

ROMANS 8 OR THE “VICTORY OF LOVE”. A MEDITATION BY ADRIENNE VON SPEYR

Medical doctor and spiritual writer of the 20th century, Adrienne Von Speyr wrote an entire book on chapter 8 of the letter to the Romans: *Sieg der Liebe*¹. But who is this woman and why did she choose to focus on this one chapter?

Adrienne Von Speyr was born in 1902 in La Chaux-de-Fonds (Switzerland) and died in 1967 in Basel. Educated in the Protestant Reformed tradition, she became a Catholic after a long spiritual journey and after her encounter with the Jesuit theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. Passionate about the search for God and his Word, she wrote nearly seventy books. Increasingly ill and blind, she dictated many of her writings to the German theologian with whom she also founded a secular institute of Ignatian inspiration: the Community of St John (Johannesgemeinschaft). Her literary work reflects her knowledge of human suffering (her own suffering and that of the sick she cared for), of married life (she was married twice), and of the depth of her prayer life. She wrote above all commentaries on the Bible (Old and New Testaments), including four volumes on the Gospel of John, but also meditations on various themes such as Mary (*Magd des Herrn*, 1948), prayer (*Gebetserfahrung*, 1965), obedience (*Das Buch vom Gehorsam*, 1966)... And among this list of works, *Sieg der Liebe. Betrachtungen über Römer 8*. Why does Adrienne devote an entire book to chapter 8 of the letter to the Romans? Hans Urs von Balthasar provides us with an answer. In his preface to the book, he states: « The eighth chapter of the Letter to the Romans is such a radiant, blasting trumpet-call in the tremendous symphony of the Pauline writings that we may let its message have its effect on us even when taken out of the context of the Letter²». This richness justifies the writing of this commentary of almost one hundred pages. To do this, Adrienne comments on the chapter verse by verse, distinguishing four parts: v.1-11: The Separation; v. 12-18, The Inheritance; v. 19-27, The Hope; v.28-39, The Certainty. She entitles her commentary: *The Victory of Love*. And that is what it is all about. Believers experience a "separation" for a new life in Christ «today» -Adrienne insists on this word. They recognize their condition of «co-heirs» of the Son, which opens them to a magnificent hope. And, in the end, God appears as the great victor who, in the Holy Spirit, makes them participate in his own victory: « This certainty comes from God and is part of his love; for it would not be enough if God always gave us the victory without granting us, who belong to him, this certainty of being victors. [...] The victory belongs to them,

¹ A. von SPEYR, *Sieg der Liebe: Betrachtungen über Römer 8*, Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag, 2008.

² A. von SPEYR, *The Victory of Love: A Meditation on Romans 8*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1990, Kindle «Foreword».

is theirs, a tremendous victory, willed and guaranteed by God: the victory of Love³». This work is of very great density⁴. It shines by its depth, by its hope, by its poetic style. I give here only one example, perhaps arousing the desire to discover it further: « This hope is a ray of divine light, a permanent opening in the closing door, a tomorrow in the midst of a today that already seems to belong to yesterday. Hope is hope of liberation, and that means of the possibility of a new choice that would lead men to become children of the glory of God⁵».

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³ *Ibid.*, Kindle comment v. 38-39.

⁴ For those who would like to go further, Rony Akiki published on YouTube a series of videos presenting this work in detail: R. AKIKI, *The Triumph of Love According to Adrienne von Speyr* (37-50), August 30, 2017 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-J4Ta8aTpFc>> (consulted on January 5, 2022).

⁵ A. von SPEYR, *The Victory of Love*, *op. cit.*, Kindle comment v. 21.