

eminent writers, and the perplexity and confusion of her most distinguished champion in expounding this topic, present rather a singular contrast to the facility and confidence with which we often hear Romanists—who are probably as ignorant of the authorized decision of the Council of Nice as St Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, was—propound the doctrine of their church on this point, and expose the alleged Protestant misrepresentation of it. We care little for these differences and perplexities, except as exhibiting the falsehood of the common boastings of Papists in their unity in clear and well-ascertained doctrines, and the special difficulties of their position on this question; for the ground we take upon this point is clear and definite, and strikes at the root of all the Romish doctrines and practices, whatever form or aspect they may assume,—viz., that it is unlawful, unwarranted by Scripture, and inconsistent with its statements, to introduce images into the worship of God, and to pay them *any* religious honour and veneration whatever.

Sec. II.—Doctrinal Exposition.

Having given some account of the real nature and import of the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the worship of saints and images, and of the leading historical circumstances connected with its origin and development; and especially of the second Council of Nice, where the doctrine of the worship of images was first formally established, and of the opposition which its decrees met with, I have now to advert briefly to some of the principal grounds on which the Romish doctrine on the subject has been assailed and defended.

The tendency to polytheism and idolatry,—*i.e.*, to the religious worship of a variety of beings, distinct from and inferior to the one supreme God, and the introduction of images or visible representations of the objects of worship into religious services,—is a very prominent feature in the character of fallen man, the result and manifestation of man's ungodliness, or his estrangement from the one only living and true God—his aversion to contemplate and realize one invisible Being, on whom he wholly depends for life, and breath, and all things. This tendency has been most fully exhibited in the whole history of our race. The world was soon overspread with polytheism and idolatry, and it still continues

to be so wherever the Christian revelation is unknown. This plainly indicates the tendency of fallen man in religious matters; and the full general results of this tendency, as exhibited in the leading features of heathenism, in every age and country, have been undoubtedly most offensive to God, most injurious to religion, and most degrading to mankind.

The leading features of heathen polytheism and idolatry stand out palpably to our observation, even upon the most cursory survey. No one can mistake them. They are manifestly these two,—viz., first, the giving of religious worship and homage to a number of inferior beings along with the one Supreme God; and, secondly, the use of images, or outward visible representations of these beings, supreme and inferior, in the religious worship and homage which are rendered to them. These two features of the common heathen idolatry, as thus generally stated and described, manifestly apply to the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome, with respect to saints and images; and her advocates have, in consequence, felt the necessity of pointing out clear distinctions between their case and that of the heathen, in order that they may escape from the charge of idolatry,—a crime so frequently and so severely denounced in Scripture. They are the more anxious to effect this, because it is undeniable that the fathers, to whom they are so much in the habit of referring as authorities, are accustomed, when they are exposing the idolatry of their heathen adversaries, to make statements which, as they stand, decidedly condemn as irrational and anti-scriptural what is now taught and practised in the Church of Rome. The distinctions which they attempt to set up are chiefly these: First, that the heathen give to these inferior beings the same worship and homage which they render to the Supreme Being—that they worship them all equally as gods; whereas they (the Romanists) give to saints and angels only an inferior or subordinate worship or homage, and reserve to God a higher kind or species of worship that ought to be rendered to no creature; and, secondly, that the heathen worshipped the images of false gods,—*i.e.*, of beings who had no real existence, or were not entitled to any religious respect,—or worshipped them in the belief that the images themselves were gods, or that some divinity resided in them, which could hear prayer and confer blessings; whereas they (the Romanists) worship or venerate only the images of Christ, His

mother, and the saints now reigning in heaven,—do not regard these images as possessed of any power of hearing prayers or conferring blessings, and merely employ them as aids or auxiliaries in rendering aright the worship and homage due to those whom they represent,—honouring and venerating the images on their account.

In regard to these allegations of the Romanists, we maintain,—first, that the representations here given of heathenism are not true in fact, and that the alleged distinctions between heathenism and Romanism in these matters cannot be established by satisfactory evidence; and, secondly, that these distinctions are insufficient to shield the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome from the denunciations of heathen polytheism and idolatry contained in the sacred Scriptures and the writings of the fathers. There is good ground to believe, that the more intelligent and reflecting among the heathen, both in ancient and in modern times, perceived and admitted a distinction between the Supreme God and the inferior deities whom they worshipped, and that they paid *some* regard to this distinction in the kind or degree of worship which they rendered to them; that they had in their minds a distinction between the highest worship and homage due only to the one Supreme God, and an inferior worship or homage rendered to many other beings,—a distinction substantially the same as that which Papists employ in their own defence, though not so fully enunciated or so carefully explained. And with regard to images, there is equally good ground to believe that the more intelligent and reflecting heathens did not ascribe to them any divinity, or expect from them blessings, any more than the Church of Rome does, and would say little or nothing more about the honour and veneration due to them than the Council of Trent has done. With respect to the allegation that the heathen gave religious worship to beings who had never existed, and to their images, this, in so far as concerns the conviction and belief of the worshippers, is not true, for they *believed* that the beings whom they worshipped had existed, and did then exist; and so far as concerns the actual reality or matter of fact, the heathens were in no worse condition in this respect than the Romanists are: for it has been proved by satisfactory evidence, that some persons have been canonized by Popes,—and are in consequence entitled to be invoked and worshipped by all Papists,—who never existed; and that others have been admitted into the calendar of saints,

and have thus become legitimate objects of Popish worship, who, when tried by the scriptural standard, can be shown to be no more entitled to respect and veneration of any sort than were the inferior deities of ancient Greece and Rome. In short, the condition of heathens, in the more civilised countries, was, in this respect, substantially the same with that of the subjects of the Romish Church. The more intelligent and reflecting heathens no more confounded the crowd of inferior or subordinate objects of religious worship with the one Supreme God, and no more identified images with living and intelligent objects of veneration, than the defenders of Popery now do; and if the general state of sentiment and practice among the common mass of ignorant heathens differed from this, and corresponded more fully with the representations which Romish writers usually give of it, this is nothing more than can be easily paralleled in the Church of Rome; for there can be no reasonable doubt that even at the present day, in countries where Romanism has full and unbroken sway, and where, in consequence, ignorance generally obtains, the great mass of the people exhibit in their prevailing sentiments and practices in regard to saints and images just as gross and palpable polytheism and idolatry as the heathen do. Papists, then, are unable to establish any material or definite distinction between their doctrines and practices with respect to saints and images, and the unquestionable polytheism and idolatry of the heathen.

It is particularly important to notice that the Scripture gives no countenance or support to these distinctions; or—to state the matter in the precise form in which it bears most directly upon the point we are now considering—the Scripture, in condemning polytheism and idolatry, does not base its condemnation of them upon those alleged features of heathen worship on which Papists base the distinctions they try to establish between their own views and practices, and those of the heathen, but on more general and comprehensive grounds equally applicable to both. The Scripture condemns all polytheism,—the worship of other gods,—not upon the ground that the worship or homage rendered to them was the same as, or equal to, that which was, and should be, rendered to the one Supreme God; but on the ground that all religious worship should be rendered only to the one Supreme God, and that no religious worship should be rendered to any other being. It con-

demns all idolatry or image-worship, not merely upon the ground that those whose images were honoured and venerated were false gods, and were not themselves entitled to religious worship; but on the ground that it is irrational, injurious, and unlawful to introduce images or external visible representations into the worship of the invisible God. There is good reason to believe that the Israelites intended to pay religious worship and homage to Jehovah, the one true God, by the golden calf which Aaron made at their instigation, and that Jeroboam likewise intended to worship the true God, the God of Israel, by the images or visible representations which he set up; and yet these acts are not the less on that account condemned in Scripture as idolatry.

It has also been satisfactorily proved, that the substance of what has now been stated in regard to the scriptural mode of representing and dealing with polytheism and idolatry, holds good likewise of the general course of statement and argument adopted by the fathers in their discussions with the heathen adversaries of Christianity.

This obvious and striking resemblance between Romanism and the unquestionable polytheism and idolatry of heathenism, surely affords at least a very strong presumption that the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, in regard to saints and images, are opposed to the word of God, and injurious to true religion, and imposes upon its defenders an obligation to produce from Scripture very clear and conclusive evidence in support of their views and conduct in this matter. The main question, however, upon this subject, is not so much whether the worship of saints and images, as sanctioned and practised in the Church of Rome, be substantially identical with those of the heathens, nor even whether the terms polytheism and idolatry be strictly and properly applicable to them, though both these questions should be answered in the affirmative; but whether the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon this subject be sanctioned by Scripture, or be, on the contrary, anti-scriptural and unlawful. If it can be proved that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject is opposed to Scripture, and, consequently, that the practice founded upon it is unlawful or forbidden by God,—this, of course, is a sufficient reason why we should on this ground express our decided condemnation of that church; why we should take care that we shall not partake in her sin, and why we should feel constrained

to exert ourselves in the use of all scriptural means to rescue our fellow-men from her yoke, by labouring to convince them that Popish priests are blind leaders of the blind; and that from following *their* guidance, nothing else can be expected than that, along with their leaders, they should fall into the ditch of guilt and misery.

We shall not dwell upon the consideration, though it is both true and important, that unless it can be positively proved from Scripture that some religious worship is due to saints, and that some honour and veneration ought to be paid to images, this is enough to condemn them, inasmuch as Scripture sanctions the general principle, that it is unwarrantable to introduce into the worship of God anything which God Himself has not positively sanctioned; but we shall proceed to advert briefly to the more direct and positive grounds by which it can be proved that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects is *opposed* to Scripture; and that the practice which she bases upon it is forbidden by God, and is therefore sinful. There can be no doubt that one object of the revelation which God has given to us was to make known to us how He ought to be worshipped,—what the religious services are which He requires of us, and the due performance of which might bear favourably upon our relation to Him, and our eternal welfare. Authoritative information upon this subject was greatly needed, in consequence of the powerful tendency of fallen man to polytheism and idolatry, as evinced by the general condition of the human race before any written revelation was given them, and by the general condition of mankind still, wherever this written revelation is unknown. The great leading principles which are plainly taught upon this subject in the whole revelation which God has given us, both in the Old Testament and the New, are these: That there is but one God, and no other; one Being who alone is our Creator, our Preserver, and our Benefactor; one Being who alone is qualified to govern, and does govern, the world,—on whom alone we depend for everything we enjoy and expect to attain to; that the worship and homage which we should render to Him, should be regulated by the perfections which He possesses, and by the relation in which we stand to Him; that He alone is possessed of such perfections, and stands in such a relation to us, as to make Him a proper object of religious worship; that His glory He will not give to

another, and that He claims religious worship as due to Himself alone, to the exclusion of all other beings; and that He condemns the introduction of images or outward sensible representations of Himself, or of any other beings, into the religious service which He requires of His creatures. This statement embodies the sum and substance of what is manifestly the natural and obvious meaning of many statements contained in Scripture, with which all must be familiar, and which we need not quote. And if the principles now stated are indeed taught in Scripture, they manifestly exclude or prohibit the paying *any* religious worship or homage to saints or angels, or any creatures whatever, and the introduction of images or visible representations for *any* purpose into the professed worship of God.

Romanists, of course, are bound, in order to defend the doctrine of their church in regard to the worship of saints and images, to show that these principles are not taught in Scripture; or, if they admit, what they cannot well dispute, that they are laid down there as general truths or doctrines, at least to prove that Scripture warrants us to understand them with some limitations or modifications, and does not require us to hold them in all their extent and absoluteness; and even if they could establish this general position, it would still further be necessary for them to prove that Scripture sanctions just *such* limitations and modifications of these general principles as will leave room for their precise doctrines in regard to saints and images. It would be sufficient, indeed, and would accomplish their whole object *at once*, if they could produce direct and specific proof of what they teach upon these subjects. If they could do this,—*i.e.*, if they could produce satisfactory proof from Scripture that saints deceased are entitled to some religious worship and homage; that they pray for us, and that we ought to pray to them; that they hear or know our prayers addressed to them, and in answer to these prayers, contribute in some way to procure for us the blessings we need; and that images ought to be used in the worship of God, and should receive some religious honour and veneration;—if they could conclusively prove *all this*, directly by scriptural evidence, then we would be bound to admit that the great general scriptural principles, formerly laid down, are to be understood with such limitations and modifications as to leave room for those Romish doctrines which seem so plainly to run counter to their natural and obvious import; but they can

scarcely be said to *attempt* producing any direct and specific evidence from Scripture in support of their doctrine; for any attempts of this kind which they make, are so despicable as to be unworthy of notice; while, on the other side, we can adduce from Scripture,—in addition to the general principles formerly stated, and in proof that they are to be understood in their natural obvious meaning,—the facts that angels and the most eminent saints are recorded to have refused the ordinary outward marks of religious worship when offered to them, and to have refused them on the ground that God alone was to be worshipped; and that *all* that we find in Scripture about images, or outward visible representations in connection with the worship of God, is in a tone of decided condemnation.

The natural obvious meaning of the second commandment in the Decalogue is, that God there, in regulating the mode in which He is to be worshipped, after having in the first commandment claimed religious worship to Himself as the only proper object of it, forbids the making of any likeness of any object, *with the view of introducing this likeness into religious worship*, or paying to it any of the ordinary external marks of religious honour and veneration. And so sensible are Romanists that this is the natural and obvious meaning of the second commandment, that they have been accustomed to exclude it wholly, while professing to quote the Decalogue, from the catechisms commonly used in the instruction of their people. Independently of the great general principles taught in Scripture concerning the worship of God, we find there the giving any religious worship to saints and angels condemned by very plain implication, and the introduction of images into the worship of God, and the rendering to them the external marks of honour and veneration, condemned explicitly; and we have nothing of a specific kind in support of the Romish doctrine and practice, that is possessed of any weight or deserving of serious consideration. On all these grounds, we consider ourselves entitled to conclude that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects is opposed to Scripture, and that the practice which she founds upon it is forbidden by the law of God.

Papists have, indeed, invented a variety of distinctions to evade the force of the general principles and the specific statements of Scripture, which seem to oppose their doctrines and practices in regard to saints and images; but they are wholly insufficient to

serve the purpose for which they are adduced. They all labour under one radical and fatal defect,—viz., that they have themselves no support from Scripture; and that, therefore, even though they were in themselves true and real, they could not be legitimately employed to explain away, or to limit, or modify a clear scriptural principle or a plain scriptural precept. If the general principles of Scripture are to be limited or modified,—if the specific precepts of Scripture as they stand are to be set aside,—we must find the warrant for doing so in Scripture itself; we must produce materials from Scripture to establish in general the lawfulness and necessity of departing from the natural obvious meaning of the statements founded on, and also, moreover, to sanction the specific deviations from their ordinary meaning, which are contended for, on the other side. And when these considerations are kept in view, it becomes obvious that Papists have not been able to produce any sufficient warrant for limiting or modifying the great scriptural principle that the one Supreme God is the only proper object of religious worship; or for setting aside the scriptural prohibition of the introduction of images into religious worship, and giving to them the outward marks of religious honour and veneration. Papists are accustomed to distinguish between a *supreme* religious worship which is due only to God, and which they call *latría*, and an *inferior* religious worship which is due to saints and angels, and which they call *douλία*; also between a *direct* worship, supreme or subordinate, which is due to God, to saints and angels, according to their rank, and a *relative* worship which is to be paid to images from a regard to the persons whom they represent. But these distinctions, though real in themselves,—i.e., though easily conceivable,—are not suggested to us by Scripture, or set before us there. They are the mere productions of men's natural power of abstracting and distinguishing; and therefore they can be of no avail in affording a warrant, and still less in imposing an obligation, to modify a scriptural principle, or to set aside a scriptural precept. If we could prove directly and positively from Scripture, that saints were entitled to an inferior religious worship, and that images ought to receive a relative honour and veneration, *then* we might legitimately employ these distinctions in showing how these positions, thus proved, might be reconciled with the other scriptural principles and precepts that seemed to be opposed to them. But in the entire

absence of all scriptural support for these distinctions, and in the entire want of any scriptural proof of the lawfulness and obligation of the things themselves, which these distinctions are designed to explain and defend,—this can afford no ground whatever for modifying or setting aside any scriptural statement, or for vindicating the doctrine and practices of the Church of Rome in regard to saints and images from the condemnation which the word of God pronounces upon them.

The only thing like a *positive* argument which Papists have been able to devise in favour of the worship which they pay to saints and angels, is a statement to this effect,—that all beings ought to be honoured according to their true qualities and their real positions,—that there is a civil honour or worship that is due to men according to their position and our relation to them,—that there is a supreme religious worship that is due only to God,—and that there is something intermediate between these two—viz., an inferior religious worship of which saints and angels are the appropriate objects, and to which they are in consequence entitled. Now, not to dwell upon the utter inadequacy of a vague generality of this sort, to set aside a scriptural principle, and to impose a religious obligation, or upon the consideration that God alone is the source and fountain of honour, and is alone entitled to determine in what way and to what extent other beings are to be honoured,—and that He has, to say the least, given us no indication of His will that deceased saints and angels should be to us the objects of *any* services, or should receive from us *any* outward marks of honour,—we have just to observe, in answer to this argument, that there is no medium between civil worship and religious worship, *and* that Scripture restricts religious worship to God alone. The only proper foundation of religious worship is the possession of divine perfection, and the power of conferring upon us spiritual blessing and ensuring our eternal welfare. These statements certainly do not apply to saints and angels; and, therefore, whatever sentiments or feelings we may cherish towards them, there is no ground in right reason why we should pay them any religious worship. An inferior religious worship is an absurdity, almost a contradiction; and, accordingly, experience abundantly proves that, however anxious Papists may be in their speculations and explanations to draw the line of demarcation between the supreme religious worship due only to God, and the inferior religious wor-

ship due to saints and angels, this line ordinarily and in practice almost wholly disappears. The Council of Trent expressly sanctions praying to saints either vocally or *mentally*, which is virtually to ascribe to them a power which God claims as peculiarly His own,—that, viz., of understanding men's thoughts, of searching the heart. The invocation of saints implies that everywhere, or in all places, they can and do hear or know the prayers which are addressed to them; and this is virtually to ascribe to them the divine attributes of omnipresence and omniscience: for the ridiculous conjectures which Papists have invented to explain how it is that the saints, without the possession of these attributes, hear or know the prayers addressed to them, are evidently mere evasions, which they themselves do not truly realize, and which exert no practical influence upon their own sentiments and impressions concerning this matter. They profess commonly that they only pray to the saints to pray to God on their behalf; but the Council of Trent directs men to have recourse to the help and assistance as well as the prayers of the saints,—as if the saints could really confer upon them or afford them certain and efficacious assistance in procuring the blessings which they need in order to their eternal happiness. Their authorized books of devotion sanction the practice of asking God to give them spiritual blessings from a regard to the merits of the saints, which practically implies that the saints are considered as occupying the same relation to God as that which is held by His own eternal Son; and in their ordinary authorized addresses to the Virgin Mary, they are accustomed to ask directly of her the highest spiritual blessings, as if they believed that she had the absolute power of dispensing them,*—thus virtually abandoning in practice what they profess to hold in theory, throwing aside the distinction between a supreme and an inferior religious worship, and practically honouring and worshipping a mere creature as if she were possessed of the perfections of the one eternal and infinite Jehovah, and were really able to determine men's everlasting destinies.

A very favourite allegation of the Romanists, in support of their doctrine and practice with respect to the worship of saints, is, that since we are authorized and encouraged to ask saints upon

* Stillingfleet, *Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome*; with Introduction and Notes by Dr Cunningham, p. 46, 1st ed.

earth to pray to God for us, or on our behalf, there can be no impropriety in our asking the glorified saints reigning with Christ in heaven to pray for us; and that if we have ground for expecting benefit from the one practice, we have as good, or rather better, ground for expecting benefit from the other. This consideration usually occupies a very prominent place in the reasonings of Papists upon this subject; and, indeed, Bellarmine asserts* that Protestants have never been able to answer it. But it is easy to show that it has no real weight or relevancy in establishing their views. First, this argument, even if admitted to be sound and valid, applies only to one portion of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject,—that which inculcates that we should invoke the saints, or ask them to pray for us. It gives not even the appearance of support to their fundamental doctrine,—that which is the basis and ground of all the rest,—viz., that the saints are entitled to a subordinate religious worship, as including both a certain state of mind and feeling to be cherished in regard to them, and certain outward marks of religious reverence to be paid to them. It gives *no appearance* of support to the doctrine laid down by the Council of Trent, that we ought to have recourse to their help and assistance, as well as to their prayers; which plainly implies, that they can and do contribute to procuring blessings for us in other ways—though these are prudently not specified—than by their prayers. It gives no appearance of support to the practice sanctioned by their authorized books of devotion, of asking God to give us spiritual blessings for the sake of the *merits* of the saints; and even in regard to the simple invocation of saints, or asking them to pray to God for us,—the only portion of the Romish doctrine to which the argument has any *appearance* of applying,—it is utterly destitute of all real weight. It is manifestly no proof of the conclusion, in support of which it is adduced,—viz., that *we ought* to pray to saints deceased to pray for us. There is evidently no logical connection between the premises and the conclusion. There is no real argument in the position, that because we ought to ask saints on earth to pray for us, therefore we ought to ask saints in heaven—in circumstances wholly different, both in themselves and in relation to us—to pray for us. The one certainly affords no real positive

* Tom. ii., p. 742.

argument in favour of the other. It might afford a certain slight presumption in favour of it, if there were nothing positive and substantial to be adduced on the other side. It may afford, in the way of analogy, an answer to *some* of the objections which might be adduced against invoking deceased saints; but it contains no direct positive argument in support of it, and it leaves all our main objections against it wholly untouched.

These considerations are quite sufficient to dispose of this argument, of which Papists make so much use in defending the invocation of saints; but it is easy to show, in addition to all this, that there are most important differences between the two cases, which render the one wholly useless as an argument, or even a presumption, in support of the other. We cannot dwell upon these differences, but will merely state some of them, without entering into any illustration. First, there is clear and unquestionable Scripture authority for the one practice; whereas there is not a vestige of scriptural evidence, bearing directly and immediately, in support of the other. Secondly, the asking and obtaining the prayers of saints or holy men upon earth is a mutual exercise of the general duty of love and kindness, which all men reciprocally owe to each other; whereas the invocation of deceased saints, or the praying to them to pray for us, is, upon Popish principles, a part and a manifestation of a certain religious worship, homage, or reverence, which is supposed to be due to them, but which is inconsistent with the scriptural principle that restricts religious worship to God alone, on the ground of perfections which He alone possesses, and of relations which He alone holds with respect to us. Thirdly, the asking the prayers of our fellow-men, to whom we have access, can be shown to be rational in all its features and circumstances,—*i.e.*, to be warranted and sanctioned by the known realities of the case, by everything in the known condition and relations of the two parties,—whereas there *are* things about the invocation of saints which have no rational foundation in the known realities of the case, in the known powers and capacities of saints in heaven, and in the relation in which we stand to them. Fourthly, there is no danger of abuse or mischief in the practice of asking the prayers of our fellow-men upon earth; whereas the invocation of saints in heaven may be shown to have a strong and manifest tendency to be perverted for superstitious and polytheistic purposes, even if it were conceded that it

did not necessarily, and in itself, involve directly anything superstitious or polytheistic.

The Romanists are accustomed to dwell much upon the practical utility of images in religious worship, in aiding the mental operations, and guiding and elevating the feelings, especially of ignorant and uncultivated men, in their religious exercises; but the conclusive answer to all they allege upon this point is to be found in the following considerations, which we can merely state without illustrating them. First, the whole history of the world fully proves that the tendency to introduce images, or visible representations of the object of worship, into religious services, is one of the most strongly marked features in the character of fallen and depraved man; and that this tendency, in its manifested results, has ever exerted a most injurious influence upon the interests of religion and morality: and, secondly, that God—who alone is entitled to regulate how He is to be worshipped, and who best knows what is in man, and what is best fitted to form man to the right worship and the full enjoyment of his Creator—has given a positive law, expressly prohibiting the making of images or visible representations of any objects, with the view of employing them in religious worship, and the rendering to them the outward marks of religious honour and veneration; while a great deal may be derived from the history and condition of the Church of Rome to establish the wisdom of this explicit and unqualified prohibition, in its bearing upon man's highest interests—his spiritual welfare.

We might have exhibited the current views and practices of Papists on the subject of the worship of saints and images, and have given practical illustrations of the undoubted polytheism and idolatry that commonly obtains in Popish countries, especially in regard to what is sometimes called Mariolatry, or the worship of the mother of our Lord, who is practically, to the great mass of Papists, the only deity, the only real object of religious worship. It is right to know something of the current views and practices of Papists upon these subjects, to have just impressions of the real tendencies and results of Popery, wherever its influences are fully developed, and to cherish due compassion for its unhappy victims. But we have thought it better, upon the whole, to direct attention to the unquestionably authorized doctrines to which the Church of Rome is pledged, which cannot be denied or explained

away, and which cannot be set aside as the misrepresentations of adversaries, or the errors and excesses of injudicious friends, or as mere abuses which may be occasionally exhibited in connection with any system. We have explained the undoubted doctrines of the Church of Rome from her acknowledged standard books, and as they are stated and defended by her most skilful champions. We have charged them with nothing which they can deny honestly, and have endeavoured to show that these acknowledged doctrines, with all the care and caution with which they can be stated, and with all the explanations and distinctions by which they can be defended, are not only unsupported by Scripture, but opposed to its statements; and that the practice that is based upon them is forbidden by God, and must be displeasing and offensive to Him,—fitted not to procure His favour, but to call forth His indignation; that it is a mode of acting which He will not only not receive as acceptable service rendered to Him, but which He will visit with tokens of His displeasure. This mode of discussing the subject not only avoids misunderstanding and misrepresenting the authorized doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome on these subjects, but prevents attempts to explain away or to gloss over the real doctrines and practices of that church; and, especially, it serves to prove, that although the authorized doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome on these points may not go quite so far as is sometimes supposed, both by ignorant Protestants and by ignorant Papists, yet that that church is, beyond all question, pledged to doctrines which are opposed to the teaching of Scripture, and to practices which are condemned by the word of God,—that there is a clear course of conclusive scriptural argument which bears full and direct against her doctrines and practices, however cautiously and carefully stated, and however skilfully and dexterously defended.

Protestants who are not much versant in these matters, who have no very precise notions of what it is they mean to charge against the Church of Rome upon this subject, who have little more than a vague idea that she teaches and practises something very bad on the subject of worshipping saints and images, are apt to be staggered at the extent to which Papists disclaim the doctrines and practices sometimes imputed to them; and if they should be convinced that they have ignorantly imputed to them more error than the Church of Rome can be proved to have

formally sanctioned, they are then apt to take these Popish disclamations at a great deal more than their real worth,—to take them as abjurations of almost, if not altogether, everything that is erroneous and objectionable, and on this ground virtually to abandon their whole charge against the Church of Rome on this point. As some process of this sort is not unfrequently going on amongst us, we have thought it best to confine attention in a great measure to a statement of the doctrines and practices to which the Church of Rome, as such, is pledged, without introducing anything that might be objected to, and set aside as a misrepresentation, an exaggeration, an abuse, or a mere private opinion; and to show how much there is, even in the undoubted and universally admitted doctrines of the Church of Rome, that is opposed to the teaching of the word of God, and fitted to corrupt the purity and to diminish the efficacy of true religion. But while we have confined ourselves in a great measure to this department of the subject, we think it important to state two facts which are necessary for the full exposition of this subject, and which can be established by conclusive proof,—viz., first, that the ordinary devotional and practical works, which are commonly in the hands of Romanists, often ascribe more honour and veneration to saints and images, and especially to the Virgin Mary and *her* images, than the standard books of the church and the statements of her controversial writers sanction, and that thus Papists incur the guilt of trying to diffuse among the people notions and practices which they know to be unauthorized, and which they are conscious they cannot defend when challenged; and, secondly, that the notions and practices prevalent among the people, in regard to the worship due to saints and images, in countries where Popery has the ascendancy, go far beyond what any intelligent Papist would sanction or defend; while yet no real or vigorous effort is made by the priesthood to discountenance these notions and practices,—a fact strikingly illustrative of the general policy of the Popish system, and of the general tendency and natural results of Popish doctrines upon this particular subject, viewed in connection with the natural tendencies of fallen man. The truth is, that, with the doctrines openly avowed and taught by the Church of Rome upon this subject, idolatry of the grossest and most offensive kind,—idolatry as gross and offensive as that which

generally obtains among the heathen,—can be avoided only by means of explanations and distinctions, which the body of the people do not readily understand and apply, and in which no pains are taken to instruct them, except in countries where they come into contact with Protestants.

There is an allegation often made by Romanists, not so much to disprove the charge of idolatry, which Protestants commonly base upon the worship of saints and angels, but rather to deter us from adducing and urging it. It is this—that it is very improbable that the great body of the church should, for so long a period, have fallen into, and continued in, so heinous a crime as idolatry; and that if this charge is well founded, it must imply that all Romanists must be consigned to everlasting misery as idolaters. The examination of the first part of this allegation would lead into an investigation of the whole of those general grounds by which Papists usually attempt to evade a fair discussion of their particular doctrines, according to the standard of Scripture,—*i.e.*, the claims which they put forth on behalf of their church, as the only true church, to indefectibility and preservation from all error. On these we cannot enter; but we would only remark that we do not admit that there is anything in Scripture to establish the falsehood, or even the improbability, of what we allege to have taken place in this matter, and that there is much in Scripture fitted to lead us to expect just such an apostasy as we say the Church of Rome exhibits.

With respect to the inference they deduce from the charge of idolatry—that all Romanists must endure the wrath of God as idolaters—we deny that this inference is well founded. Their allegation upon this point is not very consistent with another often made, that men may be faithful subjects of the Church of Rome, and yet never worship saints or images: for there is thus an opening left by which the charge against the church may be retained, while yet some of her subjects may escape the guilt in which the church, as such, is involved. And this, indeed, we hold to be in substance true, though not upon the Romish ground. We believe that there have always been, and still are, in the Church of Rome, men who, in heart, and in the sight of God, were not idolaters,—*i.e.*, who were really and in the main worshipping the one only, living, and true God in sincerity and in truth, and resting on the one foundation which has been laid in Zion. It is not easy for men

to determine how far their fellow-men,—subjected, it may be, to great disadvantages as to the means of knowing God's will, and involved in great ignorance and darkness,—may yet have had a real saving knowledge of God and divine things introduced into their minds, and made instrumental by the Holy Spirit in renovating and sanctifying them. We cannot doubt that men possessed of very different degrees of knowledge of divine things, and even professing no inconsiderable amount of error, have, while on earth, been prepared for the enjoyment of heaven. Even during the darkness of the middle ages, when the influence of Popery, in diffusing its corruptions of God's worship and truth, was greatest, and when the access to opportunities of gaining sounder knowledge was least, we meet with men who gave unequivocal evidence of having been born again through the belief of the truth. And we doubt not that the Church of Rome has always contained some such men,—men who were better than their professed principles—men who had not fully yielded to the natural tendency and the full practical influence of the errors which they professed to hold—men whose character was formed, and whose conduct was regulated, much more by the truth which they embraced than by the error which they conjoined with it—men who were so deeply impressed with a sense of the glory of God and the all-sufficiency of Christ, as that the errors they held upon the honour due to saints and images exerted but a feeble influence upon the general current of their thoughts and feelings.

All this is true, as a matter of fact established by experience, and should not be overlooked. But it is not on this account the less true, that all error in regard to the worship of God and the way of salvation is sinful and dangerous; that the word of God, and not the actual character of men, is the only standard by which we ought to judge of truth and falsehood, right and wrong; that the Church of Rome has grievously corrupted the truth of God in regard to the way in which He ought to be worshipped,—so much so, that a practice in this matter, accordant with her teaching, fully followed out and fairly applied, involves the sins of polytheism and idolatry,—*i.e.*, the sins of giving to other beings, mere creatures, the honour and reverence which are due only to Him, and of worshipping Him in a way which He has expressly forbidden; and that this is fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon all who submit to her authority and follow her guid-

ance. The greatest sin which a professing church, as such, can commit, is to hold forth and to inculcate erroneous views in regard to the worship of God and the way of salvation. This guilt most fully attaches to the Church of Rome; and the errors which she inculcates upon these subjects are so great, that we can scarcely conceive that any man who *fully* submits to her teaching, and allows it to exert its full and appropriate practical influence upon his heart and character, can be fairly regarded as worshipping God in truth, or as resting upon Christ for salvation; while we admit that there are men in her communion who, though professing to adopt her creed, and to submit to her authority, have not fully imbibed her peculiar principles, and have escaped to a large extent from their injurious influence. The substance of the matter is this. The Church of Rome systematically mingles a large portion of poison with the wholesome food which she administers, and thus proves that she is under the influence of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; and the natural tendency and ordinary result of this is to ruin men's souls, while some constitutions, by the grace of God, shake off the deleterious influence, and escape, though not without much damage, from mortal injury.

The guilt of idolatry—of giving any religious honour or worship to saints and images—is, under the Christian dispensation, peculiarly aggravated. We have now spread out before us the whole history of our race, plainly declaring how strong and, humanly speaking, irresistible is the tendency of fallen man to polytheism and idolatry, and how injurious this tendency is, in its results, to religion and morality. We have the fullest manifestation of God's displeasure against anything like polytheism and idolatry, exhibited not only in the particular statements and express provisions of His word, but in the whole history of His dealings with men, especially in His selection of a peculiar people, and in the whole arrangements of the Mosaic economy, which were expressly designed to counteract this natural tendency of men, and to guard His chosen people against it. We have in Christianity the fullest discovery of the perfections of God, and of the relation in which we stand to Him, and we have an external ritual established, characterized by the utmost spirituality and simplicity; and all this enforces the irrationality, the unlawfulness, and the incongruity of any approach to a polytheistic or idolatrous

worship. Finally, we have manifested and offered to us in the Christian system one all-sufficient Mediator between God and man, who is the only image of the invisible God—who has removed every obstacle to our drawing near to God, and asking and obtaining His favour—who has opened up for us a new and living way of access into God's presence, and who has made full provision for the everlasting salvation of all who trust in Him. We find in Him everything we can need: a most full, palpable, and impressive revelation of the Father; infinite merits to procure and deserve for us the divine favour, and all spiritual blessings; human love and sympathy for us (for He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh) far beyond whatever dwelt in any other human heart; the fullest encouragement to have recourse at all times directly to His prayers, help, and assistance, with the assurance that He hears our prayers, that He knows our wants, that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, that Him the Father heareth always, and that He is both able and willing to procure for His people whatever they need. This surely should afford us perfect satisfaction amid our anxieties about our spiritual welfare; and all the more because we know at the same time, that there is no danger that any honour or reverence we pay to Him, any confidence we repose in Him, any love or gratitude we yield to Him, *can* ever exceed what is rightfully due to Him, since, while He is a partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves, He is likewise God over all, blessed for evermore.

CHAPTER XIII.

CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES.

IN surveying the history of the church, we see the supreme civil powers, after the age of Constantine, professing to feel an obligation to exert their civil authority for the welfare of the church and the good of religion, and interfering to a large extent in religious, theological, and ecclesiastical matters, professedly in the discharge of this obligation. We see enough to prove that the church, in all its interests, was very materially affected, for better or worse, by this interference of the civil powers. We see disputes between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities about their respective functions and obligations—their powers and prerogatives. We see these disputes coming to a great crisis or era, in the contentions between the Emperor Henry IV. and Pope Gregory VII., when the ecclesiastical power put forth a claim to entire and absolute supremacy over the civil. And this contest between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities,—or *inter imperium et sacerdotium*, as it used to be called,—has continued in every age, down to the present day. It has excited no small interest in our own day; and it is likely not only to continue to be discussed as a question of argument, but to produce important practical results. It may, therefore, be proper briefly to advert to it. The whole topics which have been, or which need to be, discussed with reference to this subject, may be comprehended under these questions: What relation ought to subsist between the State and the Church, or the civil and ecclesiastical powers? and, What are the principles that ought to regulate this relation?

Sec. I.—*Voluntaryism.*

The discussion of these questions has given rise to four systems of opinion; and we shall begin with the newest or most

modern, because it is also, in some respects, the simplest and most sweeping. It is what has assumed to itself, though inaccurately and unwarrantably, the name of the Voluntary system,—a name derived from a partial representation of one of the views to which the principle leads, and not in any respect fairly descriptive of the principle itself. It amounts in substance to this,—that the only relation that ought to subsist between the State and the Church—between civil government and religion—is that of entire separation; or, in other words, its advocates maintain that nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, not only are not bound, but are not at liberty, to interfere in any religious matters, or to seek to promote the welfare of the church of Christ, as such. This theory, if true, supersedes the necessity of all further inquiry into the principles that ought to regulate the relation between Church and State; for it really implies, that no connection should subsist, or can lawfully subsist, between them. All the other answers which have been given to the question propounded, assume the falsehood of this theory, and are based upon an assertion of the opposite principle,—viz., that nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, are entitled and bound to aim at the promotion of the interests of true religion, and the welfare of the church of Christ; that there are things which they can lawfully do, which are fitted to promote these objects; and that thus a connection may be legitimately formed between Church and State. Hence, in taking a general survey of the subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical powers, it is most natural and convenient to begin with considering this Voluntary principle, as it has been called, since, if true, it supersedes all further inquiry. It has been very fully discussed of late years. In common with many others, I took part in these discussions, and I have certainly not changed my opinion concerning it. I still believe it to be a portion of divine truth, fully sanctioned by the word of God, and, therefore, never to be abandoned or denied,—that an obligation lies upon nations and their rulers to have respect, in the regulation of their national affairs, and in the application of national resources, to the authority of God's word, to the welfare of the church of Christ, and the interests of true religion. This is the only scriptural truth, and therefore the only matter of principle, which those who support the doctrine of national establishments of religion feel

called upon to maintain, or about which they cherish any solicitude. Everything beyond this is of inferior importance.

It is to no purpose to adduce against this truth the doctrine of the unlawfulness of intolerance or persecution, or of the assumption of jurisdiction by civil authorities in religious and ecclesiastical matters: for the undoubted truth of these doctrines merely *limits, or marks out*, the sphere within which alone it is competent for the civil authorities to act in the discharge of their obligation, but certainly does not prove the non-existence of the obligation itself,—unless, indeed, it be at the same time proved (and this, we are persuaded, cannot be done) that civil authorities *cannot possibly do anything* directed to the object of promoting the interests of religion and the church, without necessarily and *ipso facto* interfering with the rights of conscience, and the freedom, independence, and spirituality of the church of Christ. It is, of course, equally irrelevant, to argue against this truth from the abuses that have been too often manifested in the practical application of it,—as when error instead of truth, a corrupt instead of a pure church, has been aided and promoted by the civil authorities; or when, even though scriptural truth and a pure church may have been aided, there was yet so much that was defective and erroneous in the way in which the civil power interposed, as to do more than to neutralize the benefits resulting from its interference. The most plausible thing that has been alleged upon this branch of the subject is, that the interference of civil authorities in religious matters, as a whole, has been accompanied and followed with a great preponderance of evil to religion. But neither does this, even though it were conceded as a matter of fact, disprove the truth of the general principle of the duty or obligation,—as it may be asserted and proved, on the other side, that the evils have arisen merely from the duty not having been correctly understood, or discharged in a right way.

It is equally little to the purpose to allege, as if in opposition to this truth, that Christ left His church dependent upon the voluntary contributions of His people, without any assistance from, or interference on the part of, civil rulers, and allowed it to continue in this condition for eight hundred years. The fact that He did so is an important one, and is fitted and intended to convey some valuable lessons; but it assuredly does not teach us anything about what the duty of nations and rulers to the church is.

The fact referred to affords satisfactory and conclusive evidence of these positions,—viz., that a condition of entire separation from the State, and entire dependence upon the contributions of the people, is a perfectly lawful and honourable condition for a church of Christ to occupy; and that the church may flourish largely, both internally and externally, without any countenance or assistance from the civil powers, and accomplish fully all its essential objects. It proves this, but it proves nothing more. The conduct of the civil authorities to the church during that period was not certainly the model according to which civil rulers ought to act,—they were not then discharging their duty to the church, for they generally persecuted it. If they were not discharging aright their duty to the church—which, by universal admission, is at least entitled to toleration,—and if their non-discharge of duty actually affected the condition of the church, then it is manifest that the manner in which they acted, and the state in which the church was, *in consequence*, placed, afford no materials whatever for deciding how they ought to have acted; and of course the whole subject of whether any, and if any, what obligations lie upon rulers in regard to religion and the church, is left wholly untouched, to be decided, as every question of truth and duty should be, by the written word.

Attempts have been made to show that, whatever duty or obligation may seem to lie upon civil rulers in this matter, the church is interdicted by the law of her Master from entering into an alliance with the State, or accepting assistance from the civil power. That the church is interdicted from sacrificing any of the rights or privileges which Christ has conferred upon her,—neglecting, or promising to neglect, any of the duties which He has imposed upon her,—disregarding, or promising to disregard, any of the directions He has given her, in order to obtain, or as a condition of enjoying, the favour and assistance of the kingdoms of this world, is certain; and assuredly *this* guilt does at this moment attach to every Protestant ecclesiastical establishment in the world. But it has never been proved, that, if the civil authorities rightly understood their duties, and were willing to discharge them aright, attaching no unwarrantable conditions to their offers of service, they could not render assistance to the church which she might be fully warranted to accept.

These considerations, when expanded and applied, are, I think,