

THE SACRED COLOURS.

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I CONCLUDE, then, that the occasional divergence of season color in the various orthodox uses is perfectly legitimate, and implies no contradiction to the established custom of other sections of the Church. As regards our own practice each Parish Priest must decide for himself—not what particular doctrine he desires to dwell upon in his teaching, but the doctrine the Church enjoins; and the colors used should be in strict agreement with the doctrines she designs to symbolize. The various uses of the national churches will furnish him with sufficient means for determining the colors that are most suitable for use on the Festivals and Seasons of the year, without the aid of any specially-prepared direction on the subject.

The propriety of the color proper for the Holy Days is readily seen. Red is fittingly used for the commemoration of all martyrs who have shed their blood as Christians. As such it is used on Holy Innocents' Day, although the commemoration of St. John the Baptist requires white in the Roman Rule,—the former shedding their young blood in Christ's stead, the latter being in no sense a martyr under the Christian Dispensation. Viewed in connection with its signification, the Sarum use of yellow for confessors is equally suitable. They have boldly confessed Christ, before the powers of this world, with death staring them in the face. In accordance with the Divine command they have taken no thought what they should say, their words being directly guided by the Holy Spirit. They were called confessors on account of this direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit,—therefore the color-symbol of the Holy Spirit is the most suitable colour to be used in their commemoration.

Knowing white to be the perfect symbol of God, we should shrink from using it in the commemoration of virgins, angels and all saints, had we not scriptural examples for its use in their case. With men, it represents those who have been redeemed; those whose robes have been washed white in the Blood of the Lamb. As such it is appropriate for Holy Baptism and Confirmation, being nothing less than the livery of the servants of the Most High. With angels it is no less appropriate, being the robe of righteousness, never sullied, which they as servants of God wear in doing His service. As representing the angelic choir, white should mark all the choir services of the Church. The occasional use of light blue, of the Sarum Rule, in commemorating the B. V. M. is probably a survival of the ancient-colour tradition had assigned to her. There can be no question that the Eastern and Roman use of white is more proper, as these Festivals are, in every instance, to be considered as Festivals of Our Blessed Lord.

Concerning the strange introduction of black into the services of the Church, the lateness of its permission is significant. According to Sarum Rule black was enjoined only for

masses for the dead. The Roman Rule is black for masses of the dead, and for Good Friday. The Eastern Rule, whilst enjoining black for every day in Holy Week, permits purple as an alternative for masses for the dead. It is therefore a matter for rejoicing that the three branches of the orthodox Church have not enjoined the sole use of black on any one occasion.

As to the signification of black, the merest tyro in the knowledge of color knows that as white is the perfect union of the primary colors, so does black represent *negative* color only, it being merely the complete absence of color.

Its symbolic use, then, for ecclesiastical purposes is nothing more nor less than the distinct assertion of atheism; consequently, the most downright heresy possible.

A few words may be added here concerning the ornamentation of ecclesiastical vesture, whether of minister or altar or sanctuary.

The inadequacy of our colors to represent the purity of the triad of color as seen in the prism or rain-drop, has been already noticed. Their very imperfection renders them no less valuable for the purpose of teaching us the eternal verities, by appealing to the eye as earnestly as the eloquent discourse, always imperfect at his best, appeals to the ear. The doctrines they symbolize seem to sympathize more fully with our infirmities than though they were absolutely perfect. As our Lord taught the loftiest truths by means of familiar examples, so do the imperfect colors used to mark the seasons appeal to our eyes for attention as representing the most important issues. It is like the Deity condescending as far as possible to our imperfect level—for our better understanding—as He has designed to do in His teaching by representing Himself as moved by human feeling. But God permits bright glimpses of the life beyond to flash down into our present imperfect state. This is symbolized by the employment of precious stones in the adornment of church fabrics. Their tints are perfect, consequently they are suitable not only for strengthening the season colours they ornament, but they also point us towards the perfection we are bidden to strive for, but which can be attained only in the resurrection state.

There is, indeed, a much greater contrast between the present and future state of God's servants, than any that can possibly subsist between the dull colour of our vestments and altar coverings, and their jewelled adornment. But the contrast is sufficient for the practical teaching that, if we are faithful unto death here, in the common tasks of our simple lives, then shall be given unto us the bright Crown of Life. The dull colours of the fabric represent the truth as shining in our hearts, dimmed and weakened by the imperfections and stains that "wrap an earthly saint;"—the perfect colour of the jewelled adornment points to the triumph of the resurrection state, where the faithful servant of God shall not only see the King in His beauty, but the glorified life shall itself be attained by all who have here fought the good fight of faith.

All our ideas of perfection are far below the mark. Even the perfect colours of the precious stones which adorned the breast-plate of the High Priest, fail before the actual glory of the Divine presence. The twelve jewels set by Divine command in the High Priest's breastplate, points towards a perfection unattainable in this life; and yet the same twelve stones find a place in the golden city, only in the foundation on which its golden streets are built. No earthly color, no precious stone can be a perfect emblem of that glorious state of which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

On account of their great value as emblematic of the sure foundation of all our hopes, the artistic employment of precious stones is to be commended.

I have here attempted a brief outline of a great subject, not in any consciousness of superior knowledge, but in the modest hope that it may be of some use to those in need of that preliminary instruction which precedes the intelligent appreciation of the colour emblems which have always been associated with Divine Worship.

THE IRISH PROBLEM.

IT is strange that civilisation, reinforced by religion, should have done so little in three hundred years to extirpate the passionate ferocity of a people like the Irish, who are not unkindly or ungenerous in their happier moods. It usually changes the forms that our passions take, because it enables men to realise better the scope of their actions and produces a complexity of feeling which checks the sway of a single passion. But the Irish are still unchanged in their national temper. The dynamiters have shown that they are malignant enough to use the terrible resources which science has put into their hands, and are callous enough to kill the innocent, without scruple and without remorse, for the furtherance of an idea for which they do not sufficiently care to risk or expose their own lives. The emissaries of the national league similarly carry out a sort of *Jacquerie*, in midnight murders, in attacks on women and children, in houghing of cattle, in cropping of horses, and in brutalities which would disgrace the worst brigands. They believe in no remedy but force, and their methods are mean and vindictive. It seems to us, indeed, unmistakably clear, that the *morale* of Irish life has visibly degenerated in modern times, even amidst the manifold evidences of an improved social condition. People have remarked that the traditional gaiety and sprightly humour of the peasantry have largely given way to a temper of sullenness and gloom, both alike unexpected and unreasonable. But in olden times the love of justice was even more conspicuous amongst the Irish than the vivacity of their wit. We all remember Sir John Davies' testimony on this point. But the most conspicuous feature of the Irish today is an entire absence, not only of generosity