

CHAPTER V

Enlightenments Given to Me by the Most High Concerning Holy Scriptures, in Particular Chapter VIII of the Proverbs, in Confirmation of the Preceding Chapter.

52. I will converse, O Lord, with thy great majesty, since Thou art the God of mercies, though I am dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27), and supplicate thy incomprehensible greatness to look from thy most exalted throne upon me, this most lowly and useless creature, and to be propitious to me, continuing thy light in order to illumine my understanding. *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth* (I Kg. 3:10). The Most High and corrector of the wise (Wis. 7:15) then spoke to me. He referred me to chapter VIII of the Proverbs and gave me the understanding of this mystery, since it is enclosed in that chapter. First was given me the literal wording of the passage, which is as follows (Prov. 8:22-31):

53. Verse 22. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before He made anything from the beginning.*

23. *I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made.*

24. *The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived, neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out.*

25. *The mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established; before the hills I was brought forth.*

26. *He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world.*

27. *When He prepared the heavens, I was present; when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths.*

28. *When He established the heavens above, and poised the fountains of waters.*

29. *When He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits; when He balanced the foundations of the earth.*

30. *I was with Him forming all things; and was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times.*

31. *Playing in the world; and my delights were to be with the children of men.*

54. This is the portion of the Proverbs of which the Most High gave me understanding. First I understood it speaks of the ideas or decrees which were in the divine mind before the creation of the world; that in its literal sense it speaks of the Person of the Incarnate Word and of his most holy Mother, while in its mystical sense it refers to the holy Angels and Prophets; for before decreeing or forming the ideas for creating of the rest of material creatures, He formed and decreed the most holy humanity of Christ and of his most pure Mother, and this is indicated by the first words.

55. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways.* In God there were no ways, nor are they necessary for his divinity; yet He created them, so through them we could know Him, and all creatures capable of knowing Him could go to Him. In this beginning, before anything else was formed in his intention, and when He desired to make paths and open ways in his divine mind for communicating his divinity, in order to give a beginning of all things, He first decreed to create the humanity of the Word,* which was to be the way by which the rest of creatures could come to the Father (Jn. 14:6). And together with this decree was that of his most holy

* cf. Jn. 8:25 [Ed.]

Mother, through whom his divinity was to come into the world, being formed and born of Her as God and man. For this reason it is said *The Lord possessed me*, since both Son and Mother were possessed by His Majesty; the Son, since regarding his divinity He was the possession, portion and treasure of the Father, being inseparable from Him, because they are one and the same substance and divinity with the Holy Ghost; and He also possessed his humanity with the knowledge and decree of the plenitude of grace and glory which He would bestow upon this humanity from its creation and hypostatic union. And since this decree and possession was to be accomplished by means of the Mother who was to engender Him and give birth to the Incarnate Word (since He did not determine to create Him out of nothing, nor form his body and soul out of any other material), it was necessary to possess the Mother who was to give Him human form. Thus He possessed and claimed Her for Himself in that same instant, efficaciously desiring that at no time or moment would anyone of the human race have any right or part in Her (in the order of grace). The Lord himself reserved this portion as his part alone, and so uniquely his since She was to give Him human form of her own substance. She alone was to call Him Son, and She alone was to be called by Him Mother, a Mother worthy of having God made man for a Son. And as all this preceded in dignity the whole creation, so did it also take precedence in the mind and will of the supreme Creator. Hence it says:

56. *Before He made anything from the beginning, I was set up from eternity and of old.* Regarding this eternity of God (which we now conceive as imagining an interminable time), what were the things *of old*, since none had been created? It is clear this speaks of the three divine Persons, that is, of their divinity without beginning, and of that which alone is ancient, which is the indivisible Trinity (since all the rest, which have a beginning, are recent), and that She was decreed when only the ancient Uncreated was, and before any ideas of the future creation were formed. Between these two extremes was the means of the hypostatic union through the intervention of most holy Mary, and by it both were decreed together, immediately next to God and before all other creatures. This was the most wonderful decree which has ever been or will ever be made. The first and most admirable image in the mind of God, after the eternal generation, was that of Christ, and then that of his Mother.

57. And what other order could there be in God, when the order He has in Himself is all together, without the necessity of one thing following another, nor the perfection of anything await the perfection of another, or succeed each other among themselves? All is perfectly ordered in his eternal nature, and it is and ever shall be. What He decreed was for the Person of the Son to become incarnate, and from this deified humanity would begin the order of the divine desire and of his decrees. He would be the Head and Model of all the rest of men and creatures, to whom all would be ordered and subordinated; for this was the best order and concert of harmony of creatures, having One who would be first and superior, and from Him all nature would be ordered, and especially the mortals. And among them the first was the Mother of the Godman, as supreme among mere creatures and closest to Christ, and in Him to the Divinity. With this order the conduits of the crystalline fountain which flowed from the throne of the divine nature were directed first to the humanity of the Word (Apoc. 22:1), and then to his most holy Mother* in the degree and manner which was possible for a mere creature, and appropriate for the created Mother of the Creator. It was fitting for all the divine attributes to be manifested in Her, without denying anything She was capable of receiving in order for Her to be inferior only to Christ our Lord, and superior in degrees of grace incomparable to all the rest of creatures

* cf. Eccclus. 24:41 [Ed.]

capable of grace and gifts. This was the order so well arranged by Wisdom, to commence with Christ and his Mother, and thus the text adds:

58. *Before the earth was made, the depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived.* This earth was that of the first Adam; and before his formation was decreed, and the abysses of the resolutions *ad extra* were formed in the divine mind, Christ and his Mother were conceived and formed. They are called *depths* because between the being of the uncreated God and that of creatures there is an infinite distance; and this was measured, according to our understanding, when the creatures were individually conceived and formed, for then also were formed in their manner these *depths* of immeasurable distance. Before all these the Word was already conceived, not only by eternal generation from the Father, but also his temporal generation was decreed and conceived in the divine mind from the Virgin Mother full of grace, because without the Mother, and such a Mother, He could not establish the efficacious and binding decree of this temporal generation;* hence then and there most holy Mary was conceived in that beatific immensity, and her eternal remembrance was written in the bosom of God, so for all the ages and eternities it would never be erased. She was stamped and delineated by the supreme Artificer in his own mind, and possessed by his love with an inseparable embrace.

59. *Neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out.* The images or ideas of creatures had not yet issued from their origin and beginning, for they had not yet sprung from the fountains of the Divinity by goodness and mercy as through conduits, so the divine will could determine upon the universal creation and the communication of his attributes and perfections; for regarding the entire rest of the universe these waters and fountains were still impounded and held back within the immense ocean of the Divinity. In his own Being there were no founts or currents by which these waters could be manifest, not having been directed toward men; and when they were released, they had already been directed toward the most holy humanity of Christ and his Virgin Mother. And thus is added:

60. *The mountains with their huge bulk had not been established,* because God had not as yet decreed the creation of the high mountains of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, or the rest of the Saints of greater perfection, nor had the decree of such great resolve been established with its great weight and equity in the mighty and sweet manner (Wis. 8:1) that God has in his counsels and great works. And not only before the mountains (which are the great Saints) but also *before the hills I was brought forth*, which are the orders of the holy Angels; before them the divine mind had formed the most holy humanity (united hypostatically to the divine Word), and the Mother who bore Him. The Son and the Mother were conceived before all the angelic orders, so what David said in Psalm VIII (v. 5-6) can be understood: *What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels*, etc. Let everyone understand and recognize that there is a man who is at the same time God, who is above all men and angels, and that all are his inferiors and servants, for as man He is superior because He is also God; for this reason He is the first in the divine mind and in his will, and together with Him and inseparable is one Woman and Virgin most pure, his Mother, Queen and superior of all creation.

61. And if man (as says the same Psalm [Ib. 6]) was *crowned with glory and honor*, and was constituted above all the works of the hands of the Lord, it was because the Godman, his Head, had merited this crown, and that which the Angels possess. The same Psalm adds that after having made man a little less than the angels He placed him over the works of his hands, yet

* Thus without Mary we would not have Christ. [Ed.]

these very angels were works of his hands. Thus David included the whole human race, saying God made man a little less than the angels; yet though man was inferior in his nature, there is one Man who is superior and constituted over these same angels, who were works of the hands of God. This superiority is in the order of grace, not only because of the divinity united to the humanity, but also regarding the humanity itself by the grace which would result in it from the hypostatic union, and after that his most holy Mother would be superior in grace. Likewise some Saints in virtue of the same incarnate Lord can attain a superior degree of grace and a throne superior to that of the angels. And the Psalm says:

62. *I was brought forth* or born, which means more than conceived; for being conceived refers to the divine intellect of the most blessed Trinity at the instant when the Incarnation was known and as it were conferred in regard to its propriety. But to be brought forth refers to the divine will which resolved upon this work, so it would efficaciously carried out, the most holy Trinity resolving in his divine consistory and as it were first executing in Himself this most wonderful work of the hypostatic union and calling into being most holy Mary. And for this reason it first says in this chapter that She was *conceived*, and then *brought forth* or born, for She was first known, and then resolved upon and willed.

63. *He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world.* Before forming the second earth (for earth is repeated a second time), which was that of the earthly paradise (Gen. 2:8, 15), where the first man was taken after being created from the first earth of the Damascene plains, before this second earth where he sinned, was the determination to create the humanity of the Word, and the material from which it was to spring, which was the Virgin; for God had to prevent Her beforehand from taking part in sin or being subject to it. *The rivers and poles of the world* are the Church Militant and the treasures of grace and gifts which were to flow with impetus from the fount of the Divinity, directed toward all men, and efficaciously to the Saints and the elect, who move in God like hinges,* being dependent upon and clinging to his will by the virtues of faith, hope and charity, by which means He sustains, vivifies and governs them, moving them toward the highest good and last end, and also toward human conversation, without pulling them from the hinges upon which they were founded. Here is also included the Sacraments and composition of the Church, her protection and invincible solidity, her beauty and sanctity without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27), for this is what is signified by this *earth* and these *rivers* of grace. Before the Most High prepared all this, and ordered this earth and Mystical Body of which Christ our good would be the Head, He decreed the Incarnation of the Word, and his Mother by whose means and intervention He would work these wonders in the world.

64. *When he prepared the heavens, I was there.* When He prepared and prearranged heaven, and the reward which would be given to the just children of this Church after their exile, the union of the Word with the humanity was already decreed, meriting grace for them as their Head, and with Him his most holy Mother. Having destined the greater part of this grace for the Son and Mother, He disposed and arranged the glory for the other saints.

65. *When with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths.* When He decreed to enclose the depths of his divinity in the Person of the Son with a certain law and limit which no living being can see or encompass, He delineated this circle and sphere into which none could or can enter except the Word alone (for He alone can encompass it), in order to contract and lower his divinity into the humanity (Philip. 2:7), and then both divinity and humanity first in the womb of most holy Mary, then in the small quantity and species of bread and wine, and in them into the

* cf. Jn. 10:1-9 [Ed.]

narrow heart of a sinful and mortal man. All this is signified by those depths, law, and compass or limit, which are called *certain* because of how much they encompass, and by the certainty of what seemed impossible to exist, and the difficulty of explaining it; for it does not seem possible for the Divinity to be subject to a law, nor enclose Himself within determined limits, yet the wisdom and power of the Lord himself made it possible, and has accomplished it by enclosing Himself in a finite being.

66. *When He established the heavens above, and poised the fountains of waters; when He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits.* Here the just are called *heavens*, for that is what they are since God has his dwelling place and habitation within them by grace, giving them a center and stability, raising them above the earth (even while they are pilgrims upon it), according to the disposition of each one; and afterwards He gives them a place and seat in the heavenly Jerusalem according to their merits. For them He balanced the fountains of waters and divided them, distributing to each one with equity and weight the gifts of grace and glory, the virtues, helps and perfections according as divine wisdom so disposes. When He resolved to make this division of these waters, He decreed to give to the humanity united to the Word the entire ocean of graces and gifts which came from the Divinity as to the Onlybegotten of the Father. And though this ocean was infinite, He placed a boundary to it, which was the humanity, where the fullness of the Divinity dwells (Col. 2:9), though it was hidden thirty-three years within that boundary so He could dwell with men, and so what happened to the three Apostles on mount Tabor (Mt. 17:6) would not happen to all men. In the same instant in which this entire ocean and fountains of grace came upon Christ our Lord, as adjoining the Divinity, they redounded in his most holy Mother as adjoining her onlybegotten Son; for without the Mother, and such a Mother, the gifts of her Son would not be arranged in such an orderly manner and with consummate perfection, nor did the admirable harmony of the celestial and spiritual structure, and the distribution of the gifts of the Church Militant and Triumphant, begin upon any other foundation.

67. *When He balanced the foundation of the earth, I was with Him forming all things.* The works *ad extra* are common to all three divine Persons, for all are only one God, one wisdom and power, and thus it was necessary and unavoidable for the Word, in whom all things were made (Jn. 1:3) in union with the Divinity, would be with the Father in making them. But here more is meant, for also the Incarnate Word was already present together with his most holy Mother in the divine will. Thus, just as through the Word, insofar as He is God, all things were made, so also for Him, in the first place and as the most noble and worthy end, were created the foundations of the earth and all that is contained in it. Therefore it is further said:

68. *And I was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times, playing in the world.* The Incarnate Word rejoiced at all times, because He knew all the ages and lives of mortals, which compared to eternity are as one brief day (Ps. 89:4). He was delighted because the entire succession of creation would have an end, so when the last day ended with all perfection men would rejoice in grace and the crown of glory. He was delighted, as if counting the days until He would descend from heaven to earth and assume human flesh. He knew the thoughts and works of men were like a game, and that all was mockery and deception. He beheld the just, who though weak and limited, were suitable for the communication and the manifestation of his glory and perfections. He gazed upon his immutable being, the limitation of men, and how He was to become man among them. He delighted in his own works, and especially in the works He prepared for his most holy Mother, in whom He was so pleased to take human form and make Her worthy of such a wonderful work. These were the days in which the Incarnate

Word rejoiced. And because by conceiving and devising of all these works, and by the efficacious decree of the divine will, there followed the execution of all these works, the divine Word adds:

69. *And my delights were to be with the children of men.* My satisfaction is to labor for them and favor them; my contentment is to die for them, and my joy is to be their Master and their Repairer. My delights are to raise the poor from the dust and unite Myself with the humble (Ps. 112:7), to humble my divinity for this purpose, and cover and conceal it with their nature; to empty and humble Myself (Philip. 2:7-8), to suspend the glory of my body in order to make Myself capable of suffering and of meriting for them the friendship of my Father, to be a Mediator between his most just indignation and the malice of men, and to be their Model and Head whom they could imitate and follow. These are the delights of the eternal Word incarnate.

70. O eternal and incomprehensible goodness, how awestruck and amazed I am, seeing immensity of thy immutable Being compared with the littleness of man! And seeing thy eternal love mediating between two extremes of such incomparable distance, an infinite love for a creature not only small but ungrateful! On what an abject and lowly object, O Lord, dost Thou cast thy eyes, and on what an Object so noble can and should man place his eyes and his affections in view of such a great mystery! Overwhelmed in amazement and tenderness of my heart, I lament the unhappiness of mortals, and their darkness and blindness, since they do not dispose themselves to know how long ago Thy Majesty began to look upon them and prepare for them his true happiness with such love and care as if thy own consisted in it.

71. All his works, and the arrangement of them just as He would create them, the Lord had in his mind *ab initio*, and He numbered and weighed them according to his equity and righteousness; and as it is written in the book of Wisdom (7:17ff.), He knew the disposition of the world before He created it, He knew the beginning, the middle, and the end of time, its alterations and courses of the years, the arrangement of the stars, the powers of the elements, the natures of animals, the fury of wild beasts, the force of the winds, the differences of the trees, the properties of roots, and the thoughts of men. He weighed and counted all (Wis. 11:21), not only what the rational and irrational creatures literally represent, but all the rest which these creatures mystically signify, which since it is not relevant to my present purpose I will not mention them.