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JMJ
U.I.O.G.D.
Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls
O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!
+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +
Volume five = The Christian's Last End
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Justice of the Divine Decrees

"I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other."
St. Luke 18: 14.

When a man is able to declare himself free from so many vices, such as theft, injustice, adultery, to thank God in fervent prayer for benefits received, to fast, to give a tenth part of his goods to the poor, are not those praiseworthy holy works and occupations which show a man to be a pious, just servant of God? On the other hand, what is more scandalous than to see a man wallowing in all sorts of wickedness, so that he is publicly called a sinner? Yet how different was the judgment pronounced by our Lord on the two men: "I say to you this man went down into his house justified rather than the other." Who would look on such a judgment as just if he did not know it came from the infallible Truth? Truly, many things of the kind happen in the world, and if we were to dare to condemn them, we should make a grievous mistake; still worse should we err by presuming to murmur against and find fault with the hidden decrees and dispensations of divine Providence; yet that is an error into which many fall, who seem to themselves learned and clever. These over-curious people I must address in the words of St. Paul: "Oh, man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9: 20.) Who art thou who in a spirit of curiosity darest to investigate the wonderful workings of divine Providence the government of the world, nay, to criticize them, murmur against them, find fault with them? Wait till the work of the great Master is completed; then there will be full opportunity of seeing it all. May we not, then, express any opinion on the decrees and dispensations of God's providence in this life? Of course we may, and that is not only allowed, but it is even our duty to do so; but:

Our judgment of them should be that everything is good, right, and just in the highest degree that divine Providence does with us and everybody in the whole world, although we cannot now understand the reason of this justice and goodness, nay, although many decrees may now appear unjust and inconsistent to our understanding.

We must always give a celebrated artist the credit of working according to rule, although we may not understand the work. When the Indians first saw a clock they were so struck with admiration that they would spend the whole day gazing at it open-mouthed; they saw the pendulum swinging to and fro, and heard the rattling of the wheels

when the clock struck; sometimes it struck one, sometimes two or three; and so on. What a strange thing, thought they; there must be something hidden in it! Is it altogether natural? But the simple people, nevertheless, praised the work, and were of the opinion that great skill was required to complete it; great was their admiration of the man who could make such a wonderful machine, and if they could have got hold of him there is little doubt they would have looked on him as a kind of god.

Now, if we with good reason form such a favorable opinion of the works of man, although we do not understand them, and form that opinion simply because we trust every master in his own art, what judgment should we, must we, form of the works of divine Providence? When we consider what goes on in this world, it appears to us not otherwise than as a mighty clock, in which there are many different wheels-some large, others small; some turn here, others there; that is, one man has a wide sphere of action, another a very small one; one is seated on a throne in great honor, another lies on the ground, poor and neglected; one is rich, another poor; one healthy, another sick; one idle, another busy from morning till night, like the pendulum of the clock; one is prosperous and fortunate, another tried with sorrow and affliction; for one the clock strikes too soon, for another too late: many things seem to us inconsistent, many actually unjust, and most things inexplicable; we are quite bewildered at what we see around us; but let us seek out the Master who is still working at this clock and putting each part of it into its place, until it shall be completely finished at the end of the world.

God is the Master who arranges all; the almighty, most wise, and most just God, whom we have never seen; but of whom we know for certain that He cannot go wrong in anything, that He is "holy in all His works" (Ps. 144: 13). Oh, therefore, must we think, and firmly believe that whatever this Artist begins and completes must be good and right, and as it should be, and that it could not be done better; and although we may not understand the reason of it, this one fact, God has so ordained it, should suffice to make us form that judgment. And for a still stronger reason should we form that judgment of Him, since He tells us Himself in Holy Writ that He is just in all His decrees and works, and has, as it were, promised us that on that day, when all His works shall be fully completed, we shall praise and approve of them. Again, therefore, this one fact should suffice for us, although we see before our eyes things that to our weak understanding appear unjust and inconsistent; this one fact should be enough to convince us, even against our reason and the testimony of our senses, that all He does is right and just, and could not be done better. In the very same way, although in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, I imagine that I see and smell and feel and touch nothing but bread, yet I believe firmly the contrary, and say without the least hesitation: No, it is not bread; it is the Body and Blood of my Lord and Saviour. I do not understand this mystery, but I believe it; it is true. Why? Because He has said it.

And how many things has not God created in the world that seem incomprehensible, nay, incredible to us? And still we must acknowledge them to be true. Who would believe, if God had not revealed it, that the whole vast mass of the universe was created and furnished by a single word! Who would believe that the sovereign, infinite God became man, was born a little child, grew up to manhood, suffered hunger and thirst, was nailed to a cross, and died? Who would believe that the bodies that we now have, which shall decay in the earth, or be reduced to ashes, or devoured by wild beasts - who would believe that they shall be restored again to the form they now have and be again endowed

with life? Any one would say of these and similar mysteries before they actually occur, or are revealed by God, that they are simply impossible, they cannot be; and yet we now say and acknowledge that they have happened and shall happen; God has done as He has said, and will do so again, for nothing is impossible to Him.

Consider the beginning and progress of our religion. What a wonderful, incomprehensible thing it is! Who would ever have thought that twelve poor fishermen, such as the Apostles were before their conversion, should be able to change the whole world, and to convince kings, emperors and philosophers that they had been living in abominable errors, that their gods, to whom most magnificent temples had been erected almost everywhere over the world, were only instruments and tools of the devils? Who would believe that they should be able to persuade the Jews that the religion which they had received from their holy leader Moses, and which was revealed to him by God, was only a figure of ours, and was now of no more value? Who would believe that they should be able to persuade the nations of the world to abjure idolatry, and acknowledge and adore as the true God a poor man who was crucified as a criminal, to love Him above all things with their whole hearts, and for His sake to suffer all the torments that could be inflicted on them, and a thousand deaths, if it were possible? Yet those poor fishermen succeeded in doing all this, without as much as a staff in their hands, and that, too, they did although they were beaten out of one city into another, while all those who accepted their teachings and obeyed the law preached by them were tortured in the most frightful manner and put to death by tyrants. Who could have believed such a thing possible before it actually took place? If I were to say to you: The great city of Rome or Constantinople shall in a short time be plundered and destroyed by twelve flies, who would credit my words? Certainly not one of you, my dear brethren. For my part, I could not believe such a thing. And is it more incredible than that twelve ignorant men should change the world in such a manner? And yet they did so; no Christian can deny it; God has said it; God has carried His words into effect.

For whenever God does anything we must look, not at the apparent possibility or credibility of the matter, but at the unlimited power of the Almighty, to whom nothing is impossible, although we may not be capable of seeing how the thing is done. Now, if we hold everything as true that God has done and said, because He is almighty and infallible, although we may not understand what He has done, why should we not also look on whatever divine Providence effects in the world as just and right, although we sometimes cannot see how things can be just or right? For God is not less holy and just than powerful, and He has said, too, that all His decrees are right and just. If the infinite power of God can produce effects that surprise our understanding, why should not divine Providence also ordain things that we cannot explain, nay, that seem to us inconsistent? If we poor mortals could grasp the works and decrees of God, He would not be a wonderful, incomprehensible God. But why do I speak of the works and decrees of God? How many acts and plans of men do we not condemn as foolish, inconsistent and wicked, because we do not understand the motive of them, while if we happen to have them properly explained to us afterwards we see that they were reasonably sensible and holy?

But if we are ignorant of the causes and reasons of many decrees and arrangements of divine Providence, is that a reason for looking on them as unjust? Do they not proceed from the same infinitely good, wise, holy and just God? Ah, let the Author and Cause, God, suffice me in place of all reasons. Let a man speculate as much as he likes; let him

ask me what questions he pleases; why God, who is so good and holy, allows so much evil to exist in the world; why God, who has suffered the death of the cross for us men, should condemn so many millions of souls to hell; why there are so many millions of infidels, heathens, idolaters, Turks, Jews and heretics to whom the mysteries of our faith have never been preached; why, generally speaking, the innocent must suffer, while the wicked prosper; why potentates are allowed by God to wage war on each other so often, to the great detriment of harmless people, who have not given the slightest cause for war and are thereby reduced to poverty; let him ask me these and a hundred similar questions, and my only answer shall be: "Let the Author and Cause, God, suffice to me in place of all reasons." God has decreed it; God permits it; God has ordained it; therefore all is permitted or decreed with the utmost justice, goodness, and holiness. Amen.

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