

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Distribution of the Divine Decrees into Instants, Declaring that which in Each One God Determined to Accomplish by His Communication Ad Extra.*

35. I understood this order comprises the following instants. The first instant is God recognizing his infinite attributes and perfections together with the propensity and the ineffable inclination to communicate Himself outwardly. This knowledge of God as being communicative *ad extra* comes first. His Highness, beholding the condition of his infinite perfections, and the virtue and efficacy which in them He possessed in order to accomplish magnificent works, saw such an exalted good as most proper in his equity, and as it were a duty and a forceful inclination to communicate Himself in order to work according to his communicative inclination and exercise his liberality and mercy by distributing outside of Himself with magnificence the plenitude of his infinite treasures contained in the Divinity; for being entirely infinite it is much more natural for Him to give gifts and graces than fire to ascend to its sphere, or the stone to descend toward its center, or the sun to diffuse its light. This profound sea of perfections, this affluence of treasures, this impetuous infinity of riches, all is directed and communicated by his own inclination, and by the desire and knowledge of God himself, comprehending and knowing that to give gifts and graces is not to diminish them but increase them in the manner possible by giving an outlet to the inexhaustible origin of his riches.

36. All this God saw in that first instant after the communication *ad intra* by the eternal emanations. Seeing this He found Himself as it were obliged by Himself to communicate Himself *ad extra*, perceiving that it was holy, just, merciful and compassionate to do so; hence nothing could impede Him. According to our mode of understanding, we can represent God to our minds as not being satisfied nor at rest with Himself until He reached the object of his desires, the creatures, where and with whom, by making them partakers of his divinity and perfections, He seeks his delights (Prov. 8:31).

37. In this enlightenment and knowledge which I possess, two things hold my lukewarm heart in wonder and inflame it unto annihilation. The first is the inclination, urgent desire, and strong will which I see in God to communicate his divinity and the treasures of his grace. The second is the unspeakable and incomprehensible immensity of the good gifts which I see He desires to distribute according to this decree, assigning them for this purpose and yet remaining infinite, as if He had yet given nothing. In this desire and inclination which fills His Majesty I see Him prepared to sanctify, justify, and overwhelm with gifts and perfections all creatures together and each one in particular for itself. He would be ready to give to each of the creatures more than what is held by all the Angels and Seraphim together. Even if all the drops in the ocean and the grains of sand on their shores, all the stars, planets, elements, and all creatures were capable of reason and of his gifts, they would receive them without measure, provided they would dispose themselves and place no obstacle toward receiving them. O fearful malice of sin, which alone is capable of holding up the impetuous stream of such great and eternal gifts!

38. The second instant was to confer and decree the object and intention of this communication of the Divinity *ad extra*, namely that it redound to his greater glory and to the exaltation of His Majesty and the manifestation of his greatness. This his own exaltation God saw in this instant as the end for which He would communicate Himself and make Himself known by his liberality in showering forth his attributes and using his omnipotence in order to be known, praised and glorified.

39. The third instant was to know and determine the order and arrangement, or mode of this communication, in order to realize in an adequate manner the most exalted ends, namely the proper order to be maintained in regard to the communications of the Godhead and his divine attributes so this activity of the Lord would have its proper reasons and objects and could proceed with the most beautiful and admirable sequence, harmony and subordination. In this instant was decreed in the first place the divine Word would assume flesh and become visible; hence the perfection and the composition of the most holy humanity of Christ our Lord was decreed and modeled in the divine mind. In the second place were formed the ideals of the rest of men in imitation of Him. The divine mind prearranged the harmony and adornment of the human nature composed of an organic body and a vivifying soul, endowed with faculties to know and enjoy its Creator, to discern between good and evil, and with a free will to love that same Lord.

40. This hypostatic union of the second Person of the most holy Trinity I understood necessarily to have been the first incentive and object for which, before all others, the divine intellect and will issued *ad extra*, for most exalted reasons which I cannot explain. One of these reasons is God, having in Himself known and loved Himself, would according to right order know and love that which approaches most intimately to his divinity, as is the case with the hypostatic union. Another reason is the Divinity, having communicated Himself *ad intra*, would also communicate Himself *ad extra*, for thus the divine will and intention would begin to execute its works with the highest end in view, and his attributes would be communicated in the most beautiful order. The fire of the Divinity operated in its fullest measure upon that which was most immediately connected with Him, namely the hypostatically united humanity, and the Divinity communicated Himself in the highest and most excellent degree to Him who was to be closest to God in divine knowledge and love, and share the works and the glory of the Deity; for God (speaking according to our lowly comprehension) could not endanger the attainment of this end, since He alone could possibly possess the proportion and as it were the justification for such a marvelous work. It was also appropriate and as it were necessary that if God would create many creatures, He would create them in such harmony and subordination as would be the most admirable and glorious within the reach of possibility; hence in conformity with this they must be subordinate to a supreme Head, who would be as far as possible united immediately with God so through Him they could have communication and connection with his divinity. For these and for other reasons (which I cannot explain) the dignity of the works of God could be provided for only by the Incarnation of the Word; through Him creation would possess the most beautiful order which without Him was impossible.

41. The fourth instant was to determine the gifts and graces which were to be conferred upon the humanity of Christ our Lord in union with the Divinity. Here the Most High opened the hand of his generous omnipotence and attributes in order to enrich that most holy humanity and soul of Christ with abundance of gifts and graces in the highest plenitude and degree possible. In this instant was determined what afterwards David said: *The stream of the river of the Divinity maketh the city of God joyful* (Ps. 45:5), directing the stream of his gifts upon this humanity of the Word, communicating to it all infused and beatific knowledge, and all the grace and glory of which his most holy soul was capable, appropriate for one who was both true God and true man, and Head of all creatures capable of grace and glory, so from this impetuous stream they would partake with the order in which it would happen.

42. To this instant also, and as it were in natural sequence, pertained the decree and predestination of the Mother of the incarnate Word; for here I understand was ordained that pure creature before there issued any other decree to create any other creature. Hence before all other

creatures She was conceived in the divine mind, in such a manner and such a state as belonged to and harmonized with the dignity, excellence and gifts of the humanity of her most holy Son. Upon Her was directed, at once and immediately, the entire impetus of the river of the Divinity and his attributes according to the capacity of a mere creature to receive it and as is becoming the dignity of the Mother of God.

43. In the knowledge of these exalted mysteries and decrees I confess myself ravished in admiration and transported beyond my own self. Perceiving this most holy and pure creature formed and conceived in the divine mind from the beginning and before all the ages, I joyfully and exultingly magnify the Omnipotent for the admirable and mysterious decree by which He formed for us such a pure and grand, such a mysterious and godlike creature, worthy rather to be admired and praised by all beings than to be described by anyone. In my admiration I can say with St. Dionysius the Areopagite (*Letter to St. Paul*), that if faith would not instruct me, and if the understanding of what I see would not teach me, that it is God who has conceived Her in his mind, and who alone could and can in his omnipotence form such an image of his divinity, if all this were not shown to me at one time, I might begin to doubt whether the Virgin Mother contains in Herself divinity.

44. O what tears flowed from my eyes, and what sorrowful astonishment possessed my soul, to see that divine prodigy not acknowledged, and that wonder of the Most High not manifest to all mortals! Much is known of Her, but much more is unknown, as this sealed book has not been opened. I am ravished in the perception of this tabernacle of God, and I perceive that her Author is more admirable in her creation than in the creation of all the rest of the world, although the diversity of the creatures manifests the wonderful power of their Creator. In this Queen alone are comprehended and contained more treasures than in all the rest of creation together, and the variety and the preciousness of her riches honor the Lord above all the multitudes of the other creatures.

45. Here (according to our way of understanding) the promise and as it were the contract was made with the Word as to the degree of sanctity and perfection, and the gifts and graces, which were to be possessed by Mary his Mother, and the protection, support and defense which was to be provided for this true City of God, in whom His Majesty contemplated the graces and merits which this Lady was to earn for Herself, as well as the fruits to be gathered for his people by the loving returns She was to make to His Majesty. In the same instant, and as it were in the third and last place, God determined to create a locality and an abode where the incarnate Word and his Mother could converse and dwell. For them primarily did He create heaven and earth, with its stars and elements and all that is contained in them. Secondly the intention and decree included the creation of the members of which He was to be the Head and the vassals of whom He would be the King, so with kingly providence all the necessary and befitting arrangements would be made beforehand.

46. I pass on to the fifth instant, although I have already found what I sought.\* In this fifth decree the creation of the angelic nature, which is more excellent and more like unto the spiritual being of the Divinity, was determined upon, and first was foreseen and decreed their creation and admirable disposition into nine choirs and three hierarchies. The primary intention for their creation was for the glory of God, to minister to his divine Majesty, and so they might know and love Him; consequently and secondarily they were decreed so they might assist, glorify and honor, reverence and serve the deified humanity of the eternal Word, recognizing Him as Head

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\* cf. par. 33 [Ed.]

and honoring Him also in his most holy Mother Mary, Queen of these same angels. Commission was given to these angels to bear them up in their hands in all their ways (Ps. 90:12). In this instant Christ our Lord earned for them by his infinite merits, present and foreseen, all the graces which they were to receive. He was constituted as their Head, Exemplar and supreme King, of whom they would be subjects. Even if the number of angels had been infinite, the merits of Christ our highest Good would be abundantly sufficient to supply them all with grace.

47. To this instant also belongs the predestination of the good angels and the reprobation of the bad. God saw in this instant, by means of his infinite science, all the works of the former and of the latter, and the propriety of predestinating by his free will and merciful liberality those who would render Him obedience and reverence, and of reprobating by his justice those who would rise up against His Majesty in pride and disobedience due to their disordered self-love. In the same instant was also decreed the creation of the empyrean heaven for the manifestation of his glory and the reward of the good, the earth and the rest for the other creatures, and in the center or depth of the earth hell for the punishment of the bad angels.

48. In the sixth instant was decreed the creation of a people and congregation of men for Christ, who was already formed in the divine mind and will, and according to whose image and likeness man was to be made so the incarnate Word would find brethren similar but inferior to Himself, and a people of his own nature of whom He would be the Head. In this instant was determined the order of the creation of the whole human race, which was to begin from one man and one woman and propagate itself until the Virgin and her Son would be born in the predestined order. Because of the merits of Christ our Savior the graces and gifts were prearranged, as well as original justice if they would only preserve it. The fall of Adam was foreseen, and in him that of all others except the Queen, who did not enter into this decree.\* As a remedy it was ordained that the most holy humanity would be capable of suffering. The predestined were chosen by free grace, and the foreknown were reprobated with exact justice. All that was necessary and proper for the conservation of human nature and for obtaining the end of the Redemption and predestination was preordained without interfering with the free will of men, for such ordainment was more conformable to the nature of God and to divine equity. There was no injustice done to them, for if by their free will they could sin, so also could they abstain from sin by means of grace and the light of reason. God violated the rights of no one, since He forsook no one, nor denied to anyone that which is necessary.† Since his law is written in the hearts of all men (Ps. 4:7), nobody is excused for not knowing and loving Him as the highest Good and Author of all creation.

49. In the perception of these mysteries I saw with great clearness and force the high motives which caused God to manifest and magnify Himself, and which should induce men to praise and adore the greatness of the Creator and Redeemer of all. I also saw how tardy men are in the acknowledgment of these obligations and in making return for these benefits, and I was made aware of the complaints and indignation of the Most High due to this forgetfulness. His Majesty commanded and exhorted me not to be guilty of such ingratitude, but to offer Him a sacrifice of praise, and a new song, and that I magnify Him in the name of all creatures.

50. O most high and incomprehensible Lord! Would that I had the love and the perfections of all the angels and the just in order to confess and praise worthily thy greatness! I acknowledge, great and mighty Lord, that such a vile creature as I cannot merit the memorable benefit of

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\* cf. Esther 15:13 [Ed.]

† cf. Jn. 1:9 [Ed.]

receiving this clear and exalted knowledge and light concerning thy most high majesty. At the sight of thy greatness I perceive my littleness, which before that happy hour was unknown to me, and I was ignorant of the greatness and excellence of the virtue of humility which is learned in this science. I do not wish to say I now possess that virtue, but neither can I deny I have been shown the certain path which leads to it. Thy light, O most high Lord, illumines me, and thy lamp shows me the paths (Ps. 118:105), so I see what I have been and what I am, and fear what I may become. Thou hast enlightened, most high King, my understanding and inflamed my will by the most noble Object of these faculties. Thou hast entirely drawn me on to seek Thee, and I desire to make this known to all mortals so they may leave me in peace and I them. I am for my Beloved (Cant. 2:16), and (although I am unworthy) my Beloved is for me. Strengthen then, O Lord, my weakness, that I may run after Thee (Ib. 1:3), and reaching Thee, I may never leave Thee or lose Thee.

51. Very short and stammering is this chapter, for of this matter many books could be written; but I refrain, because I do not know how to speak and I am an ignorant woman. My sole object has been to explain how the Virgin Mother was formed and preordained in the divine mind before the ages (Ecclus. 24:14). That which I have seen over and above concerning this highest mystery transforms my interior, and in silent admiration makes me praise the Author of such magnificence in company with the Blessed, saying: *Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts* (Is. 6:3).