

and the bondage of Satan, and the parchment of divine vengeance which was written by that Almighty hand which centuries before had traced the impending doom of Babylon on the walls of the banquet chamber of her king,—that parchment of vindictive justice for sins committed during ages of human corruption, Christ nailed to the cross, wiping out its dark handwriting in the saving torrents of His blood.

By dying on the cross He conquered the enemies of human salvation—the world, the flesh and the devil, and repudiated for Himself and His followers their evil maxims. The world loves pride and glory and ambition, and what could be more galling to its criminal pride, what more irritating to its false honor than the humiliating spectacle of a God dying the shameful and ignominious death of the cross.

The sign of the cross teaches us the great lesson of Christian mortification. By dying on the cross Christ conquered the criminal appetites of the flesh. The body loves ease and enjoyment and delights in the maxims of the old Epicurean philosophy: "Eat, drink and be merry, to-morrow thou shalt die." This sinful flesh of fallen man with its corrupted appetites Christ has conquered by His mortified life and His ignominious death on Calvary's cross. These are the great salutary lessons of practical Christianity which the Sign of the Cross brings before our minds. Is it any wonder that we should revere it as the emblem of the redemption, for although as a material thing it merits no special attention, yet as a religious symbol of the great sacrifice of Calvary it is worthy of all honour. It reminds us as image never did before that we are children of a crucified God and members of a Church which, through ages of storm and tempest has borne nobly and faithfully the dark mantle of trial and persecution which she has inherited from her Divine Spouse and Master.

By dying on the cross He has hallowed forever the shame and disgrace attached to it, and what was before despised and dishonored was henceforth to become honored and glorified before the nations of the earth. Scorned by the pagan populace of Imperial Rome the cross of Christ was forced to hide itself in the subterranean vaults of the catacombs. Then when the epoch of persecution had passed away it emerged from this secluded abode and shone forth in the broad light of Roman day. It appeared in the heavens to Constantine as he was about to engage in battle with Maxentius. The emperor adopted the cross as his standard. His army was victorious, Maxentius was defeated, Paganism was destroyed forever, and on the smoking ashes of the pagan altars which centuries of religion and patriotism had erected and beautified the Cross of Christ was planted to be henceforward the Christian standard of the Roman Empire. Thence it has descended to us. It is emblazoned on the royal arms of every European sovereign, and it is thrice repeated in the flag of the British Empire.

In Catholic countries it is seen in the fields, on the high-ways and in the public places of the city. It is embroidered on the habiliments of the wealthy and on the delicate tapestry of the nobility. Everywhere, in all the various phases of Catholic life the sign of the cross appears as the most popular, and at the same time the most beautiful ornament of our religion. It is impressed on the new born babe when, baptized in the saving waters of regeneration, he becomes a disciple of the crucified