

IT IS A SACRIFICE IN WHICH THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT IN HEAVEN BEARS A PART.

It is a sacrifice in which the church triumphant in heaven likewise bears a part; not indeed, in that sensible, exterior, and visible manner, which is suited only to creatures like ourselves, but in that real, efficacious, and ineffable participation, by which this oblation which sanctifies us, and has already purified them for bliss, confirms them immutably in their happy state of innocence and sanctity. This sacrament is also termed the bread of angels, the food of the elect, because they are filled in heaven with the bread that sustains us here below, and share, without interruption, in the immortal banquet which is our consolation in this vale of tears. Hence it is, that the church derives the most noble of her privileges, for every time she offers the sacrifice, and distributes the sacrament, the smoke of this oblation ascends up even to the throne of the Eternal; the canticles of earth resound through the regions of eternity, whence arises a concordance of supplication, a communion of prayer and adoration, which associates earth to heaven, the region of exile to the land of promise, these scenes of sorrow and combat to the realms of victory and of triumph; while the lamb that was immolated, from the foundation of the world, is, according to the expression of the well-beloved disciple, the light which at the same moment enlightens the terrestrial Jerusalem and the city of the living God—Thrice happy the Christian, who, penetrated with these sentiments, feels conscious that he is adoring in company of the angels, and praying while encircled by the elect; that he is seated here below at that banquet, which in heaven is the object of their everlasting felicity!

IT IS A SACRIFICE OF EXPIATION FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH SUFFERING.

It is, moreover, a sacrifice of refreshment and expiation for the Church suffering in Purgatory; which though deprived of the consolation of offering it with us, yet enjoy the benefits of this salutary oblation. The Almighty prefigure in the Old Law his merciful designs towards these souls, when he ordained that the Priest should take two doves, and the blood of the one sprinkled on the head of the other should be the sign of its deliverance and liberty. Every day does the blood flow from our altars, even to the place of their penitence; every instant does some happy soul, purified by this expiatory effusion, wing its flight to the realms of everlasting repose. Meanwhile, those whom the hand of God still retains there, cease not to address us in tones of tender solicitation: "Have pity on us, have pity on us, at least you our friends;" now is the time to give us a real proof of your sensibility and compassion. Regard our sufferings, but not with that fruitless compassion which weeps over the unhappy, without affording them succour in their distress. Lo, your victim—your deliverer, and ours awaits you on the altar! It is there that you may open for us the fountains of the Saviour

whose purifying waters will extinguish the flames that consume us, allay our burning thirst, wash away our remaining stains, and render us objects of compassionate regard to a God, who, though he still regards us with an eye of justice, yet cannot forget that we are his children; and that you are our brethren.

We shall now proceed to show that every thing is holy in the oblation that is offered on our altars; holy, as to Him who is the subject of the sacrifice; holy as the motives that determine it.

IT IS AN OBLATION HOLY AS TO HIM WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF THE SACRIFICE.

God is the end of this sacrifice; it is to Him alone that the whole homage is referred, and all holy almighty, and all infinite; as he is by his nature, this is a homage worthy of his God-head; in these august mysteries he receives a homage of perfect dependence, a homage complete in every requisite qualification, a homage infinite in reparation and gratitude on the part of the creature.

It is an homage of perfect dependence—the holiest among the children of men, the chief of the elect consecrates himself in this sacrifice to the service of his Father, in the name of all those whom he has associated to himself in quality of members, of brethren, of co-heirs, in the same kingdom. Hence it is, that Jesus Christ, in the institution of this sacrifice, calls the blood which he there sheds, the blood of the new covenant, since by virtue of this blood, man renders to God all that is due. But why is it said all that is due? He renders him still more, for had man persevered in a state of innocence, God would have required no other homage and sacrifice at his hands, than what was suitable to a being, imperfect in his nature: he would have required of him the homage of a pure and faithful heart, for its more exalted feelings would have been confined in the narrow limits that circumscribe the virtues of a finite creature. Here the oblation is boundless in its scope, and the merit of the victim immeasurable in its efficacy. When Jesus Christ saluted his eternal Father with an "Ecce venio!" Behold I come! methinks he thus seemed to address him; "Behold in me the utmost homage that man is capable of rendering; a mind, whose whole thoughts are centered upon thee; a heart that exerts its affections to fix them on thee alone; a will whose whole prayers are devoted to thy obedience: a body which exerts its faculties only to immolate them to thy glory; what canst thou require of man, which may not be found in myself! It is to thee that man owes the first homage of his heart, and ere time yet began, I had said to thee, "Behold I come!" It is to thee that man owes the most perfect return of love; it is a feeling that should be extinguished only with his life; and the homage of my heart is perpetuated with unremitting ardor, from age to age, and shall have no other term than eternity. Will not the Almighty accept this in his justice, not only as an acknowledgment of our absolute dependence, but also as the most complete reparation of all our outrages against his Divine Majesty?

Yes; however vast the extent, and terrible the consequences that enlightened theologians have at-

tributed to sin; though it be an article of faith that our offences, however circumscribed by the will of the offender, become infinite with respect to the outraged; still we may place an entire and unbounded confidence in the victim that is immolated for us, because the merits of Jesus Christ are more than paramount to the utmost malice of sin. Man can offer no outrage, however heinous, to any one attribute of the Almighty, which Jesus Christ does not meet with a peculiar expiation, proportioned both to the magnitude of the offence, and the sanctity of the offended. I know that our sins are marked with a character of ingratitude of injustice, and infidelity which strikes immediately at the sanctity, the justice, and the mercy of God; I know that they immediately counteract the wisdom of his Providence; that every time our heart abandons itself to their controul, it renews the impious attempt of the rebel angels' and grasps with its feeble efforts at the throne of the eternal: but I also see with confidence, that in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ all these attributes are included in the inherent rights of the Redeemer. It is there that God exercises upon man, in the person of his Son, that sovereign dominion, that absolute empire, which belongs to him; while, at the same time that the rigor of his justice inflicts upon him the punishment due to sin, his mercy, boundless in its extent, provides his offending creature with a neverfailing means of returning into grace and favor.

It is here also, that the many instances of our hard and unthankful conduct are repaired by a homage of gratitude the most full and efficacious. It God condescends not to accept the victims of our choice or providing, it is because his infinite fullness cannot be contented with the offerings of our miserable insufficiency. What do we possess that we have not received from him? And what can we render to him which is not by a thousand titles already his? It is from the treasures of his own superabundance that he draws the ransom to satisfy whatever is due on our parts: it is from this fund that his inventive charity supplies us with the eucharist victim: that offering of reconciliation and favor, which alone is sufficient to correspond to those immense benefits, those inexhaustible graces, which have flowed upon us, and shall continue to flow in such lavish profusion. Yet, however inexhaustible the source may be whence these blessings flow, that from which we desire the means of acquitting this vast debt of gratitude, is not less copious nor less abundant. As often as we take the chalice of salvation, and unite our prayers with those of Jesus Christ, the perpetual intercessor, we are confident that our offerings and our homages fulfil the whole extent of our obligations; & on what is this confidence founded? on what, but the infinite sanctity of him who offers the sacrifice.

It is Eternal Wisdom that has made choice of the victim: it is Eternal Charity that has consummated the sacrifice; it must; therefore, be necessarily worthy of the God to whom it is offered. That state of astonishing humiliation, to which Jesus Christ has reduced himself on our altars, diminishes no part of his perfections, despoils him of no