

## THE DISCIPLE IS NOT ABOVE THE MASTER

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MID the present scenes of suffering and death the one bright and cheery spot is the presence of the Church. The one supporting and encouraging sound comes from her authoritative and infallible voice. It is this voice destined ever to guide the nations and to save the world, which, well heard and faithfully obeyed, constitutes that impregnable strength of unity against which even the gates of hell can never prevail. No wonder, then, if the enemies of the Church, who are at the same time hostile to well-ordered society, have always endeavored, if not to stifle that mighty voice, at least to weaken its authority and moral power. On their standard they bear the "I will not serve," which is the motto of him who was the first to rebel against God.

We cannot deny that their efforts have been to some extent successful. The present persecution of the Church in war-torn Europe furnishes us with a sad but undeniable proof of this fact. Our churches, priests, and religious, have been delivered up to the hands of the rabble, mocked, derided, bruised, crowned with thorns, forced to bear the cross of suffering and death. But, however much we may be afflicted at this spectacle, we will not despair. The sacred cause of truth and justice, though trampled under foot, and crushed for a time, must and will ultimately triumph over reckless falsehood and cruel oppression. The base arts of the slanderer and persecutor sooner or later recoil with fatal effect on their own heads. The indignation which they have temporarily excited against the innocent and the virtuous, ultimately falls, with a hundred-fold force, on themselves. Truth, obscured and hidden for a time by the dark clouds of hatred and misrepresentation, always breaks forth again with renewed lustre and splendor even as the sun breaks forth from the clouds which have for a time concealed its beams. Persecution can no more blot out the truth than clouds can blot out the sun from the heavens.

It has ever been so. The pages of history proclaim the fact in unmistakable language, that falsehood and brute violence have never yet destroyed a good nor firmly established a bad cause. And though falsehood and the shoutings from the Babel of Error in their fierce and unprincipled grappling with truth gain the sympathy of the ig-

norant masses, and even for a long time seem to retain the mastery, the benevolent Author of truth and the annals of history bear testimony to the insincerity of that cry. There is nothing new under the sun. Human nature has always been the same in every age; the same in its passions, in its prejudices, in its capacity both for good and for evil. If we examine the history of the Church we will find that the present spectacle of war and persecution, which at first struck us as new and startling, is really neither new nor startling. Similar events have occurred hundreds of times before, and under circumstances of much deeper atrocity. There have been many instances in the past, in which the efforts of slander and of brute force to crush the truth, have been marked by much greater ruthlessness and wide-spread ruin. The Church has in past ages triumphed, again and again, over much more formidable opposition than She experiences today. She has come out unscathed from much more fiery ordeals. She has triumphed over devastation and ruin, over time and revolution, over barbarian invasion and the desperate efforts made for three hundred years by the all-powerful Roman Empire to crush Her. Is it likely that the puny efforts of a few paltry dictators will now overcome Her? He whose word can not pass away, though heaven and earth may pass away, has built His Church upon a rock, and has pledged His eternal veracity that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Christ himself no longer suffers in the flesh, but in His mystical spouse, the Church. "When I shall be lifted up," He said, "then will I draw all men to me." It is the same with His Spouse. She has felt the kiss of many a Judas on Her cheek; Sadducee and Pharisee alike hate Her; She has been led before the rulers of this world and they have pronounced sentence upon Her: and the sentence is death. With this sentence ringing in Her ears, it is then that the divinity within Her shines forth with naught to dim its brightness. It was just such a sentence that was passed upon Christ by His persecutors, who, in their fiendish triumph, consigned Him to the tomb. Yet they could not prevent the exercise of His power over death, and His glorious resurrection. In spite of all the watchfulness and precautions of His enemies, He arose again as He had clearly predicted, on the third day. He arose to die no more; His triumph was permanent and eternal. In Him truth triumphed over error, innocence over slander, virtue over persecution. His meekness and patience under suffering and death, and His glorious triumph over His enemies prefigured what was subsequently to happen to His disciples and to His Church. The Church might expect to be slandered, to be persecuted,

to be nailed to the cross with her divine Founder; like Him, She was to bear all these outrages without a murmur and like Him, She was to arise again, with renewed life and vigor, from the tomb to which Her enemies had thought in the folly of their hearts, that they had forever consigned Her. What has been will be again. Persecution has ever been the heritage of truth. It was the lot of Him Who was Himself "the way, and the truth, and the life." He foretold that it should be the lot of His disciples; He led us to expect it as a matter of course; he consoled us under its anticipated or present pressure with the golden declaration: "The disciple is not above the Master."

To the Catholics of Germany, Russia, Poland, and of those other countries, who are at present bearing the yoke of the godless, we would advise them not to be discouraged or downcast by the present sad plight of the Church and the inhuman suffering of Her children. If the storms and vicissitudes and persecutions of nineteen centuries have not overcome our Church, the present ordeal will not bring its destruction. If the Diocletians, Neros, Julians, Luthers, and the Calvins could not destroy our Church, is it likely that its destruction will be brought about by such pigmies as the Hitlers, Stalins, Mussolinis, and Hirohitos? She bears a charmed life. Though daily doomed to death, yet She is fated not to die. What do we now suffer which those who nourished the Church in its infancy did not suffer a hundred-fold? If we are misrepresented and slandered, so were they. If we are assailed with lies and falsehoods, so were they. If we are branded as fifth columnists and enemies of the State, so were they. If our churches are burned and our altars desecrated, so were theirs. If public opinion is down upon us, so it was with them. And if they were not cast down, so we ought not to be; for as surely as they triumphed, so surely shall we.

There is a story of a torpedoed ship which yields an illustration that we may use here. The crew had to leave the sinking vessel and take to the life-boats. There was a heavy swell, and great care in rowing and steering was necessary in order to keep the over-laden boats on an even keel. The danger arose, not from the ordinary waves, which they rode over easily, but from the treacherous waves of the cross-currents. Night was approaching, and the courage of the survivors began to wane when they thought of what would be their fate in the darkness, if they were no longer able to see those cross-current waves. To their great joy, however, when it grew dark they discovered that they were in phosphorescent waters and that each dangerous wave rolled up crested with light which made it clearly visible. So it is that the Church's persecutions carry in them-

selves the Light which takes away their peril and terror. The night of sorrow comes with its own Lamp of Comfort. The hour of weakness brings its own divine strength. Impregnable and indestructible in the fortress which Her divine Founder has erected for Her, and in the armor which He has thrown around Her, the "gates of hell" cannot "prevail" against her, because He has predicted that they should not prevail.

Thus has it been with the Church since its foundation. The present suffering of her children is not new. Near two thousand years ago hatred and malice made use of the same weapons which they make use of to this day. They used calumny and falsehood. Her divine founder, Jesus Christ, was the victim; His children need not wish to escape. They are to be tried that they may be purified. They are to be trampled under foot, that the precious odor of their patience, and humility, and purity of heart, like the sweet scent of a bruised flower, may arise and fill the earth with its heavenly fragrance. Persecuted, yet not exterminated; calumniated, yet not destroyed. In the midst of storms, and danger, and death, the persecuted stand firm, sharing the immortality of the Church in whose bosom they were nourished. God is with His Church and Her children. And though we see the garments of His Spouse sprinkled with blood, we also see that Her progress on earth has been steady and manifold. There is no corner of the world to which her missionaries have not penetrated, carrying learning and civilization, and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the pure and holy light of Catholicism. She has turned the idolator from his idol, and the pagan from the worship of his helpless deities, and in their place, the cross of Christ flourishes. Her Vicar of Christ was an exile from the See of Peter, not over a hundred years ago, and her enemies were prophesying the end of the Papacy; today he is recognized as the greatest moral power on this earth. And though nations stand afar off, watching, he still reigns from the Vatican in the Name of his Divine Master.

Such is the Church—the great and holy family of God, the ark of salvation, the peaceful and invincible army which wages warfare with the powers of hell, and marches on through all the centuries—ever on to the conquest of paradise. She will continue to add to victory, and She knows that at the last the enemy shall not prevail against Her. But to the last the battle must be kept up, no truces may be held. If for a moment vigilance be relaxed the watchful enemy advances. Laws and customs and manners and languages

and the forms of government may change from age to age, but the Church, built on a Rock, stands unshaken and unchanged in the midst of the ebb and flow of the tides of time.

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