

passion at Bethlehem; Mary's Compassion was her Maternity at Calvary.

### SECTION III.

#### THE ACTUAL EFFECTS OF HER COMPASSION.

We are now in a condition to inquire, thirdly, into the actual effects of Mary's Compassion. These may be classed under three heads, inasmuch as her Compassion was itself part of the Passion, as it fitted her for her office in the Church, and as it regarded her co-operation in the work of redemption. Yet, although these three things may be conceived of as separate, they are, in reality, so intertwined that, in classifying them apart, we run the risk of falling into some repetition,—a risk, however, which, for the sake of clearness, it is worth while to incur.

As it was a part of our Lord's Passion, Mary's Compassion has a share in the effects which the Passion produced, in the same sense, though, of course, in a far lower degree, in which His dereliction by the Father assisted in producing the results of the Passion. This is but a material co-operation; yet, as it is a fact, it serves to show the reality of the Compassion, and the existence of a purpose in it as part of the divine plan. Its effects upon our Blessed Lord were so terrible, that it seems probable the agony it caused Him would have put an end to His life if His Divinity had not miraculously sustained Him, in order that He might suffer more. Our Lady revealed to St. Bridget that, when Jesus saw the bitterness of her

grief, He was so affected by it, Himself, that He became comparatively insensible to the pain of all His wounds, because of the much greater pain which the sight of her sorrow caused Him.\* St. Bernard calls His vision of her grief "an inexplicable woe, an ineffable reciprocation of holy love." Thus her Compassion was not only an intrinsic part of the Passion, but among its chief and most efficacious elements. Moreover, her dolours alone approached, after the Father's abandonment, to satisfy that thirst of suffering which the immense love of Jesus still felt, even while He was hanging on the Cross, and this was in itself one of their most remarkable functions. All this is very obvious. Nevertheless, we hardly do our Lady's dolours justice, as divine mysteries, from our habit of regarding them too exclusively as her sorrows, and not as His sorrows also, and perhaps more His than hers. We have already expressed a doubt whether we can, without peril of inaccuracy and misapprehension, divide our Lady's mysteries from our Lord's. For the whole spirit of the Gospel narrative, as well as the action of what is apparently a great law of the Incarnation, seems to bring Jesus and Mary together and make them inseparable. Now, if we detach her mysteries from His, or look at her for a moment as apart from Him, and possessing any thing independently of Him, we run one of two risks: either we shrink from the language and views of the great saints and doctors of the Church, because we have already, in our own minds, made Mary into some kind of gigantic saint, instead of the Divine

\*Rev. l. i. c. vi.

Mother, the "Woman clothed with the Sun" in the Apocalypse, and so, looking at her standing by herself, we dare not use of her the almost godlike words which are common with the saints; or the authority of the saints overrules us to use their language, and to force ourselves into their beliefs without understanding them, and so we may come to attribute to our Lady by herself what only belongs to our Lord, and thus we disturb the analogy of the faith, and bring devotion to our Blessed Mother into discredit by what is manifestly an exaggeration, as well as an infringing of the honor of our Lord.

In a certain sense, the saints may stand alone, with their own individual characters. Mary cannot do so. She is too near God to do so. If there be a peculiar kind of saint, with a marked character and a recognizable individuality of her own, whose name is Mary, hidden under the Divine Maternity, lurking, as it were, at the bottom of the mysteries of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary, it is at least indistinguishable to us, because of the excess of that light of the Eternal Sun in which she is all arrayed. It is not in our power to detach it from the Divine Maternity. It never works its way to the surface. If it exists, it is known to God only. If we are ever to know it, it must be by the light of the Beatific Vision, and not here or now. To us, she must be simply the Mother of God; not more like John than she was like Peter, not bearing a greater resemblance to St. Francis than to St. Dominic, to St. Teresa than to St. Catherine of Siena, to St. Philip than to St. Ignatius. We cannot look at her both as a saint and as the Mother of God.

If we attempt to do so, one or other of the two characters will suffer. The inevitable result will be a lowering of her from the heights upon which the great doctors of the Church were wont to contemplate her grandeur,—a grandeur which is not only solitary, but incomparable and incommunicable. They never looked at her as apart from Jesus. To their eyes she was blended with Him; and what she possessed she possessed in common with Him. She was filled with His light, clothed with His magnificence, and, as it were, imbedded in the mystery of the Incarnation. The very thing which startles us about her, and which made St. Denys say he doubted for a moment if she was not a God, is that similarity to God which she appears to receive from the Divine Nature of her Son, in return for that Human Nature which she ministered to Him. This has always been to me the most noticeable thing about her, her likeness to the Word as God, who is so like her as Man. It is this very privilege of the Divine Maternity which seems at times to raise her above the sphere of the Incarnation and place her in such an unspeakable vicinity to the invisible God. The saints appear to have looked at Mary as a created person and nature, on which all the communicable splendor of God Himself was laid which a mere creature could, within the limits of the divine economy, be enabled to bear. Hence they looked at her so completely as she was in God, in the lap of His divine magnificence, that they did not shrink from using language of her which cannot fail to be misunderstood by those who contemplate her from a different point of view. It is very important to bear this in

mind. For, at first sight, those who love our Lady feel a kind of sorrow at the apparent denial to her of an individual character, which should be distinctive and her own. It seems to put her at a distance from them, and so to be unloving. But a little more reflection will show them in what devotional as well as theological difficulties the other view cannot fail of ultimately entangling them.

With regard to the *dolors*, however, there can be no question of their being simply unintelligible, if we view Mary in them as apart from Jesus. Whatever may be said of other mysteries, these are undeniably His as much as they are hers. Neither shall we ever attain to a right view of them, unless we regard them as sorrows in His Heart, as well as sorrows in hers; and thereby as helping to effect the Passion, and having in the Passion a very prominent and peculiar place assigned to them. Mary's Compassion was the way in which her Maternity was concerned with the Passion.

Her Compassion had also the effect of fitting her for her offices of Mother of Men, Queen of mercy, and Refuge of Sinners. As we have said in the first chapter, she acquired what look like rights by her *dolors*. They were voluntary heroic sacrifices, over and above the absolutely indispensable sacrifices which the Divine Maternity entailed upon her. Jesus was as it were indebted to her for them. It was in them that the glorious empire over the Sacred Heart which she exercises this day in heaven was chartered and took deepest root. It was in them that her almost identity with Jesus attained its highest point and

most indistinguishable union. Neither can we doubt that her endurance of such fearful and at the same time such varied sorrow enlarged her heart, and rendered her more capable than she would otherwise have been of sympathizing with the sorrows of humanity. The saints learn much from sin. Apostolic zeal and charity have roots in the experience of sin as well as in the pure love of God. From all such learning our Blessed Mother was absolutely precluded. Sorrow, therefore, had to teach her what sin was not allowed to teach. No science of the malice of sin, or of the necessity of grace, could make her feel that loss of Jesus, which is sin's primest unhappiness, as the Three Days' Loss taught it to her. Her intercession also derives an immense power of impetration, as well as a more impressive reality, from her experience of sorrow, and the union of her sorrows with those of Jesus. Even if we look at her *dolors* simply as enormous accumulations of merit, they assume a considerable importance in reference to her offices toward us. There can hardly be a shade of human sorrow which is not familiar to her heart. The manifold inventions of grief are known to her. The secrets of its alliance with grace, as well as its tendencies to conspire with the unworthy weaknesses of our nature, are no secrets to her. She, who is to be the prophetess of a sorrowing race, is by her own experience the grand doctress in the science of sorrow. Her Compassion also gives to her yearning to increase the harvest of the Passion an intensity, like to the blessed excesses of the Sacred Heart for souls, which perhaps she could not have had without it. Indeed, her sor-

rows upon Calvary were the very birth-throes in which all men were born as Mary's children, and thus her Compassion was not merely a fitness to be our Mother, but her very delivery of us as her children. In like manner, as it was in her Compassion that we were born to her, so in her Compassion do we reach that wide and deep foundation on which our filial confidence may be built. Were our dearest Mother only the bright, glad marvel she would be with her Immaculate Conception, her Divine Maternity, and her glorious Assumption, we should not trust her as we trust the broken-hearted Mother beneath the Cross. She would seem farther off from us. We should feel toward her with feelings akin to those with which we regard the angels,—full of love and worship, of tenderness and reverence, of wonder and congratulations, of holy envy and desire of union with them. We should not feel, as we do now, that she belongs to us, is near to us, and is our real Mother. It is the Compassion which throws this filial character over our devotion to the mighty Mother of God. But this is not all. As it was in her Compassion that we were born to her, as it is in her Compassion that we find our motives for filial confidence in her during life, so it was in her Compassion that we gained our right to die in her maternal arms. For it was then that she herself received the right of the patronage of deathbeds, because of her attendance at the deathbed of our Lord; and her ministry to us, as to Him, in the hour of death is part of her office upon which the Church dwells most strongly by naming it in the Ave Maria. Thus is her Compassion inseparably bound up in the mani-

fold offices of mercy which, by the ordinance of God, Mary discharges to us.

The third effect of Mary's Compassion is her co-operation with Jesus in the redemption of the world. We have already spoken of this, but somewhat more yet remains to be said. The co-operation of Mary has sundry characteristics of which we must not lose sight in considering the question. It was the co-operation of a sinless creature with the Incarnate Creator in redeeming the world from sin. She had no sin of her own, and yet she suffered, and moreover suffered for sin. This at once distinguishes her co-operation from that of the saints, who had sinned, and the angels, who could not suffer. It is peculiar to herself. Besides this, her Compassion was, as we have said, one simultaneous and indeed identical sacrifice with His; so that one of the older theologians has said, "The will of Christ and Mary was altogether one, and their holocaust one; both offered alike to God, He in the Blood of His Flesh, she in the blood of her heart."\* Hence her satisfactions have a place with His in the treasury of the Church, which does not belong to the satisfactions of the saints. They are more Christlike, as well as more abundant and more precious. When we offer our Blessed Lord to the Father, we are offering what is not in any proper sense ours to offer. It is only ours by the artifices of grace and the ingenuities of the communion of saints. They make it really ours in a Christian sense, a supernatural sense. But Jesus belonged to Mary, and was obedient to her, in quite a different sense. She had a

\* Arnold Carnot ap Novatum 1. 380

right to offer Him, in which we cannot share. While our spiritual offerings cost us nothing, hers cost her a broken heart. She impoverishd herself to enrich us. Moreover, by offering Jesus to the Father, she did more than all creation put together could do to make reparation to His ever-blessed majesty, which sin had outraged. All angels and all saints must fall no less short than infinitely short of what she did; because her offering was infinite. Consequently it made ample reparation, a reparation worthy of God and equal to God, because what she offered was the Incarnate God, who was likewise her obedient and loving Son. When Mary had made her offering, not a vestige of the outrage of sin remained upon the glory of the Creator. All wound was healed, all void filled up, all darkness illumined, if we may dare to use human words of such a mystery, inadequate as they must necessarily be. Nay, this was not all: by Mary's offering, which was her own, and which she had a right to make, a very world of glory encompassed the throne of God, which He would not have had, perhaps, if sin had never been. Sin became as it were an immensity of new matter, out of which the sacrifice of Jesus and the offering of Mary evoked a fresh world of glory, vaster than all material worlds, for the Majesty of the Most High. Even this is not enough. Mary went into the sacrifice yet deeper. She became a living crucified part of it. Her dolors, next to the dereliction of the Father, were the deepest, the bitterest, and the most extensive part of our Saviour's Passion, and therefore co-operated, with the Divine Abandonment and the sinful cruelty of men,

in enabling Jesus to offer to the Father that magnificent and super-sufficient satisfaction which there was in the sacrifice of the Cross. These were the marvellous effects of her Compassion. We almost tremble to write of them, because we know so well how, through spiritual blindness and want of a truer love of our dearest Mother, we are stating them far below the splendor of their reality.

#### SECTION IV.

##### OUR COMPASSION WITH HER COMPASSION.

We have now to speak of our compassion with Mary as an imitation of her Compassion with Jesus, or, in other words, of our compassion with her as itself a worship of Jesus and a true compassion with Him. First of all, devotion to the dolors of our Blessed Lady is most acceptable to our Lord Himself. We quoted in the first chapter His revelation to the Blessed Veronica of Binasco, in which He told her that tears shed over His Mother's sorrows were more precious in His sight than tears shed in memory of His own. We may perhaps venture to explain this as teaching us, what appears to be certainly true in itself, that devotion to the seven dolors brings with it by a kind of necessity devotion to the Passion, whereas devotion to the Passion does not seem so necessarily to include devotion to the dolors. Devotion to the Passion, in which the right place and participation are not assigned to Mary, is not a scriptural devotion; and in many ways, which it would be out of