

From: John Henry Newman, Introduction to the Third Edition of the *Via Media* (1878).

Two broad charges are brought against the Catholic Religion in these Lectures, and in some of the Tracts and other Papers that follow. One is the contrast which modern Catholicism is said to present with the religion of the Primitive Church, in teaching, conduct, worship, and polity, and this difficulty I have employed myself in discussing and explaining at great length in my [Essay on Development of Doctrine](#), published in 1845.

The other, which is equally obvious and equally serious, is the difference which at first sight presents itself between its formal teaching and its popular and political manifestations; for instance, between the teaching of the Breviary and of the Roman Catechism on the one hand, and the spirit and tone of various manuals of Prayer and Meditation and of the Sermons or Addresses of ecclesiastics in high {xxxviii} position on the other. This alleged discordance I have nowhere treated from a Catholic point of view; yet it certainly has a claim to be explained; and, as I have said, at least I can show how I explain it to myself, even though others refuse to take my explanation.

3.

My answer shall be this:—that from the nature of the case, such an apparent contrariety between word and deed, the abstract and the concrete, could not but take place, supposing the Church to be gifted with those various prerogatives, and charged with those independent and conflicting duties, which Anglicans, as well as ourselves, recognize as belonging to her. Her organization cannot be otherwise than complex, considering the many functions which she has to fulfil, the many aims to keep in view, the many interests to secure,—functions, aims, and interests, which in their union and divergence remind us of the prophet's vision of the Cherubim, in whom "the wings of one were joined to the wings of another," yet "they turned not, when they went, but every one went straight forward." Or, to speak without figure, we know in matters of this world, how difficult it is for one and the same man to satisfy independent duties and incommensurable relations; to act at once as a parent and a judge, as a soldier and a minister of religion, as a philosopher and a statesman, as {xxxix} a courtier or a politician and a Catholic; the rules of conduct in these various positions being so distinct, and the obligations so contrary. Prudent men keep clear, if they can, of such perplexities; but as to the Church, gifted as she is with grace up to the measure of her responsibilities, if she has on her an arduous work, it is sufficient to refer to our Lord's words, "What is impossible with men, is possible with God," in order to be certain (in spite of appearances) of her historical uprightness and consistency. At the same time it may undeniably have happened before now that her rulers and authorities, as men, on certain occasions have come short of what was required of them, and have given occasion to criticism, just or unjust, on account of the special antagonisms or compromises by means of which her many-sided mission under their guidance has been carried out.

4.

With this introduction I remark as follows:—When our Lord went up on high, He left His representative behind Him. This was Holy Church, His mystical Body and Bride, a Divine Institution, and the shrine and organ of the Paraclete, who speaks through her till the end comes. She, to use an Anglican poet's words, is "His very self below," as far as men on earth

are equal to the discharge and fulfilment of high offices, which primarily and supremely are His. {xl}

These offices, which specially belong to Him as Mediator, are commonly considered to be three; He is Prophet, Priest, and King; and after His pattern, and in human measure, Holy Church has a triple office too; not the Prophetical alone and in isolation, as these Lectures virtually teach, but three offices, which are indivisible, though diverse, viz. teaching, rule, and sacred ministry. This then is the point on which I shall now insist, the very title of the Lectures I am to criticize suggesting to me how best to criticize them.

I will but say in passing, that I must not in this argument be supposed to forget that the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ, inherits these offices and acts for the Church in them. This is another matter; I am speaking here of the Body of Christ, and the sovereign Pontiff would not be the visible head of that Body, did he not first belong to it. He is not himself the Body of Christ, but the chief part of the Body; I shall have quite opportunities enough in what is to come to show that I duly bear him in mind.

Christianity, then, is at once a philosophy, a political power, and a religious rite: as a religion, it is Holy; as a philosophy, it is Apostolic; as a political power, it is imperial, that is, One and Catholic. As a religion, its special centre of action is pastor and flock; as a philosophy, the Schools; as a rule, the Papacy and its Curia.

Though it has exercised these three functions in substance {xli} from the first, they were developed in their full proportions one after another, in a succession of centuries; first, in the primitive time it was recognized as a worship, springing up and spreading in the lower ranks of society, and among the ignorant and dependent, and making its power felt by the heroism of its Martyrs and confessors. Then it seized upon the intellectual and cultivated class, and created a theology and schools of learning. Lastly it seated itself, as an ecclesiastical polity, among princes, and chose Rome for its centre.

Truth is the guiding principle of theology and theological inquiries; devotion and edification, of worship; and of government, expedience. The instrument of theology is reasoning; of worship, our emotional nature; of rule, command and coercion. Further, in man as he is, reasoning tends to rationalism; devotion to superstition and enthusiasm; and power to ambition and tyranny.

Arduous as are the duties involved in these three offices, to discharge one by one, much more arduous are they to administer, when taken in combination. Each of the three has its separate scope and direction; each has its own interests to promote and further; each has to find room for the claims of the other two; and each will find its own line of action influenced and modified by the others, nay, sometimes in a particular case the necessity of the others converted into a rule of duty for itself. {xlii}

5.

"Who," in St. Paul's words, "is sufficient for these things?" Who, even with divine aid, shall successfully administer offices so independent of each other, so divergent, and so conflicting? What line of conduct, except on the long, the very long run, is at once edifying, expedient, and true? Is it not plain, that, if one determinate course is to be taken by the

Church, acting at once in all three capacities, so opposed to each other in their idea, that course must, as I have said, be deflected from the line which would be traced out by any one of them, if viewed by itself, or else the requirements of one or two sacrificed to the interests of the third? What, for instance, is to be done in a case when to enforce a theological point, as the Schools determine it, would make a particular population less religious, not more so, or cause riots or risings? Or when to defend a champion of ecclesiastical liberty in one country would encourage an Anti-Pope, or hazard a general persecution, in another? or when either a schism is to be encountered or an opportune truth left undefined?

All this was foreseen certainly by the Divine Mind, when He committed to his Church so complex a mission; and, by promising her infallibility in her formal teaching, He indirectly protected her from serious error in worship {xlili} and political action also. This aid, however, great as it is, does not secure her from all dangers as regards the problem which she has to solve; nothing but the gift of impeccability granted to her authorities would secure them from all liability to mistake in their conduct, policy, words and decisions, in her legislative and her executive, in ecclesiastical and disciplinarian details; and such a gift they have not received. In consequence, however well she may perform her duties on the whole, it will always be easy for her enemies to make a case against her, well founded or not, from the action or interaction, or the chronic collisions or contrasts, or the temporary suspense or delay, of her administration, in her three several departments of duty,—her government, her devotions, and her schools,—from the conduct of her rulers, her divines, her pastors, or her people.

It is this difficulty lying in the nature of the case, which supplies the staple of those energetic charges and vivid pictures of the inconsistency, double-dealing, and deceit of the Church of Rome, as found in Protestant writings, and in particular in the Lectures and other publications here immediately under consideration.

6.

For instance, the Author says in Lecture iii.: "There {xliv} are two elements in operation within the Roman system. As far as it is Catholic and scriptural, it appeals to the Fathers; as far as it is a corruption, it finds it necessary to supersede them. Viewed in its formal principles and authoritative statements, it professes to be the champion of past times; viewed as an active and political power, as a ruling, grasping, ambitious principle, in a word, as what is expressively called Popery, it exalts the will and pleasure of the existing Church above all authority, whether of Scripture or Antiquity, interpreting the one and disposing of the other by its absolute and arbitrary decree."

That is, the Regal function of the Church, as represented by the Pope, seems to be trampling on the theological, as represented by Scripture and Antiquity.

Again, in Lecture i.: "Members of our Church, in controversy with Rome, contend that it must be judged, not by the formal decrees of the Council of Trent, but by its practical working and existing state in the countries which profess it. Romanists would fain confine us in controversy to a consideration of the bare and acknowledged principles of their Church;

we consider it to be an unfair restriction; why? because we conceive that Romanism is far more faulty in its details than in its formal principles." {xlv}

That is, the Church, as a political and popular power, is answerable in her past and present history for innumerable acts which go far beyond any theological definitions in the Council of Trent.

Again in [Tract 71](#):—"They claim to be judged by their formal documents, especially by the decrees of the Council of Trent; but, though the acts of individuals are not the acts of the Church, yet they may be the results, and therefore illustrations of its principles. We cannot consent then to confine ourselves to the text of the Tridentine Decrees apart from the teaching of their doctors and the practice of the Church. It is not unnatural to take their general opinions and conduct in elucidation of their synodal decrees."

That is, the current history and ordinary ways of Catholicity, as sanctioned by its rulers and instanced individually in its people, scandalous as they are, must be after all the logical result of the innocent-looking Tridentine decrees.

And to [Dr. Jelf](#): "The doctrine of the schools is at present, on the whole, the established creed of the Roman Church, and this I call Popery, and against this I think the Thirty Nine Articles speak. I think they speak, not of certain accidental practices, but of a body and substance of divinity, and that traditionary,—of an existing, ruling {xlvi} spirit and view in the Church, which, whereas it is a corruption and perversion of the truth, is also a very active and energetic principle, and, whatever holier manifestations there may be in the same Church, manifests itself in ambition, insincerity, craft, cruelty, and all such other grave evils as are connected with these. Further, I believe that the Decrees of Trent, though not necessarily in themselves tending to the corruptions which we see, will ever tend to foster and produce them; that is, while these decrees remain unexplained in any truer and more Catholic way."

That is, there may indeed be holiness in the religious aspect of the Church, and soundness in her theological, but still there is in her the ambition, craft, and cruelty of a political power.

7.

I am to apply then the doctrine of the triple office of the Church in explanation of this phenomenon, which gives so much offence to Protestants; and I begin by admitting the general truth of the facts alleged against us;—at the same time in the passages just quoted there is one misconception of fact which needs to be corrected before I proceed. The Author of them ascribes the corruptions and other scandals, which he laments in the action of the {xlvii} Church, to the Schools; but ambition, craft, cruelty, and superstition are not commonly the characteristic of theologians, and the natural and proper function of the Schools lies and has lain in forming those abstract decrees which the Author considers to be the least blamable portion of Roman teaching. Nor, again, is it even accurate to say, as he does, that those so-called corruptions are at least the result and development of those abstract decrees: on the contrary, they bear on their face the marks of having a popular or a political origin, and in fact theology, so far from encouraging them, has restrained and corrected such extravagances as have been committed, through human infirmity, in the exercise of the regal and sacerdotal powers; nor is religion ever in greater danger than

when, in consequence of national or international troubles, the Schools of theology have been broken up and ceased to be.

And this will serve as a proposition with which to begin. I say, then, Theology is the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system. It is commensurate with Revelation, and Revelation is the initial and essential idea of Christianity. It is the subject-matter, the formal cause, the expression, of the Prophetic Office, and, as being such, has created both the Regal Office and the Sacerdotal. And it has in a certain sense a power of jurisdiction over those offices, as being its own creations, {xlvi} theologians being ever in request and in employment in keeping within bounds both the political and popular elements in the Church's constitution,—elements which are far more congenial than itself to the human mind, are far more liable to excess and corruption, and are ever struggling to liberate themselves from those restraints which are in truth necessary for their well-being. On the one hand Popes, such as Liberius, Vigilius, Boniface VIII., and Sixtus V., under secular inducements of the moment, seem from time to time to have been wishing, though unsuccessfully, to venture beyond the lines of theology; and on the other hand, private men of an intemperate devotion are from time to time forming associations, or predicting events, or imagining miracles, so unadvisedly as to call for the interference of the Index or Holy Office. It is not long since the present Pope in his exercise of the Prophetic Office, warned the faithful against putting trust in certain idle prophecies which were in circulation, disallowed a profession of miracles, and forbid some new and extravagant titles which had been given to the Blessed Virgin.

8.

Yet theology cannot always have its own way; it is too hard, too intellectual, too exact, to be always equitable, or to be always compassionate; and it sometimes has a conflict {xlix} or overthrow, or has to consent to a truce or a compromise, in consequence of the rival force of religious sentiment or ecclesiastical interests; and that, sometimes in great matters, sometimes in unimportant.

As a familiar illustration of the contrast with each other which the theological and the religious elements present in their bearing towards the same subject, I am led to notice some words of a Protestant writer incidentally quoted *infr.* p. 66. Theology lays down the undeniable truth (as derived from such passages as "God is not *unjust* to forget your work," &c. Heb. vi. 10,) that our good works have merit and are a ground of confidence for us in God's judgment of us. This dogma shocks good Protestants, who think that, in the case of an individual Catholic, it is the mark of a self-righteous spirit, and incompatible with his renunciation of his own desert and with a recourse to God's mercy. But they confuse an intellectual view with a personal sentiment. Now it is well known that Bellarmine has written on Justification, and of course in his treatise he insists, as a theologian must, on the doctrine of merit; but it also happens he is led on, as if he was praying or preaching or giving absolution, to drop some few words, beyond the limits of his science, about his own or his brethren's unworthiness and need of pardon and grace. That is, he has happened to let his devout nature betray {l} itself between the joints of his theological harness. He says, "On account of the uncertainty of our own righteousness and the danger of vain-glory, *it is safest* to place our *whole* trust in the *sole* mercy and goodness of God." What Bellarmine says every theologian *in propriâ personâ* will say; nevertheless the doctrine of merit is a great truth. However, Mr. Bickersteth thinks his confession wonderful, and, as a charitable man, rejoices in it. He looks on him as "a brand from the burning." "I cannot read," he says, "the

pious practical works of Bellarmine, himself the great defender of Popery, and know that he said 'Upon account of the uncertainty of life it is most safe to rely on Christ alone,' without hoping that he was led before his death to renounce all confidence in anything but God's testimony concerning His Son, and so became a child of our heavenly Father, and an heir of our Saviour's kingdom."

Again, I have already referred to the dilemma which has occurred before now in the history of the Church, when a choice had to be made between leaving a point of faith at a certain moment undefined, and indirectly opening the way to some extended and permanent schism. Here her Prophetic function is impeded for a while in its action, perhaps seriously, by the remonstrances of charity and of the spirit of peace. {li}

In another familiar instance which may be given, the popular and scholastic elements in the Church seem to change parts, and theology to be kind and sympathetic and religion severe. I mean, whereas the whole School with one voice speaks of freedom of conscience as a personal prerogative of each individual, on the other hand the vow of obedience may sometimes in particular cases be enforced by Religious Superiors in some lesser matter to the conceivable injury of such sacred freedom of thought.

Another instance of collision in a small matter is before us just at this time, the theological and religious element of the Church being in antagonism with the political. Humanity, a sense of morality, hatred of a special mis-belief, views of Scripture prophecy, a feeling of brotherhood with Russians, Greeks, and Bulgarians, though schismatics, have determined some of us against the Turkish cause; and a dread lest Russia, if successful, should prove a worse enemy to the Church than Turks can be, determines others of us in favour of it.

9.

But I will come to illustrations which involve more difficult questions. Truth is the principle on which all intellectual, and therefore all theological inquiries proceed, and is the motive power which gives them effect; but the {lii} principle of popular edification, quickened by a keen sensitiveness of the chance of scandals, is as powerful as Truth, when the province is Religion. To the devotional mind what is new and strange is as repulsive, often as dangerous, as falsehood is to the scientific. Novelty is often error to those who are unprepared for it, from the refraction with which it enters into their conceptions. Hence popular ideas on religion are practically a match for the clearest *dicta*, deductions, and provisos of the Schools, and will have their way in cases when the particular truth, which is the subject of them, is not of vital or primary importance. Thus, in a religion, which embraces large and separate classes of adherents, there always is of necessity to a certain extent an exoteric and an esoteric doctrine.

The history of the Latin versions of the Scriptures furnishes a familiar illustration of this conflict between popular and educated faith. The Gallican version of the Psalter, St. Jerome's earlier work, got such possession of the West, that to this day we use it instead of his later and more correct version from the Hebrew. Devotional use prevailed over scholastic accuracy in a matter of secondary concern. "Jerome," says Dr. Westcott [\[Note 2\]](#), "was accused of disturbing the repose of the Church, and shaking the foundations of faith;" and perhaps there was {liii} good reason for alarm. In the event "long use made it

impossible to substitute his Psalter from the Hebrew," and the Gallican version, unless I mistake, is the text of our present Psalter [Note 3]. A parallel anxiety for the same reason is felt at this time within the Anglican communion, upon the proposal to amend King James's Translation of the Scriptures.

10.

Here we see the necessary contrast between religious inquiry or teaching, and investigation in purely secular matters. Much is said in this day by men of science about the duty of honesty in what is called the pursuit of truth,—by "pursuing truth" being meant the pursuit of facts. It is just now reckoned a great moral virtue to be fearless and thorough in inquiry into facts; and, when science crosses and breaks the received path of Revelation, it is reckoned a serious imputation upon the ethical character of religious men, whenever they show hesitation to shift at a minute's warning their position, and to accept as truths shadowy views at variance with what they {liv} have ever been taught and have held. But the contrast between the cases is plain. The love and pursuit of truth in the subject-matter of religion, if it be genuine, must always be accompanied by the fear of error, of error which may be sin. An inquirer in the province of religion is under a responsibility for his reasons and for their issue. But, whatever be the real merits, nay, virtues, of inquirers into physical or historical facts, whatever their skill, their acquired caution, their experience, their dispassionateness and fairness of mind, they do not avail themselves of these excellent instruments of inquiry as a matter of conscience, but because it is expedient, or honest, or befitting, or praiseworthy, to use them; nor, if in the event they were found to be wrong as to their supposed discoveries, would they, or need they, feel aught of the remorse and self-reproach of a Catholic, on whom it breaks that he has been violently handling the text of Scripture, misinterpreting it, or superseding it, on an hypothesis which he took to be true, but which turns out to be untenable.

Let us suppose in his defence that he was challenged either to admit or to refute what was asserted, and to do so without delay; still it would have been far better could he have waited awhile, as the event has shown,—nay, far better, even though the assertion has proved true. Galileo might {lv} be right in his conclusion that the earth moves; to consider him a heretic might have been wrong; but there was nothing wrong in censuring abrupt, startling, unsettling, unverified disclosures, if such they were, disclosures at once uncalled for and inopportune, at a time when the limits of revealed truth had not as yet been ascertained. A man ought to be very sure of what he is saying, before he risks the chance of contradicting the word of God. It was safe, not dishonest, to be slow in accepting what nevertheless turned out to be true. Here is an instance in which the Church obliges Scripture expositors, at a given time or place, to be tender of the popular religious sense.

11.

I have been led on to take a second view of this matter. That jealousy of originality in the matter of religion, which is the instinct of piety, is, in the case of questions which excite the popular mind, the dictate of charity also. Galileo's truth is said to have shocked and scared the Italy of his day. It revolutionized the received system of belief as regards heaven, purgatory, and hell, to say that the earth went round the sun, and it forcibly imposed upon categorical statements of Scripture, a figurative interpretation. Heaven was no longer above, and earth below; the heavens no longer literally opened and shut; {lvi} purgatory and

hell were not for certain under the earth. The catalogue of theological truths was seriously curtailed. Whither did our Lord go on His ascension? If there is to be a plurality of worlds, what is the special importance of this one? and is the whole visible universe with its infinite spaces, one day to pass away? We are used to these questions now, and reconciled to them; and on that account are no fit judges of the disorder and dismay, which the Galilean hypothesis would cause to good Catholics, as far as they became cognizant of it, or how necessary it was in charity, especially then, to delay the formal reception of a new interpretation of Scripture, till their imaginations should gradually get accustomed to it.

12.

As to the particular measures taken at the time with this end, I neither know them accurately, nor have I any anxiety to know them. They do not fall within the scope of my argument; I am only concerned with the principle on which they were conducted. All I say is, that not all knowledge is suited to all minds; a proposition may be ever so true, yet at a particular time and place may be "temerarious, offensive to pious ears, and scandalous," though not "heretical" nor "erroneous." It must be recollected what very strong warnings we have from our Lord and St. Paul against scandalizing the weak and {lvii} unintellectual. The latter goes into detail upon the point. He says, that, true as it may be that certain meats are allowable, this allowance cannot in charity be used in a case in which it would be of spiritual injury to others. "Take care," he says, "that you put not a stumbling-block or a scandal in your brother's way;" "destroy not the work of God for meat;" "it is good to abstain from everything whereby thy brother is offended, or scandalized, or made weak; there is not knowledge in every one," but "take heed lest your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak." "All things are lawful to me, but not all edify; do not eat for his sake who spoke of it, and for conscience sake, conscience, not thine own, but the other's." [\[Note 4\]](#) Now, while saying this, I know well that "all things have their season," and that there is not only "a time to keep silence," but "a time to speak," and that, in some states of society, such as our own, it is the worst charity, and the most provoking, irritating rule of action, and the most unhappy policy, not to speak out, not to suffer to be spoken out, all that there is to say. Such speaking out is under such circumstances the triumph of religion, whereas concealment, accommodation, and evasion is to co-operate with the spirit of error;—but it is not always so. There are times and places, on the contrary, when it is the duty of a {lviii} teacher, when asked, to answer frankly as well as truly, though not even then to say more than he need, because learners will but misunderstand him if he attempts more, and therefore it is wiser and kinder to let well alone, than to attempt what is better. I do not say that this is a pleasant rule of conduct, and that it would not be a relief to most men to be rid of its necessity,—and for this reason, if for no other, because it is so difficult to apply it aright, so that St. Paul's precept may be interpreted in a particular case as the warrant for just contrary courses of action,—but still, it can hardly be denied that there is a great principle in what he says, and a great duty in consequence.

13.

In truth we recognize the duty of concealment, or what may be called evasion, not in religious matters only, but universally. It is very well for sublime sciences, which work out their problems apart from the crowding and jostling, the elbowing and the toe-treading of actual life, to care for nobody and nothing but themselves, and to preach and practise the cheap virtue of devotion to what they call truth, meaning of course facts; but a liberty to

blurt out all things whatever without self-restraint is not only forbidden by the Church, but by Society at large; of which such liberty, if fully carried out, would certainly be {lix} the dissolution. Veracity, like other virtues, lies in a mean. Truth indeed, but not necessarily the whole truth, is the rule of Society. Every class and profession has its secrets; the family lawyer, the medical adviser, the politician, as well as the priest. The physician often dares not tell the whole truth to his patient about his case, knowing that to do so would destroy his chance of recovery. Statesmen in Parliament, I suppose, fight each other with second-best arguments, the real reasons for the policy which they are respectively advocating being, as each is conscious to each, not these, but reasons of state, secrets whether of her Majesty's Privy Council or of diplomacy. As to the polite world, which, to be sure, is in itself not much of an authority, I think an authoress of the last century illustrates in a tale how it would not hold together, if every one told the whole truth to every one, as to what he thought of him. From the time that the Creator clothed Adam, concealment is in some sense the necessity of our fall.

14.

This, then, is one cause of that twofold or threefold aspect of the Catholic Church, which I have set myself to explain. Many popular beliefs and practices have, in spite of theology, been suffered by Catholic prelates, lest, {lx} "in gathering up the weeds," they should "root up the wheat with them." We see the operation of this necessary economy in the instance of the Old Covenant, in the gradual disclosures made, age after age, to the chosen people. The most striking of these accommodations is the long sufferance of polygamy, concubinage, and divorce. As to divorce, our Lord expressly says to the Pharisees, that "Moses, by reason of the hardness of their hearts, permitted them to put away their wives;" yet this was a breach of a natural and primeval law, which was in force at the beginning as directly and unequivocally as the law against fratricide. St. Augustine seems to go further still, as if not only a tacit toleration of an imperfect morality was observed towards Israel by his Divine Governor, but positive commands were issued in accordance with that state of imperfection in which the people lay. "Only the True and Good God," he says in answer to the Manichee objecting to him certain of the Divine acts recorded in the Old Testament, "only He knows what commands are to be given to individual men. He had given the command, who certainly knows ... according to the heart of each, what and by means of whom each individual ought to suffer. They deserved, then, the one party to be told to inflict suffering, the other to have to bear it." [[Note 5](#)] {lxi}

This indeed is the great principle of Economy, as advocated in the Alexandrian school [[Note 6](#)], which is in various ways sanctioned in Scripture. In some fundamental points indeed, in the Unity and Omnipotence of God, the Mosaic Law, so tolerant of barbaric cruelty, allowed of no condescension to the ethical state of the times; indeed the very end of the Dispensation was to denounce idolatry, and the sword was its instrument of denunciation; but where the mission of the chosen people was not directly concerned, and amid the heathen populations, even idolatry itself was suffered with something of a Divine sanction, as if a deeper sentiment might lie hid under it. Thus Joseph in the time of the Patriarchs had a divining cup and married the daughter of the Priest of Heliopolis. Jonah in a later time was sent to preach penance to the people of Nineveh, but without giving them a hint, or being understood by them to say, that they must abandon their idols; while the sailors, among whom the Prophet had previously been thrown, though idolaters, recognized with great

devotion and religious fear the Lord God of heaven and earth. {lxii} Again, when Balaam had built his seven altars and offered his sacrifices, and prepared his divinations, it is significantly said, that "the Lord *met* him, and put a word in his mouth," yet without any rebuke of his idolatry and magic. And when Naaman asked forgiveness of God if he "bowed down in the temple of Remmon," the Prophet said no more than "Go in peace." And St. Paul tells both the rude and the cultivated idolaters of Lystra and Athens, that God, in times past, while He gave all nations proofs of His Providence, "suffered them to walk in their own ways," and "winked at the times of their ignorance."

15.

From the time that the Apostles preached, such toleration in primary matters of faith and morals is at an end as regards Christendom. Idolatry is a sin against light; and, while it would involve heinous guilt, or rather is impossible, in a Catholic, it is equally inconceivable in even the most ignorant sectary who claims the Christian name; nevertheless, the principle and the use of the Economy has a place, and is a duty still among Catholics, though not as regards the first elements of Revelation. We have still, as Catholics, to be forbearing and to be silent in many cases, amid the mistakes, excesses, and superstitions of individuals and of classes of our brethren, which we come {lxiii} across. Also in the case of those who are not Catholic, we feel it a duty sometimes to observe the rule of silence, even when so serious a truth as the "Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" comes into consideration. This truth, indeed, must ever be upheld, but who will venture to blame us, or reproach us with double-dealing, for holding it to be our duty, though we thus believe, still, in a case when a Protestant, near death and to all appearance in good faith, is sure, humanly speaking, not to accept Catholic truth, if urged upon him, to leave such a one to his imperfect Christianity, and to the mercy of God, and to assist his devotions as far as he will let us carry him, rather than to precipitate him at such a moment into controversy which may ruffle his mind, dissipate his thoughts, unsettle such measure of faith as he has, and rouse his slumbering prejudices and antipathies against the Church? Yet this might be represented as countenancing a double aspect of Catholic doctrine and as evasive and shuffling, theory saying one thing, and practice sanctioning another.

16.

I shelter what I go on to say of the Church's conduct occasionally towards her own children, under this rule of her dealing with strangers:—The rule is the same in its principle as that of Moses or St. Paul, or the Alexandrians, {lxiv} or St. Augustine, though it is applied to other subject-matters. Doubtless, her abstract standard of religion and morals in the Schools is higher than that which we witness in her children in particular countries or at particular times; but doubtless also, she, like the old prophets before her, from no fault of hers, is not able to enforce it. Human nature is in all ages one and the same: as it showed itself in the Israelites, so it shows itself in the world at large now, though one country may be better than another. At least, in some countries, truth and error in religion may be so intimately connected as not to admit of separation. I have already referred to our Lord's parable of the wheat and the cockle. For instance, take the instance of relics; modern divines and historians may have proved that certain recognized relics, though the remains of some holy man, still do not certainly belong to the Saint to whom they are popularly appropriated; and in spite of this, a bishop may have sanctioned a public veneration of them, which has arisen out of this unfounded belief. And so again, without pledging himself to the truth of the

legend of a miracle attached to a certain crucifix or picture, he may have viewed with tolerance, nay, with satisfaction, the overflowing popular devotion towards our Lord or the Blessed Virgin, of which that legend is the occasion. He {lxv} is not sure it is true, and he does not guarantee its truth; he does but approve and praise the devotional enthusiasm of the people, which the legendary fact has awakened. Did indeed their faith and devotion towards Christ rise simply out of that legend, if they made Him their God because something was said to have taken place which had not taken place, then no honest man, who was simply aware of this, could take any part in the anniversary outburst of rejoicing; but he knows that miracles are wrought in the Church in every age, and, if he is far from certain that this was a miracle, he is not certain that it was not; and his case would be somewhat like French ecclesiastics in the beginning of the century, if Napoleon ordered a Te Deum for his victory at Trafalgar,—they might have shrewd suspicions about the fact, but they would not see their way not to take part in a national festival. Such may be the feeling under which the Church takes part in popular religious manifestations without subjecting them to theological and historical criticism; she is in a choice of difficulties; did she act otherwise, she would be rooting up the wheat with the intruding weeds; she would be "quenching the smoking flax," and endangering the faith and loyalty of a city or a district, for the sake of an intellectual precision which was quite out of place and was not asked of her. {lxvi}

The difficulty of course is to determine the point at which such religious manifestations become immoderate, and an allowance of them wrong; it would be well, if all suspicious facts could be got rid of altogether. Their tolerance may sometimes lead to pious frauds, which are simply wicked. An ecclesiastical superior certainly cannot sanction alleged miracles or prophecies which he knows to be false, or by his silence connive at a tradition of them being started among his people. Nor can he be dispensed of the duty, when he comes into an inheritance of error or superstition, which is immemorial, of doing what he can to alleviate and dissipate it, though to do this without injury to what is true and good, can after all be only a gradual work. Errors of fact may do no harm, and their removal may do much.

17.

As neither the local rulers nor the pastors of the Church are impeccable in act nor infallible in judgment, I am not obliged to maintain that all ecclesiastical measures and permissions have ever been praiseworthy and safe precedents. But as to the mere countenancing of superstitions, it must not be forgotten, that our Lord Himself, on one occasion passed over the superstitious act of a woman who was in great trouble, for the merit of the faith which was the {lxvii} real element in it. She was under the influence of what would be called, were she alive now, a "corrupt" religion, yet she was rewarded by a miracle. She came behind our Lord and touched Him, hoping "virtue would go out of Him," without His knowing it. She paid a sort of fetish reverence to the hem of His garment; she stole, as she considered, something from Him, and was much disconcerted at being found out. When our Lord asked who had touched Him, "fearing and trembling," says St. Mark, "knowing what was done in her, she came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth," as if there were anything to tell to the All-knowing. What was our Lord's judgment on her? "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." Men talk of our double aspect now; has not the first age a double aspect? Do not such incidents in the Gospel as this, and the miracle on the swine, the pool of Bethesda, the restoration of the servant's ear, the changing water into

wine, the coin in the fish's mouth, and the like, form an aspect of Apostolic Christianity very different from that presented by St. Paul's Pastoral Epistles and the Epistle General of St. John? Need men wait for the Medieval Church in order to make their complaint that the theology of Christianity does not accord with its religious manifestations? {lxviii}

18.

This woman, who is so prominently brought before us by three evangelists, doubtless understood that, if the garment had virtue, this arose from its being Christ's; and so a poor Neapolitan crone, who chatters to the crucifix, refers that crucifix in her deep mental consciousness to an original who once hung upon a cross in flesh and blood; but if, nevertheless she is puzzle-headed enough to assign virtue to it in itself, she does no more than the woman in the Gospel, who preferred to rely for a cure on a bit of cloth, which was our Lord's, to directly and honestly addressing Him. Yet He praised her before the multitude, praised her for what might, not without reason, be called an idolatrous act; for in His new law He was opening the meaning of the word "idolatry," and applying it to various sins, to the adoration paid to rich men, to the thirst after gain, to ambition, and the pride of life, idolatries worse in His judgment than the idolatry of ignorance, but not commonly startling or shocking to educated minds.

And may I not add that this aspect of our Lord's teaching is quite in keeping with the general drift of His discourses? Again and again He insists on the necessity of faith; but where does He insist on the danger of superstition, an infirmity, which, taking human nature as it is, is the sure companion of faith, when vivid and earnest? Taking {lxix} human nature as it is, we may surely concede a little superstition, as not the worst of evils, if it be the price of making sure of faith. Of course it need not be the price; and the Church, in her teaching function, will ever be vigilant against the inroad of what is a degradation both of faith and of reason: but considering, as Anglicans will allow, how intimately the sacramental system is connected with Christianity, and how feeble and confused is at present the ethical intelligence of the world at large, it is a distant day, at which the Church will find it easy, in her oversight of her populations, to make her Sacerdotal office keep step with her Prophetic. Just now I should be disposed to doubt whether that nation really had the faith, which is free in all its ranks and classes from all kinds and degrees of what is commonly considered superstition.

19.

Worship, indeed, being the act of our devotional nature, strives hard to emancipate itself from theological restraints. Theology did not create it, but found it in our hearts, and used it. And it has many shapes and many objects, and, moreover, these are not altogether unlawful, though they be many. Undoubtedly the first and most necessary of all religious truths is the Being, Unity, and Omnipotence of God, and it was the primary purpose and work of Revelation {lxx} to enforce this. But did not that first truth involve in itself and suggest to the mind with a sympathetic response a second truth, namely, the existence of other beings besides the Supreme? and that for the very reason that He was Unity and Perfection,—I mean, a whole world, though to us unknown,—in order to people the vast gulf which separates Him from man? And, when our Lord came and united the Infinite and Finite, was it not natural to think, even before Revelation spoke out, that He came to be "the First born of many brethren," all crowned after His pattern with glory and honour? As

there is an instinctive course of reasoning which leads the mind to acknowledge the Supreme God, so we instinctively believe in the existence of beings short of Him, though at the same time far superior to ourselves, beings unseen by us, and yet about us and with relations to us. And He has by His successive revelations confirmed to us the correctness of our anticipation. He has in fact told us of the myriads of beings, good and evil, spirits as God is, friendly or hostile to us, who are round about us; and, moreover, by teaching us also the immortality of man, He sets before us a throng of innumerable souls, once men, who are dead neither to God nor to us, and, who, as having been akin to us, suggest to us, when we think of them, and seem to sanction, acts of mutual intercourse. {lxxi}

20.

Revelation in this matter does but complete what Nature has begun. It is difficult to deny that polytheism is a natural sentiment corrupted. Its radical evil is, not the belief in many divine intelligences, but its forgetfulness of their Creator, the One Living Personal God who is above them all,—that is, its virtual Atheism. First secure in the mind and heart of individuals, in the popular intelligence, a lively faith and trust in Him, and then the *cultus* of Angels and Saints, though ever to be watched with jealousy by theologians, because of human infirmity and perverseness, is a privilege, nay a duty, and has a normal place in revealed Religion.

Holding then this recognition of orders of beings between the Supreme Creator and man to be a natural and true sentiment, I have a difficulty in receiving the opinion of the day that monotheism and polytheism are the characteristics of distinct races, the former of the Semitic, the latter of the Aryan. I cannot indeed see the justice of this contrast at all. Did not the Israelites, for all their Semitic descent, worship Baal and Astoreth in the times of the Judges, and sacrifice to these and other false gods under their Kings? And then, when at last a sense of the Divine Unity had been wrought into them, did they not still pay religious honours to Abraham, up to teaching, as {lxxii} our Lord's language shows, that his bosom was the limbo of holy souls? and did not our Lord sanction them in doing so? and this in spite of the danger of superstition in such beliefs, as shown afterwards in St. Paul's warning against Angel worship in his Epistle to the Colossians.

Again, the Saracenic race is Semitic, yet the Arabian Nights suffice to show how congenial the idea of beings intermediate to God and man was to that and other Mohammedan people. In spite of the profession of their religion to uphold severely the Divine Unity, they are notorious for superstitions founded on the belief of innumerable spirits in earth and heaven. Such is their doctrine of Angels, and the stories they attach to them; of whom a large host waits upon every Mussulman, in so much that each of his limbs and functions has its guardian. Such again is that fantastic and fertile mythology, of which Solomon is the central figure; with its population of pens, gins, devis, afreets, and the like, and its bearing upon human affairs. And such again their magic, their charms, spells, lucky and unlucky numbers; and such their belief in astrology. Their insistence on the Divine Unity is rather directed against the Holy Trinity, than against polytheism.

Still more readily will that true theology, which teaches that He ever was a Father in His incomprehensible essence, {lxxiii} accept and proclaim the doctrine of the fertility, bountifulness and beneficence of His creative power, and claim for Him the right of a Father

over the work of His hands. All things are His and He is in all things. All things are "very good," and, in St. Paul's words, we may "glorify Him in" them. This is especially true as regards intellectual and holy beings, and is the very principle of the *cultus* of Angels and Saints, nor would there be anything to guard against or explain, were it not for the moral sickness and feebleness which is the birth-portion of our race, and which, as the same Apostle affirms, has led them to "change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

21.

Here at last I come to the point, which has been the drift of these remarks. The primary object of Revelation was to recall men from idolizing the creature. The Israelites had the mission of effecting this by the stern and pitiless ministry of the sword. The Christian Church, after the pattern of our Lord's gentleness, has been guided to an opposite course. Moses on his death was buried by Divine Agency, lest, as the opinion has prevailed, a people, who afterwards offered incense to the brazen serpent which {lxxiv} he set up, should be guilty of idolatry towards his dead body. But Christians, on the contrary, have from the first cherished and honoured with a special *cultus* the memories of the Martyrs, who had shed their blood for Christ, and have kept up a perpetual communion with all their brethren departed by their prayers and by masses for their souls. That is, the Christian Church has understood that her mission was not like that of Moses, to oppose herself to impulses which were both natural and legitimate, though they had been heretofore the instruments of sin, but to do her best, by a right use, to moderate and purify them. Hence, in proportion as the extinction of the old corrupt heathenism made it possible, she has invoked saints, sanctioned the use of their images, and, in the spirit of the Gospels and the Acts, has expected miracles from their persons, garments, relics, and tombs.

This being her mission, not to forbid the memory and veneration of Saints and Angels, but to subordinate it to the worship of the Supreme Creator, it is not wonderful, if she has appeared to lookers-on to be sanctioning and reviving that "old error" which has "passed away;" and that the more so, because she has not been able to do all she could wish against it, and has been obliged at times and in particular cases, as I have said above, as the least of evils, to temporize and compromise,—of course short of {lxxv} any infringement of the revealed Law or any real neglect of her teaching office. And hence, which is our main subject, there will ever be a marked contrariety between the professions of her theology and the ways and doings of a Catholic country.

22.

It must be recollected, that, while the Catholic Church is ever most precise in her enunciation of doctrine, and allows no liberty of dissent from her decisions, (for on such objective matters she speaks with the authority of infallibility,) her tone is different, in the sanction she gives to devotions, as they are of a subjective and personal nature. Here she neither prescribes measure, nor forbids choice, nor, except so far as they imply doctrine, is she infallible in her adoption or use of them. This is an additional reason why the formal decrees of Councils and statements of theologians differ in their first aspect from the religion of the uneducated classes; the latter represents the wayward popular taste, and the former the critical judgments of clear heads and holy hearts.

This contrast will be the greater, when, as sometimes happens, ecclesiastical authority takes part with the popular sentiment against a theological decision. Such, we know, was the case, when St. Peter himself committed {lxxvi} an error in conduct, in the countenance he gave to the Mosaic rites in consequence of the pressure exerted on him by the Judaic Christians. On that occasion St. Paul withstood him, "because he was to be blamed." A fault, which even the first Pope incurred, may in some other matter of rite or devotion find a place now and then in the history of holy and learned ecclesiastics who were not Popes. Such an instance seems presented to us in the error of judgment which was committed by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in China, in their adoption of certain customs which they found among the heathen there; and Protestant writers in consequence have noted it as a signal instance of the double-faced conduct of Catholics, as if they were used to present their religion under various aspects according to the expedience of the place or time. But that there is a religious way of thus accommodating ourselves to those among whom we live, and whom it is our duty, if possible, to convert, is plain from St. Paul's own rule of life, considering he "became to the Jews as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, and to them that were without the law, as if he were without the law, and became all things to all men that he might save all." Or what shall we say to the commencement of St. John's Gospel, in which the Evangelist may be as plausibly represented to have used the language of heathen classics with the purpose of interesting {lxxvii} and gaining the Platonizing Jews, as the Jesuits be charged with duplicity and deceit in aiming at the conversion of the heathen in the East by an imitation of their customs. St. Paul on various occasions acts in the same spirit of economy, as did the great Missionary Church of Alexandria in the centuries which followed; its masters did but carry out, professedly, a principle of action, of which they considered they found examples in Scripture. Anglicans who appeal to the Ante-nicene period as especially their own, should be tender of the memories of Theonas, Clement, Origen, and Gregory Thaumaturgus.

23.

The mention of missions and of St. Gregory leads me on to another department of my general subject, viz. the embarrassments and difficult questions arising out of the regal office of the Church and her duties to it. It is said of this primitive Father, who was the Apostle of a large district in Asia Minor, that he found in it only seventeen Christians, and on his death left in it only seventeen pagans. This was an enlargement of the Church's territory worthy of a Catholic Bishop, but how did he achieve it? Putting aside the real cause, the Divine blessing, and his gift of miracles, we are told of one special act of his, not unlike {lxxviii} that of the Jesuits in the East, which I will relate in the words of Neander:—"Having observed that many of the common people were attached to the religion of their fathers from a love of the ancient sports connected with paganism, he determined to provide the new converts with a substitute for those. He instituted a general festival in honour of the Martyrs, and permitted the rude multitudes to celebrate it with banquets similar to those which accompanied the pagan funerals (parentalia) and other heathen festivals." [\[Note 7\]](#) Neander indeed finds fault with Gregory's indulgence, and certainly it had its dangers, as all such economies have, and it required anxious vigilance on the part of a Christian teacher in carrying it out. St. Peter Chrysologus, in the fifth century, when Christianity needed no such expedients, expressed this feeling when, on occasion of the heathen dances usual in his diocese on the Calends of January, he said, "Whoso will have his joke with the devil, will not have his triumph with Christ." But, I suppose, both measures at once, the indulgence and

the vigilance, were included in St. Gregory's proceeding, as in other times and places in the Church's history. At this very time Carnival is allowed, if not sanctioned, by ecclesiastical authorities in the cities of the Continent, while they not only {lxxix} keep away from it themselves, but appoint special devotions in the Churches, in order to draw away the faithful from the spiritual dangers attending on it.

24.

St. Gregory was a Bishop as well as a preacher and spiritual guide, so that the economy which is related of him is an act of the regal function of the Church, as well as of her sacerdotal and pastoral. And this indeed attaches to most of the instances which I have been giving above of the Church's moderating or suspending under circumstances the requisitions of her theology. They illustrate at once both these elements of her divinely ordered constitution; for the fear, as already mentioned, of "quenching the smoking flax," which is the attribute of a guide of souls, operated in the same direction as zeal for the extension of Christ's kingdom, in resisting that rigorousness of a logical theology which is more suited for the Schools than for the world. In these cases then the two offices, political and pastoral, have a common interest as against the theological; but this is not always so, and therefore I shall now go on to give instances in which the imperial and political expedience of religion stands out prominent, and both its theological and devotional duties are in the background. {lxxx}

25.

I observe then that Apostolicity of doctrine and Sanctity of worship, as attributes of the Church, are differently circumstanced from her regal autocracy. Tradition in good measure is sufficient for doctrine, and popular custom and conscience for worship, but tradition and custom cannot of themselves secure independence and self-government. The Greek Church shows this, which has lost its political life, while its doctrine, and its ritual and devotional system, have little that can be excepted against. If the Church is to be regal, a witness for Heaven, unchangeable amid secular changes, if in every age she is to hold her own, and proclaim as well as profess the truth, if she is to thrive without or against the civil power, if she is to be resourceful and self-recuperative under all fortunes, she must be more than Holy and Apostolic; she must be Catholic. Hence it is that, first, she has ever from her beginning onwards had a hierarchy and a head, with a strict unity of polity, the claim of an exclusive divine authority and blessing, the trusteeship of the gospel gifts, and the exercise over her members of an absolute and almost despotic rule. And next, as to her work, it is her special duty, as a sovereign State, to consolidate her several portions, to enlarge her territory, to keep up and to increase {lxxxi} her various populations in this ever-dying, ever-nascent world, in which to be stationary is to lose ground, and to repose is to fail. It is her duty to strengthen and facilitate the intercourse of city with city, and race with race, so that an injury done to one is felt to be an injury to all, and the act of individuals has the energy and momentum of the whole body. It is her duty to have her eyes upon the movements of all classes in her wide dominion, on ecclesiastics and laymen, on the regular clergy and secular, on civil society, and political movements. She must be on the watch-tower, discerning in the distance and providing against all dangers; she has to protect the ignorant and weak, to remove scandals, to see to the education of the young, to administer temporalities, to initiate, or at least to direct all Christian work, and all with a view to the life, health, and strength of Christianity, and the salvation of souls.

It is easy to understand how from time to time such serious interests and duties involve, as regards the parties who have the responsibility of them, the risk, perhaps the certainty, at least the imputation, of ambition or other selfish motive, and still more frequently of error in judgment, or violent action, or injustice. However, leaving this portion of the subject with this remark, I shall bring what I have to say to an end by putting the Regal office of the Church side by side with the Prophetical, and giving {lxxxii} instances of the collisions and compromises which have taken place between them in consequence of their respective duties and interests.

26.

For example: the early tradition of the Church was dissuasive of using force in the maintenance of religion. "It is not the part of men who have confidence in what they believe," says Athanasius, "to force and compel the unwilling. For the truth is not preached with swords, or with darts, nor by means of soldiers, but by persuasion and counsel." *Arian. Hist.* § 33. Augustine at first took the same view of duty; but his experience as a Bishop led him to change his mind. Here we see the interests of the Church, as a regal power, acting as an influence upon his theology.

Again: with a view to the Church's greater unity and strength, Popes, from the time of St. Gregory I., down to the present, have been earnest in superseding and putting away the diversified traditional forms of ritual in various parts of the Church. In this policy ecclesiastical expedience has acted in the subject-matter of theology and worship.

Again: acts simply unjustifiable, such as real betrayals of the truth on the part of Liberius and Honorius, become intelligible, and cease to be shocking, if we consider that those Popes felt themselves to be head rulers of Christendom {lxxxiii} and their first duty, as such, to be that of securing its peace, union and consolidation. The personal want of firmness or of clear-sightedness in the matter of doctrine, which each of them in his own day evidenced, may have arisen out of his keen sense of being the Ecumenical Bishop and one Pastor of Christ's flock, of the scandal caused by its internal dissensions, and of his responsibility, should it retrograde in health and strength in his day.

27.

The principle, on which these two Popes may be supposed to have acted, not unsound in itself, though by them wrongly applied, I conceive to be this,—that no act could be theologically an error, which was absolutely and undeniably necessary for the unity, sanctity, and peace of the Church; for falsehood never could be necessary for those blessings, and truth alone can be. If one could be sure of this necessity, the principle itself may be granted; though, from the difficulty of rightly applying it, it can only be allowed on such grave occasions, with so luminous a tradition, in its favour, and by such high authorities, as make it safe. If it was wrongly used by the Popes whom I have named, it has been rightly and successfully used by others, in whose decision, in their respective cases, no Catholic has any difficulty in concurring. {lxxxiv}

28.

I will give some instances of it, and of these the most obvious is our doctrine regarding the Canonization of Saints. The infallibility of the Church must certainly extend to this solemn

and public act; and that, because on so serious a matter, affecting the worship of the faithful, though relating to a fact, the Church, (that is, the Pope,) must be infallible. This is Card. Lambertini's decision, in concurrence with St. Thomas, putting on one side the question of the Pope's ordinary infallibility, which depends on other arguments. "*It cannot be,*" that great author says, "that the Universal Church should be led into error on a point of morals by the supreme Pontiff; and that certainly would, or might; happen, supposing he could be mistaken in a canonization." This, too, is St. Thomas's argument: "In the Church there can be no damnable error; but this would be such, if one who was really a sinner, were venerated as a saint," &c.—Card. Lambert. *de Canon.* Diss. xxi. vol. i. ed. Ven. 1751.

29.

Again: in like manner, our certainty that the Apostolical succession of Bishops in the Catholic Church has no flaw in it, and that the validity of the Sacraments is secure, in spite of possible mistakes and informalities in the course of 1800 years, rests upon our faith that He who has {lxxxv} decreed the end has decreed the means,—that He is always sufficient for His Church,—that, if He has given us a promise ever to be with us, He will perform it.

30.

A more delicate instance of this argument, *ex absurdo*, as it may be called, is found in the learned book of Morinus "de Ordinationibus." He shows us that its application was the turning-point of the decision ultimately made at Rome in the middle age, in regard to simoniacal, heretical, and schismatical ordinations. As regards ordinations made with simony, it seems that Pope Leo IX., on occasion of the ecclesiastical disorders of his time, held a solemn Council, in which judgment was given against the validity of such acts. It seems also that, from certain ecclesiastical difficulties which followed, lying in the region of fact, from the "incommoda hinc emergentia," the Pope could not carry out the Synodal act, and was obliged to issue a milder decision instead of it. St. Peter Damiani, giving an account of this incident, says, "When Leo pronounced all simoniacal ordinations to be null and void, the consequence was a serious tumult and resistance on the part of the multitude of Roman priests, who urged, with the concurrence of the Bishops, that it would lead to the Basilicas being deprived of the sacerdotal offices; moreover, {lxxxvi} that the Masses would absolutely cease, to the overthrow of the Christian Religion and the dismay of all the faithful everywhere."

Such a mode of resolving a point in theology is intelligible only on the ground laid down above, that a certain quasi-doctrinal conclusion may be in such wise fatal to the constitution, and therefore to the being of the Church, as *ipso facto* to stultify the principles from which it is drawn, it being inconceivable that her Lord and Maker intended that the action of any one of her functions should be the destruction of another. In this case, then, He willed that a point of theology should be determined on its expediency relatively to the Church's Catholicity and the edification of her people,—by the logic of facts, which at times overrides all positive laws and prerogatives, and reaches in its effective force to the very frontiers of immutable truths in religion, ethics, and theology.

31.

This instance, in which the motive-cause of the decision ultimately made is so clearly brought out, is confirmed by the parallel case of heretical ordination. For instance, Pope Innocent, in the fourth century, writing to the Bishops of Macedonia, concedes the validity

of heretical orders in a certain case specified, declaring the while, that such a concession ran counter to the tradition of the Roman {lxxxvii} Church. This concession was made in order to put an end to a great scandal; but "certainly" the Pope says, "it was not so from the first, as there were ancient rules, which, as handed down from the Apostles and Apostolical men, the Roman Church guards and commits to the guardianship of her subjects."

32.

Again, as regards schismatical ordination, as of the Donatists:—on this occasion, Rome stood firm to her traditional view, and Augustine apparently concurred in it; but the African Bishops on the whole were actuated by their sense of the necessity of taking the opposite line, and were afraid of committing themselves to the principle that heresy or schism nullified ordination. They condemned (with the countenance of Augustine) Donatus alone, the author of the schism, but accepted the rest, orders and all, lest remaining outside the Church, they should be a perpetual thorn in her side. "It was not possible," says Morinus, "for Augustine to come to any other decision considering he saw daily the Donatists with their orders received into the Church." This is another instance of the schools giving way to ecclesiastical expedience, and of the interests of peace and unity being a surer way of arriving at a doctrinal conclusion than methods more directly theological. {lxxxviii}

33.

The considerations which might be urged, in behalf of these irregular ordinations, on the score of expedience, had still greater force when urged in recognition of heretical baptism, which formed the subject of a controversy in the preceding century. Baptism was held to be the entrance to Christianity and its other sacraments, and once a Christian, ever a Christian. It marked and discriminated the soul receiving it from all other souls by a supernatural character, as the owner's name is imprinted on a flock of sheep. Thus heretics far and wide, if baptized, were children of the Church, and they answered to that title so far as they were in fact preachers of the truth of Christ to the heathen; since there is no religious sect without truth in it, and it would be truth which the heathen had to be taught. That exuberant birth of strange rites and doctrines, which suddenly burst into life all round Christianity on its start, is one of the striking evidences of the wondrous force of the Christian idea, and of its subtle penetrating influence, when it first fell upon the ignorant masses: and though many of these sects had little or no claim to administer a real baptism, and in many or most the abounding evil that was in them choked the scanty and feeble good, yet was the Church definitely to reject a baptism simply on the ground of {lxxxix} its not being administered by a Catholic? Expedience pointed out the duty of acknowledging it in cases in which our Lord's description of it, when He made it His initiatory rite, had been exactly fulfilled, unless indeed Scripture and Tradition were directly opposed to such a course. To cut off such cautious baptism from the Church was to circumscribe her range of subjects, and to impair her catholicity. It was to sacrifice those, who, though at present blinded by the mist of error, had enough of truth in their religion, however latent, to leave hope of their conversion at some future day. The imperial See of Peter, ever on the watch for the extension of Christ's kingdom, understood this well; and, while its tradition was unfavourable to heretical ordination, it was strong and clear in behalf of the validity of heretical baptism.

Pope Stephen took this side then in a memorable controversy, and maintained it against almost the whole Christian world. It was a signal instance of the triumph, under Divine Providence, of a high, generous expediency over a conception of Christian doctrine, which logically indeed seemed unanswerable. One must grant indeed, as I have said, that he based his decision upon Tradition, not on expediency, but why was such a Tradition in the first instance begun? The reason of the Tradition has to be explained; and, if Stephen is not to have the credit {xc} of the large and wise views which occasioned his conduct, that credit belongs to the Popes who went before him. These he had on his side certainly, but whom had he besides them? The Apostolical Canons say, "Those who are baptized by heretics cannot be believers." The Synods of Iconium and Synnada declare that "those who came from the heretics were to be washed and purified from the filth of their old impure leaven." Clement of Alexandria, that "Wisdom pronounces that strange waters do not belong to her." Firmilian, that "we recognize one only Church of God, and account baptism to belong only to the Holy Church." "It seemed good from the beginning," says St. Basil, "wholly to annul the baptism of heretics." Tertullian says, "We have not the same baptism with heretics; since they have it not rightly; without, they have it not at all." [\[Note 8\]](#) "Then may there be one baptism," says St. Cyprian, "when there is one faith. We and heretics cannot have a common baptism, since we have not the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost in common. Heretics in their baptism are polluted by their profane water." St. Cyril says, "None but heretics are re-baptized, since their former baptism was not baptism." St. Athanasius asks, {xci} "Is not the rite administered by the Arians, altogether empty and unprofitable? he that is sprinkled by them is rather polluted than redeemed." Optatus says, "The stained baptism cannot wash a man, the polluted cannot cleanse." "The baptism of traitors." says St. Ambrose, "does not heal, does not cleanse, but defiles."

Expedience is an argument which grows in cogency with the course of years; a hundred and fifty years after St. Stephen, the ecclesiastical conclusion which he had upheld was accepted generally by the School of Theologians, in an adhesion to it on the part of St. Augustine.

34.

Lastly, serious as this contrast is between the decision of the Pope and the logic of the above great authors, there was, before and in his time, a change yet greater in the ideas and the tone of the theological schools; a change which may remind us of the language of Cardinal Fisher on a collateral subject, as is to be found below. I mean that relaxation of the penitential canons, effected by a succession of Popes, which, much as it altered the Church's discipline and the ordinary course of Christian life, still was strictly conformable to the necessities of her prospective state, as our Lord had described it beforehand. As Christianity spread through the various classes of the {xcii} Pagan Empire, and penetrated into private families, social circles, and secular callings, and was received with temporary or local toleration, the standard of duty amongst its adherents fell; habits and practices of the world found their way into the fold; and scandals became too common to allow of the offenders being cast off by wholesale.

This, I say, was but the fulfilment of our Lord's prophetic announcement, that the kingdom of heaven should be a net, gathering fish of every kind; and how indeed should it be otherwise, if it was to be Catholic, human nature being what it is? Yet, on the other hand, the Sermon on the Mount, and other discourses of our Lord, assigned a very definite

standard of morals, and a very high rule of conduct to His people. Under these circumstances, the Holy See and various Bishops took what would be called the laxer side, as being that which charity, as well as expediency suggested, whereas the graver and more strict, as well as the ignorant portion of the Christian community did not understand such a policy, and in consequence there was, in various parts of the world, both among the educated and the uneducated, an indignant rising against this innovation, as it was conceived, of their rulers. Montanus and his sect in the East, represent the feelings of the multitude at Rome, the school of Tertullian, {xciii} Novatian, and the author of the *Elenchus*, able and learned men, stood out in behalf of what they considered the Old Theology, terminating their course in the Novatian schism; while the learned Donatist Bishops and the mad Circumcelliones illustrate a like sentiment, and a like temper, in Africa. During a long controversy, the collision of those elements in the Church's constitution, which have formed the subject of this Essay, is variously illustrated. It carries us through the Pontificates of Zephyrinus, Callistus, Cornelius, Stephen, and Dionysius, and so on down to the Episcopate of St. Augustine; and it ends in the universal acceptance of the decision of the Holy See. The resolution of the difficulties of the problem was found in a clearer recognition of the distinction between precepts and counsels, between mortal sins and venial, and between the two forums of the Church, the external and internal;—also in the development of the doctrine of Purgatory, and in the contemporary rise of the monastic institution, as exhibited in the history of St. Antony and his disciples.

35.

So much on the collision and the adjustment of the Regal or political office of the Church with the Prophetic: that I may not end without an instance of the political {xciv} in contrast with the Sacerdotal, I will refer to the Labarum of Constantine. The sacred symbol of unresisting suffering, of self-sacrificing love, of life-giving grace, of celestial peace, became in the hands of the first Christian Emperor, with the sanction of the Church, his banner in fierce battle and the pledge of victory for his sword.

36.

To conclude:—whatever is great refuses to be reduced to human rule, and to be made consistent in its many aspects with itself. Who shall reconcile with each other the various attributes of the Infinite God? and, as He is, such in their several degrees are His works. This living world to which we belong, how self-contradictory it is, when we attempt to measure and master its meaning and scope! And how full of incongruities, that is, of mysteries, in its higher and finer specimens, is the soul of man, viewed in its assemblage of opinions, tastes, habits, powers, aims, and doings! We need not feel surprise then, if Holy Church too, the supernatural creation of God, is an instance of the same law, presenting to us an admirable consistency and unity in word and deed, as her general characteristic, but crossed and discredited now and then by apparent anomalies which need, and which claim, at our hands an exercise of faith.