

## A TREATISE ON THE INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF OUR REDEMPTION

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(Translated by a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey)

### CHAPTER II

#### THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE REDEMPTION AND THE CREATION

To understand the meaning of the Mystery of the Redemption better we must realize that all our Lord's works, especially this which is the greatest of all, are ordained with supreme wisdom and care, the principal rule being that the works of nature and grace are regulated in the same manner. Both being our Lord's actions, and sisters and daughters of the same Father, who is God, it is right that they should resemble one another. This philosophy is followed by the Holy Doctor in all his writings. Therefore we must imagine two worlds in this world: the natural one which we see with all that it contains, and the supernatural world which is the Catholic Church, with its mysteries and Sacraments. Let us first examine how our Lord formed the natural world, that we may understand the creation of the supernatural one.

Boetius explains this briefly :

*Pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse*

*Mundum mente gerens, similique imagine formans,*

signifying that this most beautiful Lord, the Source of all beauty, traced within His divine intelligence the perfect image of this world, and using it as His model, created it and made it visible. And since in this world, besides Himself, there was to be a chief and ruler upon whom all things depended, He created the first and highest heaven, which is called the first propellor, and placed in it a glorious angel who with incredible swiftness revolved the world completely in the course of each day. This foundation being thus moved causes all the movements, alterations and productions on the earth. So dependent is the world on this revolution that, if it ceased, all other movements would cease with it, so that fire would not even burn a piece of tow placed near it. For as, if the first wheel of a clock stops all the others cease working that depend on it, so if the revolution of the first heaven left off, all those dependent on it would come to a standstill.

Our Lord conformed to this plan regarding the supernatural world, which is the Catholic Church. That it might be holy, He planned and conceived in His divine intellect this supernatural world, which is a beautiful association of all the faithful, especially of the innumerable righteous souls, and a new republic, a new kingdom which the Apostle says the Son of God will deliver to the Father at the end of the world, when the number of the chosen

is complete. This glorious company was shown to Saint John in his Revelation, in which he saw "A great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne of God clothed with white robes and palms in their hands." (Apoc. vii, 9). This, then, is the supernatural world we spoke of, which God conceived from all eternity, to create when He chose, that is the innumerable company of all the righteous, from the beginning of the world until the last one to be born. This is the supernatural world, which excels the other because it is ordained for a higher end. For the end of the latter is to preserve things in a natural state, but of the former to raise them to the supernatural state of grace, which is divine. And as God created the first world in six days, He will produce this in the six ages of the world, which are to end on the day of judgement.

As the Creator had placed an angel as the cause of all nature's actions, by the movement of the first heaven, it was reasonable that He should set a ruler and cause over all supernatural things, that is, over virtues and holy actions. It would not have been fitting that this second world should have no ruler or this kingdom be without a king, or that this mystical body should have had no head to instil its supernatural virtue into its members. But as the second kingdom excels the first, so should its prince and ruler. In accordance with this dignity it was given as its Prince, Governor and Head the Son of God Himself. Nor could there have been a more suitable choice. For who could have infused the spirit of sanctity and grace into the countless members of this mystical body except one who possessed such infinite power as the Son of God?

Besides this, into this sovereign city where God dwells with His chosen ones, no one can enter who is polluted and defiled with any sin. This was figured by the white robes in which St. John saw all the Saints. It is certain that all men are defiled with endless sins, both original and actual, but who could purge such an infinitude of evils save He whose power is infinite and who is the Son of God Himself?

In comparing the work of the Redemption with the Creation, I say that in the latter we attribute all natural movements to that of the highest heaven and to the intelligence of Him who moves it, and he is the universal instrument of all natural movements, but in the Redemption the Son of God is the Author and efficient cause of our salvation, and His sacred Humanity (like that of the first heaven) is the usual instrument of our Lord. For as Saint Cyril says, the Divine Word, the Author and Giver of life, uniting human flesh to Himself, communicates to it this power, so that it also, as His instrument, should become a life giver.

It follows from this that as all the changes and movements of this world depend on the movement of the first heaven, so in the spiritual world all good and holy actions depend on the grace and merits of this sacred Humanity. For we can have no good resolution, nor any desire, nor longing, or perform any religious action or speak in a way pleasing to God that does not come to us from the grace and merits of our Lord. This is to teach us that all which is good comes from Him and that we must thank Him for it, pray that by Him and for Him we may receive it, and may resort to Him in all our needs, placing in Him our whole confidence, our love, our happiness and all our cares and thoughts, and hold for lost the time we do not spend with Him or for Him  
(*To be Continued*)

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### REVIEWS

THE SEVEN STEPS OF THE LADDER OF SPIRITUAL LOVE. By Jan van Ruysbroeck. Translated by F. Sherwood Taylor. (Dacre Press; 3s. 6d.)

Jan van Ruysbroeck, one of the greatest of the medieval mystics, is undeservedly little known in this country, and the fine translation of this small, but exquisite, work of his is a most welcome achievement. The more is it to be regretted that the introduction by Fr. Joseph Bolland, S.J., does little to familiarize the reader with Ruysbroeck's thought, and is, in fact, apt rather to repel than to attract him to the great Flemish monk. For it consists entirely of warnings against possible misunderstandings, which, though useful, might have been given in a very much shorter form instead of taking so much space, and leaving the reader with a negative impression, which a few condescending words on Ruysbroeck's piety and unction can hardly correct.

Yet the treatise is one of the gems of mystical literature, and it is to be feared, or should we rather say hoped, that once we have set our foot on the first rung of the ladder of spiritual love, we forget the warnings of our cautious guide and delightedly follow the saintly author, "always ascending and descending the steps of our heavenly ladder, in interior virtues, outward good works, the commandments of God and the precepts of Holy Church," convinced that no ill can befall us on steps so solidly built. Ascending from the conformity with God's will to voluntary poverty and thence to purity of soul and body, he leads us on to the great fountainhead of holiness, humility, this "lowliness of spirit, wherein God lives in true peace with us, and we with God," and from which flow like streams the virtues of Christ Himself, obedience and meekness, patience and self-denial. But he seems unable to linger there long, and hurrying past the first four steps, he presses