterwards, the Word who already resides in the soul, openly communicates to it His Spirit, at first in the form of sensible and visible gifts, and afterwards also as Person,<sup>71</sup> as it happened on the day of Pentecost and always in the Sacrament of Confirmation. The personal feeling of the Holy Spirit is such that through it one feels not only inspiration to do good, but also the Spirit inspiring it, so that one does not doubt that the inspiration comes from the infinite being, which is recognised as a divine Person, because one feels it *per se* acting, *per se* loveable, *per se* love, *per se* virtue.

But the intellect's reflection has difficulty in assembling and formulating such distinction, and consequently few are the people who manage to form a distinct knowledge of this, which can be expressed in words.

These are, therefore, the specific degrees of supernatural and natural virtue, which, however, can always be reduced to one essence comprised in one simple idea.

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**70** Onkelos, the author of the Chaldaic paraphrase of the Pentateuch, gives the Holy Spirit the name *Shekinah* which means *presence*, *presence* of God. This was a cognition of the Holy Spirit in his gifts. He conceived God as the divine nature present to the soul. He did not distinguish the person of the Spirit.

**71** We follow the opinion of P. Petavius concerning the personal communication of the Holy Spirit.

## Reading 24

*[The Word is the remote principle of the intelligence of man. Moreover, in manifesting Himself either as revealed divine object, or as Person, the Word moves us with His power, if we do not oppose Him, to yield to the dictates of reason]*

### *“In the beginning was the Word”*

We have already said that the Evangelist John, by beginning his Gospel with the divine Word, established the principle and the source of the supernatural wisdom which he undertook to explain in his book (Reading 20). Among the four emblems of Christ,<sup>72</sup> the eagle is the symbol of His divinity and therefore it is applied to the Evangelist who demonstrated this more than the others. No other evangelist called Christ the Word, no other probed so deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation.

It was necessary, in the first place, to proclaim the humanity of Christ, and this was done chiefly by St. Matthew; then, to announce the kingdom founded by Him, and this was done by St. Mark; then to present His eternal and royal priesthood, and this was explained by St. Luke. Finally, as if by these stages the human mind might rise to contemplate in Christ the very Word of the Father, it was the task of the last of the Evangelists, the beloved disciple, to proclaim it most clearly.

We must add that from the Word comes also the formation of the human reason, which, however, by itself does not reveal the Word to us; the Word, in fact, gives only the *idea of being*, the principle and universal means of natural knowledge. The Word is, therefore, the remote principle of natural sciences.

Furthermore, besides forming in a remote way the intelligence of man, the Word of God, in manifesting Himself either as revealed divine object, or even as Person, moves us with His power, if we do not oppose him, to yield to the dictates of reason and, as Origen observed, places far from us all that is contrary

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<sup>72</sup> Ezekiel 1.

to reason.<sup>73</sup> He is not cold and ineffective in moving us as, instead, is the bare idea, nor does He move us partially towards some finite being to the prejudice of some other, but He moves us to adhere to absolute Being, and thence to all being proportionately, because the Word is absolute Being, the fullness of objective being *per se notum* and Person. Hence our spirit, clinging and adhering to the whole of being, to that which alone is being, becomes impartial towards all the pieces of being, as are finite beings.

However, the communication of the Word to us by perception, is made by means of some sensible signs, for instance, the Sacramental signs and, in the first place, the feelable Humanity of JESUS Christ, which can be called the greatest Sacrament, the source of all the other Sacraments instituted by Him.

Another sign is the sign of the words used for preaching the Good News: St. Paul, in fact, calls the word of God *gladium spiritus*<sup>74</sup> [the sword of the Spirit] meaning the preaching animated by the internal communication of the Word, which operated mightily on the souls of the listeners, at the same time as the external word of the preachers fell on their senses.

Another important reason which moved St. John to begin his Gospel with the proclamation of the Word of God was that, in undertaking to write the life of Christ, it was necessary to proclaim before all else His eternal generation, as he wished to demonstrate the origin of the Person of whom he spoke. By beginning to announce the Divine Word, he meant to stress the unity of the work of the world, because he proclaimed the Author of both creation and redemption, the latter being a continuation and perfection of His original plan.

And rightly St. Irenaeus mentioned this reason when he said: "*Significans quoniam per Verbum, per quod Deus perfecit conditionem, in hoc et salutem his, qui in conditione sunt, praestitit hominibus: sic inchoavit in ea, quae est secundum Evangelium doctrina: In principio erat Verbum*" [They mean that

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<sup>73</sup> *In Joann.*, lib. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Eph. 6:16.

just as it was through the Word that God wrought creation, so it was in this same Word that God gave salvation to mankind in creation. So, the teaching with which we are presented in the Gospel begins with the words: ‘In the beginning was the Word’].<sup>75</sup>

Being given the occasion by the heretics Cerinthus and Ebion, who denied that Christ existed before Mary, strengthening the Church against successive heresies,<sup>76</sup> and at the same time making up for the gaps left by the other evangelists, St. John wrote his marvellous Gospel beginning it with a sublime introduction by which, “*Erexit se non solum super terram et super omnem ambitum aeris et coeli, sed super omnem etiam exercitum Angelorum, omnemque constitutionem invisibilium potestatum, et pervenit ad eum per quem facta sunt omnia*” [‘He transcended not only the earth and the whole extent of the sky and the heaven, but also all the hosts of angels and the whole hierarchy of invisible powers, and so reached Him through whom all things were made’].<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Contra Valent.* 1 c. 1.

<sup>76</sup> “*Joannes, si sedulo inspicias, prioribus capituli huius versiculis, errores evertit Judaeorum, JESUM Messiam esse negantium; Platoniorum, Stoicorumque, Verbum quidem ponentium, sed inferius Deo; Epicuraeorum, qui omnia casu facta esse putabant; Cerinthis et Ebionis, Verbi divinitatem negantium; Gnosticorum, quibus alia principia multis ante Verbum saeculis existentia probabantur; Arianorum denique et Socinianorum, quos deinde inferiora tempora effuderunt, JESUM Christum Deum uniusque cum Patre substantiae non esse asserentium*” [‘If we examine closely these verses of the first chapter we see that John is refuting the errors of the Jews, who denied that Jesus was the Messiah; the errors of the Platonists and Stoics, who accepted the existence of the Word, but put the Word below God; the errors of the Epicureans, who thought that all things had been created by chance; the errors of Cerinthus and Ebion, who denied the divinity of the Word; the errors of the Gnostics, who held other principles existed many ages before the Word; and the errors of the Arians and Socinians, who, in more recent times, have said that Jesus Christ is not of God or of one substance with the Father.’] (Calmet, in h..1)

<sup>77</sup> Aug, in *Joann. Tract.* 36.

## Reading 25

*[From the words 'the Word was with God' it is demonstrated how the Word leads us to the Father]*

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"*

Having said that the absolute and necessary Word was before all creatures and from eternity, the Word who could not fail to be, because He was Being *per se* known, St. John continues to teach us where the Word was from eternity; and tells us: *with God*.

This progression of concepts is perfectly logical, since it is necessary to start with that which is *per se* manifest, to arrive at that which is manifested; to start with the light to arrive at that which is made clear by the light. As we have seen, it is the Word who reveals the Father to men: and the Word is *per se* light which shines on every man.

This then is the order according to which intelligences move; and this is the order kept also by the one who teaches them. It is not appropriate to say that in the order of generation the Father precedes the Word, since in our case we are not dealing with the order of generation but with the order of understanding and teaching: the two orders proceed in a contrary direction. It is indeed true that as soon as one knows the Word, one knows the Father, so that the cognition of the second does not precede in time the cognition of the first, according to the words of Christ: '*Philip, he who has seen me, has seen the Father*'.<sup>78</sup> But this does not take away from the logical precedence according to which the personal cognition of the Word precedes the personal cognition of the Father.

Natural philosophy is obliged to follow the same method. It moves from the idea of being as from the first thing that it

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<sup>78</sup> John 14: 9.

knows: ideal being is *per se* known, is pure light, and no one can deny it, since it is necessary. We have to admit this and move on to the relationship which it has with the most real and absolute being. Although ideal being proceeds from absolute being, and cannot be without it, nonetheless the existence of the absolute is known by means of it. In the first place, in fact, one experiences the clear necessity of admitting ideal being, and afterwards one understands that ideal being cannot be without absolute being, and therefore the mind feels obliged to admit the absolute.

*Naples 9<sup>th</sup> March 1849*

The logical order which Christian theology must follow is to proclaim the Word first, and then to proceed from this to the Father. St. John leads us straight to the Father, when he says: '*And the Word was with God*'. God here signifies the Father<sup>79</sup> and with these words St. John shows the distinction of the Person of the Word from the Person of the Father.

We could ask at this point for the reason why the word "God", in our case, refers to the Father. We reply by noting, in the first place, with St. Thomas Aquinas,<sup>80</sup> the difference between the meaning of the word *God* and of the word *Godhead*. This second name indicates the divinity in the abstract, and therefore is valid only for signifying the divine nature; whereas the word *God* signifies the divinity in its concrete reality, and therefore it can validly signify the Person. The word *man*, for example, indicates a human person, whereas the word *humanity* signifies only human nature. Theologians, therefore, allowed the use of the following phrase: '*Deus generat Deum*' [God generates God], since this means that one divine Person generates another divine Person, but they did not permit the phrase: '*The Godhead generates the Godhead*' because by saying this we would mean that the divine nature generated another divine nature, and so

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<sup>79</sup> Origen, in *Joannes.*, 1. 2 - Chrysostom, *homily.* 2 - Basil, in h. 1. - Athanasius, in *oratione.*, *Quod Deus de Deo sit Verbum* - Hilary, *De Trinitate.*, 2 - Bede, in h. 1 - Theophylactus, in h. 1 - Euthymus, in h. 1 - St. Thomas, in h. 1.

<sup>80</sup> In h. 1.



we would multiply the persons.

Having said this, although the word *God* is properly used for signifying the concrete reality or the divine Person, yet, by our use of it, we do not determine one Person rather than the other; we must ascertain, therefore, the reason why the word “God” indicates the Father in the passage of St. John: ‘*And the Word was with God*’. This is shown by the context, since it cannot signify the Son who is the Word, it cannot indicate the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, in which case He would be said to be with the Father and the Son rather than *vice versa*, as we shall explain better when we talk about the strength of meaning of the preposition *with*.

Finally, we must note that the word *God* is usually applied in the first place to the Father, as the Person who is the original source of the two other Persons, to whom He communicates His own proper divine nature numerically identical. The Father is, in fact, divine subsistence, subsistent Being, who by His own proper act renders Himself *per se* known and loved, in which consists the procession of the other two Persons. And the word *God* means precisely the subsistence of absolute being without determining in it anything else. Hence it is suited to that Person who is first of all subsistence, and has not received it, because to have received it is not expressed in the word *God*. So, when by the word *God* we wish to signify the Son or the Holy Spirit, it is necessary that the context show this, by adding the relationship which constitutes the Persons who proceed; not so, when we wish to signify the Father.

And St. John, in saying that ‘*the Word was with God*’ speaks more in conformity with the ancient writings which often mention the ‘*Word of God*,’ whereas they do not speak of the ‘*Word of the Father*.’

Furthermore, in saying that ‘*the Word was with God*’, he gave the reason why God the generator is called Father. He is called Father precisely for this reason, that He has with Him the Word, having generated Him. If he had said “*the Word was with the Father*” he would have supposed that the readers already knew who the Father was. However, the Evangelist wished to make

Him known by means of the Word and by the relationship which the Word had with the divine subsistence that generated Him.

## Reading 26

*[The meaning of the word ‘was’, which shows ‘the eternity of the Word with the Father’. The unity of substance is kept by expressing the unity of divine Persons with the particle ‘in’; the multiplicity of divine Persons is kept by using the particle ‘with’]*

### *‘And the Word was with God’*

The word “*was*” indicates the eternity of the Word with the Father, because just as saying that ‘*in the beginning was the Word*’ had signified that the Word was eternal, so equally saying that He was with the Father signifies that from eternity He was present with God His Father.<sup>81</sup> Hence, what the ancient writings say of Wisdom is also said of the Word: “*Omnis sapientia a Domino Deo est, et cum illo fuit SEMPER ET EST ANTE AEVUM*” [‘All wisdom comes from the Lord and was with him always and is before all ages’],<sup>82</sup> where the sacred author, not content with having said “*fuit semper*” [was with him always], as if this could be understood as meaning: *during the duration of the world, the course of time*, adds, in order to show it means eternity, “*Est ante aevum*” [‘is before all ages’] using the word IS in the present tense, in order to exclude every succession and modification and to signify eternity without any equivocation. And as the Word was the absolute Word and had a necessary existence, so He had to be, with the same necessity, with the Father who was also necessary, so that the necessity of the Word shows, according to our way of thinking, the necessity of God the Father with whom He was.

If we wish now to show the value of the word ‘*with*’ used by the Evangelist, we must first keep in mind that divine things, which

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<sup>81</sup> Origen, cited St. Thomas, in h. l.

<sup>82</sup> Eccl. 1: 1.

have a nature different from created things, can be taught to men only by using words which have been invented to signify created things, and are therefore inadequate to represent divine concepts. The reason is that when they are applied to the latter, they take on a new significance and form propositions which, if applied to human things, would be absurd.

Here, St. John says that the Word was ‘*with*’ God. Now no created thing can, strictly speaking, be by itself with God, as it is infinitely distant from the excellence and from the nature of the Creator. The Being, therefore, which of its nature is with God, must have the divine nature, must be God, since there is no bridge spanning the infinite and the finite, and the finite is infinitely distant from the infinite. The infinite, therefore, is God himself.

Having, then, said that the Word was with God, St. John laid down the principle from which we could draw the consequence, which is that the Word was God; a consequence drawn immediately by the Evangelist. This consequence, which destroys the subtleties of the Arians, flows so spontaneously that the Evangelist adds that the Word was with God *in the beginning*, which, as we have said, means from all eternity, in which there could not be creatures. This is necessarily so, because we are dealing with the absolute, necessary, and eternal Word who cannot be alone but who requires, as a necessary relation, Him who pronounces Him.

Furthermore, the word “*with*”, in its first instance, signifies nearness of place, from which it was afterwards transferred to indicate nearness or intimate relationship of nature. There may be people, therefore, who not knowing how to conceive things without placing them in some space,<sup>83</sup> would like to ask: “*If the Word was already before the world was created, where was He?*” The Evangelist replies that He was ‘*with*’ God, teaching, at the same time, that He was simple and had no need to be in a place, being with God.

A similar difficulty arises when people begin to apply themselves

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**83** But this objection came from the imagination of those who say that ‘everything which exists is somewhere, and in a place.’ St. Thomas, in h. 1.

to philosophy, and are told that ideal being, the light of the mind, comes before all cognitions. They soon ask: “*Where is this ideal being?*” and one must answer that it is in itself, which is something not easy for them to grasp, since their imagination demands that it should be in some place. It seems to them that ideal being cannot be conceived without placing it in a space.

Naples,  
10<sup>th</sup> March 1849,  
*Feast of the 40 Martyrs*

There are four expressions used by the Scriptures to explain the connection of Christ with the Father. It is said that ‘*the Word is with God*’; that He is ‘*in the Father*’;<sup>84</sup> that He ‘*is in the bosom of the Father*’;<sup>85</sup> that ‘*He is seated at the right hand of the Father*’.<sup>86</sup> Since human language cannot explain this connection with one expression, it is necessary to use many in order that somehow one might supply for the defect of the others. We must see, then, the value of each of these expressions and how one corrects and completes the other.

Now as regards the last expression, it belongs to the humanity of Christ, raised above all creatures through the hypostatic union with the Word and placed by the throne of God. One sees this in Psalm 110 (109), which begins with the words: “*The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand’*”, where the Lord, that is, God, speaks to the Son of David, as we know from the Gospel,<sup>87</sup> that is, to Christ, as man, to whom He also says: “*You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*”. Being a Priest belonged to Christ as man, and also being a King, although the grandeur of this priesthood and of this kingship arose from that infinite dignity which the most sacred humanity acquired from its personal conjunction with the Word.

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**84** ‘ . . . I am in the Father and the Father is in me’ (John 14: 10).

**85** ‘ . . . the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known.’ (John 1:18).

**86** Mark 16: 19.

**87** Matt 22: 45.

We must, then, investigate the value of the three other expressions which pertain to the divine Word. No one of these, taken separately, would have been *per se* suitable to express the conjunction of the Word with God who pronounces Him.

We are accustomed to use the word '*with*' applied to human things to signify nearness of two things or persons substantially distinct from one another, there not being in created things any example in which there is identity of substance with diversity of persons. On the other hand, in divine things substance and subsistence cannot be multiplied, because God is simply one.

The preposition '*in*' in the case of created things usually means the conjunction of an accident with its substance. Hence, we say: 'the colour is in the body' and not 'near', 'with' the body; whereas we say that 'one man is 'with' another man' and not *in* another man. In created things the word *in* cannot be used in any other way because there is no case in the whole of nature of one person being in another without any confusion and also having identity of substance. This species of in-existence is not fulfilled in creation and so the word *in* is never used in this sense. Moreover, there are no accidents in God, and therefore the preposition "*in*" applied to God cannot express an accidental conjunction as happens when it is applied to bodies.

The expression, "*the Only Begotten is in the bosom of the Father*", cannot be taken in a literal sense because the Father does not have a bosom, but at the same time it expresses more suitably than the other two the in-existence of the two Persons, by means of the similarity with the mother who has in her womb the son conceived by her, and with the concept of generation which is included in it.

It is, then, necessary that these three expressions applied to the union of the Word with God who pronounces Him, correct and complete one another in such a way that we exclude from each of them that which cannot belong to the divinity, and so we come through them to understand what is right to think about it.

Now the two first expressions, which use the words '*with*' and

‘*in*’, taken together correct and perfect each other; because ‘*with*’ demonstrates that between the Word and God who pronounces Him we must not posit a union similar to that of accidents with substance, which instead is expressed by the word ‘*in*’ applied to corporeal things; and the preposition ‘*in*’ demonstrates that we must not even allow a nearness of two separate substances or natures as we are accustomed to express with the word ‘*with*’ applied to finite substances.

The unity of substance is kept by expressing that unity with the particle ‘*in*’; the multiplicity of persons is kept by using the particle ‘*with*’. By the use of such words we understand that in God there must be unity of subsistence and at the same time plurality of persons, and that such is the union of the Word with God who pronounces Him, of one substance with the Father and at the same time personally distinct.

But if the word ‘*in*’ indicates the in-existence of one person in the other better than does the word ‘*with*’, yet the former does not make known the quality of union which the two persons have with each other because we can say equally that ‘*the Father is in the Son*’ and that ‘*the Son is in the Father*.’ The word ‘*with*’ helps here. This word, as the ancient Fathers have noted,<sup>88</sup> and as St. Thomas observed later, “*significat*

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**88** Some Fathers said that the expression *apud Deum* signified the same as *in Deo*. Iren., 1. 3. c. 8 – Athan. *Orat Quod Deus de Deo sit Verbum* - Aug, *De Trinit.*, 6, 2 - Fulg., *Ad Monim.*, 3, 2 – Victorin. *Contra Arium*, 1. 2). These Fathers wished to say that both expressions signified the in-existence of the persons and the unity of substance and they were right. Nevertheless, from another point of view the two expressions differ in value, as the following have observed: St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril, Theophylact (in h. l), Severus of Antioch, Leontius, Theodore of Mopsuestia (*Catena graecor.*, in *Joann.*). They note that of substances or the persons we say that they are *apud*, whereas as regards the accidents we say they are *in substantia*. Hence, they concluded most admirably against the Sabellians, who denied the plurality of persons, that this passage of St. John: *Et Verbum erat apud Deum*, proved the subsistence of several persons.

But the Arians attacked this (S. Fulgent 1. c.) and they wanted to infer that there was a difference in nature between Father and Son, not understanding how there could be a distinction of persons without a distinction of nature, since in created things there was no instance of several persons subsisting in the same being. Now it is true enough that the preposition *apud* applied

*auctoritatem in obliquo*” [denotes authority indirectly]: because one would not say strictly that the king is with the soldier but that the soldier is with the king, and so we would not say that the Father is with the Son but that the Son is with the Father, such that the person with whom another dwells is supposed to be the principal and in some way in authority over the other. Now, although among the divine Persons there is perfect equality of dignity, yet there is a relation of origin through which the Father generates the Son, so we aptly say that the Son is with the Father who generates him whereas it would not be equally suitable to say that the Father is with the Son; and this expression is not found in Holy Scripture.

But if the word *with* applied to created beings signifies a seniority, a pre-eminence, an authority or priority of the person, with whom another is said to be; it is necessary to understand which of these significations we must apply to the divine Persons. Now we know from other places in Scripture that they are equal in everything except causality. *‘I and the Father are one’*,<sup>89</sup> said Christ: therefore, the word “*with*” in divine matters simply signifies that relationship through which the Father generates the Son, or the property of the Father to ‘*generate*’, and of the Son to be ‘*generated*’.

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to created things indicates a distinction between substances and not a distinction between persons. But it is precisely because of this that we must examine whether in the passage of the Evangelist, he indicates distinction of persons only or also of substances. In order to see this, it is necessary to compare this passage with other parallel passages in divine Scripture. Now in these we read that ‘the Son is in the Father,’ where diversity of substance is excluded because the word ‘in’ signifies that which is a substance and yet not in several. So, the word *apud* is most suitable even in common speech to indicate plurality of persons and to exclude the plurality of natures applied to God, because otherwise the other saying of Christ could not be correct ‘I am in the Father and the Father is in me.’ With this passage the Arians are refuted.

St John Chrysostom (in h. 1), St. Hilary (*De Trinit.*, 1, 2), and St. Thomas Aquinas (in h. 1), observe most wisely that the word *apud* is different from the word ‘in’,<sup>1</sup> it expresses indirectly “*auctoritatem Patris ad Verbum*” [*the authority of the Father over the Word*], which simply consists in the Word receiving from the Father all that he is, the same nature and divine subsistence of the Father.

**89** St. John 10: 30.

The other parallel passage which says: *'The only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known'*,<sup>90</sup> helps in determining the meaning of the word "*with*". In this case, the relationship between the Father and the Son is specified, namely one of generation. Also explained are other differences about the generation in finite things and the generation of the Word. Firstly, in saying that the First-born is in the bosom of the Father, we note that He is not separate from the Father but remains continually in Him.

In the second place, we note in the word '*is*' the eternity of generation; nothing new can happen in the Divinity, and we cannot say that anything happens in it, because nothing happens; the Divinity simply is. In the third place, we understand by such an expression that the generation of the Word is not an operation which has a beginning, a middle and an end, as human generations have, but it is always a complete immanent act; hence we can say at the same time, that both the Word is always being conceived and is always conceived.

By means of this passage then we understand that the expression *et Verbum erat apud Deum* [and the Word was with God], does not indicate any authority in the Father except the property which he has of being the generating principle, hence some Fathers of the Church call him the *author* of the Word.

## Reading 27

*[Before speaking of the external works of the Word, the Evangelist declares that the Word was from eternity with the Father]*

*"And the Word was with God"*

Moreover, the Evangelist found this expression suitable also for signifying other truths. Wishing to pass on to speak of the works

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<sup>90</sup> John 1: 18.



of the Word and of how He was the author of the world and was then personally revealed in the work of redemption accomplished by Him in the world, it was necessary that he should say where and how the Word was before He worked and revealed Himself to men.

Hence the Evangelist raised his mind above all the external works of the Word, and before telling what He had done and how He had revealed Himself to men, declared what He was from all eternity: that He was with God, who pronounced Him eternally, and that He was the Word of God undivided from God. He was present in eternity, hidden from creatures who did not yet exist. This is declared by St. John himself in another passage: "*Annuntiamus vobis vitam aeternam quae ERAT APUD PATREM, ET APPARUIT nobis*" ["We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us"].<sup>91</sup> In this quotation, His hidden state in the bosom of His Father is contrasted with His revelation as the Word.<sup>92</sup> St. Gregory the Great, who recognised this meaning in the words of the Evangelist, did not hesitate in understanding in the same way the words of Eliphaz in the book of Job: "*Ad me dictum est verbum absconditum*" ["A hidden word was brought to me"].<sup>93</sup>

The word remained truly hidden from Job's friend, in so far as he had not understood the person who spoke to him in the vision of the night: "*Stetit quidam cuius non agnoscebam vultum*" ["Someone stood still, but I could not discern its appearance"].<sup>94</sup> Hence, the person speaking remained unknown to him, and he did not fully understand the word spoken to him. The Word speaking to him remained hidden; if he had seen Him, he would immediately have known that man could not be justified before God;<sup>95</sup> he would have understood the purity,

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<sup>91</sup> 1 John 1, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Theophylactus, in h. l. - Ambrose, *L. De Incarnat. Dom.* C. 3 - Gregory of Nyssa, *L. De Fide ad Simplicium*, Rupert, in h. l. - Cyril of Jerusalem., *Catechesis*, 2a.

<sup>93</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Moral Dissertation on Job*, 5: 19.

<sup>94</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *On Job*, 4: 12, 16.

<sup>95</sup> The words of the unknown person who appeared to Eliphaz were: "*Numquid homo, Dei comparatione justificabitur, aut factore suo purior erit?*"

holiness and perfection of God Himself.

## Reading 28

*[The Word, who was from eternity and was with God, could only be  
God Himself]*

### *“And the Word was God”*

In these words, the Word is the subject and God is the predicate, as one can see from the Greek text.<sup>96</sup> The natural construction is this: ‘*And the Word was God*’.<sup>97</sup> The Word, then, who was from eternity and was with God could only be God Himself. We are not dealing, therefore, with a passing Word; we are dealing with a permanent and necessary Word, who cannot cease to be Word. We are not dealing with an accidental Word, but with a *per se* subsistent Word, who, being with God, had consequently to be a divine Person.

We have already noted that the word God expressed a real Being, a person, not an abstract idea or divine essence, as the word *Godhead*. Hence to say, ‘*And the Word was God*’ means ‘*And the Word was a Divine Person*.’

But we have also said that, ‘*the Word was with God*’, and therefore that one divine Person was with another divine Person; and this seems to mean that the divine Persons, one of whom is said to be with the other, are two, because one would never say that the same was with the same; there would be no need to say

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[‘Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his maker?’] (Job. 4: 17-18).

**96** Καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος [Et Deus erat Verbum – And God was the Word]

**97** The construction by which the Evangelist places here the predicate before the subject is to preserve the continuity of the three clauses each of which begins with the last word of the preceding one. This is a mode of speaking used by the Jews and frequently in Scripture.

it.

If both are God, they must have the same divine nature, because the divine nature can only be one; there can only be one God. Moreover, although the word “divine” indicates the Godhead, and therefore the divine nature, and although He who pronounces the Word is God, and the Word pronounced is God, there are not consequently two Gods, but only one God in two Persons.

Now since there is no instance, in the world of creation, of several persons sharing one identical nature, it is necessary to demonstrate that this fact does not involve contradiction. To do this it is necessary to have recourse to the definition of person, which is this: ‘A person is an intelligent being in so far as it has a supreme and incommunicable principle.’ Having given this definition, it can be clearly deduced that a being can be the same and yet have several supreme and incommunicable principles, that is, principles which do not suffer any confusion, in which case the one identical being would subsist in several persons. Now God pronouncing the Word and the Word being pronounced are supreme and incommunicable principles, which do not suffer any confusion with each other: therefore, they are two Persons in the same being, in the same nature.

But the Word is with the Father who pronounces Him: God, then, who pronounces the Word, is one Person who has a causal priority of origin, in so far as He pronounces the Word, eternally equal to Himself.

In the words, ‘*And the Word was God*’ [καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος], St. John does not place an article before the word ‘God’ because ‘God’ is construed as predicate and what is used as predicate is not given, generally, an article. When the word ‘God’ is used as predicate, it gives the clause this meaning: ‘*And the Word had the divine nature,*’ that is, the person of the Word had the same divine nature as He who pronounced Him. This is sufficient to refute the subtleties of the Arians who from the omission of the article before the word θεὸς wanted to infer that the Word was

not called God in the same sense as God the Father.<sup>98</sup>

We could perhaps add that the omission of the article in the passage of St. John is also helpful so that we do not confuse the person of the Word with the person of the Father; because, having said that *‘the Word was with God’*, πρὸς τὸν θεόν, by which he wanted to say that He was with the Person of the Father, if he had said that *‘the Word was God’* with the particle ὁ θεός, it would have seemed that He was the same person as the Father, who was mentioned first as God with the article, ὁ θεός.

In these three clauses, then, St. John said that the Word was, and was from eternity; afterwards he said where He was, that is with the Father; finally, he said more explicitly what He was, that is, God.

Here Origen asks why he said *what* the Word was, after saying *when* and *where* He was. And he replies that the Word, being by His origin with God, it was necessary first to demonstrate that He was in the Father and with the Father, instead of saying that the Word was God.

Here we suggest something which will be either a development of the reason cited by this Father of the Church or it will be a new reason; we leave it for the reader to decide. We must consider, then, that the word ‘God’ is not enough to define the Word, because that expression, besides expressing the divine subsistent nature, and therefore a real person, it does not determine one person rather than the other, since it belongs to all three equally.

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**98** Even Origen is said to have fallen into error because of the omission of the article before the word ‘God’ in this passage: *‘and the Word was God,’* saying that he inferred that the Word was, through essence, the Word, but not through essence, God. St. John Chrysostom refutes this error (*in Joann. Homily 3*) citing other places of the Scriptures (*Ep. ad Tit. 2, 13 - Rom 9, 5 - 1 John 5, 20*) in which the Son is called ‘God’ with the article and others in which the Father is called God without the article (John 1, 6 - Rom 1, 7); Theophylactus also refutes him (*in h. l.*). The same sophism was reproduced by the Arians. Chrysostom gives as a reason why the article is omitted that the Evangelist had already mentioned God with the article and so to make his meaning clearer he here omits it. But the reasons mentioned by us seem more effective, the first of which is universally mentioned by commentators.

The third phrase of St. John, then, does not declare fully what the person of the Word is, but only what is his nature. Now what the person of the Word is, is mentioned already at the beginning with the single expression 'Word', when he says, '*In the beginning was the Word,*' showing that the Word as Person is God *per se notum*, the principle of Christian theological doctrine, the subsistent Truth. This is the reason why it does not admit of definition because it cannot be understood or explained with external words, but only by the internal light of faith, through which He immediately reveals Himself. This, in turn, is expressed with external words and with these He is proclaimed to men, who, assenting through the grace which enlightens their mind, are raised to a supernatural state in virtue of the same faith.

The Evangelist, therefore, announced in the first place the Person of the Word, as the first thing known in Christian doctrine and then more explicitly expressed His nature saying that He was God.

The three clauses so far mentioned by the Evangelist, according to Aquinas refute three types of error.<sup>99</sup> The first clause: 'In the beginning was the Word' shows His eternity and refutes the error of Ebion and Cerinthus who maintained that JESUS Christ did not exist before the Virgin from whom He had taken being and His beginning in time. They considered Him simply as man who had merited divinity by His holy actions. Photinus and Paul of Samosata were followers of these heretics.

The second clause: 'And the Word was with God' establishes the distinction of the persons of the Word and God who pronounces Him. This refutes the error of Sabellius who admitted that God, who had taken flesh from the Virgin, did not take His beginning from her and was eternal, but he said that the Father and the Son were the same and that the Father who was eternal was not another person distinct from the person of the Son who was Incarnate.

The third clause: 'And the Word was God' refutes the error of

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<sup>99</sup> *In Joann.*, c. 1 lect. *la*.

Eunomius who taught that the Son was completely different from the Father, whereas according to the Evangelist he was God as the Father was God.

These three clauses, with which St. John begins, show his superiority over the others who had preceded him. As St. Matthew, in fact, narrates the human generation of Christ, so St. John narrates how the Word was already in the beginning, that is, from all eternity; as St. Luke immediately tells the story of the manifestation of Christ to the shepherds and the Magi (Chapter 2), so St. John narrates how He was with God from eternity, hidden from creatures; as St. Mark describes Him announcing to men the Good News of the Kingdom of Christ, so St. John in the third clause announces that Christ was God himself.

## Reading 29

*[Having given the doctrine of the eternal Word, St. John now begins that of His works. The verse that follows is used as a summary of the first three verses]*

*“He<sup>100</sup> was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made”*

With the three preceding verses, St. John had given the doctrine of the eternal Word. Now he begins that of His works. But first, he recapitulates the doctrine given, of the Word being in the bosom of God who pronounces Him, in order to demonstrate how He proceeds to His works and the revelation of Himself.

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**100** The pronoun ‘this’ οὗτος refers clearly to the Word and not to God because otherwise it would not make sense, since it would simply mean that ‘God was with God’; moreover, we are aware of the peculiarity of St. John’s style, in these verses, of starting the next verse with the last word of the preceding one, or of attaching it to it. This peculiarity, as we have already said, is a characteristic of the Jewish style of writing.

This epilogue is expressed in these words: *'He (that is, the Word) was in the beginning with God'*.

It is in this way that Origen explains this verse, with the approval of the Angelic Doctor, of whom we quote these words: 'Origen, then, very beautifully explaining this same verse, says that it is not in any way different from the first three verses, but is their epilogue. Since the Evangelist, having explained the truth of the being of the Son and going on to explain his power, summarises with an epilogue in the fourth verse what he has already said in the first three. And first, by saying "*this*" he means the third verse; by saying *'he was in the beginning'* he recalls the first; then by adding *'was with God'*, he recalls the second. He does this so that you do not think there is one Word who was with God in the beginning and another who was God; but that this same Word who was God was with God in the beginning'.<sup>101</sup>

Hence, besides this clause summarising the first three, linking it to that which must come afterwards regarding the external works of the Word, it helps also to indicate the identity of the Word who was in the beginning and who was with God and who was God. This is the reason why St. Cyril<sup>102</sup> found this epilogue, which the Evangelist gave regarding the things said about the Word, so suitable for destroying the vain subtleties of the Eunomians and some Arians who said that there was one Word who was in the beginning with God, and another through which things were created. If we were left, simply, with the first three verses we could doubt whether he spoke of one Word or several and to which of these was attributed the creation of the world.

St. John Chrysostom found the summary of the first three verses, which the Evangelist gave in the fourth, useful because with it any doubt is taken away as to whether the Word, who was with the Father, was with the Father in the beginning, that is from eternity.<sup>103</sup>

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**101** *In Ioannem.*, cap 1. Lectio 1a.

**102** *In Ioannem.*, 1. 1. c. 4.

**103** *In Ioannem.*, hom. 3.

Theophylactus, furthermore, observes that by saying, *‘the Word was in the beginning with God’*, the Evangelist demonstrates the perpetual harmony and consensus of will between the Word and God who pronounced Him, from whom He is never divided.<sup>104</sup>

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**104** In Ioannem Enarratio, PG 123



# Book 2

## Of the creation made through the Word

### Reading 30

*[The author begins with a long and learned note to explain why he prefers the common reading which links ‘quod factum est’ to the preceding verse]*

*“He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made”*

The Evangelist now contrasts the Word who was with God from the beginning, with the creatures which were made through Him, and therefore he teaches, as Leontius notes, that the Word is not a creature, not one of the things which were made, but He through whom were made all that was made.<sup>105</sup>

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**105** Many Fathers join these last words to the clause which follows, reading it thus: *omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil. Quod factum est in ipso vita erat.* But we follow the more common reading which joins *quod factum est* to the preceding verse because it seems to us that it was necessary to explain that by *omnia πάντα* it was not meant just all things but all things made, excluding thus the three divine Persons who were not made, it being strictly true that all things made, that is, creatures, have been made through the Word. And the Greek construction of the text seems to be more natural

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than the Latin, saying instead of *nihil*, οὐδὲ ἓν, that is *neque unum*, with which *unum* (and not *nec*) *quod factum est*, ὃ γέγονεν, is perfectly connected.

It is true that the reading *quod factum est in ipso vita erat* gives, according to the Fathers, a very important and sublime sense. But (where one wishes to keep this sense) it seems that one can find implied in *in ipso vita erat* the *quod factum est* mentioned beforehand, although I have not observed that this has been said by others. Maldonatus judged that the observation of the difference between οὐδέν *nihil*, and οὐδὲ ἓν *nec unum*, an expression used by St. John, is not made much of by the Greeks because these two expressions signify the same thing, the οὐδέν coming from the union of οὐδὲ ἓν, which is certainly undeniable. Hence, he says that no Greek author or teacher of Greek makes such an observation. But although it is true that these two expressions have the same origin and signify the same thing, yet we should note that it often happens that two words which have the same origin are used to signify, through the use of language, different things or signify the same things in a different way and with some secondary and accidental concept which one is accustomed to join to the principal use of the word. Sometimes, through use, the sense of the etymology is lost, we do not think of it and there remains the latest and obvious sense which use has preserved. So, is there anyone who saying *nothing* in English thinks of denying being of which he would undoubtedly think, if instead of *nothing*, he said *no thing*, or *not a thing*? Or is there anyone who by saying *nihil* in Latin thinks of *hilum* which is denied, which he would think of if he said *nec hilum*?

It is necessary, then, in a sacred writer, especially of the sublimity of St. John, to take everything into account not letting an iota pass unobserved as Christ said, speaking of the law of Moses. On the other hand, it seems evident to me that the ο γέγονεν is joined better grammatically with οὐδὲ ἓν than with οὐδέν.

It is true that no Greek writer will stop to observe this difference, but we find nevertheless that this difference has influenced the way in which the Greek writers have commented on this passage of the Eagle of the Evangelists.

a) For the most part it was the Latin writers who used the reading which joined the *quod factum est* to the following verse *quod factum est, in ipso vita erat*. The Greeks, generally speaking, place the full stop immediately after *quod factum est* (St. John Chrysostom, Theophylactus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Leontius, Eutimes, Elijah the Crete; St. Ambrose, *Enarratio. in Psalm 36*, calls this the reading of the Egyptians and the Alexandrians). St. Thomas Aquinas recognises the Greek mode of the reading and attributes it to the authority of Chrysostom, when he writes: “*And because among the Greeks Chrysostom is so great an authority in his explanations, where he explains anything in Sacred Scripture no other explanation is allowed; so, in all the Greek works this punctuation is found as Chrysostom punctuates it namely in this way: “Sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est” (In Joann. Cap. 1 lect 2).* And is it not this difference among the Greek and Latin authors due to the fact that the Latin construction *nihil quod factum est* is not as clear and is not lacking in ambiguity as instead is the Greek which says οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν? The reading which puts the full stop before ο γέγονεν is attributed

These last words of the verse of St. John ‘and without him was not anything made that was made’ destroys one of the usual vain subtleties of the Arians who said that all things were made through the Word except the Word himself who was made by the Father. For if one includes the Word among the things made, what the Evangelist says, that not one of the things made was made without the Word, would no longer be true.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore if the Word already was in the beginning with the Father, then He was not made, because that which is, has no need of being made.

These same words also refute the error of Origen who said that the Holy Spirit was made by the Word, through whom all things were made. This was an error which was later taken up by the Macedonians who professed the Holy Spirit to be a creature. St. John Chrysostom and Theophylactus recognise it to be a mistake based on a bad understanding of the words *omnia per ipsum facta sunt*, separating them from these others which limit them: *et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est*. Hence, St. Gregory Nazianzen says that these heretics had first to prove that the Holy Spirit was among the things made, which they do not prove, and only then would they be able to infer that he had to be made through the Word.

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by some Greek Fathers (Chrysostom, Homily 4 - Epiphanius, in *Ancorato* - Theophylactus - Euthim.) to the Eunomian and Macedonian heretics whom it favoured. The fact that Origen, the precursor of such errors among the Greeks, followed it, is not a reason for authenticating it.

b) Using the Latin *nihil quod factum est*, the Manichaeans took that *nihil* as a thing made without the Word (St. Jerome, in *Epistola LV* - St. Augustine, *De natura. boni*, contra *Manichaeos* c. 25). Now this error is excluded by the Greek text which instead of *nihil quod factum est* says ‘not even one thing which was made.’ Equally St. Augustine, (in *Joann. Tract 1 Ep. CL*, contra *Arianos*, and the book *Soliloq.* c. 4 and 5) interprets the *nihil quod factum est sine ipso* for sin: this is very true teaching but it would not be sustained in the Greek text where there is not the *nihil quod factum est* but *unum*, *εἷς*, to which is attached the *quod*, *ὅ*, following. So, these disputes do not appear in the Greek writers which shows the different value of the two expressions *nihil*, *οὐδέν*, and *nec unum*, *οὐδέ ἓν*.

<sup>106</sup> Augustine, in *Joann. Tract 1*.

## Reading 31

*[The Word, consubstantial with the Father, has a creative act identical with that of the Father; this is signified by the word 'through': omnia per ipsum facta sunt]*

*"He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made".*

The Evangelist, before passing to the creation of the world, in saying that all things which were made, were made through the Word, wishes to repeat that the Word was in the beginning with God, as his opening remark to his teaching of creation.

So, in saying '*all things were made through him*' he does not mean that they were made through Him as if through an instrument separate from God the Father, the Creator. The fact that the Word was in the beginning with God the Father shows His consubstantiality with the Father, and, therefore, shows that He had a creative operation identical with that of the Father. With this argument, the quibbling of the Arians and other heretics, are destroyed.<sup>107</sup>

You will ask why then the Evangelist prefers to say that '*all things were made through him*' rather than '*he made all things*?' What is the strict meaning here of the word '*through*?'

Firstly, we must consider that, if the Evangelist had said '*he made all things*', he would certainly have spoken correctly, as the Psalmist spoke truly and correctly when he said, "*Initio Tu Domine terram fundasti et opera manuum tuarum sunt coeli*" [*'Of*

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**107** We are helped here by referring also to the observation of St. Augustine and other expounders on the reason why it helps to interpret the λόγος of St. John rather with the Latin word *verbum* than with that of *ratio*. '*Here, says the Doctor of Hippo, 'it is more fittingly called Word, not only to signify his relationship to the Father, but also to the things made by the Word, through his power to create. The word Ratio, instead, although nothing is without it, is rightly called reason.'* (In lib. 83 q. 63).

old thou didst lay the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of thy hands’],<sup>108</sup> which St. Paul interprets of Christ;<sup>109</sup> but it would have appeared that the Word alone had created the world without the company of His Father; hence he also adds ‘*et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est*,’ where the word *sine* or *extra*, as others interpret, demonstrates that He wasn’t alone in creating, but with the Father, *apud Deum*, as the Fathers have observed.<sup>110</sup>

It is true that the preposition ‘*through*’, *διὰ*, is not always used to signify ‘company of cause’ but simply ‘cause’ as in the passage of the Apostle where he speaks of the Father: “*Fidelis Deus per quem vocasti estis in societatem filii eius*” [‘God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son’]<sup>111</sup> and precisely because of this, as St. Hilary explains, the Evangelist adds *et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est*, to explain better that the Word operated in company with His Father, or, as he had also said, ‘with His Father’. And this explanation that the Evangelist adds seems so much more suitable in as much as *factum est* being intransitive does not indicate another cause; whereas when ‘*through*’ is added to an active verb, it does not leave any doubt as to meaning company of cause, as in that passage of the Apostle *per quem fecit et saecula*.<sup>112</sup> Here it appears that God made the ages through the Son. And although all this demonstrates the suitability of the addition, *et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est*,

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**108** Psalm 102 (101) 25.

**109** Hebrews 1: 10.

**110** We cite here the words of St. Thomas Aquinas from his commentary of this passage of St. John: ‘Now according to Hilary, this phrase (*without him*) is introduced to show that the Word has its power of action from another. For the Evangelist had said ‘all things were made through him,’ and this could be interpreted to mean that the Father is excluded from all causality. It is for this reason that he now goes on to say: ‘And without him nothing was made,’ the meaning being, ‘all things were made through him’ in the sense that the Father made all things with him. ‘Without him’ is equivalent to saying, ‘not by himself.’ Hence the meaning is ‘he is not alone, through whom all things were made, but he is the other without whom nothing was made.’ This means: ‘Nothing was made without him acting with another’ i.e. with the Father”. See Prov. 8, 30: ‘I was with him ordering all things.’

**111** 1 Cor. 1. 9.

**112** Hebrews 1, 2.

nevertheless what others have observed is not any less true, that it was customary among the Jews and people in the East to say something in the affirmative and then repeat it in the negative, as where Isaiah says: “*Omnia quae sunt in domo mea viderunt: non fuit res quam non ostenderim eis*” [*They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them*]<sup>113</sup> and as Jeremiah also says: “*Omne verbum quodcumque responderit mihi indicabo vobis, non celabo vos quidquam*” [*And whatever the Lord answers me I will tell you; I will keep nothing back from you*].<sup>114</sup>

But this does not mean that the addition in the negative form, besides giving greater emphasis to the affirmation and forestalling any quibbling about the meaning of what has been said, cannot contain any new meaning, that it cannot add any of those accessory and indirect ideas which always accompany the principal one in every discourse and proposition, often even in a single word. Hence, the observation of St. Hilary on this passage of the Evangelist remains equally valid.

We said then that the word ‘*through*’ in the passage of St. John, ‘*Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*’ has the value of signifying company of cause, as if to say ‘All things have been made by the Father through the Word’; but this company of cause, also mentioned by Christ in the words, “*Pater usque modo operatur et ego operor*” [*My Father is working still and I am working*]<sup>115</sup> must be understood not as in human things, where different causes and different agents have different actions; but it must be understood in a wholly divine way, that the action of the Father and the Word is one and identical, as their nature is one and identical.

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**113** Is. 39, 4.

**114** *Harem.* 42, 4.

**115** John 5: 17.

## Reading 32

*[Continuation of the preceding argument and explanation of the concept of efficient cause, formal cause and instrumental cause]*

*“He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made”*

Again, with respect to the word ‘*through*’ we should remember the imperfection of human language which has been instituted to signify created things and is insufficient to express adequately uncreated and divine things, which do not have examples in created things. So, it is necessary to give a new value to words with which we express divine things.

The word ‘*through*’ was instituted to signify or rather indicate the *means* to an end. Now since the means for carrying out an end can vary in nature and way of execution, the preposition “*through*” receives several significations. For the existence of a thing, the very first *means* is the *efficient cause* of it, and this is sometimes expressed with the word ‘*through*’. But since in such a case the efficient cause is that which acts, the preposition ‘*through*’ is not used with an active verb because in a word so construed, the operating cause is already expressed in the nominative and has not further need of being expressed with the word ‘*through*’. But if the verb is intransitive, the operating cause not being expressed, one adds it by means of the word ‘*through*’ or ‘*by*’ of some other word. In this sense one can equally say, ‘God made the world,’ or ‘The world was made by God, or through God,’ that is by means of God, the efficient cause of it. In this sense, the word ‘*through*’ belongs equally to all three Persons because we can say, ‘The world was made through the Word’ and equally through the Father or through the Holy Spirit.

Human thought often distinguishes in created things the *form* from the *matter* of which they are composed, and we make a separate element of the form by abstracting it from the matter

in which it is found, considering it as the immediate cause of the material subject. Hence the concept, used so much by ancient thinkers, of *formal cause*. In order that a given organisation in material things be natural, it is necessary that it has its form, so we consider this as a means to its existence, and this type of abstracted cause is also expressed by using the word '*through*' with intransitive verbs.

We say the same of *material causes* which are separated by the mind from the unity of matter and form of things. Although matter is their element and not their cause, nevertheless it is regarded as a *means* or necessary condition for their existence. This *material cause* is therefore also expressed with the word '*through*' with intransitive or passive verbs. Therefore, we say equally that this statue has real existence through its form, or through its matter. Now in these last two significations, the word '*through*' cannot be applied to express creation made by God, because God is neither the form nor the matter of the universe.

Besides, in created things there is a subordination of causes. Secondary causes, among which are various instrumental causes, are also *means* for the obtaining of the effect or end. But since they suppose the first cause, which is the principal agent, they can be signified by the word '*through*' not only with an intransitive or passive verb, but also with an active verb. In this case, the nominative which governs the construction expresses the principal cause, and the word '*through*' expresses the subordinate and *instrumental* cause. So, we say that '*the carpenter works by means of (through) his axe, or plane, the sculptor by means of (through) his chisel*' etc. If we wish to use a passive construction, the principal agent is put in the genitive, which expresses the cause of the cause, for example: '*this bench was made by means of the axe and the saw of the carpenter; this statue was sculptured by the chisel of the sculptor.*' In such a way the two subordinate causes are equally expressed by both ways of speaking.

We cannot give in any way whatever this value to the word '*through*' in the passage of St. John where he says of the Word: '*All things were made through him*', because the Word is not a



subordinate cause of the Father but is equal to Him; and because subordinate causes have a different nature and a different operation, whereas the Word has one nature and one operation with God who pronounces Him, although there are two Persons who act. St. John says that the Word, through whom all things have been made, is 'with God', that is, consubstantial to the Father, as we saw.

Again, in created things the substantial subject is distinguished from its powers and abilities, and these are considered as *means* with regard to its operations and the effects which it produces. Hence, we say, for example, '*that man thinks by means of his mind*' or '*by means of (through) his mind or his knowledge man writes a book*'. But in God there is no distinction between powers, forces, and essence, there being a most simple essence which is God, and which operates all that God does. So, we cannot say in this sense '*that God does everything through his Word*' meaning that the Word is a part or a power or a special force of God; because He is God Himself, He is wholly in the divine essence which operates.

## Reading 33

*[God creating the world used the whole of his wisdom and power but not totally because creatures being finite do not allow in themselves the total communication of it]*

To say, then, that God operates through His own essence is not a very accurate statement, because it looks, from the construction, that God, who is operating, is something different from His essence; but it is not erroneous when one means that God '*operates through Himself*'. And when we say that God operates through His wisdom or His power, we should equally mean that God is working through His essence, or through Himself, because the wisdom and the power of God is His essence without any real distinction.

However, if we consider the vestiges of wisdom and power of God

in His external works, that is, in the finite things created by Him, we see that precisely because they are finite, they can never have exhausted His wisdom and power. Hence, man argues with imperfect and wholly inadequate thought when he says that God, in producing the world from nothing, has used only part of His wisdom and power, distinguishing this part of His wisdom and creative power from the total wisdom and power of God.

By means of this distinction, we believe we speak exactly when we say that God created the world through His wisdom and power, distinguishing this partial and quantitative wisdom and power from the total wisdom and power of God which is His essence. This is, however, an imperfect way of thinking, as I said, and an inexact way of speaking; it is the sort of thought which shows the limitation of the human mind. The reason is that the distinction which the mind places between that part of wisdom and divine power which the Creator used in creation, and His essential wisdom and power, is a distinction only in the mind of man, since in God there is no distinction whatsoever.

Naples,  
at the new St. Ephrem,  
Capuchin Fathers,  
19<sup>th</sup> March 1849,  
ST JOSEPH

More precisely, we ought to say that God, in creating the world, used *all* His wisdom and power, but not *totally*, precisely because creatures, being finite, were not capable of receiving a total communication of it. On the one hand, then, there is the wisdom and power used in the action of God creating and this is the essence of God simple and indivisible; and on the other hand, there is the wisdom communicated to creatures, and this is a wisdom which is, under different aspects, limited, distinct from the divine essence, but only relatively to creatures who conceive it and consider it abstractly, but such that in God is rooted in His divine wisdom itself. In it, what is for us a ray, is

found to be the infinite sun; and there is no way of distinguishing in it the ray from the sun itself and its unlimited light.

However, the essential wisdom of God is not the Divine Word; it is an attribute which belongs equally to all three divine Persons, who have the same identical nature and essence. So, when we say that '*God created the world through his Word*', meaning that He created the world through His essential wisdom, we do not speak in a *proper* sense, but in what the theologians call an *appropriate* sense, in as much as we are accustomed to attribute wisdom to the Word because the Word proceeds by way of the intellect, and therefore there is great affinity between the wisdom and the Word.

St. Thomas expressed it in this way: "*Dicimus Christum Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam: ideo APPROPRIATE dicimus quod Pater omnia operatur per Filium, id est per sapientiam suam. Et ideo dicit Augustinus quod hoc quod dicitur: 'Ex quo omnia' appropriatur Patri; 'Per quem omnia', Filio; 'In quo omnia', Spiritui Sancto*". [We call Christ the power and wisdom of God. Hence it is by appropriation that we say that the Father works all things through the Son, that is, through his Wisdom. That is why St. Augustine says that *ex quo omnia* refers by appropriation to the Father, *per quem omnia* to the Son, and *in quo omnia* to the Holy Spirit'].<sup>116</sup>

## Reading 34

*[The Word can be considered: 1) as object in its essence, 2) as personal subsistence. If it is considered as subsistence it has the same subsistence and the identical creative power of the Father; if one considers it as object, that is, as light, being known through itself, one quite rightly can say that the Father makes all things through his Word]*

But there is a meaning in these words: '*All things were made*

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<sup>116</sup> In Joann. h. 1.

*through him*' which is not *appropriated* but *proper* and we must now investigate this. We have said that the divine Word is the subsistence of being *per se notum*: He is object, but not ideal object as are the essences of finite things, but subsistent object and therefore object which is at one and the same time subject or Person in His own objectivity, in so far as He feels and lives as object; He is object with life.

Therefore, we can consider Him under two aspects: 1- as essentially object, that is, as light; 2 - as personal subsistence. We must not take these two aspects as implying a real distinction in the Word, because there isn't one, but only as two aspects in our mind, based on the twofold relationship which creatures have with Him. In creatures, in fact, we distinguish the object which is the *essence*, from the *subsistence* which is their reality.

In so far as the *essence* of things comes from the Word, we consider the Word as object or primitive light; in so far as the subsistence of things comes from the Word as from their cause, we consider Him as subsistence which acts and produces them.

If we consider the Word as subsistence and therefore also as creative power, He has the same subsistence and the identical creative power of the Father, who communicates it to Him. Now since He has being from the Father, and since He receives from the Father His being cause of all things, we can say that He is made cause of things through his Father, that is, by reason of the Father who communicates to Him all His own being.

But if the Word is considered as object, that is, as being which is light, as being *per se notum*, from this point of view we can say with complete propriety that the Father makes all things through His Word, as the Church Doctors Augustine and Thomas teach. The latter says: "Now if the aforementioned words, '*Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*' are correctly considered, it clearly appears that the Evangelist has spoken in a most appropriate manner (*propriissime fuisse locutum*). When someone, in fact, makes something, it is necessary that he first conceives it in his wisdom, which is the form and reason of the thing which is to be made, as the preconceived form in the mind

of the artisan is the reason for the chest which he is about to make. So, God does not make anything except through the conception of His intellect, which is the Word of God and the Son of God; and for this reason, it is impossible that He makes anything except through the Son. Whence St. Augustine<sup>117</sup> says that ‘the Word is the full wisdom of all the reasons for the existence of living beings; and so, it becomes clear that all the things which the Father creates are created through him.’<sup>118</sup>

This particular aspect of the Word being object *per se*, was considered by those authors who drew the reason of why He is called λόγος from His being the *knowledge* of the Father, or from containing the *definition*, the reason, the concept, the ideal essence of all things, τῷ αὐτοῦ λόγῳ, that is, *definitione sua omnia complecti*, as among others, Victorinus expresses it in his books against Arius. And this is the only aspect under which, somehow, the Platonists knew how to consider Him; among which is Philo, who, consequently makes Him less than the Father and calls Him always λόγος [Word] and never υἱός [Son]. The reason is that these philosophers never knew the Word as Person.

The two aspects under which we say we must consider the Word, give the reason of the twofold title which is applied to Him in the Scriptures, that is, of λόγος, reason, and υἱός, son; since the former expresses the objectivity, the latter the personality of the Word, and this twofold title is consequently a proof of what we say. In this way different opinions of the Fathers are reconciled, some of whom as St. Cyril<sup>119</sup> and Eusebius<sup>120</sup> say that the Word has been known by the Platonists, whereas others deny this, as St. Jerome, who writes of the Word: ‘*Hoc doctus Plato nescivit, hoc Demosthenes eloquens ignoravit*’<sup>121</sup>[“This is what the learned Plato did not know, this is what the eloquent Demosthenes was not aware of”].

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**117** *De Trinitate*

**118** *In Joann.* c. 1. Lect 22.

**119** *Contra Jul* 1. 8.

**120** *Praepar. Evang.* 1. 7 c. 5. *Lib.* 11, c. 10.

**121** *Ep. ad Paul*

The Platonists knew Him in some way as *object*, they did not know Him as *person*; they knew that cognition could not be explained without supposing that there was a first object, something known through itself, a light in which all things were seen. But they did not know that this first object, the term of all knowledge, had a personal existence and therefore was God. Simply speaking, one cannot say that they knew the Word, and hence the sentence of St. Jerome: '*Hoc doctus Plato nescivit, hoc Demosthenes eloquens ignoravit*' is true. And even more so, since the Platonic *word*, the essential object accepted by them, was an exemplar of the world; they failed, however, to know Him as God *per se* known. This was also a defect in Plato's doctrine.

On the contrary, St. Paul expressed magnificently the two aspects in which it is necessary to regard the Word, as follows: "*Cum sit SPENDOR GLORIAE et FIGURA SUBSTANTIAE ejus*". [He reflects the glory of God *and* bears the very stamp of his nature],<sup>122</sup> in which *splendor gloriae* refers to His property of being object and *figura substantiae* to His personal subsistence. And he says *splendor gloriae* because God is wholly glorious and magnificent in Himself and to those who know Him. Hence it is sufficient that He is known to be glorified (when the free will does not oppose this by denying Him this glory which shines in this concept of Him), and therefore JESUS Christ said: "Haec est vita aeterna, ut COGNOScant TE solum Deum verum, et quem misisti JESUM Christum" [*And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*].<sup>123</sup> JESUS Christ simply wills to make His Father known because to know Him truly is to glorify Him.

Moreover, St. Paul says, "*figura substantiae ejus*", instead of saying simply "*substantia ejus*", because the substance or, as it says in Greek, *υπόστασις*, subsistence, is common to all three Persons but in the Word it is the subsistence in *figura*, the personal subsistence in the object, which is proper to the Word, because the word *figura*, in Greek, *character*, *χαρακτήρ*, expresses the knowability of a thing, that which makes a thing known.

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**122** Hebrews 1. 3.

**123** John 17. 3.

Hence, although the *splendour of his glory* refers more to the property of being *object*, and the *character of divine subsistence* refers more to the property of being a subsistent person; nevertheless, the expression of the Apostle keeps these two things undivided, as they are undivided in the Word, and only undivided in this way can they give true knowledge of the Word Himself. Nor is there anything lacking in the expression of the Apostle, although it does not say that the Word is also the exemplar of the world because this is already contained in its basic property of being divine subsistence in the form of object. Nor does the expression *figura substantiae ejus* give rise to the belief that it excludes substance, as if the figure is one thing and the substance is another. Because we should reflect that:

1. There is no adequate representation of the divine substance outside itself;
2. That even generally speaking substances do not have a figure or type apart from themselves, whenever by substance we understand subsistence, which is what is proper to real things; hence it is necessary that if the first substance has figure, that is expression, knowability, this is itself, since subsistence does not enter into any idea which is pure idea.
3. That finally, the Greek expression which says the '*character of the subsistence*' takes away every equivocation because the character of a thing is in the thing itself and it belongs to it; and therefore, the character also of the divine subsistence is in the divine subsistence and it belongs to it. And because the divine subsistence is most simple and is wholly God, therefore its character can only be the divine subsistence, in so far as it is *per se* intelligible, *per se* understood.

It is not sufficient, then, in saying how the Father creates the world through the Word, to consider the latter simply as object and exemplar. Because although it is true that the artificer, for example the sculptor, makes the statue through the concept which he has of it in his mind, nevertheless one cannot say that the concept itself is the artificer or maker of the statue. The concept is, in fact, a simple rule according to which the sculptor works, it is purely idea, it is object, but not subject or a subsisting and acting person. On the contrary, the Word,

besides being *per se* object and therefore containing the idea of the world, besides being the idea of absolute being, is also subsistence, is a subject, a person operating, because He has the same nature as the Father.

If we consider that the Word is divine subsistence *per se* known and known fully, therefore known in itself and in all the modes in which it can be imitated by finite being, (being, in fact, includes this in its concept, that it can subsist in an absolute and infinite way, and in a relative and finite way), we can see that the Father does all that He does *per extra* through the Word, not only because in the latter He sees the essences of finite things, but also because these essences have the potential of being realised as they exist in the divine subsistence, without distinction from the latter, provided that alone is added the will of this same subsistence, common to the three most holy Persons.

And because being which is known is *per se* loveable, also in so far as it subsists in a limited way, through the analogy which it has with unlimited subsistent being, therefore this will cannot be lacking with regard to all limited possible being, possible, that is, not physically, but logically and morally. And we said that being, known in a limited way, needs the divine will to be realised, since it is not necessary but contingent, that is, it does not have the reason of its realisation in its own concept or in its own essence. Its realisation can be found only in the free will of the Creator.

The Father, then, creates finite being, that is, He makes it subsist by loving it, which is to say by willing it,<sup>124</sup> and He does not love it except where He knows it and He knows it where it is knowable, that is, in the Word, and therefore He creates through the Word. But because the Word is the same divine subsistence *per se* known and has in Himself finite things *per se* known, so this subsistence equally loves in Himself and wills the things

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**124** In the Hebrew language the word *will* is equivalent to effective love. This way of speaking is preserved continually in the Vulgate as when it says of the just man: '*in lege Domini voluntas ejus*' (Ps. 1) '*in mandatis ejus volet nimis*' (Ps. 111, 1); or when it says of God '*non est mihi voluntas in vobis*' (Malach. 1, 10); '*in hoc cognovi quoniam voluisti me*'. (Ps. 40, 12).



with the same love and will of the Father. And since the Holy Spirit equally has the same identical subsistence in so far as it is *per se* loved (and it is *per se* loved in so far as it is *per se* known) therefore also the Holy Spirit creates with the same creating will of the first two Persons.

But why say that the Father creates through the Word rather than through the Holy Spirit? For a reason similar to that for which one says that the sculptor makes the statue through the idea he has of it and not through his love for it. In fact, love moves the sculptor to make the statue but the means with which he makes it is the concept in his mind, which directs his hands in chiselling the stone and drawing out of it the work conceived by him. In an analogous way, as we have said, the Father certainly moved by essential love, sees in His concept, that is, in His Word, finite being and seeing it, creates it. But this concept of the Father is not as that of the sculptor, a pure idea without the corresponding reality, but is a subsistent concept of the divine subsistence identical to that of the Father, whence the divine creating subsistence creates things as it sees them in the object or the Word, which is the same subsistence in its objective form. So, we can say that the same divine subsistence common to all three divine Persons is that which creates through the Word which is itself *per se* known.

## Reading 35

*[The concept of intellectual imagination: God has this power of imagination and when it represents an object, this truly subsists in itself and to others, and this is creation]*

Man has some analogy of this fact of creation in his intellectual imagination. When he imagines a corporeal object, this object exists only relatively to the man who imagines it. Let us suppose now that this object subsisted also in relation to itself, then in this case this object would have been created. Now such is the power of the divine will that when it wills that a finite and relative being subsists, it imagines it so to speak subsisting, and

this divine imagination enables the object to exist not only relatively to God who imagines it, but also relatively to itself and to other beings and so it is created.

In fact, if the imagination, to use this analogous term, could only represent an object to itself, it would be imperfect; it would not do fully what it wants, because the real object, in order to be truly such, must subsist in itself and to other beings to which it has a natural relationship. In God, however, there is no imperfection, and that which He wishes to imagine must consequently be completely true, be the object which He wishes to imagine. But there would be no truth, the object would not truly be a real and subsistent object if it did not subsist in itself and with regard to other beings to which it is bound through its essence. It is appropriate, therefore, that God should have this power of imagination by which, when an object stands before it, it truly subsists in itself and with regard to others; and this is to create it.

To create, then, is to make an object seen in its essence and imagined (the intellective imagination being that power which tries to see an essence in its full realisation) exist as subject (or as existing in subjects which can perceive it), exists relatively to itself (or to those personal subjects who can perceive it) because without this the object would not be realised and therefore the imagination would be in error, it would be defective in representing it such to itself.

No error, however, can exist in God, because He is essentially truth and reality, nor can there be any defect in His power and operations. So, when He wishes to represent to Himself an object as realised, this object must exist as subject and person, or, if it is not intellective, it must exist relatively to persons who, according to their own nature, have the power of perceiving it or of feeling the substantial effect of it, and this is to create. Supposing then, that in God there were a perfect faculty of imagining things, that is, of representing them to Himself as realised, it is necessary to admit in Him the faculty or power of creating.

But the reality of a being is seen only in the essence, which is

the objectivity of the thing, and the essence is contained in the Word which is being as object: therefore creation must have been made through the Word and in the Word.<sup>125</sup> And therefore St. Paul calls Christ “*Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam*” [‘the power of God and the wisdom of God’].<sup>126</sup> In which two words are indicated the two properties distinguished by us in the divine Word. For in so far as He is *subsistence*, he calls Him *Dei virtutem* [power of God], and in so far as He is *object*, he calls Him *Dei sapientiam* [wisdom of God].

It is to be noted here that the word *wisdom* has two meanings, as also the word *knowledge*. These words are taken sometimes in a subjective sense meaning the habit of knowledge and wisdom, the subject having knowledge; and sometimes they are taken in an objective sense for the object itself of knowledge, for the knowledge possessed. Now, if one takes wisdom in the subjective sense, it is common to all three Persons and is attributed to the Word only in an *appropriated* sense. But if one takes it in an objective sense it is *proper* to the Word, or rather is the Word himself, and in this proper significance the Word is called in divine Scripture ‘Wisdom’.

Similarly, *virtue* or divine power taken in a subjective sense is common to all three Persons. But if it is considered as the divine power with which God creates, it is the divine faculty of representing for Himself the realised essence of finite things,

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**125** St. Thomas expresses it in this way: ‘(Created) things can be considered in two ways - as they are in themselves and as they are in the Word. Considered as they are in themselves, not all things are life, or even endowed with life. But when considered as they are in the Word, they are not only endowed with life, but are life, for the ideas which have a spiritual existence in the wisdom of God and through which things are made through the Word himself, are life. An arch made by a craftsman is not in itself endowed with life, nor is it life. But the idea of the arch, which the craftsman had previously in his mind, is in a certain way endowed with life in the sense that it has intelligible being in the mind of the craftsman; but it is not life itself, because the craftsman’s intellectual act is not in itself part of his essence, nor is it his being. But with God the case is different; God’s intellectual act is his life and his essence. Therefore whatever is in God is not only endowed with life, but is life itself, because whatever is in God is his essence. *Hence the creature, in God, is a creative essence.*’ (In. Jn chap.1 Lesson 2)

**126** I Cor. 1: 24.

which essence is in the Word; this faculty, subjective as it is, is still common to the three divine Persons, but since the essence, and in this its realisation, lies in the Word, one says that the Word is the power of God because in Him and through Him God creates, or sees things to subsist.

## Reading 36

*[God pronounces his Word, the difference between the utterance of man and the utterance of God. God loving the whole of being loves also finite being, and by reason of this very fact, it had to be realised]*

It is necessary to call to mind what we have already observed (Reading 9, note 16), that the Hebrew word for the Word, word, *dabar*, was used by the Jews to mean *reality*, which they also called the truth of things. Therefore, every word of God, every word of His must be completely true, and therefore the thing pronounced by God must be real when He pronounces it as real, otherwise it would not be true.

Hence it is that, when God pronounces His own subsistence, He pronounces a real object; through this pronouncement divine subsistence has become *object*, and this object would not be fully true unless it were a real subject and moreover a person. He thus utters His Word which is the divine subsistence itself become object (if one can express it like this) through the pronouncement of God who, in so far as He pronounces, is called Father. This is not, then, a sterile pronouncement, as is that of man who affirms things which are when he perceives them, but he cannot make new ones. If man pronounces as subsistent a thing which is not so, he pronounces a falsehood, because in pronouncing it, the thing is not made to subsist.

*Naples,  
S. Efram Nuovo,  
21<sup>st</sup> March 1849.  
St. Benedict.*

St. Augustine teaches this in these words: “*Proinde tanquam se ipsum dicens, Pater genuit Verbum sibi aequale per omnia. Non enim se ipsum integre, perfecteque dixisset, si aliquid minus, aut amplius esset in eius Verbo quam in se ipso*” [‘And, therefore, the Father, as though uttering himself, begot the Word, equal in all things to himself’ (also in being a person). “For he would not have uttered himself completely and perfectly, if there were anything less or more in his Word than in himself”].<sup>127</sup> And hence, the holy Doctor goes on to explain the difference between the human, defective word and the divine, perfect and complete.

The reason of this difference between the utterance of man and that of God, consists in this, that man is a limited portion of relative being, who, with his action, cannot go beyond his limits and the relativity of being; God, on the contrary, is absolute infinite being *per se*, hence His action always terminates in being. He is not limited to relative being or a portion of being, because He has the whole of being in Himself, and therefore whatever being or portion of being He pronounces, He finds it in Himself, without going outside Himself; He makes it subsistent, because He cannot lack the being which He pronounces, possessing all being in all its possible modes. Some of these modes may be lacking, but only if God does not pronounce them, as it happens with relative beings not pronounced, not created by God, which, however, all lie indistinct and without the individuality which makes them exist in themselves (equivalent to being outside God), in the depths of being itself.

If we consider that God is full of life and infinite in every way, we easily understand that if He lacked only one thing out of those which He loved He would cease to be God since He would have a limitation. Now Being loves being and therefore being which is loved cannot not be. Being loves Himself and wills Himself. But He could not love Himself unless known to Himself; therefore, He loves Himself known. Being known has a logical priority to Being loved; therefore, the Word has a priority of origin (not of time or nature) to the Holy Spirit.

Divine being is *per se* known because it is *per se* pronounced or

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<sup>127</sup> *De Trinit* 15, 14

generated as object *per se* known and as such a subject, a person. But in divine being *per se* known, that is, in the Word, there are known also all possible limitations of being, all the limited modes of being comprised in the concept of being. Now since being *per se* known is *per se* loved, therefore all possible finite beings are also *per se* loved. But since their subsistence, limited as it is, mutually excludes others, therefore although each can be realised, nevertheless they are not all realised together. The order of being is also being, because this order belongs to the essence of being in its ideal form;<sup>128</sup> the moral good of being is also being, belonging to its essence in the moral form. Given, then, that God loves and wills finite being, it follows that He wills it in its greatest quantity. But this demands that one takes into account its order, that is, the connection of finite being, and its moral and eudaemonological good, which is the perfective form of being, to which physical being is ordered, and the order and connection of it. Granted, then, that God, who loves all being, loves finite being, morally speaking He could not do other than will the greatest amount of eudaemonological moral good in the least quantity of finite physical beings, connected among themselves in the best way for the obtaining of such an end; and this is the created world.

Since God loves finite being so conceived and ordered, which in being *per se* known is itself also *per se* known, it could not be that, for this reason, it would not be realised. So, the faculty of creating finite being is shown to be necessary for the perfection of the infinite Being, because, without it, He would not be completely infinite because He would love something He did not have.

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**128** St. Augustine calls the Word *forma quaedam* in these magnificent words: “Est enim Verbum Dei forma quaedam non formata, sed forma omnium formatorum, forma incommutabilis, sine lapsu, sine defectu, sine tempore, sine loco, superans omnia, existens in omnibus et fundamentum quoddam in quo sunt, et fastigium sub quo sunt” [‘The Word of God is a *certain form*, not itself formed, but the form of all forms, form unchangeable without falling away, without defect, outside of time, without extension, surpassing all things, within all things, a foundation as it were, on which all things rest, a summit beneath which all things are. ‘*De verb. Domini Serm.*’ 28 (127)].

This act of the creative will corresponds to the acts of practical reason, which consist in the adherence of one's energy to the being known. It is an act of reason but not simply of speculative reason; it is a full reason to which the subject unites himself and, as it were, carries himself into the object known in order to realise it. It is a complete act of the understanding, in which the will is identified with the intellect, whereas the act of the speculative reason is an initial act, receiving rather than giving, which terminates in the ideal rather than in the real.

God, then, creates with an act of the understanding, which is perfect, practical and operative; it has in itself that which corresponds to man's will. To sum up, He creates with His pronouncement, with His Word.

## Reading 37

*[The difference between the generation of the Word and that of creation; the divine nature subsisting in three Persons creates through and in the Word; in the divine Word therefore are rooted and founded everything in heaven and on earth]*

But one of the greatest differences between the generation of the Word and creation is this, that the Father generates the Word and then loves Him; not that there is a *now* and a *then* in the divinity, but only a logical order of relations. Since the Word is being *per se* known, therefore generated by the Father a *per se* object, being cannot be loved before it is known. And therefore, although it is true what some theologians say, that the Father generates the Word *freely*, that is without being forced or made to do so by any external thing, yet He does not generate Him *voluntarily* but necessarily because such is the divine nature, without having beforehand an end which moves the act of generation.

On the contrary, in the Word generated and therefore subsisting as a Person, God sees the essence of finite being, and loving it and willing it pronounces it subsisting, and so creates it, seeing

it in the Word. Hence creatures are produced by God with an act posterior in origin to the generation of the Word and the spiration through which is the Holy Spirit, and posterior to the divine love, and therefore through an act of *free will*.

God, therefore, creates things pronouncing them in His Word in whom He knows them and this act by which He pronounces things is not posterior in time to the Word, because there is no time in God, but all is done in the eternity of the divine being and all is made. Hence what St. Anselm says is true, that with the same pronouncement God says Himself and external things. But it is necessary to understand, with respect to the origin, that the pronouncement of exterior things is logically posterior to the constitution (if one can speak like this) of the three Persons, and that this pronouncement is made by the divine nature common to all three Persons, not by the Father alone, although the object of this pronouncement is in the Word, in whom things are known *per se*, and therefore made in and through the Word.

The Word, then, creates because He has the divine nature; he is God. The divine nature subsisting in three Persons creates through the Word because it creates through being *per se* known, since it could not create if it did not have the object present to it, that is, the essence which it must create. It creates in the Word since, by pronouncing that which is by essence in this object which is the Word, things acquire reality, relative subsistence in themselves.

In divine Scripture, therefore, it is frequently stated that things have been made not only through the Word but also in the Word. St. Paul calls Him the first born of every creature, "*quoniam in ipso condita sunt universa in coelis et in terra, visibilia et invisibilia*" ['for in Him all things were created, visible and invisible, in heaven and on earth'].<sup>129</sup> And he calls Him *first born*, *primogenitus*, not because creatures are also generated in the proper sense of the word, but because of the poverty of the Greek language, in which *genitus* means both *generated* and *made*; whence also the first book of the Pentateuch, in which

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**129** Coloss. 1: 16, 17.



the creation of the world is narrated, is given in Greek the title of *Genesis* γενέσεως.

Another reason can be given for the term *first born*, *primogenitus*, given to JESUS Christ by St. Paul, and it is because generation is either considered in its principle or in its term. Divine generation in its principle, that is, in the operation itself, is, as we have seen, a pronouncement. Now with respect to the principle, with a pronouncement of God as intelligence, both the Word was generated, and finite beings were created. Hence generation and creation are similar in their principle, that is, in the way in which they took place.

Now, with respect to the term, generation means that the generated receives the same nature as the generator, so He is called Son, and it is in this that one distinguishes generation, which is a communication of nature, from creation, which is to produce from nothing something of another nature.

A third reason yet can be added if the words of St. Paul are understood of Christ, that is, not of the Word alone, but of the Word Incarnate, of the humanity assumed by the Word. In this sense, Christ is the first born, in the order not of natural things but of supernatural things, because He is the end of the universe and the end is first in the mind of the operator, because He is the first of the predestined and the principle of predestination, and because other men also are generated supernaturally by God, being adopted as children, because Christ communicates Himself to them, and both Christ and his Spirit live in them.

In the divine Word, then, are rooted and founded "*universa in coelis et in terra*" ['all things in heaven and on earth'] because in the Word, as in subsisting object, the internal act of creation terminates, through which act things exist, as subject and person relative to itself, or as that which belongs to such a relative person, which constitutes the external and proper existence of creatures. And so, St. Paul said also that, "*Omnia PER IPSUM ET IN IPSO creata sunt, et ipse est ante omnes, et omnia IN IPSO CONSTANT*" ['all things were created THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM. He is before all things, and IN HIM ALL

THINGS HOLD TOGETHER’].<sup>130</sup>

St. Paul also says of Christ: “*Portansque omnia verbo virtutis suae*” [‘upholding the universe by the word of his power’],<sup>131</sup> precisely because things being created and founded in Him, He consequently sustains them, that is, conserves them in their being; and he adds that He sustains them with the word of His power, to indicate that the Word also is creator and that He is not only that in which all things are made, but, moreover, He who makes them, jointly with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Hence, since things are created in the Word, we see the full truth of what St. Paul says of God elsewhere: “*In ipso vivimus, et movemur et sumus*” [‘In him we live and move and have our being’].<sup>132</sup> In this passage, St. Paul says that we ourselves live, we ourselves move, and we ourselves are, expressions which indicate existence relative to us, and, we could say, external. At the same time, however, he says that we live, move and are in God, because we are created in the Word, although we are not conscious of our connection with the Word, which is not, therefore, part of our own finite existence.

Relatively to ourselves and to our awareness, we are, therefore, outside the Word; relatively to God and His creating action, we are in the Word. And since “*we*” expresses a subjective relation with ourselves, it is true, strictly speaking, that *we* are outside the Word. But if the “*we*” expressing the subject is taken objectively, in this case it is true that “*we*” the subjects, as real object, are in the Word.

In a composite sense, therefore, we are outside the Word; in a divided sense we are in the Word. It is in this sense, therefore, that the Word is that ‘*formless matter*’ from which the book of Wisdom says were created all things of the universe: “*Manus tua quae creavit orbem terrarum ex materia invisibilis*” [‘For thy all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless

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**130** Coloss. 1: 16, 17.

**131** Hebrews 1: 3.

**132** Acts 17: 28.

matter’].<sup>133</sup> In this sense the Word is that in which are contained those invisible things, from which, according to St. Paul, a great teacher also of Judaism, were derived the visible things: “*Fide intelligimus aptata esse saecula Verbo Dei, ut ex invisibilibus visibilia fierent*” [‘By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear’].<sup>134</sup> In the Word, then, who is subsistent object, were made all things as subsistent objects, and not simply as ideas. Since, however, these things are subjects relative to themselves, therefore in their own existence as subjects, or in subjects, they are outside the Word, and are not the Word, and are not mixed up with the Word, who is absolute being.

Hence, St. John in the *Book of Revelation*, to indicate this twofold existence of contingent things, uses two words: “*erant*” [existed], which refers to their subsistence in the Word, where God seeing them and willing them makes them exist; and “*creata sunt*” [were created], which refers to their proper and subjective subsistence, wholly outside the Word.<sup>135</sup>

## Reading 38

*[The above-mentioned truth was announced with the beginning of revelation]*

*‘All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.’*

The fact that the creation of the Universe was made in the Word is a truth which was announced, in an initial and negative way,

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**133** Wisdom 11: 17.

**134** Hebrews 11: 3.

**135** “*Tu creasti omnia, et propter voluntatem tuam erant et creata sunt*” [‘For thou didst create all things and by thy will they existed and were created’]. (Rev. 4: 11).

from the beginning of revelation. The Word, according to the interpretation of many Fathers, was announced as *the beginning* of things already in the first words of Genesis: ‘*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*’. And indeed JESUS Christ<sup>136</sup> said expressly that He is *the beginning*, since, when the Jews asked Him, ‘*Who are you?*’ He replied, ‘*The beginning who is also speaking to you.*’ This is repeated by St. John in the book of Revelation, where he calls JESUS Christ: “*Testis fidelis et verus qui est principium creaturae Dei*” [‘The true and faithful witness, the beginning of God’s creation’],<sup>137</sup> in which passage the “*testis fidelis et verus*” [‘*the true and faithful witness*’] refers more to the Word as object, that is, as that which makes things known, and the “*Principium creaturae Dei*” [‘*beginning of God’s creation*’] more to the Word as the subsisting and effective operator.

The two properties, however, are not divided but united since, by the words “*testis fidelis et verus*” [‘true and faithful witness’] the Word is not solely represented as object *per se notum* and light in the abstract, but as personal object and giver of light, meaning that He is object-Person; and by the words “*Principium creaturae Dei*” [‘beginning of God’s creation’] it is not only an operating activity which is expressed but a subsistence-object, being the Word the beginning of created things both as object and as subsistence.

Genesis’ words agree with the words of the Psalm: “*Tu in principio, Domine terram fundasti*” [‘You, in the beginning, Lord, founded the earth’].<sup>138</sup> Origen provides this teaching: “*Quod est*

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**136** In the text “τὴν ἀρχὴν ὅτι καὶ λαλῶ υμῖν” ‘The beginning who is also speaking to you.’ (John 8, 25).

**137** Revelation 3, 14. The *principium creaturae* of St. John has still another meaning that is, the same one as that of St. Paul, when he calls the Word ‘*primogenitus omnis creaturae*’, since He was generated before any created thing, ‘being’ the term of the first action of God, co-eternal with the Father, which is also meant when Wisdom speaks in the book of Ecclesiasticus (24: 3) “*Ego ex ore Altissimi prodivi*” [‘I came forth from the mouth of the Most High’] (and from His mouth issues His pronouncement, His Word) ‘*primogenita ante omnem creaturam*’ (first born before all creatures) with which it appears that the Wisdom which is speaking is not created but pronounced and generated.

**138** Ps. C1, 26; Hebrews 1: 10.

*omnium principium, nisi Dominus noster et Salvator omnium Christus Jesus primogenitus omnis creaturae? In hoc ergo principio suo, hoc est in Verbo suo, Deus coelum et terram fecit*” [‘What is the beginning of all things unless our Lord and Saviour of all things, Jesus Christ, the first born of all creation? In him, therefore our beginning, that is in his Word, God made heaven and earth’].<sup>139</sup>

St. Basil also interprets the words of Genesis in the same way, and calls the Word ‘*artifex*’.<sup>140</sup> Similarly St. Ambrose: “*In hoc ergo principio id est in Christo fecit Deus coelum et terram*” [‘In this beginning, therefore, that is, in Christ, God made heaven and earth’].<sup>141</sup> St. Augustine agrees: “*In hoc principio, Deus, fecit coelum et terram, in Verbo suo, in Filio suo, in virtute tua, in sapientia tua, in veritate tua*” [‘In this beginning, O God, you made heaven and earth, in your Word, in your Son, in your power, in your wisdom, in your truth’],<sup>142</sup> and St. Jerome himself, in the book of the Jewish traditions on Genesis, writes: “*In capite libri scriptum est de me, id est in principio Geneseos*” [‘In the head of the book it was written of me, that is, in the beginning, Genesis’].<sup>143</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas argues with sagacity on all the meanings the word *beginning* can receive, because this word, of its nature, has an indeterminate and generic meaning determined variously from the context. ‘Since the word *beginning* implies a certain order relative to other things, it is necessary to discover a *beginning* in all those things, in which there is an order.’<sup>144</sup> There is, therefore, a beginning of quantity, a beginning of numbers, a beginning of extension, a beginning of time etc: there is a beginning in knowledge and doctrine, there is a beginning in the production and duration of contingent things.

It is necessary, then, to see how the term *beginning* applies to

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**139** *In Gen.* Hom 1.

**140** *In Gen* Hom. 1.

**141** *Exam*, 1. I. c. 4.

**142** *In Gen* 1. 2: 78, 9.

**143** N. 31.

**144** *In Joann.* lect 1.

the Word. This term belongs to Him in the most absolute way, both in the ideal order and in the real order; both in the order of knowledge and in the order of production and duration of created things. In the order of knowledge, it belongs to Him in the most absolute way, because He is being *per se notum* and, consequently, intelligibility itself. He is, therefore, the objective *beginning* of knowing for all intelligences. And in relation to man and human knowledge He is the objective *beginning*, both of natural and supernatural knowledge. He is the remote and hidden *beginning* of natural human knowledge, because the *idea of being* is the objective beginning of natural knowledge. This idea, being simply a pure idea, is not the Word, but an appurtenance of the Word, as we shall explain better later. This idea is shown to the minds by the Word, without however the latter showing Himself to them.

In the order of supernatural knowledge, this has, as it were, two parts or modes; since it is either internal, infused by grace by means of an immediate communication of the Word or of His gifts; or it is external, revealed, taught with words and external signs, and this is, strictly speaking, an expression and analysis of the first.

Regarding supernatural internal knowledge, the Word is either the proximate beginning, as in the time of grace, when He communicates Himself personally, or, as in the ancient times of the natural and written law, when He communicated Himself with His gifts, but not yet personally. With respect to revealed knowledge, analysed more or less according to whether the work of scholars is added or not, we must here distinguish the knowledge of the Old Testament from that of the New. With regard to the knowledge of the Old Testament, the Word is the beginning, but a remote one; hence the imperfection of this knowledge. With respect to the perfect knowledge of the New Testament, the Word is the immediate beginning.

Speaking of the latter, St. Thomas distinguishes two types of beginnings: the beginning of Christian knowledge considered in itself, and the beginning relatively to the way in which man apprehends it. The principle of both is Christ, but in different ways: "*Secundum naturam quidem, in disciplina Christiana,*

*initium et principium sapientiae nostrae est Christus, in quantum est sapientia et Verbum Dei, id est secundum divinitatem. Quoad nos vero, principium est ipse Christus, in quantum Verbum caro factum est, id est secundum eius incarnationem*” [‘Indeed, according to nature’, says the Holy Doctor, ‘in Christian discipline, the beginning and principle of our wisdom is Christ, in so far as he is the wisdom and Word of God, that is, according to his divinity. In so far as we are concerned, the beginning is Christ himself, in as much as the Word became flesh, that is according to his incarnation’].<sup>145</sup>

Coming now to the order of reality, that is of the production and duration of created things, St. Thomas teaches that the Word is the beginning of things in two ways: because He contains their reason or the ideal essence, and because effectively He makes them subsistent: “*Principium est creaturarum persona Filii secundum rationem virtutis activae, et per modum sapientiae quae est ratio eorum quae fiunt*” [‘The Person of the Son is the beginning of created things by reason of active power and by means of wisdom which is the reason of the things which are made’].<sup>146</sup>

And these are precisely the two aspects under which we have said the Word must be considered, namely as *object* and as *subsistent person*. These two aspects are also mentioned in those words of Christ defining Himself: “*Principium qui et loquor vobis*” [‘The beginning who is also speaking to you’].<sup>147</sup> He could have said, ‘*I myself am the beginning through which and in which all things were made, and I am also the beginning of knowledge which now I communicate to you by speaking to you.*’

It was said earlier that the fact that Moses announced the Word simply as *beginning*, does not mean that he announced Him expressly as Person, precisely because the word *beginning* has a generic and indeterminate meaning, and not all beginnings are a person. The concept of *beginning* is one of the elements which are contained in the idea of being, which we also call

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**145** *Ibid.*

**146** *Ibid.*

**147** Jn 8: 25.

elementary ideas, and the idea is not yet the Word, although it can be the foundation of a negative and initial knowledge of the Word itself.

Similarly, in the old writings one reads that God made everything ‘*in wisdom*’<sup>148</sup> and that “*in sermone eius composita sunt omnia*” [‘by his word all things were made’],<sup>149</sup> which certainly signifies that all things were made in the Word. But the Word is denoted here with general and abstract words, such as *wisdom* and *word*, which do not yet express the person of the Word, although we could deduce it by consequence, should ever the human mind be so sound in logical reasoning.

## Reading 39

*[From the biblical story of Creation, we pass on to the question ‘why the production of substances is said to be made in the Word, their ordering through the Word;’ the distinction is again made of the Word as subsistence and the Word as object]*

In the Old Testament it is not simply hinted that everything was made in the Word, but also through the Word. Moses, the historian of Creation, said that God decreed heaven and earth with His word: “*And God said, ‘let there be light’ and there was light*”<sup>150</sup> and so with all the works of the six days. The Psalmist, alluding to this says: “*Verbo Domini coeli firmati sunt et spiritu oris eius omnis virtus eorum – Quoniam ipse dixit et facta sunt, ipse mandavit et creata sunt*” [‘By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth’].<sup>151</sup>

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**148** Ps 103: 24.

**149** Eccl 43: 26.

**150** Gen 1: 3.

**151** Ps 33 (2) 6, 10.



Naples,  
St. Ephrem Nuovo  
28 March 1849.  
St. Sixtus C.

Chrysostom observes that St. John said more with the single expression "*Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*" ['all things were made through him'] than Moses had said with many,<sup>152</sup> because Moses mentioned only material things, whereas St. John comprises everything, both material and spiritual. This is true, if we take the story of Moses according to what his words seem to us taken simply in a material way.

It seems certain, however, that with the Jews the word *heavens* signified spiritual things as well, of which the material heavens were an emblem, a symbol. Hence Scripture attributes the heavens to God and earth to men.<sup>153</sup> The Jews distinguished three heavens, one of the birds, one of the clouds and the third of spirits, and the first two were a symbol of the third.

Hence, St. Paul said that he was rapt to the third heaven, which is the order of spiritual and supernatural things,<sup>154</sup> where he heard hidden words that man cannot express because he has no language for them. And St. Peter, speaking of Christ's inheritance, after saying that it is '*preserved in the heavens*', explains what he had said, interpreting the word 'heavens' by adding "in vobis" ['in you'] that is, in our souls;<sup>155</sup> and innumerable passages in Scripture prove the same thing.

When Moses, therefore, said '*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*', he meant it in a universal sense. God created spiritual things and corporeal things; or, "God created things which belong to the heavens, the angelic universe, and those which belong to the earth, the human universe", thus

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**152** *In Gen Homil 4.*

**153** "Coelum coeli Domino, terram autem dedit filiis hominum" ['the heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the earth he has given to the sons of men' Ps 115, (114) 16].

**154** 2 Cor 12:2.

**155** 1 Pet 1: 4.

including everything; then, leaving on one side the angelic sphere, he went on to tell how the earth was arranged, that is the universe of man, where the visible heavens appear again, as part of the universe of the earth, that is of man.

Moses narrated, in the first place, creation in general with the words, '*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*', in which he simply distinguished between purely spiritual substances and material or materiated substances, since indeed the latter could not exist mixed even in the first formless creation, being essentially different in their essence. Then he told the story of the second creation, that is, of the ordering of the sensible and human universe.

At this point, however, a question arises. To the first creation of substances Moses did not assign any time. They all started to be in an instant, as the saying of Scripture points out: "*Qui vivit in aeternum creavit omnia simul*" ['He who lives for ever created all things at once'].<sup>156</sup> To the second creation he assigned six successive epochs. Of the first, he said that spiritual and material substances were created in the Beginning, that is, *in the Word*; of the second creation he explained that it was made through the word, that is, through the Word of God.

The question that arises is this: 'Why is the production of substances said to be made *in* the Word, and their ordering *through* the Word?' Everything in the inspired writings is worth scrutinising, since nothing is without reason. Why, then, is there this distinction?

The Word, we have said, has two indivisible properties: of being *object*-person and of being *person*-object. As *Person*, being a subsistent subject, He is operating with the same divine subsistence which is common to all three Persons; as *object* He is *per se* intelligible and is intelligibility itself and contains the reason and the ideal form of things. In contingent things, subsistence is apart from the idea, or apart from their ideal essence, so the essence of things in the idea does not contain subsistence.

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<sup>156</sup> Eccl 18: 1.

The subsistence of contingent things, therefore, cannot pass from not being to being, except through a creating action, through a creating will, without the help of the idea, which prescribes their form, or the order they must have. On the contrary, when one deals with determining the form and the order of subsistence, then one must have recourse to the idea which contains it as the part of the thing which is objectively knowable, in brief, as intuitable. It is true that there cannot be a limited subsistence without a determination, a form, an order: but this does not take away from the fact that the two things can be distinguished by means of abstraction, being two aspects of the same thing.

Cyril of Alexandria distinguished them, when he replied to the Arians, who said that the Word had learnt the art of creating from His Father. Among other things, he said that creating is not something like an art, but a power; because art is used in ordering and moulding pre-existing matter, but creating, strictly speaking, is to make matter itself exist.<sup>157</sup> Art belongs to the intellect in so far as it contains rules and types, whereas power belongs to subsistence.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to change the form and order which pre-existing matter must already have, and this does not belong to creating; and another, to grant those first forms and any order whatever to substance, without which no matter, no substance could exist, and this is what belongs to creation, because one is dealing with those forms which are co-created with matter or the substance of things. Moses is speaking of these.

If, then, mere subsistence does not contain the idea, is not determined by any ideal essence, by any intuitable object but only by feeling, then it follows that it is not produced from a type of any idea. It has no type; it does not exist, then, through an *idea*, but it is produced immediately by an agent. On the other hand, every other quality, except subsistence, every order, determination or order of subsistence has an ideal mode of being, is comprised in the idea. Hence, an artisan has recourse

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<sup>157</sup> *Thesaur* 5.

to the idea to form it, and so we say that he forms it through *the idea*.<sup>158</sup>

Subsistence, then, every subsistence, has its source in the Word as in its principle, because the Word is subsisting, is the subsisting and operating Person. On the other hand, every form of things, shining in the idea, has its source in the Word as its principle, in so far as the Word is *object* that is *per se notum*, *per se* intuitable. God, then, created the subsistence of contingent things *in the Word* immediately, as subsisting things; He then created the form and order of the subsistence *through the Word* as object which includes every rule, every type, every form, every order, on which, as on an exemplar, subsisting things can be ordered.

Hence, it appears that when one deals with expressing formless creation it is more accurate to say that it was made *in the Word*; when one deals with the formation and cohesion of creation it is more appropriate to say that it was made *through* the Word, as the sculptor makes the statue through his concept. Hence, we may conclude that by saying that all things were made *through the Word* we mean more than by saying that they were made *in the Word* because this last way of speaking could be restricted to meaning formless and substantial creation, whereas the first expression means formed and completed creation, as when one reads: “*Qui fecisti omnia verbo tuo, et sapientia tua constituisti hominem*” [‘You who have made all things by thy Word and by thy wisdom have formed man’],<sup>159</sup> or where the Psalmist says: “*Verbo Domini coeli firmati sunt et spiritu oris eius omnis virtus eorum. Ipse dixit et facta sunt, ipse mandavit et creata sunt*” [“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke, and it came to be: he commanded, and it stood forth”],<sup>160</sup> where it speaks of the whole of creation, both the material and substantial part of it and the formal and accidental part of it, because the latter does not exist without the former, of which it is the completion.

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**158** St. Thomas I, q 14 a. 8; q 14, a. 1-3.

**159** Wisdom 9: 1, 2.

**160** Ps 33: (2) 6, 9.

And therefore, although St. John, by saying: *“Omnia per ipsum facta sunt”* [‘All things were made through him’] included every created thing and every mode and form of it, yet Origen, or another author, says that St John was not satisfied with this but that in the words which he added, *‘and without him was not made anything that was made’*, according to the force of the Greek words *χωρίς αὐτοῦ* he means also that all things are made *in the Word*. This interpretation is praised by St. Thomas, and so it is worth quoting the words of the Angelic Doctor: *“In a homily which begins, ‘The Voice of the spiritual Eagle,’ and which is attributed to Origen, there is found another fine explanation. Because in it he says that the Greek word is χωρίς where in the Latin we have ‘sine’. Now χωρίς is the same as outside or apart as if to say: ‘All things were made such through him, that apart from him nothing was made.’ He says this in order to show that through the Word and in the Word all things are conserved according to the phrase ‘carrying all things by the Word of his power.’<sup>161</sup> Because there are some things which have no need of the agent except for being made, because they are able to subsist after being made without the influence of the agent, as the thing which has need of the artisan to be made, but then continues in its being without his influence. In order, then, that no one believes that all things were made through the Word in such a way that he is their cause solely in so far as he made them to be, and not in so far as he conserves them in being, the Evangelist adds: ‘And without him was not made anything that was made,’ that is, nothing was made apart from him, because he surrounds all things conserving them.”<sup>162</sup>*

Hence, St. John with the words which we mention explains simultaneously that all things were made and conserved through the Word and in the Word.

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**161** Hebrews 1: 3.

**162** In Joann. cap. 1. lect . 2.

## Reading 40

*[In what way the Word is involved in creation as divine subsistence]*

*“All things were made through him, and without him  
was not anything made that was made”*

Naples,  
St. Ephrem,  
29<sup>th</sup> March 1849

The Word, then, is involved in creation in two ways: He takes part in producing matter and in general the subsistence of things, as power or *divine subsistence*; and He contributes in producing the form, and in general the ordering of things as *art*, that is as object, which makes known the order of being, that is, being in its intrinsic order.

In so far as He is involved as divine subsistence, He is not a lesser agent than the Father, as the Arians wildly said,<sup>163</sup> but equal to the Father as that which has the identical subsistence and therefore the identical power of the Father. “Because, says St. Thomas, *when I say that someone operates through a power*

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**163** These are the vain subtleties of the Arians. Firstly, they said that from the words ‘omnia per ipsum facta sunt’ ‘*all things were made through him*’ the Word must be excluded as made by the Father alone. But St. John had already said, ‘*The Word already was in the beginning*’, and ‘*He was with the Father*,’ after which he adds: ‘*Nothing that was made, was made without the Word*’. Secondly, they said that God made everything through the Word, as through a servant, a disciple, an instrument (Athanasius. *Contra Arians*, *serm.* 3 - Cyril *In Joann.* L. 1, chapter V and *Thesaur.* L. v. c. 3 - Idacius, *De Trinit. Contra Varimad.* C.2). But, the word *through* διὰ has not simply the significance which the heretics attribute to it, as the Fathers have shown (Athanasius in *L De Comuni essentia etc.* - St. Basil. *De Spiritu Sancto.*, c. 2, 9 - Chrysost. *In Joann.*, Hom 4 - Theodore of Mopsuestia and Leontius who wrote, (τὸ διὰ οὐ διακονίας ἕνεκα κεῖται ἀλλὰ συνεργίας καὶ τὸ μηδὲν ἐφεξαιρείσθαι τῆς αὐτοῦ ποιήσεως); and as the Scriptures show (Gen. 4: 1 -Prov. 8: 15 -1 Cor. 1: 1,9 - 2 Cor 1: 1 - Galat 4: 47). In fact the context demands the contrary, St. John already having said ‘In the beginning was the Word and that it was with God and that it was God.’ And the Scriptures in other passages give to the Word the same creative power which the Father has (Hebrews 1: 10).

received from another, this can be understood in two ways. We can understand it in such a way that the power both of him who gives it and him who receives it is numerically the same, and in this manner he who operates through the power received from another is not less than he from whom he receives it. Now when the Father gives to the Son the identical power which he has and through which the Son operates, when we say that the Father operates through the Son, we must not mean by this that the Son is less than the Father nor his instrument. This only follows in those who do not receive from another the same power but receive another and created sort. Hence it is clear that neither the Holy Spirit nor the Son is to the Father the cause through which he operates, nor the servant nor the instrument of the Father, as Origen wildly asserts.<sup>164</sup>

We cannot adduce to the contrary the decision of the Council of Sirmio which, interpreting those words: "*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*" ['Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'],<sup>165</sup> understands them as said by the Father to the Son, and those Fathers consequently said that in the creation of things *Filium obsecutum fuisse Patri*,<sup>166</sup> and they condemn as anathema those who think otherwise.

It was very far from the mind of the Council to subordinate the Son to the Father, or make Him inferior; on the contrary, that decision was pronounced against the Arians. Indeed, that passage of Genesis is suitable for confuting the Arians and St. Cyril of Alexandria uses it for this purpose observing that the words, '*Let us make man*', are not of a superior who commands but of an equal who speaks to an equal; because if He had spoken by command He would have said '*Make*' and not '*Let us make*.'<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, those words could also be interpreted of all three divine Persons who with one voice, taking counsel together to

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**164** *In Joann lect.* 1.

**165** Gen. 1: 26.

**166** Hilary *De Synodis* c. 13 - Clement of Alexandria and Tert. in 1 *Adversus Praxeam* and Eusebius, *Histor. Eccl.*I:1.c.1 had said the same thing.

**167** *In Thesaur.*

make man, say: '*Let us make man*,' where there is no distinction between one and the other in the work which they undertake, since all three determine to make man; not one by himself doing it, but all three. One does not contribute more than another, but all are equally involved: '*Let us make man*'; they make him to one image and likeness alone, '*ad similitudinem nostram*', showing in this way that the nature of all three is one and the same, if all three give only one image and likeness.

In what sense, then, must we understand the words of the above-mentioned Council, which says that the Son in creation was complying with the Father? Simply that He had had from the Father, with His nature, creative power; and that He created by means of His nature and the power received from the Father, a power which is identical with that of the Father. Hence, according to some writers<sup>168</sup> one can conceive of such a mutual assistance among the divine Persons that one is not made inferior to the other, but which is founded in the relationship through which they are distinct Persons. So, the Son knows that He has received everything from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. The Father knows that He has given everything to the Son and to the Holy Spirit through the Son, and loves Himself in the other Persons.

The acknowledgement that everything is from the Father, is, in the Son, an act of justice and gratitude (if one may speak like this); and the recognition of having everything from the Father and the Son is an act of justice and gratitude in the Holy Spirit. But more truly and more correctly we must say that such mutual assistance between the divine Persons is contained in the Holy Spirit, which is the divine subsistence *per se* loved. There is nothing else, therefore, in the Trinity except the Persons. But nothing prevents us from saying that in the Word, according to our limited intelligence, we distinguish several properties which, however, are none other in themselves than the most simple person of the Son; in the same way in the Holy Spirit we distinguish several moral roles, not really distinct from each other but constituting the one most pure Person of the Holy Spirit, in a way far above our understanding.

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<sup>168</sup> See Menegildo Pini, *Protologia*.



## Reading 41

*[In what way the Word is involved as absolute and infinite object]*

We must also consider the second way in which the Word co-operates in creation, that is, we must consider the Word according to the expression of St. Augustine, as *art*, and, as we say, as absolute and infinite object.

The words of St. Thomas, to which we have referred above, are to be understood in this way, and we place them once again before the reader: *'Now if the above-mentioned words, "All things were made through him", are correctly considered',* says the Angelic Doctor in his commentary, *'it is evident that the Evangelist speaks most correctly. Because, when a person makes something, it is necessary that he first conceives it in his wisdom, which has the form and reason of the thing which he is making, as the form in the mind of the craftsman is the reason of the ark that is to be made. In the same way, God does nothing except through the concept of his intellect which is wisdom conceived from eternity, that is the Word of God, the Son of God. It is impossible, therefore, that He makes something unless through the Son. This is the reason for which St. Augustine<sup>169</sup> says that the Word is the full ART of all the reasons of living things, and so it appears that all things which the Father makes, He makes them through Him'.*

Now the reasons, forms and concepts of things do not include, as such, the subsistence of contingent things and therefore they do not provide the subsistence of created things but determine the forms, limits, order of them and all that which belongs to things, except their matter and subsistence. Therefore, this mode of creating pertains to the formal and orderly creation, of which the Word displays the exemplar before the Father.

It is necessary to bear in mind that these two types of creating, which are found distinct in the story told by Moses, are not separate in fact, because, as we have said, the subsistence of

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<sup>169</sup> *De Trinit.*

contingent things cannot be actuated without some form, without limits and order; hence the act of creation is simply one. But this does not take away from the fact that our mind truly distinguishes in it two simultaneous effects, which are undividedly connected: that of subsistence and matter, and that of its form.

Now, with respect to the form, the Father and his Son create with equal power but not in the same way (and we shall say the same of the Holy Spirit in due course). According to the Angelic Doctor, it is correct to say that the Word is the concept and art, the Word provides the exemplar, and that the Father creates according to this exemplar. At the same time, it goes without saying that, by reason of the indwelling and circum-in-session of the Word in the Father, the Father has in himself the Word, who is subsistence *per se* known.

The Father, therefore, does not take anything from the Son which is not already in Himself; He has in Himself even the exemplar of these same things, because He has in Himself the Word. The Persons, in fact, are indivisible although, as Persons, they are really distinct; in such a way that there is only one God subsisting in three Persons, and, if He did not subsist in three Persons, He would not be God. Hence, if the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit were completely separated, they would cease to be God because there is not a God the Father separate from a God the Word, nor is there a God the Word separated from a God the Holy Spirit; if this were so, there would be three Gods, which is absurd.

In the creation of matter or subsistence, therefore, all three Persons work together with one identical power and in the same way, because such creation is owed to the subsistence or divine nature common to all three Persons. However, we attribute it to the Father who is divine subsistence in as much as He communicates it to the Son, and with the Son He communicates it to the Holy Spirit.

Equally, in the creation of form all three co-operate with the same power to realise it, but do not determine it in the same way, because it is the Word who contains the concept or

exemplar of it.

Finally, with regard to the end, which is the supernatural perfection of the universe or Holiness, all three co-operate with equal power but not in the same way. The Holy Spirit, in fact, who is being *per se* loved, communicates supernatural love to men. Hence, we see why in the Created Universe and its events we notice not only the omnipotence of one God but also the vestiges of a God who is one and three, an ectipon of the most Holy Trinity.

## Reading 42

*[The twofold existence of things: in the divine Word and in themselves]*

It would be useful to reflect on what we have said about the two-fold existence of things: in the divine Word, in whom they exist objectively, and in themselves, in which they exist subjectively. This two-fold existence explains how the creative act is eternal and fruitful *ab aeterno*, and how, at the same time, things exist in time. Created things exist in the Word from all eternity, from which the creative act comes forth. But they exist in time in themselves, outside the Word. Time, in fact, is a subjective relation of things among themselves and is, therefore, co-created with things and it occurs in the Word only as object; the subject Word is not subjected to time in anyway whatsoever.

St. Augustine writes as follows about the eternity of the creative act: "*Cum enim dicitur: 'Omnia per ipsum facta sunt' satis ostenditur et lux per ipsum facta cum dixit Deus: 'Erat lux', et similiter de aliis. Quod si ita est, aeternum est quod ait Deus: 'Fiat lux', quia Verbum Dei, Deus apud Deum, Patri coaeternus est, quamvis creatura temporalis facta sit. Cum enim verba sint temporis, cum dicimus: quando et aliquando, aeternum tamen est in Verbo Dei, quando aliquid fieri debeat, et tunc fit quando fieri debuisse in illo Verbo est, in quo non est quando et aliquando, quoniam totum illud Verbum aeternum est*" ['When it is said that

‘all things were made by Him’, it is clearly shown that light also was made by Him when God said “Let there be light”; and similarly, with regards to all other things. If this is true, the saying of God “Let there be light” is eternal because the Word of God, God with God, is co-eternal with the Father, although the created thing was made in time. Though words are of time, as when we say “when” and “sometimes”, yet when something has to be made is eternal in the Word of God; and then it is made, when that, which had been decreed that it should be in the Word, is. In the Word, in fact, there is no “when” and “sometime,” since the Word is wholly eternal.”]<sup>170</sup>

And when the Venerable Bede writes as follows: “*Quod factum est in ipso, vita erat*”, understanding the ‘*in ipso*’ to mean ‘*in ipso Verbo*’, he teaches the same doctrine in these words: “*Quia Evangelista dixit omnem creaturam factam esse per Verbum, ne quis forte crederet mutabilem eius voluntatem quasi qui subito vellet facere creaturam quam ab aeterno nunquam ante fecisset, ideo docere curavit, factam quidem creaturam in tempore, sed in aeterna creatoris sapientia, quando et quos crearet semper fuisse dispositum*” [“Since the Evangelist had said that every creature was made by the Word, to avoid the risk that someone should think that His will may be changeable, as if He should now wish to make a creature which from eternity he had not made, he was therefore solicitous to instruct us, that the creature was indeed made in time, but that the time and whom he would create was ordered from eternity by the eternal wisdom of the Maker”].<sup>171</sup>

And here one sees also how all times and all things are present to God: “*Et vocat ea quae sunt tamquam ea quae non sunt*” [“He calls into existence both the things which are and the things which are not”],<sup>172</sup> since all the things which He creates are in the Word from eternity; for although they are not yet in themselves they are in their foundation which is the Word, according to the expression of St. Augustine: we see here how, without repugnance, foreknowledge and divine predestination fit in.

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**170** *Super Gen ad litt.* 1: 1

**171** In hom 1.

**172** Rom 4: 17.

## Reading 43

*[The Word, with respect to man, is life and light; in the eternal generation, it is conceived, according to our way of thinking, first as light and then as life]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

After speaking of creation in general, saying that all things were made through the Word and nothing outside the Word, the Evangelist goes on to speak of men, for whose salvation he is writing his Gospel, and to show what the Word has done for them, or rather to show what the Word is for them. He states, then, with the words quoted above what is the innermost constitution of the intelligent human creature made by the Word.

And he begins by making us consider that *‘in the Word was life’*. We are not dealing, therefore, with a dead Word, but with a living God, in fact a God-life, a God who is *‘light’*. We are not dealing with a purely sensible life but an intellectual one; and finally, he says that the life which is in the Word is light to men, thus showing how men are made intelligent through the Word.

The two words *‘life’* and *‘light’* refer precisely to those two aspects under which we have said we ought to consider the divine Word. Because life refers to the Word in as much as He is *subsistence*, and light refers to the Word in so far as He is *object*, the term of the living intellect. But, at the same time as St. John mentions these two aspects of the divine Word, he shows also their indivisibility, because he says that the life itself of the Word is the light of men. It could not be the light of men if it were not *per se* light; only by being light *per se* and to Himself, He could be light to others; and not only to men, but to all intelligent creatures, although the Evangelist mentions only men as those to whom the Gospel is addressed.

Here we must observe that in the generation of the Word, life and light are of a different order than that which they have in the creation and formation of man. Generation, in fact, is made

through an intellective pronouncement of the Father, by which the Father pronounces His own subsistence and so this becomes object or light.

But, being this pronouncement absolutely full and complete, it has the power of making the object pronounced subsist as subject or person, and this living and subsisting object is precisely the Word. Such pronouncement is called generation because it makes a Person subsist who has the same subsistence of the Person who generates and pronounces.

Hence, in the eternal generation there is this logical order, according to our way of looking at it: firstly, and immediately, there is the object or light, then the object or light subsists as life, that is, as a Person living *per se*. On the contrary, in the creation and formation of man, he first receives life (we are speaking of the logical and not the chronological order), and then the object or light which renders him intelligent, '*quia lux non-nisi viventi attribui potest*' ["because light can only be attributed to a living being"], as the Angelic Doctor says.<sup>173</sup>

## Reading 44

*[The Word has 'life', taking this word as object or essence, as living essence; in such a way that the living subject is object-life, or is essence-life dwelling in Him]*

*"In him was life, and the life was the light of men"*

The living object, then, is the person of the Word. And we must note that the word '*life*' expresses that act in an objective mode, whereas if the Evangelist had simply said, '*the living Word*,' he would have expressed life in a purely subjective way. The Word, then, has '*life*', taking this word as object or essence, as living

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<sup>173</sup> *In Joann* cap. 1 lect. 3.

essence; in such a way that the living subject is the object-life, or the essence-life dwelling in Him; or also, *vice versa*, life as essence, as object, is the living subject. If the object had remained only object, He would not have been more than an idea, but by receiving life, the very life essential to God, He became a Person, the Person of the Word.

Therefore, He Himself declared the mode of His own eternal generation when He said: '*For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*'<sup>174</sup> And He says, '*in himself*', a personal pronoun, as if to say, in His own Person, so showing that the Person is not divided from the life, but that this life is in the Person itself.

But why does the Evangelist say that '*in the Word was life*', and not rather, '*that the Word himself was life?*' We must carefully consider that the word '*life*' expresses a mode of being in an abstract way, according to human speech, from which the meaning of that word comes, so that the word *life* does not mean in itself any subject, any person.

Keeping then to correct speech, it was not possible to say that life was the person, but it was necessary to say that the person had life in himself, or that the life was in the person. Life, in fact, expresses a property common to all subjects, all of which, precisely because they are '*subjects*' have life: but the word '*life*' does not express one subject rather than another, in fact not a subject at all, as we have said, but a property or condition of the subject. Not that in the Word there is any real distinction between His life and His Person, but we are obliged to make a distinction of concept between these two things because of the imperfection of our abstract method of speech, by which the mind divides things which are united in nature.

It would be wrong to object that Christ also said, '*I am the way and the truth and the life.*'<sup>175</sup> In this passage, in fact, He does not say that He is life in Himself, but relatively to men, for whom He is also the '*way*' which leads them to their blessed end. In fact, He has in Himself all the moral law which is precisely the

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**174** Jn 5: 26.

**175** Jn 14: 6.

way which leads them to beatitude.

This is seen from the context, because He is replying to Thomas who had asked Him, *'Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?'* Having said, *'I am the way and the truth and the life'* He adds, *'No one comes to the Father, but by me.'*<sup>176</sup> In the Greek text of the sentence, the article is placed

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**176** "Sicut enim Pater habet vitam in semetipso, ita dedit et Filio habere vitam in semetipso" [*For as the Father has life in himself so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself*] (Jn 5: 26)]. It seems to me that Maldonatus is wrong when he says that it is indifferent whether or not the article is placed before the word *life*, in the same way that it did not matter that the article was not before the word *'God'* in the passage of St. John commented on above (1: 3) *'And the Word was God.'* In this passage, we also said that the article did not matter with regard to proving the divinity of the Word, and that the Arians were wrong who argued on the omission of the article, drawing from this fact arbitrarily and against the context that the Word was not truly God as the Father was God. Because we said there that the Word was God in the beginning, that is from all eternity, and that He was in the beginning, that is eternally with the Father, through His nature of Word. Furthermore, there is a difference between the word *'God'* and the word *'life'*. Because *'God'*, as we said with St. Thomas, expresses the divinity, not in an abstract way but in a suppositum, in a subsistent subject. Whereas the word *'life'* represents an abstraction of our mind, a property considered in itself and not in the subject. Hence *'life'* has different degrees and modes in different subjects; but *'God'* always expresses absolute and infinite being, unique by reason of his nature. Whenever we call *'God'* that which is not *'God'* in order to mean authority divinely shared, it is necessary that the context explain this transferred meaning of the word *'God'* as the Scriptures do when they say: "Constitui te Deum Faraonis" [*I make you as God to Pharaoh*] (Ex 7: 1)] or "Ego dixi: vos Dii estis" [*I say you are Gods*] (Ps 81,6)] where *'I make'* and *'I say'* sufficiently explain that they were not Gods in the beginning, that is from eternity, and that the knowledge that we are speaking of mortal men excludes any possibility that their nature was divine. On the contrary, in the passage of St. John we are speaking of the Word, who is God by nature from eternity. If the article is lacking in the passage, *'And the Word was God'*, the proof of his divinity is not affected, and it is not because of this that there is a difference in grammatical form or a different meaning in those words from what there would be if the article were placed before the word *'God'*. Perhaps one can say that without the article the meaning is that the divinity is communicated by way of generation from the Father to the Son, as if one said *'And the Word pronounced by the Father was God, generated by the Father'* thus distinguishing the two aspects in which we can consider the Word, that is as Word, or as object, and as Son or divine and personal subsistence. If one had put in the article it would have seemed that He was the same person as the Father.



before the word life, ἡ ζωή, whereas in the words of St. John *‘in him was life’* ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν the article is lacking which indicates that in the first passage he speaks of a determinate life, namely that of men, whereas in the latter he says simply that the Word is not at all a dead thing but has life. And since it does not say that *‘in the Word was the life’* but that *‘in the Word was life’* there is no danger of thinking here that perhaps only the Word possessed life and not the Father or the Holy Spirit. By saying that the Word was life, nothing prevents us from saying that there is life also in the other two Persons, hence the omission of the article seems to indicate better the communion of life which the three most holy Persons have.

And so, every time that the Scriptures speak of the life which the Word has in Himself and not with respect to us, they omit the article as in the text cited above: ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ οὕτως ἔδωκεν καὶ τῷ υἱῷ ζωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ<sup>177</sup> and when they speak of life with respect to us, they put it in, as *‘I am the resurrection and the life.’*<sup>178</sup> So, when the Evangelist says that in the Word was life, he means that the Word of God is not, as the word of man, sterile and not subsisting in itself, an act, an accident of man himself; but that the Word has life in Himself, that is, a living subsistence. From which it followed that, having life in Himself, He had the power to communicate His life also to us.

## Reading 45

*[In the person of the Word there is life, there is feeling: one cannot distinguish in such a Person the principle from the term of life]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

But before passing on to see how the Word is life to us, we must reflect more deeply on how He is life in himself.

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<sup>177</sup> Jn 5: 26.

<sup>178</sup> Jn 11: 25: Εγώ εἰμι ἀνάστασις καὶ ζωή.

What is life? - Life is feeling; where there is no feeling of any sort there is no life. Now when feeling is produced, we also call this incessant production of feeling, life, and therefore we distinguish life from feeling. But when we give this meaning to life, the meaning of such word has an essential relation with feeling, since it can be said that feeling is life in act, and its production life in potency. So, misleadingly we say that plants have life, unless we are willing to attribute some feeling to them.

Men, however, not being accustomed to attributing feeling to plants attribute to them life through an analogy with what they observe occur in animals in which vegetation is reproductive of feeling, and therefore is called life.

Now, in plants also there is vegetation and because of this we are accustomed to say that they have life, although their form of vegetation, according to common opinion, does not produce any feeling in plants. However, between that which feels and that which does not feel there is a specific difference and therefore the word '*life*' applied to plants has a specifically different meaning from the word '*life*' applied to animals. That of pure vegetation which does not end up in any feeling, is life only in an analogical and figurative sense, it is not life in a proper sense; it is not true life.

Life, then, in a proper and complete sense, is feeling. We should observe that life, that is, feeling, comes to man from outside and he does not have it in himself. Indeed, animal life is aroused by a corporeal term; the soul is only the sentient principle. Should it not have the term felt, it would neither feel nor would it be the principle of any feeling nor consequently would it exist. So, man has no life in himself.

In the intellectual order too, there is feeling and therefore life. But if we consider man as an intellective being, constituted primarily as such, we discover that he could never receive intelligence if he had not first animal life, "*quia lux non nisi viventi attribui potest*" ["because light can be attributed only to a living being"]; in the second place, he receives intelligence from outside, that is, from ideal being, which is present to him as the

object which informs him and makes him intelligent. Hence man, the human person, has not even intelligent life in himself, but it is communicated to him by something which is not him and which, by revealing itself to him, constitutes his form.

This is not so with the Divine Word, says St. John, because *‘in him is life’*, since *‘for as the Father has life in himself, so he has also granted the Son also to have life in himself’*. In the person of the Word, then, there is life, there is feeling: one cannot distinguish in such a person the principle from the term of life; this term is not given to the living principle from without; it is not a different thing from, or alien to, the living principle; but life, feeling, is in the living principle itself.

It follows that life is essential to the person of the Word, as it is to the Father and the Holy Spirit. And we see that such a Person is immortal and eternal, because nothing can take away life from Him and destroy it. With man, the term of animal feeling can be withdrawn and so he can lose his life; as regards the separated soul, ideal being, its informing object, can be withdrawn by that power which gave it to the soul, and so it would be annihilated because there would no longer exist an intelligent principle.

If the soul, however, had no need of matter and of the idea of being in order to live with its twofold sensible and intelligent life, it could neither die nor be annihilated, because it would be absolute master of its own life. St. John says that this is what happens with the Word, telling us that in Him is life and that, for this reason, He has not a received life or one depending on something extraneous to Himself.

## Reading 46

*[In the Word there is life without possibility of limitation, pure life, therefore infinite life without any degree, everything that the word ‘life’ expresses, the essence of life realised and complete]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

Life, then, is in the very person of the Word; it does not come to Him from a term of different nature from itself, and therefore alien to it, as in man in whom consequently person is distinct from nature.

It follows from this, that the life of the Word must be an unlimited, infinite, and full life. Now, how does it happen that life should be limited in all those subjects, whose life is constituted by terms of a nature distinct from them, as is the case with all created subjects? The limitation of their life comes from the limitation of their vital term, which does not depend on them, but they receive it as it is given to them.

In the divine Person, however, this term is not outside it, it is not of a nature distinct or separate from it, it is not given to it by an extraneous power which, in the giving of it, can limit it. There is not, then, any reason for limitation, as in persons, or more generally, in created subjects. In the Word there is life without possibility of limitation, pure life, therefore infinite life without any degree, everything that the word 'life' expresses, the essence of life realised and complete.

We gather the same when we consider what the Evangelist has said above, that *'the Word was God'*; if He is God, He must have infinite life; if He is God, He is life in the Word; it is right that the life of the Word is in God. And since in God there is nothing which is finite, it is necessary that the life itself of the Word is not finite; and since in God there is nothing which is not God, it follows that the life itself of the Word is God, is the divine and subsisting nature. This nature, therefore, this divine subsistence is life, it is feeling; infinite feeling which embraces everything to which the meaning of this word can extend.

And that the life which is in the Word is the same divine subsistence which the Father communicates to the Son in generating Him, is seen from these words: *'For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself'*. The Evangelist speaks, then, of a life common to the Father and the Son, or rather he speaks simply of life. Now *'life'* expresses a single essence; essence is one and not several,

although there can be many subjects, which, in varying ways, share in the realisation of an essence. If, then, life as essence (which is expressed in the idea of life) is simple and one, and if in God this same essence is realised, then we must say that the life which is in the Son cannot be numerically different from that which is in the Father and is the same subsistence or divine nature.

## Reading 47

*[Just as in man there are three species of life, animal, rational and moral, so this has some analogy with the life in God: the simple feeling or real life can be attributed to the Father; the feeling or intellective life to the Son; and the feeling or moral life to the Holy Spirit]*

We have said earlier, however, that the species of life which are seen in creatures are different and each has its degree of life. If, then, we consider life in man, taken simply in its natural order, we find in him three types of life.

In the first place, we find *animal life* consisting in animal feeling, which gives life to the sentient principle. This life is purely subjective, because it has no *object* in which to satisfy itself, since the *object* is the term of the understanding only. In the second place, there is *intellective* or rational *life*, consisting in the intellective feeling which arises in the contemplation of truth and beauty or is found in the research and discovery of sciences. This is *objective* life, because it delights in the object known; and this life, in our present condition, is grafted on to the first, since, in man, from a logical point of view, animality, which constitutes the subject, precedes intellectuality, which constitutes the person. Finally, there is *moral life* which consists in moral feeling, that is, in the abundance of delight which is produced in man by the practice of the virtues.

Since we cannot reason about God except by way of analogy with what we notice about ourselves, His handiwork (where He

has certainly impressed vestiges of Himself), we must recognise in God also, by way of analogy, something of the triple life which we experience in our nature. And therefore, in God also we must recognise something analogous to pure *subjective feeling*, logically prior to the object, although without material term, and this we shall call *simple feeling* because it has neither object nor term; something analogous to *objective feeling* which arises from the contemplation or sight of the object; and something analogous to *moral feeling* which arises from the perfect agreement of the subject with the whole object, that is, with being completely known.

From this, we shall now consider what is proper to the divine nature in this threefold divine life, and therefore identical to each of the three divine Persons; and how, nevertheless, through appropriation, we attribute one rather than the other of these lives to each of the divine Persons; and finally, whether there is something proper to the Persons individually.

The *sentient principle* and *feeling* express different concepts. Now it is beyond doubt that the three-fold feeling and the three-fold life, of which we have spoken, belong to the divine essence. Through appropriation, then, the *simple feeling* or *real life* can be attributed to the Father; the *feeling* or *intellective life* to the Son; and the *feeling* or *moral life* to the Holy Spirit: because each Person co-operates in his own proper way to actualise such modes of life and feeling.

It is necessary to consider carefully that the divine essence is not really distinct from each Person, and that it would not exist if the Persons did not exist: and it is simply in the Persons and in all three simultaneously and identically, in such a way that it would be absurd to conceive it in one or two and not in the other or others.

So, although we say that the Persons co-operate in constituting, under some respect, the living essence, we do not mean by this that the essence depends on the Persons, nor the Persons on the essence; no dependence can occur in God; but only a logical priority and posteriority, according to our limited way of thinking.

We must, then, see how each divine Person co-operates on his part to constitute one of the three lives distinguished by us in divine Being and this co-operation is precisely that which is *proper* and not *appropriated* to the individual person.

In the first place, simple feeling or real life is conceived by us prior to any object and to any intellectual act, and therefore we conceive it first in the logical order of the generation of the Word, we conceive it as proper to the essence, abstracting from the Persons.

This real and living essence of simple feeling, however, is communicated to another Person, that is the Word: and hence the two Persons of Father and Son. The Father is the living essence, in so far as pronouncing Himself, He makes Himself object and subsisting and personal object: and the Son is the object itself, the subsistence itself which has instantly become object and Person.

Taking now this object-Person, it must be the case that in this divine essence, and therefore in the Father and the Son, there exists intellectual feeling, that is, an infinite delight in essential truth, essential beauty and essential wisdom; because object-being is essential truth and the intrinsic order of this object-being is essential beauty, and the knowledge of this object is essential wisdom.

So, given this object, that is, the Person generated by the Father, both Persons must rejoice in this object and find satisfaction in Him, and this constitutes the infinite intellectual feeling. This feeling, identical in so far as it belongs to the Father, has its object in the Son, and in so far as it belongs to the Son, it has its object in Himself, in such way that this feeling is *appropriated* to the Son, because it is *proper* to the Son to provide the *object* and the term which is Himself.

Intellectual feeling is a joyful contemplation of truth, beauty and wisdom and supposes an *object*, hence we call it objective feeling. In man, there is a purely *theoretical* contemplation, because truth, beauty and wisdom are manifested to him as pure objects, that is, ideally. But the object of the divine

intellectual feeling is not a pure object; it is at the same time personal subsistence.

In God, therefore, there cannot be a purely theoretic feeling, but it must be also a practical one, that is, of a voluntary adherence, and a satisfying affection in the Person who is, at the same time, essentially object. This subsistence, as it is *per se* intelligible, and hence object understood and Person, is *per se* loveable in its intelligibility, hence it is also *per se* loved.

The Father who pronounces the Word, that is subsistence, and so generates it as object-Person, loves it also as essentially loveable and so it is essentially loved; and this subsistence, in as much as it is essentially loved, is the Person *spirated*, who is called the Holy Spirit. Hence the object-Person, in so far as He is loved with the *spiration* of the Father, is another Person who feels Himself in the form of being loved.

The Father, therefore, *spirates* the Holy Spirit through the Word, because in the Word He loves the subsistence, where the cognitive and generative act terminates: because divine subsistence could not be loved if the Father did not love it, nor could the Father love it if He did not know it and pronounce it as object-Person, the Word.

The Holy Spirit, however, proceeds not only from the Father through the Word, but also from the Father and the Word with one *spiration* alone; because it is the divine subsistence common to the Father and the Word and present in both, that loving itself becomes loved-Person.

The love, then, for the divine subsistence is common to all three divine Persons who possess it identically, and this is the holiness proper to the divine essence, and the moral feeling common to each Person. But, logically preceding the Person of the Holy Spirit, is the love of the Father and of the Word for divine subsistence known, through which love the loved subsistence is constituted Person who, as such, loves with the same love, because the divine subsistence which is understood and loved, is communicated to Him.



This fully effective love is the one spiration common to the Father and the Son, whose term is the subsistence loved, which as such is subsisting as Person. Hence, *love* is *appropriated* to the Holy Spirit, because He is the term of such love subsisting subjectively, that is, He is the divine subsistence *per se* known and *per se* loved, in consequence of the love of the same subsistence which is identical in the Father and the Son, constituting these two Persons: to be divine subsistence loved is *proper* to the third Person, that is, to the Holy Spirit, who, therefore, is also the term of the feeling or of the *moral life* of God, although this feeling and this life belongs to the divine essence, and so is identically common to all three divine Persons.

## Reading 48

*[Various grades of sharing in the life of the Word by man]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

Naples,  
S. Efrem,  
Easter R.D.N.J.C  
8<sup>th</sup> April 1849

Having seen, as far as we can, what is the life which is in the Word, we now ask why St. John went on to say that in the Word was life, connecting this with the rest of his narrative.

The above quotation is joined with the preceding ones and with those which follow. With the preceding ones, because having in them announced the Word, that is, the Word of God, the Evangelist wishes to make known that this ‘Word’ is not as the words of man, without its own life, but that it is a living and subsistent Word, as we have already noted.

It is joined with those which follow, in which he explains creation, the institution, and the eternal salvation of man operated through the Word, hence he establishes the basic tenet that '*in the Word was life*' because it is from the life which is in the Word that these three works are derived and completed. That of which the effect shares must be in the cause first, and the effect is explained when a cause is posited which corresponds to the effect, having in itself what is required to produce this effect.

The effect, that is man, as a rational living being enhanced by grace and ultimately beatified, has his complete explanation in the life which is in the Word, from the sharing in which, according to different degrees, come to man all those prerogatives and all goodness. However, we must distinguish accurately these degrees of participation in the life of the Word.

Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theophylactus and Eutimius<sup>179</sup> reckon that St. John says '*in the Word is life*' in order to show that the Word conserves and governs things, not just creates them, understanding '*life*' to be that force that the Word impresses on all things and with which it conserves them and governs them. To say that in the Word there was '*life*' expresses, according to Chrysostom, that the Word not only could create but also that life always remains in Him and, with life, an exhaustible causality, a perpetual flux of all things without loss or diminution in Himself, in whom life never ceases.

And since the life which is in the Word is not only real but also intellectual and moral, in all its fulness, therefore, according to Chrysostom, when the Evangelist says that in the Word is life, he means that the Word did not make or produce things through blind necessity of nature, but through His will and intellect, by means of which He governs things wisely and graciously.

We must observe, however, that, as regards that *power* by which it is held in being, matter cannot be called life or a participation of life, because matter as such is devoid of life, because it is

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**179** *In h. 1.*

devoid of every feeling. The existence of matter, as philosophy suggests, is not *subjective*, because matter does not have neither a sentient nor an intelligent principle; it is not *objective* because it is not object *per se* alone and is understood only in the object or idea which the mind adds to it.

It is simply an existence as *term*, that is, its essence is to be the *term* of a sensitive subject. In matter, there is only mere *subsistence* without relation to itself, but to another, that is to a sensitive subject of which it is the term. Hence, St. Thomas says: *‘There is a suitable order in the above-mentioned words. In the natural order of things, first there is being (mere subsistence), and the Evangelist mentions this when he says: ‘In the beginning was the Word’; then there is life and this is what follows: ‘In him was life’; in the third place there is understanding, and consequently he adds: ‘And the life was the light of men.’*<sup>180</sup> So, the Evangelist shows that all the grades of being which are in creatures, are found causally and eminently in the Word, source of all creatures, as effects of such cause.

## Reading 49

*[Three errors of the Manichaeans]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

The Manichaeans, reading this passage with another punctuation, refuted by us, namely: *‘Quod factum est in ipso (Verbo), vita erat’* misuse it in order to support their errors. These are two. The first error is theological and regards their theory of the two principles. In fact, they said that not all things were made through the Word, and only those which were made through the Word had life. They thought that to say, *‘made through the Word’* was perfectly synonymous with, *‘made in the Word’*. They explained the above-mentioned text in this way:

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**180** *Ibid.*

*'What was made in the Word was life, that is, was living'*. Then they said that, *'nothing'*, was the other thing, the other created principle, but not created by the Word, because St. John said: *'Nothing had been made without the Word'*; *'Et sine ipso factum est nihil.'*<sup>181</sup>

The second error is philosophical, because these heretics said that all stones and minerals had life and therefore were alive.

A third error can be added to these two. The Manichaeans confused sensible life with intellectual life and attributed the latter to all living things.

Now, that the passage of St. John, even if it is read as the heretics do, does not support in the least their impious doctrine appears from this, that granted that the text is punctuated in their way, the things made in the Word would not only be *'living'* but would be *'life'*, which is much more than *they* wish to claim!

Things sharing in life have a limited life, according to the degree of their sharing it. But *'life'* in itself does not include any limitations, from which it follows that to be life belongs to God alone, who has no limits in His living and does not share in life, but He is essentially life itself without any species or degrees or limits: He is subsisting life.

If that which was created was life, it would be God; nor would there arise the different degrees of life as do arise in the various beings of which the world is composed. Furthermore, that which is created would not be subject to death, because, being life, it could never cease from being life and passing to a state of death, because death and life are mutually exclusive. Only that which is made a sharer in life, but which is not life itself, can be deprived of it and so die. And, therefore, it is impossible that the Evangelist said that that which is made through the Word is life. The Manichaeans, therefore, can derive no advantage in favour of their errors from this passage of St. John punctuated in their way.

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<sup>181</sup> St. Ambrose, *de Fide* 1: 3, c. 3 - St. Augustine, *De Gen ad litt.*, 1 v. c. 14.

Turning now to consider the '*power*' which St. John Chrysostom attributes to all things, through which in some way he considers them to be living, though not in the Manichaeian sense, we must observe that, since matter has the nature and condition of term, being as such inert, it requires an explanation as to the presence of that activity, which is, nonetheless, manifested in it.

Firstly, that which exists as term supposes a principle to which it is term, and in which it exists. This principle must be sensitive, because that which does not feel cannot have the nature of principle, but only of term. It does not, therefore, appear strange to philosophical and theological teaching to suppose that God had conjoined to every atom of matter a sensitive principle of a different and contrary nature to matter itself, and through which, matter subsists as term, and from which, it receives the action and movement which we observe in it.

This is wonderfully suitable for explaining the facts of nature. It would not follow from this that atoms in matter were animals, since an animal supposes composition and an organism; but only that they were animated. Nor for this reason would they be intelligent, because their principles would be no more than sensitive principles, whose very limited feeling would simply have as their term the atom itself, not as it appears to our external sense organs, but as it would be in respect to its principle.

The progress of the natural and philosophical sciences supports this opinion and it explains best scientific phenomena. The opinion of Chrysostom, who sees in the life which is in the Word that '*power*' by which things are conserved, would gain in nobility and weight. Because the Creator Word who has life in Himself, in creating things would give them of Himself this vital power, and the effect would better correspond to the nature of the cause.

## Reading 50

*[The term of human intelligence is ideal being per se object, which is an appurtenance of the divine Word, although it cannot be called the Word Himself; how to solve an objection about the word "appurtenance"]*

*"In him was life, and the life was the light of men"*

Sensitive life is blind and simple feeling, since it is not illuminated by the sight of any object. Therefore, when we rise from an effect to a corresponding cause, it is not necessary that we recognise in its creating cause the objective form. Since, following our way of understanding, we consider the divine essence with a concept logically prior to that of the Persons, sensitive life is attributed by us to the divine essence as to its cause, without considering the Persons, and roughly speaking, to the Father in whom the divine essence subsists as in the originating principle of the Most Holy Trinity.

However, if we consider human life, that is, rational life, this supposes a cause which is object, and therefore we cannot conceive it unless we add the consideration of the Word, who is *per se* object.

This is what the Evangelist says with the words that follow those so far stated: '*And the life was the light of men*', that is, the object which informs and illuminates their spirit and makes them intelligent.

If the Sacred Writer had not had the aim of teaching creation and the institution of man, he would not have said, '*In the Word was life*', since he could equally have said, '*There was life in the Father and in the Holy Spirit*' in which subsists the identical life as in the Word. So, why does he prefer to say, '*In the Word was life*'?

It was because his purpose was to speak of life in an objective sense, which being *per se* object, was light to the human understanding, thus explaining how human minds were constituted. Now the objective form of life is proper to the Word,

because the Word is precisely being as object. However, subjective wisdom and intelligence, which result from the intellectual act which has its term in the object, is common and identical in an equal way to all three divine Persons as proper to their essence, considering this posteriorly to the procession of the divine Persons.

If we consider, therefore, the intelligent principle as the effect, and wish to rise from this to conceive its cause, it is necessary to arrive not just at the simple essence of a creator-God, but at the essence considered posteriorly (in logical order) to the generated Word, who, being *per se* object, can alone become the light of created spirits; they also can share in being in its objective form, becoming in this way intelligent.

Hence the term of human intelligence, which is ideal being *per se* object, is an *appurtenance* of the divine Word, although it cannot be called the Word Himself, because being is manifested to us as pure object, and not as object-Person; therefore, as ideal object and not subsistent and real object.

To the teaching that, in relation to man and not in Himself, one can distinguish the appurtenance of the Word from the Word Himself, this objection can be made. The object informing the human spirit, called an appurtenance of the Word, is either created or not created: if uncreated, it is the Word Himself: if created, it cannot be an appurtenance of the Word because all that belongs to the Word is uncreated; it is not made, is eternal.

St. Thomas Aquinas replies to this objection with the following teaching:

*‘We must note that something can be said about the Son of God, in relation to Himself, secundum se, as when we say that God is omnipotent and similar things; and we can say something of Him with respect to ourselves, as when we say that He is Saviour and Redeemer.*

*Again, we can say something of Him in both ways, as when we say that He is wisdom and justification. Now in all these things that we say of the Son absolutely and secundum se, we do not*

*say that He is made: we do not say, for example, that the Son is made God or is made omnipotent. But in the things that we say of Him in relation to us, or in both ways, we can add that He was made, as in the passage to the Corinthians:<sup>182</sup> “He, who was made by God our wisdom’ etc.*

*Hence, although He has always been in Himself wisdom and justice, yet we can say that He has been made again for us justice and wisdom. Explaining this, Origen says that although He was life in Himself, yet He was made life for us, because He gave life to us, according to Romans: ‘For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive’.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, he says that the Word, which has been made life for us, in Himself was life, in order that He might become life for us in time; this is why he immediately adds: ‘And the life was the light of men.’<sup>184</sup>*

Now, since the appurtenances of the Word, as would be truth which naturally shines before us, i.e. ideal being, are such with respect to us, therefore we can say that they are made or created, or perhaps better, co-created with us. Considered, however, in the Word, and therefore found in the Word Himself without distinction, they are not made or created or co-created; but they subsist eternally because they are the Word Himself, and they have lost their being appurtenances of the Word, distinct from the Word; they are such only with respect to us.

## Reading 51

*[In what way the life which was in the Word, is the light of men]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

We must now see, however, how the life which was in the Word

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**182** I Cor 1: 30.

**183** 1 Cor 15: 22.

**184** In Joann cap. 1, lect 2.



is the light of men. Firstly, let us consider how the life in the Word has the form of object, since the Word Himself is absolute being in the form of object-Person. From the form of object, taken by the life communicated from the Father to the Son, comes the *intellective life* which is common and identical to the three divine Persons. We must note that the whole essence of God is life, there is nothing of death in Him, nothing which has the concept of bare subsistence, or of pure term such as we conceive matter to be.

Furthermore, the vital essence of God, object *per se* known, *per se* understood is also *per se* loved; and therefore life *per se* understood, *per se* loved is raised up by the one spiration of the Father and the Son to a personal existence, that is, it is at the same time the Person of the Holy Spirit, whence it is life, feeling, moral joy, completely identical in the three most holy Persons.

Therefore life, which is one and most simple in the Word, nevertheless, according to our way of conceiving it, is three-fold: *simple feeling*, which is appropriated to the Father who communicates it with everything else; *intellective life*, which is appropriated to the Son, not because it is not of divine essence but because it has, as its condition, the object and the objective form of being, which is proper to the Son or Word; *moral life* which is also of the divine essence but through appropriation is attributed to the Holy Spirit, because it has, as its condition, object *per se* loved and the form of loveableness of being, is proper to the Holy Spirit.

Now supposing all this, how does it happen that the life which is in the Word is the light of men? It could not be light if it were not the object of the human spirit, which makes it intelligent as it informs it.

But this object is not merely object, it is also life-object, and is, moreover, a vital and subsisting object *per se* loveable and *per se* understood. From this it follows:

1. That in the words of St. John: '*And the life was the light of men*' we are not dealing any more with the story of the creation of a mere sensitive being, as could be the statue

which Genesis said was made of earth by God; the statue, that is, before God breathed in the face the breath of life (however, if we suppose that material atoms are animated, as we have said, that statue could be a sensible being; Scripture always divided man into two parts and not into three, one called the living *flesh* because it lusts against the spirit, the other *spirit*; that statue could be the living flesh). We are dealing, however, with explaining how man came to be made in the order of intellectual and moral beings.

2. That the creation of the merely sensitive being does not require that the life of the Word be communicated as light, being enough that the essence of the Creator God communicates that simple life. In such a case, our mind would not be able to see in the cause the special form of objective being, that is, of being as Word. Hence, St. John says: "*The life was the light of men*", and not of animals, or plants or minerals. "*Pecora non illuminantur*, says St. Augustine, *quia pecora non habent rationales mentes, quae possint videre sapientiam. Ergo illa vita, per quam facta sunt omnia, ipsa vita lux est: et non quorumque animalium, sed lux hominum*" ["Sheep are not illuminated", says St. Augustine, 'because sheep do not have rational minds which can see wisdom (objective wisdom). Therefore, that life, through which all things are made, that life itself, is light: and not of any animals, but the light of men.'<sup>185</sup>
3. The light, however, which comes from the Word, is not mere object for the fact that it is life-light, for life is feeling and therefore reality; it is not then, a mere idea. That life, of which St. John speaks, which is the light of men, is not the bare idea of being. On the contrary, that life which is light in the Word, is not only life, feeling, is not just light-object, hence intellectual life, but is more; it is life-light *per se* loved in the Holy Spirit, hence it is moral life. St. John, therefore, speaks in this passage of a complete light, which sanctifies man and gives him his ultimate supernatural perfection.

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<sup>185</sup> *In Joann. Tract.* 1: 18.

## Reading 52

*[By saying: 'I am the light of the world: he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life', JESUS Christ not only united light to life, but also made it derive from life]*

*"In him was life, and the life was the light of men"*

This is why Jesus Christ said: *'I am the light of the world: he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'*.<sup>186</sup> By saying, *'the light of life'*, not only He united light to life, but also makes it derive from life, since life in the genitive case, according to eastern speech, means *'caused by life'* and more precisely *'son of life'* or having the nature of life. Hence such words of Christ correspond exactly to those of St. John, that *'the life was the light of men'*.

JESUS Christ is called by St. John, *'the Word of life'*, in these words: *'That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life - the life was made manifest and we saw it and testify to it and proclaim it to you, the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you'*.<sup>187</sup> Where we should note that the expression: *'Word of life'* (περί τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς) unites light to life, because the expression *'word'* means object pronounced, and the object, if it is *per se* object, is the light of the mind, hence it signifies a Word that has in itself life, which has the nature of life.

We should also observe, in the words used by St. John, as he comments on the passage we are reading, the assertion that life was with the Father, corresponding to the words: *'Et Verbum erat apud Deum'*. This shows the progress of the Evangelist's narration at the beginning of his Gospel: he wanted to announce that the Word of life has been revealed to men, and begins by saying that He was from eternity with the Father, hidden from

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**186** Jn 8: 12.

**187** 1 Jn 1: 3-5

men, and that He has been revealed to men in time, the very same Person who was with the Father before time began; even then He was essentially life, eternal life, but was not yet life for us.

What we have said, however, remains true, that with respect to our manner of understanding and speaking, we conceive God essentially to be life in Himself, even prescindingly from the consideration and the cognition of the Word, to the point that He is called constantly in Scripture '*living God*',<sup>188</sup> in contradistinction to the dead and material gods of the idolaters. St. Peter uses the phrase '*per Verbum Dei vivi*'<sup>189</sup> attributing life to God, that is to the Father, from whom the Word proceeds and from whom He receives the divine nature; and the Psalmist says, '*Deus vitae meae*';<sup>190</sup> and in Deuteronomy Moses tells the people that '*God is his life*'.<sup>191</sup>

But when we deal with the life which is the light of men, we can no longer understand this, without considering God subsisting and life-giving object, and therefore we have already an initial cognition of the Word. And although all three Persons co-operate in the communication of this life-light, whence St. Paul says: '*Christ Jesus whom God made our wisdom*',<sup>192</sup> attributing to the Father the sending of the Son, because He is generated from the Father and therefore also sent; nevertheless, the term of this life-giving illumination of man is the Word, who is also the term of the Incarnation, although the principle of this belongs to the Most Holy Trinity, but it is proper to the Father as generator.

The Word, then, having communicated Himself to us, sends and diffuses in us the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit Himself, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, provided He does not find any obstacle of sin in us which would impede His action. This operation brings to completion our

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**188** Ps 41: 2 - Ps 83: 2 - 2 Macc 15: 4 - Matt 16: 16; 26: 63 - Acts 14: 14 - Rom 9: 26 - 2 Cor 3: 3; 6: 16.

**189** 1 Peter 1: 23.

**190** Ps 41: 8 - Eccl 23: 4.

**191** Deut 30: 20 - Ecc 11: 14; 15: 18; 37: 21.

**192** 1 Cor 1: 30.

supernatural life.

## Reading 53

*[Any intellectual light whatsoever of the human creature comes from the Word]*

*“In him was the life, and the life was the light of men”*

Granted all this, it seems to be clearer how these words of St. John, general as they are, and in which he speaks of men without distinction, are directed at showing in what consists any intellectual light whatsoever of the human creature.

Any ray of such a light, the Evangelist teaches, comes from the Word because He is said to be the light of men, in an absolute way. But he does not say in the same absolute and universal way that the Word is the life of men. Not every life, in fact, is intellectual but there is an animal life, in the cause of which it is not necessary for us to see the object-light which is communicated; it is enough that we conceive a living cause, which is the divine essence common to all three Persons.

Nevertheless, animal life is not the life proper to the human creature, being common with the beasts; but the proper life of man is intellectual life, which cannot be explained without supposing that before the human spirit there is being in the form of object, and therefore without having recourse to a cause which is itself object, and which is revealed to man as such. Therefore, St. John says, *‘that the life was the light of men’*. Now if we are dealing with merely ideal being, this would be light, but not life; because the simple idea of being does not give a real feeling but a pure intuition. This is not, then, that *‘life which is the light of men’*.

It follows from this that, since *‘the life which is in the Word is the light of men’*, it was necessary that this was given in the first institution of the human race. So, when the book of Genesis

says: *'Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being'*,<sup>193</sup> we should understand by this breath of life, that life which is the light, and which is in the Word. This means that the first man was constituted not only in the natural order, for which nothing more is needed than *being* as *ideal* object, which is given to the spirit to intuit; but that he was also constituted in the supernatural order, which demands that *being* as object, given to man to intuit as object, be *real* and therefore that it has in itself life. The first man received such a communication of the Word of God.

This shows better in what way man was created in the image and likeness of God, according to those words *'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth'*.<sup>194</sup>

The image and likeness of God, in which man was made, is seen primarily in this, that also in man are found the three forms of being, analogous to those which constitute the three divine Persons in God; that is, the subjective form, the objective form in the idea of being, which is given to him to intuit, and the moral form in the inclination and harmony of himself subject to being, objectively manifested. From this we have the threefold life: real, intellectual, and moral. The last one unites the first two, and it consists in the loving embrace of the first two.

The objective form of being, however, is not given to man in such a way that it forms a part of man himself, because man is purely subject, and cannot become object, which would be to become God. And since *object-being* is the image of being, as Scriptures say, the Fathers, therefore, observe that it is not said that man is made *image of God*, but made *in the image*, which happens because the image of God is the object which he intuit, according to his first institution.<sup>195</sup>

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**193** Gen 2: 17.

**194** Gen 1: 26.

**195** In another sense man is called by St. Paul *'image of God'* in the passage:

That which is appropriately called image of God in Holy Scriptures is the Word. St. Paul says of Christ: *'He who is the image of God'*<sup>196</sup> [*'qui est imago Dei'*] and elsewhere, *'He is the image of the invisible God'*<sup>197</sup> [*'qui est imago Dei invisibilis'*], where the attribute of *invisibility* given to God shows clearly that God is known through the Word, in whom He has the form of object and therefore of light, and that the Word was with the invisible God before He was revealed.

St. Paul himself says: *'For anything that becomes visible is light'*,<sup>198</sup> [*'omne enim quod manifestatur lumen est'*], since there is nothing which can be manifested but light, which is visible *per se*, and makes visible all things which it illuminates. And because what is known about things is their *form*,<sup>199</sup> also called

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*"Vir quidem non debet velare caput suum, quoniam imago et Gloria Dei est, mulier autem Gloria viri est"* [*'For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God'* (1 Cor 11: 7)]. Here the Apostle does not speak of human nature common to man and woman, hence Moses says: *"Ad imaginem Dei creavit illum, masculum et foeminam creavit eos"* [*'In the image of God he created him: male and female he created them'* (Gen 1: 27)]. St. Paul in the passage cited means the superiority of authority that man has and means that *'woman must be obedient to man whose superiority represents that of God from whom he comes'*.

**196** 2 Cor 4: 4.

**197** Coloss 1: 15.

**198** Ephes 5: 13.

**199** *Form* is not something alien to the thing, but it is the thing in so far as it is conceivable. Hence taking the word *image* for *form*, when St. Paul says: *'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son'* (συμμορφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ) Rom 8: 29 – 2 Cor. 3, 18, means the same as if he had said *'Conformed to his Son known by them, to the idea of his Son:'* hence it is not to conceive an image different and separate from that of the Son of God. The expression of the Apostle is similar to that of Wisdom: *"Deus creavit hominem inexterminabilem: ad imaginem similitudinis suae fecit illum"* [*'God created man incorruptible, he made him to the image of his likeness'* (Wisdom 2: 23)] where the word *'similitude'* (likeness) corresponds to the Son of God, who is the similitude or cognoscibility of the Father, and the word *'image'* corresponds to the form, or to the Son himself as type and exemplar of man by whom man is objectively informed. And in the same meaning the Apostle uses the word *'image'* where he says that *'the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true image of these realities'* (οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων) Hebrews 10: 1. The image of things meaning the things themselves in so far as they are conceived or understood or even perceived.

*'figura'* (χαρακτήρ) which corresponds to the idea, and not the matter or mere subsistence, for this reason, St. Paul calls Christ *'figure'* or in Greek *'character'*: *'qui cum sit splendor gloriae et figura substantiae ejus'*<sup>200</sup> [He is the splendour of God's glory and the exact figure of His substance'].

To this also refers what is written in the Old Testament about Wisdom: *'For she is a breath of the power of God and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore, nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is the reflection of the eternal light, a spotless mirror of the majesty of God and an image of his goodness'*.<sup>201</sup> This passage seems to speak of the wisdom of God in so far as it is communicated to man: hence the objective wisdom of God which is the Word, is called *'the power of God'*, and the communication of it to man *'breath of the power of God'*; wisdom is called *'a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty'* and the communication of it *'a pure emanation'*; wisdom is called *'eternal light'* and the communication *'a reflection of it'*; wisdom is *'the majesty of God'*; the same majesty, in so far as it is communicated, is called *'a spotless mirror'*; and finally, in so far as wisdom has in itself the same loveable quality as in the Holy Spirit, it is called *'His goodness'*; and the same goodness communicated by the Word is called *'image of his goodness'*.

And every time the *face* or *countenance* of God is mentioned in the divine Scriptures, these metaphors express the knowableness of God, because men are known from their face or countenance; and therefore such expressions mean God object, God knowable, whom we know to be the Word; hence many Fathers most suitably interpret those ways of speaking of the divine Word, who is light, or life shining *per se*.

Man, then, was made in the image of God, that is, with the perception of the divine Word, in the way which we shall explain later, and therefore was placed in a supernatural state endowed with divine grace.

And although, on the part of man, there was no right to this

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**200** Hebrews 1: 3.

**201** Wisdom 7: 25-26.



supernatural state, since grace does not constitute an element of his nature, nor was such a union of man with the Word an element of his intelligent nature, since only the intuition of ideal being belongs to the constitution of human nature, without which man could not be intelligent, and not even man, nevertheless on the part of God it was most fitting, and of moral necessity, that man issuing from the divine hands should be raised to such a height, because the Word was the light of men and by giving them this light gave them also life because *‘in the Word was life and the life was the light of men’*. In this way the effect fully corresponded to the condition of the cause.

## Reading 54

*[Our first ancestors had supernatural light and so ‘some perception of the Word’; they had also the character but only in a potential way and moreover not in an indelible manner]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

The Book of Ecclesiasticus narrates the beginning of man in the following way: *‘God fashioned human beings from the earth and made them in His own image. And the Lord consigned them back to it, and He clothed them in strength. He gave them so many days and so much time, and He gave them authority over everything on earth. He filled all living beings with dread of human beings, making them masters over beasts and birds. He created of man a helpmate like himself: discretion and tongue and eyes and ears and a mind for thinking He gave them. He filled them with knowledge and understanding’*.<sup>202</sup>

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**202** Eccl 17: 1-5. The words which follow are: ‘He created in them the science of the spirit: he filled their hearts with wisdom and showed them both good and evil. He set his eye upon their hearts to show them the greatness of his works: that they might praise the name which he hath sanctified, and glory in his wondrous acts: that they might declare the glorious things of his works. Moreover, he gave them instructions, and the law of life for an

These words clearly show that Adam and Eve were endowed with supernatural gifts and with grace, which is essentially supernatural. It was not, therefore, the mere idea of being which was given to them but also an incipient vision of the Word in whom is that life which is the light of men.

At this point, however, a question arises: did the first human beings, who had just come from the hand of their maker, have impressed on their soul the *character*, from which, there not being any obstacle, followed grace and with it their sanctification? This question must be distinguished from another one: the *character* which was in their soul was it the same as that which is received by men through the waters of baptism, as instituted by JESUS Christ, or does it differ from it?

Leaving aside for the moment this second question, it appears that we can say 'yes' to the first one; the reason being that, generally speaking, the character is the habitual manifestation of the Word to the human spirit, and Adam and Eve were creatures made intelligent by that Word in whom there was the life, the light of men. As we shall see, however, when we treat of the second of the two questions, this character in Adam and Eve was potential and therefore not indelible; whereas in the Christian it is wholly actual and indelible.

It is perhaps for this reason that in the Scriptures it is not said that the first parents of the human race had the *character*, this word being reserved to signify strictly the character of the Christian. And yet, this passage of St. John seems suitable for proving that we can, in some way, attribute a divine character to the first humans. They had constant supernatural light, and

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inheritance. He made an everlasting covenant with them and showed them his justice and judgements. And their eyes saw the majesty of his glory: and their ears heard his glorious voice. And he said to them: Beware of all iniquity. And he gave to every one of them commandments concerning his neighbour. Their ways are always before him: they are not hidden from his eyes'. These words, although they could be interpreted of our first parents, seem, however, to belong rather to their descendants since the discourse seems to refer to the whole human race and especially the Jewish people with whom God bound Himself even externally by an eternal covenant, to whom He gave the law and over whom He watched with special care.

this light was not a mere idea but life, the life which lies in the Word. Therefore, some perception of the Word was given to them, perception which is the source of the character of which we are speaking.

This same word, ‘character’, is proper to the Word, whom St. Paul calls χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ <sup>203</sup> from which we believe the name of character is derived, that first effect of Baptism which consists in the impression of the Word on human minds.

This is confirmed by the passage of Ecclesiasticus mentioned earlier, where the character impressed on the intelligence of the first man seems to be distinguished exactly and precisely from the sanctifying grace of his will.

The first is signified by the words: ‘*He made him after His own image*’, the image of God which, as we saw, is simply the Word: ‘*secundum imaginem suam fecit illum*’. The second, that is, habitual and sanctifying grace, is mentioned in what is added: having made him according to His image, He turned him and transformed him into it again: ‘*et iterum convertit illum in ipsam*’.

This conversion of Adam to the image must be understood as that gentle inclination of his will to love and to adhere to the image of God, according to which he was made, that is, to the divine Word shining to his intelligence. Adam could easily do this since there was not yet any obstacle of sin.

Nor does it seem that, “convertit illum in ipsam” [‘*He turned him into it again*’], can be understood of the conversion to God of Adam the sinner, because it is only after, that the sacred writer adds the creation of Eve. Hence, in the passage cited by us he speaks of Adam, if we are not mistaken, at the time in which he had not sinned nor received a helpmate from God, whom He then gave him as a companion.

This is confirmed by the words which follow, “Et iterum convertit illum in ipsam” [‘*and turned him into it again*’], which are: “Et secundum se vestivit illum virtute” [‘*and clothed him with*

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**203** Hebrews 1: 3.

*strength according to himself*], most suitable to signify habitual grace. The words, ‘*being clothed with power*’, do not describe Adam after his sin, but at his creation.

## Reading 55

*[The pre-eminence of man who has been renewed in Christ with regard to the man created by God; the difference between the first man, Adam, and the second Adam, who is the divine Word; the joining of the Christian not only with the Word but with the incarnate Word; the vine and the branches; the mystical body of Christ]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

It seems that it was precisely for this reason that the Apostle called what Christ did, the *renewal* of man. He came to take away the sin which Adam had introduced into the world, and to restore the work of God to its original form, though in doing this, He raised it to a dignity and sanctity far greater than before. ‘*Be renewed in the Spirit of your minds*’, says St. Paul to the Ephesians, ‘*and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*’.<sup>204</sup> And to the Christians at Colossae he says: ‘*You have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*’.<sup>205</sup> It is true that in those passages it could be understood simply of the new man formed by Christ, who was this creation, without having recourse to the example of Adam; however the expression ‘*qui creatus est*’ appears to allude to the creation of Adam himself.

Furthermore, by saying that the new man was ‘*renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator*’ (τὸν

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**204** Ephesians 4: 23-24.

**205** Coloss 3: 9-10.

ἀνακαλλινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν), there seem to be a clear reference to the first creation of man, who is said by Genesis, ‘*made in the image of God*’.

Again, in this passage of the Apostle, he does not say only ‘*new man*’, but according to the original text, he adds ‘*renewed in knowledge*’; hence we do not speak simply of a new thing, but of an old one rejuvenated to its original condition of knowledge. This knowledge according to the image of his creator means ‘*knowledge according to the Word*’, since the image of God is the Word, and therefore means the character impressed in the soul, which is also the Word, called by St. Paul ‘*character of the subsistence of God*’.

As regards the above-mentioned opinion, some difficulty could arise from the passage where the Apostle writes: ‘*It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus, it is written: ‘The first man Adam, became a living being’* <sup>206</sup> *the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust: and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. For I tell you this, brethren: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*’<sup>207</sup>

If this passage could be understood of Adam the sinner, the difficulty would be overcome. But the words, cited in Genesis, provide an obstacle to this: ‘*Et factus est homo in animam viventem*’ [‘and man was made into a living being’] which the sacred writer wrote about Adam when he was created innocent, hence, before he sinned.

We must say, then, that the intention of the Apostle, here, is to extol the gifts and graces conferred on humanity by Christ over

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**206** Gen 2: 7

**207** 1 Cor 15: 44-50.

and above those which Adam had received when he was created.

And this greater excellence of man renewed in Christ, over man created by God, results from the context of the whole passage of the Apostle, and particularly those words: '*Primus homo de terra terrenus, secundum homo de coelo coelestis*' ['The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second is from heaven']. This second man from heaven and not from earth is our Lord JESUS Christ, as it is clear from the Greek text, which reads, '*The Lord, from heaven*' (ὁ κύριος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ) instead of: '*De coelo coelestis*' ['is from Heaven'].

The first Adam was then a mere man, but the second Adam was God, the divine Word, the Lord, ὁ κύριος, of the first man and of all creatures, coming not from the earth but from the heavenly throne of God. Hence, the first man derived his origin from the earth and was subject to corruption, although God quickened him with the breath of life and thus made him to be a *living soul*; not only having animal and intellectual life but sharing in that true life which was in the Word. But although the first man was a *living soul*, he was not a *life-giving spirit*, as is the divine Word; who not only has life but is the life,<sup>208</sup> and therefore can impart life to others.

For this reason, He is called by St. Peter, '*the author of life*',<sup>209</sup> an expression which is equivalent to St. Paul's phrase, '*a life-giving spirit*'.

Life can never fail Him who *is* life; but one who simply *has* life may lose it; he may die, as in fact Adam died. He was by nature liable to corruption and to death, and to sin. He was corruptible by nature because he was formed from the earth, which could return to dust, similar to the dust which had been made into the form of man. He was able to sin because he was not moral life in itself; he had received moral life from Him who was life, and it was within the power of his free will to preserve that life or miserably cast it away.

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**208** 'I am the life' John 14: 6 - 'I am the resurrection and the life' John 11: 25.

**209** Acts 3: 25.

As the book of Ecclesiasticus says, '*It was he who created man in the beginning, and he left him in the power of his own inclination. If you will, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. He has placed before you fire and water: stretch out your hand for whichever you wish. Before a man are life and death and whichever he chooses will be given to him.*'<sup>210</sup>

The new man, on the contrary, is impeccable because he is God, He is 'comprehensor' and 'wayfarer' at the same time, He is confirmed in grace as He is the author of grace;<sup>211</sup> as man He was anointed by the Father, and as God He was sent into the world.<sup>212</sup> Adam could not give grace to his descendants, but the new Adam gives them grace; Adam could not give them immortality, but Christ gives it to them, for He is a life giving spirit. Hence, the difference between the grace given by God to Adam and the grace which is in Christ and which Christ imparts to his followers.

St. Augustine says that the grace given to Adam was *a help without which* [auxilium sine quo] man could not do any supernatural good, whereas the grace of Christ which He communicates to the Christian by means of His spirit is *a help with which* [auxilium quo] he can do supernatural good.<sup>213</sup> In Adam it was man who acted, although not without grace, whereas the grace of Christ is Christ Himself <sup>214</sup> who effects in the Christian all the supernatural good which he does, not however without the Christian's co-operation. '*Non ego, says St. Paul, sed gratia Dei mecum*' ['Not I, but the grace of God which is with me'].<sup>215</sup> '*Vivo autem iam non ego: vivit vero in me Christus*' ['It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me'].<sup>216</sup>

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**210** Eccl 15: 14-18.

**211** 'Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (Jn 1: 17). 'Comprehensor' signifies he who has attained his end'. 'Wayfarer' (viator) signifies the person on his journey, the pilgrim.

**212** Jn 10: 34-35.

**213** August. *De Corrept. Et Gratia.* n. 34.

**214** Christ himself is called the grace of God by St. Paul (Heb 2: 9).

**215** 1 Cor 15: 10.

**216** Galat 2: 20.

Man, to be sure, can resist grace; he can will what is evil. But when a Christian does that which is good, then it is Christ, then it is the grace of Christ that works in him and with him. When, therefore, St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians and the Colossians to put on the new man and cast off the old man, by the new man we must understand Christ, and those words are equivalent to that other phrase, '*Induimini Dominum nostrum JESUM Christum*' ['Put on the Lord Jesus Christ'].<sup>217</sup>

This sentence of the Apostle points to a certain physical union between the Christian and the Incarnate Word, our Lord JESUS Christ. Our Lord referred to this union when He said He was the vine and His disciples the branches, that draw from the vine the life-giving sap, which is their nourishment and life.<sup>218</sup> The vine is the principal agent, so to speak, of all that is done by the branches, although the operations cannot be without the branches. It is Christ together with the Christian who does all the works of the supernatural life in the Christian, the vine with the branches: '*Non ego, sed gratia Dei mecum*' [Not I but the grace of God which is with me].

In Adam in the state of innocence, it was the man who acted with God's grace, but without grace he could do nothing, *auxilium sine quo*. In the Christian it is God's grace with man, and without man it could do nothing, *auxilium quo*.

The Apostle teaches the same when he compares the Church of JESUS Christ with the human body.<sup>219</sup> Christ is the head of this mystical body, the faithful are its members. Life and operations come from the Head united to the members, and although the members receive all from the Head, they also act in union with Him. It is always from Christ, the Head, that everything good and all life comes.

Another image helps to understand the bond that Christ has with those who are incorporated into Him. The image is that of a house and its foundation. All who are incorporated into Christ

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**217** Rom 13: 14.

**218** Jn 15: 1-17.

**219** Rom 12: 4-5 - Ephes 4: 15-16.



form one building, one house, but Christ is the foundation that supports it.<sup>220</sup>

These different examples serve to explain the secret and intimate union between Christ, the new Adam, and those whom He begets spiritually to the eternal life that is in Him.

Before we go on to make a deeper study of this union, however, we must explain some other differences resulting from the principle we have laid down, namely, of the primary difference between the supernatural state of Adam and that of the man who is regenerated in Christ and by Christ.

## Reading 56

*[Other differences between the supernatural state of Adam and that of man regenerated in Christ; from the principle that man has not per se supernatural good but that Christ does all good in him and with him, and that in Christ he can do everything proceed two feelings in the Christian: that of his own nothingness and that of his own greatness, dignity and power]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

In the first place, the man who is incorporated into Christ is aware that it is not he himself who does anything that is good, but Christ with him: *‘Non ego, sed gratia Dei mecum’* [‘not I, but the grace of God with me’], and this through the merit of the passion suffered by this grace of God, *‘ut gratia Dei pro omnibus gustaret mortem’* [‘so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone’].<sup>221</sup>

Since, then, it is Christ who does all supernatural good in the body of the faithful of which He is the Head, the Christian has a profound sense of the truth contained in Christ’s words: ‘Sine

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**220** 1 Cor 3: 9-17.

**221** Heb 2: 9.

me nihil potestis facere' [*'apart from me you can do nothing'*].<sup>222</sup> At the same time he is conscious that in Christ he can do all things: 'Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat' [*'I can do all things in him who strengthens me'*].<sup>223</sup> 'I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples'.<sup>224</sup> From these words we infer:

1. That, without Christ, man can do nothing.
2. That, if a man abides in Christ, he can bear much fruit, even the greatest fruit, and become *Christ's disciple*, a profound phrase that comprises everything: he can yield indeed as much fruit as he desires, because whatever he wants he asks for, prayer being the sign of the true will of the Christian, and when he asks, his prayer is granted.

However, all who abide in Christ do not wish for the same things, and therefore all Christians do not attain to the same degree of holiness, for it is not given to all alike to will and ask for the same things. At the same time, the whole Mystical Body of JESUS Christ always yields the greatest fruit, according to the infallible calculation of the heavenly husbandman, and each individual yields the greatest fruit in relation to the degree of good will granted to him, because his supernatural will is transfused into his prayer and is fulfilled by Christ who is '*the Truth*',<sup>225</sup> that is, real completion of the idea.

No one, however, is compelled to abide in Christ, and no one abides in Him of necessity, unless he be confirmed in grace. Hence our Lord said to His disciples: '*Abide in me and I in*

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**222** Jn 15: 5.

**223** Philippians 4: 13.

**224** Jn 15: 5-8.

**225** Jn 5: 6.

*you*’,<sup>226</sup> exhorting them to this, because man remains free to do evil if he chooses. It is possible for men by the use of their free will to cut themselves off from Christ so as to receive no longer His beneficent and life-giving influence; on the other hand, they may choose, by not separating themselves from Him and therefore abiding in Him, to do all the good they wish and ask for, because JESUS Christ wills it and asks for it, in them and with them.

Hence, St. John calls this union a *fellowship*: ‘*That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*’.<sup>227</sup>

These two principles: that man can do nothing supernaturally good of himself, but that Christ does all the good in him and with him; and that Christ can do everything with him and that in Christ he can yield the most abundant fruit, give rise to two sentiments in the soul of the Christian, the sense of his own nothingness and the sense of his own greatness, dignity and power.

Man’s sense of his own nothingness is light to his mind, because it makes him aware of his utter powerlessness to do good and of the power of Christ who can do and does all in him.

This feeling and the light of Christ, which shines through it, is the origin, the first and chief cause of Christian HUMILITY, which is the foundation and condition of virtue in the followers and disciples of the Saviour. Just as a little dog, shut into a cage with a lion, trembles because it feels utterly helpless and defenceless before the noble king of the forest, so too, and even more so and in a very different way, the true disciple remains as it were annihilated in himself and trembling at the feeling of the presence of Christ, the Lion of Judah, who is in him, and to whom he is much nearer than the little dog in the cage is to the lion. It is Christ who is in the disciple and with him does all that is good, whereas the disciple cannot do nothing that is good

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**226** Jn 15: 4.

**227** 1 Jn 1: 3.

without Christ since he has only the power to do evil.

Hence, far from setting any value on himself, he has a holy and altogether just hatred and contempt for himself. While the powerful Lion of Judah devours the man, so to speak, in his innermost being, causing him to annihilate himself by humility, at the same time He exerts all His power not for evil but for good, not for death but for the life of him in whom He lives and works, and in place of man's mortal life bestows on him His own immortality.

Hence, the humility of the man who is incorporated in the Man-God, is not only combined with reverential fear of his Redeemer, the Author of life, who dwells in him, and with that sense of fear that is always awakened in the presence of an immense though benevolent power; but also goes hand in hand with a great dread of himself, lest he should perhaps be separated from his life, that is, from our Lord JESUS Christ, due to the freedom he still possesses to do evil.

For this reason, holy men, especially in moments of heavenly visitation and communication of light and graces, in moments in which the feeling of the presence of Christ is most vivid, do not experience temptations to vainglory and pride. On the contrary, they are filled and permeated by an unspeakable sense of humility and an overpowering impulse to give glory to God. We see this in the writings of the saints, especially those of St. Theresa of JESUS.

Now this feeling of boundless humility, which is one of the most wonderful characteristics of Christian virtue, was not found in the first man, Adam, though he possessed the 'character' and the grace; character and grace which were, however, of a different nature from the character and grace of Christ. In Adam it was the man who acted, though not without grace. Adam lived his own natural life, though it was ennobled by supernatural gifts. His nature was full and perfect, and he exulted in the joy and vigour of his life.

The Christian has no other life with which to act, and which to value than the very life of Christ. He counts as worthless his

own natural life and does not expect from it those vital operations by which he may reach his final end. Adam was created to enjoy natural happiness, within the limits of justice, and to advance gradually to supernatural happiness, which would have been the fulfilment of the former. Little by little, he would have advanced in virtue and in the knowledge and love of God, as he gave his attention to the contemplation of God if disposed to do so, and in a greater or lesser degree as he pleased.

The choice was left to his free will to occupy himself either more or less in honest enjoyment of his natural gifts, or, either more or less, in the contemplation and love of heavenly things. Grace was ready to help him, had he wished to avail himself of its support; grace accompanied even his natural actions, and regulated them in relation to his righteousness with God. Concerning the direct object of his affections, he had the free will to choose God or his upright and honest nature.

The ‘*character*’, however, was in him in a potential rather than actual state. The Word was present to him, and Adam could turn to Him; but it was not impressed on his soul, dominating it as a principle for actions.

We have here one of the solutions to the question which we asked earlier (Reading 54): “What was the difference between the indelible character of the first human beings, and the indelible character of the Christian?” We read in fact in the book of Genesis the narrative of the creation of the first man: “*Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping things that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’. And God said: ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And it*

was so'.<sup>228</sup> And again we read: '*And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, you may freely eat of every tree of the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat of it you shall die*'.<sup>229</sup> These words tell us that, on the one hand, man was made to the likeness of God, and on the other, that he is simply given dominion over nature, nourishment from nature, work around nature, and a limit placed by divine precept on what he was allowed to eat. We see, then, that the acts of man are influenced by two species of morality, natural and supernatural, the morality of form and the morality of object.

The *morality of form* is that which makes an act good and well ordered, although the action may have a material and non-moral object, as the objects of eating and of reproducing. By mentioning only these two objects, the writer wished to show that God, in creating man, provided also for the preservation of the individual and of his offspring over the earth.

The *morality of object*, on the contrary, is the morality which occupies man directly with an object *per se* moral, as, for example, God and virtue pursued as end. It was to this second kind of morality that Adam had subsequently to raise himself by the use of his free will; it was not, however, the morality to which God had initially constituted him. In creating man, in fact, God did not do anything that man could do for himself: He willed, following the dictate of divine wisdom, that man himself should become the author of his own moral perfection and therefore He created him in the lowest grade of supernatural morality, a mere seed from which the great tree would develop in time.

God, however, suggested to man the purpose for his actions, as we read in the narrative of creation, which we think was communicated to Adam in the following words: '*Et requievit die septimo ab universo opere quod patrarat. Et benedixit die septimo, et sanctificavit illum: quia in ipso cessaverat ab omni*

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**228** Gen 1: 26-30.

**229** Gen 2: 16-17.

*opere suo, quod creavit Deus ut faceret* [‘And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation’]. <sup>230</sup> The blessing given to the seventh day, called the day of rest of the Lord, and the sanctification of it, was either a precept, or certainly an invitation to the first parents to keep this time for rest from earthly occupations, and for the contemplation of heavenly and divine things, and it anticipated the everlasting and blessed rest, to which they would be called, after completing the period of their earthly occupations.

One of the principal differences between the condition in which God placed Adam, and that of the Christian, is that in Adam there was perfect and vigorous human nature, accompanied by grace by which he could have refrained from misusing his natural gifts and remained obedient to God, and by which he might also have risen to direct contemplation and love of God, the supreme and infinite object of his happiness.

For the Christian, on the other hand, his own human nature is worthless and of no avail for the attainment of eternal life. He is destined for nothing but dissolution and death. What is operative in him is the human nature of Christ, a perfect nature, triumphant over death. In an ineffable and mysterious way, of which we shall perhaps speak on another occasion, the glorious humanity of Christ is in real communication and permanent union with all those who have been baptised and have received the other sacraments, which enable them to live by the life of Christ. This life is the source of all their acts and all the supernatural good they do, both of form and of object; and this alone do they prize.

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**230** Gen 2: 2-3 - See Exod 20: 11; 31: 17; Deut 5: 14; Heb 4: 4.

## Reading 57

*[Another motive for Christian humility: the natural life of the descendants of the sinner Adam is weak, mortal and uncertain but it was not like this in Adam]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

The Christian, then, who abides in Christ is aware that One who is all-powerful is working in him and with him. He is also aware that he is excluded and reduced to nothing in the actions that have life eternal in view; that is to say, he knows that he is no longer the supreme principle of those actions which proceed from another principle, of which he is only an active instrument. Here we have the deep foundation of Christian HUMILITY.

There is another consideration to be made that will deepen this humility still further. The natural life in a son of fallen Adam, is weak, mortal, and precarious. It feels, moreover, a certain repugnance to reach towards the infinite, and to renounce itself in order to let the life of Christ govern man and be the principle of his activity. Hence the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and the cry of the supernatural principle of the Christian against his animal nature:

*St. Ephrem Nuovo,  
Naples, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1849.  
After a few days of sickness*

*‘Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?’* Then St. Paul adds: *‘Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord’*.<sup>231</sup> Grace is precisely the supreme principle which is joined to man and this principle is Christ Himself, who thus becomes the first author of man’s actions, provided he does not oppose Him. The man who is ruled by this principle has therefore become a *new man*. This is the mystery of the Christian life, announced in a special way to the Romans by the

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**231** Rom 7: 24-25.



Apostle Paul. To this life Adam and Eve had no right whatever.

They were created in a state of innocence; they sinned, and their offspring became the slaves of sin. This is the foundation of Christian greatness: the annulment of moral man, caused by sin; and the fact that man made himself unfit to achieve the end for which he was created. St. Paul starts from this principle in his marvellous letter to the Romans: '*Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned*'.<sup>232</sup> He says, *because all men sinned*, meaning *men in so far as they were in Adam* because in Adam was that human nature which would afterwards be found in his descendants. So, the human nature of Adam sinned, for which reason, original sin in his descendants is called '*sin of nature*', and individuals or persons are said to have sinned in so far as they have received a sinful nature.

Human nature, then, becomes sinful because it is not just physical or intellectual, but is also essentially moral, since it is endowed with a will. The will, moral by nature, can become defective by being thrown into disorder by a perverse agent. In our case, this disordered agent is the body, whose concupiscence is no longer under the complete control of reason and free will but acts partly without it and in spite of it. The free will clings to concupiscence in such a way that man has no longer dominion over it and can no longer choose freely to engage in good deeds.

The power of freedom becomes so feeble that it no longer manages to oppose the will which has been allured by concupiscence; and even if it does, being perhaps jolted by the beauty of virtue presented by the intellect, it has no strength to follow it. Speaking of the fallen man, but in the first person, this is what St. Paul says: "*Nam velle adjacet mihi: perficere autem bonum non invenio. Non enim quod volo bonum hoc facio: sed quod nolo malum, hoc ago*" ['I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do'].<sup>233</sup> From this, he proves the existence of original

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**232** *Ibid.* 5: 12.

**233** Rom 7: 18-19.

sin in all men, as the principle which does the evil and gains the mastery: “*Si autem quod nolo, illud facio, iam non ego operor illud, sed quod habitat in me peccatum. Invenio igitur legem, volenti mihi facere bonum quoniam mihi MALUM ADJACET: condelector enim legi Dei secundum interiorem hominem: video autem aliam legem in membris meis repugnantem legi mentis meae et captivantem me in lege peccati quae est in membris meis*” [‘Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me, so I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members’].<sup>234</sup>

Therefore, the law of sin dwells in the members of the sons of Adam, and this law is the concupiscence which, if it is not overcome by the grace of Christ, makes man captive and despoils him of his perfect moral liberty. This weakening and despoiling of freedom so that the will adheres to concupiscence, is what is called original sin in the descendants of Adam. It is habitual sin, the operative principle of disorder, to which however the *notion of fault* is not attributed, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, because it is in every man who receives life by generation without his being able to avoid it.

The Apostle does not deny that the free will of the children of Adam can do some natural good. He grants this when he says: “*Cum enim Gentes quae legem non habent, naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, eiusmodi legem non habentes, ipsi sibi sunt lex: qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis, testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum, et inter se invicem cogitationibus, accusantibus, aut etiam defendentibus, in die cum iudicabit Deus occulta hominum, secundum Evangelium meum per JESUM Christum*” [‘When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my Gospel,

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**234** *Ibid.* 7: 20-23

God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus’].<sup>235</sup> But in the first place the Apostle accuses the Gentiles of not having done even that small amount of natural good they might have done with the moral strength that still remained to them, and therefore he calls them inexcusable.

He gives two reasons for this. Firstly, because although they knew God by the light of reason, they still did not *acknowledge* Him with their will, but they sought instead to despoil and disfigure the concept they had of God.

*“Quia quod notum est Dei, manifestum est in illis. Deus enim illis manifestavit. Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur: sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas: ita ut sint inexcusabiles. Quia cum cognivissent Deum, non sicut Deum glorificaverunt aut gratias egerunt: sed evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis, et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum”* [‘For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened’].<sup>236</sup>

It is certain that, if the Gentiles had preserved in its purity the concept of the divinity which they had gained from consideration of the universe, and if they had turned to him for help, God in His essential mercy would have come to their aid.

This however they failed to do, and their moral condition became even worse. First of all, their foolish hearts were darkened, and they gave themselves over to an evil which they could easily avoid, and, warped in this way, they fell into idolatry. *“Et mutaverunt gloriam incorruptibilis Dei, in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum, et quadrupedum et serpentium”* [‘And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images

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**235** *Ibid.* 2: 14-16

**236** Romans 1: 19-21

resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles’].<sup>237</sup>

- Thus, they had no help by God, from whom help could come. God abandoned them to their evil sense which, already defective in its origin, became even worse, and they were deprived of that one light which they could have had through their natural understanding, if they had chosen it, namely, a clear and genuine concept of God in their mind. Hence the shameful passions described by the Apostle.<sup>238</sup>

In the second place, St. Paul calls them inexcusable, because in their weakness and misery instead of humbling themselves and acknowledging their wretched state, they became proud, and proud people close every door to divine mercy. Already the pride of their imagination had been the cause of their idolatry: “*Dicentes se esse sapientes, stulti facti sunt*” [‘Claiming to be wise, they became fools’].<sup>239</sup>

Now this upstart pride, growing to a climax in the depth of corruption, caused them, even while they were so guilty, to take on the air of teachers and judges of their fellowmen, condemning themselves even as they were judging others: “*Propter quod inexcusabilis es, o homo omnis qui iudicas. In quo enim iudicas alterum teipsum condemnas*” [‘Therefore you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are, when you judge another, for in passing judgement upon him you condemn yourself’].<sup>240</sup> This was the error especially of the Jews who proudly condemned the Gentiles, and boasted of having the law of Moses, which, however, they did not keep.

St. Paul concludes that all, Gentiles and Jews alike, were blameworthy, that is to say, they were not merely infected in their origin by the sin inherited from their first parents, but they also had their own sins, especially the sin of pride. This was the chief hindrance to the divine aid, because they did not know

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**237** *Ibid.* 1: 23.

**238** *Ibid.* 1: 24-32.

**239** *Ibid.* 1: 22.

**240** Romans. 2: 1.

they were incapable of doing anything good, and they boasted and judged others instead of humbling and judging themselves according to the truth.

*“Causati enim sumus, Iudaeos et Graecos omnes sub peccato esse, sicut scriptum est, quia non est iustus quisquam, etc.”* [‘For I have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written:’ ‘None is righteous, no, not one’ etc.].<sup>241</sup>

But apart from actual sins freely committed, St. Paul observes that although with the moral strength which remained to man he would have been able to do some good, according to the natural law, this was not enough to save him because *‘bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu’* [‘Good is produced by a full cause, evil by any defect’]. Such is the moral law that it is one, simple and completely entire, and if one part is lacking it is destroyed.

*“Quicumque enim totam legem servaverit, offendat autem in uno fit omnium reus”* [‘For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it’].<sup>242</sup> Man conceived in sin, is incapable by himself of keeping the whole law, and therefore he cannot work out his own salvation which consists in complete moral good. The Gentile could not achieve his salvation because he failed to keep the entire natural law; the Jew could not do so because he failed to keep in its entirety the Mosaic Law. *“Omnes enim peccaverunt et egent gloriam Dei”* [‘All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’].<sup>243</sup>

A son of Adam, then, is nothing in the moral order, for by his own strength he cannot obtain true moral good in the natural and much less in the supernatural order. The awareness and the fullest recognition of this truth is the second reason which we wish to lay down for Christian *HUMILITY*.

This feeling could not be in Adam because, as we have said, he

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**241** *Ibid.* 3: 9-20.

**242** James 2: 10.

**243** Rom 2: 23.

had a perfect intellectual nature with the integrity of free will, clothed also with grace which elevated him to the supernatural order; hence in him there was a very lively feeling of his own powers by which he could do good.

Adam, certainly, had good reasons for professing humility, as every creature has, even the most sublime of the angels: but his humility was completely different from the humility of the Christian, and consisted only in the acknowledgement of the *limits* of his own nature, and in the complete *dependence* of this nature on the supreme Being, from whom he had received it, and from whom he received everything necessary for its preservation. He had to rely on God for the widening of his own limits, called to this, as it were, by the limitless idea of being which shone before his mind. God had given him the token of this and the means in the grace conferred on him.

Adam acknowledged his limitations but not his complete dependence on God and looked elsewhere to fulfil and extend himself. He listened to the devil's tempting, and he was persuaded that he would become God by eating the forbidden fruit. Instead of having recourse to God for his ennoblement and fulfilment, he looked for this in a *creature*, to which he idiotically attributed the mysterious and divine power of transforming man into another divinity. He was probably deceived by the magnificence of the angelic nature which manifested itself to him. Because of his human limitations, he was unable to comprehend the limits of the angelic greatness, and he attributed to it omnipotence and infinity. He probably believed that he could share in the angelic nature by eating of the fruit possessed and infiltrated by the devil.

So, in uniting himself with the devil by means of food, he aspired to the utmost physical and intellectual grandeur, forgetting and neglecting moral greatness as the object of his aspirations. He was offered this moral and splendid greatness, which draws the other two along with it, by way of his union with God, which he could achieve fully by directing his will to obey God, in other words by means of humility. He made the mistake of thinking that he could reach a full expansion of his limitations neglecting the moral element, in which true greatness resides, and without

having to *humiliate* himself and *depend* on his Creator. He was supported in this belief by the feeling of his own powers, generated in him by his own perfect and splendid nature.

## Reading 58

*[The feeling of Christian magnanimity; the effects of new life which man receives by being incorporated in Christ]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

So far, we have considered the first of the two feelings we have said are proper to Christians, that is of the man incorporated in Christ. We have spoken of the feeling of our own nothingness, from which springs Christian *humility*; and we have seen how such a feeling could not have existed in Adam in his innocence. We have now to consider the second feeling, produced in the Christian by the presence of Christ in him, and it is that of *magnanimity*.

Just as the Christian is aware that he can do nothing of himself, that he has a corrupt nature which is opposed to moral perfection and lusts against the spirit, so also is he aware of possessing a new principle of spiritual life, namely, our Lord JESUS Christ Himself with whom he is wonderfully united.

The first man, Adam, endowed as he was with perfect human nature, was destined to mount from physical to intellectual perfection and from intellectual perfection to moral perfection. His nature, both physical and intellectual, was well-ordered, and his will was endowed with a gift of grace whereby he could rise to an ever-increasing perception of God, by faithful obedience to a positive precept.

Adam halted in the path marked out for him, and instead of passing without interruption through the three degrees of activity, animal, intellectual and moral, he did not go beyond the first two. He failed to take the third step of obedience to his Creator. He paused to seek only his physical and intellectual greatness; and in order to obtain it without subjecting himself to the moral law, he sought to unite with the fallen angels and ate the forbidden fruit which they probably possessed.

The way of the Christian is opposite to this. He starts out not from physical or intellectual perfection but from moral perfection. The first two no longer count, because they are irreparably ruined. But when a new moral life has been supernaturally regained, this it that revives, reconquers and restores to man the first two. This moral life is restored to man by his union with JESUS Christ, who is the bread that came down from heaven: and in this moral and supernatural life of JESUS Christ, as shared by man, consists his new dignity, his greatness, his power and what we have called Christian *MAGNANIMITY*.

The first effect of this new life, which man receives when he is incorporated in Christ, is the feeling of moral power with which he despises his previous life, intellectual and physical, and has no fear of death.

This superiority over death was expressed by St. Paul in these words: *“Quis ergo nos separabit a charitate Christi? Tribulatio? An angustia? An fames? An nuditas? An periculum? An persecutio? An gladius? (sicut scriptum est: ‘quia propter te mortificamur tota die: aestimati sumus sicut oves occisionis’). Sed in his omnibus superamus propter eum qui dilexit nos. Certus sum enim, quia neque mors, neque vita, neque Angeli, neque principatus, neque virtutes (as it happened to the first Adam, who allowed himself to be deceived by angels), neque profundum, neque creatura alia poterit nos separare a charitate Dei, quae est in Christo JESU Domino nostro”*.

[‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?’ As it is written: ‘For thy sake we are being



killed all day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’<sup>244</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’]. <sup>245</sup>

Contempt for physical life and for all things human was expressed by the Apostle himself in these words to the Philippians: “*Verumtandem existimo omnia detrimentum esse, propter eminentem scientiam JESU Christi Domini mei: propter quem omnia detrimentum feci et arbitror ut stercora, ut Christum lucrificiam*” [‘Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I might gain Christ’].<sup>246</sup>

Contempt for mere intellectual life apart from moral life was shown by the same Apostle in writing to the Corinthians: “*Et ego cum venissem ad vos, fratres, veni, non in sublimitate sermonis aut sapientiae, annuntians vobis testimonium Christi. Non enim iudicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi JESUM Christum et hunc crucifixum. Et sermo meus et praedicatio mea non in persuasibilibus humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in ostensione spiritus et virtutis: ut fides vestra non sit in sapientia hominum, sed in virtute Dei*”.

[‘When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God’].<sup>247</sup>

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**244** Ps 43: 21.

**245** Rom 8: 35-39.

**246** Philipp 3: 8.

**247** 1 Cor 2: 1-5.

The second effect of Christian magnanimity is to make the Christian aware of the riches and the dominion over the natural world which he has received, inasmuch as he possesses Christ who is the Lord of nature. With this is linked, in a special way, the power of working miracles, promised by Christ to men of faith: “*Signa autem eos qui crediderint, haec sequentur: In nomine meo daemonia eiicient: linguis loquentur novis: serpentes tollent, et si mortiferum quid biberint non eis nocebit: super aegros manus imponent et bene habebunt*” [‘And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.’]<sup>248</sup>

And again: “*Amen dico vobis, si habueritis fidem et non hesitaveritis, non solum de ficulnea facietis, sed si monti huic dixeritis: Tolle et jacta te in mare, fiet. Et omnia quaecumque petieritis in oratione credentes, accipietis*”

[‘Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only you will be able to move a fig tree, but if you say to this mountain, “be taken up and cast into the sea,” it will be done for you. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer believe that you will receive it, and you will.’]<sup>249</sup>

Once more: “*Amen, amen dico vobis, qui credit in me, opera quae ego facio, et ipse faciet, et majora horum faciet, quia ego ad Patrem vado*” [‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father’].<sup>250</sup> And: “*Amen quippe dico vobis, si habueritis fidem, sicut granum sinapis, dicetis monti huic: Transi hinc illuc et transibit, et nihil impossibile erit vobis*” [‘For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move hence to yonder place” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you’].<sup>251</sup>

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**248** Mark 16: 17-18.

**249** Matt 7: 7-8 (sic) (Mk 11: 23-24).

**250** Jn 14: 12-14.

**251** Matt 17: 20; 21: 22; - Lk 17: 6; 11: 9; James 1: 6.

Everything is promised to the prayer of faith despite the obstacles presented by the laws of nature. It rarely happens, though, that one of the faithful seeks miracles for his own benefit; usually he desires them that others may know the truth of the Gospel. The person who already believes does not need them; and for the rest, he is satisfied with the ordinary ways of divine Providence, in whose hands he rests. His only desire is to become holy, and for this there is no need of external miracles. Therefore, as he neither desires nor longs for them, he cannot possess that faith which obtains them.

This is why miracles occurred more frequently in the early ages of the Church when the Gospel was being spread among the heathen, and they happen also more frequently when apostolic men feel the need of them for the spread of the Gospel among infidel nations. However, miracles may also be desired for the increase of holiness, or to increase the glory of the saints. If this desire, accompanied by faith, springs up in the soul of the Christian and he consequently asks for a miracle, this without doubt takes place. It also takes place whenever the holy desire is formed in the soul for any good reason whatsoever, when the desire is simple and produces the absolute will to obtain the miracle, which results in unhesitating prayer.

This holy and simple act by which a man absolutely wills to obtain a miracle and consequently asks for it without hesitation, if it does not come about through a special inspiration from God or inspired by the motives already mentioned, of the propagation of the Gospel or the glorification of the saints, is more frequently found in holy, simple souls who have little learning than in the learned people, though holy themselves. The reason is that the learned have more light with regard to God's ordinary providence and greater trust in it. They patiently await its development in due course and therefore see no absolute need to will and ask for a miracle. Their will to ask for a miracle is not therefore absolute, and they do not ask for it with the same simplicity and without conditions.

Yet such men are no less rich and have no less power over the course of events than the others. All holy persons are conscious that in Christ they possess all, and that with Him they have all

things, of which He is the Lord. Hence St. Paul says: “*Si Deus pro nobis quis contra nos? Qui etiam proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum: quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?*” [‘If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?’]<sup>252</sup>

And again he says: “*Habeo autem omnia et abundo*” [‘I have received full payment and more’].<sup>253</sup> So, everything that happens in the universe is directed by Providence for the benefit and greater perfection of the Saints: “*Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum iis qui secundum propositum vocati sunt Sancti*” [‘We know that in everything God works for the good with those who love him, who are called according to this purpose’].<sup>254</sup> Of these Christ has said that not a hair of their head will perish.<sup>255</sup>

At the same time, however, a holy person understands that he possesses all things in Christ and through Christ who is in him. He regards himself as a son in his Father’s house, a son who possesses all, but in subordination to his Father who is the true master. The Apostle expressed this in writing to the Corinthians: “*Omnia enim vestra sunt, sive Paulus, sive Apollo, sive Cephas, sive mundus, sive vita, sive mors, sive praesentia, sive futura; omnia enim vestra sunt; vos autem Christi; Christus autem Dei*” [‘For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos or Cephas or the world, or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours: and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s’].<sup>256</sup>

Moreover, the saints incorporated in Christ are called his *co-heirs*, because Christ, having died in the form of fallen man and risen again as the new man, has inherited whatever belonged to fallen man and indeed all things; He has invited the faithful who are members of His mystical body to share His royal and magnificent inheritance.

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**252** Rom 8: 31-32.

**253** Philip 4: 18.

**254** Rom 8: 28

**255** Matt 10: 30; Lk 21: 18.

**256** 1 Cor 3: 22-23.

The third effect of Christian magnanimity is the contempt which the Christian has for riches and worldly things. A holy man who is united with Christ is not concerned to acquire a few and transitory things with the cares and worries they bring; he knows that in Christ he possesses all things, and that all things are at his disposal without trouble or anxiety, whenever he needs them for the attainment of his supernatural end, which alone he values as his true good.

Hence, he appreciates the blessedness of poverty proclaimed by Christ, to which the heavenly kingdom is promised.<sup>257</sup> He remembers also the words of Christ: *“Nolite ergo solliciti esse dicentes: Quid manducabimus, aut quid bibemus, aut quo operiemur? Haec enim omnia gentes inquirunt. Scit enim Pater vester, quia his omnibus indigetis. Quaerite ergo primum regnum Dei et iustitiam eius, et haec omnia adjicientur vobis”* [‘Therefore do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and all these things will be yours as well’].<sup>258</sup>

The Apostle describes the minister of Christ as follows: *“Sicut egentes, multos autem locupletantes: tamquam nihil habentes, omnia autem possidentes”* [‘As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing everything’].<sup>259</sup> To this should be added those incorruptible riches promised by Christ for a future time, when they can be enjoyed without fear and with no lessening of holiness. *“Et omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres, aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem propter nomen meum, centuplum accipiet, et vitam aeternam possidebit”* [‘And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundred-fold, and inherit eternal life’].<sup>260</sup>

*“Vendite quae possidetis et date eleemosynam. Facite vobis*

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**257** Matt 5: 3-12.

**258** *Ibid.* 6: 31-33.

**259** 2 Cor 6: 10.

**260** Matt 19: 29.

*sacculos qui non veterascunt, thesaurum non deficientem in coelis; quo fur non appropriat, neque tinea corrumpit*” [‘Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys’].<sup>261</sup> *“Euge serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multam te constituam: intra in gaudium Domini tui”* [‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master’].<sup>262</sup>

The fourth effect of Christian magnanimity is *tranquillity* in our state of life and in the discharge of its duties, unless God moves or invites us to do some special work. On the other hand, it includes a *spirit of initiative* and a persevering courage in undertaking and bringing to a successful conclusion those special works that are required by the will of God when this is made known.

The man who is incorporated in Christ experiences tranquillity of mind with regard to the good things of this world and the improvement of his condition, because he is conscious of possessing Christ, and he is content thus to be in possession of all things, as the Apostle says: *“Unusquisque in qua vocatione qua vocatus est, in ea permaneat. Servus vocatus es? Non sit tibi curae: sed si potes fieri liber, magis utere. Qui enim in Domino vocatus est servus, libertus est Domini: similiter qui liber vocatus est, servus est Christi. Pretio empty estis, nolite fieri servi hominum. Unusquisque in quo vocatus est, fratres, in hoc permaneat apud Deum”* [‘Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called. Were you a slave when called? Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom avail yourself of the opportunity. For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freeman of the Lord. Likewise, he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were brought with a great price; do not become slaves of men. So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God’].<sup>263</sup>

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**261** Lk 12: 33.

**262** Matt 25: 23 - Lk 19: 17.

**263** 1 Cor 7: 20-24.

And again: *“Hoc itaque dico, fratres, tempus breve est: reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores tanquam non habentes sint: et qui flent tanquam non flentes: et qui gaudent tanquam non gaudentes; et qui flent tanquam non flentes; et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur: praeterit enim figura huius mundi”* [‘I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short (the time is short for those who, in Christ, are aware of eternity) from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealing with it. For the form of this world is passing away’].<sup>264</sup>

Therefore, those who are conscious of possessing Christ can never be unsettled and worried about obtaining human promotion and wealth but live happily in their state of life.

The Christian, moreover, does not leave this quiet state to undertake any special work on his own initiative and without first ascertaining God’s will, however good the work may be in itself and intended to promote God’s glory. He acts thus through humility which makes him understand that he is nothing and of himself capable of nothing. Furthermore, he is well aware that Christ who is in him and with him for God’s glory would, if He so pleased, give him the necessary impulse and make known to him His will by means of providential events or in other ways.

In the third place, a man cannot know whether a work that is good in itself, enters into God’s grand plan, and therefore whether it is a true good with respect to the whole design, and is consequently a true good forming part of that plan, and such as God wills to bring to completion. Hence St. Paul says: *“Unde enim scis, mulier, si virum salvum facies? Aut unde scis vir, si mulierem salvam facies? Nisi unicuique sicut divisit Dominus, unumquemque sicut vocavit Deus, ita ambulet, et sicut in omnibus Ecclesiis doceo”* [‘Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband how do you know whether

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**264** *Ibid.* 5: 29-31.

you will save your wife? Only, let everyone lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches’]<sup>265</sup>

In the fourth place, the Christian knows that all things, no matter how he acts, are directed by the Father to the greatest glorification of the Son, and indeed are all given into the Son’s hands, and that therefore the good result which he has at heart is already assured with or without his cooperation, as God pleases.

But when the spirit of Christ which is in him, inspires him, when the will of God is revealed to him, when the moral necessity arises of which St. Paul says: “*Nam si evangelizavero non est mihi gloria: necessitas enim mihi incumbit: vae enim mihi si non evangelizavero*” [‘For if I preach the Gospel that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’],<sup>266</sup> then the initiative, the courage, the perseverance of the Christian in labouring for the salvation of souls and in undertaking the most arduous works of charity are without limits. Once he has received a mission from God, he is conscious of immense power in Christ in what he does. He rises above death and all worldly things, which he scorns, knowing that he has all things in his hands, and he says with the Apostle: “*Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*” [‘I can do all things in him who strengthens me’].<sup>267</sup>

Difficulties, trials, weakness only serve to strengthen him: “*Propter quod placeo mihi in infirmitatibus meis, in contumeliis, in necessitatibus, in persecutionibus, in angustiis pro Christo: cum enim infirmior tunc potens sum*” [‘For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong’].<sup>268</sup>

The sense of his own weakness does not daunt him nor make

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**265** *Ibid.* 7: 16-17.

**266** *Ibid.* 9: 16.

**267** Phillip 4: 13.

**268** 2 Cor 12: 10.



him afraid, for he puts his trust in God and not in himself, knowing and experiencing in himself the truth of what the Apostle says: “*Quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientes: et infirma mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat fortia: et ignobilia mundi et contemptibilia elegit Deus, ut ea quae sunt destrueret: ut non gloriatur omnis caro in conspectus eius*” [‘But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God’].<sup>269</sup>

The man, who is incorporated in Christ counts himself among the ‘things that are not’, *quae non sunt*, for he no longer lives his own life. In other words, he makes no account of his own life and does not wish to act in accordance with it, but there lives in him the new man JESUS Christ, by whom alone, according to his new life, he wishes to act, conscious of his own power. Therefore, from this sense of one’s own nothingness, all false humility is excluded, and there is room for the acknowledgement of Christ’s gifts and for that kind of boasting to which St. Paul refers when he says: “*Qui autem gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur*” [‘Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord’].<sup>270</sup>

These words have more than one meaning. In the first place, we may glory in the Lord who is the author of all the good in us, attributing to Him alone the glory in which He gives us a share.<sup>271</sup> Secondly, we may also glory, not in ourselves, for we are nothing, nor in things vain and blameworthy, but in counting our union with God to be our only glory.<sup>272</sup> Thirdly, we may glory in the expectation that our Lord JESUS Christ, who is already glorified in us by His heavenly Father, will Himself

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**269** 1 Cor 1: 27-29.

**270** *Ibid.* 1: 31.

**271** “*Regi autem saeculorum immortalis, invisibilis, soli Deo, honor et Gloria in saecula saeculorum*” [‘To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.’ (1 Tim 1: 17)].

**272** ‘He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord’ (1 Cor. 1: 30-31) See Jerem. 9: 22-23.

give us a share in His glory, without our claiming anything ourselves, for we cannot judge our own merits or those of other people.<sup>273</sup>

Adam, the first man, could not possess the virtue of Christian magnanimity, that most noble feeling arising from several others, because he could not annihilate himself to give place entirely to Christ. Though he had the perception of the Word, Adam lived fully his own life, acting in accordance with his human and limited life. If he had wished, he had the power both to act uprightly and to grow steadily in the intellectual life and grace of the Word.

## Reading 59

*[The meaning of the solemn words, 'IN CHRISTO']*

*“In him was the life, and the life was the light of men”*

By man's union with Christ -physical, intellectual and moral- Christ becomes the Head and the faithful become His members, receiving life and activity from the Head. Thus, Christ is the principal agent in every Christian who does not resist but co-operates with the activity of the Head. This union helps us to understand the value of some solemn expressions found in the divine Scriptures, which were continually on the lips of the early Christians.

One of these expressions is: *'in Christo'*. *“Ex ipso autem vos estis in CHRISTO JESU”* [*'He is the source of your life in Christ JESUS'*].<sup>274</sup> To be in Christ JESUS is equivalent to being inserted into Him like the branch in the vine. And the writer says: *ex ipso*, that is, *ex Deo* because this incorporation is the

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**273** 'Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord. For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends' (2 Cor 10: 17-18).

**274** 1 Cor. 1: 30.

work of the most Blessed Trinity and is attributed to the Father from whom proceeds the Word, and with the Word all who are united to Him and form one body with Him. Almost as though the faithful, having become one with the Son and having themselves become sons, proceed from the Father.

*“In Christo JESU per Evangelium ego vos genui”* [‘For I generated you in Christ Jesus through the Gospel’].<sup>275</sup> To beget in Christ is the same as to incorporate, to insert in Christ. It is a true begetting, because when Christ becomes the supreme principle of activity or, in other words, when by His union with man He creates in him a new activity superior to all others, which dominates them all, man becomes a new person, because the foundation of personality consists in the supreme intelligent principle of activity.

Hence, St. Paul considers a man who is in Christ a new creation, a new man,<sup>276</sup> a new creature, who alone has any value, all the rest being worth nothing: *“In Christo enim JESU neque circumcisio aliquid valet, neque praeputium sed nova creatura”* [‘For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation’].<sup>277</sup>

For when the personality is made anew and a supreme, dominating and incorruptible principle has been created in a man who is sanctified, this principle is, as it were, the seed through which all human nature and everything that is made for its service must be renewed, since, according to divine wisdom, once the end has been obtained, the means cannot be lacking, and the most important of such means will draw to itself what is accessory to it. The Apostle, therefore, is perfectly right when he sees in the renewal of man’s highest faculty the renewal also of all mankind and the restoration of all things.

*“Si qua ergo in Christo nova creatura, vetera transierunt; ecce facta sunt omnia nova”* [‘Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has passed away, behold the new has

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**275** *Ibid.* 4: 15.

**276** Rom 6: 6-11.

**277** Gal 6: 15.

come'],<sup>278</sup> as the prophets of old had foretold.<sup>279</sup> Such was the eternal design of God who permitted the first man's fall. "*Ut notum faceret nobis sacramentum voluntatis suae, secundum beneplacitum eius, quod proposuit in eo, in dispensatione plenitudinis temporum, instaurare omnia in Christo, quae in coelis et quae in terra sunt, in ipso*" [For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth'].<sup>280</sup>

By '*things which are in heaven*', we are to understand spiritual things, the intelligence and all that pertains to it, or the intelligent will, which ascends from heaven to heaven, from virtue to virtue, from perfection to perfection, until at length, when the bodily vesture and all its blemishes are removed, it attains to the vision of God in the heaven of heavens.

By '*things which are earthly*' we must understand the human body, the animal nature and all external things which belong to the animal life, which will likewise be restored in due time, and which are indeed already in process of being restored by the Providence that guides and directs them for the benefit of those who love God.

The Apostle adds: *in ipso* [in him], because all things are incorporated in Christ and together with Him form one body of which He is the head and the life-giving spirit, for it is not merely the soul that is incorporated in Christ. Inasmuch as Christ is not only God but also man, and His humanity is necessarily composed of body and soul, He must be ruler, head and life no less of men's bodies than of their souls, in some way even in this life, but more perfectly in the life to come when the body will also be entirely renewed and made perfect.

Hence, St. Paul refers to the bodies of Christians as already members of Christ: "*Nescitis quoniam corpora vestra membra*

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**278** 2 Cor 5: 17.

**279** Is 43: 19 - See Rev 21:9.

**280** Ephes 1: 9-10.

*sunt Christi? Tollens ergo membra Christi, faciam membra meretricis? Absit. An nescitis quoniam qui adhaeret meretrici unum corpus efficitur? Erunt ergo, inquit, duo in carne una. Qui autem adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est*” [‘Do you not know that your members are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For as it is written “the two shall become one.” But he who is united to the Lord become one spirit with him’].<sup>281</sup>

Not that the body in its present condition is entirely renewed and made worthy of the life of Christ; but through its union with the spirit it is incorporated in Christ, and by the virtue that flows from His humanity, as we shall see, the body is hallowed and shares in the spiritual life itself. This is what St. Paul means when he concludes: “*Qui autem adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est*” [‘but he who is united with the Lord becomes one spirit with him’].

He considers the body not as a mere body but as, in some way, spiritualised, so that it is less of a hindrance to the spirit and even assists in its sanctification. Since, however, in this present life there always remains something material in the body, something that offers resistance and even suffers in proportion to the union of the spirit with God, it must therefore in due time be restored and afterwards remade in the resurrection. St. Paul refers to this when he says: “*Esca ventris, et venter escis. Deus autem et hunc et has destruet: corpus autem non fornicationi, sed Domino: et Dominus corpori. Deus vero et Dominus suscitavit: et nos suscitabit per virtutem suam*” [‘Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power’].<sup>282</sup>

Endless are the expressions used by the apostles and their disciples containing this expression: ‘*in Christ*’, because all that

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**281** 1 Cor 6: 15-17.

**282** *Ibid.* 13-14.

the Christian is or does, is in Christ; or is done by him in Christ. “*Creati in Christo*”, “*Sanctificati in Christo*”, “*Radicati et superaedificati in Christo*”, “*Dormire in Christo*”, “*Vivificari in Christo*”, “*Crescere in Christo*”, “*Consolari in Christo*”, “*Gaudere in Christo*”, “*Gloriari in Christo*”, “*Exhibere hominem perfectum in Christo JESU*”, “*Mori in Christo*”, “*Pie vivere in Christo*”, “*Bona conversatio in Christo*”, “*Patientia in Christo*”, “*Voluntas Dei in Christo*”, “*Gratia Dei in Christo*”, “*Dilectio Dei in Christo*” [‘Created in Christ’<sup>283</sup> ‘made holy in Christ’<sup>284</sup> ‘rooted and built up in Christ,’<sup>285</sup> ‘to sleep in Christ,’<sup>286</sup> ‘to be made alive in Christ,’<sup>287</sup> ‘to grow in Christ,’<sup>288</sup> ‘to be consoled in Christ,’<sup>289</sup> ‘to rejoice in Christ,’<sup>290</sup> ‘to glory in Christ,’<sup>291</sup> ‘to present every man mature in Christ,’<sup>292</sup> ‘to die in Christ,’<sup>293</sup> ‘to live a godly life in Christ,’<sup>294</sup> ‘good behaviour in Christ,’<sup>295</sup> ‘patience in Christ,’<sup>296</sup> ‘the will of God in Christ,’<sup>297</sup> ‘the grace of God in Christ,’<sup>298</sup> ‘love of God in Christ’].<sup>299</sup> The same may be said of everything that befalls the spiritual man, everything that he suffers and everything that he does.

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**283** *‘Ipsius enim sumus factura, CREATI IN CHRISTO JESU in operibus bonis, quae preparavit Deus ut in illis ambulemus’* [‘For as we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.’ Eph 2: 10].

**284** *“Sanctificatis in Christo JESU, vocatis sanctis”* [‘To those sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints.’ 1 Cor 1: 2].

**285** Cor 2: 7.

**286** 1 Cor 15: 18.

**287** *Ibid.* 22.

**288** *“Crescamus in illo per omnia qui est Caput Christus”* [‘We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.’ (Eph 4: 15)].

**289** Philip 2: 1.

**290** *Ibid.* id 3: 1.

**291** *Ibid.* id 3: 3.

**292** Col 1: 28.

**293** 1 Thess 4: 15.

**294** 2 Tim 3: 12.

**295** 1 Peter 3: 16.

**296** Revel 1: 9.

**297** 1 Thess 5: 17.

**298** 2 Tim 2: 1.

**299** 1 Tim 1: 14.

We only have to read the Letters of the Apostles to find this expression '*in Christo*', which is so pregnant with meaning. It is found no less frequently in the works of the early Christian writers, on Christian tombstones, on altars and in Churches, and on all the monuments of Christian tradition.

## Reading 60

*[All moral and ascetical doctrine of the Christian comes from this feeling of incorporation in Christ. Incorporation of man in Christ implies; 1) the impress of the character; 2) the diffusion in man of habitual or sanctifying grace which arises from the character; the twofold life of the 'Christian pilgrim on earth;' Adam's life and the life of Christ]*

*"In him was life, and the life was the light of men"*

In this solemn expression, '*in Christ*', is contained the sum-total of Christianity, because it expresses the real mystical union of man with Christ. Active Christianity is based on this union and incorporation.

From this union and this incorporation Christian piety and doctrine derive their origin, for Christianity is in the first-place actual piety, and in the second-place abstract doctrine. The Christian derives all moral and ascetical doctrine from the *feeling* of this incorporation which is a light to enlighten him, because it is the *feeling* of Christ dwelling in him.

The real union and the incorporation of man with Christ has two parts.

The first and fundamental part is the work of God alone and is the foundation of the second. It is known as spiritual generation, the birth of the new man. It is the permanent union of Christ with man, by which man becomes a new creature.

The second, which is a development and effect of the first, is not the work of Christ alone, but of Christ together with man, with whom He is united. For this second part of the Christian's incorporation in Christ, it is necessary that he should not place obstacles to Christ's action, and that he should allow himself to move spontaneously in accordance with the instincts aroused in him by Christ.

The first of these two parts is the impression of the *character*, which, according to the Apostle, is the character of the subsistence of God, that is, of the Word Incarnate.

The second is the diffusion in man of habitual and sanctifying grace, which comes from the character, when the Incarnate Word of God infuses His Spirit into the man who offers no resistance and who allows his own spontaneous activity to be moved by the Spirit of Christ.

We have said that the impression of the character is made by Christ alone. This is fully realized in an infant that can offer no resistance to Christ's action. In the case of an adult, however, who receives Baptism (and it is in Baptism that the character is first imprinted) it is necessary that the person has at least the intention of receiving the Baptism of Christ, or the Baptism conferred by the Church of Christ. If, on the contrary, he intends to receive Baptism in a material way only, or if he refuses to receive Baptism, the effect of the character would not follow.

It is necessary, therefore, in order to obtain the first effect, that the will of man is not turned against receiving Baptism; and, in order to obtain the second effect, that his will shows faith and obedience to the promptings of Christ, if the will is active. On the other hand, if the will is not active, as in babies, it is necessary that there is a will in potency ready to receive the habit of faith and the inclination towards it, without any hindrance. It is Christ who unites the baby to Himself by gently bending his will to His; on its part, the baby's will gives way to Christ who draws it to Himself, finding no resistance.

So, the *character* is impressed on the essence of the soul in so



far as the soul is *intelligent*, modifying human nature; whereas grace takes possession of the *will*, that is, of the essence of the soul in so far as it is *volitive*. Thus, the whole man is united to Christ, or as St. Paul says, '*he has put on Christ*'.<sup>300</sup>

According to the teaching of the Apostles and their successors, all the precepts of Christian morality and perfection derive their origin from this wonderful union of man with Christ which is the germ, as it were, containing them all. From this union they drew the subject matter of all their preaching in which they encouraged the faithful to practise virtue, by co-operating with this foundation of their spiritual salvation which they had already received.

From this doctrine it followed that the merely natural life of man, that is, the old man corrupted by sin, was henceforth worthless and therefore under sentence of death, and indeed ought to be accounted already dead. The new life, on the other hand, the life of Christ communicated to man, was that on which he should base all his hope, containing as it did the germ of immortality and being truly in itself immortal and eternal.

Therefore, St. Paul said to the Romans: "*Vos autem in carne non estis, sed in spiritu: si tamen spiritus Dei habitat in vobis. Si quis autem spiritum Christi non habet, hic non est eius. Si autem Christus in vobis est: corpus quidem mortuum est propter peccatum, spiritus vero vivit propter justificationem*" ['But you are not in the flesh, you are in the spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness'].<sup>301</sup>

By words '*flesh*' and '*body*' is meant the natural life inherited from Adam and corrupted by sin; a life from which nothing is to be hoped for, since it is doomed to death, whereas man's true

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**300** Gal 3: 27: "*Quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis*" [For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ].

**301** Rom 8: 9-10.

good and salvation are to be found in immortality. For this reason, Christ said: “*Spiritus est qui vivificat, caro non prodest quidquam*” [‘It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail’].<sup>302</sup> And the Apostle also wrote: “*Ergo, fratres, debitores sumus non carni, ut secundum carnem vivamus. Si enim secundum carnem vixeritis, moriemini: si autem spiritu facta carne mortificaveritis, vivetis. Quicumque enim spiritu Dei aguntur, ii sunt filii Dei*” [‘So then, brethren we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.’]<sup>303</sup>

These two expressions, therefore, “*esse in carne*” [‘to be in the flesh’]<sup>304</sup> and “*esse in spiritu*” [‘to be in the spirit’], denote and contrast the two lives: the natural, mortal, corruptible and corrupted life, received from Adam by way of natural generation; and the life of Christ, communicated to us by supernatural generation.

To these two expressions correspond the following: “*ambulare secundum carnem*” [‘to walk according to the flesh’], that is, to live according to the desires of natural life infected by sin; and “*ambulare spiritu*” [‘to walk in the spirit’], that is, to live according to the instincts of the new, incorruptible life of Christ, which is communicated to us. “*Nihil ergo nunc damnationis est iis qui sunt in Christo JESU, qui non secundum carnem ambulant*” [‘there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ JESUS who do not walk according to the flesh’].<sup>305</sup> These words, “*qui sunt in Christo JESU*” [‘who are in Christ Jesus’] indicate the first and fundamental incorporation in Christ; and the words, “*qui non secundum carnem ambulant*” [‘who do not walk according to the flesh’], indicate the co-operation of those who follow the instincts of the new life which they have received from their union with Christ.

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**302** Jn 6: 64.

**303** Rom 8: 12-14.

**304** See Rom 8: 5; 8: 8; 2 Cor 10: 3 - Gal 2: 20 Philip 1: 12-16 - 1 Peter 4: 2-6.

**305** Rom 8: 1.

But although the man who lives by the life of Christ is no longer considered to be ‘*in the flesh*’ since he has renounced this carnal life, yet as long as he lives, it is in a certain sense true that he walks in the flesh, for this is not altogether taken away and it wages war against the spirit. So, St. Paul says of himself: “*In carne enim ambulantes, non secundum carnem militamus*” [‘For though we live in the world [flesh] we are not carrying on a worldly war’], and he gives us the reason, saying, “*Nam arma militia nostrae non carnalia sunt, sed potentia Deo ad destructionem munitionum, consilia destruentes*” [‘for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have the divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments’].<sup>306</sup>

In this passage the words, ‘*to live in the world*’ indicates the condition of a Christian in this world who is still hampered by the corrupted animal life which is ever ready to war against the spirit, but the spirit resists, striving against the flesh with weapons that are not carnal but spiritual, that is to say, taken from the life of Christ which he shares and which alone he values and regards as his own life.

The phrase, then, “*esse in spiritu*” [‘to be in the Spirit’], as opposed to “*esse in carne*” [‘to be in the flesh’], means precisely that perfect union with Christ, which is fulfilled, as we have said, by the will consenting to and co-operating with the action of Christ. Herein consists the effect of grace. For the spirit to which the Apostle refers is the spirit of Christ. Hence, he adds: “*Si quis autem spiritum Christi non habet, hic non est eius*” [‘Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him’].<sup>307</sup>

Again, he calls it ‘*the Spirit of life in Christ*’ when he says: “*Lex enim spiritus vitae in Christo JESU liberavit me a lege peccati et mortis*” [‘For the law of the spirit of life in Christ JESUS has set me free from the law of sin and death’],<sup>308</sup> because this ‘Spirit of life’ by which man is stimulated when he is incorporated into

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**306** 2 Cor 10: 3-4.

**307** Rom 8: 9.

**308** *Ibid.* 2.

Christ also with his will, is holy and immortal. But in order that we may have this life, Christ should be in us spiritually, that is, He should send forth into our souls the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Otherwise, we do not perceive Christ according to the Spirit, but only according to the flesh.

This is what St. Paul says: “*Et si cognovimus secundum carnem Christum, sed nunc iam non novimus*” [‘we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer’].<sup>309</sup> It is not by the mere imprint of the character, much less by an external knowledge without faith or charity; it is only by receiving the grace of Christ that Christ is known *spiritually* by a participation in his ‘Spirit of life’. Without grace, the mere imprint of the character gives man a knowledge of Christ according to the flesh, which is dead, incapable of giving life.

According to the teaching of the Apostle our divine sonship does not consist in the character only that is received in Baptism, but in the grace that flows from it, if it meets with no obstacle, if man allows himself to be moved by grace, in other words, by the Spirit of Christ, and if he acts accordingly: “*Quicumque enim spiritu Dei aguntur, hi sunt filii Dei*” [‘For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God’].<sup>310</sup>

## Reading 61

*[The teaching regarding the mortal conflict between these two lives is part of Christian wisdom; the evil power of the angels of darkness]*

From the twofold life which man has during his pilgrimage on earth, that is, the life of Adam and the life of Christ in whom he is incorporated, proceed two sections of Christian wisdom: one is speculative, and deals with the doctrine about the fierce war between the life of Adam and the life of Christ, or, we could say, between the two men, *the old man* which has been repudiated,

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**309** 2 Cor 5: 16.

**310** Rom 8: 14.

and the *new man*. The story of this combat constitutes a great deal of theological studies. The second section of Christian wisdom deals with moral and ascetical teaching and contains the rules of spiritual combat.

The conflict between the adamitic life, which is called *flesh*, and the life of Christ in us, which is called *spirit*, is frequently mentioned in Scripture. St. Paul says: “*Caro enim concupiscit adversus spiritum: spiritus autem adversus carnem: haec enim sibi invicem adversantur: ut non quaecumque vultis illa faciatis*” [‘For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would’].<sup>311</sup>

The last words refer to the freedom to do good without hindrance, though to a limited extent, by reason of the impulses of the life inherited from Adam which was corrupted by sin. These impulses are mentioned expressly by St. Paul: “*Manifesta sunt autem opera carnis: quae sunt fornicatio, immunditia, impudicitia, luxuria, idolorum servitus, veneficia, inimicitiae, contentiones, aemulationes, irae, rixae, dissensiones, sectae, invidiae, homicidia, ebrietates, commessiones, et his similia: quae predico vobis, sicut praedixi, quoniam qui talia agunt, regnum Dei non consequentur*” [‘Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God’].

On the other hand, he sets forth the fruits of the Spirit of Christ: “*Fructus autem spiritus est: charitas, gaudium, pax, patientia, benignitas, bonitas, longanimitas, mansuetudo, fides, modestia, continentia, castitas*” [‘the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control’].<sup>312</sup>

The Apostle also teaches us, however, that our natural life as

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**311** Gal 5: 17.

**312** Gal 5: 19-23.

children of Adam would not be so corrupt, nor wage so fierce a war against the spirit of Christ, were it not molested by the angels of darkness who acquired power over human nature and the material world, when our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, which perhaps contained in itself the devil.

*“Induite vos armaturam Dei – the Apostle wrote to the Ephesians -adversus insidias Diaboli. Quoniam non est nobis colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed adversus principes et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae, in coelestibus”* [‘Put on the whole armour of God’ he says to the Ephesians, ‘that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places’].<sup>313</sup>

By the words, *in coelestibus* [‘in the heavenly places’], is meant the highest faculty of man, which is his will. This alone by its consent is the cause of formal sin which the devil strives to make us commit. The devils are called princes and powers and rulers of the world of this darkness because the devil became prince of this world when he conquered it by inducing our first parents to sin. Hence the natural life, precisely because it is molested by the devil, is abandoned to him who was a murderer from the beginning,<sup>314</sup> for his constant endeavour has been to destroy man.

But Christ, the new man, who is wholly immune from sin, could not in any way come under the power of the devil, and hence he obtained an immortal life which He shares with other men, thus creating in them a new humanity, a new life that is not subject and so is eternal: *“Renati – thus says St. Peter – non ex semine corruptibili sed incorruptibili per Verbum Dei vivi et permanentis in aeternum; quia omnis caro ut foenum, et omnis gloria eius tanquam flos foeni: exaruit foenum et flos eius decidit. Verbum autem Domini manet in aeternum”* [‘You have been born anew’ says St. Peter ‘not of perishable seed but of imperishable,

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**313** Eph 6: 11.

**314** Jn 8: 44.

through the living and abiding word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord abides for ever’].<sup>315</sup>

St. Peter exhorts the first Christians to practise the virtues of sobriety and watchfulness, with which virtues they can keep the flesh under control, and he gives this reason: “*Quia adversarius vester diabolus tanquam leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret*” [‘Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour’].<sup>316</sup>

Thus, he shows that it is the rebel angels who make the flesh arrogant and would drive men to consent to its desires and impulses. Christ Himself teaches us that the devil carries away the good seed, scattered by the heavenly Father, that fell by the wayside. This represents the heart of one who hears the word of the kingdom preached and does not grasp it.<sup>317</sup> The enemy of the human race sows weeds in the field where the farmer had sown good seed.<sup>318</sup>

Again, Christ said to the Jews: “*Vos ex patre diabolo estis*” [‘You are of your father, the devil’]<sup>319</sup> to point out the consummate malice which had been instilled into them by the devil who wanted to kill Christ just as he wanted to destroy man; and the Jews had formed the same idea. To point out, too, the ultimate degree of malice on the part of the disciple who betrayed him, He called him devil: “*Ex vobis unus diabolus est*” [‘one of you is a devil’].<sup>320</sup> As if to say that the devil had entered into Judas Iscariot and acted in him and with him, almost in the same manner in which Christ acts in the man who is grafted in Him.

The devil has gained a kind of hold over adamitic man, and only JESUS Christ Himself is beyond the power of the devil, hence He could say, “*Venit enim princeps huius mundi et in me non*

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**315** 1 Peter 1: 23-25.

**316** *Ibid.* 5: 8.

**317** Matt 8: 4-19.

**318** *Ibid.* 25-28.

**319** Jn 8: 44.

**320** *Ibid.* 6: 71.

*habet quidquam*” [‘the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me’].<sup>321</sup>

Our Blessed Lady was exempt from all assault of the devil by a singular privilege which She received from the Son She bore. But, speaking in general, even in the Saints, who have nothing deserving damnation, part of their lower nature is molested and to some extent under the power of the devil. This is the origin of the conflict which increases their merits, the source also of their venial sins, and of the need of purification by fire and by death.

As long as the devil is not master of the noblest part of man, in other words, of his supreme will, while man is indeed imperfect, he is nevertheless saved through Christ, and nothing will be destroyed by fire in him except the combustible material that has been laid upon the foundation, which is Christ in him. *“Fundamentum autem aliud nemo potest ponere, praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus JESUS. Si quis autem supraedificat super fundamentum hoc, aurum, argentum, lapides pretiosos, ligna, foenum, stipulam, uniuscuiusque opus manifestum erit. Dies enim Domini declarabit quia in igne revelabitur: et uniuscuiusque opus quale sit, ignis probabit. Si cuius opus manserit quod supraedificavit, mercedem accipiet. Si cuius opus arserit, detrimentum patietur; ipse autem SALVUS ERIT; sic tamen quasi per ignem”* [‘For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is JESUS Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble - each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burnt up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.’]<sup>322</sup>

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**321** *Ibid.* 14: 30.

**322** 1 Cor 3: 11-15.



## Reading 62

*[In what way the 'new man' can be strengthened in the Christian]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

The doctrine of the spiritual combat has its origin in this fierce struggle in the Christian between the old man and the new man, that is, Christ in the Christian.

This conflict has two objects in view. The first is to strengthen the new man and make him more and more robust and secure. The second is to weaken the enemy, that is, the adamitic man, by depriving him of his aggressive power to inflict injury.

St. Paul enumerates in a special way the weapons that achieve the first object when he says: *“Propterea accipite armaturam Dei, ut possitis resistere in die malo et in omnibus perfecti stare. State ergo succincti lumbos vestros in veritate, et induti loricae justitiae, et calceati pedes in praeparatione Evangelii pacis: in omnibus sumentes scutum fidei, in quo possitis omnia tela nequissimi ignea extinguere: et galeam salutis assumite; et gladium spiritus (quod est Verbum Dei); per omnem orationem et obsecrationem orantes omni tempore in spiritu: et in ipso vigilantes in omni instantia et obsecratione pro omnibus sanctis, et pro me, ut detur mihi sermo in aperitione oris mei cum fiducia, notum facere mysterium Evangelii”* [“Therefore take the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the Gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to

proclaim the mystery of the Gospel’].<sup>323</sup>

Thus, the weapons listed by St. Paul, which he also calls ‘*the armour of light*’,<sup>324</sup> are the following.

1. *Chastity*, expressed by the phrase ‘*gird your loins*’, is connected by St. Peter with sobriety: “*Propter quod succincti lumbos mentis vestrae sobrii perfecte sperate in ea quae offertur vobis, gratiam, in revelationem JESU Christi*” [‘Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of JESUS Christ’].<sup>325</sup> St. Peter says, ‘*gird up your minds*’, because chastity resides chiefly in a pure, serene mind free from everything carnal. Sobriety helps greatly towards this state of mind which enables man to raise himself to the hope of that glorious grace offered to him, when JESUS Christ will manifest Himself at the hour of death, and again at the last day. St. Paul adds: “*Succincti lumbos vestros in veritate*” [‘having girded your loins with truth’], to point out that apparent chastity, external propriety, is not sufficient. It must be genuine chastity which shuns all uncleanness not only in the eyes of men but also in the sight of God and of one’s own conscience.
2. *Justice*, which is like a breastplate protecting the body, is that uprightness of soul which is always disposed to give to everyone his due and to wrong no one.
3. *Love for the Gospel of Peace, and readiness to preach it*. According to the Apostle, a Christian should have his feet shod like a man who is about to set out on a journey. In other words, he should be ready to travel anywhere for the sake of the gospel, whether it be into exile owing to persecution or because he has been sent to preach the Gospel to other nations or has been called by God to the next life, where the Gospel of peace is fulfilled in the mansion of the God of peace. And when he speaks of the Gospel of peace, after he has recommended justice, the Apostle is laying stress on

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**323** Ep 6: 13-19.

**324** Rom: 13: 12.

**325** 1 Peter 1: 13.

meekness and peace towards all men.

4. *Faith*, which is like a strong shield and can render harmless all the fallacies and specious arguments of the worldly wise and of heretics, arguments instilled into their minds and prompted by the evil one, namely, the devil. St. Paul speaks of these as flaming darts by reason of their subtlety and viciousness, and to call to mind the perdition to which they are destined in the eternal fire of hell from which they come.
5. *Hope*, which is termed the helmet of salvation or of the Saviour (τοῦ σωτηρίου) who is JESUS Christ, because hope rests on the promises of Christ. The Apostle refers to the helmet of salvation in another passage where he says: “*Nos autem qui diei sumus, sobrii simus, induti lorica[m] fidei et charitatis, et galeam spem salutis: quoniam non posuit nos Deus in iram, sed in acquisitionem salutis per Dominum nostrum JESUM Christum*” [‘but since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ’].<sup>326</sup> Now, a helmet is a means of defence protecting the head, for hope proceeds from the mind, where faith in Christ, in His merits and His promises resides.
6. *The knowledge and study of God’s word*. In the power of this word which rests on the infallible authority of God Himself, the Christian finds instructions and maxims to refute all the sophisms and temptations of the enemy. Christ Himself gave us an example of this when He replied to the threefold temptation of the devil by quoting three sayings from the Scriptures.
7. *Prayer and unceasing supplication in omni tempore* [at all times], made in the Spirit and not simply with the lips (*in spiritu*) and with all perseverance (*in omni instantia*). The Christian should pray earnestly for himself, for all the saints, in other words for all the faithful who together form one body, of which the head is JESUS Christ. He ought to pray

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**326** 1 Thes 5: 8-9.

especially for the ministers of the Gospel, that God may bestow on them the gift of speech, and confidence to preach boldly and make known to men the mystery of the Gospel.

8. *Christian watchfulness*, which must be added to prayer as a necessary consequence. In this way man is always on the alert to receive the divine communications, and attentive to himself and to all his actions in order to avoid every offence against God and every false step. “*Igitur non dormiamus, sicut et caeteri, sed vigilemus et sobrii simus*” [‘So do not let us sleep’ he says in another passage ‘as others do but let us keep awake and be sober’]<sup>327</sup> because a want of sobriety is a hindrance to watchfulness as well as to prayer. Watchfulness and prayer were linked together by Christ when He said: “*Vigilate et orate ut non intretis in tentationem*” [‘watch and pray that you may not enter temptation’].<sup>328</sup>

## Reading 63

*[In what way the forces of the old man can be diminished; the doctrine of the mortification of the flesh and Christian penitence; in what way, according to the Author, the devil entered into the animality - or into subjective life - of our first parents]*

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*

Man is composed of an intellective and an animal part. The animal part provides the understanding with the signs of real things, through which man can think them. The union of these two parts constitutes rationality, in which human nature resides. The active intellective part, that is, the will, is the seat of *human personhood*, since the will is the supreme active principle in man.

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**327** *Ibid.* 6.

**328** Matt 26: 41.

If the person is saved, man is saved; if the person perishes, man perishes. The devil tries to destroy the person, while Christ aims to save it. Christ saves it by uniting Himself to the person, that is to the supreme part of human nature, and by imparting to it His own life. The devil, on the other hand, does his utmost to seduce the person by working on man's animal nature and playing tricks with his imagination. In this way he lures man into thinking of what is evil and incites him to will it.

Man, therefore, has two enemies: 1. the devil with the sophisms which he instils into the human mind, while banishing the mental images which would ensure right thinking on man's part, in other words, thoughts of what is true and good. At the same time, he suggests thoughts which, by their disorder, tend to confuse and darken the human mind, lead it to think of what is evil and to draw false and wrong conclusions. 2. Man's animal nature which, not without the aid of the devil, entices him to indulge in the pleasures of sense and induces a distaste for the delights of the spirit.

The eight means suggested by St. Paul to defeat the first of these have already been mentioned. The Apostle suggests them as suitable weapons for waging war against hostile powers, after he has told us that our wrestling is against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places, *contra spiritualia nequitiae in coelestibus*, rather than against flesh and blood.<sup>329</sup>

The second enemy, namely, the flesh must be attacked by reducing the strength of the natural man. For although the devil strives to urge him on and to give him a predominant power, still, the devil cannot do everything, for by mortifying the flesh man can neutralise the enemy's efforts to strengthen it. At the same time the enemy himself is weakened and his power diminished by the eight means already mentioned.

The second part of the spiritual combat, then, consists in reducing the power of the old man, in so far as he opposes and molests the new man. The old man is called '*the flesh*' not because we are to understand by flesh the animal life alone, but

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<sup>329</sup> Ep 6: 12.

because in the natural order the whole man lives an animal life, since it is animal nature that supplies the subjective feeling in which life consists. This subjective feeling, essentially animal, is made rational through the intuition of being, by means of which he reasons about sensible or abstract things and seeks them rationally. The new man, on the contrary, has a new subjective feeling, as we shall say later, in which his life consists, and this feeling is a sharing in the life of Christ. From all of this is derived the doctrine of the mortification of the flesh and of Christian penance, which we must now explain.

It must be borne in mind that by sin man had become incapable of achieving the end for which God had created him, namely, to be united to God and thus share in His holiness and bliss. Having become useless by sin, man had to die, for it would be contrary to divine wisdom and perfection for a thing to exist without a purpose. For this reason, the command given to Adam not to eat of the forbidden fruit included also the threat of death: *“In quocumque enim die comederis ex eo, morte morieris”* [‘for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’].<sup>330</sup>

Man’s death was brought about by the devil who had dared to challenge God. In order to test the submission and faith of the angels, God had created man mortal and frail, as indeed he is by nature, and had decreed to make him immortal by sanctifying and even deifying him (by joining human nature to the Word in the Hypostatic union) and thus making him an object of worship to the angels themselves, who by nature are far more excellent than man.

The good angels believed God’s word and were confirmed in grace, while the rebel angels, proud of their exalted nature, refused to believe the mystery of God’s Word. To bow down and worship a creature so inferior to themselves seemed an intolerable degradation; and they even flattered themselves that they would be able to destroy a being so fragile as they saw man to be. So, having taken possession of the fruit, they thought they would enter into man when he plucked it and ate it.

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**330** Gen 2: 17.

Since the food would be converted into the living body of man, they could enter his animal nature or his subjective life without hindrance and rule him as they wished. God, therefore, put man on his guard by commanding him not to eat of the forbidden fruit, and by warning him that if he should eat it, he would die. This was a loving and timely command on the part of God, giving man as it did an opportunity to mount to the Creator by faith and obedience. This was an advantage that God reaped from the malice of the rebel angels.

These rebel angels were bent on carrying out their plan to induce man to eat of the forbidden fruit, but at the outset they met with opposition from the divine command. Very soon, however, they deceived the woman by promising that both she and her husband, when they had eaten the fruit, would become God. This temptation acted as a goad to man who felt in himself all the vigour of life and the desire of an intelligent nature to attain to an excellence infinite and divine.

The woman was aware, on the one hand, that the nature of the angel who spoke to her was very great, and it may be believed that she knew it to be far above her own, in other words, immeasurably greater than human nature, so great indeed as to be beyond the power of man to gauge and hence indefinitely great.<sup>331</sup> On the other hand, she was dazzled by the splendour of the promise, stimulated by the full vigour of life which she enjoyed; and finding distasteful the mortification and humiliation of obedience, and being attracted by the appearance of the fruit which was so fair to behold and good to eat, and curious to taste it, she falsely concluded that it was better to become equal to God, as the angel had promised, through natural, that is, physical and intellectual greatness, by yielding to her own natural inclination, rather than opposing it in order to acquire moral perfection by obeying the divine command received in the past, which obliged her to constant submission to God.

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**331** The reason for idolatry consists in man conceiving an 'indefinite' greatness and not being able to measure it, confuses it with the 'infinite'. See *Frammenti d'una storia dell'empietà*.

She was overpowered by this false reasoning, and believed her seducer, denying her obedience to eternal truth. First herself and then her husband fell into sin, and by eating the forbidden fruit they became like the devil who had led them to expect so great a prize.

Thus, the natural man had become useless for the end for which he had been created; and on this account God no longer had any reason to save him from death. On the other hand, the devil had gained an entrance to man and upset the order of human nature which remains subject to death through the justice of God, the frailty of nature and the malice of the devil.

## Reading 64

*[‘Natural man’ made useless for the end of creation; the preservation of the Virgin from original sin; the Man-God born of her voluntarily submits to death; the struggle of the wicked against the Just One]*

The natural man had therefore become useless. He was sentenced to death and was in the power of the devil, whose only aim was to render him more and more corrupt and to hurry him on to death and to sin, which is the sting of death.<sup>332</sup> Had things remained in this state mankind would have been destroyed and the devil would have prevailed in his challenge to the Creator.

The Creator, however, could not be overcome, and this momentary victory of the devil was the occasion, the way, and the means chosen by God for the accomplishment of His merciful plan. He unfolded the mystery of his eternal purpose in the course of events.

God preserved from original sin a maiden, chosen from Adam’s race, over whom the devil had no power. In order to be preserved from original sin it was sufficient that the tiniest seed in man had remained incorrupt, perhaps overlooked by the devil; from

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**332** 1 Cor 15: 56.



such incorrupt seed, passed down from generation to generation, came forth, at the proper time, the Virgin who had to crush the head of the serpent.<sup>333</sup>

In this Virgin the Word was made flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit, and so the man who was born of her was not only man but God. In this man human nature was perfect, uncontaminated, completely innocent: death had no power over Him.

All other men paid the penalty of sin by death; through it they were destroyed, losing their subjective life, and from death there was no return. The Man-God was born subject to suffering and death, like other sons of Adam, although, since He was God, He might have been born immortal and impassible and have escaped every kind of suffering and death.

To abide in this mortal state was an act of great virtue because it entailed a generous renunciation of His own power. It was moreover an act of virtue because in this condition He had opportunities to practise more fully all virtues towards God and men. It was an act of humility and submission to God, from whom alone He expected all exaltation and glory. It was an act of love for men, whom He would resemble in all things except sin, and He wished in this way to be able to instruct them better by word and example concerning the abyss into which they had fallen and the necessity of being converted to God.

Now, if this was morally excellent, it was fitting that the Man-God, who was to accumulate in Himself all moral greatness, which alone is true and complete greatness (something the first man did not understand), should choose this sublime course, and this He did.

Moreover, the Father abandoned this innocent Lamb to the fury of wolves. Guilty men, slaves of the devil, could not endure the sight of the righteous Man in their midst. They spoke therefore and acted as the Scriptures had foretold long ages before,<sup>334</sup>

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**333** Gen 3: 15. ( see Vulgate 'she will...')

**334** 'But the Scriptures must be fulfilled' Mk 14: 49 - See Lk 21, 22; 22,

since God Himself had inspired the words, to show that it was His eternal decree: *“Circumveniamus ergo iustum, quoniam inutilis est nobis et contrarius est operibus nostris, et inproperat nobis peccata legis, et diffamat in nos peccata disciplinae nostrae, promittit scientiam Dei se habere et filium Dei se nominat. Factus est nobis in traductionem cogitationum nostrarum, gravis est nobis etiam ad videndum, quoniam dissimilis est aliis vita illius et inmutatae sunt viae eius. Tamquam nugaces aestimati sumus ab illo et abstinet se a viis nostris tamquam ab inmunditiis, et praefert novissima iustorum, et gloriatur patrem Deum se habere. Videamus ergo si sermones illius veri sunt, et temptemus quae ventura sunt illi, et sciemus quae erunt novissima illius. Si enim est verus filius Dei, suscipiet illum et liberabit eum de manu contrariorum; contumelia et tormento interrogemus eum, ut sciamus reverentiam illius, et probemus patientiam ipsius, morte turpissima condemnemus illum, erit enim ei respectus ex sermonibus illius”* [‘Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous, happy, and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God’s son, he will help him, and he will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for according to what he says, he will be protected’].<sup>335</sup>

All this was fulfilled to the letter by men in their treatment of the righteous Man, our Lord JESUS Christ: *“Fecerunt quae manus tua et consilium tuum decreverunt fieri”* [‘they did whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take

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37: 24, 44 - Jn 17, 12; 19, 24, 36, 37.

**335** Wis 2: 12-20.

place’].<sup>336</sup>

JESUS Christ used expressions similar to those of the *Book of Wisdom* in speaking of the undeserved hatred with which He was persecuted by men: a hatred reserved for Him personally, because He alone had the fullness of justice, sanctity and divinity. When His relations urged Him to go into Judea and make Himself known, JESUS answered: “*Non potest mundus odisse vos: me autem odit; quia ego testimonium perhibeo de illo, quod opera ejus mala sunt*” [‘The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil’].<sup>337</sup>

And elsewhere: “*Quaeritis me interficere, quia sermo meus non capit in vobis. Ego quod vidi apud Patrem meum loquor: et vos quae vidistis apud patrem vestrum facitis*” [‘I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father’],<sup>338</sup> and soon after: “*Nunc autem quaeritis me interficere, hominem qui veritatem vobis locutus sum, quam audiui a Deo*” [‘But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God’];<sup>339</sup> and again: “*Si Deus pater vester esset diligeretis utique me. Ego enim ex Deo processi et veni; neque enim a me ipso veni sed ille me misit. Quare loquelam meam non cognoscitis, quia non potestis audire sermonem meum. Vos ex patre diabolo estis et desideria patris vestri vultis facere; ille homicida erat ab initio, et in veritate non stetit quia non est veritas in eo. Cum loquitur mendacium ex propriis loquitur, quia mendax est et pater eius*” [‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature for he is a liar and the father of lies’].<sup>340</sup>

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**336** Acts 4: 28.

**337** Jn 7: 7.

**338** Jn 8: 38.

**339** *Ibid.* 40.

**340** *Ibid.* 42-44.

It is deserving of notice that whereas Christ said to His relations who did not yet believe in Him: “*Non potest mundus odisse vos*” [‘the world cannot hate you’];<sup>341</sup> He told His disciples who already believed and were therefore incorporated in Him: “*Si mundus vos odit, scitote quia me priorem vobis odio habuit. Si de mundo fuissetis, mundus quod suum erat diligeret; quia vero de mundo non estis, sed ego elegi vos de mundo, propterea odit vos mundus. Mementote sermonis mei quem ego dixi vobis: non est servus maior domino suo. Si me persecuti sunt et vos persequentur; si sermonem meum servaverunt, et vestrum servabunt. Sed haec omnia facient vobis propter nomen meum, quia nesciunt eum qui misit me. Si non venissem et locutus fuisset eis, peccatum non haberent; nunc autem excusationem non habent de peccato suo. Qui me odit et Patrem meum odit. Si opera non fecissem in eis quae nemo alius fecit peccatum non haberent, nunc autem et viderunt et oderunt et me et Patrem meum, sed ut impleatur sermo qui in lege eorum scriptus est, quia odio me habuerunt gratis*” [‘If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. It is to fulfil the word that is written in their law, ‘they hated me without a cause’].<sup>342</sup>

On several occasions, He foretold that His disciples would be treated like Him, because “*non est discipulus supra magistrum*” [‘a disciple is not above his teacher’].<sup>343</sup> And indeed the Apostle makes the general statement: “*Omnes qui pie volunt vivere in Christo JESU persecutionem patientur*” [‘Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ JESUS will be persecuted’].<sup>344</sup>

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**341** *Ibid.* 7:7.

**342** John 15: 18-25.

**343** Matt 10: 24; 24: 9.

**344** 2 Tim 3: 12

Such is the conflict between the old and the new man; it is the same conflict which is found in regenerated man between himself and what remains of the old man in us, between the spirit and the flesh. Except that the new man who lives with Christ's life and acts according to the instincts of this life, has not for his adversary another man but merely certain hostile forces, namely, concupiscence and the devil, who can be handled to a certain extent by him.

On the other hand, in the conflict between Christ and the world of wicked men, and between Christians who are in Christ and the wicked who are their persecutors, the conflict is not between the human person and the hostile powers which are in man, but between persons and other persons, between man and man. Nevertheless, the cause and nature of the strife are the same: except that in the first case the conflict is within an individual; in the second, it is a conflict between a number of individuals, the persecutors and deceitful people on the one hand, and those who are persecuted and deceived on the other.

## Reading 65

*[In what sense the death of Christ - which was completely spontaneous and an effect of love - was at the same time a command or order from the Father]*

Naples, *S Efreem Nuovo*,  
20<sup>th</sup> May 1849.

Sunday within Oct. Ascension of Our Lord

The perfection of virtue in which moral greatness consists requires that a man should be wholly intent on doing the will of God, and that, forgetting himself and his own subjective interests, he should live only for objective morality. He can expect, therefore, protection, defence, praise, honour, and glory from God Himself, who generously provides for His servants. It also demands that whatever tends to bring happiness should be

desired and expected as an effect, which blossoms from moral good, of which, according to the ontological order, it should be the appendage and complement. It should not be willed on its own, without its natural connection with moral good.

It was fitting that Christ, destined as He was to be the model and fulfilment of all perfection, should not provide for His own exaltation or make use of His divinity to render Himself impassible and glorious; that He should not exempt Himself in any way from the penal conditions of his fellowmen, nor even evade the persecution that would be raised against Him on account of His righteousness, which was hateful to the evil world that recognised only physical and intellectual greatness. On the contrary, it behoved Christ to endure for the sake of righteousness the extreme measure of suffering and death itself.

Precisely because He loved the Incarnate Word with an eternal and infinite love, the heavenly Father was bound to will this moral greatness and perfection of Christ, in whom human nature was to be raised to the highest degree of excellence which consists primarily in moral good. This was therefore the work entrusted by the Father to the Son, whom He sent into the world. This was the Father's will, which was the one constant rule of Christ's conduct: "*Meus cibus est, ut faciam voluntatem eius qui misit me, ut perficiam opus eius*" ['My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work'].<sup>345</sup> The work of the Father was man; this work had to be brought to perfection by the Son, clothed with human nature.

"*Non quaero voluntatem meam, sed voluntatem eius qui misit me*" ['I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me'];<sup>346</sup> that is, I do not seek to do my own subjective human will, I do not follow the limited instinct of my human nature; but I seek to do the most perfect and infinite will of God the Father, from whom I proceed and by whom I have been sent into the world.

Now, was the will of the Father positive and arbitrary? Did the Father will this because it was good? Or was it good because it

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**345** Jn 4: 34.

**346** Jn 5: 30.

was willed by the Father? And if the Father so willed because it was good, why did Christ always say that He had come to do the will of the Father, instead of saying that He had come to do what was in itself the perfect good? In such a case, to do well what He did would have been His reason for acting, prior to that of the will of the Father, since the 'being good' would have been the reason of the will of the Father.

If, then, the will of the Father was simply positive and arbitrary, would it not have been a will without a reason? A cruel will, because it submitted the Son to so much suffering without necessity?

In replying to this difficulty, it is necessary first of all to reflect that there is nothing prior to the Most Holy Trinity; there is no God, because God is the Trinity; there is no being, because being is God; there is no order of being, because there is no being, and the intrinsic and fundamental order of being consists in the personal relations which constitute the Most Holy Trinity; and there is no moral form of being, because there is no order of being of which the moral form is the completion.

This moral form is first and foremost, in its absolute and original perfection, as person, the Person of the Holy Spirit. Now the Person of the Holy Spirit, which is objective being loved *per se*, proceeds from the Father through the Son *per modum voluntatis*, as theologians say, since to love and to will are the same; therefore, being object Person, loved or willed *per se* by subsistence, that is, by the Father, is the Holy Spirit in whom is absolute moral good, absolute and personal holiness.

There is, then, a personal will of the Father, which is the spiration which places in act the Holy Spirit, in which essential morality is found as in its source. There is no moral good, then, prior to this will; instead, moral good proceeds from the beginning, and is constituted by this will, and is contemporary to it, though posterior to it according to logical order. We must say, therefore, that the will of the Father, about which we are talking, is the first reason prior to all morality, but, far from being irrational and arbitrary, is, on the contrary, what constitutes every moral reason, and it is necessary, as it is

necessary in divine Being the Spiration of the Holy Spirit, which completes and perfects the Divinity subsistent in three forms, or Persons.

JESUS Christ, consequently, refers to this will when He says that He does not seek to do His own will, but the will of the one who sent Him, of the Person from whom, being generated *ab aeterno*, He received the nature to spirate, with a single spiration, the Holy Spirit; of willing being *per se* willed, *per se* loved.

This being, then, in so far as it is infinitely loved, is the object of the will of the Father and the Son, and the rule of the activity of Christ, and so, for this reason, He had to give the utmost outward proof of His love towards being itself, whether in God, where it is absolutely and by essence, or in man, where it is contingent, relative, and shared.

So, since the will of the Father has a moral necessity, is called by Christ precept or commandment and it extends to all the actions and sufferings of Him who was to be the model of all perfection for men. "*Quia ego ex meipso non sum locutus, sed qui misit me Pater, ipse mihi mandatum dedit quid dicam, et quid loquar. Et scio quia mandatum eius vita aeterna est. Quae ergo ego loquor, sicut dixit mihi Pater, sic loquor*" [‘For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me’].<sup>347</sup>

Christ tells us that this commandment of the Father is eternal life, in contrast to temporal life. Since the commandment is essentially moral, containing, that is, the spiration of the Holy Spirit, who is moral subsistent good as Person, it must contain necessarily *moral life*, which is, of its nature, eternal. At the same time, He shows how the commandment of the Father is of greater value than this temporal life which is fleeting and momentary, so that nothing in this life should be considered loss in order to gain eternal life.

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**347** Jn 12: 49-50.



To fulfil, therefore, this commandment and to show His love for the Father (and in this love, as we have said, lies the moral form of being), Christ set no value on His mortal life and submitted to the Passion which was to be the extreme measure of moral excellence. *“Iam non multum loquar vobiscum. Venit enim princeps mundi huius et in me non habet quidquam. Sed ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem, et sicut mandatum dedit mihi Pater, sic facio. Surgite, eamus hinc”* [‘I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise let us go hence’].<sup>348</sup>

By these words He showed that He did not suffer death as a debt of justice, since the devil had no hold over Him, had not right of conquest over Him, and could not put Him to death as He could other men. He showed that He died, not under constraint, but spontaneously for love of His Father.

Yet this love was a moral necessity, and hence it was a precept of His Father who willed that He should give the supreme proof of love, the spontaneous sacrifice of His life. Thus, Christ’s death was perfectly spontaneous; since, however, this spontaneous love was the supreme excellence of virtue willed by the Father in His Incarnate Son, so it was, at the same time, a command or precept of His Father.

These two qualities, apparently incompatible but really in perfect harmony, are combined by Christ in the following words: *“Propterea me diligit Pater, quia ego pono animam meam, ut iterum sumam eam. Nemo tollit eam a me: sed ego pono eam a meipso, et potestatem habeo ponendi eam: et potestatem habeo iterum sumendi eam. Hoc mandatum accepi a Patre meo”* [‘For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I received from my Father’].<sup>349</sup>

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**348** Jn 14: 30-31.

**349** *Ibid.* 10: 17-18.

The prophet Isaiah had foretold that Christ's sacrifice would depend on His own free will: "*Oblatus est quia ipse voluit, et non aperuit os suum: sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur, et quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet et non aperiet os suum*" [‘He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth’].<sup>350</sup>

What we have said is confirmed by the words spoken by Christ: ‘*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again*’. Now the love which the Father has for his Word, as essentially loveable and loved, is the spiration of the Holy Spirit: the Word, *in so far as* He is object loved, and not *in so far as* He is the Word, that is, subsistent object *per se* known, is the person of the Holy Spirit; and *loveableness loved* is the moral essence.

It was necessary, therefore, that the Word Incarnate, the Man-God, should be loved by the Father, *in so far as* He realised the greatest moral virtue, the greatest love, of which the sacrifice of His temporal life was the greatest act, the greatest proof; so that the command given to Christ by the Father was an act of the greatest love of the Father for the Son, was the love itself of the Father and of the Son, forming the rule which the humanity assumed by the Son had to follow.

It is to be noted that not only is it the Father's will that the Son should lay down His life of His own accord to set an example of perfect moral virtue, but it is also His will that the Son should take it up again, no longer temporal but impassible, glorious and eternal. Hence the Son, in perfect harmony with the Father, does not lay down His life for the purpose of laying it down but for the purpose of taking it up again. And in this also He is loved by the Father and He loves the Father: ‘*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father*’.

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**350** Is 53: 7.

Thus, the commandment of the Father extends alike to the death and to the resurrection of the Son. The evil and the good are both the object of love; and the love of the Father who wills, is the love of the Son who obeys. The commandment is nothing else but love, and the good of happiness is here maintained in its natural relation to moral good; it does not precede it but follows it as its sequel, its appendage and complement.

## Reading 66

*[Reason why the Father allowed his dear Son to undergo death; the effects of the death of Christ; the justice of the Father demanded the glorification of the humanity of the Son]*

The eternal Father allowed His Incarnate Son to be put to death, among other reasons, in order to point out the excess of evil to which man, corrupted by the sin of Adam and under the power of the devil, was led; to show the development of such a fatal germ and the fruit of such a tree. The deep-seated wickedness of that germ and its diabolical malice would not otherwise have appeared so clearly to the eyes of man. Being hidden, it would have been judged much more leniently than it deserved, had it not reached the point of putting to death in the sight of all nations Him who was God.

Hence, Simeon's prophecy to our Blessed Lady: "*Ecce positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel, et in signum cui contradicetur: et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius, UT REVELENTUR EX MULTIS CORDIBUS COGITATIONES*" ['Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also) *that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed*'].<sup>351</sup>

When JESUS Christ asked the Jews: '*Why do you wish to kill me?*' they replied that no one wished to kill Him. It may be that

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**351** Lk 2: 34.

they were unaware of the evil plans of the chiefs of the Synagogue, and yet JESUS Christ accused the people themselves of seeking to kill Him, for although those to whom He spoke may not have formed the actual intention, still they virtually bore it within them, in the sin by which they were infected.

Christ, therefore, did not defend Himself, and being abandoned by His Father into the hands of guilty men, He was crucified in hatred of the truth and justice, which He preached, and of which He Himself gave a perfect example. Expiating the sin of men, He became the first of the Martyrs.

Now, before going any further in our reasoning, let us consider who JESUS Christ was. First of all, He was God, He was the Word, this constituted His personality; but He was, at the same time, man. And what sort of man was He? In so far as He was man without sin, He was innocent man, the new Adam. But since He had been pleased to assume the flesh transmitted from Adam, suffering and mortal flesh subject to all infirmities and pains, which result from sin, although in sin He had no share, He was the *Son of man*.

JESUS Christ loved to be called by this humble title.<sup>352</sup> *Son of man* meant something more lowly and humble than *man* because the term '*man*' did not include the concept of man fallen from his original state, of man destined to die; but the title *Son of man* suggested the fallen state, the son of a sinner; of one who was subject to the penalties of sin.

In this condition, as a man who was capable of suffering and was mortal (some of the Fathers expressed this truth by saying that Christ had taken on the flesh of sin), He could practise virtue in the very highest degree, He could make Himself an example for all men, He could die calumniated and persecuted for righteousness' sake, which is precisely the greatest act and the greatest proof of moral perfection. All this, He and His Father

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**352** Matt 8 20; 9: 6; 10: 23; 11: 19; 12: 8; 32, 40: 13, 37, 41; 16: 13, 27, 28; 17: 9, 12, 21; 18: 11; 19: 28; 20: 18; 28, 24: 27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25: 31; 26: 2, 24, 45, 64 etc.

allowed to take place.

What was the eternal design, the ineffable mystery concealed in this permission? Consider what followed from Christ's death. For all other men death was pure justice, and once this debt was paid nothing remained that could restore them to life. They were dead for ever. But Christ's death was not an act of justice, because it was not just that the innocent, the Holy, the Man-God should suffer and die. This man, who was also God, abandoned Himself even to the last into the hands of His Father, and with unbounded confidence did not withdraw from suffering as He might have done. He had not willed to give Himself anything, He had willed to expect and receive everything from His Father, because this was in accordance with the rule of virtue, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive".<sup>353</sup> Christ's will had always been to give to God and to fellowmen, with unlimited and heroic generosity.

But, for a moment, the Father forsook Him, did not protect Him from His persecutors and allowed Him to die on the cross. When He sent an angel to strengthen Him in the garden, it was simply that He might not die in His sorrow and agony, and that His weak human nature might be saved for the sacrifice of the cross.

Thus, Christ may be said to have died twice: first in the spirit, in His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and secondly, in body, on Calvary. Humanity therefore suffered in Christ all that it could suffer, even to the death of the two component parts of man's sensitive nature, namely, the imagination or internal sense and the bodily sense; and all this without deserving it, for He was perfectly innocent and, being all-holy, deserved the opposite.

But the Father is essential justice, and as such had been appealed to by the Son in those words: 'O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou hast sent me. I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast

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**353** Acts 20: 35.

loved me may be in them, and I in thee.<sup>354</sup> It was necessary, therefore, that the Father, as righteous, should compensate the Son for all that He had so unjustly endured and suffered, as though He had been the greatest of sinners.

On the other hand, the merits of the Son had an infinite value, because by reason of the hypostatic union it could truly be said, by means of the *communicatio idiomatum* [communication of properties], that God Himself suffered and died. To restore the balance of divine justice it was fitting, first of all, that the humanity of Christ, which had returned to life and was destined to die no more, should be accorded divine honours and placed in the highest throne, at the Father's right hand; and, secondly, that all the desires of His humanity should be fully satisfied. And since these included the desire to triumph over all His enemies and exercise sovereignty over the whole world, it was fitting that this also should be fulfilled.

These two things had been foretold and promised to the Son in the ancient Scriptures, and particularly in the Psalm which relates these two promises: *"The LORD says to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." The LORD sends out from Zion your mighty sceptre. Rule in the midst of your foes. Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day you lead your forces on the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter heads over the wide earth. He will drink from the stream by the path; therefore, he will lift up his head "*.<sup>355</sup>

In this magnificent and sublime Psalm, the Father says to the Son, who has consummated His sacrifice and drunk from the torrent of poverty and suffering: *'Arise and sit on my right hand'*. This is the first part of the reward due to the Son, namely, the raising of His humanity to immortal life and divine glory. Of this

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**354** Jn 17: 25-26.

**355** Psalm 110 (109).

part Christ had said: *“Ego te clarificavi super terram; opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut faciam; et nunc clarifica me tu Pater apud te ipsum, claritate quam habui priusquam mundus esset apud te”* [‘I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made’].<sup>356</sup>

These words remind us of those other words of St. John: *“In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum”* [‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God’], and they mean: “Before I revealed myself to men, before there were men or a world, that is, from eternity, I was God: I was generated before the morning star in the splendour of holiness from your substance, *ex utero* [from the womb], as the Psalm says. Now, therefore, adorn my humanity with this same divine and infinite glory which as God I have never lost, since already before the creation of the world, you in your most profound and wise knowledge, predestined me to be seated glorious with you, at your right hand”.

Here we see that the expression ‘*with God*’ used by St. John at the beginning of his Gospel, *apud Deum* (with God) applies, though in a different sense, not only to the divinity but also to the humanity of JESUS Christ, in as much as this is inseparable from the divine Person. This human nature began in time to enjoy this glory by a certain participation, whereas the Word enjoyed it from eternity and essentially.

## Reading 67

*[Other rewards that were owing to the Son from divine justice because of his death; kingship over the world; the restoration of human nature by means of the resurrection of all men; incorporation of all men in Christ, the dignity of Christ as mediator and priest; in particular, the priesthood of Christ]*

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<sup>356</sup> Jn 17: 4.

The second part of the recompense and reward due to Christ, is the fulfilment of every natural desire of His Humanity, with relation to His fellowmen with whom He had in common a human nature. The natural desire of man is to be lord and ruler of the world, and to be able to reduce his enemies to subjection to himself. This desire is evil when it is not subordinated to justice, and when one wishes to satisfy it unduly and without a lawful title, as is generally the case. But the desire in itself is implanted in nature and is therefore by no means blameworthy; in fact, it ennobles human nature.

Therefore, in the Psalm quoted above, God bestows on Christ the sovereignty over the whole world and promises to make His enemies a footstool under His feet. He exhorts Him to rule in their midst: the sceptre, that is the power of God, will go forth from Zion, a symbol of justice and moral good, showing that power is exercised because of it. And lastly, He says that on the day of His triumph He who is the beginning, God the Father, will be with Him, who is not only prince but is, by essence, principality itself.

How does the Man-God avail Himself of the power which is granted to Him, the power of which Christ has said, "*Dedisti ei potestatem omnis carnis*" ['thou hast given him power over all flesh'<sup>357</sup> and again, after the resurrection: "*Data est mihi omnis potestas in coelo et in terra*" ['all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me']? <sup>358</sup>

Christ as man loved the human nature He possessed, and so He must love it in all His fellowmen. Hence, following the impulse of natural affection, by the resurrection of all men He had to restore all human nature destroyed by death. Thus, He vanquished the devil, frustrating his evil plan to ruin this fragile and mortal nature, which God wished to preserve as His own handiwork.

He abolished, moreover, original sin, in so far as it consists in and arises from the corruption of the flesh, by giving on His part a perfect body to all those who rise again, as He had shown with

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**357** Jn 17: 2.

**358** Matt 28: 18.



His own resurrection, provided they are free from actual sins. Thus, the apostle writes: “*Nunc autem Christus resurrexit a mortuis primitiae dormientium: quoniam quidem per hominem mors et per hominem resurrectio mortuorum. Et sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur, ita et in Christo omnes vivificabuntur*” [‘But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive’].<sup>359</sup> And elsewhere, we read: “*Purgationem peccatorum faciens, sedet ad dexteram majestatis in excelsis*” [‘when he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high’].<sup>360</sup> Thus, the remission of sins is attributed to the glory of Christ in heaven whence He is able to make other men sharers in His glory.

But Christ was not satisfied with restoring life to the human race that had become the prey of death. His ardent love for God and His fellow men demanded much more. Friendship is proper to man’s nature. If he is free from corruption, there is nothing that man desires more eagerly than union with his fellowmen. Each man feels that he is not the whole of human nature but that part of it is in other men. It seems to him, then, that he completes it in himself the more closely he unites himself to other individuals of the same nature and becomes identified with them.

But the bonds, by which human individuals can mutually bind and unite themselves are limited by the conditions of their nature itself. One of these bonds, and perhaps the most intimate of all, is the conjugal bond by which man and woman become one flesh, two kindred souls living in one flesh. This image is used in Scripture, to show the stable, perpetual and real union of Christ with His saints in heaven. Christ as the bridegroom, celebrates His eternal nuptials with His bride, the Church triumphant, which is the society of those who have been predestined, and who enjoy the beatific vision.

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**359** 1 Cor 15: 20-22.

**360** Heb 1: 3.

In the Apocalypse, St. John describes his vision of this Bride of the Lamb coming out of heaven from God: “*Et venit unus de septem Angelis habentibus fialas plenas septem plagis novissimis, et locutus est mecum dicens: Veni et ostendam tibi Sponsam uxorem Agni. Et sustulit me in spiritu in montem magnum et altum, et ostendit mihi civitatem sanctam Hierusalem descendentem de caelo a Deo, habentem claritatem Dei: et lumen eius simile lapidi pretioso tamquam lapidi iaspidis, sicut cristallum*” [“Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying ‘come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And in the Spirit, he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal”].<sup>361</sup>

In the *Song of Songs*, we read a description of the chaste love, which is the divine prelude on earth to the indissoluble marriage that is to be perfected in eternity, where there will be no unfaithfulness, and no cooling of affections.

Now as marriage is taken as a symbol of the nuptials of Christ and the Church, on the other hand this mystical union, perfect and holy as it is, becomes the type of the conjugal union of the Christian man and woman, in which Christ vouchsafes to those of His followers who are joined together in matrimony a share of that spiritual grace and holiness which binds Him ineffably to His Church. For this reason, St. Paul says: “*Viri diligite uxores vestras sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam et seipsum tradidit pro ea, ut illam sanctificaret, mundans lavacro aquae in verbo vitae, ut exhiberet ipse sibi gloriosam Ecclesiam, non habentem maculam, aut rugam, aut aliquid huiusmodi, sed ut sit sancta et immaculata*” [‘Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish’].<sup>362</sup>

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**361** Rev 21: 9-11.

**362** Ep 4: 7-10.

In compensation therefore for the immense sufferings which He, though innocent, had endured, Christ could form the Church from among men. In other words, He could unite and incorporate with Himself as many as He pleased, and from them He could choose those whom He would make sharers of His glory: “*Ascendisti in altum, cepisti captivitatem: accepisti dona in hominibus*” [‘Thou didst ascend on high’, says the Psalmist, ‘leading captives in thy train and receiving gifts among men’].<sup>363</sup>

St. Paul, commenting on this passage, says: “*Unicuique autem nostrum data est gratia secundum mensuram donationis Christi. Propter quod dicit: Ascendens in altum captivam duxit captivitatem: dedit dona hominibus. Quod autem ascendit, quid est nisi quia et descendit primum in inferiores partes terrae? Qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit super omnes caelos ut impleret omnia*” [‘But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore, it is said: ‘When he ascended on high, he had a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’ In saying, ‘he ascended’, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things’].<sup>364</sup>

So, Christ, as a result of the glory obtained through His sufferings, and of His Lordship over the human race, and because of His love for God His Father, and for men who shared the nature He had taken upon Himself, became their Redeemer from death and original sin, their master and saviour from all actual sins and the author of their heavenly glory. He therefore had the dignity not only of King, but also of Mediator and Priest, as the Psalm quoted above adds: “*Iuravit Dominus et non poenitebit eum: Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisech*” [‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek’].<sup>365</sup>

The doctrine of Christ’s priesthood is explained with deep

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**363** Ps 67: 18.

**364** Ep 4: 7-10.

**365** Ps 109: 4.

insight in the Letter to the Hebrews. In it, the Apostle shows how Christ acquired the dignity of high priest, how He merited it by His sufferings and mortal condition and exercised that office in the sufferings, by which He made a sacrifice of Himself. *“Unde debuit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret, et fidelis pontifex ad Deum, ut repropitiaret delicta populi. In eo enim in quo passus est ipse et tentatus, potens est in eis, qui tentantur, auxiliari”* [Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted].<sup>366</sup>

These words mean that since Christ suffered and was tempted when there was nothing in Him for divine justice to punish, it was fitting that this justice, which does not allow the innocent to suffer pain, should recompense Him for sufferings endured but undeserved. This recompense consisted in the power He received not only to rise again Himself, impassible and immortal, but to come to the aid of His brethren in their sufferings and temptations. This is what Scripture says: *“Non enim habemus pontificem, qui non possit compati infirmitatibus nostris; tentatum autem per omnia pro similitudine absque peccato”* [‘For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning’].<sup>367</sup>

We must bear in mind that human nature is so made, that from actual experience it retains the positive knowledge of suffering, and, by the law of sympathy among individuals possessing the same nature, this renders it compassionate and merciful.

Human nature in Christ was subject to this law as to all other laws to which it is subject. And although He merited all things by His suffering, in compensation for which His every desire was to be satisfied by His Father, nevertheless, because it behoved Him to practise in all things the greatest generosity and to be a perfect model of virtue for us, He willed to receive the glory and

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**366** Heb 2: 17-18.

**367** *Ibid.* 4: 15.

the life which were His due, rather as an answer to humble prayer than as merited in justice, or certainly as one and the other together. St. Paul, in fact, says: “*Et quidem cum esset Filius Dei, didicit ex iis quae passus est obedientiam: et consummatus factus est omnibus obtemperantibus sibi, causa salutis aeternae, appellatus a Deo Pontifex secundum ordinem Melchisedech*” [‘Although he was Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high Priest after the order of Melchizedek’].<sup>368</sup>

The sacrifice of Christ therefore had the power to remit the sins of men. St. Paul, in fact, says: “*Eum qui non noverat peccatum, pro nobis peccatum fecit, ut nos efficeremus iustitia Dei IN IPSO*” [‘For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin (God allowed him to be treated as sinner) so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’].<sup>369</sup>

Having risen again after He had suffered, and having entered heaven, He exercises there a perpetual priesthood, and can reconcile all whom He pleases among men and make them sharers in His glory. As St. Paul says, He was made a priest “*non secundum legem mandati carnalis, sed secundum virtutem vitae insolubilis*” [‘not according to bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life’],<sup>370</sup> and he adds: “*Et alii quidem plures facti sunt sacerdotes, idcirco quod morte prohiberentur permanere: hic autem, eo quod maneat in aeternum, sempiternum habet sacerdotium. Unde et salvare in perpetuo potest accedentes per semet ipsum ad Deum, semper vivens ad interpellandum pro eis*” [‘the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently, he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them’].<sup>371</sup>

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**368** *Ibid.* 5: 8-10.

**369** 2 Cor 5: 21.

**370** Heb 7: 16.

**371** *Ibid.* 7: 23-25.

The sacrifice of Christ's death, therefore, from which He rose gloriously was acceptable and efficacious for ever, remitting sins and saving mankind: *"Non enim in manufactis sanctis Iesus introiit, exemplaria verorum: sed in ipsum caelum, ut appareat nunc vultui Dei pro nobis. Neque ut saepe offerat semetipsum, quemadmodum Pontifex intrat in Sancta per singulos annos in sanguine alieno; alioquin oportebat eum frequenter pati ab origine mundi; nunc autem semel in consummatione saeculorum, ad destitutionem peccati per hostiam suam apparuit. Et quemadmodum statutum est hominibus semel mori, post hoc autem iudicium: sic et Christus semel oblatus ad multorum exhaustiunda peccata, secundo sine peccato apparebit expectantibus se, in salute"* [For Christ has entered not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes the judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him'].<sup>372</sup>

It must be noted that the priests of the new law, although they are many, all share in the one priesthood of Christ, and all offer the same oblation, that is, the Body and Blood of Christ. Here again is seen their unity with Christ, because it is always Christ who acts in them when they offer the sacrifice, so that it is Christ alone in all of them who is the true priest and sacrificial victim. This is why no one can be a priest of the new law unless he is baptised, because it is only through baptism that man is incorporated into Christ and Christ in man.

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**372** *Ibid.* 9: 24-28.

## Reading 68

*[St. Paul attributes our justification to the resurrection of Christ since, if this was merited by his Passion, it was brought about and completed by means of the resurrection, through which Christ acquired His Lordship over us and could dispose of us according to the yearnings of His heart]*

The death of all mankind satisfied divine justice but did not save man. On the contrary, it destroyed him; and the soul separated from his body remained under the same rightful condemnation. But the death of Christ, which He had suffered undeservedly, was not a satisfaction due for His own sins. Instead, it was a credit He acquired on divine justice, an infinite credit, by which, after paying the debt of the human race, He was enabled to bestow ineffable gifts of infinite value on men.

The death of Christ, therefore, saved the world because it merited Him His resurrection as glorious and omnipotent Lord, King and Priest, according to the oath sworn by his eternal Father.

For this reason, the Scriptures always attribute the salvation of the world to the resurrection of our Lord JESUS Christ, who, as the Psalm said, ascending on high led captivity captive, that is, took away from the devil his power over men, and brought them into captivity to Himself and obtained an abundance of gifts to bestow on men whom He had set free by right of lawful conquest.

Christ had told his Apostles that it was expedient for them that He should go from this world and return to the Father: "*Quia vado parare vobis locum. Et si abiero et praeparavero vobis locum: iterum venio et accipiam vos ad me ipsum, ut ubi sum ego et vos sitis*" ['I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also'].<sup>373</sup>

It was necessary that Christ should be glorified, in order that He might give His disciples a share in His glory. When He said

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**373** Jn 14: 2-3.

He would come again to take them to Himself and place them where He is, He did not say where He would be, because Christ was always with God, not only as the Word, but also, in another sense, as man enjoying the beatific vision, although its glorious effects were not apparent outside the mind of our Saviour. His return is precisely the sharing of His glory, and it refers primarily to the second coming of the Saviour, when He will raise from the dead the righteous who believe in Him and will invest them with His own glory.

When JESUS says: "*Iterum venio et accipiam vos*" ['I will come again and take you to myself'], He is speaking of the whole man and not simply of his soul. Nevertheless, there is another return of Christ. This takes place at the death of the righteous man who believes in Him, when Christ takes this soul to Himself, gives it His own life and admits it to the vision of God.

A third return of Christ is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who is the seal of Christ in the souls into which He comes, giving them the pledge of immortality and of the future resurrection. Christ Himself speaks of this return, when He says: "*Si diligitis me, mandata mea servate. Et ego rogabo Patrem, et alium Paraclitum dabit vobis, ut maneat vobiscum in aeternum, Spiritum Veritatis, quem mundus non potest accipere, quia non videt eum, nec scit eum. Vos autem cognoscetis eum, quia apud vos manebit, et in vobis erit. Non relinquam vos orphanos: veniam ad vos. Adhuc modicum, et mundus me iam non videt. Vos autem videtis me: quia ego vivo, et vos vivetis*" ['If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live you will live also'].<sup>374</sup>

JESUS says He will ask the Father, thus showing how as Man He prays that His fellowmen may receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For this, we are consequently indebted to the humanity

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**374** *Ibid.* 15-19.



of JESUS Christ who, having merited that His every desire should be granted, prayed in His great love for us, and this prayer, which revealed His desire, could not go unheard.

He tells His Apostles that He will not leave them orphans, that is, without a Father, because He who is the Son dwelling in them and joined to them as the head to the members, will be made known by the light of His Spirit. They will be aware of possessing Him and thus of being truly sons of God, sharing in the Sonship of the Incarnate Word to whom they are inseparably united.

Hence, St. Paul attributes to the Holy Spirit the knowledge that we have become children of God: "*Non enim accepistis spiritum servitutis, sed accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus: Abba (Pater). Ipse enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro, quod sumus Filii Dei*" ['For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of Sonship. When we cry, Abba, Father! it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God'].<sup>375</sup>

Finally, Christ says that His disciples will see Him by the light of the Holy Spirit, even when He has departed from this world, *quia ego vivo et vos vivetis* ['because I live and you also will live'], that is to say, because we share in the very life of Christ: and to see Christ is an act of this life. He tells them likewise that they will know the Holy Spirit because *apud vos manebit et in vobis erit* ['he dwells with you and will be in you']. For the Holy Spirit cannot be known except through the same Holy Spirit, and hence the world cannot see or know Him, because it cannot receive Him owing to the obstacle of sin.

Christ repeats once more that it is expedient for His disciples that He should go away, for when He is glorified, He will send the Holy Spirit, the pledge of their future glory: "*Sed quia haec locutus sum vobis, tristitia implevit cor vestrum. Sed ego veritatem dico vobis: expedit vobis ut ego vadam: si enim non abiero Paraclitus non veniet ad vos: si autem abiero mittam eum ad vos*" ['But because I have said these things to you, sorrow

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**375** Rom 8: 15-16.

has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that if I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you’].<sup>376</sup>

For these reasons, St. Paul attributes our justification to Christ’s resurrection, for while it was merited by his Passion, it was effected and completed by His resurrection, by which Christ acquired His Lordship over us and could deal with us according to the yearnings of His Sacred Heart: “*Qui traditus est propter delicta nostra, et resurrexit propter iustificationem nostram*” [‘who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification’].<sup>377</sup>

If Christ had not risen, He could not have given us His glorious life and, therefore, we should not have risen, but should still be under the condemnation of sin. Similarly, St. Peter attributes our regeneration to the resurrection of Christ: “*Benedictus Deus et Pater Domini nostri JESU Christi, qui secundum misericordiam suam magnam regeneravit nos in spem vivam per resurrectionem JESU Christi ex mortuis*” [‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord JESUS Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of JESUS Christ from the dead’].<sup>378</sup>

To this same resurrection of JESUS Christ he ascribes the power of Baptism to plant in us the seed of the glorious life which we expect hereafter: “*Quod et vos simili formae salvos facit Baptisma, non carnis depositio sordium, sed conscientiae bonae interrogatio in Deum per resurrectionem JESU Christi, qui est in dextera Dei, deglutiens mortem ut vitae aeternae haeredes efficeremur: profectus in coelum, subjectis sibi angelis et potestatibus et virtutibus*” [‘Baptism which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to

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**376** Jn 16: 6-7.

**377** Rom 4: 25.

**378** 1 Pet 1: 3.

him’].<sup>379</sup>

This teaching agrees wonderfully with that of St. Paul, who wrote to the Colossians: “*Consepulti ei in baptismo, in quo et resurrexistis per fidem operationis Dei qui suscitavit illum a mortuis. Et vos cum mortui essetis in delictis et praeputio carnis vestrae, convivificavit cum illo, donans vobis omnia delicta: delens quod adversum nos erat chirographum decreti, quod erat contrarium nobis, et ipsum tulit de medio, affigens illud cruci, et expolians principatus, et potestates, traduxit confidenter, palam triumphans illos in semetipso*” [‘And you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God has made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside nailing it to the Cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him’].<sup>380</sup>

It would not have been enough, however, for Christ to destroy the old adamitic man unless life were given to the new man. This Christ did by giving man the new life which He received when He rose from the dead. For man, who is incorporated in Christ and made a member of the body of which Christ is the head, ought to share in all the vicissitudes of the head, ought to die with Him, and rise again with Him.

## Reading 69

*[St. Paul argues from the glorious resurrection of Christ to the glorious resurrection of those who die in Christ, that is, those who are united with Him, and who, therefore, form one body with Christ]*

Hence, the Apostle did not hesitate to say: “*Si autem Christus*

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**379** *Ibid.* 3: 21-22.

**380** Col 2: 12-15.

*non resurrexit, inanis est ergo praedicatio nostra, inanis est et fides vestra: invenimur autem et falsi testes Dei: quoniam testimonium diximus adversus Deum quod suscitaverit Christum, quem non suscitavit, si mortui non resurgunt. Nam si mortui non resurgunt, neque Christus resurrexit. Quod si Christus non resurrexit, vana est fides vestra: adhuc enim estis in peccatis vestris. Ergo et qui dormierunt in Christo, perierunt. Si in hac vita tantum in Christo sperantes sumus, miserabiliores sumus omnibus hominibus”.*

[‘If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied’].<sup>381</sup>

In this passage, St. Paul proves the resurrection of the dead from the resurrection of Christ, because men could not have risen again if the risen Christ had not acquired the power of raising also from the dead all those who shared with Him the same human nature. In particular, the Apostle proves from Christ’s glorious resurrection the glorious resurrection also of those who died in Christ, in other words, those incorporated into Christ, and who therefore form with Christ one body which must in its entirety either be quickened by the same life, or in its entirety remain in the same condition of death. Given, therefore, the resurrection of the head, the resurrection of His members is inevitable.

St. Paul says, moreover, that if there be no resurrection, the state of sin remains: “*Adhuc enim estis in peccatis vestris*” [‘And you are still in your sins’], and therefore the preaching of the Gospel, that is, of the good news, is vain, and faith in the Gospel is vain. For, if all men remain under the sentence of death, if the penalty endures, it cannot be said that their sin is remitted.

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**381** 1 Cor 15: 14-19.

Finally, he gives us to understand that without the resurrection there is no hope of a future life, and consequently Christians would be the most miserable because all their hopes would be limited only to the present life, the delights of which they have renounced and which they deem to be death rather than life.

All this teaching is in perfect harmony with the constant teaching of all the books of the Old Testament, in which hope of the life to come always rests on faith in the resurrection of the body and on nothing else. Thus, the book of Wisdom, speaking of the just who have departed this life, does not praise them for the good things of this life which they have enjoyed, but for their hope of the future: “*spes illorum immortalitate plena est*” [‘their hope is full of immortality’],<sup>382</sup> and because God, at the right time, will show His care for them, “*et in tempore erit respectus illorum*” [‘they wait for the time of their deliverance’],<sup>383</sup> and the undefiled person, “*habebit fructum in respectione animarum sanctarum*” [‘will have fruit when God shall examine the holy souls’],<sup>384</sup> that is, at the resurrection.

And the Maccabean youth, under torture, placed all his hope in the resurrection, saying: “*Rex mundi defunctos nos pro suis legibus in aeternae vitae resurrectione suscitabit*” [‘But the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws’].<sup>385</sup>

Still more to the point is the passage which speaks of the collection of 12,000 drachmas of silver made by Judas Maccabeus for sacrifice to be offered in Jerusalem for the sins of those who had died in battle, and under whose tunics had been found gifts offered to idols. The sacred text says explicitly that it would have been useless to pray for the dead for the remission of their sins had there been no resurrection. The words are as follows: “*Et facta collatione, duodecim millia drachmas argenti misit Jerosolymam offerri pro peccatis*

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**382** Wis 3: 4.

**383** Wis 3: 6

**384** *Ibid.* 13.

**385** 2 Macc 7: 9.

*mortuorum sacrificium, bene et religiose de resurrectione cogitans (nisi enim eos qui ceciderant resurrecturos speraret, superfluum videretur et vanum orare pro mortuis), et quia considerabat quod hi qui cum pietate dormitionem acceperant, optimam haberent repositam gratiam*” [‘For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought’].<sup>386</sup>

This teaching presents a difficulty for Christians which we must accurately solve. All our happiness, our hope of happiness, is made to depend on the resurrection, and the remission of sins or justification is also made to depend on the resurrection. Now, we know by faith that when the soul is separated from the body, if it is not stained with sin, it is admitted at once to the vision of God. If it has some slight stains it is destined to the fire that cleanses and purifies, and as soon as it is made clean and spotless, it is granted the beatific vision, before the resurrection of the body.

How, then, can it be said in the Book of Maccabees that it would be superfluous and vain to pray for the dead *ut a peccatis solvantur* [‘that they might be loosed from their sins’] if they were not to rise again, while it is profitable to intercede for the souls in purgatory so that their sufferings may end speedily and they may pass promptly to enjoy the vision of God?

Furthermore, how are we to understand the words of the Apostle who says that if there be no resurrection of our body, we Christians are of all men the most miserable, when our souls, even before the resurrection, can see God face to face?

To solve these apparent difficulties, we must bear in mind two things:

1. What is the state of the soul separated from the body and left entirely to itself, in other words, left to what it has by nature without anything added or any exterior aid;
2. What is to be understood by resurrection, the work of our

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**386** *Ibid.* 12: 43-45.

Lord JESUS Christ, and what is meant precisely for the just people who rise again.

The answer to the first question is that the human soul, deprived of the body and receiving no substitute for it but left entirely to itself, with no action done to it by any agent outside it, separated from the body and on its own, it has no longer any sensation, nor images, and cannot perform any sensory action which requires the bodily organism. Consequently, it can no longer reason or think of real things, or of abstract things which always need some sensory sign to stimulate thought. Nothing, therefore, remains to it but the intuition of indeterminate being, and the habits contracted in the preceding life, which give the soul its individual character. These habits never lead to action because there is nothing to stimulate them into action.

The soul, therefore, without any real term, would have no feeling, in as much as this is defined by the real form of being; and therefore, it would have no life, except the simple intellectual act of intuition which could not properly be called life: the soul would exist but would have no life. In this state, it would not be possible for it to reflect on itself, nor have any consciousness; its condition would be like a state of perpetual darkness and sleep, whence the underworlds<sup>387</sup> and the dark kingdoms<sup>388</sup> of the poets and their harsh and eternal sleep.

This was one of the reasons why some philosophers, who had not received the light of revelation, and possibly Aristotle among them, at least according to the interpretation of Pomponazzi and others, denied the immortality of the soul. Their mistake was to believe that the soul was annihilated or dissolved; they made no distinction between life and existence; they had no conception of the intuition of being or of the habits remaining in the soul from its previous union with the body which give it an intellectual existence and an individuality, though not a true life in the proper sense that we attach to the word *life*.

Amongst the Jews, the sect of the Sadducees fell into the same

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**387** 'Bis nigra videre tartara' Virg. Aen. 4: 34-35.

**388** Dant. Inf 16: 82; 24: 141.

error. They believed that the soul could not survive its separation from the body, or rather they denied it.<sup>389</sup> And this was a consequence of another mistake, their denial of the resurrection.

When confuting their errors, JESUS Christ did not stop to prove that the soul, even though separated from the body, continues to live on. He limited Himself to speak of the departed saints and to say that in the resurrection they will live and cannot die any more.

When the Sadducees asked whose wife at the resurrection would a woman be who had as husbands seven brothers in succession, Christ replied: "*Filii huius saeculi nubunt, et traduntur ad nuptias: illi vero qui digni habebuntur saeculo illo, et resurrectione ex mortuis, neque nubent, neque ducent uxores: neque enim ultra mori potuerunt: aequales enim angelis sunt, et filii sunt Dei, cum sint filii resurrectionis*" ["The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection"];<sup>390</sup> He said nothing of the soul considered by itself alone, nor of the wicked who will rise again, "*sed non in resurrection vitae, sed in resurrection iudicii*" ["though not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of judgement"].<sup>391</sup>

From these words of Christ, we can learn two things: the first, that it is the resurrection that gives immortality to the just; the second, that it is by the resurrection that the just are *sons of God*, consequently released from all punishment or effect of sin, made like the holy angels, spiritualised, without the bond or hindrance of a material body.

Christ then goes on to prove to the Sadducees the truth of the resurrection of the just: "*Quia vero resurgent mortui, et Moyses*

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**389** Act 23: 6.

**390** Lk 20: 34-36.

**391** Jn 5: 29.



*ostendit secus rubum, sicut dicit Dominum, Deum Abraham, et Deum Isaac, et Deum Jacob. Deus autem non est mortuorum, sed vivorum: omnes enim vivunt ei*” [‘But that the dead are raised even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush<sup>392</sup> where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him’].<sup>393</sup>

These words wonderfully confirm what we have said, for this is Christ’s argument: *‘Moses said that the Lord is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Now if these patriarchs were dead, we could not say that the Lord was their God, because the Lord is God of the living and not of the dead. Therefore, these patriarchs are living. But they could not be said to be living unless they would rise again one day. Therefore, we must say that the dead will rise again.’* This reasoning makes the life of these patriarchs depend on their future resurrection. Why are they living? Because they will rise again.

Therefore, they would not be living unless they were to rise again. Accordingly, if the soul separated from the body were not destined to rise again, if it had not in itself a reason or germ of its future rebirth, it would be in a condition or state of death. Christ adds, therefore, that all live to God, *omnes enim vivunt ei*, to show that God has the power to restore to life all those whom He wills.

This seems an allusion to the general resurrection of both the good and the bad, but when He says, *‘all are living to him’*, He is speaking of life with reference to God, not of life with reference to itself, not of a subjective life. He thus shows that all souls continue to exist, even though separated from the body, and therefore all can be restored to life by God to whom, therefore, all live.<sup>394</sup>

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**392** Exod 3: 6; ‘The thicket which burnt without being consumed was the symbol of immortal life.’

**393** Lk 20: 37-38.

**394** See the same reply given by Christ to the Sadducees in Matthew 22: 29-32 and Mark 12: 24-27.

## Reading 70

*[The Author explains each of the four types of life which Christ and His disciples have: 1<sup>st</sup> The natural life; 2<sup>nd</sup> The mysterious, eucharistic, divine life; 3<sup>rd</sup> The spiritual life of Christ as a pilgrim while on earth; 4<sup>th</sup> The glorious life after the resurrection and the ascension]*

We now come to the second question: what is to be understood by the resurrection of the just, the work of our Lord JESUS Christ?

In the language of Holy Scripture, the word ‘*resurrection*’ does not simply mean the final regeneration or rising again when men will recover their own bodies and the righteous their glorified bodies which they will never again lose; but it also means that germ of life, placed by Christ in those who are united to Him, the immortal germ which unfolds through life, and at the death of each man; and is fully realised at the end of the world in the final re-birth. That germ is the new man, is Christ in man, whose life is eternal.

Eternal life begins with man’s incorporation into Christ. The natural corruptible life perishes, but beneath it there is another hidden life, just as beneath the dead skin of the serpent there is another living skin, which appears when the old skin is cast off.

Hence, Christ said: *‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.’*<sup>395</sup> Again, addressing His Father, Christ says of His disciples: *“Ego in eis et tu in me”* [‘I in them and thou in me’].<sup>396</sup> If Christ, then, is the life and is in His disciples, it follows that life can never become extinct in them unless their union with Christ is severed. An everlasting life must necessarily continue in them, a life that of its nature cannot perish. For Christ says unconditionally: ‘Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die’.

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**395** Jn 11: 25.

**396** *Ibid.* 17: 23.

But Christ is not only life, He is also the resurrection. His words clearly refer to two forms or modes of life; otherwise he who has life would have no need of the resurrection. The life, therefore, that is proper to each individual and consists in the vital union of body and soul, is one thing; and the life which Christ communicates to those who are incorporated in Him and partake of His grace is something different.

Regarding the latter, Christ says that He Himself is *life*; regarding the former He says that He is the *resurrection*. Christ is the habitual life in the holy men of the New Testament, and He is also their resurrection. That life can never fail: "*Christus resurgens ex mortuis iam non moritur, mors illi ultra non dominabitur*" ['for we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death has no longer dominion over him'].<sup>397</sup> But Christ, too, at one time died: did His apostles and disciples, therefore, in whom He was present, also die at the same time?

Yes, that Christ, who was in them, died. In the Triduum of the death of Christ, Christ died in His disciples: the disciples of JESUS Christ, during that time had within them the dead JESUS Christ. The disciples had received Christ in the Eucharist on the night before His death: if Christ was still present in them after His death, it would have been the dead Christ, with His body separated from His soul.

We must be fully aware, however, that the divinity never abandoned the body or the soul of Christ; the Person of Christ, in fact, could not be subject to death because that Person was the Word. Christ, then, although dead as man, was alive as God, and had the power of re-assuming His human life just as He had the power to lay it down. Christ, as God, preserved His body immune from corruption, He preserved it by His power and for this reason He did not allow other creatures to consume it as it happens with the dead bodies of men, which breed worms and other tiny animals.

We must believe, on the contrary, that the divine body of Christ

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**397** Rom 6: 9.

did not suffer any disorganisation in His Passion which would completely prevent life, except the shedding of His most precious blood. Furthermore, it would not be absurd to believe that although JESUS Christ had ceased to live with the natural life of man, yet His soul lived of a eucharistic life, that mysterious life which, elsewhere, we may have occasion to speak about more extensively.

Leaving aside, for the time being, this mysterious life of Christ, we must nonetheless distinguish in Christ two lives, the divine life He has as God, and which He could never lose because God does not die; and the human life which consisted in the union of His most sacred soul with His most divine body. Although Christ, in the three days of His death, was in His disciples in a human condition of death, yet He lived in them with His divine life, a life which is the first cause of the resurrection, attributed by Christ to the power of God, as He told the Sadducees: “*Erratis nescientes Scripturas, neque virtutem Dei*” [‘you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God’]<sup>398</sup> and when He called ‘the children of God,’ the ‘children of the resurrection’.<sup>399</sup>

The omnipotent power of God could certainly give a real term to separated souls, in whatever way it pleased Him to do it. Such real term would hold the place of the body, and so could make the soul live of a subjective life, though not a natural one. Generally speaking, to feel alive the soul requires only a real term, so united to it that it forms with it one subject; such subject can, under suitable conditions, perform the vital operations of feeling and thinking regarding that which is real.

This real term, however, can vary; hence the different types of life. God’s omnipotence, however, can add, as we said, another reality to a soul separated from its own natural body, to take the place of the natural body. We think that this term, as we have implied, is the sacramental body of Christ, according to those words: ‘The bread which I shall give, is my flesh for the life of the world’<sup>400</sup> that is, “My flesh, under the form of bread, of food,

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**398** Matt 22: 29.

**399** Lk 20: 36.

**400** Jn 6: 51.

will take the place of, will do instead of, the life of the world”.

We can distinguish, therefore, four types of life in Christ and His disciples: 1<sup>st</sup> The natural life, that is, the union of the natural human body in an individual subject; 2<sup>nd</sup> The mysterious, eucharistic, divine life which remained during the three days of Christ's death; 3<sup>rd</sup> The spiritual life of Christ while He was still a pilgrim on earth, before His death, and which consisted in a sanctification and divinisation of Christ as man living a natural life; that is, a sanctification and divinisation of His soul and body united together individually, from which came the power He had of being transfigured, as on Mount Tabor, and of being glorified when He wished, although He chose rather to hide these effects of His divinity, allowing His body and soul to suffer, as we have said, and to be separated in death. All of this, did not mean that the immortal and glorious life of Christ was not in Him in his earthly state, but it was hidden, as if in a seed; this glorious life, at the proper time, was going to appear and be revealed, as it happened at His resurrection; 4<sup>th</sup> Finally, His glorious life after the resurrection and after His Ascension into heaven (two degrees of the same life), which is His former life realised in the fullness of its power and wonderful effects.

The first of these four types of life was destined to death, in Christ and in His disciples; in His disciples, as the penalty of original sin, through which man's natural life became corruptible, opposed to the Holy Spirit, and prey of the devil; in Christ, because Christ, through His magnanimity, as we have said, wished to take on Himself the punishment of sin without committing any sin, and so, to be the most perfect exemplar of moral virtue, which was what His eternal Father wished it to be and be seen in this world.

Pentecost Sunday  
27<sup>th</sup> May 1849  
Naples, St. Ephrem Nuovo

The second life was never lacking to Christ, not even at the time of His death, nor during the resting of His most sacred body in

the sepulchre. During that time, Christ and the disciples united with Him, lived with the eucharistic life, as it seems to be indicated by JESUS' words: "*Operamini non cibum qui perit, sed qui permanet in vitam aeternam, quem Filius hominis dabit vobis*" ['Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life which the Son of man will give you'].<sup>401</sup>

The food that JESUS Christ had not yet given, but which He promised to give, is here said to be such that it never perishes, never fails, because it endures to life eternal. This is the eucharistic food. And He adds this reason: "*Hunc enim Pater signavit Deus*" ['For on him has God the Father set his seal'],<sup>402</sup> as if He would have us understand that the Son of man, whom God sealed as His own, even though dead as regards the natural life, cannot but have some other type of life, His subjective life which lasts eternally and which He can communicate to His followers in the form of food.

A little further on He says: "*Non Moyses dedit vobis panem de coelo, sed Pater meus dat vobis panem de coelo verum. Panis enim Dei est, qui de coelo descendit, et dat vitam mundo*" ['It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven: my father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world'].<sup>403</sup> This bread from heaven is JESUS Christ Himself, but not in His natural life but in His eucharistic life.

The Fathers of the Church who have interpreted this Chapter 6 of St. John's Gospel, have always understood what it is said of the bread from heaven to refer to the eucharistic or sacramental life of Christ. This bread is said to be from heaven because Christ under the form of food or bread is not present in a human, natural way, but in a miraculous and supernatural way. He has another mode of existence, another hidden and altogether mysterious life; and this life is communicated to the world, "*dat vitam mundo*" ['gives life to the world'].

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**401** *Ibid.* 27.

**402** Jn 6: 27.

**403** *Ibid.* 32-33.

To the world, which has lost its life in Adam, He gives a completely new form of life, which persists even when the world has lost its natural life, the life which comes from earth and not from heaven, from flesh and blood and not from God: "*Qui non ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, neque ex voluntate viri, sed ex Deo nati sunt*" ['Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'].<sup>404</sup>

This life, which is given to men in so wonderful way, is given in the form of food in order that the original design may be restored whereby men were to become immortal, by eating of the fruit of the tree of life. This design, established by God in the beginning, was rendered useless by the cunning of the devil. Now, in order that the devil might be vanquished and put to confusion in all his plans, the Eternal Father decreed to give to the regenerated world another tree of life, far surpassing the first. This second tree is JESUS Christ; and the eucharistic food, and the hidden life it contains are the fruits of this tree. This food may rightly be called 'fruit', because it was obtained by Christ's prayer to His Father and merited by His passion and death, of which it is a living memorial, since it endures and lives even after Christ has died in His human nature.

The words of the Apostle are relevant to this hidden, eucharistic life when it is said: "*Qui in diebus carnis suis, preces supplicationesque ad eum, qui possit illum salvum facere a morte, cum clamore valido et lacrymis offerens, exauditus est pro sua reverentia*" ['In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with a loud voice and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his Godly fear'].<sup>405</sup>

Now, Christ was not saved from natural death; in this He was not heard, and although He afterwards broke through the bonds of death by His resurrection, He died, nevertheless. But, if it is granted that Christ, even though dead, was living another life, a hidden, supernatural, eucharistic life, in that case He was

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**404** *Ibid.* 1: 13.

**405** Heb 5: 7.

heard, because He was never without some form of life. And we should also note that this hidden manner of life given to others in the form of food, supposes that they are living. For this reason, the Eucharist cannot be received except by those who are born again in the waters of baptism.

## Reading 71

*[With the gift of His mysterious, eucharistic life, which lies in the perception and incorporation into Him, Christ saves the persons who have been given to Him by the Father]*

JESUS Christ, once more, said to the Jews: *“Ego sum panis vitae: qui venit ad me non esuriet: et qui credit in me non sitiet unquam”* [‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst’].<sup>406</sup> To the Samaritan woman He had spoken of water in similar terms: *“Si scires donum Dei, et quis est qui dicit tibi: Da mihi bibere: tu forsitan petisses ab eo, et dedisset tibi aquam vivam”* [‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you “Give me a drink” you would have asked him and he would have given you living water’],<sup>407</sup> and again, *“Omnis qui bibit ex aqua hac sitiet iterum: qui autem biberit ex aqua, quam ego dabo ei, non sitiet in aeternum: sed aqua quam ego dabo ei, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam”* [‘Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life’].<sup>408</sup>

This water is the reward of faith, and so Christ says: *“Qui credit in me non sitiet unquam”* [‘He who believes in me will never thirst’], and when it is mixed with wine in the chalice, it is

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**406** Jn 6: 35.

**407** *Ibid.* 4: 10.

**408** *Ibid.* 4: 13-14.



transubstantiated into the blood of Christ. The water mixed with wine does not become one substance with it. It does not combine with it in a chemical way, and yet, according to theologians, together with the wine in the chalice it becomes the blood of Christ.

The eucharistic bread is flour kneaded with water, as St. Cyprian said in a text quoted by Innocent III: "*Calix Domini non est aqua sola, neque vinum solum, sicut neque corpus Domini potest esse farina sola, nisi fuerit utrumque adunatum et panis unius compage solidatum*" ['The chalice of the Lord is not water only, nor wine only, just as the Body of the Lord cannot be flour only unless it is both combined and solidified as one bread'].<sup>409</sup>

Faith is the beginning of salvation: it gives the right to baptism and the other sacraments. When these cannot be received, faith which creates the desire for them saves man and gives him the right, after death, to receive from Christ that life which on earth he could not receive from the sacraments he desired. Christ's blood, therefore, should be received with the living water of faith, as flour also becomes bread through being mixed with water.

For this reason, it is rightly said that the water in the chalice represents the people who are closely united to and incorporated in Christ by their lively faith. The water then represents the faithful, it represents the act or habit of faith whereby they cleave to JESUS Christ and are made one in Him. We shall speak later about faith and the other theological virtues which unite the faithful to Christ and give them the right to be constantly united to Him.

Christ said to the Samaritan woman, "*Si scires donum Dei*" ['if you knew the gift of God'], which appears to allude to the mystery of the Eucharist, since the same word *eucarestia*, according to the interpretation of Greek scholars, means 'good gift', 'excellent or best gift,' from *eu* 'good' and from *χαρίζομαι* *largior dono* 'to bestow abundantly', 'to give as a present',<sup>410</sup>

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**409** Innocent III '*Mysterior. Evangelicae legis ac Sacram. Eucharistiae.*' L IV c 32.

**410** See this etymology given by Raimondo Guarini in his book: *Effetti fisici*

hence: χαριστέριον *donum* 'gift', and the Eucharist is called 'gift' by the more ancient Fathers.<sup>411</sup>

It is true that the word 'gift' is also a word signifying the Holy Spirit, but this supposes firstly Christ, from whom He proceeds. And in the Eucharist, which is Christ with His being and life as food, the Holy Spirit is given, this being the mystery of the love of JESUS Christ. This is confirmed by the context, because, when He says: "*Si scires donum Dei et quis est qui dicit tibi: da mihi bibere, tu forsitan petiises ab eo et dedisset tibi aquam vivam*" ['If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you "Give me a drink" you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water'], He means '*You would have asked for the gift of living water if you had known what this gift is and who it is who asks you for material water; and who could give you much better water*'. So, the gift refers to water, and water, the symbol of faith, refers to the Eucharist, our super-substantial food.

Let us now turn to Christ's words: '*I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst*'; they may be paraphrased as follows: 'He who comes to me prepared to believe my words, will be hungry no more, because I will welcome him and give myself to him as his food, in such a way that he will live by my life, the life I live under the form of bread. And he who already believes in me, will be thirsty no more, because I will give myself to him as drink in such a way that he too will live by that life which I live under the form of wine and water mixed with wine'.

He alludes to two seeds of man's salvation: *the predisposition to faith* and *faith already obtained*. He promises that both one and the other will bear fruit and bring man to eternal life, because Christ will give Himself to man as food and will bestow this life under this form. He says that he who will eat and drink this divine nourishment will no longer hunger or thirst for any other food or drink. At the same time, he will never be satiated with

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*del pane e del vino consacrato*, Naples 1839.

**411** How the ancient Christian writers call the Eucharist, 'gift' par excellence can be seen in the notes attached to the first letter of St. Clement the Pope No 44 in the *Raccolta* of the Apostolic Fathers made by the *Cotelerio* ediz. *Del Clerico*.

this food, as may be gathered from the words of Wisdom itself: "*Qui edunt me adhuc esurient, et qui bibunt me adhuc sitient*" ['Those who eat me will hunger for more and those who drink me will thirst for more'].<sup>412</sup> These words would appear to conflict with those of Christ, although this is not really the case. The words from Sirach describe the hunger and thirst for wisdom, which can never be satisfied, whereas Christ is speaking of the hunger and thirst of those who have their fill of wisdom and of the life of Christ.

Christ Himself made this plain. When He told the Samaritan woman that anyone who drinks the water that He will give, will never be thirsty any more, He gave this reason: "*Sed aqua, quam ego dabo ei fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam*" ['The water that I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life'].

This is not to be taken in the sense that he will never be thirsty again because he no longer wants to drink this water; it means that he will no longer be thirsty owing to a shortage of the water. There is no danger that this water will ever fail, causing in him a troublesome thirst for the desired water; for this water, that is to say, the faith that Christ will give him, will become within him an abundant and perennial supply of water from which he will drink continually. This water will spring up to eternal life, since from faith spring the other graces and the life which the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, bestow and preserve in the fullest measure.

We can now consider the discourse of JESUS to the Jews. He said: "*Ego sum panis vitae*" ['I am the bread of life'], and, a little later, He says: "*Haec est autem voluntas eius, qui misit me, Patris, ut omne, quod dedit mihi, non perdam ex eo, sed resuscitem illud in novissimo die. Haec est autem voluntas Patris mei, qui misit me, ut omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum habeat vitam aeternam, et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die*" ['And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and

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**412** Eccl 24: 21

believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day’].<sup>413</sup>

These two sentences begin in the same way: ‘*This is the will of the Father who sent me*’, but they do not refer to the same thing. They indicate the two ways already mentioned whereby which Christ gives life to men:

1<sup>st</sup> Christ at the last day will restore to all men the *natural life* which they lost through the wiles of the devil by the sin of the first man;

2<sup>nd</sup> He will give *eternal life* to those who are predestined to salvation and He will raise them up at the last day.

He says clearly that such is the will of the Father who has sent Him, that He should lose nothing of all that has been given Him. Now, what did the Father give the Son? Christ tells us elsewhere: “*Dedisti ei potestatem omnis carnis*” [‘Thou hast given him power over all flesh’].<sup>414</sup>

All flesh is therefore entrusted to the Son who for that reason restores it by the resurrection on the last day. Christ did not say that everything given Him by the Father will have eternal life; He said that all that the Father has given Him will be raised on the last day. When He speaks of that which He will raise on the last day, He uses the neuter gender, *omne quod dedit mihi*, but when He speaks of those who have *eternal life*, He uses the masculine gender, *omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum*. The neuter gender denotes nature, the masculine, the person; the former denotes the flesh, the latter the spirit.

At the final resurrection of the just and the wicked, Christ restores the whole of human nature, He gives life to all flesh: “*Haec est autem voluntas eius qui misit me, Patris, ut omne quod dedit mihi, non perdam ex eo, sed resuscitem illud in novissimo die*” [‘For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day’].

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**413** Jn 6: 39-40.

**414** *Ibid.* 17: 2.

By imparting the mysterious life which consists in the perception of and incorporation in Himself, Christ saves those who have been given Him by the Father. Besides the expectation of the future resurrection, when they will regain that life which consists in the union of the soul with the body, they will also have another mysterious life, which we believe to consist in the perception of Christ living under the form of food or bread: "*Haec est voluntas Patris mei, qui misit me, ut omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum habeat vitam aeternam, et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die*" [For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day].

*To see* the Son is to perceive Him, to have the perception of Him, and this follows when the indelible character is impressed in the soul. *To believe* in the Son means to give the assent of the will, and if faith is a living faith, it gives moreover practical recognition and allegiance to the Son.

Such people, says Christ, have *eternal life*. But if a person has eternal life, what need has he to be raised to life at the last day? To be raised again to life, one must first be dead: and he who has *eternal life* is not dead. It must therefore be said that man can be dead as to the natural life and yet be living another life, a better and eternal life, which he has who sees the Son of God and believes in Him.

## Reading 72

*[If faith is enough to gain eternal life, why does Christ make it a condition of living eternally that man should eat the bread of life?]*

The '*eternal life*', which the soul enjoys through the grace of Christ, in whom it is incorporated, is a guarantee that the hypothesis about which we spoke earlier, of the soul separated

from the body, which retains nothing else but its own nature (Reading 69), namely, existence, the intuition of being and certain habits preserved from its previous union with the body, but without life, in so far as life means '*the feeling of something real*', and without the possibility of any activity, action, and, even any consciousness, we now say that such hypothesis will never come true.

The Christian soul, in fact, even separated from the body, will not remain alone, because it is united to Christ; it does not remain without life, because it has eternal life. With all probability, this life had as its real term, during the three days of the death of Christ, the body and blood of Christ under the form of food and drink; and after Christ's resurrection, it had not only the body and blood of Christ by means of the eucharistic sacrament, but also His natural glorious body.

In the present life man is incorporated into Christ by the mysterious sacramental life only, because Christ's natural and glorious life remains altogether hidden from him. This is in order that it may be an object of faith, that our Lord's words may be fulfilled: "*Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt*" ['Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed'],<sup>415</sup> and man may thus possess that blessedness which he would not otherwise have.

All is ordained for man's benefit, even the limitation of God's gifts. To believe God's words without seeing Him, and to live according to one's belief, gives greater honour to God than believing after one has seen. It implies complete confidence in God who reveals, and entire abandonment to Him who is truth. It is a strong and free mental act, mastering the senses and the appearances, which are wont to attract and hold fast man's assent. Thus, there is a greater value and moral dignity in faith than in simple vision, and God's whole purpose is to lead man to greater perfection.

This is the faith of those who are already incorporated into Christ, a faith produced by the hidden perception of Christ

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**415** Jn 20: 29.

whereby He is perceived in His sacramental form of food, the faith of which Christ said: “*Ut omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum habeat vitam aeternam*” [‘That everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life’].<sup>416</sup>

In the first place, JESUS says: “*Videt Filium*” [‘Sees the Son’] and afterwards, “*Et credit in eum*” [‘And believes in him’], because the *vision* of the Son is placed above the *faith*. It is not a vision which takes away the faith, rather it is its foundation, for faith is ‘the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’ (οὐ βλεπομένων).<sup>417</sup> This definition is particularly applicable to the faith of the man who is already incorporated into Christ, in whom Christ, perceived in a hidden manner and not in His natural and glorious body, is the subsistence of things hoped for, that is, of the manifestation of Christ in His glorious life, and it is the unshakeable proof of this glorious life of Christ which is not seen in this present life.

In speaking to the Jews, Christ also said: “*Nemo potest venire ad me, nisi Pater qui misit me, traxerit eum: et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die. Est scriptum in Prophetis: ‘Et erunt omnes docibiles Dei’*” [‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets “and they shall all be taught by God”’];<sup>418</sup> “*Omnis qui audivit a Patre, et didicit, venit ad me. Non quia Patrem vidit quisquam, nisi is, qui est a Deo, hic vidit Patrem. Amen, amen dico vobis: qui credit in me habet vitam aeternam*” [‘Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life’].<sup>419</sup> In these words, Christ describes the whole progress by which man attains to that faith in Him that leads to eternal life.

He alludes to it first in general terms, when He says: ‘No one can come to me unless the Father, who has sent me, draws him’,

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**416** *Ibid.* 6: 40.

**417** Heb 40: 1.

**418** Is 54: 13.

**419** Jn 6: 44-47.

and promises that if the Father draws him, no matter how He draws him, He will raise him up on the last day. This *drawing* to Christ, can also be understood, in a certain way, as a drawing of all things, as Christ Himself said: “*Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum*” [‘And I when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all things to myself’];<sup>420</sup> and the words which follow: “*Et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die*” [‘And I will raise him up on the last day’] can also be understood of the resurrection of all things, in the same way as we have explained the preceding words: “*Ut omne quod dedit mihi, non perdam ex eo, sed resuscitem illud in novissimo die*” [‘That I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up at the last day’].

But the expression: ‘*Being drawn by the Father*’ embraces much more; in its most general sense it includes every type of attraction, especially of those who are drawn to Christ not simply that they may be in His power, but that they may be saved by Him. With regard to these, Christ’s promise: ‘*And I will raise him up on the last day*’, must be understood as referring to the blessed and glorious resurrection.

If the Father draws souls to Christ in this sense, the person who is drawn has not yet come to Christ, is not yet incorporated into Him, but is on the way to this happy end. This attraction to Christ by the Father comprises all those graces and gifts which prepare man to believe in Christ, and therefore precede complete, actual, and habitual faith.

Such a disposition, strictly speaking, is not the result of natural uprightness of thought and conduct, natural knowledge or natural integrity. This can only be a certain initial and remote disposition which, however, will also be assessed: “*In die cum iudicabit Deus occulta hominum, secundum Evangelium meum per JESUM Christum*” [‘On that day when according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ JESUS’].<sup>421</sup> This is also fittingly attributed to the Father, to whom creation is attributed, and it is due to the Father in His own right in as

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**420** Jn 12: 32.

**421** Rom 2: 16.



much as the Father generates the Son, and consequently all that belongs to Him, among which is the light of human reason, that is, ideal being.

Moreover, the preservation and providential ordering of things, whereby everything and man in particular derive the capacity to preserve the energy of their being and of their activities, as also the reason why some men seem to be less tempted to evil in their lives, are likewise attributed to the Father. For the Gentiles, however, the immediate and effective disposition to accept Christ and his Gospel was due to the ancient oral traditions derived from the early revelations which God gave to Adam and the patriarchs, before humankind separated into nations.

For the Jews, it was due to the special revelations and traditions, oral and written, which were handed down in the family of Israel. By means of these divine revelations and traditions both Gentiles and Jews could acquire some notion of the future Redeemer of the world, on which their faith in Him might be based.

These revealed truths are attributed to the Father because since they are, as we have said (Reading 29), supernatural appurtenances of the Word, though not the Word Himself, they belong to Him. The Father, who generates the Word and sends Him into the world, produced with Him all that belongs to the Word, and so Christ was not satisfied with saying: "*Nemo potest venire ad me nisi Pater traxerit eum*" ['No one can come to me unless the Father draws him'], but He said, "*Pater qui misit me*" ['The Father who sent me'], as if to say: He who is my Father from all eternity and who sends me to men, it is He who will reveal me, when the time comes.

A little further on, Christ says that no one has ever seen the Father, *nisi is qui est a Patre* ['except he who is from the Father'], because the Father cannot be known and perceived except through and in the Son. The Word, in fact, has a full knowledge of the Father and is, therefore, His intelligibility. Moreover, Christ adds, if it is true that the Father cannot be seen by man, nevertheless man can still hear Him, whence the prophet Isaiah

said: 'They shall all be taught by the Lord', that is, they will be made capable of being taught by God the Father.

The teaching that the Father gave to men who did not yet know Christ, especially before His coming on earth, consisted of the supernatural revelations and instructions of which we have spoken earlier, and which, we have said, are not yet the Word but appurtenances of the Word.

When these are accepted by men with submission, humility and faith they form the proximate and effective disposition that later will lead them to receive Christ and believe in Him. Hence Christ, in His infinite goodness, promised that, "*omnis, qui audivit a Patre, et didicit, venit ad me*" ['all who hear the Father and learn, come to me'].

It is not enough for men to *hear* what the Father teaches them, what He taught through the ancient revelations, and what He taught the Jews through the special revelations to the House of Jacob. To come to Christ, they must also *learn* what the Father teaches; in other words, they must cooperate and give the assent of their free will: "*Audivit a Patre et didicit*" ['to hear the Father and learn'].

In this way, they come to Christ. It seems that a disposition to come to Christ precedes faith, or belief in Christ. When a man has '*heard*' the Father, when he has '*learned*' what the Father has taught him, then he goes to Christ, that is to say, he desires that the lessons the Father has taught him may be completed, and he acts in conformity with this desire by seeking the completeness he does not yet possess, does not yet know, namely, Christ.

Assuming that Christ is revealed to him, he then believes in Christ and acts in conformity with his faith. When he has reached this stage, his eternal salvation is assured, for Christ promised this: "*Amen, amen dico vobis qui credit in me habet vitam aeternam*" ['Amen, amen, I say to you, he who believes in me has eternal life']. The steps, therefore, towards eternal salvation, mentioned by Christ, are the following: 1<sup>st</sup> Hearing the Father; 2<sup>nd</sup> Learning from the Father; 3<sup>rd</sup> Coming to Christ;

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Believing in Christ.

This *faith* in Christ does not follow the acquisition of eternal life but is the faith which gives *eternal life*. “*Qui credit in me habet vitam aeternam*” [‘He who believes in me has eternal life’]. He who has eternal life believes in Christ, that is, he continues to believe with a brighter light, the light of eternal life, which at last he possesses.

Christ moves on to teach how this eternal life is formed in man, and He says: “*Ego sum panis vitae. Patres vestri manducaverunt manna in deserto, et mortui sunt. Hic est panis de caelo descendens: ut si quis ex ipso manducaverit, non moriatur. Ego sum panis vivus, qui de caelo descendi. Si quis manducaverit ex hoc pane, vivet in aeternum: et panis quem ego dabo, caro mea est pro mundi vita*” [‘I am the bread of life. Your Fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh’].<sup>422</sup>

Christ had already stated that whoever believes in Him has eternal life; now, He continues by saying that He is the bread of life, and that whoever eats of it shall live forever. However, if faith is enough to gain eternal life, why does Christ make it a condition for the gaining of eternal life that man should eat the bread of life? And, if this bread of life is the eucharistic bread, if it is the flesh of Christ, as Christ expressly states, “*Et panis quem ego dabo caro mea est*” [‘and the bread which I will give is my flesh’] is it then true that one who has faith but has not received the eucharistic bread cannot have eternal life? This would seem to be contrary to Christ’s own words, since He had previously said, in an absolute and unconditional way, the following words: “*Qui credit in me habet vitam aeternam*” [‘He who believes in me has eternal life’].

It must then be said that faith in Christ carries with it, as its natural consequence, a desire for Baptism and for the other

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<sup>422</sup> Jn 6: 48-52.

Sacraments; when this desire cannot be fulfilled, it is nonetheless sufficient for man's eternal salvation. This being so, how is it that a little later Christ goes on to say: "*Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis et biberitis eius sanguinem non habebitis vitam in vobis*" ['Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you'].<sup>423</sup> These words are absolute and universal. They seem to conceal a great mystery.

## Reading 73

*[The eucharistic life of Christ can never fail; and this life will give life to men, even when they have lost their natural life, their life in this world]*

Although this mystery will always remain partly hidden, nevertheless JESUS Christ Himself has drawn the veil aside in part. He tells us that He gives Himself to man as food: that this food is His flesh; that this flesh, in the form of bread and drink, gives life; that unless a man partakes of this bread and drink, he cannot have life; that the bread which He will give is His flesh for the life of the world, *caro mea est pro mundi vita*, or, as the Greek text says: 'It is my flesh that I will give for the life of the world' (ὅν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς). In other words, this same flesh which I will give up to death so that the world may live, is the bread of life, that is to say, the bread that will give the world a new, immortal, and everlasting life.

There is, therefore, a flesh which Christ gives up to death; but this same flesh which is doomed to death will be the bread of eternal life, that is, it will have another mode of life that can never fail, and this will give life to men. The eucharistic life of

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**423** *Ibid.* 6: 53 (RSV, JAD).

Christ, therefore, can never fail. This will give life to men even when they have lost their natural life, their life in this world. Christ is therefore saying, 'I will give up my flesh to death, but at the same time I will give another life, because this my flesh will always be a living bread, a bread that gives life'.

This bread must therefore give life also to those who have laid down their natural life at death. The implication is that the Eucharist has an effect beyond this natural life, so that our souls, though separated from their bodies, live the life which the flesh of Christ gives them under the form of bread of life, in a way that is completely hidden and mysterious.

In reality, after He had instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, JESUS Christ told His Apostles that He would drink a new wine with them when He had entered into His kingdom: "*Dico autem vobis: non bibam amodo de hoc genimine vitis, usque in diem illum, cum illud bibam vobiscum novum in regno Patris mei*" ['I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom'].<sup>424</sup>

He refers to the eucharistic wine which He will drink in His Father's kingdom as '*new wine*' because His body would then be in a glorious state. He says that He will drink it '*with them*' to show the share they would have in His eucharistic life. The eucharistic wine presupposes also the bread, just as the blood presupposes the body; but Christ limits Himself to mentioning that liquid which gives life to our natural bodies, for it is written: "*Anima enim omnis carnis in sanguine est: unde dixi filiis Israel: sanguinem universae carnis non comedetis, quia anima carnis in sanguine est: et quicumque comederit illum, interibit*" ['For the life of every creature is the blood of it; therefore I have said to the people of Israel, 'You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off'].<sup>425</sup>

And a little earlier, it was said: "*Homo quilibet de domo Israel et*

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**424** Matt 26: 29 - Mk 14: 25.

**425** Lev 17: 14.

*de advenis qui peregrinantur inter eos, si comederit sanguinem, obfirmabo faciem meam contra animam illius, et disperdam eam de populo suo, quia anima carnis in sanguine est: et ego dedi illum vobis, ut super altare in eo expietis pro animabus vestris, et sanguis pro animae piaculo sit*” [‘If any man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life’].<sup>426</sup>

This blood which in God’s design is to make atonement for the soul, *pro piaculo animae*, is not the blood of any animal, which could be nothing more than a figure, nor is it the blood of a mortal man; but it is the blood of the Son of man, who is also the Son of God, JESUS Christ our Lord.

No other blood could be consumed because it was dead blood, and when taken from a living being it brought death. But JESUS Christ also fulfilled this legal ordinance and so annulled it by giving man His most precious blood in the form of wine, living and life-giving blood, the true *piaculum*, ‘atonement’, for souls; the blood of the new and eternal covenant.

Moreover, in His discourse to His disciples, Christ prefers to speak of His blood which He would drink new in His kingdom under the form of wine, because the reception of the blood was reserved to the perfect, and to priests; and to priests the Church reserved the reception of the blood when the first fervour of the Christians weakened, as that which contained in a special way the more perfect graces, such as joy in doing good, signified by the species of wine which “*laetificat cor hominum*” [‘cheers the heart of man’],<sup>427</sup> and the grace of fortitude and martyrdom, typified by the blood which Christ was the first to shed.

Hence, these words were to be a source of comfort and, at the same time, a source of strength to His sorrowful disciples, who

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**426** *Ibid.* 17: 10-11.

**427** Psalm 103: 16.

were soon to see their Lord and Master barbarously crucified.

The action of Christ, then, who lives His eucharistic life under the appearance of bread and wine, extends beyond this present life, and imparts to the separated soul, as well as to the soul united to the body, a mysterious life in Christ which can never fail, because, of its own nature, is eternal. *“Hic est panis de coelo descendens, ut si quis ex ipso manducaverit non moriatur”* [‘This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that whoever eats it will not die’]. This bread is always living bread: *“Ego sum panis vivus”* [‘I am the living bread’]; and this living bread gives life to others: *“Ego sum panis vitae”* [‘I am the bread of life’].

Therefore, Christ can be dead as to His natural life, but not in His eucharistic life. This living bread has come down from heaven: *“Ego sum panis vivus qui de coelo descendi”* [‘I am the living bread which has come down from heaven’]; and it does not die precisely because it is not from the earth. Heaven is the abode of life, not of death, and what is from heaven is not subject to the laws of the earth, and therefore does not die, because neither the earth nor the powers of earth, nor those of hell, have any power over the things of heaven. Christ’s human body was from the earth because it was formed from the blood of the Virgin, and so it would be given up to death. But His eucharistic body has a supernatural existence which comes only from heaven, and therefore is living and life-giving. No man can destroy it.

## Reading 74

*[Participation in the mysterious eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ unites admirably the Church Triumphant with the Church Militant at every Mass]*

A doctrine so hidden and wonderful astonished the Jews, who did not understand it and they murmured among themselves saying: *“Quomodo potest hic nobis carnem suam dare ad manducandum?”* [‘How can this man give us his flesh to

eat?'].<sup>428</sup> And yet, Christ did not retract His teaching nor did He explain it in a metaphorical sense; on the contrary, He confirmed it and re-iterated it, by saying: “*Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis, et biberitis ejus sanguinem, non habebitis vitam in vobis. Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, habet vitam aeternam: et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die. Caro enim mea vere est cibus: et sanguis meus, vere est potus; qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo. Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem: et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me. Hic est panis qui de caelo descendit. Non sicut manducaverunt patres vestri manna, et mortui sunt. Qui manducat hunc panem, vivet in aeternum*” [‘Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever’].<sup>429</sup>

Christ’s words contain the condition for having life in oneself; and the condition is the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood: “*Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis et biberitis eius sanguinem non habebitis vitam in vobis*” [‘Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood you will not have life in you’]. These words are so clear and absolute that, before the Church formalised the teaching that the reception of the Eucharist was not a necessary means of salvation,<sup>430</sup> there were some, such as St. Augustine<sup>431</sup> and Innocent I<sup>432</sup> who held that the simple reception of baptism was not sufficient for the eternal salvation of babies; they also needed the sacrament of the Eucharist.

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**428** Jn 6: 52 (RSV, JAD).

**429** *Ibid.* 6: 54-59.

**430** Conc. Trid. Sess. 21 cap 4, can. 4.

**431** *Lib. 1. C. Julian* c. 4 n. 13.

**432** *Ep ad Patres Milevitanos inter Ep. August.* 93.



Now, however, the contrary has been defined by the infallible authority of the Church, even though the words of Christ about the Eucharist are as absolute and universal as the words for Baptism: "*Amen, amen dico tibi: nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto non potest introire in regnum Dei*" [Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'].<sup>433</sup>

However, if the person who does not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, has no life in himself, and yet, if he who dies with baptism of water or blood or desire, is certain to obtain eternal life, we must say that this eating of the flesh and blood of Christ, which he did not receive in the present life, will be given to him in the next, at the point of death; and in this way, he will have life in himself since, as we have seen, the Eucharist has effects also beyond this life. Christ Himself said that once He is in His glorious kingdom, He will partake of the Eucharist with His disciples.

Equally we may presume that when Christ descended into limbo, He gave Himself to the Saints of the Old Testament under the form of bread and wine, restoring them to life, and out of the darkness and sleep in which they were. He gave them a share in His own eucharistic life, and He made them ready for the beatific vision of God. Their title to this was the faith in which they had died, which gave them a right *ad rem*; this right was fulfilled by Christ, when He gave them the possession of the things in which they had hoped. Hence, it became for them a right *in re*.

The same must be said of all those among the Gentiles who had faith in the future Saviour of the world and who lived without mortal sin; or, being sorry for their sins, they had been forgiven.

The same holds true for those Christians who, although baptised and free from actual sin, died before they could receive the Eucharist in the present life, as it is the case with many babies, and as it was the case with the man to whom Christ said on the Cross: "*Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso*" [This day you will

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<sup>433</sup> Jn 3: 5.

be with me in Paradise’].<sup>434</sup>

This teaching is confirmed by the sacrifice of the Mass. During the Mass, in fact, after the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Redeemer, the priest prays that the Angel may take the sacrifice, “*in sublime altare tuum, in conspectu divinae majestatis tuae*”, [‘to your altar in heaven in the sight of your divine majesty’], and that we, who receive from the altar, may, “*omni dono coelesti et gratia repleamur*” [‘be filled with every grace and blessing’]. This is our fellowship and communication with the Saints in heaven.

Hence, Innocent III in his liturgical work, when he comes to the passage which begins: ‘*Jube haec perferri*’ [‘Command that your angel may take these gifts’], gives the chapter this title: *De profunda quorundam intelligentia verborum* [Concerning the deep meaning of these words], and later adds: “*Tantae sunt profunditatis haec verba ut intellectus humanus vix ea sufficiat pertractare*” [‘So great is the depth of these words that the human understanding is scarcely capable of grasping them’].

He sees in these words the mystery, and does not dare, out of reverence, to unveil it, does not dare to investigate it, because of its sublimity. This is, in fact, one of the most mysterious doctrines of the Catholic Church. If we dare to treat of it, it is only because we are convinced that it is, at this time, God’s will. The Holy Pontiff, nevertheless, mentions it, by quoting two texts of St. Gregory the Great as follows: “*Nam Beatus Gregorius tanti sacramenti dignus interpret quodam in loco de illis verbis, TANQUAM DE RE INEFFABILI PENE INEFFABILITER LOQUENS: ‘Quis, inquit, fidelium habere dubium potest, in ipsa immolationis hora ad sacerdotis vocem coelos aperiri in illo JESU Christi mysterio, angelorum choros adesse, summis ima sociari, terrena coelestibus iungi, unum quid ex invisibilibus et visibilibus fieri? Idem alibi dicit: ‘Uno eodemque tempore ac momento, et IN COELUM RAPITUR mynisterio Angelorum consociandum corpori Christi, et ante oculos sacerdotis in altari videtur’*” [‘For holy Gregory, a worthy interpreter of so great a sacrament, speaking in a passage about those (words), as though dealing with a sublime matter in a sublime way, says: “Who among the faithful

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**434** Lk 23: 43.

can doubt that at the hour of immolation, at the voice of the priest, the heavens are opened to the mystery of JESUS Christ; the choirs of angels are present; the most lowly things are combined with the highest; earth with heaven; the invisible and the visible are made one?’ Elsewhere, he says: “At one and the same moment, it is taken up to Heaven through the ministry of Angels for participation in the body of Christ, the same as it is seen before the eyes of the priest on the altar”].<sup>435</sup>

After quoting such witnesses, Innocent III goes on to explain those words in a less profound sense, but stressing again the deep mystery they hide: “*Salvo tamen occulto coelestis oraculi sacramento, possunt haec verba licet simplicius, tamen securius sic intellegi etc.*” [‘Keeping intact, nonetheless, the mysterious sacrament of the heavenly oracle, these words can be understood in a simpler but safer way, etc.’].

Later, however, when he speaks of that holy altar, on which the priest prays that the Eucharist be carried by the Angel, he says: “*Multiplex autem altare legitur in scripturis superius et inferius, interius et exterius*” [“The Altar is represented in many ways in Scripture: the higher and the lower altar, the interior and the exterior altar”], and he goes on to enumerate the different altars, the high and heavenly altars, and the earthly and lower ones, and among these he says that the higher altar is also the Church Triumphant and the lower altar is the Church Militant: “*Est et altare superius triumphans Ecclesia de qua dicitur, ‘Tunc imponent super altarem tuum vitulos’. Altare inferius est Ecclesia militans de qua dicitur, ‘Si altare lapideum feceris mihi, non aedificabis illud de sectis lapidibus’*” [“The higher altar is also the Church Triumphant, about which it is said, “Then bulls will be offered on thy altar.”<sup>436</sup> The lower altar is the Church Militant,

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**435** Innocent III. ‘*Mysteriorum Evangelicae legis’ etc. L. vi. c. vii.* Several places are found in the Fathers which mention the part that the blessed take in the Sacrifice of JESUS Christ which is renewed on earth through the hands of his priest. A passage of St. Bernard is the following: in a discourse written by the saint for the Feast of St. Malachy, the Bishop says: ‘The Holy Pontiffs, who had many times taken into heaven victims of peace in a spirit of humility, have entered through the very same to the altar of God, being themselves both victims and priests.’

**436** Ps 50: 20.

about which it is said: ‘And if you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it out of hewn stones.’].<sup>437</sup>

And it is fitting that the sublime altar, mentioned in the words quoted earlier, the same words uttered by the priest at Mass a little after the consecration, should designate the Church Triumphant, which is made a sharer in the same divine mysteries with the believers on earth, both being alive by the power of the same food and enjoying the same life of JESUS Christ. What a sublime fellowship! What a close union of heaven with earth! what a divine bond between visible and invisible things! What an admirable union between the present and the future! What a unity of the whole body of Christ, which comes down from this glorious body, and is communicated not less to those members who now share its glory than to those who still are alive on earth, hoping in faith.

At Mass, after the priest’s prayer by which he begs God to command His Angel to take the bread and wine of life from the earthly altar to the heavenly altar, that is, to take it to the blessed in heaven, the priest goes on to pray for the souls of the departed, who have not yet arrived at their final end and who must be purified from every slight stain which they have taken into the next life. In fact, when this food of life is given to the faithful departed, they are set free from their dark prison much earlier, since they are given Christ’s life through which, in the next life, one can see the face of God; this divine food, in fact, remits venial sin, and cleanses the soul, “*tamquam antidotum, quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis*” [“it is the remedy by which we are freed from our daily faults”], as the Holy Council of Trent said.<sup>438</sup>

After the prayer for the souls in purgatory, the priest begins a prayer with the words: *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* [for us, too, though sinners], by which he prays for himself, for those who are present, and for all the faithful who constitute the Church Militant on earth. He begs God that by means of the eucharistic food, all of us can have some share with the holy martyrs and

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**437** Ex 20: 25; *Mysteriorum ecc.* 50: 6, c. 6.

**438** Sess 13; c. 2.

the other blessed in heaven, so that we too, having lived on earth by means of the hidden life of Christ, will one day enjoy in heaven His life, fully revealed and manifested to us.

Here we see that the three parts into which the Church is divided, that is, the Church Triumphant, the Church Suffering and the Church Militant, necessarily live by means of the same life of Christ, although in different degrees and modes, and they share in this life through the one same means.

It is worth noting that the *concept* of sacrifice has always been the same, from the beginning of the world. It was preserved not only among the Jews, but also among all the nations. The concept of sacrifice included not only the immolation of the victim to the divinity, but the persuasion also that the victim immolated should be eaten, partly by the divinity and partly by whoever offered the sacrifice. It was their clear view that the same food should be common to God, or Gods, and to men, so that men could share in the very life of God, or Gods. And in dealing with His people, God often sent fire down from heaven to consume the victim, as if He Himself were nourished by it.

*“Sicut et Moyses orabat ad Dominum et descendit ignis de coelo et consumpsit olocaustum sic et Salomon oravit et descendit ignis de coelo et consumpsit olocaustum”* [‘Just as Moses prayed to the Lord’, we read in the books of the Maccabees ‘and fire came down from heaven and devoured the sacrifices<sup>439</sup> so Solomon prayed, and the fire came down and consumed the whole burnt offerings’].<sup>440</sup>

In ancient times, the concept of sacrifice, though very persistent among all nations, was carried out only in a symbolic way; Christ, however, fulfilled the symbol and made real the truth of that prophetic concept. If then, it was in ancient tradition and in the instinct of human nature that the victim had to be food for God and man, it was fitting that God Incarnate and glorified, should share this sacred food with men. This food was the bread and wine changed into His flesh and blood.

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**439** Levit 9: 24.

**440** 2 Mac 2: 10 - 2 Chronicles (Paral) 7: 1.

And if the glorified Christ shared in it, it was convenient that the whole of humanity, in its glory, which forms one body with Him, should also share in it. This, then, is the super-substantial food of all the Saints who belong to Christ and constitute His most sacred body.

## Reading 75

*[The life in JESUS' flesh and blood is divine life; this life cannot be received, except through the action of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ. So, those who receive the Eucharist in a state of sin, do not receive, and cannot receive, that life]*

When JESUS Christ spoke of the eucharistic food, He called Himself "Son of Man". "*Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis*" ['Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man']. This was the lowliest title He could give Himself. He had come on earth to undertake the defence of the sons of men against the devil, to take upon Himself the lowly and humble form of a son of man. The expression 'son of man' seems to allude to human generation, in which the devil had placed the fault of human nature, and through which sin was propagated from father to son. JESUS Christ, however, was not conceived by means of human generation but by the power of the Holy Spirit, and He was completely immune from sin, just as He was immune from it because He was God.

Christ came so that He might make anew and raise from his degradation this son of man, who subsisted perfect and exalted in Christ. This perfection and sublime dignity Christ would share with all other sons of men, His brethren according to the flesh to whom He would be a brother, making them sharers in His divine nature.

To put the devil to shame, therefore, He exalts and magnifies that son of man on whom the devil had inflicted such

humiliation and havoc, as, for example, when He said: “*Ut autem sciatis quia Filius hominis habet potestatem in terra dimittendi peccata, etc.*”; “*Dominus est Filius hominis etiam sabbati*”; “*Mittet Filius hominis angelos suos et colligent de regno eius omnia scandala*”; “*Filius autem hominis venturus est in gloria Patris cum angelis suis et tunc reddet unicuique secundum opera eius*” [‘But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’;<sup>441</sup> and again ‘For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath’;<sup>442</sup> ‘The Son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and evildoers’;<sup>443</sup> ‘For the Son of man is to come with his angels to the glory of his Father and then he will repay every man for what he has done’].<sup>444</sup>

Many other things He said in honour of human nature which the devil had so degraded, but which He, Christ, had come to uplift. It was His purpose to raise this human nature not only in Himself but also in many individuals who would show in their lives all the forms of honour and glory which human nature can achieve, because He invited all men to share the dignity, honour and glory that belonged to Himself.<sup>445</sup> He even said: “*Amen dico vobis, quod vos qui secuti estis me, in regeneratione, cum sederit Filius hominis in sede maiestatis suae, sedebitis et vos super sedes duodecim iudicantes duodecim tribus Israel*” [‘Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel’].<sup>446</sup>

Now, He speaks of the eucharistic food in the same way. Instead of saying, ‘If you do not eat my flesh’ or ‘If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of God,’ He says: ‘*If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man*’, as if to say, ‘The son of man was corrupted by sin through the wiles of the devil. Now to the shame of that seducer and traitor, the Son of man will find the remedy to

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**441** Matt 9: 6.

**442** *Ibid.* 12: 8.

**443** *Ibid.* 13: 41.

**444** *Ibid.* 16: 27.

**445** See Theodicy.

**446** Matt 19: 28.

repair the harm in Himself; He will have no need of seeking such remedy outside Himself.

All this shows an inexpressible love for human nature, since it induces God to become its champion and defender. It shows with what tenderness He provides for the honour of this nature, so greatly tormented by its perpetual enemy, and His reverence for it, according to the *Book of Wisdom* where it says: "*Tu autem dominator virtutis, cum tranquillitate iudicas, et cum magna reverentia disponis nos*" ['Thou who art sovereign in strength does judge with mildness and with great forbearance thou dost govern us'].<sup>447</sup>

And yet, the eucharistic life is supernatural and divine. JESUS Christ makes this clear in the following words: "*Sicut misit me vivens Pater et ego vivo propter Patrem, et qui manducat me et ipse vivet propter me*" ['As the living Father sent me and I live by the Father; he who eats me shall live by me']. The Father gives the mission to the Word to become flesh, in generating Him, and the Word Incarnate lives, wholly God and Man, with the life of the Father. As the Word, He has this life in common with the Father, and as man, He shares in it through the hypostatic union. This is not His natural life, but the divine life in which He shares, the essential life of which St. John says: "*In ipso vita erat*" ['In him was life'].

This life is the subsistence living in the Father, known essentially in the Son, and loved essentially in the Holy Spirit. This life of the divine Person of Christ ruled His human nature as supreme principle, and He hid this human nature living with the divine life and ruled by it, under the form of food, in order to communicate Himself to other men. For man does not obtain the real term of his feeling, through which he lives, except by generation and nutrition.

In these two modes, man's spirit is united with his corporeal substance, as the term of his feeling. Now, the first way by which natural life is propagated was ruined by the work of the devil: but the second remained intact, since the tree of life was not

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<sup>447</sup> Wis 12: 18.



spoilt either by the devil or man. So, for the fruit of the tree of life which at the beginning, by means of nutrition, would have given him a corporeal term, making him immortal, God substituted another food, taken from man himself, that is, the flesh and blood of JESUS Christ.

This mysterious and hidden life is that life whereby the Father provided for the Word Incarnate, when He destined His natural life to be given over to the hands of those who crucified Him; that life which the Father granted to the prayers of the Son, according to the words of the Apostle: "*Qui in diebus carnis suae, preces supplicationesque ad eum qui possit illum salvum facere a morte, cum clamore valido et lacrymis offerens, exauditus est pro sua reverentia*" [‘In the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear’].<sup>448</sup> These cries and tears could not but be fully heard; for these Christ gave thanks when He instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament: "*Dominus JESUS in qua nocte tradebatur, accepit panem, et gratias agens fregit, etc.*" [‘The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, broke it, etc.’].<sup>449</sup>

This divine life which of itself does not depend on flesh and blood, is communicated to the humanity of Christ according to God’s design. Hence, Christ, at the conclusion of His teaching on the eucharistic food, said the following words: "*Spiritus est qui vivificat, caro non prodest quidquam. Verba quae ego locutus sum vobis spiritus et vita sunt*" [‘It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life’].<sup>450</sup>

By this He wished to teach us two things: first, that the life in His flesh and blood is divine life; second, that this life can be received only through the action of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ. So, those who receive the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin, do not receive, and cannot receive, this life.

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**448** Heb 5: 7.

**449** 1 Cor 11: 23.

**450** Jn 6: 64.

St. Augustine, explaining Christ's words, says that he does not die who receives in the eucharistic food "*quod pertinet ad virtutem sacramenti, non quod pertinet ad visibile sacramentum: qui manducat intus, non foris, qui manducat in corde, non qui premit dente*" ['what belongs to the virtue of the Sacrament not to the visible sacrament: he who eats within and not without: he who eats in the heart, not he who chews with his teeth'].<sup>451</sup> And again, he says: "*Huius rei sacramentum, id est unitatis corporis et sanguinis Christi alicubi quotidie, alicubi certis intervalli dierum in dominica mensa praeparatur, et de mensa dominica sumitur quibusdam ad vitam, quibusdam ad exitium: res vero ipsa cuius sacramentum est, omni homini ad vitam, nulli ad exitium, quicumque eius particeps fuerit*" ['The sacrament of this, that is, of the unity of the body and blood of Christ, is prepared on the Lord's table, in some places every day, in others at certain intervals. And from the Lord's table, it is taken by some to life, by some to destruction, but the reality of which it is the sacrament is for every man to life, for none to destruction whoever shall be partaker thereof.'].<sup>452</sup>

Hence Christ, who promises that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood will not die but will have eternal life, makes it plain that He is speaking of an eating through which man receives the *rem sacramenti* [the inner grace of the sacrament] and not simply the *sacramentum*. The latter is not the eating of which Christ speaks, because "*Spiritus est qui vivificat, caro non prodest quidquam*" ['It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail'].

Hence, again St. Augustine, speaking of the sacrament, says: "*Vis ergo et tu vivere de Spiritu Christi? In corpore esto Christi. Numquid enim corpus meum vivit de spiritu tuo? Meum vivit de spiritu meo, et tuum de tuo. Non potest vivere corpus Christi, nisi de Spiritu Christi. Inde est quod exponens nobis Apostolus Paulus hunc panem 'unus panis, inquit, unum corpus multi sumus'. O Sacramentum pietatis, o signum unitatis, o vinculum caritatis! Qui vult vivere, habet ubi vivat, habet unde vivat. Accedat, credat,*

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**451** *In Joann Tract 26: 13.*

**452** *Ibid.n.15.*

*incorporetur, ut vivificetur*” [‘Will you live by the Spirit of Christ? Abide in the body of Christ. Does my body live by your spirit? My spirit animates my body, and your spirit animates your body. The body of Christ can only live by the Spirit of Christ. Hence it is that the Apostle Paul says, explaining this bread to us, “we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”<sup>453</sup> O Sacrament of piety; O symbol of union! O bond of charity! He who would live has where to live. Let him draw near, let him be incorporated in Christ that so he may receive life’].<sup>454</sup>

In order, then, to eat truly the body and blood of Christ in the sense intended by Christ when He used the word ‘eat’, we must be members of the body of Christ and living members. It is not enough to have received the indelible character in Baptism or in the other sacraments that confer it, that is, in Confirmation or Holy Orders; it is necessary, moreover, to have the grace, that makes us living members of that body. For Christ said: “*Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in illo*” [‘He who eats my body and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him’].

If there is, therefore, an obstacle caused by sin, that which would of its nature occur through the power of the Sacrament cannot occur, because “*quae conventio Christi ad Belial?*” [‘what accord has Christ with Belial?’].<sup>455</sup>

Christ, then, in those words expresses the effect of the Most Holy Eucharist, which it produces of its own power, leaving out of consideration the accidental impediment placed by man. This is why St. Augustine says that, in the cited words of Christ, the Lord explains “*quid sit manducare corpus eius, et sanguinem eius bibere*” [‘what is meant by eating his flesh and drinking his blood’]. And he adds: “*Hoc est enim manducare illam escam, et illum bibere potum, in Christo manere, et illum manentem in se habere. Ac per hoc qui non manet in Christo, et in quo non manet Christus, procul dubio nec manducat carnem eius, nec bibit eius sanguinem, sed magis tantae rei sacramentum ad iudicium sibi*

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**453** 1 Cor 10: 17.

**454** *In Joann Tract* 26: 13.

**455** 2 Cor 6: 15.

*manducat et bibit*” [“To eat this bread and drink this cup is to abide in Christ and to have Christ abiding in us. For which reason, he who does not abide in Christ and in whom Christ does not abide, without a doubt does not eat his flesh nor drink his blood, but instead eats and drinks judgement to himself”].<sup>456</sup>

These words of the Holy Doctor must be understood in the correct sense. For he also who has received Baptism, with the grace it confers, is already a living member of the body of Christ, and Christ, therefore, is in him, and he is in Christ. The Most Holy Eucharist, however, preserves this union and mutual indwelling, just as food preserves life in the one who has life already.

This is expressed by that word of Christ, “*manet*”, [‘abides’] (“*qui manet in me et ego in illo*”) [‘he who abides in me and I in him’] which denotes permanence and stability. Furthermore, just as food makes good what the living body loses day by day, so the Holy Eucharist remits the venial sins into which man falls daily, forgiving them and pouring into him new life.

In the third-place, food enables man to grow to full manhood, and the Holy Eucharist enables the new spiritual man to grow up to the full stature of Christ. In the fourth place, bread gives strength, and wine cheers and gladdens; such too are the effects of the Eucharist, which gives man the fullness of life, of feeling, of activity, because in the Eucharist man receives Christ whole and entire: body, blood, soul and divinity; whereas Baptism unites man to the living body of Christ, but does not give him Christ whole and entire.

In the second place, we should not believe that, without the real eating of the consecrated bread and wine, man can come to possess all these graces by another way and can have Christ’s body in himself. But he can, nevertheless, be saved; because his desire to eat the most sacred body and blood, and his being in a state of grace, although do not give him the possession and,

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**456** *In John Tract* 26: 18. This passage is cited without the glosses which Bede and Alcuin add; as it appears to me that they were added afterwards in certain editions of St. Augustine.

so to speak, the right *in re*, yet they do give him the right *ad rem* which, after his death, enables him to share, in a real way, in the heavenly bread and wine.

## Reading 76

*[The answer to the question: "What is meant in the Holy Scriptures by the resurrection?"]*

And now we can give a more precise answer to the question: 'What is meant in Holy Scripture by the word 'resurrection'?' It receives different meanings according to the various types of life to which it refers. We have distinguished in Christ four types of life in which the Christian has a share, and there is a certain kind of resurrection which applies to each of them. The lives we distinguished were:

1. the natural life, which consists in the union of the soul and the body.
2. The eucharistic life.
3. The spiritual life of Christ as a wayfarer on earth. This consists for Christ in the theandric union of man with God, and for the Christian in a share of the grace of Christ, by which man not only perceives the Word but gives the assent of his will to the Word and becomes His follower while still living a natural life.
4. The glorious life, which began for Christ after His resurrection and was completed after His ascension into heaven, the life which will begin for the Christian after the resurrection of his body.

The third and fourth of these lives are a supernatural elevation of the first, or better, they have the first as their foundation and, as it were, a kind of subject; the second, that is, the Eucharist life, is a miraculous and mysterious life.

Having said this, in Holy Scripture resurrection means:

1. The effect produced by faith and Baptism by which the life of

grace is restored to man. Man, the descendant of Adam, is born corrupt and sinful and is therefore said to be dead, that is, bereft of spiritual life. He has indeed his natural life, but this is doomed inevitably to death, the germs of which it has in itself. Therefore, man has only a life that is useless for the attaining of his end, which is immortality.

Having lost his natural life, he would remain dead for ever; his soul would fall into that state of darkness and inaction which we have described earlier. But the man who accepts the Gospel and becomes a Christian, lays aside all his confidence in his natural and corrupted life and considers himself as dead as far as it is concerned. Instead, he centres all his hope and his affection upon the new life, which he acquires by being incorporated into Christ and living by His life.

This is St. Paul's teaching when he says: *"An ignoratis quia quicumque baptizati sumus in Christo Jesu, in morte ipsius baptizati sumus? Consepulti enim sumus cum illo per baptismum in mortem: ut quomodo Christus surrexit a mortuis per gloriam Patris, ita et nos in novitate vitae ambulemus. Si enim complantati facti sumus similitudini mortis ejus: simul et resurrectionis erimus. Hoc scientes, quia vetus homo noster simul crucifixus est, ut destruat corpus peccati, et ultra non serviamus peccato. Qui enim mortuus est, justificatus est a peccato. Si autem mortui sumus cum Christo, credimus quia simul etiam vivemus cum Christo, scientes quod Christus resurgens ex mortuis jam non moritur: mors illi ultra non dominabitur. Quod enim mortuus est peccato, mortuus est semel: quod autem vivit, vivit Deo. Ita et vos existimate vos mortuos quidem esse peccato, viventes autem Deo, in Christo Jesu Domino nostro"* ["Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised in his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For

he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus’].<sup>457</sup>

According to the Apostle, the immersion in the water of Baptism represents the death of the natural, corrupted man, death to sin. For as we have seen, JESUS Christ, with the death of His natural, innocent body acquired the right to justify all other men, for the sins of which divine justice was more than fully satisfied. He acquired the right to unite them to Himself, as in His generous charity He yearned to do, and thus enable man, dead as he was to supernatural life, to rise again to this life by forming one body with Him. This resurrection is symbolised by man’s coming out of the water in which he had been, so to speak, entombed.

Hence the Apostle infers that man must do the works proper to his new life, instead of the deeds of the old life which he has cast off: “*Ut quomodo Christus surrexit a mortuis per gloriam Patris, ita et nos in novitate vitae ambulemus*” [‘So that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life’].

And he gives us to understand that in this spiritual life we have the pledge of the future resurrection of our bodies, because Christ who is in us has risen; and therefore, we too shall rise again to our natural but glorified life, after we have laid aside our present natural corrupt life. We ought to regard this as dead and live as though we have already risen from the dead: “*Si enim complantati facti sumus similitudinis mortis eius, simul et resurrectionis erimus*” [‘For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his’]. And as Christ died once the death of nature, and now dies no more, so we being dead to sin, live with a life that endures eternally: “*Ita et vos*

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<sup>457</sup> Rom 6: 3-11.

*existimate, vos mortuos quidam esse peccato, viventes autem Deo in Christo JESU Domino Nostro*” [‘So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ JESUS’].

The Apostle St. Peter, likewise, attributes our dying to sin to the death of Christ, and our rising again to the life of grace he attributes to the effect of our Lord’s Resurrection, whereby He was given the right to dispense to men His spiritual life, which is the seed of their future bodily resurrection.

And he compares Baptism to the waters of the flood, when in the Ark, *“pauci id est octo animae salvae factae sunt per aquam”* [‘a few, that is, eight persons were saved through water’]. And he adds: *“Quod et vos nunc similis formae salvos facit baptisma: non carnis depositio sordium, sed conscientiae bonae interrogatio in Deum per resurrectionem JESU Christi. Qui est in dextera Dei, deglutiens mortem ut vitae aeternae haeredes efficeremur: profectus in caelum subjectis sibi angelis, et potestatibus, et virtutibus”* [‘Baptism which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels authorities, and powers subject to him’].<sup>458</sup>

## Reading 77

*[The Eucharistic has its own resurrection and this occurs when man dies. On the ‘last day’ of the world there will be another resurrection ‘when the faithful soul will have a glorious body given to him]*

The difference between the spiritual life and the life which the Christian who is still a pilgrim on earth receives from the perception of the Most Holy Eucharist, consists mainly in this, that in Baptism he acquires the initial perception of the Word who impresses on him an indelible character; from this

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**458** 1 Peter 3: 20-22.



character the grace of the Holy Spirit flows, provided there is no obstacle.

This type of life is communicated by the humanity of Christ, through a hidden contact of His living and glorious body with the water, when he who baptises utters the words which are the form of the Sacrament. As we shall see later, a living power issues from the body of JESUS Christ simply by contact with Him. This power full of life binds the person to Christ and incorporates him into Christ.

In the Eucharist, however, man, already incorporated and living in Christ, does not simply enjoy the invisible and mysterious contact with the body of Christ, who communicates to the water this life-giving power, whence man lives in Christ, but he receives into himself the complete Author of grace, His body and blood, together with His soul and divinity in the form of food. And as food becomes our blood and flesh, so also it happens with the body and blood of Christ, under the accidents of bread and wine, in such a way that we and Christ have the same term of feeling and corporeal life; hence, from the source of all life and grace, we derive all life and grace.

The second difference is that the man who is nourished with this divine food and makes it his nourishment is not the old man but the new man. It is this new man, already in possession of Christ's living power through faith and the Sacrament of Baptism, who can, by means of this power, find his nourishment in Christ, that is, he can make the flesh and blood of Christ the term of his own vital principle.

In ordinary nutrition, if the soul, that is, the sentient, subjective principle, does not have the power of nutrition, it cannot make the food taken in through the mouth its own living flesh and blood. In such a case, no one would say that this is real and true *eating* and feeding, as no one would call eating and feeding the action of a machine, the millstones of a mill for example, which takes and grinds and produces substances which are nourishing for animals.

Equally, if a person receives the Eucharist but has no life in

Christ, either because he is not baptised or because he is actually dead to grace because of mortal sins, he can indeed chew with his teeth the eucharistic species, according to the expression of St. Augustine, and he receives indeed the real body and blood of Christ within himself under the veil of the species. However, the consecrated bread and wine pass into his body as through a machine: he receives the physical effects of the species, but he is not nourished by what lies under the species, he is not sustained, fed, enriched by the very body and blood of Christ, and so, strictly speaking, his is not an 'eating' the flesh and drinking the 'blood' of the Saviour.

JESUS Christ, therefore, reserves the words *eating, drinking* only to indicate the eating and drinking of the Most Holy Sacrament by the souls of righteous people who truly grow in His flesh and in His blood. Hence Christ says: "*Panis enim Dei est, qui de coelo descendit, et dat vitam mundo*" ['for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world'].<sup>459</sup> And again: "*Si quis manducaverit ex hoc pane vivet in aeternum*" ['if anyone eats of this bread he will live for ever'].<sup>460</sup>

If someone, therefore, does not live with this eternal life, it is a sign that he has not eaten this bread, even though he has received it materially into his mouth, and it has passed through his system. Again, to show the co-operation of man with the eucharistic food, Christ says: "*Operamini non cibum qui perit sed qui permanet in vitam aeternam, quem Filius hominis dabit vobis*" ['Do not labour for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to eternal life which the Son of man will give you'].<sup>461</sup>

Baptism, on the other hand, does not pre-suppose life but gives it to the person who has not yet got it. The reception of life, in fact, is not an act of the vital principle, as is nutrition, but it comes to the animal and to man from without, through an act prior to the new living being which it produces.

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**459** Jn 6: 33.

**460** *Ibid.* 6: 52.

**461** *Ibid.* 6: 27.

The effect of Baptism is to give the life of Christ to one who does not already possess it, and so it is called spiritual generation or birth. The effect of the Eucharist is to preserve this life, as the fruit of the tree of life did, and to increase it, enabling the child to reach manhood and become stronger. Hence it is likened to nourishment or food.<sup>462</sup>

The reception of the Eucharist is not called '*a rising again*'. Nevertheless, the eucharistic life has its own resurrection, which takes place when a man dies. For after death the separated soul receives from the eucharistic life that perennial union with Christ in glory of which He said: "*Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in illo*" ['he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him']. This union after death supplies the '*light of glory*' of which theologians speak, and which enables the soul to see God face to face together with Christ, and so to enjoy eternal happiness. Such is the promise made by Christ in those words: "*Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem habet vitam aeternam, et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die*" ['He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day'].<sup>463</sup>

He possesses eternal life, and yet it is promised that he will be raised again to life. What need of being raised has one who already lives and lives eternally because he has eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ? He lives indeed, but in this world he lives a life which is hidden, which manifests itself in full light only at death, when the veil of the corrupt flesh is taken away from the eyes of the soul; the veil which was foreshadowed by the curtain of the ancient Temple which prevented the faithful from seeing and entering the *Sancta Sanctorum*, the 'Holy of Holies'.

When JESUS Christ died, this veil was rent asunder, because when the new and eternal High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek had entered once for all into the *Sancta Sanctorum*, the Holy of Holies, all those who were one with Him could and

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**462** *Ibid* 6: 56.

**463** *Ibid* 6: 55.

did of necessity enter likewise, according to His loving plan: *“Non pro eis autem rogo tantum, sed et pro eis, qui credituri sunt per verbum eorum in me: ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint: ut credat mundus, quia tu me misisti. Et ego claritatem, quam dedisti mihi, dedi eis: ut sint unum, sicut et nos unum sumus. Ego in eis, et tu in me: ut sint consummati in unum: et cognoscat mundus quia tu me misisti, et dilexisti eos, sicut et me dilexisti. Pater, quos dedisti mihi, volo ut ubi sum ego, et illi sint mecum: ut videant claritatem meam, quam dedisti mihi: quia dilexisti me ante constitutionem mundi”* [‘I do not pray for those only but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me before the foundation of the world’].<sup>464</sup>

Now those souls who though separated from the body are one in the Son and in the Father, *in nobis unum sint*, [that they may be one in us]; those in whom the Son dwells, *Ego in eis et Tu in me*, [I in them and thou in me]; those whom JESUS Christ wishes to be where He is, in the vision of the unveiled face of God, *volo ut ubi sum ego et illi sint mecum*, [I desire that they also may be where I am]; those who are to see the glory of Christ, *ut videant claritatem meam*, [to behold my glory], must assuredly behold God face to face together with Christ, sharing in Christ’s glorified life.

Therefore the passage from this life to the next is for them a true resurrection, and what Christ said to Martha is fulfilled by His death: *“Ego sum resurrectio et vita: qui credit in me etiamsi mortuus fuerit vivet”* [‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live’].<sup>465</sup>

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**464** *Ibid.* 17: 20-24.

**465** *Ibid* 11: 25.

Christ said that he who eats His body and drinks His blood will be raised the last day: “*Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem habet vitam aeternam et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die*” [‘he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day’].

Now there are two days that may be called last, namely, the last day of man and the last day of the world. Christ included both in this saying and therefore He refers to two resurrections, as the effect of the eucharistic food: the one that takes place as soon as the faithful soul has breathed his last and laid down the burden of his mortal flesh, and the other that will take place at the end of time when his flesh will be restored to him, but a glorified flesh.

## Reading 78

*[Christians should receive frequently Holy Communion, since it will keep them in constant preparation for the coming of the Bridegroom]*

In the passages already quoted, JESUS Christ attributes everything to faith. He prays for those who “*credituri sunt*” [‘shall believe’], that they may be where He is. He says: “*Hoc est opus Dei ut credatis in eum quem misit ille*” [This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent’].<sup>466</sup> He adds: “*Ego sum panis vitae: qui venit ad me, non esuriet, et qui credit in me non sitiet umquam*” [‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst’].<sup>467</sup>

And again: “*Haec est voluntas Patris mei, qui misit me: ut omnis qui videt Filium, et credit in eum, habeat vitam aeternam, et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die*” [‘For this is the will of my

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**466** *Ibid.* 6: 29.

**467** John 6: 35.

Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day’].<sup>468</sup> He therefore attributes to the faith of which He is ‘*the author and perfecter*’<sup>469</sup> and not just to any kind of faith, the same effects that He elsewhere attributes to eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Yet, He says that without the latter they cannot have life in themselves: “*Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis et biberitis eius sanguinem non habebitis vitam in vobis*” [‘Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you’].<sup>470</sup>

We must therefore say that whoever has faith in JESUS Christ must eat His flesh and drink His blood; for otherwise they would have no life in themselves. But it is also certain, from Christ’s testimony, that “*omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum habet vitam aeternam*” [‘everyone who sees the Son of man and believes in him has eternal life’]. Not all those, however, who had faith in Christ, ate the flesh of the Son of Man and drank His blood during their mortal life. Those who died before the institution of the Most Blessed Eucharist did not do so. Many, moreover, since its institution believed in Christ and died without being able to receive it.

We must, therefore, conclude that they will eat the flesh of the Son of Man and will drink His blood after death, and are thereby raised to eternal life. JESUS Christ, then, speaks first of faith, and then of the eucharistic food, in order to include in His discourse, the saints of the Old Testament and all those who believed, spread throughout the world, to the end of time. All these were saved by their faith in Christ who was to come or who had already come.

Hence, the Apostle says: “*Fide intelligimus aptata esse saecula Verbo Dei, ut ex invisibilibus, visibilia fierent*” [‘By faith we understand that the world was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not

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**468** *Ibid* .6: 40.

**469** Heb 12: 2.

**470** Jn 6: 53.

appear’],<sup>471</sup> that is, in order that the things unseen (which are the object of faith, the promised reward and the glory to come) may be made clear, be fulfilled and be seen and so no longer be an object of faith but of sight and experience.

The Apostle adds: “*Juxta fidem defuncti sunt omnes isti, non acceptis repromissionibus, sed a longe eas aspicientes, et salutantes, et confitentes quia peregrini et hospites sunt super terram. Qui enim haec dicunt, significant se patriam inquirere. Et si quidem ipsius meminissent de qua exierunt, habebant utique tempus revertendi: nunc autem meliorem appetunt, id est, caelestem. Ideo non confunditur Deus vocari Deus eorum: paravit enim illis civitatem*” [‘These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had the opportunity to return. But, as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city’].<sup>472</sup>

Hence, the saints of the Old Testament had good reason for placing their faith and hope not in the natural immortality of the soul separated from the body, which would not give them either light or action, but in the *resurrection*, which God would give them through JESUS Christ. In other words, they placed their hope in the restitution of subjective life and activity by the reception a new term to their sensory and subjective principle, for without a *real term* there is, strictly speaking, no actual life.

Their hope in this resurrection of their soul, and not in anything else, is confirmed in sacred text which says: “*Fide obtulit Abraham Isaac – arbitrans quia et a mortuis suscitare potens est Deus. Alii autem distenti sunt, non suscipientes redemptionem, ut meliorem invenirent resurrectionem*” [‘By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He considered that God was

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**471** Heb. 11: 3.

**472** *Ibid.* 11: 13-16.

able to raise men even from the dead.’<sup>473</sup> ‘Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life’].<sup>474</sup>

These Saints of the Old Testament, however, had to remain for a long time separated from their bodies, in a state of darkness and inaction, until the time when Christ instituted the mystery of the resurrection, that is, the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, and entered into His kingdom, since, as the Apostle says, they were to be made perfect with us: “*Et hi omnes testimonio fidei probati, non acceperunt repromissionem, Deo pro nobis melius aliquid providente, UT NON SINE NOBIS CONSUMMARENTUR*” [‘and all these though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that APART FROM US THEY SHOULD NOT BE MADE PERFECT’].<sup>475</sup>

“*Deo pro nobis melius aliquid providente*” [‘God had foreseen something better for us’], says the Apostle, because God predestined us to live in the time of the Saviour’s grace, and when we leave this life without stain of sin, we rise immediately to the eucharistic and glorious life, and through this life we see God. Unlike the saints of the Old Testament we need not wait before being admitted to the glory, even though our soul is separated from the body.

Furthermore, besides other advantages we have over the men of ancient times, even in this life we receive the Body and Blood of our Lord and so we have, within us, that eternal life which will be unveiled at the moment of death, refulgent with light, and which was symbolised by the lighted torches concealed by Gideon in three hundred vessels of clay, which when they were shattered revealed the light.<sup>476</sup>

The Catholic Church, therefore, gives the name of *Viaticum* to the most Holy Eucharist which is given to the dying; such people

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**473** Heb 11: 17-19.

**474** *Ibid.* 11: 35.

**475** *Ibid.* 11: 39-40.

**476** Judges 7.



are obliged to receive it when they can, so that, as they die, they may have within themselves that eternal life which is the seed of the immediate resurrection of their souls, as soon as they are separated from their bodies. This shows that it is not good to hesitate too much about giving the Viaticum again to a sick person, who survives for some time after its first reception.

And this is also a good reason, among others, which should persuade Christians to receive frequently Holy Communion, since it will keep them in constant preparation for the coming of the Bridegroom, like the wise virgins, and it will enable them to have in themselves that life which will be revealed at the hour of their death.

The Sacred Council of Trent speaks explicitly of the heavenly banquet of separated souls, which is also alluded to in ancient Christian monuments, to indicate the bliss which the soul enjoys in heaven; and it appears that the above-mentioned Council used this same argument to recommend to the faithful the veneration and use of the Most Holy Eucharist, or at least it makes an illusion to it, as it says: *“Demum autem paterno affectu admonet S. Synodus, hortatur, rogat, et obsecrat per viscera misericordiae Dei nostri, ut omnes et singuli, qui Christiano nomine censentur, in hoc unitatis signo, in hoc vinculo charitatis, in hoc concordiae symbolo iam tandem aliquando convenient et concordant, memoresque tantae maiestatis, et tam eximii amoris JESU Christi Domini nostri, qui dilectam animam suam in nostrae salutis pretium, et carnem suam nobis dedit ad manducandum; haec sacra mysteria corporis et sanguinis eius, ea fidei constantia, et firmitate, ea animi devotione, ea pietate et cultu credant et venerentur, ut panem illum supersubstantialem frequenter suscipere possint; et is vere eis sit animae vita et perpetua sanitas mentis, cuius vigore confortati, ex huius miserae peregrinationis itinere ad coelestem patriam pervenire valeant, EUNDEM PANEM ANGELORUM, QUEM MODO SUB SACRIS VELAMINIBUS EDUNT, ABSQUE ULLO VELAMINE MANDUCATURI”*.

[‘Finally, this Holy Synod, with true fatherly affection, admonishes, exhorts, begs and beseeches, through the profound mercy of our God, that all and each of those who bear

the name of Christians would now finally agree and be of one mind over this sign of unity, this bond of charity, this symbol of concord; and that, mindful of the great majesty and exceeding love of our Lord JESUS Christ, who gave His own beloved soul as the price of our redemption, and gave us His own flesh to eat, they would believe and venerate these sacred mysteries of His body and blood with such constancy and firmness of faith, with such devotion of soul, with such piety and worship, as to be able frequently to receive the super-substantial Bread, that it may be to them truly the life of the soul, and the perpetual health of their mind; that being invigorated with its strength, they may, after the journeying of this pilgrimage of tears, be able to arrive at their heavenly country, THERE TO EAT WITHOUT ANY VEIL, THAT SAME BREAD OF ANGELS, WHICH THEY NOW EAT UNDER THE SACRED VEILS’].<sup>477</sup>

## Reading 79

*[A short commentary on the words of the Council which state that our souls, having passed from this life, without stain, or having been purified in purgatory, will be admitted to eating of ‘the same bread’ of the angels, which those who are pilgrims on earth eat in a veiled way]*

It is worth reflecting on these remarkable words of the Sacred Council. It uses the word ‘*eating*’ to refer both to the reception of the body of Christ in this world and to that which the souls separated from their bodies will experience in heaven. It therefore teaches that in heaven there is a partaking of the Body of Christ which will bestow beatitudes on the saints.

It says that our souls, if they pass out of this life without stain, or when they had been purified in purgatory, will feed upon that *self-same bread* of angels which Christians in this life receive in a way suited to their condition. Thus, Christ in the life to come,

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**477** Sess.13, Ch. 8.

will unite Himself to our souls in a way similar to that in which food is assimilated and becomes our flesh and blood.

The Council does not say simply that in the heavenly kingdom we shall be united with Christ, we shall enjoy Christ. It teaches that we shall eat Him as bread, that is, after the manner of food, and that it will be the same eucharistic bread that we now eat on earth: “*Eundem panem angelorum, quem modo sub sacris velaminibus edunt, absque ullo velamina manducaturi*” [‘there to eat without any veil, that same bread of angels which they now eat under the sacred veils’].

St. Ephrem Nuovo,  
5 June 1849,  
St. Ferdinand, Confessor.

This bread is moreover called ‘heavenly’ in Scripture, and in this sense we may understand the words of St. Paul: “*Gustaverunt etiam donum coeleste*” [‘They have tasted the heavenly gift’],<sup>478</sup> and it is said, figuratively, of the manna: “*Januas coeli aperuit, et pluit illis manna ad manducandum et panem coeli dedit eis: panem angelorum manducavit homo*” [‘and opened the doors of heaven; and he rained down upon them manna to eat, and gave them the grain of heaven. Man ate of the bread of angels’].<sup>479</sup> In the book of Wisdom, we read words which apply more appropriately to the Eucharist than to the manna: “*Pro quibus angelorum esca nutritiisti populum tuum, et paratum panem de caelo praestitisti illis sine labore, omne delectamentum in se habentem, et omnis saporis suavitatem. Substantia enim tua dulcedinem tuam, quam in filios habes, ostendebat; et deserviens uniuscujusque voluntati, ad quod quisque volebat convertebatur*” [‘Instead of these things thou didst give thy people the food of angels and without their toil thou didst supply them from heaven with bread ready to eat,’ providing every pleasure and suited to every taste. For thy sustenance manifested thy sweetness toward thy children; and the bread, ministering to the desire of the one who took it, was changed to suit everyone’s

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**478** Heb 6: 4.

**479** Ps 77: 23-25.

liking’];<sup>480</sup> and in many other places of Holy Scripture the Eucharist, prefigured in manna, is called bread of heaven.<sup>481</sup>

We must say, then, that in heaven we shall partake of this divine food. Christ Himself says so even more plainly, when He speaks of the faithful servants who shall be found watching for the coming of the Lord, by which the Fathers understood the hour of death: “*Beati servi illi, quos cum venerit Dominus invenerit vigilantes; amen dico vobis, quod praecinet se, et faciet illos discumbere, et transiens ministrabit illis*” [‘Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them’].<sup>482</sup>

This is the banquet which is prepared in heaven immediately after their death for Christians who die free from all sin, and for the souls that emerge from the fires of purgatory, cleansed from every stain. It is Christ who ministers to them, as He ministered to His disciples on earth, and He Himself is the food He distributes. But why is it said that our Lord “*passing*” will minister to these faithful servants?<sup>483</sup>

This mysterious word indicates the resurrection, of which we speak, a resurrection which takes place as soon as the purified soul has laid aside its earthly burden, because Christ in the Eucharist from His concealed state “*sub sacris velaminibus*” [‘beneath the sacred veils’], as the Council of Trent expresses it, reveals and manifests Himself and is eaten “*absque ullo velamine*” [‘without any veil’]. To this passing of Christ as food, from a concealed state to a revealed state, there corresponds that resurrection of the soul, which passes from death to life, of which Christ speaks: “*Amen, amen dico vobis, quia qui verbum meum audit, et credit ei qui misit me, habet vitam aeternam, et in iudicium non venit, SED TRANSIT DE MORTE IN VITAM*” [‘truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgement, BUT

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**480** Wis 16: 20-21.

**481** Ps 104: 39 - Judith 5: 15 - Exod 16: 4 - Deut 33: 13-15.

**482** Lk 12: 37.

**483** *Ibid.* *Et transiens ministrabit illis* (JAD).

HAS PASSED FROM DEATH TO LIFE’].<sup>484</sup>

The two resurrections, that is, this one and the final one, are clearly stated by Christ in this passage, for after saying that whosoever believes in the Father who sent Him, has eternal life and passes from death to life, He immediately talks about the final resurrection: “*Amen, amen dico vobis, quia venit hora, et nunc est, quando mortui audient vocem Filii Dei: et qui audierint vivent*” [‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live’].<sup>485</sup>

He says that the hour is coming “*et nunc est*” [‘and now is’], when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. He does not say that they will rise again, but that they will live, “*et qui audierint vivent*” [‘those who hear will live’], because the salvation and the grace of Christ were communicated to the departed saints in a gradual way, just as they were communicated little by little to those who were living on earth in the days of the earthly life of the Saviour. Hence, the preaching of Christ which brought light to those on earth, must also have brought light to those who were in Limbo.

The word “*transiens*” [‘passing’] occurs in yet another way. In the Eucharist Christ passes through our bodies as does our food, and we may believe in a similar passing, though constant, through the separated soul, in such a way that it is continually nourished by this new divine food. Hence, the word ‘*pasch*’ means a passing, to indicate the passing of the Angel who did not put to death, but spared, all those who had smeared the door-posts of their dwellings with the blood of the lamb.

In the same way, all men are doomed to die, but the angel of death has no power over those who are vitally incorporated into Christ, because everyone who believes, though he may die a natural death, does not die, absolutely speaking, but “*transit a morte in vitam*” [‘passes from death to life’]. Thus, the *pasch* of the Jews is a striking figure of the Eucharist.

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**484** Jn 5: 24.

**485** *Ibid.* 25.

## Reading 80

*[The significance of the meaning of the term 'bread of Angels' given to the eucharistic food, and the value of Viaticum]*

At this point, however, we find a difficulty regarding the term '*bread of Angels*' given to the eucharistic food. Angels do not eat; they are not nourished on food like men. How then, can it be said that Christ, His Body and Blood, becomes the food of pure spirits?

It is true that Angels are pure spirits, but they nevertheless have a relation with and an action on bodies. Just as bodies are the active term of animal life inasmuch as they stimulate the sentient principle into action whereby it has its act of feeling and being, so also these same bodies are a passive term for the angels and receive from the angels the activity by which they have power to act on the principle of sensitive corporeal life.

The angels, therefore, in their own way, may be united with the eucharistic Body of Christ, a way which is certainly different from man's action of eating, but which corresponds exactly and by analogy to our manner of deriving nourishment. We do not have other words to express what pertains to pure substances, which do not fall under our experience, except analogically from what our own experience gives us.

This expression '*bread of Angels*' must have a true meaning, and not be a mere fancy of the Jews who, seeing the manna fall from heaven, called it '*the bread of Angels*' who dwell in heaven. It would be a fancy as regards the manna, but not as regards the true heavenly bread, which came down from another heaven, a spiritual heaven. God allowed the Jews to form this concept of the manna and ordained that this expression should be recorded in the sacred Books.

Moreover, we may bear in mind that the word 'Angel' signifies 'messenger' and denotes not a nature but an office. Hence, the Scriptures give the name angel to St. John the Baptist and to

the bishops of the seven Churches.<sup>486</sup> JESUS Christ Himself is called the 'Angel of the Covenant', in that passage from Malachy: "*Ecce ego mitto angelum meum, et praeparabit viam ante faciem meam: et statim veniet ad templum suum Dominator quem vos quaeritis, et angelus testamenti quem vos vultis*" ['Look, I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his temple; and the angel of the covenant whom you are longing for'].<sup>487</sup>

The same prophet says also of the Priest: "*Labia enim Sacerdotis custodient scientiam et legem requirent ex ore eius: quia Angelus Domini exercituum est*" ['For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the Angel of the Lord of hosts'].<sup>488</sup>

Now, the eucharistic bread and wine are, above all, the food of the priest, for whom alone the Church has reserved the Chalice, and especially since this was a prophecy about the eucharistic food: "*Quid enim bonum eius est, et quid pulchrum eius, nisi frumentum electorum et vinum germinans virgines?*" ['Yes, how good and how fair it shall be! Grain shall make the young men flourish and new wine springing forth virgins'].<sup>489</sup>

It may be asked, why does the Catholic Church recommend us so earnestly to receive the Body of Christ at the hour of death? For it is given to the just after death in a mysterious and sublime manner that human language cannot fully explain, even if they did not receive it before their death.

The answer is contained in the very name '*Viaticum*' which the Church gives to the eucharistic food when it is received by the dying. The Council of Trent, quoted earlier, provides this explanation: "*Et is vere eis sit animae vita, et perpetua sanitas mentis, cuius vigore confortati ex huius miserae peregrinationis itinere ad coelestem patriam pervenire valeant*" ['that it may be to them truly the life of the soul and the perpetual health of their

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**486** Rev 2 & 3 - Gal 4: 14 - Isaiah 33: 3.

**487** Mal 3: 1 - Matt 11: 10 - Mark 1: 2 - Lk 1: 17; 7: 27.

**488** *Ibid.* 2: 7.

**489** Zach 9: 17.

mind, that strengthened by its efficacy they may be able, after this miserable pilgrimage, to reach the heavenly country’].

The passage from this life to the next, which man undergoes at death, is as perilous as it is momentous, because from it depends the eternal condition of the soul. So, we should not neglect any means of obtaining aid and support in this extreme time. The most powerful of all such means is the eucharistic food which was prefigured by the bread and water given by the Angel to the prophet Elijah on his flight from Ahab, as we read in the Scriptures: “*Qui cum surrexisset, comedit et bibit, et ambulavit in fortitudine cibi illius quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus, usque ad montem Dei Horeb*” [‘And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God’].<sup>490</sup>

And certainly, man has no other strength, no other true life than that which comes from Christ, from his incorporation in Christ, from his living by the life of Christ, from possessing Christ within him.

The life of Christ which man shares when he receives His most sacred Body, is so powerful that it cleanses him from venial sins, and if he is penitent, even from mortal sins still clinging to him, either because he is not conscious of them, or because he is unable to submit them to the power of the keys. The life of Christ, in fact, expels and banishes every impediment, provided only that it be not hindered by man’s evil dispositions on the part of his will. In such a case, man would receive the divine food, without, however, receiving life.

We ought also to consider carefully those words of the Council of Trent: “*Ut is vere eis sit animae vita*” [‘And that it may truly be for them the life of their souls’]. It is called life not of the body but of the soul: the soul also having that type of natural death of which we have spoken, besides the death of sin. So, the holy men of old, who had not the advantage of the Eucharist, were in a state similar to the death of the soul, in which, as we have said, they existed in Limbo waiting for Christ, who finally came

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**490** 1 Kings 19: 8.



to raise them to new life.

But even among Christians who die in a state of grace we can believe that there is a difference between those who die having received the Viaticum and those who have not received it, and not simply in the degree of greater holiness and union with the source of holiness of which they were able to avail themselves, but also with regard to the state of their death.

In order to throw greater light on this, let us distinguish three cases: 1<sup>st</sup> Those who die with only baptism of desire, without the opportunity of receiving it in practice; 2<sup>nd</sup> Those who die in a state of grace after receiving baptism, yet without receiving the Viaticum; 3<sup>rd</sup> Those who die in a state of grace after receiving the Viaticum.

It is certain and clearly defined by the Church that the people in all three situations are saved. However, the first group, of those who have a right to life, but have it by right but not in fact, they pass in a certain way through that state of natural death of the soul, from which they are immediately raised by the One who said: *'I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he be dead, will live.'* They are similar to the holy men of old, with the difference that the holy people of the Old Testament remained for a long time in the state of natural death of the soul, whereas they pass through it instantaneously.

The second group, of those who die after being reborn by water and the Holy Spirit, possess the life of the soul in right and in fact, but they share only initially in the life of Christ, though they receive with it the right to complete possession of that life. Hence, when they have laid aside the body, they do not pass not even for an instant through the natural death of the soul but pass from that state of initial life received in baptism and which they possess, to the fulness of life which Christ bestows immediately on to them.

Finally, the third group, of those who received Christ fully before dying, suffer only the death of the body and in the next life have already that fullness of life which simply demands to be illuminated and revealed, without the soul having to pass

through some lower degree.

## Reading 81

*[The difference between the way with which the 'pilgrim Christians' eat the body and blood of Christ 'who remains hidden and veiled to them;' and the way in which the same divine food is eaten by the blessed 'without any veil preventing them from their vision of it.']*

It now remains to be seen how it is that, whereas the wayfarers on earth feed on the body and blood of Christ, who remains hidden and veiled to them, the blessed in heaven are nourished by the same divine food, without any veil obscuring their vision: "*Eundem panem Angelorum quem modo sub sacris velaminibus edunt, absque ullo velamina manducaturi*" ['Eating without any veil that same bread of angels which they now eat under the sacred veils'].

When JESUS Christ laid down His mortal life, His divine body was buried, and afterwards raised again to life. He then ascended into heaven and was withdrawn from the sight of men. The man who is incorporated into Christ, shares all the vicissitudes of Christ, and therefore he too has died and been buried, has risen again and ascended into heaven in spirit with Christ, as a member of Christ.

He does this with the interior and new life which he has acquired, for he is prevented from doing so fully and bodily by the obstacle of the *old man*, as long as he still lives by the life of Adam and has not yet laid aside his mortal flesh. He has not yet received his new and glorious body which will be given him at the final resurrection. Hence, for the time being, he must do all this by means of the faith by which he lives<sup>491</sup> and by which he does all these things without full consciousness and clear vision. So, the life of Christians in Christ is called by St. Paul

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**491** The just man lives by faith. Hebrews 10: 38; 11: 3 - Romans 1: 17 - Gal 3: 12.

the ‘hidden life’.

This life will be revealed, it will be animated by a most intense feeling, it will shine with an ineffable light, first of all at the death of the body when the first resurrection takes place, the resurrection of the soul; and afterwards, when we shall recover our own glorified bodies at the end of the world, which will be the second resurrection. So, St. Paul says: *“Igitur, si consurrexistis cum Christo: quae sursum sunt quaerite, ubi Christus est in dextera Dei sedens: quae sursum sunt sapite, non quae super terram. Mortui enim estis, et vita vestra est abscondita cum Christo in Deo. Cum Christus apparuerit, vita vestra: tunc et vos apparebitis cum ipso in gloria”* [‘If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory’].<sup>492</sup>

This means, Christ, who is in you, is your life. But, at present, Christ is hidden from the experience of your senses, because these corrupt and material senses are not worthy nor suitable for seeing or perceiving Him, because they are not worthy nor suitable to see God, in whom Christ is; nor is the soul, who governs these senses, worthy or suitable to see Him. Therefore Christ, our true life, is hidden now in God, at whose right hand He sits.

Nevertheless, you live, although you are not aware of all the treasures contained, as it were, in germ and hidden in that life which one day will suddenly be made manifest in you in all its splendour. You must, then, believe all this, have faith in your life and await its glorious manifestation; you must also conduct yourselves according to your immortal and eternal life. You must renounce with your will and judgement your natural and corrupt life doomed for death. You must consider yourselves dead, with and in Christ, not seeking nor relishing anything except heavenly things, that is to say, Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and the things of Christ,

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<sup>492</sup> Coloss 3: 1-4.

while awaiting the marvellous manifestation of Christ in you, which He has promised.

St. Paul says in another place: *“Patientia enim vobis necessaria est: ut voluntatem Dei facientes, reportetis promissionem. Adhuc enim modicum aliquantulum, qui venturus est, veniet, et non tardabit. Justus autem meus ex fide vivit: quod si subtraxerit se, non placebit animae meae. Nos autem non sumus subtractionis filii in perditionem, sed fidei in acquisitionem animae”* [‘For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls’].<sup>493</sup>

Elsewhere, the Apostle bids us have confidence that we shall enter the *Sancta Sanctorum*, the ‘Holy of Holies’, which was the holiest part of the ancient temple, symbolising heaven, where God and Christ are revealed to us and our hidden life is made manifest. Its entrance was opened to us through the blood of Christ. His mortal flesh was, as it were, the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies, hiding it from our view. He has laid aside that flesh, the curtain is removed, and we may enter, provided that we also lay aside our mortal flesh as Christ laid aside His innocent flesh.

It was only by His will that He was in a mortal and suffering state, for He willed to be made like us, whose material flesh is not only mortal but corrupted by sin and is in truth a curtain that obstructs the view of the Holy of Holies and blocks the entrance. *“Habentes itaque, fratres, fiduciam in introitu sanctorum in sanguine Christi, quam initiavit nobis viam novam, et viventem per velamen, id est, carnem suam, et sacerdotem magnum super domum Dei: accedamus cum vero corde in plenitudine fidei, etc.”* [‘Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over

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**493** Heb 10: 36-39.

the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith etc.'].<sup>494</sup>

Christ, then, began to tread this new and living way (because so long as we have life, we are wayfarers), which leads into the most secret and innermost part of the Sanctuary, in which the Apostle invites and exhorts us to enter. St. Peter alludes to this *'life hidden with Christ in God'* which the Christian lives during his earthly pilgrimage, when he speaks of the most precious inheritance laid up in heaven for the faithful, and ready to be revealed and manifested in all its splendour when the life of each individual is ended, and even more fully when the end of the world comes.

*"Benedictus Deus et Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui secundum misericordiam suam magnam regeneravit nos in spem vivam, per resurrectionem JESU Christi ex mortuis, in haereditatem incorruptibilem, et incontaminatam, et immarcescibilem, conservatam in caelis in vobis, qui in virtute Dei custodimini PER FIDEM IN SALUTEM, PARATAM REVELARI IN TEMPORE NOVISSIMO".* [Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord JESUS Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope (*here is the living way of St. Paul*) through the resurrection of JESUS Christ from the dead (*since man is made new by the resurrection*) and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and un-fading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME'].<sup>495</sup>

By 'the last time' is understood not only the last day for each individual, that is, the day of his death, but also the last day of the world, the day of the final resurrection. There is, therefore, an *'imperishable inheritance'* in heaven for us (ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ἡμᾶς) reserved in heaven for us, at present hidden from us but to be disclosed in heaven. This inheritance is Christ, invisible to us in our pilgrim state on earth, but visible and resplendent to the saints, so that when He appears thus to us, we shall truly have reached heaven.

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**494** Heb 10 : 19-22.

**495** 1 Peter 1: 3-5.

## Reading 82

*[The constant increase of the divine and eternal life in man; the action of the humanity of Christ on man]*

Before we investigate what the veils are which cover, at the present time, the eucharistic food, and the changes which may arise in us with the removal of such veils, and before we investigate how much of this sublime argument we can actually understand, it is important that we deal with what the divine Scriptures teach us about the progressive increase of the divine and eternal life of men.

We have seen that, even before Christ, people lived “*sub testamento aeternae vitae*” [‘under the covenant of eternal life’],<sup>496</sup> even after death. Hence, the God of the Patriarchs was a God of the living and not of the dead. It would be useful, therefore, to explain, as far as we can, the degrees of such lives.

St. Paul teaches that all those who are pilgrims on earth live by faith, and faith is not concerned with things that are seen, but with those which do not fall under our senses. Faith, however, is not sheer darkness, there is already some light in it, which will become full when in the next life faith will cease altogether and give place to full and perfect vision. Until this happens, men on earth may have, and have had, a faith mixed with greater or lesser light of divine feeling. We have a mixture of faith and knowledge, things which St. Paul often combines.

For example, writing to Titus, he speaks in his greeting of being an Apostle of Christ “*secundum fidem electorum Dei, et agnitionem Veritatis, quae secundum pietatem est*” [‘According to the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness’].<sup>497</sup> For this reason, it would seem that St. Paul distinguishes several types of faith, where he says, for example, “*ex fide in fidem*” [‘from faith to faith’].<sup>498</sup>

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**496** 2 Macc 7: 36.

**497** Titus 1: 1.

**498** Rom 1: 17.

‘For in it (the Gospel of Christ)’, he says, ‘the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith’, as if to say that man passes from one faith to another, from a less enlightened faith to a more enlightened faith. Thus, the righteous Gentile and the righteous Jew, by embracing the preaching of Christianity, passed from a faith that was obscure to a more enlightened faith, for the Gentile could not be righteous unless he believed.

With relation, therefore, not only to the Gentiles but also to the Jews, our faith is called light, brightness, glory by St. Paul, who does not hesitate to write: “*Nos vero omnes, revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem, tamquam a Domini spiritu*” [‘and we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit’],<sup>499</sup> in which passage, John Diodati translated the word *speculantes* (κατοπεριζόμενοι) as ‘contemplating as in a mirror’ which best corresponds to “*videmus nunc per speculum*” [‘we see now through a mirror’].<sup>500</sup>

This superiority, this greater light of Christian faith over that of those who lived before Christ, consists mainly in this, that in ancient times, since Christ had not yet come into the world, He could not act with His divine humanity on our humanity; nor could He, by a real though invisible and ineffable union between Himself and us, grant us a share in His own life and thus revive our subjective life.

Adam himself, in his life of innocence, was deprived of the communication of the human life made divine in Christ. This is another difference, therefore, between the *character* in Adam, if we like to call it such, and the *character* in Christians, because the former was only *objective*, that is, it was an initial perception of the divine Word, but the latter, besides being *objective*, is also *subjective*, being the perception of Christ, object as Word, and subject as man.

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**499** 2 Cor 3; 18.

**500** 1 Cor 13: 12.

It is true that the Word is, at the same time, object Person, and that the Person of the Word can be given to man to perceive, but only to the mind, and therefore only in an objective way. It is true that the Word can take to Himself the human nature in an individual, but this is the Incarnation, in which the Person of the *compositum* is the divine Person, as it happened in Christ, in whom the human subject is not person, since the person is the supreme operative principle of an individual, and the supreme operative principle in Christ was the Word.

It seems to me that the divine person of the Word cannot be communicated in a subjective way to an individual with a human nature, except by becoming incarnate in it. On the contrary, Christ's humanity, in virtue of the divinity which informs it, could act physically and subjectively on our humanity as a friend can act on his friends, or a husband on his wife. And Christ's life, as that of man, of whom the divinity has taken possession, could act on our subjective life and impart to it something of His power and vitality. Life, in fact, can be communicated by one to another as is seen in generation, nutrition and, less obviously, by other phenomena, particularly in those of love.

From the Word objectively perceived, there may be, in some ways, an emanation of the Holy Spirit. It would appear, however, that the effect of the Spirit on the soul is limited to making good lovable to the intellect, and not to provide strength and immediate motion to the inferior, subjective and operative faculties. Whereas, by our union with the Incarnate Word, with the Word no less than the human nature assumed by the Word, all our powers are at one and the same time uplifted, strengthened, divinised; and this applies not only to the objective powers but the subjective ones also.

This is a notable difference between the grace given to Adam in the state of innocence, and that of the Christian who is born again in Christ. St. Paul speaks about this subjective life imparted to us by the human-divine life of Christ when he says: "*in eamdem imaginem transformamur*" ['we are transformed into the same image'] because, as he says elsewhere: "*Vivo ego? Iam non ego; vivit vero in me Christus*" ['it is no longer I who live, but



Christ who lives in me’].<sup>501</sup> Again, he says: “*Mihi vivere Christus est*” [‘For me to live is Christ’].<sup>502</sup> In the letter to the Hebrews we read, moreover: “*Participes enim Christi effecti sumus: si tamen initium substantiae eius usque ad finem firmum retineamus*” [‘For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end’].<sup>503</sup> Although the Greek does not say *substantiae ejus*, but only *substantiae* (υποστάσεως, subsistence), the Vulgate, nonetheless, translates it more clearly *substantiae ejus*, because it appears that the Apostle is here speaking of subsistence or substance of Christ in us, from the first words of the verse: “*Participes enim Christi effecti sumus*” [‘For we share in Christ’].

By partaking of the human-divine life of Christ, we are transformed into the very image of Christ, we are in some way transformed into Christ and we become, in a certain sense, so many Christs living in Him, such being the force of the word *image*, as we have noted above (Reading 53), by which the *image* is taken for *the thing itself in its beginning*, as we read in another passage: “*Umbram enim habens lex futurorum bonorum non ipsam imaginem rerum*” [‘For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things’],<sup>504</sup> that is, not *ipsa bona*, the *good things* in embryo, so to speak, when we feel as Christ feels, share His likes and dislike, will what He wills, and thus become loveable in the eyes of the Father, who loves in us those same things which are in Christ and in us. In a word, He loves Christ in us.

Hence, our Saviour said to His disciples, when He promised them the personal coming of His Spirit: “*Venit hora cum iam non in proverbii loquar vobis, sed palam de Patre annuntiabo vobis. In illo die in nomine meo petetis. Et non dico vobis quia ego rogabo Patrem de vobis. Ipse enim Pater amat vos quia vos me amastis et credidistis quia ego a Deo exivi*” [‘the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray to the Father for you; for the Father himself

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**501** Galat 2: 20.

**502** Philip 1: 21.

**503** Heb 3: 14.

**504** *Ibid.* 10: 1. (Vulgate).

loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father’].<sup>505</sup>

## Reading 83

*[The external revelation was accompanied even in the Old Testament by an interior supernatural light but at that time there was no sharing in the subjective life of Christ]*

Christ spoke these most kind and gentle words to His disciples, and we should note:

1. That, His saying that He will speak openly and clearly of the Father, shows how much more the faith of Christians is illuminated through their sharing in the subjective life of Christ, than the faith of the men of old, and corresponds to what St Paul says: “*In eamdem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem*” [‘we are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another’], or as the Greek text says: (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν). This *glory* does not belong to the *faith* of the Jews, but only to the *faith* of the Christians; because the Jews knew that Christ had to come into the world, but they could not have the *feeling of Christ*. His real humanity, in fact, had not yet come into the world, and it could not act on their humanity, as it acts really, though mysteriously, on our humanity.

Hence, St. Paul says elsewhere that Christ, by coming into the world ‘brought light to life’: “*Manifestata est autem nunc (gratia quae data est nobis in Christo) per illuminationem Salvatoris nostri JESU Christi, qui destruxit quidem mortem, illuminavit autem vitam et incorruptionem per Evangelium*” [‘and now has been manifested (this grace given to us in Christ JESUS) through the appearing of our Saviour Christ JESUS, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel’].<sup>506</sup>

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**506** 2 Tim 1: 10.

It looks as though Christ wished to say, there was a life even before Christ (though it was also by means of Christ). But this life was in darkness and not illuminated because it was not subjective, but only objective, so that the weak and feeble subject could not perform the vital acts of feeling, drawing them from the object, which could not give him subjective immortality.

But Christ, by means of the Gospel, that is, of faith and of the sacraments, gave to the soul, that is, to the subject of that immortal feeling which He had in His humanity, united hypostatically to the Word, and so He destroyed death, that is, that state of the separated soul which remains without operative feeling because deprived of a real term, which, forming with it one subject, makes it suitable for action; although it did not remain deprived of intelligence, having a real object (the Word) and therefore objective life. He destroyed death, therefore, also with regard to natural life, enabling the soul to receive a glorious body at the resurrection of the flesh.

It is true that the Jews were foretold many things about Christ, and that the faith they put in them was supernatural. It was supernatural, because they perceived these things objectively, in the objective existence which things have in the Word (Readings 37, 38, 41, 42), through an interior communication of the Word, which had hardly any clarity in it, and remained shrouded in great obscurity.

Hence, when Christ came into the world, He fulfilled the prophecy: "*Eructabo abscondita a constitutione mundi*" ['I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world'];<sup>507</sup> and said: "*Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos, ut et vos diligatis invicem*" ['A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another'],<sup>508</sup> likening Himself to a father of a family who, "*profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera*" ['brings out of his treasure what is new and what is

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**507** Matt 13: 35 - Ps 77: 2.

**508** Jn 13: 34.

Gaeta, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1849  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.

If the truths had been proclaimed to the Jews by means of external words only, without these being accompanied by any interior light of faith, their state could not have been a supernatural one, even though the revelation had ensued from a supernatural source. The interior light, however, which was given in varying degrees to these faithful Jews, helped them, as we said, to perceive in the Word those truths which were proclaimed to them by means of external words.

2. But, although the Jews lived by their faith, nevertheless that faith did not give them the subjective life, it did not transform them, as St. Paul says, into the very image of Christ, it did not spare them from death and corruption as human subjects, whereas Christ, by giving His light to life, as St. Paul says, destroyed death and corruption: "*Destruxit quidem mortem, illuminavit autem vitam et incorruptionem per Evangelium*" ['abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel'].

And how could subjective life fail in those who are loved by the Father with the very love with which He loved His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased? "*Ipse enim Pater amat vos*" ['The Father Himself loves you']. And their prayers, made in the name of Christ, are accepted and heard: "*In illo die in nomine meo petetis: et non dico vobis quia ego rogabo Patrem de vobis*" ['In that day you will ask in my name and do I not say that I shall ask the Father for you'].

The prayers and sacrifices of the saints of the Old Testament, even though made in the name of Christ, could not save them from subjective death and from being destined for limbo. It was necessary first of all, that they rose and were led from that prison, and for this reason Christ came and prayed for them

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<sup>509</sup> Matt 13: 52.

and He was heard, according to the commandment He had received: “*Ut diceret his qui vincti sunt: exite; et his qui in tenebris: revelamini*” [‘that he might say to the prisoners, come forth, to those who are in darkness, appear’].<sup>510</sup> This is why St. Paul calls the old law, though holy in itself, “*ministratio mortis, ministratio damnationis*” [‘the dispensation of death, the dispensation of condemnation’],<sup>511</sup> for man, as a subject, was not strong enough to fulfil it, and because it was not being kept, it threatened him with the penalty of death. As a result, there was no salvation for man through the perfect fulfilment of the law; he could be saved only by faith in Him who removed and cancelled his sins, and whose merits, through faith, would be applied to him.

The faithful of old, therefore, lived with an objective life and had a sure hope of a subjective life; they did not have, yet, the subjective life of Christ. This life of the good Christians is often called the ‘*new man*’, the ‘*interior man*’, and is also likened by St. Paul to a garment, and the lack of it to nakedness. This is a very suitable simile with respect to the soul separated from the body, which, deprived of its natural term, it remains naked, unless God gives it, in a supernatural way, some other real term (which, according to us, is the eucharistic life of JESUS Christ). It is then clothed, if it has this ineffable and mysterious term to accompany it, through which it is given the life of Christ.

Likewise, this real term of our interior and spiritual life, is likened to a house which persists even when the temporary house of our body is laid down: “*Scimus enim, quoniam si terrestris domus nostra huius habitationis dissolvatur, quod aedificationem ex Deo habemus, domum non manufactam, aeternam in coelis. Nam et in hoc ingemiscimus, habitationem nostram, quae de coelo est superindui cupientes: si tamen vestiti, non nudi inveniamur*” [‘For we know that if the earthy tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it

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**510** Is 49: 9.

**511** 2 Cor 3: 7-9.

on we may not be found naked’].<sup>512</sup>

3. In the third place, it is necessary to note, that Christ’s cited words refer to the Holy Spirit, who enables men, who do not use their will to oppose Him but co-operate with Him, to be ‘sons of God’. Hence, they pass, says St. Paul, “*a claritate in claritatem tanquam a Domini Spiritu*” [‘From one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit’]. This can be understood both of the rising from virtue to virtue, from perfection to perfection, from one degree of excellence to another, during this present life, and of the passing from the internal splendour or glory, which the righteous Christian has in this life, to that shining and complete splendour and glory which he will have in the next.

4. And since the Holy Spirit is essential divine love and diffuses, therefore, in us that charity which renews and sanctifies our will, according to the words: “*Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum qui datus est nobis*” and: “*Ipse enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro, quod sumus Filii Dei*” [‘God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’],<sup>513</sup> and again, [‘It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God’],<sup>514</sup> this is the reason why JESUS Christ said that the Father loves us, because we love Him: “*Ipse enim Pater amat vos quia vos me amastis*” [‘The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me’]. There cannot be subjective life, of which we are speaking, in fact, where there is no charity, at least habitual charity, since the Holy Spirit, who unites Christ with our souls in this subjective life, would not be present.

Charity then (which is so much more than a simple, natural and accidental love, just as the Holy Spirit is so much more than a purely accidental love, being a subsisting divine Person) has Christ incarnate as its object, as faith teaches us. Hence, the Lord adds to the words: “*quia me amastis*” [‘because you loved me’] these other words: “*et credidisti quia ego a Deo exivi*” [‘and

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**512** 2 Cor 5: 1-3.

**513** Rom 5: 5.

**514** *Ibid.* 8: 16.

you have believed that I came from God']. The word *exivi* ['came'] does not simply indicate the procession of the Word from the Father, but also His visible mission in the world and His Incarnation, as the words which follow state: "*Exivi a Patre et veni in mundum*" ['I came from the Father and have come into the world']<sup>515</sup> which correspond to the words of St. John: "*Et Verbum erat apud Deum*" ['and the Word was with God'].

## Reading 84

*[In the time of the Gospel there was a great clarity and light of the Christian life through the work of the Holy Spirit; but only in the future life will there be the complete revelation of 'seeing unveiled those things which we now know under a veil']*

The Gospel, then, not the letter but the spirit, brought a great increase of light to the ancient faith and shed light on man's spiritual life and doctrine: "*Quoniam Deus qui dixit de tenebris lucem splendescere, ipse illuxit in cordibus nostris ad illuminationem scientiae claritatis Dei, in facie Christi JESU*" ['For it is God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ'].<sup>516</sup>

The Apostle says: "*in facie Christi JESU*" ['in the face of Christ JESUS'] because, as we have said, the Holy Spirit, who enlightens the soul, has the effect, proper to Himself, of enabling us to understand, to perceive, and in consequence to love JESUS Christ, God and Man, who came forth from the Father and was sent by Him into the world. Now all this brilliant and ineffable light of the Christian life is nevertheless veiled, by comparison with that which will illumine our souls when the veil of the body will be rent asunder: "*Non contemptantibus nobis quae videntur, says St. Paul, sed quae non videntur. Quae enim videntur temporalia sunt; quae autem non videntur, aeterna sunt*"

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**515** Jn 16: 28.

**516** 2 Cor 4: 6.

[‘Because we look not to the things that are seen’ says St. Paul, ‘but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal’].<sup>517</sup>

Hence, in the Old Testament there was *faith*, but there was still to be revealed another *faith* which, precisely because it was to be revealed, would be more enlightened. This new faith has now been made known, and no further revelation of faith remains to be made, but only the revelation of glory. Of this faith which was to be revealed, and has in fact been revealed by the Gospel, St. Paul says: “*Prius autem quam veniret fides, sub lege custodiebamur conclusi, in eam fidem quae revelanda erat*” [‘Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed’].<sup>518</sup>

And, in the same sense, the Apostle says that Christ revealed Himself in him: “*Cum autem placuit ei qui me segregavit ex utero matris meae et vocavit per gratiam suam ut revelaret Filium suum in me, ut evangelizarem illum, etc.*” [‘But when he who set me apart before I was born and had called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach etc.’].<sup>519</sup>

And thus, St. Peter speaks of the glory, no longer about the faith, which at present remains to be revealed: “*Qui et eius quae in futuro revelanda est, gloriae communicator*” [‘As well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed’].<sup>520</sup>

22<sup>nd</sup> June 1849

Caserta, with the Liguoriani Fathers,  
Feast of St. Julian, PP

The Apostle of the Gentiles declares that his preaching has for its object, ‘*the mystery of Christ*’, because in Christ’s doctrine

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**517** *Ibid.* 4: 18.

**518** Gal 3: 23.

**519** *Ibid.* 1: 15.

**520** 1 Peter 5: 1.



there always remains part which is mysterious to us in the present life. He wrote to the people of Colossae: “*Orationi instate, orantes simul et pro nobis, ut Deus aperiat nobis ostium sermonis ad loquendum mysterium Christi ut manifestem illud ita ut oportet me loqui*” [‘Continue steadfast in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving: and pray for us also that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ’]; but he also adds, ‘that I may make it clear as I ought to speak’]:<sup>521</sup> because this mystery can be proclaimed, believed, and partly also revealed, according to that degree of knowledge that is granted to us, so long as we are encompassed by a corruptible body.

For this reason, he had previously called it: “*Mysterium quod absconditum fuit a saeculis et generationibus, nunc autem manifestatum est sanctis eius, quibus voluit Deus notas facere divitias gloriae sacramenti huius in gentibus, quod est Christus, in vobis spes gloriae, quem nos annuntiamus*” [‘The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope and the glory. Him we proclaim’].<sup>522</sup>

In this passage, the Apostle tells us that the mystery of Christ was revealed to the Saints, not to all those to whom it was preached. Hence, it is evident that the Apostle is speaking of a supernatural knowledge and revelation, whereby the Saints, being inwardly enlightened by faith, understand and penetrate the depth of this mystery, whereas those who do not believe, understand nothing more than the letter, which is not the knowledge of the mystery itself and it is not supernatural.

The Apostle explains this more fully in his first letter to the Corinthians. After saying that the wisdom of God is hidden in mystery, and that none of the rulers of the age have understood it, he adds: “*Nobis autem revelavit Deus per Spiritum suum: Spiritus enim omnia scrutatur, etiam profunda Dei. Quis enim hominum scit quae sunt hominis, nisi spiritus hominis, qui in ipso*

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**521** Col 4: 2-4.

**522** Col 1: 26-28.

*est? ita et quae Dei sunt, nemo cognovit, nisi Spiritus Dei. Nos autem non spiritum huius mundi accepimus, sed Spiritum qui ex Deo est, ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis. Animalis enim homo non percipit ea quae sunt Spiritus Dei: stultitia enim est illi, et non potest intelligere: quia spiritualiter examinatur. Spiritualis autem iudicat omnia: et ipse a nemine iudicatur*” [‘God has revealed to us through his spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, by the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things but is himself to be judged by no one’].<sup>523</sup>

From these words we gather that the knowledge which a Christian has in this world comprises everything. It includes all that he will know more clearly in the next world, because he has the Spirit of God, “*qui omnia scrutatur etiam profunda Dei*” [‘who searches everything, even the depths of God’]. Hence the change which will ensue will be a true *revelation*, according to the etymology of the word; it will be the *unveiled* view of those things which the Christian knows at present beneath a veil, as the Council of Trent said: “*Eundem panem Angelorum quem modo sub sacris velaminibus edunt, absque ullo velamina manducaturi*” [‘There to eat without any veil, that same bread of angels which they now eat under the sacred veils’].

Therefore, the passing of the Christian from his present state to his future condition is called sometimes a revelation of JESUS Christ. Speaking of Christ’s second coming the Gospel says: “*Qua die Filius hominis revelabitur*” [‘On the day when the Son of man is revealed’].<sup>524</sup> Referring to the present state of the Christian who possesses Christ though veiled, it had already said: “*Non venit regnum Dei cum observatione, neque dicent: Ecce*

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**523** 1 Cor: 2: 10-15.

**524** Lk 17: 30.

*hic, aut ecce illic. Ecce enim regnum Dei intra vos est*” [“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, “Lo, here it is,” or “There”, for behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you’].<sup>525</sup> From this, it goes on to say that this kingdom of God that comes unnoticed by men will be manifested in glory at the coming of the Son of Man.

Similarly, the Apostle promises that rest will be granted to the Thessalonians who suffered for the kingdom of God: “*In revelatione Domini JESU de coelo cum angelis virtutis eius*” [‘when the Lord JESUS is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels’].<sup>526</sup>

It seems to me, that the reason why the divine Scriptures mention more frequently and promise the revelation of Christ at the end of the world, rather than that which occurs at the death of individual persons, may be that the final resurrection is more solemn and complete by reason of the resurrection of the body. Moreover, the glory of the Christian after death concerns the individual, while the final resurrection concerns the whole body of the faithful, the entire Church.

The passing from our present state to our future glory is something referred to as ‘our own revelation, the revelation of the sons of God, the revelation of the glory in us’, as in the following passage: “*Existimo enim quod non sunt condignae passiones hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam, quae revelabitur in nobis. Nam exspectatio creaturae revelationem filiorum Dei exspectat. Quia et ipsa creatura liberabitur a servitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei: et ipsi intra nos gemimus, adoptionem filiorum Dei exspectantes, redemptionem corporis nostri*” [‘I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God because creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God, but we ourselves groan inwardly as we wait for adoption

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**525** *Ibid.* 17: 20-21.

**526** 2 Thes 1: 7.

as sons, the redemption of our bodies’].<sup>527</sup>

The last words: “*adoptionem filiorum Dei expectantes redemptionem corporis nostri*” [‘as we wait for adoption as sons of God, the redemption of our bodies’] show that St. Paul is here referring to the final completion of our glory when we shall rise again in glory, and is not referring to that glory which will be, as it were, provisional although beatific, and which our souls will enjoy while still separated from the body.

We may notice that the Apostle calls “liberty” both the freedom we now enjoy in Christ and the freedom we shall acquire in the final glory: “*Itaque fratres, non sumus ancillae filii sed liberae, qua libertate Christus nos liberavit*” [‘So brethren, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman. For freedom Christ has set us free’].<sup>528</sup> And he adds: “*Quia ipsa creatura liberabitur a servitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei*” [‘because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God’]. The reason is that our present liberty, perfect as to the spirit, is nevertheless combined with a certain bondage in a corruptible body.

Likewise, we are already the adopted children of God, as regards our spirit. “*Quicumque enim spiritu Dei aguntur, ii sunt filii Dei. Non enim accepistis spiritum servitutis iterum in timore, sed accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus: Abba Pater*” [‘For all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship, so as to cry ‘Abba! Father’].<sup>529</sup> But as regards the body, we still await the “*adoptionem filiorum Dei*” [‘adoption as sons of God’].

According to this manner of speaking, on the day of the Lord, our works will be revealed and tested by fire. “*Uniuscuiusque opus manifestum erit: dies enim Domini declarabit, quia in igne revelabitur: et uniuscuiusque opus quale sit ignis probabit*” [‘Each

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**527** Rom 8: 18-23.

**528** Gal 4: 31 - 5:1.

**529** Rom 8: 14-15.

man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done'].<sup>530</sup>

The Christian therefore possesses everything. All is contained in the faith and spiritual knowledge of the man who is in Christ according to the spirit of holiness, yet all is veiled, and obscured by a sentimental perception which is not reached at all, or is reached in a weak manner, by the life-giving reflection of the conscience. When we shall lay the body aside, and, more perfectly, when the body will be restored to us in its glory, all will be for us unveiled, manifest and shining with glory.

## Reading 85

*[The effects of the consecrated Body and Blood are the operation of the Spirit of Christ who diffuses charity in the soul; in what way Christ with his Spirit produces these effects in those who receive his Body and Blood]*

Santa Lucia sopra Caserta,  
With the Frs Minori Riformati  
23<sup>rd</sup> June 1849,  
St Peter Martyr and VSJB

Coming now to the eucharistic life, veiled on earth, manifest in heaven, I begin by saying that the veils which, for the time being, hide the glorious body and blood of Christ are the accidents of the bread and wine, which alone fall under our external senses.

Now, we should consider that the consecrated bread and wine (which are no longer bread and wine) have, through the

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**530** 1 Cor 3: 13.

accidents that persist, the same physical effects on our external organs and the internal feeling of our body as if they were not consecrated, that is, as if they were still true bread and true wine. These physical effects, however, are not eucharistic effects.

The body and blood of Christ, then, are so hidden under the accidents of the bread and wine, that naturally, and through the physical law of bodies, they do not produce any effect on our body. When JESUS Christ lived on earth, His passible and mortal body was a physical body and acted on the bodies of other people according to the ordinary physical laws which govern the interaction of bodies.

However, this is not the case with the eucharistic body of JESUS Christ, in which such physical laws are completely suspended by divine omnipotence, and is not, therefore, visible nor tangible nor odoriferous etc.

As a consequence, the eucharistic effects depend solely on the will and power of our Lord JESUS Christ, according to the laws which govern the moral order. So, those who are not baptised and, therefore, not incorporated into Christ do not receive any effect (except the physical effects of the accidents) and the same is to be said of those who receive the Most Blessed Sacrament, knowing and willing to be in a state of mortal sin – and they also commit a sacrilege, as Scripture says: “*Quicumque manducaverit panem hunc vel biberit calicem Domini indigne, reus erit corporis et sanguinis Domini*” [‘Whoever, therefore eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord’].<sup>531</sup>

It follows again that the eucharistic effects are produced by Christ in the faithful. They receive His most sacred body, according to their dispositions: those who are better disposed and co-operate more devoutly with the acts of their will, receive more from it and others less.

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**531** 1 Cor 11: 27.

The effects are primarily the work of the Spirit of Christ, who diffuses God's love in our souls. This is the reason why Christ, speaking of the Eucharist, said: "*Spiritus est qui vivificat: caro non prodest quidquam: verba quae ego locutus sum vobis spiritus et vita sunt*" [It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life'].<sup>532</sup>

24<sup>th</sup> June

We must now explain, as far as we can, in what way Christ, with His Spirit, produces these marvellous effects in the person who receives His body and His blood. We must firstly consider that the supreme principle acting in Christ is the Word, who, therefore is not solely the divine Person, but the Person of Christ, that is, the divine Person Incarnate, since the person of an intelligent individual is that supreme acting principle which is in him. Now, how did the divine Person of the Word unite to Himself human nature? It is certain that the Word, through this union, did not suffer any passion nor any change; He was not susceptible to it because He is immutable and there are no accidents in Him.

We must firstly consider, however, as a preliminary to the doctrine we are presenting, that all things exist in the Word, not only ideally, but also really, as we have said (Reading 35) in an objective way; and that in the same objective way, like all other things, the humanity of Christ also exists in the Word. This is not yet the Incarnation, this is not the hypostatic union: otherwise the Word would have been joined hypostatically with all the creatures, which is absurd.

Objective existence is always divine; created things have only a subjective existence, or an existence which is referred to the subjective (extra-subjective existence). Therefore, things in their objective existence, being appurtenances of the Word, are not the things as they exist simply in themselves, from which it comes their being real creatures. The objective existence of creatures is real for the Word (absolutely real) but not in the

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<sup>532</sup> Jn 6: 63.

creatures themselves, whose proper existence is only subjective, so that their objective existence could be in the Word (and is the Word itself) without their actually existing.

So, creatures in their objective existence alone do not exist in themselves; and when they exist (subjectively), then they do not necessarily apprehend the Word, although the Word has them in Himself objectively; and objective and subjective existence are two modes of the same being. In order, then, that the Word assumes to Himself and unites Himself with an intelligent creature in so far as this exists in itself, it is not enough that He possesses it objectively, though really in Himself; but it is necessary that He be united subjectively to that creature, or better, that He unites that creature subjectively to Himself.

This is what He did at the Incarnation, by uniting, that is, to Himself human nature hypostatically in an individual. The change, as we said, was not in Him but in the assumed human nature, which found itself moved and governed, as by its own supreme principle, by the Person of the Word.

The subjective communication of God to humanity is the work of the Holy Spirit: therefore, the Word became flesh through the action of the Spirit: "*Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi. Ideoque et quod nascetur ex te sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei*" ['The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most-High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God'].<sup>533</sup>

And Christ calls Himself, "*quem Pater sanctificavit et misit in mundum*" [whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world],<sup>534</sup> making His sanctification come before His mission in the world, not as regards time, but logically, as if meaning that the Father sanctified the humanity of Christ at the same time that He sent the Word into it, who assumed it, being hypostatically united to Himself.

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**533** Lk 1: 35 - Matt 1: 20.

**534** Jn 10: 36.



Hence, the Apostle calls Christ: “*Qui predestinatus est Filius Dei in virtute secundum spiritum sanctificationis*” [‘designated Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness’].<sup>535</sup> And the very word, ‘Christ’, means ‘*anointed of the Lord*’ and this was the name of Him who was sent with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, as the prophets had already foretold. “*Spiritus Domini super me*, thus says Isiah’s Redeemer, *propter quod unxit me, evangelizare pauperibus misit me, sanare contritos corde*” [‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted’].<sup>536</sup>

The Psalmist also says: “*Propterea unxit te Deus, Deus tuus oleo letitiae*” [‘therefore God, your God, has anointed you with gladness’].<sup>537</sup> The first disciples, on hearing the account Peter and John gave about the charges against them brought by the leaders of the Synagogue after the healing of the cripple at the gate of the temple of Jerusalem, said: “*Convenerunt enim vere in civitate ista adversus sanctum puerum tuum JESUM quem unxisti Herodes et Pontius Pilatus cum gentibus et populis Israel*” [‘For truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant JESUS, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel’].<sup>538</sup> St. Peter also told the family of the Centurion: “*Vos scitis quomodo unxit eum Deus Spiritu Sancto et virtute*” [‘you know how God anointed JESUS of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power’].<sup>539</sup>

5<sup>th</sup> July 1849,  
St. Jo. Nepom.  
S. Lucia sopra Caserta.

We must now observe that it is proper to the Holy Spirit to act in a subjective way, because He unites Himself as active

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**535** Rom 1: 4.

**536** Is 61: 1 - Lk 4: 18.

**537** Ps 44: 7 - Heb 1: 9.

**538** Acts 4: 27.

**539** *Ibid.* 10: 38.

principle to the will of man, and the will, united with Him, is raised to *recognise* being, practically; and above all, to *recognise* absolute Being, in which lies the sanctification of man.

We ought to believe that, in the humanity of Christ, the human will was so taken over by the Holy Spirit to adhere to objective Being, that is, to the Word, that it surrendered the direction of the man entirely to the Word, and the Word personally took over its direction, thus becoming flesh. The human will, and the other powers were subordinate to the will of the Word, which, as the first principle of this Theandric being, acted in everything directly, or through the other powers, with its consent.

Hence, the human will was no longer personal in the man, and what is person in other men remained nature in Christ. We should note that all these operations of the Holy Spirit, either as a preliminary to the Incarnation, or as the Incarnation itself or hypostatic union, were not successive but simultaneous; completed in an instant, the instant of the Incarnation itself.

The Word then, made flesh through the work of the Holy Spirit, extended His union to all His human powers and to flesh itself, to the point that St. John could say: *'the Word was made flesh.'* And He sent his Holy Spirit into His human powers and into other men, first by means of gifts, and afterwards by means of His Person, who suggested practically to them what He had said to them merely by means of words. And the mission of the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier of Christ's humanity, always proceeds from the Word, whether as that which is conceived logically as preliminary to the Incarnation, or that which is conceived logically after it; the first coming from the Word separate from His humanity, the second (identical with the first) from the same Word united to His humanity.

## Reading 86

*[How the justification of man is fulfilled; the difference between the contact with the glorious body of Christ in Baptism and the contact we have in the Eucharist]*

The spiritual rebirth of man occurs in a similar way, except that the preliminary activity of the Holy Spirit can precede in time such rebirth, as is the case with adults. These are the gifts and graces, of which the holy Council of Trent speaks, which prepare man for justification. The first of such gifts is the divine *calling*: “*Declarat praeterea ipsius iustificationis exordium in adultis a Dei per Christum JESUM praeveniente gratia sumendum esse, hoc est ab eius vocatione, qua nullis eorum existentibus meritis vocantur, ut qui per peccata a Deo aversi errant, per eius excitantem atque adiuvantem gratiam ad convertendum se ad suam ipsorum iustificationem, eidem gratiae libere assentiendo et cooperando disponantur: ita ut tangente Deo cor hominis per Spiritus Sancti illuminationem, neque home ipse nihil omnino agat, inspirationem illam recipiens, quippe qui illam et abiicere potest, neque tamen sine gratia Dei movere se ad iustitiam coram illo libera sua voluntate possit*”.

[‘The Synod furthermore declares that, in adults, the beginnings of the said Justification is to be derived from the preventing grace of God, through JESUS Christ, that is to say, from his vocation, whereby, without any merits existing on their part, they are called; that so, they who by their sins were alienated from God, may be disposed through his quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with that said grace; in such a way that God touches the heart of man by illumination of the Holy Spirit, nor does man do absolutely nothing, while he receives that inspiration; but he is not able by his own free will without the grace of God to move himself unto justice in his sight’].<sup>540</sup>

After the calling comes faith, about which the ecumenical and holy council says: “*Disponuntur autem ad ipsam iustitiam dum*

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**540** Sess 6 c. 5.

*excitati divina gratia et adiuti, fidem ex auditu concipientes libere moventur in Deum, credentes vera essa, quae divinitus revelata et promissa sunt, atque illud in primis a Deo iustificari impium per gratiam eius per redemptionem quae est in Christo JESU, et dum peccatores se esse intelligentes a divinae iustitiae timore, quo utiliter concutiuntur, ad considerandam Dei misericordiam se convertendo, in spem eriguntur, fidentes Deum sibi propter Christum propitium fore; illumque tanquam omnis iustitiae fontem diligere incipiunt; ac propterea moventur adversus peccata per odium aliquod et detestationem, hoc est per eam poenitentiam, quam ante Baptismum agi oportet; denique dum proponunt suscipere Baptismum, inchoare novam vitam, et servare divina mandata”.*

[‘Now they (adults) are disposed towards this justice when excited and assisted by divine grace, conceiving faith by hearing, they are freely moved towards God, believing those things to be true which God has revealed and promised, and this especially, that God justifies the impious by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ JESUS; and when understanding themselves to be sinners, they, by turning themselves, from fear of divine justice, whereby they are profitably aroused, to consider the mercy of God, are raised to hope, confiding that God will be merciful to them for Christ’s sake; and they begin to love him as the fountain of all justice; and are therefore moved against sins by a certain hatred and detestation, namely, by that penance which must be performed before baptism; lastly when they intend to receive baptism, to begin a new life, and to keep the commandments of God’].<sup>541</sup>

The same operations which the Holy Spirit performs in adults to dispose them towards baptismal justification, He performs also in babies, in so far as the substance is concerned, but in a hidden manner, through the habitual motions of their will, at the same time as their justification, so that in the same instant they receive justification through Baptism, they also receive those graces.

In Baptism, therefore, whereby our justification is

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<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.* 6 c. 6.

accomplished, the Word unites Himself as *real object* to the mind of the baptised person. If the will of such a person does not put any obstacle in the way and is disposed to acknowledge Him, the Word continues and completes the mission of the Holy Spirit, through which the person is sanctified, adopted as a child of God, and made a co-heir with Christ.

Hence, the same Council quoted above declares that the justification which follows Baptism, “*non est sola peccatorum remissio sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiae et donorum*” [‘is not merely the remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inner man through the voluntary reception of the grace and of the gifts’];<sup>542</sup> and that the one formal cause of justification “*est iustitia Dei, non qua ipse iustus est, sed qua nos iustos facit, qua videlicet ab eo donati renovamur spiritu mentis nostrae et non modo reputamur, sed vere iusti nominamur et sumus, iustitiam in nobis recipientes, unusquisque suam secundum mensuram, quam Spiritus Sanctus partitur singulis pro ut vult et secundum propriam cuiusque dispositionem et cooperationem. Quamquam enim nemo possit esse iustus, nisi cui merita passionis D. N. JESU Christi communicantur, id tamen in hac impii iustificatione fit, dum eiusdem sanctissimae passionis merito per Spiritum Sanctum Charitas Dei diffunditur*”.

[‘is the justice of God, not in so far as he himself is just, but in so far as he makes us just, that is to say, in so far as we, being endowed by him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and we are not only reputed, but are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Spirit distributes to everyone as he wills, and according to each one’s proper disposition and co-operation. For although no one can be just, but he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this is done in the justification of the impious when, by the merits of that same most holy Passion, the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit’].<sup>543</sup>

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**542** *Ibid.* 6 c. 7.

**543** *Ibid.* 6 c. 7.

In this work of the Holy Spirit, however, the divine Word is impressed on the mind, as we have said, as object, not as subject, and therefore this is not an incarnation, but only a *real union* of the human persons with the Incarnate Word, and these persons are like members of the mystical body, of which the Word is head.

Nevertheless, considering that the Head, that is, the Word Incarnate, bestows on His members the power of the Holy Spirit, the will of these members, in which their personality dwells, is sanctified before all else, that is, is attracted to recognise practically that Word which it perceives. And since the same will acquires now a new supernatural activity which it did not have before, for this reason the person is said to be renewed, being made a new man, in which consists spiritual rebirth: “*Voluntarie enim genuit nos*, thus says St. James, *verbo Veritatis ut simus initium aliquod creaturae eius: renati*, as St. Peter continues, *non ex semine corruptibili, sed incorruptibili per Verbum Dei vivi et permanentis in aeternum*” [‘Of his own will he brought us forth’ says St. James ‘by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures’].<sup>544</sup> [‘You have been born anew,’ continues St. Peter, ‘not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God’].<sup>545</sup>

Now, as we have said before, we believe that it is very probable that the vital power of Christ is communicated to the baptismal water through a hidden contact with Christ’s glorious body in virtue of the words and at the same time that the words, which are the form of the Sacrament, are pronounced. We also believe that the water, as it touches the body of the person who is being baptised, communicates, through the faith of the person or that of the Church, the vital power of Christ which passing from the body to the soul and the spirit, ultimately renews the superior part of man, impressing on his mind the Word.

In the sacrament of the Eucharist, however, the bread and wine are not only touched by the body of Christ but assumed and transubstantiated into His glorious flesh and blood. So, when

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**544** James 1: 18.

**545** 1 Peter 1: 23.

man receives this Sacrament, he does not receive only the impact of the power of Christ as in Baptism, where water remains water, though it becomes the vehicle of the power of Christ and touches the body momentarily and spontaneously, but he receives the glorious and living flesh and blood of Christ (and by concomitance also His soul and divinity). Christ's body and blood remain for some time within us, though they do not touch our body, which is touched only by the accidents of the bread and wine.

The accidents do all that the un-consecrated bread and wine do. They are digested and assimilated and are converted into our body. However, beneath the accidents there is the true body and blood of Christ, and He produces His spiritual effects in the soul and in the spirit of the man who is baptised and well disposed. The accidents of bread and wine have a real contact with our flesh; on the other hand, the body and blood of Christ, hidden under the accidents, make a spiritual contact, not felt by the body; and as our flesh is alive, so is the glorious flesh of Christ, and Christ's life is communicated to our life through this spiritual contact, in the measure wished by Him, and according to the dispositions which He finds in us.

## Reading 87

*[In nutrition, the bread and wine are assimilated into our flesh and blood and are truly transubstantiated. Understanding eucharistic transubstantiation in this way, we can more easily perceive and determine what the Eucharistic Body of Christ is]*

Baptism does two things in man: 1. it impresses the indelible character; 2. it confers sanctifying grace. Through the indelible character, man is placed in communication with the Word by means of his essential intelligence; through grace, he is placed in communication with the Holy Spirit by means of his essential will.

Through Baptism the door of communication is opened between

man and the Word and the Holy Spirit. When man receives the other Sacraments, and particularly the most Holy Eucharist, he receives from the body and blood of the Lord the effects of the Holy Spirit who is charity: "Deus caritas est" ['God is love'],<sup>546</sup> and is enabled to draw all the other effects.

The manner whereby such effects occur is something hidden; nevertheless, we do not believe the following theory to be alien to Catholic doctrine, which alone is the true doctrine.

The flesh and blood of Christ, into which the substance of the bread and wine is changed, are the term of the sentient principle of Christ. Now this flesh and this blood, in the way that they exist in the Eucharist, can become also the term of the sentient principle of man, who receives them. The substance of the bread and wine has ceased entirely to be the substance of bread and wine and has become Christ's true flesh and blood at the same instant Christ made it the term of His sentient principle, and so enlivened it with His life, after the manner that occurs in nutrition.

In nutrition, in fact, the bread we eat and the wine we drink are assimilated into our flesh and blood and are truly transubstantiated. They are no longer what they were before, bread and wine, but are really our flesh and our blood, because they have become the term of our sensitive principle. By considering transubstantiation in this way, we can more easily understand and determine what the Eucharistic Body of Christ is.

Although Christ has only one body, now a glorious one, nonetheless, when transubstantiation occurs, we may infer that some part, which is both inseparable and glorious, is now united and incorporated into His glorious Body. And this added part, that is, the transubstantiated substance of the bread and wine, which forms one thing with the glorious body of Christ, just as a portion of our flesh and blood forms one thing with our body, can be understood as that which becomes the common term of the life giving and sentient principle of Christ, and the

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**546** 1 Jn 4: 16.



sentient principle of the man who receives the eucharistic food in a state of grace.

At this point, however, we ought to solve some possible objections. The first objection is that, according to such theory, there would not be the whole Body of Christ in the Eucharist. The reply to this objection is that precisely because the Body of Christ is one and indivisible, it is necessary that where there is a part there is the whole. The distinction between the part and the whole is made only regarding the spiritual and internal operation in man, who certainly receives the whole Body, but not all that Body becomes the term of his sentient principle, but only that part which corresponds to that portion which the substance of bread and wine had in transubstantiation.

Moreover, if it is true that, because of the power of Christ's divine words, this substance of bread and wine is certainly transubstantiated into the Saviour's Body and Blood; the remainder of His Body and Blood, however, would be united only by concomitance. This inference does not appear to be contrary to Catholic Doctrine, according to which it is of faith that the *whole* of the substance of bread and wine is transubstantiated, but not that it is transubstantiated into the whole glorious Body and Blood of Christ, according to the words of the Holy Council: "*Persuasum semper in Ecclesia Dei fuit, idque nunc denuo sancta haec Synodus declarat, per consecrationem panis et vini conversionem fieri TOTIUS substantiae panis in substantiam corporis Christi Domini nostri, et TOTIUS substantiae vini in substantiam sanguinis eius*" ['It has therefore always been held in the Church of God and this holy Synod now declares anew that through consecration of the bread and wine there comes about a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood'].<sup>547</sup> It says: "*Totius substantiae panis et vini*" ['the whole substance of bread and wine'] but it does not say, "*In totam substantiam corporis et sanguinis Christi*" ['into

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**547** Sess 13, c. 4. And here and in c. 2 the same manner of speaking is used: 'The wonderful and unique conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood, the species only of the bread and wine remaining etc.'

the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ’].

Another objection comes from Psychology. In this work, we said that if two feeling principles had the same term, they would be identical and become one only. Now, it would be absurd and contrary to orthodox faith, to say that the sentient principle of Christ and that of the recipient, who communicates in grace, become one principle.

The reply to this objection is that principles are not identical unless the corporeal term is also totally identical. In this case, however, the conditions are not such. In fact, the sensitive principle of the recipient who communicates in grace, has not in common with Christ’s sensitive, life giving principle the whole body of Christ but only that part which corresponds to the substance of bread and wine transubstantiated. And not even all this, but only a part, which corresponds to those accidents of bread and wine which take part in the nutrition of the recipient and not to that part of them which, corrupting without taking part in nutrition, ceases from being the veil to the Body and Blood of Christ, and having reverted to material substance, passes from the body of the recipient by other means.

## Reading 88

*[The effects of the Eucharist on a baptised person who is not in a state of grace and on one who is in a state of grace]*

That part of the flesh and blood of Christ, corresponding to the bread and wine before transubstantiation, contains, if the theory above explained is true, that Eucharistic life which never ceased in Christ, not even at the moment of His death, which occurred in His natural body, as we mentioned above (Readings 70, 71, 73, 74), and for which He was heard, as St. Paul says, when He prayed that He may escape from death. The Eucharist is called, therefore, *living bread* and was never dead bread, even when His natural body was dead.

The Eucharistic bread and blood said to be, “*novi et aeterni testament*” [‘of the new and eternal covenant’],<sup>548</sup> is the object of a priesthood which was said by St. Paul to have been instituted ‘by the power of an indestructible life’. “*Et adhuc manifestum est, si secundum similitudinem Melchisedech exurgat alius Sacerdos, qui non secundum legem mandati carnalis factus est, sed secundum virtutem VITAE INSOLUBILIS*” [‘This becomes even more evident when another Priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life’].<sup>549</sup>

If the Eucharistic life of Christ, therefore, the object of the priesthood, were to cease even for a time, it could no longer be called ‘*indestructible life*’. Now, although this word ‘*indestructible*’ is an excellent word applied to the glorious life acquired by Christ after His resurrection, nevertheless the clarity of that word is fully visible if we interpret it of the indestructibility of the Eucharistic life. Christ, in fact, exercised His priesthood before His death, at the Last Supper, and was made a priest according to the order of Melchizedek who offered bread and wine, before His glorious resurrection and, therefore, even from that time He was constituted such, ‘*according to the power of His indestructible life.*’

Hence, very conveniently St. Ignatius the Martyr, a disciple of the Apostles, called the Eucharist, “*farmacum immortalitatis*” [‘the medicine of immortality’],<sup>550</sup> and the Holy Council of Trent called it, “*an ineffable and truly divine benefit quo mortis eius victoria et triumphus repraesentatur*” [‘whereby the victory and triumph of His death are represented’].<sup>551</sup>

If we now continue to discuss the preceding argument about whether it is true that the sentient principle of those who receive the whole Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist receives for its term that portion of the Body and Blood of Christ corresponding to

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**548** Order of the Mass at the Consecration of the Chalice.

**549** Heb 7: 15-16.

**550** St Ignatius to the Ephesians c. 20.

**551** Council of Trent Sess 13 c. 5.

the substance of the bread and wine which was there before transubstantiation, one can better understand why this Sacrament is called by the Fathers and the Councils, "*signum unitatis*" ['sign of unity'],<sup>552</sup> and certainly not an ineffective sign, but an effective one, namely, a sign which creates that unity of which it is the sign. All the Sacraments of Christ, in fact, are effective signs, that is, they bring about in man that which they signify.

The unity brought about by the Eucharist is twofold: the unity of the faithful with Christ, and the unity of the faithful among themselves.

The unity of the recipient of the Body of Christ with Christ is truly great and sublime. For, although Christ is not identified with him, as it was said earlier, yet a portion of Christ's sensitive life is identified, in a certain way, with a portion of the life of the faithful who receives Him, since these two lives have a portion of their corporeal term identical. Christ and the recipient feel, as a portion of their body, the same eucharistic body.

This feeling does not occur in those who have not received Baptism. They feel the accidents of bread and wine; whereas the Body and Blood of Christ remain ineffective in them. Christ does not communicate to them that corporeal term which is the term of the life of Christ; for this reason, the communication of the two lives does not occur, nor does the partial identification of the two feelings. This is because the spirit of such people has not received the power which makes them fit for communicating with the Spirit of Christ.

Hence, they are not united to the Word. In the baptised, on the other hand, the Word produces the supernatural power to perceive the humanity of Christ, which underlies the accidents. Man himself, in fact, could never communicate with the living flesh and blood of Christ, who lies hidden under the veil of the accidents of bread and wine naturally accessible to the senses of man. The baptised person, on the other hand, is already united with Christ; and Christ in him and with him communicates with him with His own flesh and blood, making

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**552** *Ibid.*c. 8.

him one with Christ.

Now, the sensitive life of Christ is intimately and individually united to His intellectual life, and the Person of the Word is united with both in such a way that the entire humanity of Christ belongs strictly to the Person of the Word and has no other person except this, which directs and governs the whole, as the supreme principle of the one Christ. Therefore, the man who shares, in the way said, in the sensitive life of Christ, shares at the same time in the power and divinity of the whole Christ, who sends forth into the just his Spirit of Charity, whereby such a Sacrament is rightly called the Sacrament of Love, *vinculum caritatis* (bond of Charity).<sup>553</sup>

And as love has several degrees, but the greatest is that in which the lovers are united substantially, in the closest way granted to them by nature, and rejoice in each other as if with one undivided feeling; so it is clear that the union of the faithful with Christ by means of the Eucharist, since it is substantial and real even so far as having partly the same term of life, which is the greatest union one could conceive in human nature in the present condition of life, is not only the greatest pledge of the love of Christ towards men, but it also contains the most intimate act of love between the just and Christ.

And that love is not simply ideal and spiritual but real, substantial, supernatural and vitally corporeal. It is appropriate, at this point, to remember the canon of the Sacred Council of Trent: “*Si quis dixerit Christum in Eucharistia exhibitum spiritualiter tantum manducari, et non etiam sacramentaliter et realiter, anathema sit*” [‘If anyone says that Christ, given in the Eucharist, is eaten spiritually only and not also sacramentally and really; let him be anathema’].<sup>554</sup>

Caserta, S. Lucia

We need to distinguish, therefore, between the non-baptised

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**553** Council of Trent Sess 13 c. 8.

**554** Council of Trent Sess 13 c. 8.

persons, who, in consuming the Eucharist, do not receive either the Sacrament or the inner grace of the Sacrament, the *res sacramenti*; from the baptised persons, who receive the Sacrament and if they are in a state of grace with God, also the inner grace of the Sacrament, the *res sacramenti*.

The non-baptised persons communicate only with the accidents, according to physical and natural laws, but the baptised persons communicate with Christ, though those who are in a state of grace communicate in a different way from those who are not in a state of grace.

The baptised persons, who are not in grace, have the Word in their mind, which, though belonging to their human person, does not constitute it. They are not sanctified, therefore, by merely possessing the impression of the Word, because the Word, who is in them, does not send the Holy Spirit or His grace into their will, which alone constitutes their person.

Hence, the Word impressed in their mind, is completed, as it were, with the flesh and blood which they receive, becoming flesh, so to speak, within them; but all this is in the order of the mind and feeling, and sanctification does not consist in this. We should observe, in fact, that, though the baptismal water works its supernatural effects by virtue of the hidden contact with the humanity of Christ, yet in Baptism the very humanity of Christ, that is, His living flesh and blood, is not communicated to man. What is communicated in Baptism is only the power which issues from the body of the Saviour, and such power is enough for communicating the perception of the Word.

Hence, Christ said to St. Philip: "*Philippe, qui videt me, videt et Patrem meum*" ['Philip, he who has seen me (that is my humanity in a supernatural manner) has seen the Father'],<sup>555</sup> that is: 'He sees me as Word and in me knows my Father of whom I am the image.' So, in man, the communication of Christ which had begun in Baptism is completed with the Eucharist, by the union of the flesh and blood, that is, of the living humanity of Christ, with the Word which shines in the mind. However, none of this will be for his salvation but for his condemnation, if man has a

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**555** Jn 4: 9.

sinful will. This is the first effect of the most Holy Eucharist.

If, on the other hand, a baptised person is in a state of grace, the Word sends the Holy Spirit in him, through whom He sanctifies his will, in which lies man's personality, and so the person of man is sanctified. Such a person, by his reception of the Eucharist, receives the living humanity of Christ, and the Word Incarnate is completed in him. This Word Incarnate sends the Holy Spirit into man, not only as light, which is the immediate operation of the Word, but also, by means of His most holy body, as light and feeling and real joy.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, is poured forth from the fulness of Christ for the sanctification of man, always being sent by the Word. However, if the Word, before-hand, gave light with His divine Spirit only to the supreme part of man's will, that is, to the faculty of practical acknowledgement and his intelligence, obedient to it; afterwards, the human and inferior will of Christ grants the Holy Spirit to man's inferior will and strengthens it to submit to the supreme will. Moreover, the feeling and sensitive instinct of Christ grants the Holy Spirit also to man's feeling and animal instinct and draws it away from evil and directs it towards good; and finally the flesh and blood of Christ grant the Holy Spirit to the flesh and blood of man making him chaste, in such a way that all the parts of Christ act on all the parts of man.

So, Christ fulfils what He said in His prayer to the Father, before He suffered: "*Pater venit hora, clarifica Filium tuum ut Filius tuus clarificet te, sicut dedisti ei potestatem omnis carnis, ut omne quod dedisti ei det eis vitam aeternam*" ['Father the hour has come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee, since thou hast given him power of all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him'].<sup>556</sup>

And on the part of the faithful, the words of the Apostle to the Philippians are fully accomplished: "*Et pax Dei quae exsuperat omnem sensum custodiat corda vestra et intelligentias vestras in Christo JESU*" ['And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ

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<sup>556</sup> Jn 17: 1-2.

Jesus’],<sup>557</sup> and again, “*Hoc enim sentite in vobis, quod est in Christo JESU*” [‘Have the same feeling among yourselves which was in Christ Jesus’].<sup>558</sup>

It is from this feeling of Christ, which is given to us, that we come to understand His humility, which no human words can teach, as stated by St. Paul: “*Qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo; sed semetipsum exinanivit forma servi accipiens in similitudinem hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo*” [‘Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men’].<sup>559</sup> In truth, therefore, chastity and humility are the special effects of the Eucharist, in him who receives it worthily.

## Reading 89

*[Difference between spiritual communion and sacramental communion; even the body receives a sanctifying action from the sacramental Eucharist]*

Since the Holy Spirit communicates Himself to the will of man, subduing the inferior powers to this will made holy, there is open, therefore, a channel of communication between the will in this supernatural state of grace and the Holy Spirit, through which man, by the acts of his will, can receive more, or less, of the Holy Spirit. As a consequence, the amount of grace received by the righteous faithful from the Sacraments, and from the Holy Eucharist, varies according to their dispositions and co-operation.

This is the reason why when dealing with the justification which is received in Baptism, “*Quod est sacramentum Fidei sine qua*

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**557** Philip 4: 7.

**558** *Ibid.* 2: 5.

**559** *Ibid.* 2: 6-7.



*nulli unquam contigit iustificatio*” [‘which is the sacrament of faith without which no man was ever justified’], the Council of Trent proclaimed that its single formal cause is the justice of God: “*Qua nos iustos facit, iustitiam in nobis recipientes, unusquisque suam secundum mensuram, quam Spiritus Sanctus partitur singulis, pro ut vult, secundum propriam cuiusque dispositionem et cooperationem*” [‘by which he makes us just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Spirit distributes to everyone as he wills, and according to each ones’ proper disposition and co-operation’].<sup>560</sup>

Since the whole and entire Christ is always present under the accidents once the bread and wine have been consecrated, therefore the faithful, even before they receive Christ sacramentally, can obtain from Him spiritual graces and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, simply by adoring Him in His presence, with the desire and promise of receiving Him sacramentally. This type of participation is called spiritual communion.

Hence, the Council of Trent declares the following about the use which the faithful make of the Eucharist: “*Quoad usum autem recte et sapienter Patres nostri tres rationes hoc Sanctum Sacramentum accipiendi distinxerunt. Quosdam enim docuerunt sacramentaliter dumtaxat id sumere, ut peccatores; alios tantum spiritualiter, illos nimirum qui voto propositum illum coelestem panem edentes, fide viva, quae per dilectionem operator fructum eius et utilitatem sentient; tertius porro sacramentaliter simul et spiritualiter: hi autem sunt, qui ita se prius probant et instruunt, ut vestem nuptialem induti, ad divinam hanc mensam accedant*” [‘Now as to the use of this holy Sacrament our Fathers have rightly and wisely distinguished three ways of receiving it. For they taught that some receive it sacramentally only, namely sinners; others spiritually only, those namely who eating in-desire that heavenly bread which is set before them, are by a lively faith working through love, conscious of the fruit and usefulness thereof; whereas the third class receive it both sacramentally and spiritually, and these are they who so prove and prepare themselves beforehand as to approach this divine

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<sup>560</sup> Council of Trent Sess 6 c. 7

table clothed with the wedding garment’].<sup>561</sup>

So, it is certain that in spiritual communion we do not receive the body of Christ either really or sacramentally but that we derive from it the graces of the Spirit, we obtain fruit from it, we experience its benefits. Yet, another difference between sacramental and spiritual communion is this: that in sacramental communion Christ Himself acts in the faithful who have received Him, by granting the gifts of His Spirit *ex opere operato* and so meets the soul with His divine action, the effect of which would be felt even if a person were not capable, through sickness or fatigue, of making any act of voluntary affection, after having received the body of Christ; whereas in spiritual communion it is the soul with the acts of its will which obtains for itself the graces of the Sacrament.

We note here that, although the body which we have received from Adam is ruined and doomed to death, and good only for making a sacrifice of it to the Lord according to what the Apostle says: “*Obsecro itaque vos fratres per misericordiam Dei ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum*” [‘I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship’],<sup>562</sup> yet this victim, that is, the body of Christians, is called ‘a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God,’ because by the Sacraments of Christ the body also receives a sanctifying effect, but especially from the Eucharistic Sacrament, by which the glorious body of the Lord is placed partly in our body, and puts there an element of immortality.

The Apostle, therefore, calls not only our spirits but also our bodies members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit, from which he argues to the insult that is given to Christ by fornication, violating His members and His temple: “*Corpus autem*, he says, *non fornicationi, sed Domino: et Dominus corpori*” [‘the body (he says) is not meant for immorality but for the Lord,

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**561** *Ibid.* Sess 13 c. 8.

**562** Rom 12: 1.

and the Lord for the body’],<sup>563</sup> and then: “*Nescitis quoniam corpora vestra membra sunt Christi? Tollens ergo membra Christi, faciam membra meretricis? Absit*” [‘Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!’].<sup>564</sup> And again: “*An nescitis quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti qui in vobis est, quem habetis a Deo, et non estis vestri?*” [‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not on your own’].<sup>565</sup> From this he concludes: “*Glorificate et portate Deum in corpore vestro*” [‘So glorify God in your body’].<sup>566</sup> Hence St. Peter calls his own body ‘a tabernacle’<sup>567</sup> showing that it was a custodian of the Word and of the Spirit.

From the same teaching, St. Paul draws other moral precepts, since, as we have said, the principle of all Christian morality is our indwelling in Christ, and Christ’s indwelling in us. And first, he teaches Christians not to contract marriage with pagans, for the respect they ought to have for their own bodies sanctified by the indwelling in them of Christ: “*Nolite jugum ducere cum infidelibus. Quae enim participatio justitiae cum iniquitate? aut quae societas luci ad tenebras? quae autem conventio Christi ad Belial? aut quae pars fidei cum infidei? qui autem consensus templo Dei cum idolis? vos enim estis templum Dei vivi, sicut dicit Deus: Quoniam inhabitabo in illis, et inambulabo inter eos, et ero illorum Deus, et ipsi erunt mihi populus*” [‘Do not marry unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and move among them and I will be their God and they shall be my people’].<sup>568</sup>

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**563** 1 Cor 6: 15.

**564** *Ibid.* 15.

**565** 1 Cor 6: 19.

**566** *Ibid.* 6: 20.

**567** 2 Peter 1: 13-14.

**568** 2 Cor 6: 14-18 - Lev 26: 12.

From the same principle, he deduces the love and respect which husbands ought to show to their wives: “*Viri, diligite uxores vestras, sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam, et seipsum tradidit pro ea. Ita et viri debent diligere uxores suas ut corpora sua. Qui suam uxorem diligit, seipsum diligit. Nemo enim umquam carnem suam odio habuit: sed nutrit et fovet eam, sicut et Christus Ecclesiam: quia membra sumus corporis ejus, de carne ejus et de ossibus ejus. Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia*” [‘Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and held himself up for her. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church’].<sup>569</sup>

Again, St. Paul deduces the obligation Christians have of abstaining from victims offered to idols, saying: “*Calix benedictionis, cui benedicimus, nonne communicatio sanguinis Christi est? et panis quem frangimus, nonne participatio corporis Domini est? Quoniam unus panis, unum corpus multi sumus, omnes qui de uno pane participamus. Videte Israël secundum carnem: nonne qui edunt hostias, participes sunt altaris? Sed quae immolant gentes, daemoniis immolant, et non Deo. Nolo autem vos socios fieri daemoniorum: non potestis calicem Domini bibere, et calicem daemoniorum; non potestis mensae Domini participes esse, et mensae daemoniorum*” [‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the practice of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons’].<sup>570</sup>

Although the body of the Christian man, ruined by original sin,

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**569** Eph 5: 25-32.

**570** 1 Cor 10: 16-21.

receives some power from the grace of Christ, and, by means of the Eucharist receives also some part of the Body of Christ, which enters into him, nevertheless, his animal body is doomed to perish, because it cannot exist without being entirely renewed. Therefore, that hidden element of life which he receives from the Sacraments, but above all from the Eucharistic Sacrament, is the object of faith, rather than a complete and obvious experience. It is a beginning and a pledge of the future resurrection, whence St. Paul says: "*Quod autem nunc vivo in carne, in Fide vivo Filii Dei, qui dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*" ['and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me'].<sup>571</sup>

## Reading 90

*[The Eucharistic bread is also the bond of union of the faithful among themselves; and in what way; the one Mystical body of Christ; the diversity of the members of this Mystical Body]*

We said earlier that the Eucharistic bread is not only a bond of union of the faithful with Christ, but also of the faithful among themselves.

As the union of the faithful who receive Christ has two modes, one of which is made immediately through Christ, and the other through the Holy Spirit, who pours into our souls that love which proceeds from Christ, so in the same way there is a twofold union of the faithful among themselves found in those who receive worthily JESUS Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist.

The union of the faithful who receive Christ, made immediately through Christ, is based on two causes. The first cause is that all receive the same Christ whole and entire. The second cause is that each faithful change into the term of his own life that quantity of the flesh and blood of Christ which corresponds to the quantity of the substance of bread and wine, which was

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<sup>571</sup> Gal 2: 20.

there before transubstantiation.

The union of the faithful who receive Christ, which occurs by means of the Holy Spirit, arises from the sending of the Spirit and His gifts by Christ to his faithful, in the measure that He wishes and in proportion to the disposition and co-operation of the faithful.

These two types of union, which are formed or perfected with the reception of the Eucharist, are indicated by St. Paul in those words: "*Unum corpus, et unus Spiritus, sicut vocati estis in una spe vocationis vestrae*" [There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call].<sup>572</sup>

With the Sacrament of faith, that is, with Baptism, men begin to be members of the Mystical Body of Christ; but with the Eucharist, they are united much more with the Body of Christ because a portion of this Body, undivided from the whole, is placed in them as if it were a portion of their own body, and so there is a more complete continuity of them with Christ. But their having become the Body of Christ does not help towards their salvation, on the contrary it greatly prejudices it, if being in a state of sin with their wills opposed to Christ, they do not receive the union of the Spirit.

If their will does not place any obstacle in the way, in such case the Spirit of Christ is diffused in them, and then helps them without limit to be one body with Christ, with whom they become at the same time, so to speak, one spirit.

As far as the Eucharist is concerned, the union by which they form one body with Christ, (which body, although real, is called mystical, meaning hidden, because one does not see it in this life and it is the object of faith), arises from the fact that the portion of the flesh and blood of Christ which corresponded to the substance of bread and wine before the consecration, becomes now their own flesh and their own blood.

This happens in a hidden manner, because the faithful do not

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<sup>572</sup> Eph 4: 4.

notice that there is a part of the flesh and blood of Christ in them, since this is hidden under the accidents, just as the whole real Body of Christ, undivided from that small part, remains hidden. The Body of Christ, therefore, with regard to the faithful, acts only spiritually, because the whole of Christ in His Body either condemns the faithful if they are knowingly in sin, or sanctifies them by giving to them the spirit of holiness.

But this does not take away from the fact that, with respect to Christ, He is, to a certain extent, present in His faithful with His own real Body, in the eucharistic mode; and that one day, that is, after this present life, He will be revealed.

It is Christ, therefore, who keeps the faithful who receive Him united to His real body, as by so many strands with the different portions of the eucharistic bread divided for them; hence the expression of dividing or of breaking the bread, so often used in the Scriptures when speaking of this sublime mystery: "*Coenantibus autem eis, accepit JESUS panem et benedixit et fregit, deditque discipulis suis*" ['Now, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples'];<sup>573</sup> "*Et manducantibus illis, accepit JESUS panem, et benedicens fregit et dedit eis*" ['And as they were eating, he took bread and blessed, and broke it and gave it to them'];<sup>574</sup> "*Ego accepi a Domino quod et tradidi vobis, quoniam Dominus JESUS in qua nocte tradebatur, accepit panem et gratias agens, fregit*" ['For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord JESUS on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it'].<sup>575</sup>

And in the multiplication of the loaves, a figure of the Eucharist: "*Acceptis quinque panibus et duobus piscibus, aspiciens in coelum benedixit et fregit*" ['And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and blessed, and broke'];<sup>576</sup> and in the same way with the second multiplication of the loaves: "*Et accipiens septem panes et pisces et gratias agens, fregit et*

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**573** Matt 26: 26.

**574** Mark 14: 22.

**575** 1 Cor 11: 23-24

**576** Matt 14: 19.

*dedit discipulis suis et discipuli dederunt populo*” [‘He took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds’].<sup>577</sup> The same expression is scrupulously put into the narrative of Mark<sup>578</sup> and Luke.<sup>579</sup> The same solemn expression is used in the Acts of the Apostles, as where it says, “*frangentes circa domos panes*” [‘breaking bread in their homes’],<sup>580</sup> a passage which holy commentators refer to the Eucharist.

In the Ambrosian liturgy, when the priest breaks the host he says: “*Frangitur corpus Christi*” [‘the Body of Christ is broken’]; this expression, however, must be understood as Sassi explained it in his *Dissertation*, to avoid any error.

The Body of Christ, then, cannot be divided. This fact, however, does not prevent that one part of the Body of Christ, in its eucharistic life, is united more closely than other parts with the body of the one who is receiving, and that this part, which is more closely united with the body of one faithful, is different from that part which is more closely united with the body of another faithful; and that these different parts, each of which is destined for the spiritual nourishment of the faithful, are indivisible from the complete Body of Christ, and they correspond to that quantity of substance of the bread present in each host before the consecration. These parts are symbolised by the grains of wheat which are scattered by the sower, some of which fell on the public footpath, others on stony ground, others among thorns and others finally on good soil,<sup>581</sup> since Christ calls Himself, elsewhere, a grain of wheat.<sup>582</sup>

All the faithful, therefore, by means of the Eucharist, are united to the body of Christ and form one mystical, and nevertheless, real body with Him. They are also, therefore, closely united

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**577** *Ibid.* 15: 36.

**578** Mark 8: 6.

**579** Lk 9: 16.

**580** Acts 2: 46.

**581** Matt 13: 3-25.

**582** Jn 12: 24-25.



among themselves, as members of one body, who, although distinct, are not divided: “*Sicut enim in uno corpore multa membra habemus omnia autem membra non eundem actum habent; ita multi unum corpus sumus in Christo, singuli autem alter alterius membra*” [‘For as in one body we have many members, and all members do not have the same function, so we though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another’].<sup>583</sup>

In line therefore with the doctrine which has been presented, the diversity of the members of the mystical Body of Christ would also find a foundation in the diversity of the Eucharistic portion which they receive and that bears fruit differently in each, according to the soil, or according to the quality of the tree on to which it is grafted. And so, the union of the faithful among themselves, a union which I would call corporeal, in a mystical sense, results from all of them sharing as food and nourishment one part belonging to the same Body, and receiving, from this part, the whole and identical Body of Christ in themselves, which cannot be separated from that part which each makes his own in a more particular way.

## Reading 91

*[The natural union and the personal or spiritual union with Christ; the latter arises from the Holy Spirit and its exemplar is the union which Christ has with the Father]*

However, only the union which is born from the Holy Spirit is that which unites not only man’s ‘*nature*’ with Christ, by means of the bodily union above described, but man himself, the person of man; and which unites in one spirit all the persons of the faithful among themselves, as St. Paul says: “*Qui autem adheret Domino, unus Spiritus est*” [‘but he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him’].<sup>584</sup>

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**583** Rom 12: 4-5.

**584** 1 Cor 6: 17.

It was this spiritual union, proceeding from the corporeal, as the Spirit of Christ proceeds from Christ, which JESUS Christ asked of His Father in the sublime prayer which He made in the Cenacle: *“Pater sancte, serva eos in nomine tuo, quos dedisti mihi: ut sint unum, sicut et nos. Non pro eis autem rogo tantum, sed et pro eis qui credituri sunt per verbum eorum in me: ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint: ut credat mundus, quia tu me misisti. Et ego claritatem, quam dedisti mihi, dedi eis: ut sint unum, sicut et nos unum sumus. Ego in eis, et tu in me: ut sint consummati in unum: et cognoscat mundus quia tu me misisti, et dilexisti eos, sicut et me dilexisti”* [‘Holy Father keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and has loved them even as thou hast loved me’].<sup>585</sup>

Christ then, the same Christ, is equally everything in everyone, and all the parts of Christ communicate their power to all the parts of man. The manner, used by Elisha, to raise the son of the Shunammite, was a figure of this. And Scriptures tell us: *“Ingressusque clausit ostium super se et super puerum, et oravit ad Dominum. Et ascendit, et incubuit super puerum: posuitque os suum super os ejus, et oculos suos super oculos ejus, et manus suas super manus ejus: et incurvavit se super eum, et calefacta est caro pueri”* [‘He shut the door upon the two of them and prayed to the Lord. Then he went up and lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm’].<sup>586</sup>

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**585** Jn 17: 11-23.

**586** 2 Kings 4: 33-34.

Since the same Christ is present in everyone, all have the same, identical infinite Good, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in them, whom they are aware of possessing. All have the same immortal life, which they share from the good they possess, that is from Christ. All have the same love, the same will, as it was said about the first Christians: “*Multitudinis autem credentium erat cor unum et anima una*” [‘The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul’].<sup>587</sup>

Since they shared Christ together, who was their supreme and only good, they were happy to share all other things, which they did not count as goods except as ordered to Christ: “*Nec quisquam eorum quae possidebat, aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illis omnia communia. Neque enim quisquam egens erat inter illos. Quotquot enim possessores agrorum aut domorum erant, vendentes afferebant pretia eorum quae vendebant, et ponebant ante pedes Apostolorum. Dividebatur autem singulis prout cuique opus erat*” [‘No one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were the possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the Apostle’s feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need’].<sup>588</sup>

In describing this unanimity and community of goods, the book of the *Acts of the Apostles*, makes a special mention of the Eucharist, which was the source and the most effective cause of it all. This is what we read: “*Omnes etiam qui credebant, erant pariter, et habebant omnia communia. Possessiones et substantias vendebant, et dividebant illa omnibus, prout cuique opus erat. Quotidie quoque perdurantes unanimiter in templo, et frangentes circa domos panem, sumebant cibum cum exsultatione et simplicitate cordis, collaudantes Deum et habentes gratiam ad omnem plebem*” [‘And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad

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**587** Acts 4: 32.

**588** *Ibid.* 4: 32, 34-35.

and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people’].<sup>589</sup>

The exemplar of this union, willed by Christ for His faithful, was the union He had with His Father: “*ut sint unum sicut et nos*” [‘that they be one as we are one’]. The Divine Word is united to His Father by the nature which is identical in both, though He remains distinct as regards His Person. So it is with the faithful, the personality of each remains distinct, but they share their nature together. Men, prescinding from grace, have the same specific nature, therefore, their sameness belongs only to the ideal and objective order.

Since they have a subjective mode of being, it does not follow from this that the faithful are truly unified either as persons or as nature. But the Divine Word is not only ideal but real object. Hence His action (in so far as it goes beyond the order of nature and tends to perfect it, completing its deficiencies and limitations without destroying it), is always perfect and comprehensive and tends, therefore, to realise the object even with respect to subjective natures.

Since, in all beings, the principle draws its determination and activity from the immanent term with which it is united through an ontological synthesis, and since the term of the intellective principle is the object, for this reason the Word, in revealing Himself to intelligences, unifies them in a real way. In so far as they have the Word Himself for their term, the intelligent principle which constitutes them as subjects is determined and actuated in the same way, and becomes nearly identical, in so far as it has that real common object.

And since the Word manifests Himself to finite intelligences in different ways, with various degrees of light, so they remain distinct from each other. This hidden communication of the Word is already given in Baptism, as is this partial identification, about which St. Paul writes: “*Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma*” [‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’].<sup>590</sup>

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**589** *Ibid.*2: 44-47.

**590** Eph 4: 5.

Christ, however, was not only God but also man, and as man His Person was the Person of the Word of God; hence it was the Word of God as Person who ruled His humanity as the inferior power. Humanity, therefore, also received from the Word the divine instinct of unifying men in a real way, since He loved in them the likeness of nature. He obtained this end by the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, through which all men acquired for the term of their sensitive life a portion of the Body of Christ, indivisible from the whole Body; by this means, the sensitive principle, which is the basis of human nature, receives a partial identification of nature, whereas the persons remain distinct.

Isaiah, therefore, was right to foretell the works of the Saviour in song: *“Haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus Salvatoris et dicetis in die illa: Confitemini Domino et invoke nomen eius: notas facite in populis adinventiones eius. Exulta et lauda habitatio Sion: quia magnus in medio tui Sanctus Israel”* [‘With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the nations. Shout and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel’<sup>591</sup>

## Reading 92

*[Because man is united with Christ as the branch with the vine, ‘he is likewise joined with the eternal Father;’ the society of man with Christ and the Father; the common good in society is ‘precisely Christ and his most holy Body and his Spirit’].*

As a result of Christ being united with man, and man inserted into Christ as a branch into the vine, in the ways mentioned above, man is united also with the eternal Father, in whose

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**591** Is 12: 3-6.

bosom is the Son, as the Father is in the Son: “*Ut omnes unum sint sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint. Ego in eis et tu in me: ut sint consummati in unum*” [‘that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us. I in them and thou in me that they may become perfectly one’].<sup>592</sup> The Apostle also says: “*Unus Deus et Pater omnium, qui est super omnes et per omnia, et in omnibus nobis*” [‘One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all’].<sup>593</sup>

Therefore, man’s society with Christ willed by the Father, of whom the Apostle says: “*Fidelis Deus, per quem vocati estis in societatem Filii eius JESU Christi Domini nostri*” [‘God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord’]<sup>594</sup> is also man’s society with the Father, as St. John taught: “*Ut et vos societatem habeatis nobiscum et societas nostra sit cum Patre, et cum Filio eius JESU Christo*” [‘So that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son JESUS Christ’].<sup>595</sup>

12<sup>th</sup> July 1849,  
Santa Lucia Sopra Caserta,  
St. Jo. Gualb.

We should note how suitable is here the word ‘*society*’, which demands that several persons have as aim a common good. Now, the faithful with God, and with each other, have in common and rejoice together in their common good, which is Christ, and His most holy Body and His Spirit.

And coming now to speak of the Spirit, whom Christ sends into those in whom He dwells, we begin by saying that this is the Spirit of our *subjective* life. In the sentient and intelligent being, in fact, considering it as it is ontologically constituted, two extremes are to be distinguished, the *principle* and the *term*. And

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**592** Jn 17: 21-23.

**593** Eph 4: 6.

**594** 1 Cor 1: 9.

**595** 1 Jn 1, 3, 6, 7.

although the principle (which is strictly the *subject*) is not without its own term, nevertheless, once it exists, it has an activity of its own, through which it adheres to its term in varying degrees.

This can be seen, in a most obvious way, in intelligent and free creatures whose subjective act, of greater or lesser intensity, is the adhesion of love. Since we cannot make a subjective act of love without an object to love, according to the saying “*voluntas non fertur in ignotum*” [‘the will does not tend to the unknown’], nonetheless, when the object is present, this can be loved by the subject in varying degrees. In the order of the supernatural life, of which we speak, the immediate object is always Christ. Now the subjective act, whereby we love Christ whom we know as the object of our love, is inspired by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is sent forth by the object itself, namely, by Christ.

Christ, then, is the immediate author of the *objective life*, the source of the *subjective life*. And about the *objective life*, Christ said: “*Haec est autem vita aeterna: ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum, et quem misisti JESUM Christum*” [‘And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and JESUS Christ whom thou hast sent’].<sup>596</sup> This life is said to be objective, not because it is not also an act of the subject (in this sense all life is subjective), but because it is determined necessarily by the sole immanent and primitive perception of the object, provided the will does not place any obstacle and reject it. This object is Christ, who has the Holy Spirit in Him.

Of the *subjective life*, the special work of the Holy Spirit, Christ said: “*Et notum feci eis nomen tuum, et notum faciam, ut dilectio, qua dilexisti me in ipsis sit, et ego in ipsis*” [‘I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known (sending the Holy Spirit personally) that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them’].<sup>597</sup>

The Holy Spirit operates in both lives, and for this reason He is called “*Spiritus vitae*” [‘Spirit of life’],<sup>598</sup> in so far as both lives

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**596** Jn 17: 3.

**597** *Ibid.* 26.

**598** Rom 8: 2 - 2 Cor 3: 3-6 - 1 Peter 3: 18.

are subjective, the act of the subject. In the first life, however, the Spirit acts in an initial way and, as it were, potentially, not yet fully, and even less personally (by which we wish to say that the Spirit is not revealed as a person to the feeling of man, but simply in the form of gifts and not distinct from Christ). The effect of the Holy Spirit is to add force to the subjective supernatural activity, so that we may know Christ and His words in a lively and more perfect way and may love Him more intensely and effectively.

The Word remains distinct from the human subject, in whom He dwells, because of the difference between the object and the subject, which is a categorical distinction. The Holy Spirit remains distinct, from the difference between the Creator and the created, the Mover and the moved. The subject moved, in our case, feels the motion, feels that he has in himself what he did not have before, feels charity, possesses holy acts; but does not notice any new object, because the Spirit does not have the objective form proper to the Word. Hence Christ said: "*Spiritus ubi vult spirat, et vocem eius audis, sed nescis unde veniat aut quo vadat: sic est omnis qui natus est ex spiritu*" ['The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes, so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit'].<sup>599</sup>

St. Paul distinguished the *mind* of man, which has the object for its form, from the *spirit*, which is like an instinct, without any new and proper object. Hence he said: "*Qui enim loquitur lingua non hominibus loquitur sed Deo: nemo enim audit. Spiritu autem loquitur mysteria. Nam si orem lingua, spiritus meus orat, mens autem mea sine fructu est. Quid ergo est? Orabo spiritu, orabo et mente: psallam spiritu, psallam et mente*" ['For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God: for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also'].<sup>600</sup>

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**599** Jn 3: 8.

**600** 1 Cor 14: 2-15.



The same Apostle, elsewhere, says that the Spirit prays in man, and asks for what is needed, at that time when man himself does not know what he should be asking.<sup>601</sup> The Spirit, then, is united with and joined, so to speak, to the subject, whom He sanctifies, acting in him in such a way that the subject is at the same time acting together with the Spirit. Hence, Christ attributes to the Spirit the new man, the man born to holiness; and for this reason, man is said to become one spirit with God. “*Amen, amen dico tibi, nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto, non potest introire in regnum Dei. Quod natum est ex carne, caro est: et quod natum est ex spiritu, spiritus est*” [‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit’].<sup>602</sup>

And St. Paul adds: “*Qui autem adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est*” [‘But he who is united to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him’].<sup>603</sup> Hence the same Apostle says that the Spirit prays in us, when we pray: “*Ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus. Qui autem scrutatur corda, scit quid desiderat Spiritus: quia secundum Deum postulat pro Sanctis*” [‘The Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what the mind of the Spirit is because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God’].<sup>604</sup>

However, although the Spirit is given “*secundum mensuram donationis Christi*” [‘according to the measure of Christ’s gift’],<sup>605</sup> as the Scriptures express it, the divine knowledge of the Spirit always remains distinct from the human knowledge of the man in whom the Spirit is manifested. Equally, we distinguish the justice of God “*qua ipse iustus est*” [‘by which he himself is just’] from the justice of God “*qua nos iustos facit*” [‘by which he

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**601** Rom 8: 26-27.

**602** Jn 3: 5-6.

**603** 1 Cor 6: 17.

**604** Rom 8: 26-27.

**605** Eph 4: 7.

makes us just'];<sup>606</sup> because, although justice and holiness are one and identical, nevertheless the subjects who share or possess them, and have the feeling or knowledge of them, are different.

## Reading 93

Therefore, just as Christ unites human nature, so His Holy Spirit unites human persons into the most intimate society.

*(The Manuscript ends at this point. Rosmini left it unfinished).*

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**606** Conc. Trid. Sess 6 c. 7.

# INDEX OF SOURCES

## ANCIENT SOURCES

**DIOGENES LAERTIUS**, *De vita et moribus philosophorum libri X*

**PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA**

*De eo quis rerum divinarum haeres sit*

*De eo quod a Deo immittantur somnia*

*De mundi opificio*

*Legis allegoriarum*

**FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS**

*Antiquities of the Jews*

*Contra Apionem*

*The Jewish War*

**PLATO**

*Timaeus*

*Epinomis*

**VERGIL**

*Aeneis*

## FATHERS OF THE CHURCH AND THE MIDDLE AGES

**AUGUSTINE**

*Confessions*

*Contra Iulianum Pelagianum, Libri VI*

*De Civitate Dei*

*De correptione et gratia, ad Valentinum, et cum illo Monachos, liber unus*

*De Genesi ad litteram*

*De natura boni contra Manichaeos liber*

*De Trinitate*

*Epistolae*

*In Evangelium Ioannis expositio*

*Liber de diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus*

*Liber de haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum*

*Liber quaestionum Veteris et Novi Testamenti*

*Quaestionum ex utroque testamento mixtim, De principio*

*Sermones*

*Soliloquiorum libri de cognitione Dei et animae*

**ALCUIN**, *Commentariorum in Ioannem*

**ALIGHIERI DANTE**, *The Divine Comedy*

**AMBROSE**

*Ad Gratianum Augustum de fide*

*De incarnationis dominicae mysterio liber*

*Hexaemeron*

*In Psalmum David XXXVI, Enarratio*

**ANSELM**, *Monologium*

**ARETA**, *Apocalypsin*

**ATHANASIUS**

*Divinae scripturae synopsis*

*Epistola de sententia Dionysii*

*Ex Deo Deus est Verbum*

*Liber de definitionibus*

*Orationes adversus arianos*

*Testimonia ex sacra Scriptura, de naturali comunione similis essentiae inter*

*Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum*

**BASIL**

*Homiliae*

*Homeliae IX in Hexaemeron*

*Liber de Spiritu Sancto*

**BEDE**, *In Sanctum Evangelium Dñi Ioannis expositio*

**BERNARD**, *Super Cantica Canticorum*

**CYPRIAN**, *Adversus Iudaeos*

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA**

*Contra Iulianum*

*Dialogus de Trinitate*

*Pro Christiana religione, ad ea quae a Iuliano Apostata ei fuerunt objecta*

*Super Evangelium Ioannis*

*Thesaurus*

**CYRIL OF JERUSALEM**, *Catechesis secunda*

**CLAUDIANUS**, *De Christo servatore*

**CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA**, *Cohortatio ad gentes*

**CLEMENT (Pope)** *Epistola ad Corinthios 1*

**ELIJAH OF CRETE**, *Commentarii in S. Gregorii Naz. Orationes XIX*

**EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS**

*Adversus octoginta haereses*

*Ancoratus*

**EUSEBIUS**

*De demonstratione evangelica libri decem*

*Ecclesiasticae historiae*

*Praeparationis evangelicae libri quindecim*

**EUTYMIUS**, *Evangelium secundum Ioannem*

**FULGENTIUS**

*Ad Monimum libri tres*

*Ad Trasimundum regem Vandalorum libri tres*

*Contra arianos liber unus*

**JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

*Commentarii super Ioannis Evangelium*

*Eruditi commentarii in Evangelium Matthaei, Incerto Authore*

*Sermo admonitorius, sub initio sanctae quadragesimae, in qua opus sex dierum narrare coepit*

**JOHN FROM DAMASCUS**, *Expositio accuratae fidei orthodoxae*

**JEROME**

*Catalogus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum*

*Commentariorum Hieronymi in Esaiam*

*De viris illustribus*

*Epistolae*

*Evangelii secundum Ioannem*

*Expositio quatuor Evangeliorum*

*In commentaries super Matthaeum*

*In epistolam ad Ephesios*

*Quaestiones sive traditiones hebraicae in Genesim*

**GREGORY THE GREAT**, *Moralis expositionis in beatum Iob*

**GREGORY OF NAZIANTIUS**, *Oratio secunda de Filio, quae quarta est de Theologia*

**GREGORY OF NYSSA**, *De fide ad Simplicium seu de Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto*

**GREGORY OF TOURS**, *De Gloria beatorum martyrum*

**IDACIUS (VIGILIUS TAPSENSIS)**, *Contra Mariavadum arianum diaconum, sub nomine Idacii Clari contra Varimadum*

**IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH**, *Ad Ephesios*

**HILARY OF POITIER**

*De Trinitate*

*De synodis fidei Catholicae contra arianos, et praevaricatores arianis acquiescentes*

*In Evangelium Matthaei, canones seu commentaries*

**INNOCENT I**, *Patribus concilii Milevitani, comprobans illorum acta adversus pelagianos*

**INNOCENT III**, *De sacro altaris mysterio libri sex*

**IRENAEUS**, *Adversus Haereses Valentini similiumque*

**LACTANTIUS**, *Divinarum institutionum*  
**LEONTIUS**, *Capita triginta contra Severum*  
**NOVATIANUS**, *De Trinitate Liber*  
**HONORIUS FROM AUTUN**, *Liber de cognitione verae vitae*  
**ORIGEN**  
*Commentariorum in Evangelium Ioannis*  
*In Genesim homiliae*  
**PRUDENTIUS**, *Liber cathemerinon*  
**REMIGIUS OF AUXERRE (HAIMO OF HALBERSTADT)**, *In divi Pauli epistolas exposition, in epistolam ad hebraeos*  
**RUFINUS**, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*  
**RUPERT**, *In Evangelium S. Ioannis commentariorum libri XIV*  
**THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA**, *In Evangelium Ioannis commentarii fragmenta*  
**THEOPHILACTUS**, *In Ioannem enarratio*  
**THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH**, *Ad Autolyicum*  
**TERTULLIAN**  
*Adversus Hermogenem Liber*  
*Adversus Praxeam Liber*  
*Apologeticus adversos gentes*  
*De praescriptionibus adversus hereticos liber*  
*De Trinitate*  
**THOMAS AQUINAS**  
*Expositio super Epistolam S. Pauli ad Colossenses*  
*In catenam explanationum super Ioan. Evn. Contextam*  
*In Evangelium beati Ioannis evangelistae exposition*  
*Summa contra gentiles*  
**VICTORINUS**, *Adversus Arium*  
**VICTORINUS OF POETOVIVM**, *In Apocalypsin Beati Ioannis*

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**BRETSCHNEIDER K. G.**, *Probabilia de Evangelii et Epistolarum Joannis Apostoli indole et origine*  
**CALMET A.**, *Commentarius litteralis in omnes libros veteris et Novi Testamenti*

**COTELIER J. B.**, *Sanctorum Patrum qui temporibus apostolicis floruerunt, Barnabae, Hermae, Clementis, Ignatii, Polycarpi opera, cum Clementis, Ignatii, Polycarpi actis atque martyriis*

**CROME F. G.**, *Probabilia haud probabilia*

**DE LA BIGNE M.**, *Sacrae bibliothecae Sanctorum Patrum seu scriptorum ecclesiasticorum probabiliū*

**DE WETTE W. M. I.**, *Beitrage zur Einleitung in das Neue Testament*  
*Biblische Dogmatik*

**DIODATI G.**, *La Sacra Bibbia contenente l'Antico ed il Nuovo Testamento*

**EICHORN J. G.** *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*

**GABLER J. P. (GABLERI)**, *Neuestes theologischen Journal*

**GIESELER J. C. I.**, *Ueber die Entstehung und die fruhesten Schicksale der schriftlichen Evangelien*

**GROTIUS U.**  
*Annotationes in Vetus et Novum Testamentum*  
*De veritate religionis Christianae*

**GUARINI R.**, *Effetti fisici dell'uso del Pane e del Vino consacrato*

**HENKE H. P. K. (HENKIO)**, *Magazin fur die Religionsphilosophie, Exegese und Kirchengeschichte*

**HORSTIUS**, *Lasst sich die Aechth, des Johannes Evang. Aus Hinslangt Grund. Bezweifeln, und welch. Ist der wahrscheinl. Urspr. Dies schr.*

**KAISER G. P. C.**, *De Apologeticis Evangelii Jo. consiliis authentiam eius commonstrantibus*

**KUINOEL C. G. (KUINOELIUM)**, *Commentar. ad N. T. libros histor. Prolegg. In Evang. Jo.*

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**MALDONATO J.** *Commentariorum in quattuor evangelistas*

**OLSHAUSEN H.**, *Die Echtheit der vier kanon. Evangelien aus der Gesch. der zwei ersten Jahr. erwiesen*

**PAULUS H. E. G.**, *Commentationes theologiae patissima historiam Cerinthi illustraturae*

**PETAU D. (PETAVIUS)**, *Dogmata Theologica*

**PINI E.**, *Protologia analysin scientiae sistensratione prima exhibitam*

**ROSENMULLER J. G.**  
*Historia interpretationis librorum sacrorum in ecclesia christiana Scholia in Novum Testamentum*

**ROSMINI A.**  
*Frammenti di una storia dell'empieta'*  
*Psicologia*

*Teodicea*

**SCHLEKER F. G.**, *Versuch einer Widerlegung der hauptsächlichsten Einwurfe, die in der neusten Zeit gegen die Aechtheit des Evangelium Joannis gemacht sind*

**SCHOTT H. A.**, *Examinantur dubitationes quaedam de authentia Evangelii Joannei nuperrime ex prioribus quatuor capitibus a S. V. Bretschneidero excitatae*

**SCHMIDT J. E. C.**, *Allgemeinem Bibliothek der neuesten theologischen und padagogischen Litteratur*

**SUSKIND F. G.**, *Magazin fur christliche Dogmatik und Moral*

**USTERI I.**, *Commentatio critica in qua Evangelium Joannis genuinum esse ex comparatis IV Evangeliorum narrationibus de coena ultima et passione Jesu Christi ostenditur*

**VAN GRIETHUYSEN W. H.**, *Dissertationes pro Ev. Jo. Αὐθεντία*

**VOGEL E. F. (VOGELIUS)**, *Der Evangelist Johannes und seine Ausleger vor dem jungsten Gericht*

**WEGSCHEIDER**, *Einl. In Evang. Jo.*

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