

ARCHBISHOP MANNIX

IF we have reached the parting of the ways in Ireland, Archbishop Mannix is the signpost to those who will take the trouble to read before they rush into hysteric hostility. There is something melodramatic, but not without its providential aspect, in his return to Europe. It is curious to think that the Twentieth Century opened finding Mercier, Mannix, and Wilson obscurely buried in college life, so closely related to abstract and metaphysical subjects that their very injection into international politics would have caused instant amusement to their former pupils. They were after the manner of Plato's schoolmasters, whom in his republic he wished to govern the world. The world has never come nearer to the Platonic ideal than when Wilson proclaimed the doctrine of Self-determination among nations. Though Wilson failed in the gigantic task of imposing it upon the Allies, Archbishop Mannix has taken upon himself the duty of bringing it with logical severity to the notice of the British Government. Though living at the Antipodes, he has crossed two oceans in his consuming desire to see applied the supreme theory of modern times to the kindly and admiring people who gave him birth.

Lord Acton's view of history was largely that ideas, not men or events, made the differences between one era and the next. Free-will, Transubstantiation, Liberty, and Predestination are the ideas that have made revolutions and poured human blood like water. Terrible as human history reads, it is different from the internecine slaughter in the animal world. Insects and carnivora only tear each other in pieces for a material end. The wolf does not destroy in the name of Liberty, or the wasp persecute the fly for insufficiency of belief in Predestination. It is to the credit of historic man that he has again and again sacrificed

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his material well-being and the general peace to purely abstract ideas, some of them proven since to be preposterous. Crusades, reformations, and counter-reformations in the past, causes whether of the crank or the patriot in the present attest the amazing fact that the ordinary human being will die and suffer for any idea that will touch his spiritual imagination. There is no idea which has not been reinforced by solitary martyrs who have persevered to the end, often both of their idea and of themselves. The human tragedy is that no truth or untruth but can claim the witness of anguished and whole-hearted men. When a truth receives witness by blood and endurance it becomes unassailable. When a political conception, say—"No Taxes without Representation" or Self-determination of Small Nations—sweeps a whole people in its fire, it becomes irrepressible and insurmountable.

The position of Archbishop Mannix is strange but not contemptible. He incarnates the spirit of Irish self-determination as completely as the Germans confessed that Cardinal Mercier incarnated the spirit of Belgian resistance. It may seem at variance or outside the sphere of his pastoral duties in Australia to make speeches in another Continent about conditions in yet a third, but at least it has symbolized the universality of his appeal. In Australia he has been the centre of a delirious enthusiasm among the majority of Catholics, Labourites, and Democrats. The great crowds which accompanied him to the station at Melbourne caused him twenty-four hours' delay, and it was not until he had driven out into the country privately that he could catch a train the next day. Only the Middle Ages recall such a popular position being accorded to a prelate. In the United States, from New York to San Francisco, amazing demonstrations marked his progress even in a country devoted to ecclesiastical

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celebrity. By the time he and his secretary were signalled off the Irish coast the British Government became stupidly aware that its prestige might be diminished by their landing. Six destroyers were sent out to do battle with an abstract idea. The Archbishop and his secretary were taken forcibly on board *The Wivern* and deposited in the melodramatic vicinity of Penzance. It has only showed how impossible it is to attack a moral idea by force. All the cannon of Krupp could not drown Cardinal Mercier's protest of Belgic Nationality. Lord Westbury did not succeed in "dismissing Eternal Punishment with costs," as he once boasted. The majority of mankind continue to expect retribution in another life and the Church's formulas, softened, however, with their almost all-embracing promise of forgiveness, remain. The doctrine of Transubstantiation has survived the Erastian spearpoint of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Every year more people in England come to believe in Transubstantiation than ever, and those who don't, don't care what the Prayer Book of the State has ever said. These examples are only adduced to show that when corporations, commercial or legislative, come into conflict with abstract ideas right or wrong, the ideas generally win. The danger of Prohibition, right or wrong, lies in the fact that, as American liquor-men said, it was an impossibility to fight against. It had become a creed, a fetish, an invisible idea, which could not be dislodged from the minds of the idealists in the States. Self-determination now seems very wrong to a great many Englishmen, who believe it is responsible equally for Bolshevism in the East and Sinn Fein in the West. There is no use repeating Archbishop Mannix's invincible logic as to the application of this theory. There is nothing more disagreeable than the truth in politics as well as in ethics and morals, and the most disagreeable people and

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Churches are those who carry logic out of theology, where it is as proper as in mathematics, into the practical field around them. Hence the whole system of State Churches for the purpose of crippling and pinioning religion, when logic demands that it should oppose the State. The real commendation of the Reformation to King and Parliament in England was that it placed the Head of the State in supreme and pontifical power over the Church. The result has been that the most complaisant and law-abiding of English citizens have been the Anglican Bishops. They have conscientiously voted against every reform proposed in Parliament and, whether Liberal or Tory personally have proved the most undiminishing anti-democratic factor in the State. This was all to be expected and is extremely proper and becoming, but it would not have helped the winning of Magna Charta or inspired Saint Thomas à Becket to withstand the State, which with unchanging stupidity despatched not destroyers but men-at-arms to rid their master of a turbulent priest.

The tendency of a settled State is conservative in action and aristocratic in fruitage. An aristocracy often serves very well, and when leavened with Catholicism has not been hostile to popular welfare. An aristocracy which ceases to be Catholic loses its redeeming point and rapidly degenerates into oligarchy and plutocracy. Hence the tendency in modern times for Catholicism to unite with democracy, and the striking coalition of Labour with Catholic parties in Australia and America. Quebec and Faubourg St. Germain are honourable survivals of old-fashioned Toryism in the Catholic body, but the future of English-speaking Catholicism is with the popular movement. At the same time, should a triumphant Sinn Fein in Ireland develop an anti-clericalism, the Irish peasant will become what he always tends to be, a Catholic Tory after the Breton pattern.

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Archbishop Mannix appears on the horizon, impersonating the actual alliance of Catholicism and Democracy. He is the most potent phenomenon of our ecclesiastical times. If the Church can eventually hold or at least influence modern democracy during the next generation, it will be largely through him and Mercier in view. Doubtless many have been scandalized, and he has often made mistakes of discretion, but he has never erred canonically. For that reason his enormous influence on the American, Australian, and Irish masses must prove a healthy one. The Labourite in favour of direct action feels he must not compromise his ecclesiastical ally. The Sinn Feiner thinks twice before damaging by assassination both the Irish cause and the Archbishop who so bravely adopted it. It is obvious that, while His Grace will go all lengths, scouring the oceans and defying Governments in his crusade for liberty, he is probably the strongest dam to license in modern democracy. Himself an ascetic, denying himself food in accordance with the laws of the Church and wine in accordance with the temperance movement, he stands for honourable discipline of the individual as a complement to the liberty of the community. With a really commanding voice he can call upon the masses in three continents to follow the medieval moralities. His mission is not only to teach governments the logical and legitimate working of democracy, but to strengthen the State by setting the bounds of individual liberty. He is not only the largest factor in the peace of Ireland, but also in the Christianizing of the whole Labour Movement. Both Irish and English workers see in him a prophet.

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