

ious traditions from which the higher life of the European nations has sprung, and with which that life is indissolubly linked. As in the past, so too to-day, she stands forth, almost alone in many countries, as the champion of the rights of conscience, and of the freedom of the spiritual order against the tyranny and overbearing power of the dechristianised States that would oppress them.

How grand is the idea of the dignity of man which the Church's doctrine of his spiritual life presents. The image of God impressed upon his soul brings with it a heritage of infinite perfection and eternal life. His personality, his character, his liberty of will, of conscience, and of spirit become his richest possession. His highest nobility is not derived from the riches or the honors that this world can give, but from the title-deeds of Redemption by which as Son of the Most High He is entitled to the inheritance of Paradise.

All this should be borne in mind if we may hope to solve the problems which the social order of the world of to-day presents. Men's minds are distracted by the inequalities that are found in the various classes of mankind, apparently incompatible with the ideas of justice that prevail, but for which nevertheless all human legislation fails to find a remedy. Such a remedy would soon be found were men to take for their guide the standard which Religion presents. The Commandments of old were engraven on tablets of stone. The precepts of the Redeemer are to be written on the hearts of men. How admirable are the lessons which those divine precepts convey. Whether we be rich or poor, whether we be of high or low birth, all are equal at the bar of eternal justice. The soul of the humblest outcast weighs equally with that of the wealthiest citizen. Love of justice, hatred of iniquity, the doing of good shall be the criterion of merit for all. Every class of citizen has its rights; it has its duties also. Whilst the former are guarded and asserted, the latter should not remain unfulfilled. Religion is not a matter of theory or speculative ideas; it imposes practical duties upon all. Its heaven should permeate every condition of life. It ordains justice and charity in all. It condemns egotism, and selfishness and iniquity, wherever they may be found. To solve the problems of the world to-day, men should take to heart the lesson which the records of history teach, that in the domain of Holy Church throughout the centuries, there has been for all nations an inexhaustible stream of happiness, contentment, and other manifold blessings, a divine stream that has its fountain head at the foot of the Cross. The Cross of the Redeemer is the symbol of life and blessedness for all. His words ever find an echo in Holy Church: 'I have compassion on the multitude'; 'Whosoever desires to be My disciple, let him take up his cross every day and follow Me.' Let those who would promote the welfare of men and would desire to secure for them contentment and blessedness lead them to drink of these waters of joy and gladness, and thus restore happiness and peace to the whole world: 'Christ yesterday and to-day, the same for evermore.'

III.

The third great gift of the Divine Redeemer to His Church is the abiding sacrifice of His mercy and love. The Gospel narrative presents innumerable scenes from the Divine Redeemer's public ministry which reveal His infinite power and wisdom combined with infinite mercy and love. It appears to me that the closing scene in the upper room of Jerusalem in sublimity and grandeur surpasses them all. He has gathered the chosen disciples around Him, and in the words of the Evangelist: "Cum dilexisset suos qui erant in mundo, in finem dilexit eos." St. John Chrysostom interprets the words in finem to mean the supreme and crowning manifestation of His infinite love. The apostles had come to eat of the Paschal Lamb. He makes them partakers of the true eternal Paschal Lamb. He institutes the Blessed Eucharist, as a Sacrament for the spiritual life of the world, and as a Sacrifice to give glory to the Most High. As a Sacrifice He enshrined in it the holocaust of His own divine life, a holocaust infinitely fruitful and far-reaching and all-pleasing to the Father; as a Sacrament. He became Himself the heavenly nourishment, strength and joy of faithful souls.

Commentators on the Old Testament refer to the creative words 'Fiat lux,' 'Let there be light,' as the most perfect model of simplicity of expression and marvellous efficacy of result. But no less remarkable for simplicity, combined with infinitely greater fruitfulness, is the Redeemer's utterance 'Hoc facite,' 'Do this,' by which He endowed Holy Church with His own eternal Priesthood and perpetuated His infinite Sacrifice throughout all time. That simple formula, with ineffable efficacy, inseparably links earth with heaven, bestows on man-

kind the incomparable offering of divine worship, and throughout all time brings a paradise on earth within the reach of the faithful soul.

On 100,000 altars the Church every day perpetuates this holocaust of the Divine Redeemer, and the Prophet's words are fulfilled: 'From the rising of the sun, even to the going down, My name is great among the gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to My name a clean oblation: for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.' (Malach. i. 11.)

We are sometimes accused of multiplying sacrifices of the Mass and substituting them for one all-satisfying holocaust of Calvary, and of thus derogating to the dignity and efficacy of the sacrifice of the Cross. Such accusations proceed from the crassest ignorance of the Catholic doctrine of Holy Mass. The Mass in its sacred ritual symbolises the Sacrifice of the Cross, but furthermore in its sacrificial hearing it perpetuates the one Sacrifice of Redemption. It is not a different sacrifice from that of the Cross; but it is the very same sacrifice hidden from material gaze under sacred symbols. The same Sacrifice is perpetuated in heaven. The Lamb as it slain, yet living, is ever present on the golden altar before God's throne, 'interpellans pro nobis' ever pleading for the human race. The same Divine Holocaust hidden under the sacramental veils of Bread and Wine is day by day offered to the Father on the altars of Christendom.

Sometimes, too, the Church has been accused of extreme rigor in her precept which enforces attendance at Holy Mass on Sundays under grave obligation. Men, it is said, might well recite their prayers elsewhere and assist at instruction and thus sanctify the Sunday without the additional duty of coming to the church for such pious exercises. But the assisting at Mass is something far different from assembling at prayers and receiving religious instruction. Such prayers and instruction are most salutary and merit manifold blessings. Holy Mass is the supreme act of worship and homage, instituted by Our Saviour, perpetuating His presence on earth, giving glory to the Most High, and bringing within the reach of faithful souls the ineffable blessings of the holocaust of His life, sufferings, and death. During the Holy Sacrifice we are as truly present to our Blessed Lord, as were the shepherds at Bethlehem, as were the disciples in Galilee, and as were the faithful women of Jerusalem at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. We offer to God the most perfect holocaust all-pleasing in His sight, we perform the sublimest act of divine worship, and whilst propitiating the Divine Majesty we may confidently petition for all the spiritual blessings of which we stand in need.

Throughout the trying time of persecution our Fathers braved every hardship, and faced death itself that they might assist at the Holy Sacrifice. The Arch-persecutor Oliver Cromwell, in his pride of tyranny, made it his boast that wheresoever his sword could reach no Mass would be said. And yet despite his threats, the faithful in Ireland assembled on the hill-sides and in the remote valleys or silent caves, at morning's dawn, around the rude altar where, under the broad canopy of heaven, the good shepherd, ready to lay down his life for his flock, bidding defiance to the wind and hail and snow, offered up the Holy Sacrifice. Such heroism was invincible, such piety could not but be crowned with the abiding victory that heaven has accorded to it.

And here another thought presents itself. Whilst fulfilling her marvellous mission the Church has availed of the auxiliary aid, which the arts in their varied resources presented, and at the same time she perfected those arts in their highest ideals and crowned them with immortal splendor. Even in the Catacombs with the sword of persecution ever impending over them, the early Christians were intent on the adornment of the centres of sacrifice, and of the shrines of devotion to the intent that the material structure might in some way embody their conceptions of the Sacrifice which was offered, and of the Deity Whom they adored and might give expression to their piety and love. When peace smiled upon the Church then indeed were the monuments of religion multiplied by the faithful, resplendently showing forth their ardor of devotion and their conception of the supreme worship which is the Creator's due.

Better than any words of mine, an expert in the sphere of Christian art will tell you of the triumphs achieved by Holy Church in this indirect outcome of her Divine mission. 'How little could friend or foe of the new-born Faith have foreseen that out of it there should unfold itself a poetry infinitely greater, an art infinitely higher than the old world had ever seen; that this Faith which looked so rigid, so austere, even so

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