

“feeling” had a far wider connotation then; it does not necessarily include any sensible emotion, but may be translated simply by ‘awareness’ in the most general sense. This deep awareness, proper to the highest forms of prayer, is a substantial touch beyond expression and statement, of its nature ineffable.

When we are presented with such excellent editions of the English Mystics as is given us in this edition of *The Cloud*, we seem to hear the call very clearly TOLLE, LEGE. We should certainly seize upon these sources of our traditional spirituality. But we must not mistake the word TOLLE. It is not a command to perform a merely physical act of acquiring the true texts of the masters of the spiritual life, of taking hold of the book thus presented by the blessed enterprise of editors, societies and publishers, of opening the book at page one. To take the book means far more than that. We cannot take the book in the true sense of the word without these preparations. To take up books such as *The Cloud*, we must have the arms of the objective knowledge of the faith and the hands of a spiritual life skilled in the ways of prayer. These arms can stretch out to the naked being of God hid within the soul, these hands can deftly disentangle the skein of the normal way to sanctity. And having taken the books with these hands and these arms we can read the words of this middle English writer who makes it clear in the first chapter that he is writing only for those whose minds are attuned to the truths he desires to set forth;

“Fleshy janglers, open praisers and blamers of them-self or of any other, tiding tellers, rouners and tutilers of tales, and all manner of pinchers; kept I never that they saw this book. For myn entent was never to write soche thing unto them; and therefore I wolde that thei medel not therwith, neither thei ne any of thees corious lettred or lewed men”.

A TREATISE ON THE INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF OUR REDEMPTION

By

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(Translated by a nun of Stanbrook).

CHAPTER VI (cont.)

4

Three reasons for the intensity of the sufferings of Christ our Lord.

I said that the reason why the Saviour redeemed us with such intense suffering was that inestimable and priceless fruit that would result to us from this special remedy. I will speak of this later on. At present let us dwell upon three of the chief ones. To understand the first it should be understood, as Saint Maximus says, that the Christian life, if led conformably with the

laws of the Gospel, is a perpetual cross. Our Saviour himself declared this, as Saint Mark tells us: "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me". (St. Mark VIII, 34).

The Saviour here specifies three things, each of them difficult enough. For what is more difficult than to deny ourselves, to oppose all our disordered desires and self-will, and take up our cross; to be ready for anything, to prepare for the trials of a good life, and follow Christ, who in this earthly life walked on no easy road of comfort, but on a hard, a humble, and laborious one? This being so, the Christian life may rightly be called the way of the Cross.

This is so because the Christian life is virtuous and virtue is surrounded by difficulties and trials. For as it is natural to fire to hold heat, so virtue is annexed to difficulty and labour, and without this we do not practice virtue. Therefore I think, though the comparison may be commonplace, that virtue is like the chestnuts on the tree, which are full of prickles like a hedgehog and must be removed before eating the fruit. Then let man imagine that the virtues are hedgehogs surrounded by prickles, the difficulties and troubles that surround them, which he must overcome if he wants to embrace and practice the virtues.

This laborious difficulty springs from man's bitter enemy, disordered self-love, the firstborn of original sin, the first and most vehement of all our affections and passions and the root from which they all spring. This love is the enemy of all labour and the friend of pleasure and enjoyment. The more it inclines us to the latter, the farther does it withdraw us from virtue, which loves effort and detests pleasure. Therefore let the enemy of labour say goodbye to the virtues for they are all its sisters and companions.

To return to our subject. Our Lord sought by means of his most sacred Passion to make us good, holy and lovers of virtue as he is. He knew that a good Christian life is a ceaseless struggle against the tyrant of self-love and the flesh from which it originates, which is our worst enemy. Our Saviour saw the need of effort on our part to dominate and mortify our body in order that the spirit and virtue may reign in us as he desired.

He therefore chose to offer himself to many kinds of trials, so that in his sacred Passion we might find not only impressive examples but also strong incentives and motives for suffering for our own salvation, seeing how much the Lord of glory endured for others. This was one reason for the severity of our Lord's trials. Another reason was Christ's knowledge that nothing under heaven so pleased God as our love for him and the trials we underwent for this love. For we believe that the end of a Christian life is the practice of charity, and its perfection consists in per-

fect charity, the highest grade of this virtue being joyful endurance of suffering for his sake. Then what greater incentives and motives could be given us than in this sacred Passion?

To these reasons was added a third, far the most important of all. Our God and Lord, seeing that the devil, the Prince of this world, had mastered it and was worshipped nearly everywhere, thereby affronting the true God, who determined to eject the tyrant though armed and defended by all the might of mankind. He intended to do this not by weapons of steel, for it would have done him no honour to implant the Faith, as Mahomed, the Prince of heretics had established his falsehoods, but by arms worthy of a divine Ruler, not wrought in the forges of Milan by human artifice, but in the breasts of the holy martyrs by the fire of the Holy Ghost. They consisted in indomitable faith, certain hope of winning the crown, burning charity, invincible strength, unflinching courage, a generous heart and contempt for all worldly prosperity and adversity.

To understand this, we must know that neither the tongues of men nor of angels could describe our Lord's burning thirst for the honour and glory of his Eternal Father shown in his bodily thirst on the Cross. Nor could these tongues explain what immensity of glory was rendered by the martyrs to their Creator by their terrible torments, which astounded heaven and earth, men, angels and devils. But as our Lord so thirsted for the glory of his Father and saw how great was the glory rendered to him by the faith and life-blood of these devoted, fearless knights, he, realizing what strength and encouragement in battle they would gain from the example of his Passion, resolved to go forward, bearing the banner of the Cross and wearing the royal crown of thorns upon his head, his shoulders torn and bleeding from the scourging and with wounded hands and feet, that he might fortify his followers.

5.

Advice for the devout.

Lest anyone should be astonished at our believing, and confessing in the Creed that God suffered, died and was buried, let him remember that our Lord God, *as God*, did not suffer, nor could he suffer, but he suffered inasmuch as he was true and perfect man. He is said to have suffered because he had united human nature with himself in one suppositum, which is the Divine Person. Also because actions are attributed to the person who performs them, and in these two natures there was but one Person, which is the Divine One.

Should anyone be scandalized at the ignominy of the Cross and Passion, let him remember that our Lord, though perfect God is also perfect Man, like all other men; and since man's greatest glory is to give his life for God, as did the martyrs, it

would not be right that their Captain and Master, the Saint of Saints, should be deprived of it, for he is truly man and could glorify God with them as much, and more than they could. And as a testimony of this glory he willed that its seals should be stamped nowhere except on his sacred feet and hands and side.

Therefore I advise that when we wish to arouse in our souls fervent admiration and love for this Lord, we should recall to mind in each phase of his torments and outrages that he who suffers is God, the Lord of heaven and earth. But should the devil tempt us by suggesting that it was derogatory for sublime Majesty to undergo such things, we should recollect that he was true and perfect man, yet the most holy of the human race, and it would not be right, as I said, that the Saint of Saints should lack the immense glory of suffering for God.

Therefore Christ willed that his most innocent Mother should stand at the foot of the Cross and suffer the greatest sorrow ever felt by any merely human creature. For as grief is caused by love and her love surpassed all others, so did her sorrow exceed all other grief. The four wounds inflicted on her sweetest Son were four blows aimed at her soul, and the fifth blow, aimed by the lance, was felt by her and not by him. Added to this, each stroke of the hammer by the executioners upon the nails that held her Son's hands and feet, stabbed the heart of the Mother, hence each blow of the hammer on the nails was one more stab that pierced her most tender, loving heart.

So that devout souls may realize somewhat of her grief, I will tell what happened lately in this city. A youth was beheaded for a crime and his head was exposed in a public place for an example. His mother, beside herself with grief, spoke to it with tender lamentations. On returning home, she died of sorrow that very day, so vehement is a mother's love for her son, guilty though he may be. Then let the devout soul consider how far deeper must have been the most Blessed Virgin's affection for her Son, and such a Son, when she saw him stripped, fastened to a Cross with three nails and pierced by a lance, and above all, when she held him thus slain in her virginal arms! How acute must have been the grief that pierced her, foretold so many years ago by the Prophet Simeon! Doubtless, when our Lord exclaimed before his Passion, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death", he meant that this grief would have killed him had he not prevented it, and we may truly say that the Virgin would have died of sorrow, had not God hindered it for the sake of his Church.

It should be realised that her devoted Son willed that she should endure this anguish, not for her own sins, for she had committed none, nor for those of the world for which his Passion would suffice, but in order that the most holy of all Saints should

not be deprived of their greatest glory—that of enduring severe sufferings for God, for the more costly is this action, the higher is its merit and the more sublime the virtue and its perfect charity.

(*To be continued.*)

REVIEWS

LOS SANTAS EVANGELIOS DE NUESTRO SENOR JESUCRISTO. Translated into Spanish from the Original Greek by Dr. Juan Straubinger. (Ediciones Peuser, Buenos Aires).

This family sized edition of the Holy Gospels in Spanish was produced on the occasion of the Argentinian National Eucharistic Congress, under the patronage of Cardinal Capello, Archbishop of Buenos Aires. In his preface the Cardinal rightly remarks that this fine production "does honour to Argentinian art, and is a ray of light in the darkness which materialism has cast over humanity."

Dr. Juan Straubinger's scholarly translation—direct from the original Greek into Spanish—is not the first of its kind. He was preceded by La Torre in the Herder Edition, and more recently by Garcia Hughes. But this new work is claimed as the first of its kind to be produced on the American continent, and as a distinct advance on the earlier editions.

The print is both large and beautiful and each page has a full-length marginal wood-engraving by Victor L. Rebuffo, the well-known Argentinian artist. The general effect of these engravings is pleasingly artistic, although some people may find the single human figures a shade over-attenuated. There are also two attractive, coloured maps.

JOHN MOGGRIDGE.

GIBBETS AND GALLOWES. By George Burns, S.J. (Burns Oates; paper 3/6, cloth 5/-).

An account of Blessed Edmund Arrowsmith, S.J., written with a Lancashire accent—which is to say that this is a sturdy, unsentimental piece, with a proper regard for the loyalty of place and a way of life wholly hostile to the new religion and all that it meant in destruction of the Faith and the traditions it sanctified. The names of places—Brindle, Chipping, Crosby, Lydiate; of persons—Gerard, Burgess, Hoghton: these are the pointers of a story which is as English as the earth that received the martyrs' bones. Father Burns can truly conclude "Father Arrowsmith died, indeed, for the Faith, but the Faith gave England her true canons of morality. Indirectly, then, he died for Catholic England and the national traditions of the country as part of a European Order which commanded from him a singular love and veneration".

I.E.

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