

THE CHARACTER
OF
THE CHURCH OF ROME,

A Sermon

PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF VIRGINIA,
IN LEXINGTON, OCTOBER 26, 1855.



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SERMON.

REVELATIONS XVII. 3—5.

I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet-colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.

FATHERS AND BRETHREN OF THE SYNOD OF VIRGINIA:

THE custom which requires a sermon on Popery to be delivered annually in your hearing, is one which must ever be considered more honoured in the observance than in the breach. Whether this annual review of the wickedness of Popery ought to stand alone in our organized efforts against Antichrist, may admit of a question. But, surely, in the absence of other means, it is well to have our minds turned occasionally to the nature and progress of the great and abominable institutions of the Roman Catholic Church. We are prone, in the absence of active collision with any evil, to cease to estimate it with accuracy: our knowledge becomes indistinct, and our feelings of opposition proportionably abate, just as the distance softens the lines of its horrors. In the full enjoyment of the undisturbed and guaranteed rights of religious liberty, and in a community in which we are seldom brought in contact with Popery, particularly in its more confident and

aggressive spirit, we are exposed to the temptation of suffering the whole system of its damnable errors to fade from our minds; to forget what it is, or to remember it rather as the shade of an ancient, but extinct abomination; an historical ornament of the annals of human wickedness, rather than a living candidate for the abhorrence of all good men. The consequence is, our minds are occupied with other studies; we do not make ourselves familiar with the history, or go into the logic of Popery; and while the rapid increase of the great apostacy in our land is calling with startling accents on every Protestant Church, and some are disposed to think, even for the action of the political powers—an idea about which we do not feel called upon to express any opinion in this place; but, certainly, on every Protestant Church to rouse up for the conflict, to search out the ancient weapons of the saints, and to strike in time for the cross and crown of Christ—we are contenting ourselves with a single annual sermon on the issues involved; and some are disposed to regard even that as superfluous. This annual discourse is valuable if it serves no other purpose than to keep us advised of the existence of the Popish body in the midst of us. This is no novel announcement; it is only a reiteration of a fact known to all; yet the only reason why it does not startle us, is that we do not grasp all that is involved in the declaration; because we neither see nor feel the fulness of the evil thus presented to our notice.

From the time the student of European history begins to enter on the sixth century of her annals, his

attention begins to be absorbed by the character and influences of an organization in the form of a Church, seated in the great decaying capital of the West, and governed by the Bishop of Rome. From that time until he emerges from the horrors of the middle ages into the dawn of the sixteenth century and the full light of the nineteenth, three-fourths of the materials of the historic muse of Europe are furnished by that order. Nor in all the history of the world together is there to be found a narrative so terrible. No institution ever known among men has come down from the past draped in colours so full of the gloom and terror of hell itself. Gathering its original impulse from the natural hatred of the carnal heart to the truth of God, it has perfected a systematic perversion of the whole of that grand system, which was left to men as the charter of their salvation by the Redeemer of the world. In vain he died; in vain the grandest of all mysteries, the incarnation and death of God for man, was accomplished; in vain he poured the treasures of his Spirit upon the Apostles, in order to prepare the records of the truth and the standard of faith. His written records, dictated by the Holy Ghost, have been degraded from their rank as the tests of truth. His atonement, made in the heart and blood of his own unutterable and mysterious agony, has been set aside as the only foundation of human hope. The simple order of his visible kingdom has been polluted, broken up, utterly destroyed, and replaced by the ascending grades of a hierarchy, terminating in a sham divinity; who has usurped the very throne of the

Tears

Master himself in his earthly kingdom. Almost every glorious doctrine he taught for the illumination and comfort of this dying world has been deliberately perverted and put out; so far as Popish fury could do it, and in their place what have been substituted? Dogmas that unsettle the foundations of all civil and social purity, which pollute the soul and stain the morals of men, which shock the simplest and most elementary dictates of human reason even more than the most barbarous fetich of the most degraded heathen, which subject everything that is dear to man, his liberty of action, his property, the honour of his wife, and the safety of his children, his political and social relations; together with the everlasting welfare of his soul, all at once, by one consummate and audacious claim of priestly power, to the will of a priesthood marked in history by the bad pre-eminence of being the very worst class of men that ever went from earth to dispute the palm of wickedness with the demons of the abyss. Enthroned over whole nations, holding millions trembling at her frown, by the fear of perdition at her will, adorned by all arts; defended by genius and learning, drugged by her sorceries until the very first office of intellect has been utterly nullified; armed with a power and enriched with a wealth incomparably superior to the resources of all other ecclesiastical associations put together; wielding her authority with the precision of a machine, and all the authority of a God, this vast and complicated institution, unique in all history, unmatched in all the dreams of successful superstition and cruelty, *is in the midst of*

us, and is bending all her vast resources with resolute and consummate skill to the subjugation of this country; government, people, institutions of all descriptions, our doctrines of civil and religious liberty, all are embraced in her vast plot, and will perish in her success. The Popish Church is in the midst of us; no new, but for all that, a solemn and startling fact. It is a solemn thing to realize that the hoary and blood-stained superstition over whose follies we have so often wondered, over whose remorseless and wholesale slaughter of the saints of God we have so often shuddered—the author of the crusades of Montfort, the instigator of St. Bartholomew, the mother of the Inquisition, the responsible source of the murder of millions of men for their religious opinions, is no longer a distant historical terror with which we were never to encounter, but is in the midst of us, putting forth the most gigantic efforts to recruit here the enormous decays of her odious dominion in Europe, and already beginning to employ boldly the same language of bloody intolerance with which her dialect has always been familiar when she has dared to employ it.

It is even true: the Roman Catholic Church, disgraced as it is by the most odious and terrible peculiarities of opinion and practice—loaded with the burden of a past history the most infamous in all time, is still a living and controlling power on earth. To the shame and terror of the age be it spoken. Nor is she a power to be despised, as too many are apt to imagine. It is the most deceitful kind of reasoning, to infer from the intensity with which we perceive the gross and stupid

superstitions of Popery, that it need only to expound its own creed to the intelligence of the age, to receive an universal repudiation. Such logic makes no allowance for the deceitfulness of sin and the spiritual darkness of the carnal mind, which bears no relation to the mere natural strength or artificial development of the intellect. The numbers of able and sincere men who are utterly deluded by the most obvious and utter fooleries of Popery, should warn us not to rely merely or mainly on the force of mere rational sense for the restraint of the system. Nor does the logic allow duly for the influence of the natural forces which guard the gates of the hoary superstition. The Roman Catholic Church gathers all the powers that command human opinion for her ornament and defence. Her casuists are among the keenest on earth. Her rhetoric is often the growth of great and scholarly skill. Her learning is frequently of the highest and most finished order. She spares no pains for the equipment of her champions, however she may rejoice when she can keep the laity from indulging in the impertinence of thought. Her whole system, overwhelmed as it is by the most glaring absurdities and the most outrageous contradictions to the word of God, has been furnished with the subtlest and most complicated defences. Her polemical arsenal is furnished with the choicest dialectics of some of the keenest of human intellects, aided by the suggestions and improvements of successive generations of sophists. All these forces, backed by unbounded pecuniary resources, furnished with any amount of the material of war in the shape of libraries and presses,

constitute a combination of powers which every wise man, so far from regarding as unworthy of notice, must regard as demanding the most intense and powerful efforts which all Protestant Christendom can put forth in order to counteract it.

The grand visible result of the coming of Christ, was the organization of a Church for the extension of the gospel over all the earth. The objects of this organization are the holiest and the most benevolent that can possibly be conceived. They are the salvation of the soul, the reclamation of the wanderer, the pardon of the guilty, the sanctification of the ungodly, the amelioration of all temporal, the final extinction of all spiritual ills. All the powers and agencies of the organization, small and great, direct or remote, have been adapted to this end, and are fitted to accomplish it. The visible character and history of such an institute, provided it is kept conformed to its original model, must be in accordance with the end of its existence. If, therefore, there is any organization claiming to be this Church of Christ, it must display its conformity with the forms impressed upon his kingdom by the will of the Master. If there is an institute claiming to be the Church of God, marked in history by every conceivable enormity of opinion and practice, claiming powers inconsistent with the welfare of man in all his individual and associated relations, denying and endeavouring to destroy the doctrines of Christ, disregarding his explicit will in the order of his kingdom, waging war on the records dictated by the Holy Ghost for the preservation of the real system of Jesus of Nazareth,

exalting the power of the priesthood over all the interests of human life, her history black with every crime, and crimson with the blood of millions of the human race, her creed disfigured by the coarsest and most brutal superstitions—by the most barefaced and impious absurdities—if such facts are traceable in the history and existing character of any organization claiming to be a church, it would be a mockery of human reason, an outrage on the simplest dictates of common sense, even to admit such a pretension to be debatable. It is well known that the Church of Rome claims to be, not merely a part of the Church of Christ, but the only Church of Christ on earth. We design to test this claim by an examination of her past and present form as actually presented in society, compared with the model of the primitive system of Jesus of Nazareth, as laid down in the records of the Apostles. This test by the Scriptures is one which Rome has always repudiated; but it makes little difference whether she may like it or not; for those who understand the uses of the Bible as a revelation of truth, will ever consider it sufficiently intelligible to report on such an issue as this. To the law and the testimony then, as God commands, no matter whether Rome will allow the test to be appropriate or not. She shall come to it.

I. The Church of Christ was a visible organization of men, under a public seal of allegiance to Jesus Christ, by which they were bound to trust in his merits, to believe his teachings, to obey his will in all things, and to propagate the knowledge of his great

work for the redemption of the race. A government was established. A discipline, designed to promote the spiritual growth and the moral purity of its members; was appointed. Certain officers were appointed to discharge certain functions. Teachers were appointed to explain the doctrines, and enforce the precepts of the Master. Elders were ordained to rule, who did not minister in the word and doctrine. A great order of extraordinary officers was appointed, whose peculiar business was to bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus, to organize the Church, and prepare the records of the New Testament, under the dictates of the Holy Spirit, and whose office, limited by the very nature of its functions, to the individuals who held it, was to expire without succession at the termination of their natural lives. Deacons were appointed to manage all the temporal affairs of the Church. A series of officers, described under a variety of titles, as "prophets, miracles, gifts of healing, diversities of tongues, helps and governments," was set of God in the Church; some, as indicated by their titles, peculiar to the miraculous age of the accumulating testimony; and others, as defined by the same signs, identical with the permanent functions of teaching, government, and active benevolence vested in the organization of the people of Christ. In all this organization we see not one single trace of the improper distribution of power, or the aggrandizement of one part of it, at the expense of another. Both the official and private members are equally protected in their rights and relations of all kinds. The officers of the Church were vested only with a spiritual

and moral power in their offices, and in the incidental powers necessary to the discharge of them. These powers vested in the offices, could only be exercised under the call of the people, a condition which secures the full conditional liberties of the Christian commonwealth. Nor when exercised, were these powers permitted to advance beyond a mere declarative jurisdiction. The officers of the Church were vested with no power to employ temporal penalties or physical power of any sort in the discharge of their duties. If a member offended gravely enough to call for the exercise of discipline, he was either suspended or dismissed from his position and privileges as a member of the Church. But this was all. The Church did not dare pursue him beyond her own bounds, to inflict any physical or temporal penalty. All such retribution was reserved by Christ, solely in his own hands. A free commonwealth of believing men and their children organized into two classes of citizens, with different qualifications, rights and privileges severally annexed, under the jurisdiction of a free and effective government, variably adjusted to each of these classes of citizens, for the great purpose of seeking an increase of grace in its members, and extending the gospel wherever men were perishing for the lack of it—such was the original model of the Christian Church, as described by the Apostles. Let us see what is the organic governmental form of the Church of Rome.

The first peculiarity which strikes, even at a distance, as we approach this fearful assemblage of powers, is its close conjunction with the political and civil powers.

Christ distinctly ordered that his kingdom should not be of this world. Rome is governed by an ecclesiastical prince, who glories in the double character of an ecclesiastical and civil ruler; and in the teeth of the declaration of the Saviour just quoted, claims a divine grant of a temporal as well as of a spiritual sword.

The principles enunciated in the New Testament clearly demand the existence of the Church as an organized body, within the shadow, but apart from all connection with the civil powers, dependent for its maintenance on the free-will offerings of its own members; looking to no other source for support, and relying upon no exterior powers for the enforcement of its own decrees. Rome is never satisfied until she has effected a close conjunction between the Church and the State. As we come closer to the examination of her form, we perceive that the whole order of Christ's house has been systematically reversed. Instead of the offices ordained of him, a whole ascending and descending series of alterations have been made. The people have been extinguished, so far as their voice was made potential in ecclesiastical affairs. All power has been centred in the clergy. The office of the ruling presbyter has been extinguished; the functions of the deaconate have been changed; and a hierarchy, running through an ascending grade, and resting upon a descending grade of lower officials, many of both these grades notoriously created by human authority, has been substituted for the single order of co-equal presbyters appointed of God. To crown the whole, all the vast power of this transfigured institute is vested in the hands of a single man, sitting

on a throne, with a crown of an earthly prince on his head, and the symbolic keys of priestly power in his girdle, openly claiming to be in the place of the Great Master and Head of the Church himself, the admitted lord and ruler of the millions who bow under this enormous structure of hierarchical usurpation. There is not one solitary element of resemblance as a visible institute between the Church of the New Testament and the Church of Rome. We defy all the champions of Popery to take the records of the Apostles, and make out by the specification of particulars, the alleged identity. The truth is, with an audacity that is blasphemous, the ruling powers in the Papal community have gradually, but completely, extinguished every feature peculiar to the organization of the Church in its early existence. But this is not all, nor the worst. Not only have they altered the offices and seats of official power in this Church, but, what is of infinitely more consequence as going to the vitals of the whole question of salvation, they have completely changed *the nature and extent of these powers themselves*. Instead of claiming the mere moral and declarative power of controlling the relations of the individual with the visible Church, they claim *a direct and efficacious power* to control the relations of the individual to heaven itself, and for the power to admit him to the communion of the Church below; they claim the power to admit or exclude him from the kingdom above. They claim not merely power to admit to the ordinances of the Church, but to the efficacious grace of the Redeemer himself. They claim to determine not only his visible relations, but by a

most extraordinary and successful enterprise of priestly ambition, they have perverted this power into the power to determine his actual salvation—thus clearly invading the very office of the Deity himself. Nay, more than this; the conjunction of the ecclesiastical and civil powers which they claim to possess, or in their own phraseology, “the spiritual and temporal sword,” is no mere empty form. They claim to enforce ecclesiastical penalties by civil power, as a matter of *right*, and they do it as a *matter of fact* wherever they can.

The recent cases of imprisonment in Italy at once illustrate and cover the claim with indelible infamy. Instead of the simple and moral power originally given by Christ to the officers of his Church, to sunder the relations of the individual with the visible organization of his people, they claim to give weight and effectiveness to ecclesiastical censures, by the infliction of direct civil penalties, going to the destruction of liberty, property, and, in cases that count up by thousands, to death itself in the most appalling forms. In other words, the power by which the hierarchy of Rome domineers over the millions who crouch under their yoke, are the tremendous powers, directly claimed and unsparingly exercised, of the civil arm on the one part; the terrors of penance and the fear of perdition on the other.

The free commonwealth of Christ, an organization of his people for a few limited and specified ends, with offices charged only with limited and merely declaratory powers, and with the voice of the people potential over

the *exercise* of these, has been transmuted into an organized form of a cruel and remorseless tyranny of the worst class; the tyranny of a priestly order, its powers changed utterly in every element of the original grant, lodged wholly in the hands of the priests, while the vast masses of the people, diligently taught to regard the voice of the priest as the voice of God, and the Church as the actual fountain of efficacious grace, are ruled by the overwhelming convictions of the civil powers on one side, and eternal damnation on the other.

The whole history of this lost world has presented no social organization of men in a form so fearful, with its officers endued with such power, its masses so utterly enslaved, so cruelly besotted by the delusions and terrors of superstition, as is presented in this Popish Church. Well has it been termed the synagogue of Satan: it is a fair sample of what the diplomatic skill of the archfiend could accomplish, in the organization and arrangement of an ecclesiastical institute. We stand before the structure amazed and bewildered: our fundamental conceptions all confounded, to see what purports to be a Church, an institute for the spiritual welfare of men, instinct with the very spirit of Satan, even in the external form of its governmental structure, enthroning all power over the soul for time and eternity in the hands of a priestly class, its dark towers graven all over with inscriptions of blasphemy—with mottoes of cruel tyranny and bitter mockery of the weakness and superstition of man, its courts filled with abject and trembling worshippers, and the whole

draped in the mists of a dark and mystical religionism. We gaze, and as we gaze, we begin to comprehend something of that joy which the prophets say will echo over all the earth, and run up to fill heaven with delight, when the Apocalyptic woe shall be accomplished, and the cry, "Babylon is fallen," shall tell the universe of the final extinction of this enemy of all righteousness.

II. So much for the external structure—the governmental form of the Romish Church. But there are other elements of its visible character which we may compare with the order ordained of Christ in reference to these points. From the records we learn that Christ ordered, by his inspired Apostles, a simple and unadorned series of rites and ordinances of worship for the use of his Church. He repudiated the gorgeous and costly forms of the old dispensation. His kingdom, now to be thrown out of its symbolic forms, and extended beyond the limits of a single nation, was wisely accommodated to her new life, and the more aggressive law of her new existence. She was to be a missionary institute to the end of time, and she was put into marching order. She was encumbered by no stately forms, or ritualistic ceremonies. The people were ordered not to forget the assembling of themselves together on the one only day ordered to be set apart for the divine services. The Scriptures were to be read. Psalms and hymns were to be sung with the spirit and the understanding. Prayers were specially ordered to be offered up, in a language which all could understand. Baptism was to be administered by the

simple use of water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with no additional signs or elements of administration whatever. Bread and wine were to be offered to all communicants in the ordinance of the Supper. The doctrines of Christ were then to be publicly expounded to the people, and a collection taken up for ecclesiastical and charitable uses. This was the simple ceremonial of the early Church: this and nothing more. The whole order of the Church was so arranged as to accommodate itself to all nations, all customs, all classes, all conditions among men. Everything like ostentation in dress, in ceremony, in pomp of display, was rigidly excluded. Taking men as they were found, and human life in its ordinary existing phase, the Head of the Church only demanded the use of the simple rites and means of grace already detailed, without any concurrent change of dress, or formal preliminary preparations of any sort, either in minister or member, save the chastening of the soul into a mood of serious devotion, in accordance with the acts of the worship about to be performed. Simplicity was sought earnestly in the whole aspect of the Church, for the very purpose of preventing any obscuration of the intensely spiritual worship which was demanded of all the followers of Christ. In this equipment his Church went forth, strong in the power of her Lord, and the world trembled beneath her tread. Simple, fearless, full of love, full of power, armed only with the doctrines of grace, but animated with keen and high visions of her marvellous revelations to men, she strode over the earth, until it rang from Jerusalem to

the eastern and western seas with the thrilling account of the great salvation! The Church of Christ, in her early forms, is the simplest, yet most majestic figure that ever embodied the imaginative conceptions of the glorious and the beautiful, in an organized institution.

Let us turn from this picture to the Church of Rome: What do we behold? Instead of the simple and natural grandeur of the spouse of Christ, standing in the wilderness in the simple but majestic drapery in which her Lord had clothed her, we behold the harlot of Babylon, grand of limb and brazen of face, decked in purple and scarlet, gorgeous in gold and gems, her robes glittering with names of blasphemy, her hand armed with the golden cup of her sorceries, her face foul with cruelty and lust, riding forth drunk, on her mysterious and terrible beast—drunk not with wine, but with the blood of the saints. To pass from metaphor to statement; all the simplicity of the order of Christ has been utterly extinguished in the Papal Church, with the disastrous results upon the spirituality of religion which might have been expected. She has utterly refused to obey the orders of Christ in the arrangements of his house. His word is a sealed book in her assemblies. Prayers are offered up in an unknown tongue, in the teeth of an explicit prohibition. Neither bread nor wine is offered to the people in the sacrament. His praises are hymned in the mechanical sounds of instrumental music, and often in terms unintelligible to the people. Baptism is administered with water, oil, salt, and spittle, with the sign of the cross, and a variety of senseless observances,

which have turned the simple dignity of a Christian sacrament into the mummeries and grimace of a pagan rite. The gospel is not expounded to her assemblies. The whole aspect of the divine worship has been changed. What is worse, the *fundamental nature* of the worship has been changed; a change necessarily inducing visible changes of corresponding magnitude. The pulpit has been exchanged for the altar; and the whole function of the ministry has been changed; because, instead of proclaiming the one finished sacrifice of Christ, which of itself, according to the Holy Ghost, has made an end of sin and perfected them that are sanctified, a new sacrifice is offered every day. The officer, therefore, instead of being a mere expounder of the virtues of a sacrifice already complete, becomes a priest, to offer up the new sacrifices which have been found necessary to supplement the imperfect work of the Redeemer. In accordance with his assumed, priestly functions, he violates the simplicity of the divine services, despises the law prohibiting any departure from the customary forms of existing society in the dress of the worshippers, and appears in the decorated robes of a Jewish priest.

This, however, is only the beginning. A complete reversal of the order of Christ, gives room for the most gorgeous and complicated forms of ceremonial observance. All kinds of meretricious ornaments and influences are combined to dazzle the imagination and confound the senses. A thousand glittering and grotesque ceremonials confound the gazer. The genuflexions of priests, the ringing of bells, the curling of incense, the

thunder of organs, the pompous processions of stoled-clad functionaries, and the mummeries of a pantomime, which seeks to dazzle without instructing, fill up the hour of worship. Architecture has been greatly exalted among the agencies of grace. Paintings glare from the carved and groined walls, and aim to breathe the spirit of devotion into the worshipper, as well as to give him an object of worship. All that the most ingenious and splendid combinations of genius and taste, in music, in form, in colour, in the pomp of ceremony and the gorgeousness of vestments can do, is brought to the highest perfection in the worship of the Popish Church. Employing the best resources of successive generations of artists and zealots studious of effect, she has tested to the uttermost the efficacy of training men to the sentiments of religion through the imagination and the senses, instead of the conscience and the heart. As we listen to the overwhelming crashes of music, swelling in grand melody over the kneeling crowds in her decorated temples, amid the odours of oriental gums, and visions of richly ornamented priests parading in solemn pomp before the altar, we are able to understand why her influence is so powerful over those whose natural enmity to a spiritual religion can find so charming a substitute, in this sensuous worship, for the deep spirituality, and severe, heart-searching and humbling faith demanded by the true service of Christ.

No one can read the descriptions of the New Testament, or of the early ecclesiastical writers, concerning the worship of the Church of Christ, who will ever be able to discern one trace of resemblance between it

and the bloated ritualism of the Romish Church. In spite of the severe discouragement which Paul gave to the observance of "days, and months, and times, and years," she has crowded the calendar with days made holy merely by her own appointment. A thousand minute and superstitious corruptions have been foisted upon the services of the sanctuary. The affusion of holy water, the elevation of crosses, the baptism of bells, the illumination of candles, the blessing of animals, the consecration of relics, the uses of oil and salt, the sign of the cross, the genuflexions and the posture-making, all indicate the fearful fertility of her prodigal superstition. The violence done to the explicit will of Christ in the arrangements of his kingdom, by all this mass of superstitious foolery, is obvious and appalling. He is treated with contempt by those who claim, in the midst of their insolence, to be the only true Church he has upon earth.

But when we refer to the fact, that in ordering the extreme simplicity which characterizes the New Testament Church, the Master was guided by the deepest and most far-sighted reference to its effects upon the spirituality of religion and the welfare of his people; when moreover, we look to the effect of this Popish corruption of worship, in extinguishing the very knowledge of the nature of true religion, and sending its deluded millions into eternity, cheated of heaven by the fooleries of ritualism, we are able to see more of the infernal wickedness which is involved in the change, and we are ready to endorse all the stern and menacing metaphors in which the great apostacy is

described in the Bible. There is a fearful accuracy in the imagery of the 'Apocalyptic seer, quoted in our text—a harlot drunk on blood, the blood not only of bodies but of souls, riding in the pomp of blasphemy and royal wealth, to debauch a planet with her sorceries, and to become a joy to the universe, in the unutterable bitterness of her final damnation.

III. Having passed in review the *government* and *worship* of the Popish body, let us now dwell for a moment on the nature of *her creed*. In the examination of this creed we shall experience a most annoying perplexity, so long as we examine it as the creed of a Christian Church. The opposition between it and the doctrines of Christ, as reported by his Apostles, is so complete, the contradiction so palpable, that we are confounded by the incongruity between the actual creed, and the professed claims of the body which holds it. But as soon as we begin to examine it as the creed of Antichrist, the public articles of the synagogue of Satan, the difficulty vanishes, and we are able to comprehend how an institute, avowing allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth, could so completely, so boldly, with so racy a spirit of distilled malignity, contravene his will and contradict the whole system of faith which he came to inculcate. The Popish system is not a mere perversion of Christianity; it is a deliberate and fundamental contradiction of it, in all its parts, not only on fundamental, but even on minor points. Let us notice one or two of the principal articles of this creed of Antichrist.

Let us begin with the controlling principle, under

the operation of which she has succeeded in effecting all her other contradictions of the truth. We refer to the creed and practices of the Romish Church in relation to the *word of God*. When Christ left the world, he made ample provision for the exact statement and the pure transmission of the doctrines he taught, and the terms of his salvation. He ordered them to be committed to writing, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He was too wise to commit them solely to the memories of men, and the fluctuations of a traditional report. A record was indispensable as a standard by which all memories might be refreshed, and all disputes as to what was taught by Jesus of Nazareth, might be determined and settled. To say that such an expedient was impracticable, because it would need an interpreter to render the testimony of the silent record available, as is asserted in the fundamental proposition of the Popish theory, is at once to assert an absurdity in itself, and an insult to the Saviour who ordered the expedient to be adopted. It is to assert that it is impossible to make a written record intelligible, which is an obvious absurdity, and to make the Saviour a fool for adopting an expedient wholly impracticable for its ends.

To say that these records are intelligible, is no more than to say, that Christ did not trifle with mankind when he ordered them to be made. It is no more than to say, that the Saviour was not guilty of the intense absurdity charged upon him by the fundamental idea of the Popish creed on this point, of making a revelation which could not possibly reveal any thing.

The Scriptures themselves proclaim their own intelligibility. In all that is necessary to be known in order to salvation, a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. They are a light to the feet and a lamp to the path. Allowing for the intentional obscurities of prophecy, and the implied knowledge necessary to a full comprehension of some other parts of it—a knowledge attainable under the same conditions as all other human knowledge, and by no means demanding an infallible unction, a new inspiration of the Holy Ghost to furnish it—the Bible is even remarkable for the clearness and simplicity of its teachings. To make them unintelligible by the common order of human understandings, is to contradict their own testimony concerning themselves, and to charge folly on all the parties to the original composition of them. The Scriptures not only assert their own intelligibility, but their *authority and effective utility* as the standard of truth. "*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*"

But this is not all: the Scriptures not only assert their intelligibility and authority as a standard to *the Church*, as distinguished from *the people*, according to the Popish construction, but the grant of the Scriptures as embodied in the command of Christ to the Jewish people to *search the Scriptures*, is a grant to man as such, not specifically as a believer in Christ, still less as an *official member of the Church*. That command was given to the Jewish people, to the very enemies of

Christ, not to his own followers of any class specifically and exclusively.

Moreover, the Scriptures are placed in the series of the ordinary means of grace: they say they were written that men might believe, and believing, might have life through his name; and they are therefore the common heritage of all who are entitled to use the means of grace under a peculiar sanctity and weight of grant. Yet again, let it be noticed, that in the order to *search the Scriptures*, the use of them is not merely granted as a privilege which men may use as they please, or neglect as they choose, and which even as such alone, no party under heaven has the right to limit or condition on any terms whatever, but it is *enjoined as a command*. Therefore, and by an inexorable necessity of logic, any party seeking to interfere with the unlimited popular examination of the inspired records, becomes guilty on some of the most fearful counts ever chargeable upon a responsible agent. It is to nullify a plain and explicit order of the Son of God. It is to interfere, not only with the privileges he has granted, but with the duties he has enjoined. It is therefore not only a robbery of man, but it is *rebellion against God*. It is to tamper with the appointed means of grace, and to reach a sacrilegious hand into the treasury of redemption. It is a deliberate and public attempt to nullify the uses of the Scriptures, and prevent the very ends for which they were written.

Finally, the Scriptures testifying concerning their own completeness for all the ends of their composition,

denounce the most fearful woes on whoever shall either alter their testimony, add to, or diminish their inspired utterances. Now what has been the creed and practice of the Roman Catholic Church in relation to the Bible?

She has, in the first place, encountered the curse denounced against those who shall add to the Scriptures. She has added to the sacred canon whole books, which contain an internal testimony of resistless force against the supposition of their inspiration. She has broken up the employment of them as a means of grace, in the face of clear injunctions to the contrary. She has utterly abolished the popular use of the Scriptures, and claims the right to limit and condition all uses of them whatever. She has tampered with the sacred text, altered its utterances, and for the repentance, which is a fundamental condition of salvation, she has substituted another action wholly different in nature. For a mental and spiritual process, without which Christ has pronounced that all shall perish, she has substituted *penance*, in all its forms a mere modification of *pain*, either of the mind or the body. Moreover, with an audacity which is as insulting to the word of God and its infinite Author, as it is dangerous to all the high interests of man for time and eternity, she claims a divine right to determine the meaning of Scripture; to interpret, authoritatively, the natural and revealed law of God; and to demand, under penalty of the civil arm in time, and perdition in eternity, that all her decisions shall be received as ultimate and conclusive. By this means all uses of

the Bible as a test of truth have been annihilated. It is a principle which for ever prevents any detection of her errors from the word of God.

It is impossible, then, to test whether the creed and practices of the Popish Church are agreeable to the mind of God or not, since we are only to receive the testimony of God in his word, through her mouth. It is clear, that if we are to receive nothing from the Bible, but as she reports it, we can never know anything as to what it does say, except what she pleases to tell us. We had as well then leave the Bible alone, in spite of the command to search it, and go at once, and only, to the Church, for the truth of God. This claim involves the entire change of the teaching character of the Christian ministry, and instead of a mere teaching function, a capacity to instruct by reasoning out of the Scriptures, it becomes a power to determine authoritatively, to decide the meaning of the word of God, under penalties annexed. Moreover, and it is one of the most fearful results of the claim in question, this claim to interpret authoritatively the meaning of God is a principle by which all the interests of human life, every act of man, secular or religious, is brought directly under the control of the clergy; a control enforced by the tremendous sanctions of religion. It is obvious that the right to determine authoritatively the law of God, brings under the control of the deciding power, all that comes under the jurisdiction of that law.

Now, as the law of God extends over all possible action, it follows that the right to determine the law

gives a power to control the actions of man, under all the relations and circumstances of life. Everything which admits of the distinction between right and wrong, is thus subjected to the orders of the Church, and the entire liberties and rights of the race of man are prostrated beneath her feet. This is the principle by which Rome holds the millions of her vassals subject to her will. Human ambition never before discovered a principle by which the whole of human life could be subjected to the control of a class, under the awful sanctions of religion. From this claim has sprung the merciless war of Popery upon the word of God, and all who have honestly sought to obey Christ in searching it. Claiming the right to declare their meaning, every attempt to examine the records, to see if they are truly reported, is at once encountered as rebellion, and visited remorselessly with all the penalties in her power to inflict. From this claim has sprung her war upon the Bible itself—a war waged with unsparing ferocity. It has been denounced, proscribed, hunted with armed police, as the deadliest of agencies, and treated as if it was the utterance of hell, instead of the dictates of the Holy Ghost. These two witnesses for God, the Old and New Testament, have been slain over and over again; so far as Popish fury could do it. Indeed, the recorded utterances of this horrid structure of blasphemy and tyranny against the word of God, her denunciations of all popular uses of it, her open violence against all efforts to circulate it, her palpable contempt of the will of Christ in regard to the use of it, and the high rank she has given it in

her list of prohibited books, are absolutely inexplicable as the acts of the Church of Christ. His kingdom could not wage such a war upon its own fundamental law, the word of its Head, the dictates of the Holy Ghost. Consider it, however, as the action of the Synagogue of Satan, and all is plain.

That Christ did not commit a power over his word so destructive of the ends for which it was written, and so ruinous in its effects over the whole compass of human life, to the hands of the officers of his Church, is perfectly clear from the pages of the revelation of his will. He proclaims his word, the law and the testimony. He orders all men to examine it under direct responsibility to him, and to him alone. He warns them against wresting the Scriptures to suit the complexion of their own prejudices, and against handling the word of God deceitfully. He commends, by the Holy Ghost, the honest use of the written word, to test even the teachings of the Apostles, as in the case of the saints of Berea. Nor is it conceivable why the teachers of Rome should flinch from a test admitted by the Apostles, unless from the consciousness that the obvious testimony of the Scriptures would condemn their doctrine. Such is the treatment of this monstrous organization of priestly imposition and knavish craft towards the *word of God*. Judge for yourselves, whether this is the conduct of a Church of Christ, or of the *Man of sin*.

But again, this audacious claim of putting her own meaning on the terms of the Scriptures has not been a mere empty assertion of power in the Church of

Rome. It has been put into use with the most disastrous results upon fundamental doctrines of the faith of Christ. She has assailed under cover of it, the fundamental idea of all true religion, the exclusive right of Deity to religious worship, and has introduced a thorough system of the grossest idolatry into the bosom of Christendom. To cover up this audacious wickedness and to indicate her distinct consciousness of the criminality involved in her conduct, she has tampered with the very law of God, altered the terms, and transposed the arrangement which God had engraven on the tables of stone, and that too, for the very purpose of obscuring the startling testimony of the law against her enormities. Her votaries bow in religious veneration before relics and garments. Her churches are crowded with images and pictures, before which, her worshippers kneel, under the very same apprehension of the action under which the ancient Greek bowed to the statue of Apollo, and the Hindoo prostrates himself before the image of Brahma. Prayers are offered to saints and angels. The mother of Jesus has been exalted even above the Son of God, in the practical homage of Popish devotees. In fact, so desperate has become this peculiar manifestation of Romish idolatry, that Mary is in fact the goddess of the community, and receives an immense proportion of the prayers of the people. The wafer of the eucharist is solemnly adored with the highest acts of religious veneration. The whole aspect of the Roman Catholic Church is covered with the ensigns of her idolatrous superstition,

the broad signatures of the fundamental nature of her departures from the truth.

In vain the law of God has defined the only object of worship: in vain it has forbidden the worship of the true God, through the symbolism of images: in vain the word of God has denounced the sin of idolatry with the most distinct and appalling warnings: in vain the records of the religion of Christ proclaim the abolition of idolatry, and all false modes of religious worship—one of the great cardinal ends of the incarnation of the Son of God. The Roman Catholic Church claiming the right to interpret these records authoritatively and by the Holy Ghost, denies their testimony, garbles and divides the very law of God, to hide the traces of her guilt; and in the phrensy of her judicial blindness, covered all over as she is, with the manifest symbols of her utter apostacy, proclaims herself the only Church of God on earth. It is vain for her to argue a distinction in the nature of the worship: the subtlety is unfounded. The law proclaims, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* When John fell down before the angel in Patmos, he was not excused on the ground of his not offering the kind of worship to which the bright messenger of God was entitled; he was sternly rebuked for offering any worship at all, and was ordered to worship God only. To say that prayers offered to the saints are identical, in their fundamental nature, however different in expression, with a request from one friend to another, for an interest in his prayers, is rank trifling with the

common sense of mankind. Who ever dreamed of considering such a request an act of worship toward the one receiving it? Yet what Catholic ever considered prayers offered to the saints as anything *but* an act of worship? The use of this plea is valuable, because it serves to illustrate the true nature of the homage rendered to the saints, and to confound the distinction in the nature of the worship, on which Rome relies for her defence against the charge of idolatry.

It is notorious that the homage rendered is designed as religious homage. To make it anything else would confound the very purpose for which it is rendered at all. The aim of prayer to the saints and the virgin is identical with the aim of prayer to the Divinity. Admitting hypothetically that there is, *conceivable* at least, a difference in the *degree* of the worship, however difficult it might be found to embody that difference practically in devotion, there is, certainly no difference in fact in the nature of the worship itself. In both cases its fundamental nature, the essence of the act, is that of religious veneration. To say that the difference in the *objects* of worship constitutes an essential difference in the *nature* of the worship, would make idolatry not only harmless, but impossible; it would, according to this logic, be impossible, in the nature of the case, to render divine honours to any but Divinity. The very essence of idolatry is in giving to the creature, not merely the feelings and affections, but the acts and symbols of their expression, which are due to God alone. The law forbids men to *bow down* before, not less than to *serve*, the prohibited symbols of worship.

Admitting then the distinction in the nature of the service which the Papists maintain, they are still convicted of a breach of the law, *in bowing down* before the ensigns of a false devotion. The whole Scripture is vocal with the condemnation of the *forms* as well as of the *essence* of idolatry. In spite of all the laborious metaphysical trifling with which the casuists of Rome endeavour to defend her idolatrous practices, the plain obstinate fact, as a practical development of Popish piety, is beyond all relief from the most eager and artistic efforts of the sophists. Her worship in an immense variety of forms is redolent of the foulest taints of this fundamental departure from the truth of God. If the Church of Christ is an idolatrous body, then is Rome a Christian Church. If universal and confirmed idolatry be a proof of the contrary, then is Rome proved to be no part of the Church of Christ.

Once more: one of the most overwhelming proofs of the apostacy of Rome, is her distinct repudiation of the very foundation-stone of the Christian system, and her introduction of another gospel, by an absolute perversion of the doctrine of justification by faith in the merits and mediation of Christ alone. This is a fundamental point. Any mistake here is necessarily fatal. The inquiry relates to the way of salvation, and if we miss it, all is lost. The guilt involved in any misdirection of the way, or in any deliberate falsification of Bible declarations on the subject, is the guilt of murdering the soul. The loss involved in any misconception of the way, is the loss of the soul for ever. The very essence of the gospel is, that it presents Christ

himself, in his own person, as a Saviour for individual men, and his righteousness as the completed ground of pardon and acceptance, which needs not to be supplemented by aught in man himself. *We are complete in him*, is the declaration of his word. Faith is merely the instrument by which we accept it, and the whole communication of grace, to perform the conditions of the gospel, is a free and gratuitous gift.

The declarations of Scripture in relation to this great ground of reliance, are full of clear and startling emphasis to all who tamper with this foundation doctrine of the Christian faith. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, Jesus Christ." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "The just shall live by faith." "By the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified." "There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." "I will make mention of thy righteousness, and of thine only." Indeed, the most overwhelming conception of the whole system of Christianity is the incarnation and death of God for the sins of the world. It is the mystery of the universe—the most remarkable of all events. The cross is the object upon which the glorified spirits of the just will gaze backward with an ever freshening interest. No emotions but those of reverence, penitence, faith, and gratitude unutterable, can be suitable on the part of man, to the contemplation of the fact. It is the part of a devil, the part of a most audacious and intrepid devil, to endeavour to nullify the ends of such a sacrifice, and render it inef-

fectual. Go stand by the cross, behold the troubled agony of the princely face, the death-like pallor, the spots of blood, the writhing of the wasted but noble frame; estimate the sorrows of that unutterable strife, remember who is the sufferer, and the purpose for which he suffers, and then estimate the guilt of an attempt to nullify utterly the uses of that sacrifice, and to extinguish the glorious hopes of human redemption which spring from the offering. It is a fearful thing to endeavour to counteract the benevolent aims and purposes of God; but to counteract what he dies to accomplish, how can its guilt be estimated! Yet this is what the Church of Rome has done. She has cursed the doctrine that we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the merits of his Son. She denies that the merits of that great sacrifice are the only grounds of reliance for the soul of man. She has degraded it by allowing other merits to be valuable to supplement it, or to be important, or necessary to obtaining the benefits of the great atonement. Refusing to allow the grace of the gospel, the free participation of all who will accept it, in the benefits of the atonement, she has suspended the application of them on a series of conditions and preliminary acts or merits, which has wholly changed the grace of God, in its freeness and tenderness, and, in point of fact, has made the atonement subordinate in importance to the preliminary conditions and sub-satisfactions, on which she has presumed to suspend its efficacy. She proclaims, in the teeth of the explicit declarations of Paul, that human works are necessary, not merely in

some parts of the plan of his salvation, and for the accomplishment of certain ends, but to the specific purpose of his justification. She proclaims that the merits of saints are reliable grounds of confidence in suing for the favour of God. In fact, the virgin Mary is infinitely more relied upon than Christ, in the bosom of the Papacy. His late Holiness, Pope Gregory, "of pious memory," did not hesitate to say in his Encyclical Letter, dated August 15th, 1832, that she was "*his chief confidence*," "*his only ground of hope*"—a distinct and articulate abandonment of all trust in Christ, uttered by the alleged infallible head of the Romish communion, in reference to his personal salvation. How startling is the enunciation of the Scriptures, "Other foundation can man no lay, than that is laid, Jesus Christ," when brought into conjunction with such a declaration as that of his Holiness! It is admitted that the Holy Ghost speaks in the declaration of Scripture, just quoted: can it be supposed the same infinite Agent would contradict himself speaking through the Pope? This is a fair sample of the practical aspect assumed by these awful perversions of the gospel, in the experimental reliances of the victims of the delusion. If the head of the Church is found resting on so obvious a rejection of the gospel foundation, what can be expected of the members at large? Here is one of the most fearful charges against the Church of Rome, that she has corrupted the very fountain of hope, obscured and degraded the great sacrifice of Christ, evacuated it of its practical importance by suspending its efficacy on a series of prelimi-

nary conditions and minor satisfactions, silenced the glorious music of the free grace of God, and by her tampering has left her whole company of followers a prey to the very spirit of bondage to the law which Christ came to extinguish in the joy of a gratuitous justification.

In like manner she has destroyed the doctrine of regeneration. She has perverted baptism, a mere symbol of a change of state in the public and visible relations of an individual to the visible Church, into an instrument efficacious in itself, and has put it in the place of the glorious and unutterable mystery of the grace of the Holy Spirit. She has deliberately added to the number of the sacraments, as well as perverted the nature and form of those appointed of Christ. She has deliberately repudiated all regard to the voice of the Holy Ghost in relation to the marriage of the clergy, and in so doing, with a blindness only to be explained as the judicial infliction of God, has by her own act engraved upon her creed the admitted symbol of Antichrist. In this act of open violence to the explicit order of the Apostle, *Let the Bishop be the husband of one wife*, they have insulted God, the original author of the relation, and what is most astonishing, degraded an admitted sacrament of their own religion, by pronouncing marriage inconsistent with ministerial purity.

She has also boldly assumed another admitted symbol of antichristian tyranny, in the authoritative prohibition of the use of meats on regular weekly and yearly occasions. But the crowning act of her folly

and crime, the dark, consummate fruit of ages of judicial blindness and abandoned wickedness, the overwhelming evidence of her utter apostacy and consignment to the judicial curse of sounding every depth of depravity and folly, is the formal enunciation of the doctrine of transubstantiation by the infallible authorities, and the anathema of all who refuse to believe it.

In discussing this point we are utterly perplexed: the uses of discussion seem to be completely confounded, by a call to test the credibility of a statement which shocks the elementary dictates of human intellect, to an extent which seems to render a more complete exposition or proof of its falsehood not only impossible, but inconceivable: The religious history of mankind has afforded some of the most astonishing problems for the investigation of the mental philosopher. The utter degradation, the infatuation of common sense, the profound stupefaction of intellects, often of high capacity, involved in the adoption of their objects, modes, and articles of religious worship and opinion, are absolutely amazing. How a rational mind could be brought to render religious homage to stocks, stones, cats, dogs, reptiles, and beasts of the field, is well nigh inexplicable. Yet the most absurd and atrocious fetish of the barbarians of interior Africa, the wildest foolery of old Egyptian reverence for their divine lizards and monkeys, the most degrading heathen superstition of all ages, ancient or modern, are absolutely respectable alongside the tremendous climax of blasphemy, absurdity, and intolerable wickedness involved in the Roman Catholic dogma of transubstan-

tiation—the doctrine of the mass. The creed asserts that when the words of consecration are pronounced by the priest over the little wafer, which has been substituted for the bread ordered by Christ, to be employed in the sacrament, it is actually transmuted into the literal body, blood, bones, soul, and divinity of Christ. It makes no odds that the wafer appears the same to every sense, and to the profoundest chemical analysis, after the consecration, as before it; for according to their exposition, the *accidents* remain, though the substance has been changed. It makes no difference that the alleged change is an absolute and ludicrous impossibility—a chimera wilder than the wildest that ever danced in the brain of a maniac, yelling at a midnight moon, through the bars of Bedlam. It is vain it involves that greatest of all conceivable contradictions in terms, the creation of millions of Jehovahs by his own act. It is vain the whole gospel idea of sacrifice and atonement is not merely perverted, but denied by it. It makes no difference that no conceivable effect could be exerted on the moral relations and character of a sinner, by a physical mastication of the body and divinity of Christ, even admitting such a blasphemous absurdity to be possible.

The superstitious folly and the utter judicial abandonment of Rome, must be made so awfully conspicuous, that no eyes but those sealed themselves by the judgment of God, could ever fail to see it and tremble. Thus abandoned of God, she has decreed an act of cannibalism according to her own theory, on the body of

her insulted Lord, and pronounced it essential to salvation! She has asserted by a formal infallible decree, binding her over to the infernal foolery for ever, that the consecration of the wafer changes it into a literal Christ, and that each one who receives the host, takes his Maker into his mouth, melts him on his tongue, eats him up, and receives him into his stomach! It is almost blasphemous even to describe it. Is it not almost incredible that any human being above the rank of an idiot, could accept such a belief? Prove formally such an idea to be false! The very statement of it is its refutation to any mind not already, by the judgment of God, incapable of seeing the reasons that prove it.

Who is not ready to credit the strongest assertions of the Scriptures, as to the blindness and depravity of man, when he sees American citizens, men of talent and education, men of integrity and refinement often, who walk our streets and mingle with us in society, accept an article of religious faith, which degrades them below the lowest devotee of the African Obeah? Yet this is the grand doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass, on which Rome conditions the salvation of all the saved—her substitute for the glorious mystery of the blood of Christ. This caps the climax, to render the belief of such a doctrine a condition of salvation. In the name of reason, and in the name of God, we earnestly inquire what ought to be thought by rational men, of a body which incorporates such an article into its creed, and requires the acceptance of it on pain of perdition? Can it be a Church of God? Can it be

anything but the Synagogue of Satan, and even as such, suffering under the malicious spleen of its master, who, disgusted with the intense abominations of his own favourite institution, has determined to amuse his infernal malice, by showing into what fantastic horrible depths of mingled wickedness and stupidity he is able to conduct it.

Such is the creed of Rome, a creed in fit keeping as a perversion and contradiction of the doctrines of Christ, with the open contempt of his authority, which appears in every portion of her structure and worship. Is the church which holds such a creed, a Church of Christ?

IV. Let us notice briefly, and in the last place, the moral character, the practical development of this awful organization. Her history is marked with moral characteristics answerable to the nature of her other peculiarities. Not to speak of the interests of morality for the present, we remark in the progress of our examination into the actual development of Popery, that genuine piety is extremely rare among the vast masses of Popish worshippers. Indeed the very knowledge, the theoretical conception of the nature of genuine religion has been wholly banished from the body as a popular idea, and if it is found at all, it is only found in rare instances, in men peculiarly situated in their circumstances of life. Here and there, in the sovereignty of his mercy, God has found one of his chosen, and in spite of over-clustering habits of superstition, incomplete knowledge and popish compliances, has led him to the knowledge of the saving truth, and thus redeemed him;

In such men as Fenelon and Pascal, if we conceive their characters aright, we delight to recognize the true marks of a genuine devotion. We would fain indulge the hope too, which some circumstances seem to justify, that silently by the wonderful grace of God, many amid the glooms of monastic life, have been led to the one fundamental truth in the blood of Christ. But such cases are rare, absolutely and relatively. The general character of the Popish body, and just in proportion as it has been tinctured more strongly with the true spirit of the system, has been distinguished for anything else than elevation and purity of morals. The influences of the system are all unfavourable to the development of real vigour and purity of practical righteousness. The intense and incessant superstitions, the reliance on forms, the submission to the priesthood, the absence of the gospel, the use of a dead language in public worship, must necessarily produce a peculiar modification of character, a servility, a want of definite moral convictions, a deficient perception of the dignity of moral law, and a want of activity in obeying it. Her doctrine of *indulgence* strikes directly and with a heavy stroke at the interests of morality. Her doctrine of clerical celibacy, the insufferable doctrine and practices of the confessional, the multiplication of nunneries and monasteries, have historically, and by the nature of the case, must continue to render the inside life of the Roman Catholic Church an outrage upon morality, of the worst description. Time and again in the progress of ages, her corruption has become so universal and intense as to

truth

awaken an indignant outcry, even among some of her own vassals. It is also notorious that no amount of immorality does of itself, and when not accompanied with a refusal to render the usual recognition of her authority, in attending the confessional and mass, provoke an excommunication from her bosom. No such qualifications of character as are required for communion by Protestant Churches, are demanded by her. Because a man is a scoundrel, she thinks that is no reason why he should cease to be a Catholic. The crowds of swearing, drunken ruffians, that haunt our public works, are regular and honourable members of this respectable institute, and in full attendance upon her ordinances.

But independent of such disregard to the moral conduct of her members, a contempt of propriety which would irretrievably damage the reputation of any Protestant Church; the moral character of the Roman Church is chargeable with stains of infinitely graver and more fearful pollution. She is chargeable with blood. She is chargeable with it to an extent which surpasses in its infinite horrors all the evil ever chargeable in history upon any mere social organization of men, and ranks alongside the huge chronicles of slaughter chargeable upon national organizations of men in their public wars. The practical exertion of her claim to coerce with the sword all dissentients from her creed, has covered this infernal enemy of the saints of God with the crimson signs of her utter apostasy. Compare the history of Rome with the orders and teachings of Christ about the propagation of his

gospel. He ordered his gospel to be *offered* to men, not to be *forced* on them. He deliberately proclaimed that his kingdom was not of this world, and consequently not to be maintained or propagated by the arms which support the political organizations of this world. When Peter drew the sword in his defence, when betrayed in the garden, he repudiated the weapon, and rebuked his follower. The whole system of the gospel is opposed, by the very law of its existence, to violence as an instrument of its propagation.

But how is it with Rome? She boldly asserts she has been invested with two swords, the spiritual and the temporal, for the extension of the gospel, and she has employed both with unsparing ferocity. Hence her fatal history. Hence she is steeped to the lips with the blood of the slain. Hence the fearful metaphor of the Scriptures, descriptive of her persecuting character—the harlot drunk with blood. In full conformity with this detestable maxim she has pursued all dissentients from her creed, wherever she has had the power, with remorseless cruelty. In order to glut her fury whenever she will, she claims the power to dispense with all oaths, to violate her own pledges, and release others from theirs; and, as a matter of fact, has been a party to high acts of public perjury, in order to commit murder in the name of God. Time after time have wars been waged at her bidding to exterminate whole races of heretics. She organized an Inquisition, a compact and disciplined institution, for the very purpose of extirpating heresy by fire and steel; and, in the dungeons of that body, the most

infernal troop of incarnate devils the world ever witnessed, the human intellect was strained until invention was exhausted, to multiply the number and increase the power of the methods by which anguish and death could be inflicted on the body of man. No report can ever come in full from the secret dungeons of Rome until the judgment day. Then hell itself will tremble for her laurel of wickedness.

It has been said, that all the tragic representations of the stage, even of the most sublime and pathetic character, fall infinitely short of the grand expressions of human grief which charmed the vision of the Roman inquisitors, with more than tragic terror, in their midnight rehearsals of heresy and vengeance. The fates of Huss and Jerome, the scattered ashes of Wickliffe, the bloody rocks of Piedmont, the unutterable wail of Bartholomew's, the songs of praise which rose and swelled far in the solitudes of the wilderness, whither she had chased the saints of God; the grand story of the heroic faith and unquenchable zeal of the flock of Christ, amid all her fierce and pitiless persecutions, all attest the fearful responsibilities of the Church of Rome. There is no estimating the numbers for whose death, and sufferings worse than death, she is responsible. Her victims are estimated by millions: no figure of rhetoric, but a fearful fact.

The Church of Rome is responsible for her whole past history in a sense in which no other body of men is responsible for the acts of their predecessors. Her claim to infallibility, her articulate enunciation in her public documents, of the power of the sword, her

boasted claim of intense unity in all times and places, constitute this responsibility. She has never repudiated these acts of the past; still less has she ever renounced the power of a temporal sword, from which her dreadful history has sprung. Nor will this spirit change. Repeated instances within a few years, and even a few months past, indicate, with a clearness which no sophistry can perplex, that the persecuting spirit of Rome is as fierce and relentless as ever.

Our own happy land now shelters in her ample bosom a band of exiles driven from their native island by the fury of Popish vengeance. The case of the Madias has gone abroad to the ends of the earth. Within twelve months the name of Domenico Cecchetti has been added to the noble army of the martyrs and confessors of Jesus: imprisoned first, and by the courtesy of a foreigner, relieved from prison by an expulsion from his country, for the enormous crime of reading the Bible. The case of the noble Prussian Christians, who for the truth of God have been shut up for twenty years, and are to-day gazing on the stone walls of a Popish madhouse, is a living testimonial that the temperature of Popish fury has not lost one iota of its hellish heat. This is the *moral* history of the Roman Catholic Church. Here in the midst of us, and already beginning to employ the natural dialect of her persecuting spirit, stands the vast and consolidated form of the institution, which is responsible before God and man for such antecedents. Disfigured in every feature, debauched in every practice, abominable beyond estimate for the mingled atrocity and foolery

of her creed, cursed with a history of a thousand years; black with more crime than ever before or since has been chargeable upon any class or condition among men; the embodiment of Antichrist challenges your suffrages, whether she is *the Church of God*! The great harlot in her golden and scarlet array, with *Mystery, Babylon, The Mother of Harlots*, graven upon her shameless brow, rides before us, and requires you to assent, under penalty of perdition, that she is the pure and unbloody spouse of the gentle and immaculate Jesus.

Such are the main features of the Roman Catholic Church, in her *structure, worship, creed and morals*. It is a fundamental contradiction on all these points, to the explicit will of Christ, and the model of the Church as described by the Apostles. It requires no great sagacity to see that the freedom taken with the will of Christ, indicates clearly that his authority is not the ruling law of this institution. It is the property of another king and obeys none but its master. To call it a *Church of Christ* is a mockery of reason, and an insult to Heaven.

We suppose it is no uncommon feeling attendant upon the consideration of the awful abominations of Popery, that there is a great lack of just sensibility to their magnitude and malignity. All these evils appear so natural to Popery, so much a matter of course, so accordant with its whole past history, that we actually do not feel the real enormity involved in the existing aspect and the recent acts of this unchanging enemy of the truth. In fact there is too much disposition

frequently displayed to shift off a deep sense of its evils, to speak with a tone of apology for its errors, to deprecate strong feelings and strong expressions of abhorrence of it, and some even go so far as to admit her claims as a Church of God. To test the rationality of these views of the Roman Catholic Church, let us suppose her myriad abominations to be distributed among the different branches of the Protestant Church and other merely social organizations of men. Suppose the Methodist Church had a foreign prince at the head of it, and a creed which claimed a power of the sword in the suppression of heresy. Suppose that the Episcopal Church had become idolatrous, and had by public acts tampered with the ten commandments in order to conceal it. Would any one say that a strong feeling of indignation unsparingly expressed was improper? Suppose a masonic organization, charged with a history like the history of Popish persecutions, claiming a power to judge and condemn by civil penalties, all dissentients from masonic principles; and actually guilty of waging wars of extermination, actually responsible for creating within its ancient seats of mystery and solemn counsel, an institution like the Inquisition. Would public abhorrence be an injustice? Suppose the Presbyterian Church had lately imprisoned one of its members and finally expelled him from the commonwealth of Virginia for reading the Bible. Could any man in his senses complain that the universal burst of ungovernable indignation which would rock the nation to its centre, would be altogether censurable, the mere spleen of a rival party? Why, then, should

Rome be permitted to commit such acts, without being held accountable to a just public condemnation?

Suppose our venerable Church should be chargeable with such open contempt of the will of Christ, on so many and such fundamental points, as we have just proved upon Rome, with altering the whole order of the ministry, refusing bread and wine in the sacrament, taking the Scriptures from the people, corrupting the whole worship and doctrine of Christ, and announcing a dogma so unutterably abandoned in every element of folly and wickedness as the dogma of the mass, would the language of respect and tender veneration be justly used in our allusions to her? Why, then, should Rome be allowed to concentrate on herself an unbroken mass of abominations, which, if divided among ten distinct organizations, would curse them all with an indelible infamy, and yet receive no language of indignant denunciation? Why should all such delineations of her true character be set down as the mere ebullitions of sectarian spleen? We abhor such a miserable spirit of polite indifference to truth and righteousness. It is wrong to gaze with an unmoved soul on the universal overthrow of all the fundamental interests of human life, the destruction of the gospel of God, the utter corruption of the Church, and the enthronement of the most fearful combination of superstition and tyranny over all the life of man. For ourselves, we can see no rationality in having less sensibility to the evils of a system, just because they are overwhelmingly great in numbers and importance. Just as long as Rome remains what she

is, she deserves and will receive the indignant abhorrence of all honest men, who are capable of judging an apostacy in religion with candour and accuracy.

We have no apologies to make for denouncing her unsparingly. When we estimate the character of the Popish system, and see the fundamental and unalterable nature of its evils, we see that reform is impossible, its destruction at once desirable, and ultimately inevitable. Hence we are ready to join in the acclamations which will greet the final downfall of Antichrist. Firm as she may appear to stand, and boastful as she is of immortal vigour, she shall perish by the breath of Christ, and be consumed in the brightness of his coming. The Scriptures seem to intimate that the destruction of Rome will occur amid some remarkable and terrible displays of the divine power; and as she thunders with unspeakable ruin into the abyss, under the armed foot of God, the wail of her damned legions will be swallowed up in the resounding joy of all heaven and earth, together repeating, amid song and shout, the cry of the clients and merchants of the doomed city, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen!* Even so may it be.

THE END.