

ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



THE
BISHOP OF CREMONA

1/2 m
7-1



ST. BASIL'S SEMINARY
TORONTO, CANADA

LIBRARY

GIFT OF

ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE

TRANSFERRED



Rev. F. J. Morrissey





ON RELIGIOUS
WORSHIP





MGR BONOMELLI, BISHOP OF CREMONA

On Religious Worship

& Some Defects in Popular Devotions

By
MGR BONOMELLI
BISHOP *of* CREMONA

With a Letter to the English Translator
with
R. Egerton

BURNS AND OATES
28 ORCHARD STREET
LONDON W

1907

First Impression 1906
Second Impression 1907

All Rights Reserved

THE CONTENTS

<i>A Letter to the Translator from Bishop Bonomelli</i>	p. 1
<i>A Bishop and his Flock</i>	7
<i>The Rational Side of Religion</i>	13
<i>The Interior Worship</i>	21
<i>Interior and Exterior Worship</i>	37
<i>Defects and Abuses of Popular Devotions</i>	83

A LETTER TO THE TRANSLA-
TOR FROM BISHOP BONO-
MELLI

A Letter to the Translator from the Bishop of Cremona

CREMONA, June 18, 1906.

DEAR —, I have to thank you for the honour you pay me in translating into English my Pastoral, *Il Culto Religioso, Defetti e Abusi*, but still more for the pleasure I have in thinking that some of my words may be of use to our brethren in England who are Protestants.

The English are travellers *par excellence*, and every year we see them by hundreds in our country, visiting our cities, our monuments both civil and religious, and studying our customs, our life, our religion. As regards our religion, doubtless they cannot but admire the magnificence of our churches and the splendour of the Catholic worship, which is at one and the same time the expression of, and stimulus to, Christian feeling.

But I know that they also observe with wonder and something of scandal certain

4 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

defects and abuses, chiefly in the southern parts of Italy, where, only too often, the most ignorant superstitions are to be found.

I do not imagine that serious, intelligent English Protestants cannot distinguish clearly between the divine unalterable element in the Church and her teachings, and that which is human and frail in practice; nor do I imagine that they do not perceive that an institution depending upon and existing among men is destined, by the very nature of things, to acquire with the course of time certain excrescences, which, though not affecting its actual substance, alter and occasionally disfigure its aspects. This, I repeat, cannot escape the notice of the English Protestants who travel in Catholic countries. But it is only right that they should know that we also see and condemn exaggerations, abuses, littlenesses and superstitions; and, if need be, know how to face unpopularity by speaking out freely and with severity.

Yes. Abuses and defects *do* exist, but they are only *tolerated*, not approved, by the Church.

They are tolerated from a wise sense of

prudence which (so long as the substance of things remains untouched) does not insist upon running counter to the inveterate habits of a people, habits that sometimes take their root in the very nature of the people themselves or in their almost invincible ignorance. To strike at certain abuses and defects would be simply to cause scandal and even create rebellion—in other words, to destroy one evil only to create a greater one.

Tolerate. This is the word of the Church. This she has ever done, even in the past, as far as it was possible.

Tolerate and teach. Only by the slow work of religious instruction will it become possible to correct, readjust and destroy what is excessive, wrong, senseless and puerile in certain forms of the popular devotions. But the *doctrine* of the Church, let us own, is reasonable, beautiful and noble; and I think, if it is represented to them as I now represent it, cannot prove displeasing even to our brethren who are not Catholics.

I rejoice then that you should become the interpreter of a Catholic and Italian Bishop to your fellow-countrymen, in order

6 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

that certain difficulties may be removed from their minds which now keep them separated from the Church of Rome. Again I thank you.

GEREMIA BONOMELLI, BISHOP.

A BISHOP AND HIS FLOCK

A Bishop and his Flock

MANY and grave are the duties of a Bishop towards the people confided to his care by JESUS CHRIST at the hands of the Supreme Pontiff; and wonderfully are they described by the Apostle St Paul in a few lines of his concise, vigorous language, in his Epistles to the two youthful Bishops Timothy and Titus, whom he himself had ordained.

Among the duties of a Bishop comes first, without doubt, that of making known the Gospel truths, inculcating and explaining them, and (in case of necessity) defending them. "Preach thou the truth," writes St Paul to Timothy, "in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

How is a Bishop to fulfil this important duty, if his people live dispersed throughout a vast territory and scattered about in a hundred small towns and villages? In the first place, by means of parish priests and all the clergy who exercise their sacred

ministry under his charge, and who are bound to be the faithful transmitters of his word, in the same manner as he himself is bound to be the faithful echo—under the guidance of CHRIST'S Vicar—of the Prince of Pastors, JESUS CHRIST. In addition to this method it is expedient and necessary that the faithful should at some time during the year themselves hear the word of their Bishop, which is to comfort and strengthen them in their faith. And this the Bishop endeavours to bring about, by going himself to visit, one by one, the several parishes in his diocese, and there letting his voice be heard, as is ordained by ecclesiastical law.

In the natural course of things, however, a Bishop can but seldom visit these parishes singly—so what remains for him to do? To follow the example of St Paul, who, being unable to visit personally each separate church, sent letters to them, and by these means admonished, instructed and corrected the faithful. At the present time, following an old custom (which has since been transformed almost into law), the Bishops, at the approach of the season of Lent, are in the

A BISHOP AND HIS FLOCK 11

habit of addressing a Pastoral Letter to the faithful of their dioceses, reminding them of, and inculcating, such truths as shall appear to them most fitting. This most excellent custom I have always observed, and I should think myself culpable were I to fail in doing so also this year (1905).



THE RATIONAL SIDE OF
RELIGION



The Rational Side of Religion

BELOVED! You are already well acquainted with the tenor of my Pastoral Letters, the tendency of which I see no reason to alter. It is my custom every year to choose a theme of active importance, which may possibly be of interest to all the faithful, but chiefly so to those who most stand in need of being interested therein. And, as a rule, those who are mostly in need of it are those who are the better-informed and in easier circumstances, because, alas! it is they who less frequently go to church, who occupy themselves less with the things of religion, and who are exposed to greater perils of being perverted from the right way. This class of persons who have cultivated the higher branches of study or a part at least of such studies; who frequent civil and political societies, clubs and gatherings of a certain degree of culture; who live in the midst of business affairs, and acquire in their contact with society a certain fluency of speech and appearance of general

16 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

knowledge—possibly not profound but at least apparent and not to be despised—this class does not frequently attend church, rarely listens to the Word of God, and, if occasionally it does so, does not always find it adapted to its needs, and more often than not is left with a distaste for it, and becomes still further alienated from the faith. Hence it follows that this class, which holds in its hand both power and wealth, and is in reality the regulator of society, knows but little of religion, and, what is much worse, *thinks* that it knows more about it than is the case; considers it its right to teach it; is full of confused ideas, vulgar prejudices, and often errors of all kinds, which it propagates in a hundred different ways.

It is to this class that I chiefly address myself in my Letters, because it is the most intelligent and most influential socially, and yet at the same time is the most deficient in knowledge of religious matters.

Experience has taught me that a certain number of men belonging to this class, who scarcely ever cross the threshold of a church, do not object to reading some of these Letters of mine, whence they gather some

slight help which, if it does nothing else, may give them a desire to study a little more about what they are either ignorant of or know but superficially. I cherish a hope of being of more use to them in this way than if I were to treat of purely religious subjects in the old and strictly conventional manner, which nowadays no longer is in favour. On the other side, it seems to me that certain subjects, even of an elevated character, if they are put into simple, popular language and (by preference) in argumentative form, may be of use also to the humbler classes who know how to read, and who are developing more and more rapidly every day. Even if not directly, at least indirectly, they too may be benefited, for whenever a *truth* is known and recognized by the upper classes, it becomes reflected among the lower, and, if of use to cultivated persons, proves also useful to many others who may come into contact with the cultivated.

I do not disguise for a moment the fact that my intention in publishing my Pastoral Letters is to arouse the attention of the clergy, to induce them to study more deeply

18 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

certain *primary* truths, which, from the fact of their being generally known, would appear to be held as less worthy of consideration, and to study them specially by the light of natural reason, and by this means to render them accessible and dear to the people. It is imperative that we should grasp the fact that at the present time not only the cultivated and governing classes, but also the lower, are no longer contented with the bare religious truth presented to them in the name of divine authority which imposes it upon them: they prefer and wish to see the rational side of it and demand it above everything else; and it is our duty, as far as possible, to second them in this noble aspiration of theirs.

The subject which I select to deal with in this Pastoral is an ordinary one, but at the same time one of great practical and theoretical importance. Can any subject indeed appear more ordinary than that of "Religious Worship," of which I intend to speak? Nevertheless, if you look well at it, the whole of religion, in all its most essential and noblest acts, turns in and upon its practice—in *interior* and *exterior* acts,

which are its fruits, its sustenance, and in a certain sense the outcome of it. There is not a single act connected with religious worship that will not receive some explanation in this treatise. I like to think that not only the laity, who have always kindly received my Pastoral Letters, but also the clergy will find herein certain important truths, up till now perhaps but little dwelt on, and that it will readjust certain ideas and correct certain practices which are far from being in conformity with the great principles of an enlightened faith and well-grounded piety.

I now lay before you the order I intend to follow in the development of my theme, which will proceed clearly and simply by the double light of faith and natural reason—guides never to be separated from each other, more especially in our own times.

In discussing religious worship—a vast theme which alone would fill a large volume—I shall restrict myself by demonstrating to you:

1. The necessity of an interior worship and in what it consists; and in this part I shall be brief, since it is a self-evident truth.

20 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

2. The necessity of uniting exterior to interior worship, as effect is united to cause.

3. We shall then see how with regard to religious worship many err under two heads: some being desirous of over-restricting and limiting it to the *interior* practice, almost suppressing the *exterior*; whilst others, going to the opposite extreme, and caring either little or nothing for the *interior* worship, would wish to reduce devotion to an *exterior* form only—two extremes which are equally to be avoided.

And here I shall take steps to bring out into relief certain practices, certain devotions and certain abuses existing among even good Catholics, which do no honour to true piety, which offend the purity and sanctity of religion, and which we by every means in our power should strive to remove.

THE INTERIOR WORSHIP



The Interior Worship

BY the words "religious worship" we express those collective interior and exterior acts which men perform to the honour of GOD, and also to the honour of other created beings, angels or men; but to these latter only in so far as certain divine qualities and perfections shine forth in them, for which reason they transcend all other beings and more closely resemble GOD. The word "religious" differentiates our worship from any other, and raises and places it above all that is natural and human. The practice of religion comprises all the various multitudinous acts, both interior and, more specially, exterior, which man incessantly offers up to GOD and to those whom he believes to be superior to himself and most near to GOD; it is the hymn which humanity with its myriad tongues and infinite manifestations raises to GOD. Only too many, alas! of these observances of religious worship (which in every century and from all parts of the globe are offered up)

24 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

are worthy neither of GOD nor of man, and are repugnant both to faith and human reason. We will not dwell further here on this subject; we only note the fact, which requires no further proving.

Let us come to the proofs of the truth which I have asserted—the necessity of inward worship. GOD, that is to say, the First Cause, the Supreme Being, the Creator and Ordainer of all things, *exists*.

This is a truth which is found in the language of every people, which is in the depths of every human conscience, which shines forth in the stars of the firmament as in the tiniest material atom, which bursts spontaneously forth from the deepest roots of the heart, which makes itself mysteriously felt in every soul that will but ask itself the question. GOD, whether in praising or in cursing, in one way or another is acknowledged by the entire human race. He may be called by various and divers names according to different modes of speech, but it is always He, GOD, the *first* and completely perfect Being, who alone *is*, from whom all is derived, and by whom all is governed. The few who deliberately deny

THE INTERIOR WORSHIP 25

this—if such there be—will never be able to choke back the irrestrainable constant cry of humanity, which proclaims, adores, blesses and invokes Him; any more than the few who are blind and deaf will ever be able to cast doubt on the existence of light and harmony because they are incapable of perceiving them. This is a truth which one only obscures by striving to prove it. If God exists, as reason, conscience and faith impress upon us, then it follows that there is an absolute necessity for religious worship. And, to proceed in order, we at once distinguish between two forms of religious worship, the one “interior,” the other “exterior”—distinguish but not separate them, nor indeed can we separate them, as we shall presently see.

First, then, of inward worship. Let us seek out its origin and nature.

Secondly, what is outward worship? In what does it consist?

2. Every one knows that man is composed of two entirely different substances: one visible, material—the body; the other invisible, spiritual—the soul, which gives life and movement to the body, which body is

26 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

the sole means of the soul's communication with the world. Now as the body is provided with its different senses, so the soul has its powers and faculties absolutely different from those of the body. The soul is developed and acts by means of the two powers or faculties which constitute its chief greatness and glory: viz., the intellect and the will. These spring forth from the soul like blossom and fruit from a tree, emanating from it like light from the sun, and are so much a part of it that without the intellect and the will it would be impossible even to form a thought. The intellect exists in order to recognize both itself and those things existing apart from itself in their infinite bearings; it is the inextinguishable torch which shines upon the summits of the soul, distinguishing the true from the false, the beautiful from the hideous, good from evil.

3. The will follows the intellect, as the thunder the lightning; it exists in order to obey the intellect, to grasp the true, the beautiful, the good which the intellect presents to it for its possession and enjoyment. The will must ever be the handmaid of the intellect; to withdraw itself from the

THE INTERIOR WORSHIP 27

empire of the intellect and to rebel against it—such is the power of the will that it is even able to rebel—is to create disorder, to cause internal strife, and to commit what we call *sin*. What is meant by sinning? It is the rising up, the revolt, of the will against reason, and doing the contrary to that which reason commands. And if to reason faith has been coupled, the sin assumes a most grave character.

It happens on some day that the soul, enlightened by the intellect and faith, stirred by conscience, moved by some mysterious inward sense, or by other not easily fathomed causes, feels itself to be in the presence of God, that infinite, incomprehensible Being who encompasses all things and of whom all things speak. It dimly comprehends that it is neither the author nor creator of itself nor ruler of that universe which unfolds such countless marvels before its eyes; it comprehends that before this supreme ineffable Being it is subject, small, weak, an imperceptible atom, almost nothing; it feels itself overcome, oppressed by such grandeur, and almost beside itself it sinks into the depths of its own nothing-

28 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

ness, and exclaims: "GOD, GOD is great, immense, eternal, and I am but an atom, naught!"

This vague, undefined, but irresistible sentiment penetrates and invades the soul, and causes the intellect—and together with the intellect the will and the entire being—to bow down, to become engulfed almost to the extent of annihilation in its own self. Here we behold the first and principal act of that interior worship which develops within the sanctuary of the soul; an act which we call *adoration*, due to GOD alone. This act springs from a general confused recognition—or I should say rather from an intimate, powerful and inexplicable feeling—of our inferiority and our total dependence on God. He reveals Himself in all things, and we feel ourselves to be nothing; and the natural consequence of this comparison of ourselves with GOD—which like a flash of lightning in the dark darts across the mind, carrying away with it the will—is that we fall down in our nothingness and adore Him who is the infinite Being, who is All.

I need scarcely observe that the recognition or rather sentiment which produces

this *adoration*, the first and natural act of the *interior worship*, needs must have as many different expressions as there are different degrees of intellect and human sentiment.

Place any son before a father worthy of the name; any poor ignorant man before one who is famous for learning; any pious, virtuous person before one who is recognized and proclaimed a perfect saint or worker of miracles; and the son, the ignorant man, the pious virtuous person, will not be able to prevent a strong inward feeling of esteem, reverence and veneration towards that father, that learned man, that saint or worker of miracles before whom he stands. This is what must necessarily occur to any man who thinks of GOD, who by reason or faith or conscience or any other means feels himself to be brought before the presence of GOD: he gazes upon GOD, then on himself, comprehends confusedly the abyss which lies between himself and Him, and bows his head and adores Him.

4. This feeling of adoration, by which a man must feel himself seized and which forces him back as it were upon himself, cannot be severed from yet another feeling

30 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

which starts up within his soul. "This GOD," so must he repeat inwardly, "this GOD, who is in need of no one, whose greatness no one can comprehend, has from His height above cast His glance upon me. He has drawn me out of nothingness; within my mind He has flashed a ray from His eternal reason; He makes me the judge of my own self; He has given me this body, and provides me with what is necessary and wanting to it; all that I am or can be is a gift from Him. He is my Father and the Father of my fathers before me, and of all mankind, and He overwhelms me with benefits." Beneath all the re-echoings of such thoughts as these, which, at the voice of faith, reason and conscience, follow each other like lightning flashes in rapid succession, by means of the sentiment which is mysteriously stirring in him, he is conscious of a feeling of affection distilling with great sweetness through the fibres of the soul, an affection such as a well-loved son experiences when he is in his father's arms; and in an impulse of loving gratitude he cries aloud, "O my GOD, my Creator and Father, I thank Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify

THE INTERIOR WORSHIP 31

Thee I, love Thee! To show my gratitude towards Thee I would fain lose myself and become nothing in Thy presence, even as a drop of dew is dispersed and lost beneath the attracting and absorbing rays of the sun.”

5. This is the second act of interior worship, the act of loving thanksgiving, which follows that first one of adoration, and which again is followed by a third that crowns both—the act of *prayer* or asking. “God is the centre of all good, and can do all things; He is infinite Majesty: I *adore* Him. He is goodness itself, and has overwhelmed me with benefits: I *thank* and *bless* Him. But I, a poor creature, have perpetual need of Him; of His arm to support me, of His light to guide me, of His loving-kindness to pity and pardon me.” Here, then, we have *prayer*, the final development of the interior religious practice, which is as natural to man as it is natural for an infant, trying to walk, to look towards its father and mother and to hold out its hands to them. To *adore*, to give *thanks*, to *pray* or ask, are the forms under which interior religious worship is developed—that worship which is as inhe-

32 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

rent and inseparable from human nature as are reason and will; and thus we shall always find this threefold manifestation throughout the history of man.

Mankind has always *adored*, given *thanks*, and *prayed* to GOD, or what it has believed to be GOD; it has always offered Him this tribute, this worship which proceeds from its innermost being. For as the tree, or the field, offers up its fruit to the owner and husbandman, as the honest, faithful servant honours his master with true inward respect, as the son is subject to and reverences his father, turning to him for help—so man offers to GOD the fruit, the internal homage of his mind and heart: adoring Him, giving thanks to Him and praying to Him for help.

I am well aware that a man can neither tell nor distinguish clearly regarding these interior evolutions of self-knowledge and religious feeling from whence arises this interior worship; at one time they are so intertwined as to form for him but a single act, at another time one succeeds another. For this reason the soul is, as it were, entirely absorbed in one single act of worship, whether of *adoration*, of *thanksgiving*, or of *prayer*,

according to the varied conditions in which it finds itself. What it is important to notice is that in *prayer*, taken in its broadest sense, is included interior religious worship, with its three outward expressions, as I have shown by analysing its nature. Whoever *prays truly adores*, renders *thanks*, and *asks*, even though he be unconscious of these distinct actions; and this is the real reason why every kind of religion, including the false, not only makes use of the form of *prayer*, but considers almost the whole religious worship to consist therein.

6. Another very important remark must be made, which is this: Religious worship, which takes its birth in the most secret recesses of the soul and arises thence like the sweet fragrance of a flower, differs according to the objects to which it refers. If addressed to GOD, to the Man-GOD JESUS CHRIST, it is absolute, complete, boundless—a bounden duty in itself. If it refers to the Mother of GOD, to the angels, to the saints, to holy things, it is in proportion to the object, which is, more or less, according to its nature, worthy of worship, and according as it more or less participates in

34 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

the divine qualities and perfections. Just as is the case with that civil worship or honour which we pay to man, our religious veneration varies inwardly according to the merits, offices and powers which we perceive in the objects of our worship. All these are things superfluous to dwell upon.

7. To me it seems more to the purpose to solve a difficulty which I myself have often heard expressed, and yet which one could hardly have supposed would have occurred to the human mind, viz., what need has GOD of our *adoration*, our *thanks*, and our *prayers*?

Truly GOD has no need of any one of our acts: it is we who have need of *Him*. Here we are dealing with the case of our duty towards GOD. We are the works of His hands, totally dependent on Him, benefited by Him in a thousand ways; He is the supreme, perfect Being, source of every good. How then can we refuse Him the tribute of our homage, of our gratitude? It is His by every possible right.

Does a distinguished man of science derive benefit from the respect and admiration paid him? Does any advantage accrue to a

benefactor from the gratitude of the person he benefits? Do parents materially gain by being loved by their children? Yet who does not feel and comprehend the duty which these all owe, and the blame they would incur if they failed in the fulfilment of their duty? The law of *duty* is not always related to that of self-gain or gain to others, but rather proceeds from reasons of eternal truth and from those innumerable affinities which exist between the infinite Being who transcends all His creatures, and us, the children of His desire. It is our duty to adore Him, to offer Him the greatest possible interior worship. Reason requires it of us. Let us then give it.



INTERIOR & EXTERIOR
WORSHIP



Interior & Exterior Worship

LET us now proceed from the consideration of the interior worship to that of the exterior. It will be as well to smooth the way by a few simple observations.

1. All beings, to whatever order they belong, whether material or spiritual, or both (not excepting the Supreme Being, God Himself), have this much exclusively their own: Each one, from his inner nature, from the depths of his being, draws an occult, self-contained force (proportionate to the being himself), which in a certain sense transports him outside, beyond, himself. The Supreme Being manifests Himself in a twofold perfect emanation: in the generation of the Word by the act of the intellect; in the procession by action of the will and love to which the Holy Spirit responds: *GOD is*, *GOD thinks* or comprehends, and *GOD loves*. These are the two actual emanations of the inner being of God which constitute the Holy Trinity. But let us not render more obscure this ineffable mystery,

40 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

the origin of all mysteries; it is enough that we should be mindful of and venerate it.

Every material body, in proportion to its inherent size, develops of itself an invisible force, which attracts towards itself all other bodies; this is the force of attraction.

The sun, by reason of its enormous dimensions, by an invisible force sends forth the oceans of light and heat which ceaselessly pour from it.

A seed, by some hidden, invisible virtue, throws forth a blade of grass, a young shoot, a tree, as its outward manifestation.

A tree, by reason of its inherent invisible life, produces blossom, and, after the blossom, fruit—its crowning loveliest emanation. Thus each body forms a centre, a point, from which radiate motion, heat, force, light and life.

Let us consider what *man* is. The noblest part of him is the soul, which resembles the Divine Nature, and from which emanates, according to our mode of speaking, the intellect, which generates thoughts, and the will, which produces interior acts. These are ever emanating from within, although invisibly. But man is of a mixed nature, and



INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 41

(as being a necessary part of him) the body is united to the soul in such a way that everything which takes place in the body is reflected in the soul, and all that happens in the soul is reflected in the body, although very often we are unaware of it. From this undeniable truth, proved by experience over and over again, it follows that religious knowledge and sentiment, or rather the interior religious worship which springs from the secret fibres of the soul, is reflected in the body and must also naturally manifest itself outside the body, thus becoming transformed into an exterior worship and into the various acts of that exterior worship.

If vigorous, lively thoughts present themselves to your mind, and your will is sharpened and stimulated by strong ardent desires, what do you do? What do you feel? You experience a lively overpowering desire and necessity of expressing them and putting them into practice, and you exclaim, "I must speak and act." It is the thought which agitates you, the desire which urges you on; it is the entire soul which is moved and convulsed and forces you to make known abroad what is occur-

ring within; it resembles a great subterraneous spring which, imprisoned in the bowels of a mountain, bubbles and boils, whirls round and round, and presses against its enclosing walls, till at last it opens a way for itself, and rushing down the mountain side spreads itself fruitfully over the plain below. This is what happens to every one, whether considered individually or collectively. "Who," cried Job's comforter, Eliphaz the Themanite, "can withhold the words he hath conceived?" In vain are all our efforts; that which is within us, one day or another, in one way or another, by speaking or writing, by signs, by cries, or sighs or groans, by the expression of the face or by a look, we are obliged sooner or later to bring out and communicate to others; and as long as it remains within our mind or heart or will, it is as a weight which oppresses us, an incubus which suffocates, and we are compelled to throw it off and rid ourselves of it.

Whoever knows aught of history knows well that of all the feelings which grow up in the heart the strongest and deepest is without doubt the religious sentiment; and that no force has availed or ever will avail

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 43

to extinguish it. It may be perverted, misguided, corrupted, but extinguished never.

As the religious sentiment is the strongest and most indestructible in the human heart, so equally the evidences of it in exterior worship are, though differing among themselves, splendid, continuous and indispensable.

2. You will find these evidences of religious feeling in the individual not less than in the social body all over the world and in all ages. Show me any single race of people which has not possessed temples, altars, sacred books and priests, sacrifices and religious rites; turn over the pages of all the archives of history, search through the most ancient monuments, the burial places of all the prehistoric world, and you will not be able to find one. Some bend the knee, others join hands together, some bow the head, some raise their eyes to heaven, some prostrate themselves on the earth, some fast, some scourge themselves, some weep, some sing, some dance, some return thanks, some pray, some offer up sacrifices, some take vows, some erect temples, some go pilgrimages, and so on. The evidences

44 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

of exterior worship are endless, and it would be a hopeless task even to enumerate them. But there is one thing which above everything else strikes the eye of any ordinary observer, and it is this: that man is not content with giving vent to the religious sentiment which is in his heart, and manifesting it in all these different outward acts which I have just been speaking of, even though he knows that God has no need of them and can discern them in the heart before they take life there. He, so to speak, summons all creatures to him—he wishes to associate them with himself, almost to infuse himself into them; he is desirous of extending beyond all limits the worship due to God outside his own self; of transforming the universe into a temple, an altar, an unceasing hymn to God's glory; he desires that heaven and earth, mountains and seas, rivers and woods, animals and men, all things animate and inanimate, should celebrate His name, should sing of His splendour: in this desire the language of the pagan poets and the prophets are indistinguishable from each other; the entire universe is transformed into a temple, a

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 45

hymn, an incessant manifestation of exterior worship.

For proof of this look at what man does: he builds innumerable sumptuous temples in every conceivable form of architecture, with statues, and images, and altars, and every kind of symbolic figure; he erects towers, casts bronze, builds organs, works in marble, metals, gold and silver; he spends treasure profusely on sacred vessels and priestly vestments; architecture, sculpture, painting, illuminating, inlaying, vocal and instrumental music, all the arts without exception, from the humblest to the noblest; literature, poetry, science, all are called upon to pay their tribute. One would suppose that the sentiment, the religious spirit, of the people embraced all things, took possession of them by force, and insinuated itself into them, led them to GOD, and desired by their means and together with them, as though they were so many different tongues, to uplift praises to His glory.

All this is natural to man. Is it not thus he acts when desirous of paying honour to some great personage, a benefactor, a monarch, a hero? Does he not erect

46 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

triumphal arches along the way, decorate windows and monuments with flags and festoons, sing *Te Deum*, deafen the air with the roar of cannon, with the noise of musical instruments, and with applause and shouts which reach to the stars, lighting up the darkness of night with illuminations and fireworks? All this he does to show his joy, gratitude, admiration, love. Nobody blames these popular demonstrations in themselves, or if any man does blame, it is because he considers them to be unmerited or exaggerated. The objects of these demonstrations are different. The one is religious, invisible, GOD by Himself and for Himself alone, or the Mother of GOD and His saints. The other is mundane, visible, human; but the moving principle, the desire of the human heart to give expression to its feelings, is the same, and is inseparable from the nature of man. I wish that certain persons too ready to blame the exterior devotion of our people on certain occasions, and to deplore it as a weakness or folly, could reflect more deeply and quietly on the nature of man and its exigencies; then they would understand

that sometimes the people, obeying the impulses of their nature, reason better than those who appeal to low calculations and to principles of a dried-up, miserly science which sterilizes the heart and suffocates its more generous aspirations.

3. It will not be out of place here to lay before you certain observations which, if I do not err, are of importance, and throw a clear light upon the exterior worship of which we are now speaking.

In the first place one should never forget that the exterior, like the interior worship, is always relative, and varies, and must vary according to the object to which it is addressed. I drew attention to this above; for it is repugnant to reason, and at the same time to faith, to confound under the same form of worship the Creator and the created, to equal the GOD-MAN JESUS CHRIST to His Mother, to the angels or to the saints. The difference of nature, dignity and merits naturally carries with it a sensible graduation in worship, which the most ordinary common sense must be aware of and which must be regulated by ecclesiastical authority.

48 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

There is besides another obvious truth, which very few, however, properly appreciate, to which it is important to direct our attention.

The conception of GOD and of divine things cannot be the same for all nor the same in all periods, however much GOD and divine things remain unaltered. The difference of conception is due to the differing intellectual capacity of every individual, to his degree of culture, to his age, to the times and varying conditions in which each man lives, and also to the greater or lesser manifestations which GOD makes of Himself. All of us can see and recognize a tree, but what a difference as to the knowledge of that tree lies between a field labourer and an able botanist! Every one can gaze at a monument of Palladio or a statue by Michael Angelo, but what a difference in the estimating of its value between a stone-mason and a great architect or sculptor! All can listen to a great musical work by Rossini or Verdi, but what a difference in the appreciation of its beauty between a distinguished professor of music and a peasant!

So it is and so it must be with regard to

the idea of GOD and of divine and supernatural things, which men make for themselves. Very different was the knowledge of the pagan populace of Athens from that of Plato and his followers; different that of the Brahmins from that of the Buddhists; that of the Mussulmans from that of the Christians. And even amongus Christian Catholics what a difference lies in the conceptions formed of GOD by the learned, the theologian, the charcoal-seller, and the poor peasant woman!

We cannot deny, for example, that the Hebrews, who had, moreover, a divine revelation, generally conceived GOD to be a national GOD, their very own, the enemy of other peoples, often under purely anthropomorphic forms. Nor do I believe that I am wronging many of the good Christians among our people by saying that they too form ideas of GOD and His actions which differ but slightly from those of the ancient Hebrews; it is very difficult to suppose that they can rise to a truly spiritual conception of GOD and rid themselves of material images. We are only too much driven to believe that in their ideas about GOD and His acts they intermix low, material thoughts, and rarely

50 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

succeed in attaining to the notion of GOD as a spirit. Who can say how imperfect, poor and unworthy of GOD are the notions of Him held by our people? Who knows what they imagine as to the act of His mind which generated the Son? and of His will which, in union with the Son, produces the Holy Spirit? and of the mystery of the Incarnation, how it was brought about and how man participates in its grace? I believe that anthropomorphism, that is to say, the thinking of GOD as though He were a man and operated as a man, is a much more common thing than we suppose, and it must be so.

Now it is clear that man, outwardly symbolizing the divinity and His works in pictures, sculpture, figures and emblems, was bound to represent Him as he conceived Him to be, and therefore in an imperfect and still oftener in an absurd manner. This we know from the images of heathen deities which remain, undeniable evidences of the incredible gross ignorance of nations (most certainly not the most depraved then in existence) such as the Egyptians and Phœnicians.

4. To a certain extent then we are bound to say that nations and peoples, through the various periods of history, depict God to themselves according to the standard of their capacity and intellectual culture. The conception of God follows the vicissitudes of man's intellectual development, and wherever this, together with the moral sense, is elevated, the exterior worship—the natural and inevitable reflection of the interior—becomes elevated also. If the one is low, abject, vile, the other is also; savages and barbarous nations, who, as regards religious worship, stand on the bottom scale of the ladder of progress and are still fetish-worshippers, are a proof of this statement.

No sooner does a ray of truth, however, begin to penetrate their minds, even if only by their being brought into contact with civilized Christian countries, than at once their puerile worship becomes gradually raised, and they form ideas about God which are less gross and unworthy of Him. They cease adoring images of beasts, and substitute for them those of human beings; after them, the sun, the moon, the stars and then the great forces of nature, materialized in certain

52 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

fantastic forms, but endowed with reason; and finally they arrive at the conception of GOD as an invisible, spiritual Being dwelling above the clouds, beholding everything and ruling over the destinies of man. What do we gather from all this? That if we wish to raise the exterior act of devotion, we must raise the interior act, as, when we want a tree to be strong and fruitful, we cultivate its roots. Let us then elevate interior worship, which is equivalent to saying, let us elevate the mind, elevate and ennoble the moral sentiment of the people. And in what way? The former by more frequent and accurate instructions, the latter by cultivating and developing better the dignity of men and Christianity.

5. I am aware that what I have said about exterior worship amongst our people may appear to some to be incorrect and possibly too strong, as though I had said they were inclining toward and falling into anthropomorphism. I did not, nor shall I ever, say that our people are actually guilty of anthropomorphism; that would be making them descend to the level not merely of the Hebrews but of the heathen, and would be

an atrocious calumny. For if we were to ask a boy seven or eight years old, "Is GOD like us? Has He a body, hands, eyes?" he would promptly answer, "No, GOD is a Spirit." Now the heathen would never have answered in this manner. But what idea does that boy, or even the adult and fairly educated Christian, form as to this GOD, this spiritual Being? I know not, and it is not easy to answer the question. His knowledge is merely negative. He knows, that is to say, that GOD is not a man, that He has not a human body; and this suffices to raise his knowledge above that of the heathen and draws him towards the truth. Taking his stand upon the Catechism and the words of the priest, the boy or the adult Christian rejects the idea that GOD is in any way material or resembling man, and he holds this as faith; what the Spirit or Being without body may be he most certainly does not understand. He believes, which is all he can do, and before GOD that suffices. But when he no longer hears the priest speaking, when he kneels and prays and adores, then I think in all probability some conception of a Being in

54 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

human form must appear to his uninformed and uncertain mind, and drawn downwards as it were by the weight of his own nature, he prays and worships GOD under the form of a man or something resembling man.*

It is for this reason that I wish the priests in charge of parishes and all priests when they are preaching and speaking of GOD to inculcate as often as possible and repeat the great elementary truth that GOD is *not* like a man, does not operate as a man would; that He is a spirit; that He is as our own soul; and in this manner the priests will be able to keep the minds of the people elevated and as a consequence the devotion of the people also; even as JESUS CHRIST willed when He said to the Samaritan woman, "GOD is a Spirit, and therefore they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And remember He was

* GOD in His infinite wisdom and goodness has provided for this natural human tendency and weakness of man, who almost involuntarily and unconsciously worships Him as though He were man. He has provided for it by the Incarnation of His Son. In the Incarnation we adore the Man-GOD, the Man in GOD and GOD in Man, for the Person is One. St Thomas Aquinas observes wisely that this need of man which always seeks sensible forms and images, was one of the reasons for the Incarnation.

speaking to a poor woman, and to what class of woman! A Samaritan, too, born and brought up outside the truth. The least intelligent of our peasantry will always be superior to that Samaritan, so that it is fitting we should teach the people what JESUS CHRIST taught that poor woman.

Exterior worship, as I have said, is as natural and necessary to man as it is for him to speak, or act, or breathe, and the stronger and deeper the thought and sentiment about GOD which he has within him the greater his need of manifesting it outwardly. The soul, desirous of escaping forth from itself, opens almost by force a way to the senses and begins to move, and, drawing towards itself the things which are without, forcibly unites them with itself, and with and by means of them, being as it were increased by them, offers them to GOD and does homage to Him. We have seen that this is so.

6. Exterior worship, however, is not only a need of human nature and an emanation from and effect of interior worship, but it serves also to nourish and strengthen the latter, so much so that if exterior worship

56 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

were to cease, interior worship would also by degrees become extinguished, just as a lamp will go out when the oil is exhausted, or a fire when fuel is lacking.

The Apostle says truly that faith, or rather the truth as regards faith, comes to us by speaking, and exterior worship in all its manifold forms is an eloquent means of speaking especially to the people, who learn much more by the eye than by the hearing, since the former requires less effort than the latter, and strikes more forcibly and impresses the soul more. Enter one of our many magnificent Catholic cathedrals on a feast day. The vision of those arches, those stupendous cupolas and columns, carries away the thoughts, forces the soul upwards towards heaven; the sight of the statues, the paintings, the marbles, the works of every kind with which they are enriched, fills us with wonder, and makes us feel in a mysterious manner the greatness of God; and when all the bells ring joyously and the organ sends forth its harmonies in waves of noble sound, when the priests, clothed in their ample majestic vestments and encircled with the smoke of incense, celebrate

the sacred rites, when the grave and gay notes of the sacred music, intertwining one with the other, wander vaguely among the superb vaultings; when the people silent and devout throng the spacious naves; then shall we feel within our souls an unexpected thrill, a tremor, and from our hearts will break forth an undefined mingling of affection, marvel, reverence and veneration which words cannot express. All around us grows still, our passions within are quieted, we forget the sorrows and trials of this life; the soul becomes calm and peaceful, and experiences a pure, chaste feeling of sweetness, which passes rapidly through all its fibres, and satisfies and even for a certain time hallows it.

What happens to those who enter our grand cathedrals and churches on solemn feast-days happens also to a certain degree to the people in small towns and villages, for everything here below is relative, and the modest functions which they assist at are to them what these splendid ones are to those who live in great cities. Those long, solemn processions preceded by crosses, with banners and flags flying in the air, passing

58 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

under arches put up by the peasants; those crowds who fall on their knees at the approach of the Sacred Host; those innumerable moving lights symbolizing the faith; those clouds of incense which spread around and upwards to the sky; the voices of men mingling with the high delicate voices of women and children, now imploring mercy, now praising God; those sad loving visits to the sepulchre of CHRIST;* in short, all the acts, all the grave ceremonies, so full of meaning, which are instinctively comprehended by the people, and in which is summed up the exterior worship—how they penetrate and touch all hearts! How they fill one with high feelings and holy enthusiasm! How they arouse one's faith, nourish one's hope, inflame one's charity, excite one's piety, enlarge one's ideas of God, and do honour to religion!

When Misson saw the Pope come on to the Loggia of the Vatican to bless the people who thronged the immense Piazza below, he was so profoundly moved by the sight that he almost fainted away. And Rousseau once furtively entered a Catholic

*In Holy Week.

church and remained present during the sacred functions, and was so forcibly impressed by them, that, falling on his knees, he prayed and wept—he who so often had derided and mocked at prayer, and insulted the Catholic religion in his books!

7. Nor is this all; whenever we manifest our faith by outward acts of devotion we edify our brethren: silently but effectively do we remind them that there is a God and that we must honour Him, and by our example we incite them to do as we are doing. Evil is contagious—but so also is good; and every exterior act of devotion, however small, is as a spark which re-awakens religious feeling; it is an unspoken word, which re-echoes within the heart of him who sees it or hears it. And is not this a great advantage which we ought to attribute to exterior worship?

Many, alas, are the weaknesses of our human nature, and without doubt not the least among them is that deference to man which holds so many souls miserably enslaved, especially among those classes which ought to be the most free and independent. They are ashamed of being religious, of ful-

60 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

filling their religious duties before the public eye—they *have* faith, but they keep it hidden away in their hearts. Weak souls! who allow themselves to be bound and shamefully dragged behind the car of the victors of the day and legislators of fashion! How many there are of such souls!

By exterior acts of worship we profess the faith which we hold in our hearts. Every outward religious act is, in a sense, an act of faith outwardly professed, and therefore of itself makes it necessary to break with this undue deference to man: this is the case especially with the great acts of external devotion which multitudes perform under certain special circumstances. Occasionally I have chanced to be in imposing processions, or pilgrimages consisting of many thousand persons, where the number of men equalled that of the women—a rare event! And when those great crowds, after having filed through the streets with their bands playing and banners at their head, massed themselves together before an altar erected in the open air, on which stood a statue of the Virgin; when the well-known chant of the *Magnificat*

and *Te Deum* burst forth like thunder from the throats of those strong peasants and mountaineers, I felt as though transported almost from this world. You would have imagined that at that moment an electric spark had passed through the multitude, fusing all those voices and minds into one mass. I saw then certain men who were standing looking on, almost unconsciously raise their hats—men who certainly were without faith, and who had probably come there to amuse themselves by laughing at the pilgrims. I saw the smile of compassion die on their lips, I saw tears come into their eyes, and I saw them, dominated as it were by some secret irresistible force, go down on their knees amongst the people and pray with them.

These great demonstrations of public worship marvellously reawaken the faith which seems to have fallen asleep, forces deference to man to veil itself at least for a while, and reinvests once more the faithful with outward public dominion over religious feelings—and this is no small gain.

8. Whoever follows with any attention the irreligious tendency of modern times

62 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

will quickly perceive that it aims in different ways at restricting religion to the limits of the soul's privacy, at putting a stop to it as a *social* observance and converting it into a purely *individual* affair, compelling it to subsist and develop itself within the inmost conscience, or, at most, to confine itself to the home life. It would prefer an entirely internal religion, without ties, devoid of external acts, individual; as though religion, because it is the duty and necessity of every man, ought not to be, for that very reason, a public social matter—in the same way as those rights and duties are social, not individual, which have to be fulfilled towards the civil and political authorities and the country, in all the varied relations by which citizens are bound together.

Exterior worship is a consequence of the *social* nature of religion, and at the same time supports and strengthens it. As all of us, inasmuch as we are human beings, are subject to God and have this religious feeling, so all of us have the desire to manifest it, and therefore religion *outwardly* professed is a necessary *social* act and not merely an

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 63

individual one. It is in exterior worship that the *social* character of religion manifests itself, and, above all, in the Church—which we may consider the permanent centre of worship.

Every Sunday, every feast-day, and even oftener, the people in the small country towns and villages and parishes are bidden to the church which is the central gathering-place, and, so to speak, the House of all: there they assemble, in great or small numbers as circumstances may require. Beneath those vaulted roofs, seated on those benches, they see and recognize and feel themselves to be equals and brothers, for all there have equal rights. Here are not, or at least ought not to be, any hateful distinctions between rich and poor, educated and uneducated, master and servant. Men, women and children, believers and non-believers, well dressed and poorly dressed—they enter and leave as they choose. Together they listen to the same truths, the same admonitions, are present at the same ceremonies, receive, if they desire it, the same sacraments, recite the same prayers: there, in the parish church, the parish pre-

64 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

sents the appearance of one single family of which GOD is the Father and those present are the children—all brethren together. The life of the people develops round the church, where each one enters first as a babe to receive baptism; then as boy and man to listen to the Word of GOD, to partake of the sacraments and fulfil his religious duties; and thence he is carried after death and accompanied to his last resting-place. Take away the exterior worship which has its being chiefly in the church, and each Christian must remain isolated, circumscribed within his family (supposing that he has one), without any ties binding him to his brethren. Who can doubt that the sublime theories of equality and brotherhood, of which all of us are proud, have had their origin and greatest growth in the exterior worship which constantly assembles the people within its temple?

Ah, yes! It is the Church which is, which was, and which always will be the centre of union for the people, because it is the home of all, the house of our universal Father, in which all gather to honour and pray to Him.

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 65

This is an enormous benefit which we obtain through exterior worship—an enormous benefit, though but little recognized, since that which we have always before our eyes is held to be of little value.

9. A celebrated author has said that the Church is a great school for teaching respect, manners and civilization; and he spoke truly, if the expression is taken in its broad, relative sense, as it should be. The basis of education lies most certainly in that respect which is owed to every authority, to equals and to inferiors. Without this respect the order of things is disturbed, and one cannot imagine any peaceful communal life productive of good existing, and education remains an unfulfilled dream. Exterior worship brings the people together. The meeting place is always naturally the church. These people gathering together in church feel obliged to be orderly in person and clothing; on entering the church they take off their hats, compel themselves to keep silence, take care not to do anything which is not right and seemly, and feel obliged to behave themselves respectfully and deferentially towards all. The reverence

66 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

and veneration which they owe to God, to His ministers, to the solemn rites which they celebrate, act so upon them that the very lowest among them, the very poorest creature, conducts himself seriously and in a far superior manner to what one might have supposed him capable of; and then this reverence and veneration owed to God and His ministers and sacred things become reflected later on unconsciously through society, in the family, and all the actions of public and private life.

The rich, and those who by the special conditions of their birth are born and live in high ranks of civilization, acquire by other means with great ease the habits of reciprocal respect and good manners; but for the masses who live in factories, in the fields, and on the mountains, always in contact with rough, unpolished people, who are ground down by heavy manual labour, the church will always constitute a school—however elementary and incomplete—of reciprocal respect and popular education; and it is the need of exterior worship that always opens and maintains this school (without the demand of any sacrifice)

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 67

gratuitously, voluntarily and uninterruptedly. How many think at all about this civil and social benefit obtained by the Church through the means of exterior worship? Very, very few indeed.

10. We all, without exception, have need of something to raise our spirits, to comfort us among the trials of life, to rejoice the eye and ear with what may honestly please them.

And most particularly do those hard-working ones stand in need of it, who sweat in factories and in the fields, who often live in wretched hovels, who almost always have before their eyes the sad spectacle of want and sorrow. When Sunday comes round, the holiday dear to the people is a long-looked-for one. Look at them coming out of their shops, their miserable, little, smoke-blackened houses! Look at them approaching the churches, whither the Divine service summons them! Their eyes are gladdened by the sight of the vast temple, cleaned and adorned for the festival, sparkling with lights, decorated with flowers: their ears are comforted by the sound of bells, the organ, the chantings of

68 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

the choir, and still more by the numbers of people present. Then for a time these workers in factories and fields, these disinherited ones of fortune, who in silence devour their misery, forget their sad fate. Their angry passions and hatreds are assuaged, their anxieties are quieted, their sorrows diminished: they, too, taste a few drops of happiness, and return less sad to their homes, happier, calmer and better men.

You, rich and wealthy ones, have your public shows and theatres, and travelling, and pleasant entertainments, and friendly gatherings; the people, especially the country people—the most numerous, deserving, moral, and the most tried by privations—have only the church, the sight and display of its religious rites, to solace their tired, beaten down spirits, and to satisfy that craving for the beautiful, the pleasing, the desire for honest repose, which is experienced by every one. There are, it is true, games, shows, public amusements; but these are not intended for every one, nor for the poor: moreover, they leave the soul empty; often excite rather than assuage the thirst

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 69

after pleasure, and so far from satisfying the passions, arouse and irritate them, opening the way often to the most deplorable moral disorder.

11. We may add also that the Church, with its exterior worship, is not only a school for inculcating respect and civilization, a social tie, a place of peaceful reunion, comfort, and honest and eminently moral refreshment, but also a school of art and taste, and of everything that is beautiful.

We know that all religions (if we except those fallen into fetish-worship and essentially degraded) exercised some beneficial influence over the origin and development of the fine arts. The sumptuous pagan temples of every epoch which we still wonderingly admire are undeniable proofs of this, as are also the Mohammedan mosques, which are real works of art in their way. This influence shines out also in the Christian places of worship and religious monuments which are found *without* the Catholic Church.*

* It is worth noticing that the most beautiful, artistic monuments in Protestant countries are the creations of the Catholic Church; heresy and schism have robbed her of

70 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

And finally this influence upon the arts within the Catholic Church and in its worship is without comparison, and borders on the miraculous. Run through, in your mind, all the Catholic countries, and you will find that almost all great artistic works, architecture, sculpture, painting, and the many analogous arts, had their birth, we may say, *within* the Church and *by means* of the Church, and are the outcome and spontaneous growth of Catholic worship, whether as regards their ideal conception or their material execution. I should be wronging my readers were I to stay to prove a fact which stands out as clear as daylight. It is the greatest and purest glory of our Italy, which foreigners may envy us and even despoil us of, but which they can never hope to equal.

What is the origin of this unique boast of our native land? I do not deny the part which our Latin nature played in it, born as it was, like the Greek, to the worship of beauty in its various forms—but most certainly, so that now they adorn non-Catholic buildings; in reality, however, they are Catholic. How many magnificent churches are to be seen in Northern Europe converted into Protestant places of worship!

tainly the Catholic Faith, ever-living and pure among us, with the love of its exterior rites, was the generating principle which begot so many marvels.

That it *is* owing to the worship of the Catholic Church that all these marvels of art were created is evident from the following simple reasons:

They had their birth in the churches;

They were ordered and paid for by Catholics;

And nine-tenths of them have a religious signification.

The cathedrals of Milan, Venice, Florence, and St Peter's, Rome—I mention only the chief ones; hundreds of others might be added—are works of this kind, and alone are sufficient to prove what miracles Christian art is capable of performing when inspired by genius and faith. Add to these unrivalled creations of Catholic worship the thousands and thousands of churches scattered through every province; the innumerable great works of painting, sculpture, chiselling and carving with which the museums, collections and galleries overflow—both our public and private ones and those

72 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

abroad, also enriched by the spoils taken from us!—and then tell me whether the world, and more especially our own native country, ought not indeed to bless that religion and that sacred worship which render it so great and glorious, and attract to it every year from all parts of the globe armies of the highest educated intellects and art-worshippers to enjoy the delights of so much loveliness.

Imagine a case which, let us hope, may never occur. Suppose that some day every sort of artistic treasure which owed its inspiration to religion and its sacred rites were taken away from our country, Italy, by force; that the churches were despoiled, the altars, sacristies, sanctuaries, public and private chapels all demolished; that all that beautifies State buildings, galleries, the palaces of old noble families, were removed; in a word that everything artistic and lovely and sacred and of a religious character were taken away—tell me what would be left us? What would become of our country? Answer me this. Whoever, therefore, is an enemy to the exterior worship of religion, and would reduce it to miserable, grudging

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 73

proportions, may rightly be held to be the enemy of our country's greatest glory and of that which it holds most dear. He may be regarded as a man desirous of handing Italy back to barbarism, and a worthy companion of those barbarians who once swept through the length and breadth of it, devastating it and covering it with smoking ruins.*

12. Before concluding the second part of this pastoral, it may be useful to answer certain objections, which are not infrequently heard and which may create doubt in certain small, weak, badly instructed minds. These objections are as follows:

(1) GOD reads our hearts. It is enough if we honour Him inwardly with faith, hope and love; exterior worship is then superfluous with Him.

Most assuredly GOD reads our hearts, and there is no need for Him that we should do homage to Him in exterior worship. But our soul is united to the body, and for us there is

* Nevertheless there are some who venture to say, "It would be better if the places where these great churches stand were turned into so many squares, then we should not have to throw away so much in preserving and restoring them." To such a pitch can the anti-clericalism of some attain! To such a degree can every idea of the beautiful be lost sight of!

74 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

almost always a necessity for expressing with the body what is in our soul, and thus the soul offers to GOD the homage of interior worship and the body offers Him the homage of outward worship. This is needful for us and our brethren; for us because it shows forth and fortifies our faith, and for our brethren because it strengthens and edifies theirs. Nature demands, together with an interior worship, an exterior one, and nature may not be disobeyed.

(2) But, it is insisted, of what good is it to GOD, all this pomp of our outward worship? It is useless.

It is of no good whatever to GOD. It is *we* who benefit by it, and for us it is a necessity. I said this before, and I repeat it. Neither is inward worship of any good to GOD; it would be absurd to say so even—it is one of our duties which we must fulfil. Of what *use* either are the external acts of reverence and respect which servants and subjects pay to their masters and monarchs? And yet they do perform these acts, and are bound to do so.

(3) Some will exclaim, “What can be more splendid or more worthy of GOD than

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 75

the temple of the world, the entire universe? Where can you look for richer ornament or more magnificent and perfect works than those which the heavens offer with their firmament of stars—the earth with its mountains, and fields, and lakes, and fertile lands, with all the beauties and marvels which it lays before the eye? What can more forcibly stir the mind, what can better elevate our thoughts and affections than the ever-old yet ever-new spectacle of nature? All the efforts, all the magnificence, of our exterior worship, the work of our own hands, only lessen the conception of GOD and are like trifling children's games."

I know all that. I know that the great works of nature far surpass everything that man can do, and do certainly attract men to GOD. But what class of men do they thus attract? The well educated, the highly refined, whenever they may stop to consider about such things; but the mass of the people, and many who are of higher rank than the people, do not think anything at all about them. They look, admire, wonder, and then go away, and the thought of GOD either does not occur at all to their

76 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

minds, or but resembles a flash of momentary lightning.

The grand displays of nature will occasionally arouse some vague sentiment about God, but nothing of any definite character; and it is this definite something which all require, especially the populace. For the great majority of persons the universe with its marvels is an open book, which is left unread or not understood. It is an empty, silent temple of worship.

The sky and the stars teach astronomy, the ocean in its terrifying immensity teaches hydrostatics and hydrodynamics, the earth with its trees teaches physics and botany and many other things; but you will never master either astronomy, or hydrostatics, or hydrodynamics, or physics, or botany, or any other science, if the mysteries of nature and the laws which govern it are not explained to you by some one. So it is with the laws of God. You will learn them in the Church where, together with the practice of exterior worship, the Word is heard which interprets and makes it intelligible to all.

(4) "But," say some, "nowadays exterior

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 77

worship has become excessive, beyond all bounds, it suffocates interior devotion. How far have we travelled from the sublime simplicity of those forms of worship which were in use in the earliest centuries!"

I do not deny that sometimes and in certain places exterior worship is perhaps excessive and may possibly be harmful to interior devotion. But how is an exact limit—a *juste milieu*—to be defined in each individual case? The Church determines as to general lines and establishes the safest precepts to follow, but she cannot prevent abuses or excesses arising from ignorance or the passions, either in this or in many other things. So ought reason to regulate every man's actions and prevent him from doing either too much or too little; yet where is the man, be he ever so wise and virtuous, who always maintains moderation in everything? There is nothing that is good and excellent, but the danger of its abuse springs up alongside of it, and it may sometimes happen that in endeavouring to remove the abuse, the good itself may be cut away: *There is no substance which does not cast a shadow.*

78 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

Another observation must not escape us. Just as the people of different countries are different, so are their natures and their requirements, hence their methods of manifesting their religious feelings also differ. The people of the north, born beneath a dark cold sky, are rigid, severe, hard, taciturn, cautious, chary of everything that is lively, gay, brilliant; the southern races, Italians, Spaniards, etc., born under a laughing sky and in the midst of a luxuriant nature, amid flowers, love vivid, brilliant colouring, sound, feasts, music, cheerful singing, religious spectacles; and for this reason religious rites with us take a different form, and what is suitable and almost necessary for us may possibly be displeasing to the northern people, and what pleases them may not please us. Just as our languages are rich and harmonious, and theirs sound harsh to our ears, so is it with the outward expressions of worship.

Those show a lack of knowledge as regards the diversity of races who wish them all to be subjected to the same rules; and if those who consider themselves to be well-informed, were to know more about our

people, about their degree of culture, their tastes, perhaps they would be less hasty in condemning certain of their religious practices; for these practices respond to their condition and nature, and if not adapted to those of their judges, at least are suitable to their own.

I shall allude further on to certain abuses, and correct some erroneous impressions and some reprehensible practices.

Exterior worship may to a certain extent be considered like languages and clothes and other things in ordinary social life, matters which are continually undergoing the modifications imposed on them by necessity, expedience, times and circumstances. Whoever is poor dresses and lives as a poor man, whoever is rich, as a rich man; so the Church, in those times when she was obliged to live concealed in catacombs, without means of subsistence, fighting against difficulties of every kind, being poor, lived as one who is poor. Now, the conditions being changed, she has altered her mode of living, and presents herself in another garb of society. Civilized society itself demands this of her; to-day more than ever it would despise those poor

80 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

maimed rites of early centuries. Does it not repeatedly assert that the Church in non-essential matters ought to accommodate herself to the times and live a modern life? And she does so, rivalling society with the splendour of her services. Who would descend to the catacombs with us, if we were to return to them? If our churches were of wood, bare and squalid, who would set foot in them?

(5) "But in the meantime," it is said, "enormous sums are spent on the keeping of festivals, on fittings and decorations, or objects of luxury. Would it not be better to employ them for objects which are more deserving, more productive of good, or for works of charity?"

This is the most common objection that one hears from those who possibly have the least right to make it.

Has it not always been and is it not still considered a most praiseworthy thing to give employment to many hands, to many different trades? And does not exterior worship provide all this work? A church is erected, it is adorned with pictures, sculpture, carving, gilding, mosaics, an

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR 81

organ is built, a set of bells is cast, vestments, hangings, decorative rich stuffs are required. Do not the workpeople and artists profit by it all? Are not the makers of all these goods the first to gain by it? Does it not benefit every one? Does it not all work in favour of the fine arts, the giving of employment? Is it not an impetus to society?

How many fabulous sums are expended on building palaces, on furniture and luxurious ornaments, on villas, gardens, cooks, on the comfort of private individuals, and objects which can be enjoyed only by the fortunate owners or their friends and those whom they choose to favour! The money expended on places of worship goes to benefit everybody, and everybody without exception can enjoy them, specially the people, without paying a halfpenny, without asking for any permission, whenever and as much as they please. Here the principle of true democracy is applied with the greatest liberality. All the works of the Church, with all that appertains to her services, belong to every one, are always there for the people without any distinction of class. Only those who are enemies of the people can be an-

82 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

tagonistic to the exterior worship of religion, which is made by and for the people, regardless of distinctions of classes, or factions, or, I venture to say, even religious belief, since they can be enjoyed also by non-Catholics.

DEFECTS AND ABUSES OF
POPULAR DEVOTIONS



Defects & Abuses of Popular Devotions

IN speaking of interior and exterior worship always remember that these are not to be considered as separate or separable things; they are distinct from each other, but not separated: distinct as cause is from effect, as fruit from the tree, as soul from body, thought from speech. As the fruit draws the vital sap from the tree, and the body its life and force and power from the soul, so the living power and value and merit of exterior worship is derived from interior devotion; both are a necessity and a duty on the part of man towards God, but in different senses: interior worship comes first in order of time and intrinsic value, exterior worship comes second in both these respects.

1. And here it is that many fall into error, violating the boundaries set up by both reason and faith. For some, reflecting upon the excellence of interior devotion, are desirous of restricting all religion within the

86 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

soul and sanctuary of the conscience, wishing to eliminate entirely any exterior rites; while others, instead, not from principle or theoretically, but practically, seem to neglect the interior for the exterior worship, reducing the whole of religious worship to acts, rites, ceremonies and material practices. Two extremes which we must avoid.

What we have said up till now of the natural necessity for exterior worship clearly demonstrates the error of those excessive *spiritualists* (to give them a name) who look upon man as though he were an angel, and are prone to think that the soul can accomplish the interior acts of the intellect and will without the concurrence of the body, whilst science and experience itself teach the contrary, according to that fine utterance of the poet, philosopher and theologian who wrote that the soul

solo da sensato apprende
Ciò che fa poscia d' intelletto degno.*

Taking into consideration human nature, one can easily understand how cultivated,

* "The soul learns from the senses alone that which afterwards becomes worthy of the intellect" (Dante's *Il Paradiso*, Canto IV).

highly refined persons will incline to the error of these *spiritualists*, and how the great mass of the people will be more addicted to the opposite excess, being too much drawn towards a visible and material form of religion; for, as a rule, the people are more led by the senses than by rational and divine principles.

In this third portion of my letter I shall point out some—not all, for that would be impossible—but some of the most ordinary prevailing particulars in which exterior worship may err and depart from those laws which faith and sound reason would have us hold in respect.

2. The nature and qualities of worship, whether interior or exterior, are obviously determined by the objects which it has in view. As I said before, the object may be GOD, the GOD-MAN; it may be His Virgin Mother; or it may be the saints, their relics and images; it is obvious that worship must differ according to the variety of its objects. To offer a degree of worship to the Virgin Mother, to the angels, to saints, or their relics and images, similar to that which is offered to GOD, or to the GOD-MAN

88 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

CHRIST, would be to insult both faith and reason—a downright impiety! Who does not see this?

The Church with the most scrupulous care establishes the minutest forms and differences in the degrees of the worship which ought to be practised; but only too often, weakness, ignorance, lack of reflection and many other causes render all her injunctions ineffectual, and acts and ceremonies which ought to be kept distinct among themselves are all jumbled together in confusion.

GOD and the GOD-MAN, JESUS CHRIST, reign high above the angels and saints and the Mother of GOD herself; and it is an offence to Christian sense and natural reason to hold the Virgin, and even perhaps some particular saint, equalled to CHRIST, and invoked and honoured as though they were in themselves the actual source of grace.

Images of the Mother of GOD are carried through the streets, or the relics or image of some special saint—and the entire populace uncover and kneel; but CHRIST in the Sacrament is borne along—and it is a great thing if anybody as much as lifts his

SOME DEFECTS & ABUSES 89

hat or makes any sign of homage! The altars of the Holy Virgin and of the saints will be blazing in gold and silver, before their images quantities of lamps and lighted candles burn; and CHRIST's altar on which He dwells—behold it almost neglected! “Many,” exclaims the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, “many run to visit the relics of saints, admire their works, and contemplate with wonder their sanctuaries, and kiss their bones wrapped in silken cloths and covered with gold: and, behold, here on the altar Thou art present, my GOD, the Holy of Holies, the Creator of all men, the LORD of the angels!”

Do the people who seem sometimes to be paying a degree of worship to the Virgin and saints equal to and sometimes even greater than what is given to GOD—do they really place the Virgin and saints above GOD and the GOD-Man, CHRIST? No, certainly not! and heaven forbid that I should so much as suspect them of it! If I were to question any boy, any woman, from among the people, they would answer me in such a way as to show that they knew well how to distinguish between

90 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

GOD and JESUS CHRIST, and the Blessed Virgin and saints, and between the kinds of worship due to them. But nevertheless it is a fact that in practice this difference is badly observed; and this generates confusion and confirms the prejudices of people who look only to appearances, particularly those among our erring brethren, the Protestants, who are living or travelling in Catholic countries. They receive certain disagreeable impressions, arising from this confusion in public worship, and those who are inclined to become Catholics are repelled by it and draw back again.

For these reasons our parish priests and clergy will do well, by means of pastoral instructions, to put the faithful on their guard as to *the necessity of distinguishing between the worship which they owe to GOD and JESUS CHRIST and that which they should pay to the Virgin, the angels and the saints.* And they will do yet better if they will have the patience to descend to details and determine those acts of devotion which are to be made and those which are to be abandoned and condemned.

In speaking of JESUS CHRIST and the de-

votion of the Sacred Heart of JESUS (so beautiful and so general a devotion throughout the Church), I cannot refrain from quoting a very outspoken page from the writings of a French Bishop now living, who is beyond all doubt one of the most gifted of the illustrious members of the French episcopate. I myself would not have dared to write as he has done. Here are his words: "With regard to our SAVIOUR Himself, why must we partition, change, disfigure Him, when all we ought to do is to listen to, imitate, adore, love Him? Not to speak of those strange images which represent Him to us almost in the act of ostentatiously pointing to a large symbolized Heart upon His Breast, is it not the truth that what that Heart is intended to say to us would be expressed much better by a simple gesture or look? And, to quote but one example among a thousand, what would St Paul think of the little CHRIST-Child of Prague, with its tiny garments of gold and its insignia of a future kingdom? With what energy would he cry aloud that only one thing was needful for us to study—JESUS CHRIST and JESUS CHRIST crucified!

92 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

“I am aware that all these devotional practices may be explained and supported by theology and the most exacting orthodoxy, but are they of any practical use in our generation? *Omnia mihi licent*, said St Paul, *sed non omnia expediunt*. To set aside circumspectly all that appears excessive, although it may have been in practice for a long time past, and to bring forward, as the great attraction, JESUS and JESUS crucified—this is religion.”*

How much more appropriate and useful, and in conformity with faith and reason, would it be to present to the eyes of the people the noble, sublime and divine form of the SAVIOUR as it shines forth to us in the Gospels in the varying actions and periods

* It is needless to remark that Mgr Camus, the present Bishop of La Rochelle, from whom I have been quoting (Letter v, August 24, 1902), does not censure either the devotion to the Sacred Heart or the manner of depicting it as is so often done, with the Heart placed upon the breast and giving out rays of light. Only he would remark that this position is unnatural, and that the full significance of the representation may be obtained under another and more appropriate form. Why is this representation of the Sacred Heart used with such frequency as almost to appear to displace the crucifix? The crucifix existed from the earliest times; the image of the Sacred Heart dates from about a century and a half ago.

of His life, from the cradle to the cross—the ascetic, adorable Figure full of majesty and ineffable sweetness, such as we find delineated in the old monuments and finest creations of Christian art!

There is One CHRIST, one only and complete, and the various members of His adorable Body, only as they are united to it and therefore in personal union with the divine Word, *may* be and *ought* to be worshipped, because the worship refers to the Person in which they coexist. But it is not desirable to encourage too strongly this tendency to consider separately the parts of the divine Humanity; and when I see that in addition to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of JESUS, to His Blood, to His wounds (all recognized devotions of the Church), it is sought to introduce also the devotion to “His Sacred Hands,” “His Holy Face,” etc., I experience a feeling of aversion, fearing lest a certain fashion for new devotions should make its way into the Church, of which we have not the slightest need, and which by degrees might bring things to the point of rendering almost a subject of ridicule the devotion to JESUS CHRIST Himself.

94 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

For, after the "Devotion to the Sacred Face," "to the Hands," would not that to "the Eyes," to "the Tongue," soon follow? Where should we stop?

CHRIST is One Whole, together with all His Parts, in Heaven and in the Eucharist. Let us worship Him as He is in Himself, or by figures which represent Him in His entirety.

This will not hinder us from fixing our thoughts by preference upon His Heart, the emblem and organ of His love; or on His Blood, the price of our redemption; or on His Wounds, the witnesses of His love; but let us stop short at the boundaries fixed upon by the Church, and let us make an end to this mania for new devotions, which only spring up and fall away like the leaves of a tree. Do not let us too much materialize or too much particularize our worship, for in so doing we should diminish its value, its meaning and its efficacy, and possibly encounter that ridicule which certain devotions of the Middle Ages met with, of which I will refrain from reminding you.

"Let everything be in its right place," continues the Bishop whose words I here

adopt as mine, “before all, JESUS CHRIST only, by *Himself*, visibly incomparable, the sole author of our salvation. He alone is the Saviour of the world; who can share with Him His eternal sovereignty? He governs all things in heaven and earth. At His feet the Holy Virgin, a sweet and gracious vision, humbly prostrates herself, offering to the SON the homage which comes to her from the world below. She, in her grace-transformed soul, reproduces the holy virtues of her SAVIOUR in so far as any mere creature may reflect the infinite beauty of GOD.”*

Devotion to the great Mother of GOD, which consists in making us imitate her exceeding high virtues, can never be too much insisted upon; but we should always remember that she is a human being, and that it is a grievous offence to her to confusedly attribute to her the honours due to her SON. Only such honours and worship as are sincere can possibly be acceptable to GOD and the Virgin Mother, and an excess therein, as in everything else, offends truth. This is a great principle which stands out on the strength of its own intrinsic evi-

* Letter v, quoted above.

96 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

dence, and which must be constantly practised in every devotion including that to the Blessed Virgin; and the Bishops and priests should take care to see that this principle is properly applied.

3. As the planets are in attendance on the great sun of our system, so in like manner do the saints constitute the court and crown of the Head of all saints, JESUS CHRIST. We honour the ministers, friends, confidants of kings and of the great ones of the earth and all those who partake of their power and dignity, in proportion as they share therein. This is so natural that we do so without even thinking about it. The saints are ministers, friends and confidants of JESUS CHRIST, and by Him are made partakers of His power. "Ye are my friends," He said to the Apostles. It is, therefore, right to honour and invoke them according to their rank and merit. Not only are they the friends of CHRIST, but they are our advocates and examples which we can invoke and follow;*

* We may honour the saints and invoke them as mediators with God, but we are not *obliged* to do so, except when the Church orders us. I recollect when I had said this once to a well-known Protestant lady, who afterwards became a Catholic, a look of joy passed over her countenance

we must, however, honour them as the friends and confidants of CHRIST, as our advocates and models—never in such a manner as to exceed what their nature and dignity demands.

Not one of the faithful, not even the least educated, would ever believe it right to honour and invoke a saint as he would the Mother of JESUS CHRIST, much less as he would JESUS CHRIST Himself—this I am sure of; but in certain places and on certain occasions there does exist this apparent outward confusion, and we must put a stop not only to *error*, but to the *appearance of error*; and let this be your concern, beloved priests and parish priests!

We can and we ought to reverence and invoke all the saints and study how to imitate them, because for these reasons the Church has raised them to the dignity of the altar. But as each star differs from another, according to the phrase of St Paul, so do the saints, and all have their grades known only to God. Any one of the faithful

—an error had been dispelled. She had believed that it was impossible for us Catholics to have direct access to God, and that we might only approach Him through the Virgin and the saints—which is *NOT TRUE*.

98 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

may choose as his advocate and model the saint who is most pleasing to him and seems most to answer to his wants and, if I may say so, is most in sympathy with him; but what I cannot understand is why, whilst the faithful and the priests honour and invoke and seek to imitate comparatively modern saints, very few remember those great and marvellous saints who lived in the olden days, who shed around them such a light of sanctity and splendour of learning. Who remembers, venerates, or celebrates the memory of those great giants of holiness, Ignatius, martyr; Polycarp; Justin, martyr; Athanasius; John Chrysostom; Cyril; Augustine, and so on down to Gregory VII, Anselm, Bernard, Francis de Sales, Vincent de Paul and many others? And yet in these perfect models of virtue, these masters of Christian erudition, every one, and especially priests, would find much to learn, and far more than from those saints whom they prefer to honour and invoke.

It seems to me that if the clergy were to keep their eyes fixed chiefly on those exalted and glorious models, certain small minute devotional practices, certain vir-

SOME DEFECTS & ABUSES 99

tues (which though doubtless good and desirable are rather passive than active, and almost timid, secret and precise) which are fed by devotions, meditations and readings, done for so many hours according to the clock, certain abstinences, certain enumerated penances, would all be changed and raised in proportion to present social requirements. Their spirits would be attuned to great undertakings, they would adjust themselves more to the struggles of life, they would acquire that breadth of view and large-heartedness, that manly generosity, that practical working activity, which nowadays are demanded of them, and which the Church has need of, if we would wish to arrest the numbers of fallings away from the faith taking place before our eyes, and recover our lost ground.

All the virtues exercised by the saints are in themselves always excellent and deserving of praise, but their utility and practical importance are relative according to different epochs, countries and people. I do not think I am wrong in saying that the clergy would render themselves more fitted for their most high calling, by modelling

themselves on the above-named saints, rather than by taking for their example saints who have formed themselves in deserts, such as Paul the Hermit, Anthony, Macarius and others who lived of old in wildernesses and cloistered cells, and who are to be admired as examples of monastic discipline, for their love of solitude and penitential exercises—saints whom we can admire but not often imitate. Moreover, virtue itself, not excepting even its highest degree of sanctity, is adaptable and must adapt itself to different social conditions. If this were not so, it would cease in certain cases to be virtue, and would degenerate into a fault and a vice.

4. From devotion to the saints we pass easily to the veneration of their relics and images; there is no need to resort to the theological arguments for this, common sense alone is sufficient to establish it. When anyone dies who is famous for his genius, or learning, or great and arduous enterprises, what honours are paid to his body! With what care and reverence mementoes of him, his writings, all things that belonged to him, are collected! Na-

poleon's sword, Charlemagne's spear, the MSS. of Tasso and Ariosto are preserved as treasures. And why? Because they belonged to such celebrated men.

Why may not the same occur in the field of religion? The saints are, for us Catholics, the friends of God, heroes of faith, virtue and honour, and the merit attributed to what belonged to them is, so to speak, an emanation of virtue from their very selves. This accounts for the veneration of relics and images—a natural consequence of that which is paid to the persons of the saints themselves. We like to have portraits of those whom we love and esteem. What are the images and statues of saints? Their portraits—reproductions of their persons. Why may we not hold them in honour? The acts of reverence and devotion which we pay them appertain to the saints themselves, and, therefore, are not superstitious but reasonable and praiseworthy. Whoever rejects the veneration of the saints, their relics and images, as understood, approved and inculcated by the Church, shows that he is ignorant regarding it, or is unconsciously placing himself in opposition to the most

ordinary good, Christian and, I should say, common sense.

5. Some may inquire whether we are sure that the things we honour really are the relics of the saints to whom we say they belong, and, if they are not, whether our devotion is not superstitious.

As regards the relics of recent centuries we can be certain, because the Church acts with the greatest care and severity. We cannot be so certain about those which belong to remote times before and during the Middle Ages, when the Church did not and *could* not practise that caution and exactness which she does now. She allowed the devotions to be practised, basing them on tradition. This was a *necessity* in those days which does not carry certainty with it nor a guarantee as to authenticity.

There is a certain newspaper which disgraces Italy with its unmentionable articles and comic illustrations—it respects nothing, and answers only too truly to its name.*

* My readers will understand to what paper I allude, and that for the honour of our country, or at least out of respect for the most ordinary decency, it ought not to be in existence. Yet it continues, and I am told has a circulation of some 10,000 copies. I saw it in the hands of our emigrants in

This paper often takes upon itself to insult the veneration of ancient relics, demonstrating by many arguments, some false, some exaggerated and some occasionally true, that they could not be real, authenticated relics, but were rather given out to be real for the sake of "filthy lucre," advantage being taken of the simplicity and ignorant piety of the faithful.

I will not deny that this may have occurred in bygone days—even now some abuses may occur. But what is there to wonder at in that? Where are abuses *not* to be found? Where do we not find snares set for those of good faith?

Let us suppose that among the ancient relics in the Middle Ages there were some spurious ones and that they were venerated by the people—did a superstitious devotion arise in consequence? No, never! The people believed them to be real and the devotion Switzerland and Germany. It is a form of indecency and a scandal which the law forbids but takes no active steps to prevent.

[*L'Asino*—the *Ass*, is a perfect specimen of the most scurrilous "gutter-press" type of print. Its coarse coloured caricatures, together with its contents, are often quite unfit for publication, and would be suppressed with us immediately. —TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

had reference naturally to the saints whose relics they were supposed to be, and this sufficed to remove the suspicions and perils of a false superstition arising. I mean that those spurious relics became the representations and figures of the real, and there is no reason whatever to be scandalized or to make such a to-do about so small a matter.

It is a thing to be deplored, and we wish it had never happened and may never happen again, but in those times it was inevitable, and it is beyond our remedy now, but it does not in the slightest degree damage the purity of the faith or Christian piety.

Whilst speaking of this practice, or rather of the honour paid to the image of CHRIST, of the Virgin and saints, it is only just to recall the teaching of the Council of Trent, which only too many (and priests too) seem to be either ignorant or careless of. The Council ordains: "They (images and relics) are to be held in due honour and especially venerated in the churches, not because of a belief that in themselves they contain anything divine, or any virtue for which they should be honoured, or because anything may be asked of them, or because faith may

be placed in these images (as by the Gentiles, who at one time placed all their faith in idols), but because the reverence paid to them is to be attributed to their prototypes whom they represent; so that whenever we kiss them or uncover the head and kneel before them, we adore CHRIST and worship His saints of whom these are the images."* It seems to me that if these words of the Council of Trent were well understood and explained to the people, perhaps certain things which have a superstitious appearance would disappear altogether.

The image in itself is nothing. There is nothing superhuman or divine in it, nothing whatever. It is not to it that we pray or do reverence; it is not in it that we put our faith, but in that which it represents. For this reason the having one image or another, *this* statue or *that*, is a matter of indifference. Every now and then it is not so with the faithful. They want a particular image or statue and honour and venerate it more than another, although very often it may be artistically inferior to the other and not even decorous; yet if it is suggested to alter or

* Sess. 35, Decr. De Invocat., etc.

remove it somewhere else or exchange it for a better, they all protest and cry out and oppose its removal! Is not this a sign of superstition? If they act thus because the image is dear to them, and dearer as having been revered by their fathers, because bound up with memories, or because it excites their devotion in a greater degree, then their conduct may be tolerated. But I am afraid that the true reason is that in their ignorance they see in it *an indefinable something divine, a certain mysterious virtue*, and this is a remnant of paganism and idolatry prohibited by the Council of Trent.

There are certain images and statues of the Virgin and the Saints which attract to them crowds of devout worshippers, even from distant countries. What is the reason of this preference?

It may well be that GOD will dispense His favours more in one place than another. In some places and in certain sanctuaries one's faith may be more forcibly awakened by the very sight of these places and sanctuaries, or by the concourse of worshippers, or from other reasons, and hence it may be that one more easily ob-

tains what one asks for there. Under this aspect the preference shown is permissible, and even praiseworthy, provided always the doctrine of the Council of Trent remains intact. But I am not sure if this is always the case; and on this practical point also how useful and necessary it is that the clergy should properly instruct the people!

6. And here a fitting opportunity presents itself for me to add an important warning. Public education is now making great advances in all classes, owing to all now being able to read. With education also increases the desire and the right to judge, and religious matters are privileged perhaps in being more discussed and more severely criticized than any others. It is, therefore, more than ever necessary that the greatest prudence should be used nowadays in regard to the preaching of sermons, the biographies of saints, the origins of certain relics, images and feast-days, certain apparitions, etc. Let us put aside everything that is without a secure historical basis. Do not let us talk about legends, miracles, apparitions, wonderful events, which have no foundation beyond a vague

tradition held by the people, who are always so ready to believe and exaggerate anything which is out of the ordinary course of things. It is we who should lead the people; not let ourselves be guided by them.

There are enormous quantities of ecclesiastical books, both ancient and modern, in which the critical judgment displayed is most defective. Some are filled to overflowing with old chronicles and legends of the lives of the saints, in which the supernatural, miracles and prophesyings, exceed all bounds. Very often priests and preachers, drawing largely, in all good faith, from these sources, give utterance from the altar and pulpit to things which, though possibly pleasing to the supernatural-loving populace, cause disgust and contempt to serious reflecting persons.

Everywhere, but particularly in the churches, we ought to teach the Truth only, for we are the ministers of Him who said, "I am the Way and the Truth."

It is not by fables, perverted facts, miracles invented by the popular imagination, visions, apparitions, raptures, ecstasies, inventions, exaggerations, and the misrepresentation of history, that we shall edify the faithful or

draw to us those who have separated themselves from the faith—and there are many who have done so.

Let us eliminate with the greatest care from our sermons everything which is not historically certain, and if a doubt exists, treat it as a doubt. The Church has no need of untruths or exaggerations to defend her from error or exhibit her in the light of a divine creation. Those who imagine they are rendering a service to the cause of Truth, which is the cause of the Church, by suppressing the truth when it should be spoken, or worse still, by pandering to what is false, cruelly betray it; they are the real enemies of the Church.

In our books, particularly those of by-gone days, many facts are related as historical which cannot stand by modern criticism; whoever wrote them were victims of their own ignorance or that of others. There is nothing marvellous in this, and we should be very lenient towards them. We too shall often be deceived, and those who come after us will have to deal leniently with us. But let us be quick to recognize what is untrue or inexact, and be the first

to point it out if necessary, so as not to have to suffer the shame of seeing it exposed by our enemies.

The honest dealer, who knows that his goods are to be shown to competent and impartial judges, hastens either to remove any that are damaged, or says himself that they are damaged. So in our churches and lecture-halls let no one ever hear of deeds, apparitions, miracles and acts of the saints, that are not historically proved, and are exaggerated or misleading, and, far from edifying the hearers, excite, if not their contempt, their pity, and finally create doubts as to the truth of the entire teaching of the Church.

7. It is now several years that I have meditated speaking about a very grave but at the same time so delicate a subject, that I could not make up my mind to do so, but kept postponing it from one year to another. Now, however, as I see that several other Bishops have resolutely faced the question, I shall venture to follow their example.* It concerns *devotions*, and the need

* I note the Bishops of Coire and Saint Gall, in Switzerland; of La Rochelle and Rodez, in France; and others.

SOME DEFECTS & ABUSES 111

of suppressing certain abuses of them, which have either already appeared or are very likely to make their appearance.

By “devotions” are understood those religious acts which it is customary to perform—such as special prayers, the veneration of relics, images, visiting of churches, sanctuaries and altars; processions, pilgrimages, penances, benedictions, triduos, novenas, octaves, and so on; they are very numerous, and it would be impossible to mention them all, as they vary according to different times and countries. These devotions are, so to say, the natural outcome of interior worship, and whereas this latter is the soul, so the former constitute the body, or exterior worship.

Devotions as a whole are a natural necessity, and consequently always have been, are, and will be in existence, although varying as to form. Some of these devotions have been instituted by the Church, others allowed and approved, and some have, through a kind of tolerance, become more or less general.

I need not say that when they are ordained, or prescribed, or approved, or even

tolerated by the Church, they cannot in themselves be otherwise than desirable and praiseworthy. But does it follow as a necessary consequence that in their practice there is never anything to be corrected or re-proved? No one would venture to affirm this.

In the use of devout practices, private or public, it is above all things easy to sin through *excess*. Every one knows that even the most desirable things may become prejudicial if they are overdone. Work, food, repose, light and many other things are not only good but necessary to life—and yet too much of them does harm, and may even finally be fatal to life. This may be said also of exterior worship and religious practices; excess is always harmful and reprehensible. And why is this so?

I will leave aside the question of inordinate expenses and how they weigh upon the faithful, of loss of time, and many other drawbacks to be found in each, and limit myself to what is actually injurious to religion.

Excess in exterior religious practices disperses the spiritual forces in too many

directions, distracts, fatigues and oppresses the spirit, and instead of elevating it and arousing all its energies, relaxes the fibres and suffocates it. Look at a tree. In order to live and be fruitful, it must be covered with young shoots and leaves, by means of which it breathes and draws its necessary sustenance. But let the shoots and leaves become too thick and luxuriant, and the vital sap of the tree will be dispersed—it will not bring forth any fruit or only a few miserable, unripe specimens, which fall off—and very soon the tree itself begins to wither up and die from exhaustion.

This is what happens to anyone who loads himself with devotions and religious practices, and lives entirely for the exterior worship—he succumbs beneath the weight of them. Look now at the skilful husbandman who remorselessly cuts away the superfluous branches from the vine, and so restrains the flow of sap, thus making sure of the fruit, and at the same time providing for the life of the plant.

Fewer devotions, fewer religious practices, less consumption of spiritual forces in external acts—and more vigorous will

be the spiritual life, more strongly will burn the inner fire of charity.

Focus the sun's rays upon a given point, and you will get *fire*; divert them and disperse them, and you will get but a feeble light and scarcely any feeling of heat.

Multiply your devotions, and you diminish the energies of religious feeling and weaken piety.*

8. It is impossible to doubt that a certain feebleness of mind—a lack of fibre and energy—is manifesting itself within the Church. Where is the cause of this? Monsignor Le Camus † does not hesitate to write these very serious words: “The general weakness of spirit in the Church arises in part from the variableness which a number of new things produce in the religious feelings—new things which excite a passing enthusiasm and create a real peril to

* Speaking on one occasion to an extremely able and good man, though no believer, I asked him: “How do you account for the marvellous strength of the Mohammedan religion, which goes to the length of most deplorable fanaticism?” and he replied, “It is quite natural. The Moslems restrict the object of their worship to God alone—Allah. The Catholics spread theirs over too many objects.” There was some amount of truth in the reply, I am obliged to confess.

† Bishop of La Rochelle.

the spiritual health, as sweet foods substituted for meat may provoke momentarily an appetite for them, but afterwards change the elements of the body itself." * And further on, addressing himself to the younger clergy, he exclaims: "Let St Paul be our model. We must give real, substantial nourishment to these souls confided to our care. Let us prevent their ardour from degenerating into a taste for those little, minor devotions which change yearly together with their inventors. Recollect that we must show ourselves as men to the world—not effeminate weaklings!"

Let us frankly say out what we think.

Can you imagine, O my fellow priests, a St Paul—any one of the Apostles, who traversed the world proclaiming the Gospel and shedding forth their blood—a Saint Ambrose, a St Gregory Nazianzen, a Saint Cyprian, a St Boniface, a St Francis Xavier—can you imagine any of them laden with medals, images, the *Agnus Dei*, sacred figures, religious emblems of all kinds? I believe it is impossible, both for you and me, so to picture to ourselves those men, so full of

* See letter already quoted, p. 90.

faith, burning with charity, who prayed in the spirit, and were ready to suffer even death for the love of JESUS CHRIST.

Am I condemning then the use of medals, rosaries, images, sacred symbols? GOD forbid! They are, I have already said so, means to excite faith and sustain piety—but let them be used with moderation. Do not let us imagine real virtue to exist in them, nor think that through their means we please GOD, for He looks on the mind and heart, and desires above all things that we should learn to govern our passions and put virtue into practice. What are all these devotions, rosaries and novenas, benedictions and visits to altars and famous sanctuaries, processions and pilgrimages and hymns and feast-days and functions worth, unless we do our duty and live a real Christian life? What are they but a pretence of virtue? They are as leaves without fruit—and who cares for leaves only?

9. It is still worse when these devotions drag the poor people into puerile, absurd, superstitious practices, unworthy of Christian and civilized countries. In one parish (not in Italy) I found, not long ago, among

other devotions practised one to the *Madonna del Buon Consiglio*—Madonna of Good Counsel. A very good thing in itself—but how was it brought forward and put into practice? A sheet of paper was given to each of the devout, on which were printed a hundred Madonnas, *and every day one of these was to be torn off and—swallowed!* and this was to be done for a hundred days in succession! Could anything more ridiculous, contemptible, mad, be invented? Does not the superstition which was condemned by the Council of Trent clearly show itself here, of those who recognize in images some hidden virtue and power—precisely as the savages believe in their fetishes, and the Indians in their amulets?

I am silent as regards many other devotions which resemble this one and which I have heard of from trustworthy persons, which I know of myself, and which dishonour the Catholic religion and cause laughter and derision. And should not the custom be disapproved which has been introduced into some places, of writing letters to St Anthony and different saints (always for some temporal benefit) and placing them in boxes

118 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

put for that purpose in the churches? Now, too, it is sought to introduce the veneration of a certain Saint Spedito, who it is desired should especially interest himself in matters which are urgent and imminent and almost despaired of! And there exist those who believe in these devotions, those who make gain out of them, and those who allow themselves to be made profit of! This devotion to St Spedito is one which has its origin in a mere play upon a word, according to the Bollandists. These are devotions which ought not so much as to be named among us, and yet they go on spreading! Oh, that our holy religion, so sublime in its origin, so pure in its worship, may be preserved from falling miserably into ridicule, or so low as to recall to mind the heathen superstitions!

10. But I have not yet finished with this subject. If you will consider the origin, spirit and tendency of certain devotions you will find that not infrequently they have for their object the obtaining of certain concessions, some material favour, some removal of this or that evil, e.g., to keep away hailstorms, to obtain rain or

fine weather, to drive away obnoxious insects, that the cattle may not take a disease, that the harvest may be abundant, that business may be prosperous, and so on without end.

Is it lawful and right to ask temporal favours of GOD, and to ask them through the invocation of this or that saint? Yes; it is right and lawful in itself to do so. But in what way? *Never* under the serious impression that the devotion itself or practice can be infallible, or almost so, as so many of the faithful, pious rather than educated, lead one to fear they believe. GOD *may* listen to them, their faith *may* be rewarded by Him, but the result is not necessarily bound up with the devotion as grace is allied to the sacraments, and even to think so is both a presumption and a gross error. The devotion must always be subject to the condition that it pleases GOD and that it shall turn to benefit in what is of most importance, namely, the real good of the soul.

Ah! even among good Christians, among those souls so dedicated to devout practices, how little the words of JESUS CHRIST are re-

membered, who said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and these things shall be added to you." On the contrary, they first seek other things, that is to say temporal benefits, deliverance from bodily ills, and *afterwards* seek, if they seek them at all, the spiritual ones. These are the real objects of not a few of these devotions, if one may judge by what one sees and hears.*

It might not be so bad if this were all. It would indeed be a base form of trading, offering up acts of devotion in exchange

* There is in our diocese the celebrated Sanctuary of Caravaggio, visited by the devout from many parts of North Italy, and the object of numerous pilgrimages. A periodical is published under the title of *The Sanctuary of Caravaggio*. I read in it a long list of persons who commend themselves to the Virgin, and almost always beg for some favour. It is not without surprise that I note it is always, or nearly always, some *temporal* favour which they ask—of *spiritual* there is hardly a trace. This confirms what I have said, and proves how the spirit of true Christianity and real, solid devotion are on the wane. It would please me to have this list of *temporal* favours asked for suppressed, as it does not appear to me to be edifying. To sum up, the object of these persons' devotions almost always appears to be a worldly human one, and therein differs little from that of the heathen. It is necessary to instruct our people on this point, and it is the duty of the clergy to do so. We must elevate the minds and hearts of the devout, directing them towards higher things worthier of Christians. *Sursum corda!*

for temporal favours; but in certain cases the good faith shown might possibly constitute some excuse. But what is to be said of these devotions when it is proposed by means of them not only to obtain material favours and the successful issue of simple lawful and minor interests, but to ensure the success of unlawful ones, opposed, and openly, to all religious principles? This is, however, so. Rarely perhaps, and very rarely we hope, are they so offered, but undoubtedly it does so occur. Such is the ignorance and force of the passions that practices and acts of devotion are made in order that the Virgin or such or such a saint may remove someone who is a hindrance in the way of an inheritance, or an obstacle to the gratifying of some passion, or may punish some person who is an object of hatred. To such a pitch of blindness do some arrive.*

* See how the Devotion to St Joseph is treated in a Catholic newspaper. "A poor religious, being molested and worried by her curé, appealed to St Joseph, praying him to procure for the good man [the curé] some better position elsewhere, which would liberate her from his insupportable tyranny. This was a difficult matter to accomplish, for it seems that the curé was not of a character to be appreciated by parishioners, and apparently it could not be managed.

122 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

11. Lastly (and this is the final remark only because it grieves me to dwell longer on this unpleasing topic), lastly, let us bravely own that, oftener than we think, a subtle, deadly poison instils itself, almost imperceptibly, into these devotions, the poison of *private interest*. There are the interests of self-love, vanity, a desire to make oneself prominent in the eyes of the people or of one's superior, to be spoken of by the populace as a zealous priest, to form a

But good St Joseph arranged it in another way. An attack of bronchitis came on; the curé, having confessed and received the Sacraments, went to another world, and the poor little Sister Clare, telling her rosary for him, did not fail to add, after each *Gloria Patri*, 'I thank thee, O good St Joseph!'" (See the *Propagator of the Devotion to St Joseph*, February, 1899, p. 76). This extract from a Catholic newspaper was read in the French Chamber, March 16, 1903, and everybody can imagine the merriment it occasioned and the impression it made in the Chamber, where afterwards the Devotion to St Antony of Padua was also mentioned. I have quoted this fact in order to show to what an abuse the practice of certain devotions in Religious Houses has passed, where there ought not to be a lack of sufficient instruction, and to show how men of the world, the deputies themselves in the most anti-clerical Chamber in Europe, are aware of it, with what result the reader may imagine. What a discredit these excesses are to religion, and what an opportunity they offer to sceptics and unbelievers to throw ridicule on piety and faith! Similar facts to these have occurred in other countries which we know of and could quote, facts which are almost incredible; but this one will suffice.

clientèle for oneself, to open out for oneself a way to get on. There is the low, base interest, which in the times of St Paul caused him to blaze forth in wrath against certain men of the Primitive Church as being "greedy of filthy lucre." And why "filthy lucre"? Because under the appearance of piety and religion their eyes were really fixed on the money which they were striving after and for which they made merchandise of holy things. Before St Paul, too, our LORD JESUS CHRIST chastised mercilessly those miserable men who, under pretence of long prayers, devoured the houses of widows.

It is necessary then that the clergy should most particularly study in every way to put an end to the suspicion and accusation that they make use of their sacred ministry and pious practices in order to pander to the dishonourable passion of avarice.

Is it never the case that this base passion insinuates itself dexterously into certain religious practices and devotions? The world has its suspicions, and whispers that it is so, and appearances are not wanting to make it appear credible! I observe that all these

devotions and pious societies for devotions, of all sorts and everywhere, always ask for money, some *little offering*, either in a direct or indirect manner. I know that certain honest and necessary expenses must be provided for, and are so far good. But do *all* the offerings go towards the expenses? And these expenses themselves, do they not conveniently transform themselves into profitable industries alongside of the devotions? And what happens if by chance the offerings exceed the expenses? Again, how many ways there are by which, without raising any suspicion, the promoters and administrators of the offerings can derive advantage to themselves from them!

I am not accusing anybody. I merely point out the possibilities which exist of material advantages derived from certain devotions, worked with singular ability, sometimes individually, sometimes collectively, sometimes alone, sometimes by means of others, or through the shops and trades which get bound up with the objects of devotion.*

* *Abridged Note.*—The Bishop of Rodez, already quoted in these pages, attacks with all his might this illicit trafficking veiled

12. If ever there was a period when Catholics, both priests and laymen, ought to guard themselves from the "defiling pitch," the evil of seeking their material interests under the shadow of religion, committing "simony" with subtle art, it certainly is this of ours. Nowadays, owing to the thousand channels of the press and facilities of communication of all kinds, owing also to

under the mask of devotions. The expressions employed by this French Bishop are burning, and not less so those used by other Bishops, e.g., the Bishop of Nice. Several articles deserve to be reprinted here which appeared in the *Settimana Religiosa* in Paris, Lyons, Albi, Cambrai, Arras, Clermont, Bruges, Mans, all approved by their respective ecclesiastical authorities, and quoted by the Abbé Brugerette, professor of the Lyons University, in his discourse entitled, "Les Orientations Actuelles de la France Religieuse." Do not let our brother-Catholics in France be offended at this—but, to a great extent the new devotions which are inundating us are either of French origin or owe their propagation principally to the French. . . We rejoice now that the eloquent apostolic voices which condemn these abuses should proceed also from France. Let us hope that they will find their echo in our own Italy, where these weeds have taken root and are continually spreading. It is enough to read certain books of devotion, certain small works, certain leaflets in which the language of the lowest interests mixes with the most grotesque piety, to understand the need there is to put an end to these abuses. It is for the clergy to disperse the cloud of hazy, almost superstitious, ideas and but half-understood religious practices, and to recall the people to a solid firm piety and practice of the really Christian life.

the lack of faith, and anti-clerical hatreds now so obstinate and profound, the slightest failing on our part is made much of and converted into a weapon against religion. The regular unimpeachable conduct of twenty or fifty priests and religious is overlooked, in order to point at and cry out against one who is guilty. Then, no priests, no religious have ever done anything good; all have done evil, nothing but evil, and always evil! Is this justice? Nay, it is unspeakably unjust on the part of the world, but so it is, and it is useless to protest against it. All the more is it our duty as Catholics never to give an opening to such accusations and calumnies, and to render it impossible to make them.

Whoever looks at our educated wealthy society, whether it be aristocratic or middle-class, commercial or industrial, cannot but receive a sad impression. As regards religion it is to a great extent sceptical, indifferent, incredulous, and practically divorced from faith and the Church. What are the causes of this state of things?

Without doubt there are many reasons, but among others and perhaps not the least,

is the persuasion that religion is something to be left to the poor and to women and children; educated men are ashamed of being thought religious. And note that this especially is the case of our country, Italy; it is not so in England or in the other Protestant countries, where men of the upper classes are not ashamed publicly to profess themselves believers and religious.

Why does this prejudice exist? Because religion taken altogether presents itself to the classes above referred to as a ponderous mass of duties, practices, beliefs, devotions, with no reason to justify them. It appears to them a great superstructure of meaningless rites and ceremonies, suitable for the soothing and pleasing of the people, but offensive to good sense. All those devotions which have become almost merged into what is the substance of religion, and which, I venture to say, form a sort of distasteful incrustation upon it, have no slight influence in confirming those social classes of whom I speak in their false opinions, and they accordingly become still more disgusted with religion and hold aloof from it. They notice that the clergy occupy themselves

more about women and their devotions, than with men and the sound practices of religion; so they become alienated, with the harmful result which all may see.

Let us look to it, then, to remove this prejudice, to clear away this encumbrance from the cause of religion, this double growth of unnecessary, senseless devotions, which weaken the faith, poison the sacred simplicity of the Gospel, and lay open the soul to the suspicion that religion is but an instrument for serving base interests, and but little removed from any other industry.

In order to destroy this false impression and prepare—though only distantly—the way for the return of these erring souls now outside the Church, let us banish the practices and devotions which offend them. Let the useless leaves drop off which are developing gradually on the tree of the Church and impoverishing the divine sap to the damage of its fruit, the true, solid virtues of the Christian Life. Let us remove from the field of the Church “that unhealthy fungus-growth which has sprung up beneath the tree of the cross.” This forcible phrase is not mine; it is made use of by a French

Bishop and gladly repeated by me on account of its truth.

And as the occasion here presents itself, I wish to give utterance to a truth which I hold to be most important, though it may appear to some to be too strongly stated.

The entire Christian religion is made up of two parts. One, a summing up of truths which we are bound to believe; the other, a summing up of things which we must do and laws which we must observe.

The truths which we must believe are contained in the Creed. The things we must do and the laws we must observe are contained in the Sacraments and the Decalogue. The great total of truths and laws is fundamentally contained in the Gospel. But in what way? As germs, and in their essential elements, dispersed throughout the sacred writings and apostolic oral traditions, just as the tree is contained in the seed.

In the course of time, that seed—that nucleus of historic truth to be believed, and those precepts and laws to be observed—has gradually developed in hundreds of ways, too many to be enumerated.

Make a catalogue of the truths defined

by the General Councils, of the rules and laws which have gradually emanated from the Church; of those which we find, for example, in the fifth or tenth century, and compare them with what we now possess. What a difference you will find! How enormously their number has increased, and how the meaning and application of them has grown! And yet the foundation, the root, is the same, it is that of the apostolic times, because nothing material has been added to it and nothing may be taken away. We nowadays believe the same Creed and observe the same divine laws as the primitive Christians believed and observed. They possessed the sacred treasure in a more compendious form. We possess it highly developed in certain defined truths and laws applicable to new wants.

In the beginning of things the faith was restricted to a belief in GOD, the TRINITY, JESUS CHRIST; and the laws to be observed were the Ten Commandments. Nowadays how many specified truths exist regarding GOD, the TRINITY, the nature of the TRINITY, JESUS CHRIST, the mystery of His Person, the Church, the Sacraments!

What is it that has taken place?

Religious worship has undergone a dogmatic and moral development, as it was natural it should.

Just in the same way as many truths, many almost new aspects of those truths themselves, proceeded forth from the Creed, the germ, so did the form and devotions of religious worship increase.

JESUS CHRIST, the GOD-MAN, was adored. Here we have the truth in its germ: then He was adored in His wounds, His Blood, in the incidents of His Passion, in His Heart. From synthesis they passed to analysis, from the whole to the individual parts, and so with other revealed truths.

Here then we have the origin of a great many of the devotions which blossomed forth in the field of the Church; they are as it were the branches, flowers, fruit and leaves, of greater or less value, growing on the great tree of the Church. Religious worship, which in early days was in a more concentrated form, just as all dogma was also, increased together with the increasing development of dogma, and hence is derived that efflorescence of devotions approved

or at least "tolerated" by the Church. Of any other forms of devotions I take no account.

Although in their origins, and theologically speaking, these devotions may be as good in themselves as the dogmas from which they sprung, yet they may be harmful because of their number and methods.

It is a good thing when some great nobleman invites all to his house and sets before his guests a great banquet where meats and good things abound, but it is not well that all who sit at table should partake immoderately of everything—moderation is needful. And so it is also with devotions which are lawful and right and thought well of by the Church. Let each one make use of them according to his own particular circumstances and nothing more. A certain measure of discretion, a certain restraint, must be employed, if we do not wish them to prove more harmful than good.

Generally speaking, would it not be better to do our best to induce the faithful to restrict themselves to the devotions and devotional practices which are most practical

and elevating and in keeping with the times, thereby causing, through a lack of support, a cessation of the others, or at least their reduction to a minimum? Is it not true that by restricting devotions to a few, but those few sound substantial ones, we should provide the faithful with healthier, more strengthening, and less costly food?

Yes, I think so. We must, instead of scattering them, gather together our religious forces, and direct and concentrate them on those objects which will nourish the faith and effectively increase piety. Let us strive to call the attention of minds to the fundamental objects of religion: GOD; JESUS CHRIST; the Holy Eucharist, which *is* JESUS CHRIST Himself; the Virgin Mother; let us see to it that hearts and minds are fixed on the grand mysteries of the faith and not on their remote applications; on the substance of the dogmas rather than on their outgrowths.

GOD and the perfections of GOD, the GOD-MAN, JESUS CHRIST, the mystery of the altar, the Mother of GOD, considered in herself rather than in so many of the derivatives of her privileges—let these be the subjects

134 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

of our discourse and the objects of devotion on the part of the faithful; let us look for life at its sources rather than in the little rivulets derived, and often so distantly, from the fountain-head; do not let us divide, crumble up into small particles, as it were, our religious worship by representing it in so many small pictures, so many minute objects, under so many figures which succeed one another so rapidly and cannot produce any strong, lasting impression; let us bring forward the idea of GOD in all His infinite perfections, GOD as creator and preserver of all things; let us represent JESUS CHRIST our Redeemer, Master and Model, in all His magnificent and simple majesty, entire as He appears in the Gospel; let us represent the Virgin Mother as she is depicted in ancient monuments; and the ideas of the people, believe me, will be raised to a higher level; they will create among themselves a simple-minded, manly, strong form of piety which will escape unscathed the sneers and jests of unbelievers, and will enforce respect from them.

13. We descend too much to particulars when we teach, and are too exacting, and

because we require too much, we obtain very little. I think of what the Apostles did, and the Apostle *par excellence*, St Paul. He went from one city to another, staying here for some weeks, there for months, elsewhere sometimes for a whole year. Everywhere he established a Christian community, putting at its head a priest, a Bishop, and then going on his way. And what was it St Paul taught? We get some idea from the Acts of the Apostles and from his Epistles.

He taught that there was one God; that the Son of God made Himself Man, suffered, died and rose again; that it was necessary to believe in Him, to receive Baptism, the Holy Eucharist; that it was necessary to keep the divine laws and to obey one's own pastors. This is the substance of his teaching. It was the Creed, the Ten Commandments in all their simplicity, God, JESUS CHRIST, the Law, the Sacraments, the Church, all in one compact form.

Ought not that to be sufficient for our faithful which sufficed for St Paul? We take the teachings of the Gospel, the Creed, the Decalogue, as amplified by the Church's definitions, and often by the discussions and

136 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

refinements of theologians, and we try to fasten them all on to the minds of the poor people and even their children! We want them to learn all those dry synthetical formulas gathered in the Church, which, though clear enough to a theologian, are unintelligible to the people. Is this reasonable in us? No indeed, it is too much to expect, and can but weary them. Those amplifications are perhaps needful and good for us priests, for teachers, and for certain of the laity, but not for the people, who are only oppressed by them. Let us confine our teaching to positive matters, putting them into simple, popular form, and illustrating them suitably by impressive figures of speech. When I hear of children, and specially country people, being spoken to about the most profound truths of the faith—for example, of the distinction between the Divine Persons of the Trinity; of the generation of the Son by the Father by means of the intellect; of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son by love; of transubstantiation existing and the accidents remaining in the Eucharist; and many other truths, certified, but incompre-

hensible to the people and to children of eight and ten, who learn and repeat them from memory without understanding a single word of them; I remember how it was with myself as a boy; when I hear of all this, I ask myself, "Is this a good method of teaching the Catechism? Is it not rather the way to *bore* these poor children and people? Is it not a waste of time and effort, and a mere confusing and oppression of such childish intellects?" How often have I said to myself, "Too much theology!" Here we have the Catechism choked by theology. We practically require of these children that they should know as much as the priests and theologians do—if, by the way, we *do* know! for there is no doubt that many priests would *not* know how to explain such involved formulas.

Let us reduce the catechismal teachings to a few, to the fewest, of fundamental truths, which can be understood to a certain extent; and the same with dogmatic truths, putting them into intelligible forms; and let us make more of practical, moral teaching, proving it by facts. Look at the Gospel—*that* will be the everlasting Catechism of the people;

138 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

and we with our theological learning have rendered it obscure and unintelligible to them.

Let no one say I undervalue theology; I appreciate it highly, but it is for us; and to the people we should offer, as did St Paul, the milk of the Word, not the solid meat which they are not able to receive.

14. And it is the same with regard to prayer, which constitutes practically the basis of religion. A superfluity of prayers, said too in Latin, not generally understood by the people, only wearies and, instead of affording them support, tires them. Yet prayers (and sometimes *such* prayers, and so many of them!) form the greater part of all devotions. We forget that the Apostles once said to JESUS CHRIST, "Master, teach us to pray," and JESUS answered them, "When you pray, say, 'Our Father who art in heaven,'" etc. JESUS taught but one single prayer, and this—note it well—to the Apostles, who were to be, as they themselves said, men of prayer. Behold it! It is most short, most simple; and before He taught it them, He had already said: "When you pray, speak not much, as the heathen,

for they think that in their much speaking they are heard.”

Why then do we exact from the people such interminable prayers, and in addition sometimes Latin ones, which they cannot understand? JESUS taught the *Pater noster* in the language then spoken by the people, and understood by the Apostles. Why do not we do the same? Let us distinguish between what is necessary and what may be useful and expedient. What CHRIST taught so clearly, and what sufficed for the Apostles—those pillars of the Church—ought also to suffice for our people; and instead we are trying to lay a weight on them which He never imposed, and which we priests ourselves are sometimes glad to let fall from our own shoulders.

15. This letter is exceeding the limits which I have hitherto observed in my letters, and therefore I will now conclude, summing up in a few lines the substance of what I have been endeavouring at greater length to demonstrate.

First of all, the interior religious worship of the mind and heart is a necessity, exacted by both reason and faith. This worship

springs forth naturally from the soul, and develops into exterior acts. This development is also most natural, is from GOD and consecrated to religion. It is the Church's duty to decide how it shall be put into practice; but if the exterior worship is not reinforced by the interior worship—that is to say, if it is not acting in union with the mind and the heart—then it is a valueless worship; it is as a body bereft of the soul.

Devotional practices are various forms of the exterior worship, and are subject to the laws of the Church. Let us be careful not to let them become excessive and reduced to merely external material acts, or in any way superstitious and unworthy of the religion we profess. Let us pay attention to the deeds worthy of a Christian life rather than to exterior devotions, bearing in mind always the words of Saint Paul: "For in CHRIST neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creature" (meaning thereby the leading of a Christian life); and the utterance of the SAVIOUR, "I will have mercy, not sacrifice," that is to say, "works of mercy."

Here, in this sublime utterance which fell

from the lips of the SAVIOUR, we find the character described of that piety and virtue which His disciples are to practise. They are to fulfil their exterior religious acts even as JESUS CHRIST fulfilled them, and as they are designated by Him with that word "sacrifice"; but over and above these outward forms are to be placed the practical exercises of works of charity, as expressed in the words, "I will have mercy."

Nowadays, as you know, the world cares but little for purely religious practices, almost despising them, and sets value only on works of charity. Herein it gravely errs. Let us do better—we, the children of the Gospel, and true disciples of JESUS CHRIST. Let us, together with our religious practices, unite always works of charity, thereby rendering also the former acceptable and deserving of respect.

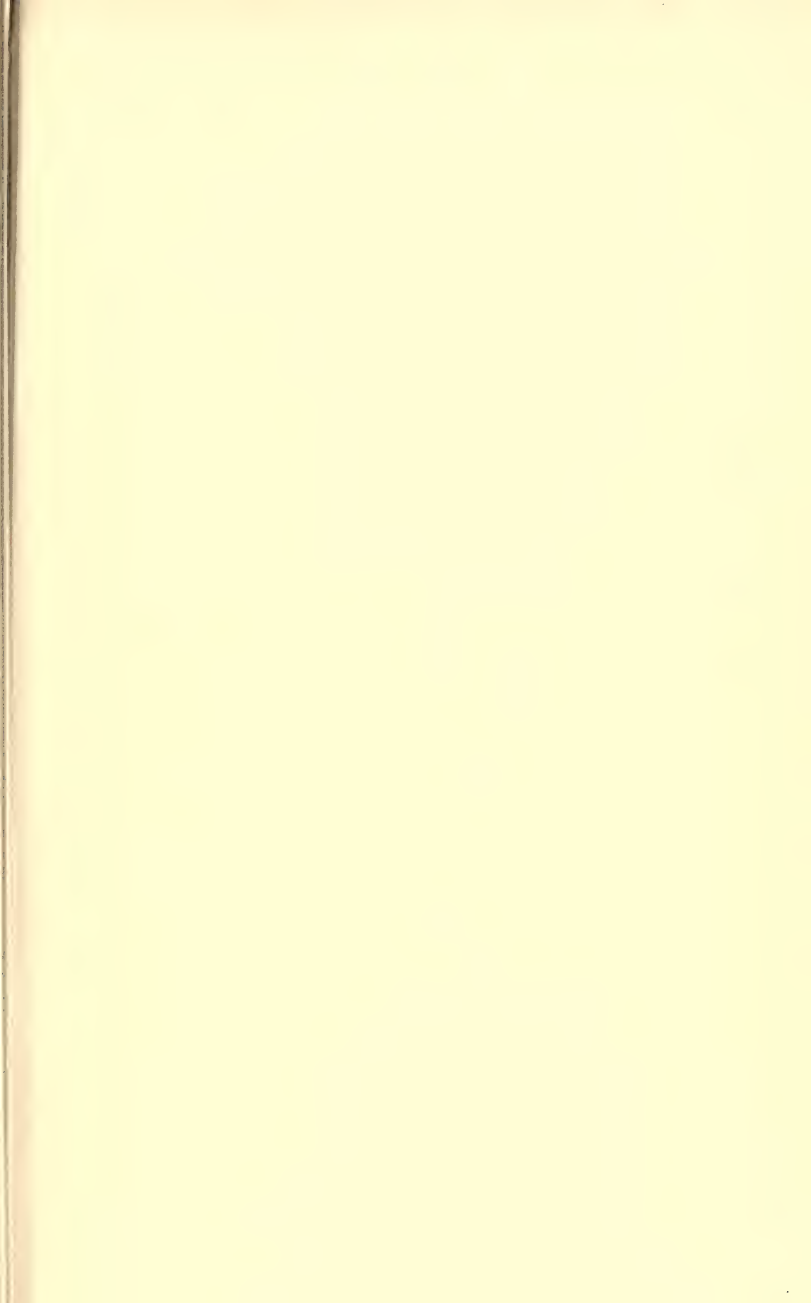
Listen to the voice of our LORD JESUS CHRIST when He cries out against the Pharisees, who, mindful of the minutest ceremonial, yet neglected to practise the divine laws: "Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have

142 ON RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

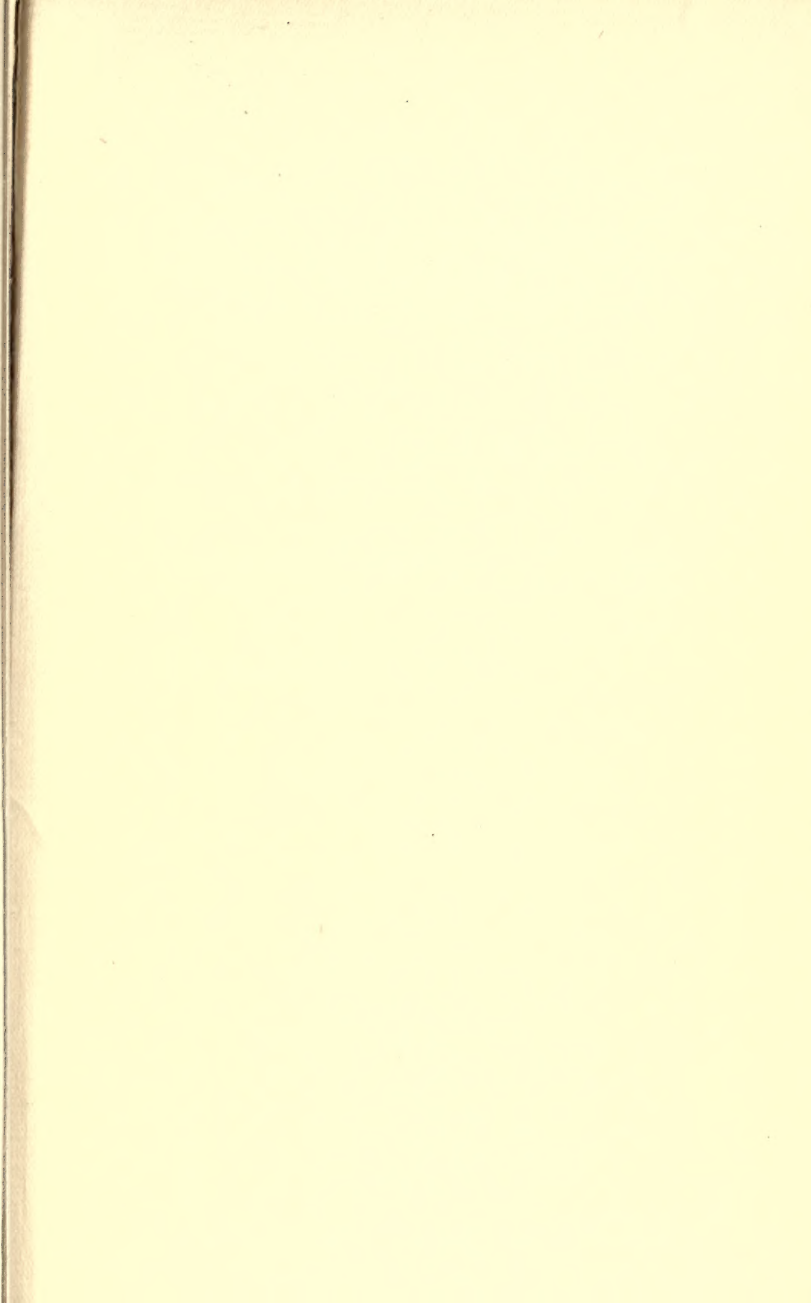
left the weightier things of the law, judgment and mercy and faith. *These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those others undone.*" Let this be our motto ever.

Benedicet vos Omnipotens Deus, Pater✠,
et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.

✠ GEREMIA, *Bishop.*









BONOMELLI, GEREMIA

BQT

4047

.B58 .

On religious worship.

