

## 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 only dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27), and supplicate thy incomprehensible greatness to look from thy exalted throne upon me, thy most vile and useless creature, and to be propitious to me by continuing to enlighten my understanding. *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth* (I Kg. 3:10). Then the Most High and corrector of the wise (Wis. 7:15) spoke to me. He referred me to chapter VIII of the Proverbs and gave me the understanding of its mysteries. 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 an understanding. First I understood it speaks of the ideas or decrees which were in the divine mind before the creation of the world, and 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 of the rest of material creatures He formed and decreed the most sacred 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 are no ways, and his divinity does not need them; yet He made use of them, so by them He could be known, and all creatures capable of knowing Him could go to Him. In this beginning, before the image of anything else was formed, because He desired to create paths and open ways in his mind in order to communicate his divinity, He decreed as a beginning the formation of the humanity of the Word, who was to be the way by which the other creatures could come to the Father (Jn. 14:6). Joined with this decree was that of his most holy Mother, through whom his divinity was to enter into the world, becoming man and being born from Her as God and man. Therefore it is said *God possessed me*, since both his divinity and humanity were possessed by His Majesty: In his divinity the Son was the possession, the property, and the treasure of the Father without possibility of separation, because Father and Son are One, of the same substance and divinity

with the Holy Ghost; and the Father possessed the humanity of the Son, because He himself knew and decreed the plenitude of grace and glory which He was to bestow upon this humanity at the moment of its creation and hypostatic union. Moreover, as this decree and possession was to be brought about by means of the Mother who was to engender Him and give birth to the Word (since He did not decide to create Him out of nothing, nor form his body and soul out of any other material), it followed that He possessed Her who was to give Him human form. Thus He possessed and claimed Her as his own in the same instant, providing with solicitude that in the order of grace neither the human race nor any other would have at any time a right or a part in Her. He alone retained the full right in Her as his portion, and as much his portion as the dignity of Mother required. She alone was to call Him Son, and She alone was to be called by Him Mother, a Mother worthy of having an incarnate God for a Son. Now as all this far surpassed in dignity the whole creation, so did it also take precedence in the mind 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, She was ordained from his divinity without beginning, and from that which alone is ancient, which is the indivisible Trinity (since all the rest, having a beginning, are recent); that She was ordained when only the ancient Uncreated was, and before any ideas of the future creation were formed. Between these two extremes intervened the idea of the hypostatic union, which was to be verified *ad extra* through the intervention of most holy Mary. Both were ordained together, immediately next to God and before any other creature, and it was the most wonderful decree ever passed or ever to be passed. 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 must the perfection of anything await the perfection of another or succeed each other among themselves? All is well ordered in his eternal nature, and so it was and shall be forever. The new ordainment, however, was for the Person of the Son to become incarnate, and from his deified humanity would begin the order of the divine desire and of his decrees. He was to be the Head and Exemplar of all other men and creatures, for this was the most appropriate order and harmony to be instituted among creatures, that they have One who is the first and the highest, and from Him would descend the order of all nature, and especially the order of mortals. First among them all, however, was the Mother of the Godman as the supreme among mere creatures, following immediately upon Christ and through Him upon the Divinity. Thus the conduits which led the crystalline fountains of the Divinity from the eternal throne meet first in the humanity of the Word (Apoc. 22:1), and immediately thereafter in his holy Mother\* in the degree and manner as it was possible for a mere creature, and as it was proper for the Mother of the Creator. It was equitable for all the divine attributes to exert themselves in Her without reserve insofar as She was capable, and for Her to be inferior only to Christ our Lord. She was to be superior in the degree of his incomparable graces to all the rest of the creatures who are capable of graces and gifts. This then was the order so well instituted by the eternal wisdom, that all was to commence with Christ and his Mother. Therefore the text adds:

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\* cf. Ecclus. 24:41 [Ed.]

58. *Before the earth was made, and the depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived.* This earth was that of the first Adam, for before his creation was decreed, and before the abysses of the ideas *ad extra* were formed in the divine mind, the likenesses of Christ and of his Mother were already conceived. The forms are called *depths* because between the being of the uncreated God and that of creatures there is an infinite distance. This distance was measured, according to our understanding, when the creatures themselves were conceived and formed, for then also were formed in their manner these *depths* of infinite distance. Before all these was conceived the Word, not only by the eternal generation from the Father, but also decreed and conceived in the divine mind was his temporal generation from the Virgin Mother full of grace, because without the Mother, and such a Mother, He could not establish the efficacious and complete decree of this temporal generation; hence then and there most holy Mary was conceived in that beatific immensity, and her eternal memory 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 his love by 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 source and origin, for they had not yet sprung from the fountains of the Divinity by the goodness and mercy of God through which they were to be conducted so the divine will could determine upon the universal creation and communication of his attributes and perfections. In respect to the entire rest of the universe these waters and fountains were still repressed and detained within the bounds of the immense ocean of the Divinity; in his own Being there were as yet no founts or currents for outward manifestation, not having until then met their proper object, namely men. But when these were encountered, the sacred humanity of Christ and his Virgin Mother had already furnished proper objects of benevolence. And therefore it is added:

60. *The mountains with their huge bulk had not been established,* for God had not as yet then decreed the creation of the high mountains of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, or the other Saints of great perfection, and this was not yet exerting its full weight and force in the mighty and sweet manner (Wis. 8:1) in which God executes 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 conceived the most holy humanity (united hypostatically to the divine Word), and the Mother who bore Him. The Son and the Mother were conceived before the hierarchies of the angelic hosts, and thus what David said in Psalm VIII (v. 5-6) becomes intelligible: *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 all understand and know that there is a man who is at the same time God, who is above all angels and men, and that all are his inferiors and his servants, for being the first of men He is God at the same time; hence He is the first in the divine mind and in the divine will, and with Him is associated and inseparably connected one Woman and Virgin, his Mother, the exalted Queen of all creation.

61. And if man (as says the same Psalm [Ib. 6]) was crowned with glory and was constituted above all the works of the hand of the Lord, it was because the Godman, his Head, had merited both this crown and also that which is borne by the angels. 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 these very angels were works of his hands. Thus David spoke to the whole human race when he said: God made man a little less than the angels. But although man was inferior in his nature, one man is found who is of superior nature and is set over these same angels, who were works of the

hand of God. This superiority is in the order of grace, not only as far as the Divinity united to the humanity is concerned, but also in regard to the humanity itself insofar as grace was conferred by the hypostatic union. In a proportionate degree his most holy Mother likewise attained this superiority, just as some saints in virtue of the same incarnate Lord can reach a station and throne superior to that of the angels.

62. It is further said *I was brought forth* or born, which means more than being conceived, for the latter refers to the divine intellect of the most blessed Trinity at the instant when the Incarnation was known and, as it were, weighed in regard to its propriety. But to be brought forth refers to the act of the divine will which determined upon this work, for the most holy Trinity in the divine councils resolved upon the efficacious execution of this work by determining and preliminarily putting into effect the wonderful decree of the hypostatic union, and of calling into being Mary most holy. That is the reason for using first the word *conceived* and then the words *brought forth*, or born, for in reality the work was at first conceived, and then immediately afterwards determined upon and willed.

63. *He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world.* Before the creation of the second earth (for earth is here mentioned a second time), namely the earthly paradise (Gen. 2:8, 15) into which the first man was placed after he had been created from the first earth of the Damascene plains, and where he sinned, the sacred humanity of the Word and the material from which it was to spring, namely the Virgin, was determined upon, for it was necessary for God to provide beforehand against her participating in sin and being in any way subject to it. *The rivers and poles of the world* are the Church Militant and the treasures of grace and gifts which were to emanate from the fount of the Divinity, directed toward all men, and efficaciously to the saints and the elect, who move in God as in their pole or pivot, being dependent upon and clinging to his will\* by the virtues of faith, hope and charity by means of which He sustains, vivifies and governs them, moving them toward their highest Good and last end, and also toward human conversation, without swerving them from the center upon which they were founded. Also the Sacraments and the institutions of the Church are here signified, her safety and stability, her beauty and sanctity without *spot or wrinkle* (Eph. 5:27), for this is what is meant by this world and these currents of grace. Before the Most High prepared all this and ordained this mystical sphere and system of which Christ was to be the center and Head, He decreed the union of the Word with human nature, and foresaw his Mother through whom He was to execute these wonders in the world.

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

65. *When with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths,* namely when He determined to enclose the depths of his divinity in the Person of the Son according to a certain law and measure which no living being can ever compass or understand. He delineated this sphere and circumference where none could nor ever can enter, except only the Word (since none but Himself can ever fill his place), for thus He was able to empty (Philip. 2:7) and humiliate his divinity in the humanity; then, both humanity and divinity in the womb of most holy Mary;

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\* Jn. 1:13 [Ed.]

afterwards, in the small quantity and species of bread and wine; and by these in the narrow bosom of a sinful and mortal man. All this is indicated by the words depths, law and compass or limit. They are called *certain* because of their vast bearing, the certainty with which they were to be fulfilled in spite of seeming impossibility, and the difficulty of explaining them in words. It certainly did not seem possible for the Divinity to be subject to law, nor enclose Himself within determined limits; but the wisdom and power of that same Lord made it possible, and has accomplished it by enclosing Himself in a designated created 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 remains and dwells within them by grace, and through it, according to each one's disposition, gives them courage and firmness to rise above the earth as long as they are pilgrims. Afterwards He gives them a place and a dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem according to their merits. For them He poised the fountains and has divided them, distributing to each one with equity. He weighs the gifts of glory, the virtues, the helps and the perfections according to the dispositions of divine Wisdom. When He resolved to make this distribution of these waters of grace He also resolved to give to the humanity united to the Divinity all the ocean of graces and gifts which naturally flowed from the Divinity in its union with the Onlybegotten of the Father. Although this ocean was infinite He placed boundaries to it, namely the humanity in which was to dwell the plenitude of the Divinity (Col. 2:9), which was enclosed thirty-three years within these confines so He could dwell among men, and so what happened to the three Apostles on mount Tabor (Mt. 17:6) would not happen to all men. In the same moment in which this entire ocean and all the rivers of grace reached Christ our Lord as adjoining the Divinity, they also redounded in his most holy Mother as being nearest to her onlybegotten Son; for without the Mother, and precisely such a Mother, the gifts of her Son could not have been arranged in such an orderly way and with such high perfection, nor did the admirable harmony of the celestial and spiritual machinery, and the distribution of the gifts of the Church Militant and Triumphant, commence 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 the three divine Persons, for They are one God, one wisdom, one power; therefore it was unavoidably necessary for the Word, in whom according to the Divinity all things are made (Jn. 1:3), to be in union 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, as far as He is God, all things were made, so also for Him, in the first place and because He is the most noble and most 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 diverted Himself at all times, because He knew all the ages and the lives of all mortals, all being as one day in comparison with eternity (Ps. 89:4). He was delighted because the whole course of creation had found its end, for when the ultimate day with all its perfection would arrive men were to enjoy the affluence of grace and the crown of glory. He diverted Himself, as it were counting the days when He would descend from heaven to earth and assume human flesh. He knew that all the works and thoughts of men were like a play, wherein all is mere mockery and deception. He saw also the just, who though so weak and limited in their capacity would nevertheless be fit for the manifestation and communication of his glory and perfections. He compared his immutability with the changefulness of men, and how He was

nevertheless to act in concert with them. He delighted in his own works, and especially in those which He ordained in his most holy Mother. He took great delight in the prospect of assuming the form of man within Her and in making Her worthy of so great a privilege. And because the conception of these ideas and the efficacious decree of the divine will in their regard were to be followed by their actual fulfillment, therefore the divine Word adds:

69. *And my delights were to be with the children of men.* My recreation is to work for them and show them favors; my contentment is to die for them, and my joy is to be their Teacher and their Redeemer. My delights are to raise the poor from the dust and unite Myself with the humble (Ps. 112:7), to bend down my divinity for this purpose, and clothe it and conceal it with their nature, to constrain 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 the 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 I am ravished with admiration when I compare the immensity of thy immutable Being with the insignificance of man! And when I see thy eternal love mediating between two extremes of such immeasurable distance, an infinite love for a creature not only so small but so ungrateful! On what a low and debased object, O Lord, dost Thou cast thy eyes, and on what a noble Object can and should man fix his thought and his affection in beholding such a mystery! Filled with admiration and with sadness of heart I lament over the unhappy state of men, their darkness and blindness, since they do not make any effort to understand how much Thy Majesty has been beforehand in looking down upon them and in offering them true happiness with such great love and care as if thy own consisted in it.

71. All his works, and the disposition of them as they were to be called into being, the Lord had in his mind *ab initio*, and He numbered and weighed them according to his equity and rectitude. He knew the constitution of the world before its creation, as it is written in the book of Wisdom (7:18ff.). He knew the beginning, the middle, and the end of time, the changes of the years and the courses of the ages, the disposition of the stars, the powers of the elements, the nature of animals, the wrath of wild beasts, the force of the winds, the differences of the trees, the virtues of roots, and the thoughts of men. All He weighed and counted (Wis. 11:21), not only that which is literally true of the rational and irrational creatures, but He preordained also all that is signified mystically by these creatures; but since this does not come within my scope at present, I do not speak of it in this place.