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A Treatise on Relics

By

John Calvin

Translated from the French Original

With An

Introductory Dissertation

On the Miraculous Images, as Well as Other Superstitions, of the Roman Catholic and Russo-Greek Churches.

By the Late

Count Valerian Krasinski,

Author of "The Religious History of the Slavonic Nations," etc.

Second Edition.

Edinburgh:

Johnstone, Hunter & Co.

1870

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Preface.

The Treatise on Relics by the great Reformer of Geneva is not so generally known as it deserves, though at the time of its publication it enjoyed a considerable popularity.¹ The probable reason of this is: the absurdity of the relics described in the Treatise has since the Reformation gradually become so obvious, that their exhibitors make as little noise as possible about their miraculous wares, whose virtues are no longer believed except by the most ignorant part of the population of countries wherein the education of the inferior classes is neglected. And, indeed, not only Protestants, but many enlightened Roman Catholics believed that all the miracles of relics, images, and other superstitions with which Christianity were infected during the times of mediæval ignorance would be soon, by the progress of knowledge, consigned for ever to the oblivion of the dark ages, and only recorded in the history of the aberrations of the human mind, together with the superstitions of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Unfortunately these hopes have not been realised, and are still remaining amongst the *pia desideria*. The Roman Catholic reaction, which commenced about half a century ago by works of a philosophical nature, adapted to the wants of the most intellectual classes of society, has, emboldened by success, gradually assumed a more and more material tendency, and at length has begun to manifest itself by such results as the exhibition of the holy coat at Treves, which produced a great noise over all Germany,² the apparition of the Virgin at La Salette, the winking Madonna of Rimini, and, what is perhaps more important than all, the solemn installation of the relics of St Theodosia at Amiens; whilst works of a description similar to the Life of St Francis of Assisi, by M. Chavin de Malan, and the Lives of the English Saints, which I have mentioned on pp. [113](#) and [115](#) of my Introduction are produced by writers of considerable talent and learning. These are significant facts, and prove, at all events, that in spite of the progress of intellect and knowledge, which is the boast of our century, we seem to be fast returning to a state of things similar to the time when Calvin wrote his Treatise. I therefore believe that its reproduction in a new English translation will not be out of date.

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On the other side, the politico-religious system of aggression followed by Russia has now taken such a rapid development, that the dangers which threaten the liberties and civilization of Europe from that quarter have become more imminent than those which may be apprehended from the Roman Catholic reaction. Fortunately England and France have taken up arms against the impious crusade proclaimed by the Imperial Pope of Russia. I think that the term *impious*, which I am advisedly using on this occasion, is by no means exaggerated; because, how can we otherwise designate the proceedings adopted by the Czar for exciting the religious fanaticism of the Russians, as, for instance, the letter of the Archbishop of Georgia, addressed to that of Moscow, and published in the official Gazette of St Petersburg, stating, on the authority of the Russian General, Prince Bagration Mukhranski, that during an engagement between the Russians and the Turks, which recently took place in Asia, the Blessed Virgin appeared in the air and frightened the Turks to such a degree that they took to flight!³ I have developed this subject in the last chapter of my Introduction, in order to show my readers the religious condition of the Russian people, because I think that without it a knowledge of the policy now followed by their

Government cannot be well understood, or its consequences fully appreciated.

EDINBURGH, *May 1854.*

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Preface To The Second Edition.

The valuable Dissertation which forms such a fitting commentary upon John Calvin's Treatise on Relics, was written by the late lamented author on the eve of the Crimean War, in 1854. It has been out of print for several years, but in these days of Popish assumption and claims to Infallibility, it has been thought that a new edition would prove acceptable, and be found useful in directing attention to the mummeries and absurdities engrafted on the True Christian Faith, by the false and corrupt Church of Rome.

EDINBURGH, *January 1870.*

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Introductory Dissertation.

Chapter I. Origin Of The Worship Of Relics And Images In The Christian Church.

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Hero-worship is innate to human nature, and it is founded on some of our noblest feelings,—gratitude, love, and admiration.—but which, like all other feelings, when uncontrolled by principle and reason, may easily degenerate into the wildest exaggerations, and lead to most dangerous consequences. It was by such an exaggeration of these noble feelings that Paganism filled the Olympus with gods and demigods,—elevating to this rank men who have often deserved the gratitude of their fellow-creatures, by some signal services rendered to the community, or their admiration, by having performed some deeds which required a more than usual degree of mental and physical powers. The same cause obtained for the Christian martyrs the gratitude and admiration of their fellow-Christians, and finally converted them into a kind of demigods. This was more particularly the case when the church began to be corrupted by her compromise with Paganism, which having been baptized without being converted, rapidly introduced into the Christian church, not only many of its rites and ceremonies, but even its polytheism, with this difference, that the divinities of Greece and Rome were replaced by Christian saints, many of whom received the offices of their Pagan predecessors.⁴ The church in the beginning tolerated these abuses, as a temporary evil, but was afterwards unable to remove them; and they became so strong, particularly during the prevailing ignorance of the middle ages, that the church ended by legalising, through her decrees, that at which she did nothing but wink at first. I shall endeavour to give my readers a rapid sketch of the rise, progress, and final establishment of the Pagan practices which not only continue to prevail in the Western as well as in the Eastern church, but have been of late, notwithstanding the boasted progress of intellect in our days, manifested in as bold as successful a manner.

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Nothing, indeed, can be more deserving of our admiration than the conduct of the Christian martyrs, who cheerfully submitted to an ignominious death, inflicted by the most atrocious torments, rather than deny their faith even by the mere performance of an apparently insignificant rite of Paganism. Their persecutors were often affected by seeing examples of an heroic fortitude, such as they admired in a Scævola or a Regulus, displayed not only by men, but by women, and even children, and became converted to a faith which could inspire its confessors with such a devotion to its tenets. It has been justly said that the blood of the martyrs was the glory and the seed of the church, because the constancy of her confessors has, perhaps, given her more converts than the eloquence and learning of her doctors. It was, therefore, very natural that the memory of those noble champions of Christianity should be held in great veneration by

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their brethren in the faith. The bodies of the martyrs, or their remnants, were always, whenever it was possible, purchased from their judges or executioners, and decently buried by the Christians. The day on which the martyr had suffered was generally marked in the registers of his church, in order to commemorate this glorious event on its anniversaries. These commemorations usually consisted in the eulogy of the martyr, delivered in an assembly of the church, for the edification of the faithful, the strengthening of the weak, and the stimulating of the lukewarm, by setting before them the noble example of the above-mentioned martyr. It was very natural that the objects of the commemoration received on such an occasion the greatest praises, not unfrequently expressed in the most exaggerated terms, but there was no question about invoking the aid or intercession of the confessors whose example was thus held out for the imitation of the church.

We know from the Acts that neither St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, nor St James, who was killed by Herod, were invoked in any manner by the apostolic church, because, had this been the case, the inspired writer of this first record of the ancient church would not have omitted such an important circumstance, having mentioned facts of much lesser consequence. Had such a practice been in conformity with the apostolic doctrine, it would have certainly been brought forward in the epistles of St Paul, or in those of other apostles. There is also sufficient evidence that the fathers of the primitive church knew nothing of the invocation, or any other kind of worship rendered to departed saints. The limits of this essay allow me not to adduce evidences of this fact, which may be abundantly drawn from the writings of those fathers, and I shall content myself with the following few but conclusive instances of this kind.

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St Clement, bishop of Rome, who is supposed to have been instituted by St Paul, and to be the same of whom he speaks in his Epistle to the Philippians iv. 3, addressed a letter to the Corinthians on account of certain dissensions by which their church was disturbed. He recommends to them, with great praises, the Epistles of St Paul, who had suffered martyrdom under Nero, but he does not say a word about invoking the aid or intercession of the martyr, who was the founder of their church, and which would have been most suitable on that occasion, if such a practice had already been admitted by the Christians of his time. On the contrary, he prays God for them, "*because it is He who gives to the soul that invokes Him, faith, grace, peace, patience, and wisdom.*" St Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who lived in the second century, addressed a letter to the Philippians, but he says nothing in it to recommend the invocation of St Paul, who was the founder of their church, and as such would have been considered as its patron saint, had the worship of the saints been at that time already introduced amongst the Christians. The most important and positive proof that the primitive Christians, not only did not pay any adoration to the martyrs, but decidedly rejected it, is the epistle which was issued by the church of Smyrna after the martyrdom of its bishop, whom I have just mentioned. It states that the Pagans had, at the instigation of the Jews, closely watched the Christians, imagining that they would endeavour to carry away the ashes of Polycarp in order to worship him after his death, because these idolaters knew not that the Christians cannot abandon Jesus Christ, *or worship any one else.* "*We worship,*" says the same document, "*Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God; but with regard to the martyrs, the disciples of Christ and imitators of his virtues, we love them, as they deserve it, on account of the unconquerable love which they had for their Master and King; and would to God that we should become their disciples and partakers of their zeal.*"

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I could multiply proofs of this kind without end, but I shall only observe, that even in the fourth century the orthodox Christians considered the worship of every created being as idolatry, because the opponents of the Arians, who considered Jesus Christ as created and not co-essential with God the Father, employed the following argument to combat this dogma:—"If you consider Jesus Christ a created being, you commit idolatry by worshipping him."

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Admiration is, however, akin to adoration, and it was no wonder that those whose memory was constantly praised, and frequently in the most exaggerated terms, gradually began to be considered as something more than simple mortals, and treated accordingly. It was also very natural that various objects which had belonged to the martyrs were carefully preserved as interesting mementoes, since it is continually done with persons who have acquired some kind of celebrity, and that this should be the case with their bodies, which have often been embalmed. It is, however, impossible, as Calvin has justly observed,⁵ to preserve such objects without honouring them in a certain manner, and this must soon degenerate into adoration. This was the origin of the worship of relics, which went on increasing in the same ratio as the purity of Christian doctrines was giving way to the superstitions of Paganism.

The worship of images is intimately connected with that of the saints. They were rejected by the primitive Christians; but St Irenæus, who lived in the second century, relates that there was a sect of heretics, the Carpocratians, who worshipped, in the manner of Pagans, different images representing Jesus Christ, St Paul, and others. The Gnostics had also images; but the church rejected their use in a positive manner, and a Christian writer of the third century, Minutius Felix, says that "the Pagans reproached the Christians for having neither temples nor simulachres;" and I could quote many other evidences that the primitive Christians entertained a great horror against every kind of images, considering them as the work of demons.

It appears, however, that the use of pictures was creeping into the church already in the third century, because the council of Elvira in Spain, held in 305, especially forbids to have any picture in the Christian churches. These pictures were generally representations of some events, either

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of the New or of the Old Testament, and their object was to instruct the common and illiterate people in sacred history, whilst others were emblems, representing some ideas connected with the doctrines of Christianity. It was certainly a powerful means of producing an impression upon the senses and the imagination of the vulgar, who believe without reasoning, and admit without reflection; it was also the most easy way of converting rude and ignorant nations, because, looking constantly on the representations of some fact, people usually end by believing it. This iconographic teaching was, therefore, recommended by the rulers of the church, as being useful to the ignorant, who had only the understanding of eyes, and could not read writings.⁶ Such a practice was, however, fraught with the greatest danger, as experience has but too much proved. It was replacing intellect by sight.⁷ Instead of elevating man towards God, it was bringing down the Deity to the level of his finite intellect, and it could not but powerfully contribute to the rapid spread of a pagan anthropomorphism in the church.

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There was also another cause which seems to have greatly contributed to the propagation of the abovementioned anthropomorphism amongst the Christians, namely, the contemplative life of the hermits, particularly of those who inhabited the burning deserts of Egypt. It has been observed of these monks, by Zimmerman, in his celebrated work on Solitude, that "men of extraordinary characters, and actuated by strange and uncommon passions, have shrunk from the pleasures of the world into joyless gloom and desolation. In savage and dreary deserts they have lived a solitary and destitute life, subjecting themselves to voluntary self-denials and mortifications almost incredible; sometimes exposed in nakedness to the chilling blasts of the winter cold, or the scorching breath of summer's heat, till their brains, distempered by the joint operation of tortured senses and overstrained imagination, swarmed with the wildest and most frantic visions."⁸ The same writer relates, on the authority of Sulpicius Severus, that an individual had been roving about Mount Sinai nearly during fifty years, entirely naked, and avoiding all intercourse with men. Once, however, being inquired about the motives of his strange conduct, he answered, that, "enjoying as he did the society of seraphim and cherubim, he felt aversion to intercourse with men."⁹

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Many of these enthusiasts imagined, in their hallucinations, they had a direct intercourse with God himself, who, as well as the subordinate spirits, appeared to them in a human shape. The monks of Egypt were, indeed, the most zealous defenders of the corporeality of God. They violently hated Origenes for his maintaining that He was spiritual. Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, opposed this error; but the monks assembled in great force, with the intention of murdering him; and he escaped this danger by addressing them in the words which Jacob used to Esau, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God."—(Gen. xxxiii 10.) This compliment, which could be interpreted as an acknowledgment of a corporeal God, appeased the wrath of the monks, but they compelled Theophilus to anathematise the writings of Origenes.

The following anecdote is characteristic of the strong tendency of human nature towards anthropomorphism. An old monk, called Serapion, having been convinced by the arguments of a friend that it was an error to believe God corporeal, exclaimed, weeping, "Alas, my God was taken from me, and I do not know whom I am now worshipping!"¹⁰ I shall have, in the course of this essay, opportunities to show that the monks have always been the most zealous and efficient promoters of image-worship.

The following rapid sketch of the introduction of image-worship into the Christian church, and of its consequences, has been drawn by a French living writer, whose religious views I do not share, but whose profound erudition, fairness, and sincerity, are deserving of the greatest praise:—

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"The aversion of the first Christians to the images, inspired by the Pagan simulachres, made room, during the centuries which followed the period of the persecutions, to a feeling of an entirely different kind, and the images gradually gained their favour. Reappearing at the end of the fourth and during the course of the fifth centuries, simply as emblems, they soon became images, in the true acceptation of this word; and the respect which was entertained by the Christians for the persons and ideas represented by those images, was afterwards converted into a real worship. Representations of the sufferings which the Christians had endured for the sake of their religion, were at first exhibited to the people in order to stimulate by such a sight the faith of the masses, always lukewarm and indifferent. With regard to the images of divine persons of entirely immaterial beings, it must be remarked, that they did not originate from the most spiritualised and pure doctrines of the Christian society, but were rejected by the severe orthodoxy of the primitive church. These simulachres appear to have been spread at first by the Gnostics,—*i.e.*, by those Christian sects which adopted the most of the beliefs of Persia and India. Thus it was a Christianity which was not purified by its contact with the school of Plato,—a Christianity which entirely rejected the Mosaic tradition, in order to attach itself to the most

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strange and attractive myths of Persia and India,—that gave birth to the images. And it was a tendency of lowering Divinity to the narrow proportions of a human creature, that produced war against those images. But the manners and the beliefs had been changed. Whole nations had received Christianity, when it was already escorted by that idolatrous train of carved and painted images. Only those populations amongst whom the ancient traditions were preserved could favour this reaction. The clergy were, moreover, interested in maintaining one of their most powerful means of teaching. The long and persevering efforts of the Iconoclasts proved therefore ineffective; and the Waldenses were not more fortunate. Wickliffe, the Hussites, and Carlostad, attacked the images; but it was reserved only to the Calvinists to establish in some parts of

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Europe the triumph of the ideas of the Iconoclasts. The shock was terrible. The Religionists frequently committed acts of a fanatical and senseless vandalism; and art had many losses to deplore. But the idolatrous tendency was struck at its very root; and Catholicism itself found, after the struggle, more purity and idealism in its own worship.¹¹ The Reformed perceived afterwards the exaggeration of their principles; and though they continued to defend the entrance of their temples to the simulachres, condemned by God on Mount Sinai, they spared those which had been bequeathed by the less severe and more material faith of their fathers."¹²

The principal cause of the corruption of the Christian church, by the introduction of the Pagan ideas and practices alluded to above, was, however, chiefly the lamentable policy of compromise with Paganism which that church adopted soon after her sudden triumph by the conversion of Constantine. The object of this policy was to lead into her pale the Pagans as rapidly as possible; and, therefore, instead of making them enter by the strait gate, she widened it in such a manner, that the rush of Paganism had almost driven Christianity out of her pale. The example of the emperors, who, professing Christianity, were, or considered themselves to be, obliged, by the necessities of their position, to act on some occasions as Pagans, may have been not without influence on the church. I shall endeavour to develop this important subject in the following chapters; and, in order to remove every suspicion of partiality, I shall do it almost entirely on the authority of an eminent Roman Catholic writer of our day.

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Chapter II. Compromise Of The Church With Paganism.

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I have described, in the preceding chapter, the causes which made Christian worship gradually to deviate from its primitive purity, and to assume a character more adapted to the ideas of the heathen population,—numbers of whom were continually joining the church. It was, particularly since the time of Constantine, because its festivals, becoming every day more numerous, and its sanctuaries more solemn, spacious, and adorned with greater splendour,—its ceremonies more complicated,—its emblems more diversified,—offered to the Pagans an ample compensation for the artistic pomp of their ancient worship. "The frankincense," says an eminent Roman Catholic writer of our time, "the flowers, the golden and silver vessels, the lamps, the crowns, the luminaries, the linen, the silk, the chaunts, the processions, the festivals, recurring at certain fixed days, passed from the vanquished altars to the triumphant one. Paganism tried to borrow from Christianity its dogmas and its morals; Christianity took from Paganism its ornaments."¹³ Christianity would have become triumphant without these transformations. It would have done it later than it did, but its triumph would have been of a different kind from that which it has obtained by the assistance of these auxiliaries. "Christianity," says the author quoted above, "*retrograded*; but it was this which made its force." It would be more correct to say, that it advanced its external progress at the expence of its purity; it gained thus the favour of the crowd, but it was by other means that it obtained the approbation of the cultivated minds.¹⁴

The church made a compromise with Paganism in order to convert more easily its adherents,—forgetting the precepts of the apostle, to beware of philosophy and vain traditions, (Col. ii. 8,) as well as to refuse profane and old wives' fables, (1 Tim. iv. 7.) And it cannot be doubted that St Paul knew well that a toleration of these things would have rapidly extended the new churches, had the quantity of the converts been more important than the quality of their belief and morals.

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This subject has been amply developed by one of the most distinguished French writers of our day, who, belonging himself to the Roman Catholic Church, seeks to justify her conduct in this respect, though he admits with the greatest sincerity that she had introduced into her polity a large share of Pagan elements. I shall give my readers this curious piece of special pleading in favour of the line of policy which the church had followed on that occasion, as it forms a precious document, proving, in an unanswerable manner, the extent of Pagan rites and ideas contained in the Roman Catholic Church, particularly as it proceeds, not from an opponent of that church, but from a dutiful son of hers. The work from which I am making this extract is, moreover, considered as one of the master-pieces of modern French literature, and it was crowned by one of the most learned bodies of Europe—the *Academie des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres* of Paris.¹⁵

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"The fundamental idea of Christianity," says our author, "was a new, powerful idea, and independent of all those by which it had been preceded. However, the men by whom the Christian system was extended and developed, having been formed in the school of Paganism, could not resist the desire of connecting it with the former systems. St Justin, St Clement (of Alexandria), Athenagoras, Tatian, Origenes, Synesius, &c., considered Pagan philosophy as a preparation to Christianity. It was, indeed, making a large concession to the spirit of the ancient times; but they believed that they could conceal its inconveniences by maintaining in all its purity the form of Christian worship, and rejecting with disdain the usages and ceremonies of polytheism. When Christianity became the dominant religion, its doctors perceived that they

would be compelled to give way equally in respect to the external form of worship, and that they would not be sufficiently strong to constrain the multitude of Pagans, who were embracing Christianity with a kind of enthusiasm as unreasoning as it was of little duration, to forget a system of acts, ceremonies, and festivals, which had such an immense power over their ideas and manners. The church admitted, therefore, into her discipline, many usages evidently pagan. She undoubtedly has endeavoured to purify them, but she never could obliterate the impression of their original stamp.

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“This new spirit of Christianity—this eclectism, which extended even to material things—has in modern times given rise to passionate discussions; these borrowings from the old religion were condemned, as having been suggested to the Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries by the remnants of that old love of idolatry which was lurking at the bottom of their hearts. It was easy for the modern reformers to condemn, by an unjust blame, the leaders of the church; they should, however, have acknowledged, that the principal interest of Christianity was to wrest from error the greatest number of its partisans, and that it was impossible to attain this object without providing for the obstinate adherents of the false gods an easy passage from the temple to the church. If we consider that, notwithstanding all these concessions, the ruin of Paganism was accomplished only by degrees and imperceptibly,—that during more than two centuries it was necessary to combat, over the whole of Europe, an error which, although continually overthrown, was incessantly rising again,—we shall understand that the conciliatory spirit of the leaders of the church was true wisdom.

“St John Chrysostom says, that the devil, having perceived that he could gain nothing with the Christians by pushing them in a direct way into idolatry, adopted for the purpose an indirect one.¹⁶ If the devil, that is to say, the pagan spirit, was changing its plan of attack, the church was also obliged to modify her system of defence, and not to affect an inflexibility which would have kept from her a great number of people whose irresolute conscience was fluctuating between falsehood and truth.

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“Already, at the beginning of the fifth century, some haughty spirits, Christians who were making a display of the rigidity of their virtues, and who were raising an outcry against the profanation of holy things, began to preach a pretended reform; they were recalling the Christians to the apostolic doctrine; they demanded what they were calling a true Christianity. Vigilantius, a Spanish priest, sustained on this subject an animated contest with St Jerome. He opposed the worship of the saints and the custom of placing candles on their sepulchres; he condemned, as a source of scandal, the vigils in the basilics of the martyrs,¹⁷ and many other usages, which were, it is true, derived from the ancient worship. We may judge by the warmth with which St Jerome refuted the doctrines of this heresiarch of the importance which he attached to those usages.¹⁸ He foresaw that the mission of the Christian doctrine would be to adapt itself to the manners of all times, and to oppose them only when they would tend towards depravity. Far from desiring to deprive the Romans of certain ceremonial practices which were dear to them, and whose influence had nothing dangerous to the Christian dogmas, he openly took their part, and his conduct was approved by the whole church.

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“If St Jerome and St Augustinus had shared the opinions of Vigilantius, would they have had the necessary power successfully to oppose the introduction of pagan usages into the ceremonies of the Christian church? I don't believe that they would. After the fall of Rome, whole populations passed under the standards of Christianity, but they did it with their baggage of senseless beliefs and superstitious practices. The church could not repulse this crowd of self-styled Christians, and still less summon them immediately to abandon all their ancient errors; she therefore made concessions to circumstances, concessions which were not entirely voluntary. They may be considered as calculations full of wisdom on the part of the leaders of the church, as well as the consequence of that kind of irruption which was made at the beginning of the fifth century into the Christian society by populations, who, notwithstanding their abjuration, were Pagans by their manners, their tastes, their prejudices, and their ignorance.¹⁹

“Let us now calculate the extent of these concessions, and examine whether it was right to say that they injured the purity of the Christian dogmas.

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“The Romans had derived from their religion an excessive love of public festivals. They were unable to conceive a worship without the pompous apparel of ceremonies. They considered the long processions, the harmonious chaunts, the splendour of dresses, the light of tapers, the perfume of frankincense, as the essential part of religion. Christianity, far from opposing a disposition which required only to be directed with more wisdom, adopted a part of the ceremonial system of the ancient worship. It changed the object of its ceremonies, it cleansed them from their old impurities, but it preserved the days upon which many of them were celebrated, and the multitude found thus in the new religion, as much as in the old one, the means of satisfying its dominant passion.²⁰

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“The neophytes felt for the pagan temples an involuntary respect. They could not pass at once from veneration to a contempt for the monuments of their ancestors' piety; and in ascending the steps of the church, they were casting a longing look on those temples which a short time before had been resplendent with magnificence, but were now deserted. Christianity understood the power of this feeling, and desired to appropriate it to its own service; it consented, therefore, to establish the solemnities of its worship in the edifices which it had disdained for a long time.²¹ Its

care not to offend pagan habits was such, that it often respected even the pagan names of those edifices.²² In short, its policy, which, since the times of Constantine, was always to facilitate the conversion of the Pagans, assumed, after the fall of Rome, a more decided character, and the system of useful concessions became general in all the churches of Europe; and it cannot be doubted that its results have been favourable to the propagation of Christian ideas.²³

“There is, moreover, a peculiar cause to which the rapid decline of the pagan doctrines in the west must be ascribed, and I shall endeavour to place this powerful cause in its true light, carefully avoiding mixing up with a subject of this importance all considerations foreign to the object of my researches.

[pg 023] “Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, after having defended a long time the true faith, strayed from it on a subject which proved a stumbling-stone to so many theologians—I mean, the nature of Jesus Christ. Nestorius distinguished in the Son of God two natures, a divine and a human one; and he maintained that the Virgin Mary was not the mother of God (Θεοτοκος), but the mother of the man (ἀνθρωποτοκος). This doctrine, which was a new and bolder form given to Arianism, spread in the two empires, and gained a great number of partisans amongst the monasteries of Egypt. Many monks could not almost suffer that Jesus Christ should be acknowledged as God, and considered him only as an instrument of the Divinity, or a vessel which bore it (Θεοφορος).

[pg 024] “The celebrated St Cyrillus, bishop of Alexandria, wrote an epistle to those monks, in order to call them back to respect for the traditions established in the church, if not by the apostles—who, in speaking of the holy virgin, never made use of the expression, *mother of God*—at least by the fathers who succeeded them. The quarrel became general and violent; the Christians came to blows everywhere. Nestorius seemingly wished to draw back, being frightened by the storm which he had himself raised. ‘I have found,’ said he, ‘the church a prey to dissensions. Some call the holy virgin the *mother of God*; others only the *mother of a man*. In order to reunite them, I have called her the *mother of Christ*. Remain, therefore, at peace about this question, and be convinced that my sentiments on the true faith are always the same.’ But his obstinacy and the ardour of his partisans did not allow him to go beyond this false retraction. The necessity of a general council was felt, and the Emperor Theodosius II. ordered in 431 its convocation at Ephesus. On the 21st June 431, two hundred bishops condemned Nestorius, and declared that the Virgin Mary should be honoured as the *mother of God*. This decision was accepted, notwithstanding some vain protestations, by the universal church. The fathers of the council of Ephesus had no thought of introducing into the church a new dogma or worship. The Virgin Mary had always been considered by them as the *mother of God*, and they made now a solemn declaration of this belief, in order to reply to the attack of Nestorius, and to remove every incertitude about a dogma which had not hitherto been opposed. But these great assemblies of Christians, notwithstanding the particular motive of their meeting, were always produced by some general necessity which was felt by the Christian society, and the results of their decrees went often beyond the provisions of those by whom they were framed.

[pg 025] “Though I am far from believing that it is allowable to weigh in the scales of human reason the dogmas of Christianity, I do not think that it is prohibited to examine which of these dogmas has been the most instrumental in detaching the Pagans from their errors.

“We have several times penetrated, in the course of our researches, into the conscience of the leaders of Paganism, and we have always found that it was entirely under the influence of political views and interests. These interests, which so powerfully acted upon the politician's mind, had but a feeble hold upon that of the inhabitants of the country. And, indeed, what interest could the agriculturists, the artisans, and the proletarians, have in maintaining the integrity of the Roman constitution, or in preserving the rights of the senate, as well as the privileges, honours, and riches of the aristocracy? Being destined, as they were under any religion whatever, for a life of labour and privation, they might choose between Christianity and Paganism, without having their choice actuated by any personal interest. It is therefore necessary to seek for another cause of that obstinate attachment which the lower classes of the town and country population showed for the practices of a worship whose existence was for a century reduced to such a miserable state.

[pg 026] “I shall not dwell on what has been said about the tyranny of habit, which is always more severe wherever minds are less enlightened. I shall indicate another cause of the obstinacy of the Pagans, which was founded at least upon an operation of the mind—upon a judgment—and was, consequently, more deserving of fixing the attention of the church than that respect of custom against which the weapons of reason are powerless.

“The Christian dogmas, penetrating into a soul corrupted and weakened by idolatry, must have, in the first moment, filled it with a kind of terror. And, indeed, how was it possible that the Pagans, accustomed as they were to their profligate gods and goddesses, should not have trembled when they heard for the first time the voice of God, the just but inexorable rewarder of good and evil? Should not a solemn and grave worship, whose ceremonies were a constant and direct excitation to the practice of every virtue, appear an intolerable yoke to men who were accustomed to find in their sacred rites a legitimate occasion to indulge in every kind of debauchery? The fear of submitting their lives to the rule of a too rigid morality, and to bow their heads before a God whose greatness terrified them, kept for many years a multitude of Pagans from the church.

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“If it has entered the designs of Providence to temper the severe dogmas of Christianity by the consecration of some mild, tender, and consoling ideas, and by the same adapted to the fragile human nature, it is evident that, whatever may have been their aim, they must have assisted in detaching the last Pagans from their errors. The worship of Mary, the mother of God, seems to have been the means which Providence has employed for completing Christianity.²⁴

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“After the council of Ephesus the churches of the East and of the West offered the worship of the faithful to the Virgin Mary, who had victoriously issued from a violent attack. The nations were as if dazzled by the image of this divine mother, who united in her person the two most tender feelings of nature, the pudicity of the virgin and the love of the mother; an emblem of mildness, of resignation, and of all that is sublime in virtue; one who weeps with the afflicted, intercedes for the guilty, and never appears otherwise than as the messenger of pardon or of assistance. They accepted this new worship with an enthusiasm sometimes too great, because with many Christians it became the whole Christianity. The Pagans did not even try to defend their altars against the progress of the worship of the mother of God; they opened to Mary the temples which they kept closed to Jesus Christ, and confessed their defeat.²⁵ It is true, that they often mixed with the worship of Mary those pagan ideas, those vain practices, those ridiculous superstitions, from which they seemed unable to detach themselves; but the church rejoiced, nevertheless, at their entering into her pale, because she well knew that it would be easy to her to purge of its alloy, with the help of time, a worship whose essence was purity itself.²⁶ Thus, some prudent concessions, temporarily made to the pagan manners and the worship of Mary, were two elements of force which the church employed in order to conquer the resistance of the last Pagans,—a resistance which was feeble enough in Italy, but violent beyond the Alps.”²⁷

[pg 029]

Chapter III. Position Of The First Christian Emperors Towards Paganism, And Their Policy In This Respect.

I have given in the preceding chapter a description, traced by one of the most learned Roman Catholic writers of our day, of the compromise between Christianity and Paganism, by which the church has endeavoured to establish her dominion over the adherents of the latter. I shall now try to give a rapid sketch of the circumstances which undoubtedly have influenced the church, to a considerable degree, in the adoption of a line of policy which, though it certainly has much contributed to the extension of her external dominion, has introduced into her pale those very errors and superstitions which it was her mission to destroy, and to deliver mankind from their baneful influence.

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There is a widely-spread but erroneous opinion, that the conversion of Constantine was followed by an immediate destruction of Paganism in the Roman empire. This opinion originated from the incorrect statements of some ecclesiastical writers; but historical criticism has proved, beyond every doubt, that, even a century after the conversion of that monarch, Paganism was by no means extinct, and counted many adherents, even amongst the highest classes of Roman society.

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When Constantine proclaimed his conversion to the religion of the Cross, its adherents formed but a minority of the population of the Roman empire.²⁸ The deficiency of their numbers was, however, compensated by their moral advantages; for they were united by the worship of the one true God, and ardently devoted to a religion which they had voluntarily embraced, and for which they had suffered so much. The Pagans were, on the contrary, disunited, and in a great measure indifferent to a religion whose doctrines were derided by the more enlightened of them, though, considering it as a political institution necessary for the maintenance of the empire, they often displayed great zeal in its defence. The Christians of that time may be compared to the Greeks when they combated the Persians on the field of Marathon and at Thermopylæ; but, alas! their victory under Constantine proved as fatal to the purity of their religion as that of the Greeks under Alexander to their political and military virtues. Both of them became corrupted by adopting the ideas and manners of their conquered adversaries.

[pg 032]

Some writers have suspected that the conversion of Constantine was more due to political than religious motives; but though great and many were the faults of that monarch, his sincerity in embracing the Christian religion cannot be doubted, because it was a step more contrary than favourable to his political interests. The Christians formed, as I have said above, only a minority of the population of the empire, and particularly so in its western provinces. There was not a single Christian in the Roman senate; and the aristocracy of Rome, whose privileges and interests were intimately connected with the religious institutions of the empire, were most zealous in their defence. The municipal bodies of the principal cities were also blindly devoted to the national religion, whose existence was considered by many as inseparable from that of the empire itself; and these bodies were generally the chief promoters of those terrible persecutions to which the Christians had been so many times subjected. The Pagan clergy, rich, powerful, and numerous, were ever zealous in exciting public hatred against the Christians; and the legions

were chiefly commanded by those officers who had united with Galerius in compelling Diocletian to persecute the Christians. The capital of the empire was the particular stronghold of the ancient creed. "Rome," says Beugnot, in the work from which I have so largely drawn, "was the cradle and the focus of the national belief. Many traditions, elevated to the rank of dogmas, were born within her pale, and impressed upon her a religious character, which still was vividly shining in the times of Constantine. The Pagans of the west considered Rome as the sacred city, the sanctuary of their hopes, the point towards which all their thoughts were to be directed; and the Greeks, in their usual exaggeration, acknowledged in her, not a part of the earth, but of heaven."—(*Libanii Epistolæ*, epist. 1083, p. 816.) "The aristocracy, endowed with its many sacerdotal dignities, and dragging in its train a crowd of clients and freedmen, to whom it imparted its passions and its attachment to the error, furnished, by the help of its immense riches, the means of subsistence to a greedy, turbulent, and superstitious populace, amongst whom it could easily maintain the most odious prejudices against Christianity. The hope of acquiring a name, a fortune, or simply to take a part in the public distributions, attracted to that city from the provinces all those who had no condition, or, what is still worse, those who were dissatisfied with theirs. Italy, Spain, Africa, and Gallia sent to Rome the *elite* of their children, in order to be instructed in a school, the principal merit of whose professors was, an envious hatred of every new idea, and who had acquired a melancholy reputation during the persecutions of the Christians. The standard of Paganism was waving in full liberty on the walls of the Capitol. Public and private sacrifices, sacred games, and the consultation of the augurs, were prevailing to the utmost in that *sink of all the superstitions*.²⁹ The name of Christ was cursed, and the speedy ruin of his worshippers announced, in every part of that place, whilst the glory of the gods was celebrated, and their assistance invoked. How cruel must have been the situation of the Christians, left in the midst of that city, where, at every step, a temple, an altar, a statue, and horrible blasphemies were revealing to them the ever active power of the Lie! They dared not either to found churches, to open schools, or even publicly to reply to what was spoken against them, at the theatres, at the forum, or at the baths: so that they seemed to exist at Rome only in order to give a greater *eclat* to the dominion of idolatry."—(Vol. i., p. 75.) It was no wonder that such a religious disposition of Rome had placed it in a continual and strenuous opposition to Constantine, and his Christian successors; and this circumstance may be considered as an additional motive which induced Constantine to transfer the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, though this measure may have been chiefly brought about by political considerations. In removing his residence to a more central point of the empire, he at the same time drew nearer to the eastern provinces, where Christianity had many devoted adherents. Constantinople became the capital of the Christian party, whence it gradually developed its sway over the other parts of the empire, but the Pagans maintained meanwhile their ground at Rome, in such a manner, that it seems to have been uninhabitable to the Christian emperors; because we see even those of them who ruled the western provinces fixing their residence either at Milan or Ravenna, and visiting only on some occasions the city of the Cæsars, which had become, since the foundation of Constantinople, the fortified camp of Paganism.³⁰

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Constantine proclaimed full religious liberty to all his subjects. This measure, dictated by a sound policy, and in perfect harmony with the true spirit of his new religion, was not, however, sufficient to relieve him from the difficulties of his personal position, as he united in his person two characters diametrically opposed one to another. Being a Christian, he was at the same time, as the emperor of Rome, the head and the representant, not only of its political, but also of its religious institutions. This circumstance forced him into a double line of policy, which I shall describe in the words of M. Beugnot:—

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"There were in Constantine, so to say, two persons,—the Christian and the emperor. If that monarch had not been endowed with a rare intellect, he would have, by confounding these two characters, raised in his way obstacles which he could not overcome. As a Christian, he showed everywhere his contempt for the vain superstitions of the ancient worship, and his enthusiasm for the new ideas. He conferred with the bishops; he assisted *standing* at their long homilies; he presided at the councils; he deeply meditated the mysteries of Christianity; and he struggled against the heresiarchs with the ardour of a Christian soldier and the grief of a profoundly convinced soul. As emperor, he submitted to the necessities of a difficult position, and conformed, in all grave matters, to the manners and beliefs which he did not feel sufficiently strong openly to shock. On endowing the purple, he became the heir of that long series of emperors who had all remained faithful to the worship of the father-land; and he wrapt himself, so to say, in the ancient traditions and recollections of pagan Rome; for it was an inheritance which he could not renounce, without danger to himself as well as to the empire.

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"When we observe some actions of Constantine, evidently tinged with Paganism, we must consider less their external form than the relation in which they stood towards the constitution of Rome, which that emperor had no desire to destroy. We shall then become convinced that his conduct was the result of necessity, and not that of a crooked policy. As an individual, he was free; as an emperor, he was a slave; and his greatest merit, according to our opinion, was to have soundly judged the embarrassments of this situation. Animated as he was with a lively zeal for the truths of Christianity, it was very natural that he should employ the imperial power in order to break down all the obstacles to its progress. But this would have involved him in an open war with a nation, the majority of whom were composed of Pagans; and it is very likely that he would have succumbed in such a contest. He understood this; and it prevented him giving way to the entreaties, and even complaints, of over-zealous Christians."—Vol. i., p. 88.

Constantine was, notwithstanding his conversion to Christianity, the supreme pontiff of pagan Rome. The title of this dignity was given him on the public monuments, and he performed its functions on several occasions; as, for instance, in 321, several years after his conversion, he wrote to Maximus, prefect of Rome, as follows:—

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“If our palace or any public monument shall be struck by lightning, the auguries are to be consulted, according to the ancient rites (*retento more veteris observantiæ*), in order to know what this event indicates; and the accounts of these proceedings are immediately to be sent to us. Private individuals may make similar consultations, provided they abstain from secret sacrifices, which are particularly prohibited. With regard to the accounts stating that the amphitheatre was recently struck by lightning, and which thou hast sent to Heraclianus the tribune, and master of offices, know that they must be delivered to us.”

This is undoubtedly a very strange document for a Christian monarch, who officially commands to consult the Pagan oracles, and, as its concluding words seem to imply, is anxious to maintain, on similar occasions, his rights as the supreme pontiff of Paganism.

It was also in his quality of supreme pontiff that Constantine instituted, soon after his accession, the Francic games, for the commemoration of his victory over the Franks, and which were celebrated, during a considerable time, on the 18th of the kalends of August; and, in 321, the Sarmatic games, on the occasion of his victory over the Sarmatians, and celebrated on the 6th of the same month. These games were real Pagan ceremonies, and reprobated on this account by the Christian writers of that time.³¹

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I could quote other instances of a similar kind; but I shall conclude this subject by observing, that a medal has been preserved, upon which Constantine is represented in the dress of the supreme pontiff,—*i.e.*, with a veil covering his head.

Constantine was, indeed, very anxious not to offend the Pagan party. In 319 he published a very severe law against the soothsayers; expressing, however, that this prohibition did not extend to the public consultations of the *Haruspices*, according to the established rites. And a short time afterwards he proclaimed another law on the same subject, in which he still more explicitly declares that he does not interfere with the rites of the Pagan worship.³²

It must be observed, that the Romans, as well as the Greeks, had two kinds of divination: the public, which were considered as legitimate; and the secret, which were generally forbidden. This last had been prohibited by some former emperors; and the laws of the Twelve Tables declared them punishable with death. Constantine seems to have been very anxious that his intention on this subject should not be mistaken; and he published in 321 an edict, by which he positively allows the practice of a certain kind of magic, by the following remarkable expressions:—

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“It is right to repress and to punish, by laws justly severe, those who practise, or try to practise, the magical arts, and seek to seduce pure souls into profligacy; but those who employ this art in order to find remedies against diseases, or who, in the country, make use of it in order to prevent the snow, the wind, and the hail from destroying the crops, must not be prosecuted. Neither the welfare nor the reputation of any one are endangered by acts whose object is to insure to men the benefits of the *divinity* and the fruits of their labour.”—*Codex Theodosianus*, lib. ix., f. 16, *apud* Beugnot.

This was, undoubtedly, a very large concession to the superstitions of Paganism made by a Christian monarch, and from which he was, perhaps, himself not entirely free. It is well known that Constantine, after his public declaration of Christianity, introduced the *labarum*,³³ as a sign of the dominion of the new faith; but it was generally placed on his coins in the hands of the winged statue of the Pagan goddess of Victory. Besides these coins of Constantine, there are many others of the same monarch, having inscriptions in honour of Jupiter, Mars, and other Pagan divinities. The Pagan aristocracy of Rome seem to have been resolved to ignore the fact that the head of the empire had become a Christian, and to consider him, in spite of himself, as one of their own. Thus, after his death, the senate placed him, according to the usual custom, among the gods; and a calendar has been preserved where the festivals in honour of this strange divinity are indicated. The name of *Divus* is given to him on several coins; and, what is very odd, this Pagan god is represented on the above-mentioned medals holding in his hand the Christian sign of the *labarum*.

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We thus see that Constantine, instead of persecuting the adherents of the national Paganism, was following a policy of compromise between the two characters united in his person, that of a Christian and of a Roman emperor. This did not, however, prevent him from heaping favours of every kind upon the Christian church,—favours which proved to her much more injurious than all the persecutions of the former emperors. And, indeed, the Christians, who had nobly stood the test of adversity, were not proof against the more dangerous trial of a sudden and unexpected prosperity.

The first favour granted by Constantine to the Christians, and which he did even before his public confession of their faith, was the extension to their clergy of the exemption from various municipal charges enjoyed by the Pagan priests, on account of their being obliged to give at their expense certain public games. The Christian clergy were thus placed in a more favourable

[pg 041] position than the Pagan priests, because, though admitted to equal immunities, they were not subjected to the same charges; and thus, for the first time, a bribe was offered for conversion to a religion which had hitherto generally exposed its disciples to persecution. "Numbers of people, actuated less by conviction than by the hope of a reward, were crowding from all parts to the churches, and the first favour granted to the Christians introduced amongst them guilty passions, to which they had hitherto remained strangers, and whose action was so rapid and so melancholy. The complaints of the municipal bodies, and the disorder which it was producing in the provincial administration, induced Constantine to put some restrictions on a favour which, being granted perhaps somewhat inconsiderately, did more harm than good to the interests of the Christian religion."—*Beugnot*, vol. i., p. 78.

Constantine increased his favours to the Christians after he had publicly embraced their faith. "The ecclesiastical historians," says the author whom I have just quoted, "enumerate with a feeling of pride the proofs of his generosity. They say, that the revenues of the empire were employed to erect everywhere magnificent churches, and to enrich the bishops. They cannot be, on this occasion, accused of exaggeration. Constantine introduced amongst the Christians a taste for riches and luxury; and the disappearance of their frugal and simple manners, which had been the glory of the church during the three preceding centuries, may be dated from his reign."—*Ibid.*, p. 87.

[pg 042] The ecclesiastical historian Eusebius, a great admirer of Constantine, whose personal friend he was, admits himself, that the favours shown by that monarch to the church have not been always conducive to her purity.

In short, the sudden triumph of the church under Constantine was one of the principal causes of her corruption, and the beginning of that compromise with Paganism, described in the preceding chapter. Paganism, though weakened through its abandonment by the head of the state, was by no means broken down at the time of Constantine's death. Many of its zealous adherents were occupying the principal dignities of the state, as well as the most important civil and military offices; but its chief stronghold was Rome, where its partisans were so powerful, that the unfortunate dissensions which divided the Christians were publicly exposed to ridicule in the theatres of that city. The Arian writer Philostorgus says that Constantine was worshipped after his death, not as a saint, but as a god, by the orthodox Christians, who offered sacrifices to the statue of that monarch placed upon a column of porphyry, and addressed prayers to him as to God himself. It is impossible to ascertain whether examples of such mad extravagance had ever taken place amongst Christians or not; but the Western church has not bestowed upon his memory the honours of saintship, though she has been generally very lavish of them.³⁴ Thus the first Christian emperor was canonised only by the Pagans.

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The sons of Constantine followed the religious policy of their father; and the facility with which his nephew, Julian the Apostate, had restored Paganism to the rank of the dominant religion, twenty-four years after his death, proves how strong its party was even at that time. Julian's reign of eighteen months was too short to produce any considerable effect upon the religious parties into which the Roman empire was then divided. After his death, the imperial crown was offered by the army to Sallust, a Pagan general, who having refused it on account of his great age, it was bestowed upon Jovian, a Christian, who reigned only three months. The legions elected, after Jovian's death, Valentinian, who, though a sincere Christian, strictly maintained the religious liberty of his subjects; and the same policy was followed by his brother and colleague Valens, who governed the eastern part of the empire, and was an Arian. Valentinian's son and successor, Gratian, though educated by the celebrated poet Ausonius, who adhered to the ancient worship, was a zealous Christian. He published, immediately after his accession, an edict allowing perfect religious liberty to all his subjects, with the exception of the Manicheans and some other sects.

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He granted several new privileges to Christians, but he continued to conform for some time to the duties inherited from his Pagan predecessors, of which the most remarkable instance was, that he caused his father to be placed amongst the gods, according to the general custom followed at the death of the Roman emperors.³⁵

Though greatly enfeebled by the continual advance of Christianity, Paganism was still the established religion of the state. Its rites were still observed with their wonted solemnity, and its power was still so great at Rome, that a vestal virgin was executed in that city for the breach of her vow of chastity, subsequently to the reign of Gratian. These circumstances induced, probably, the above-mentioned emperor to respect the religious institutions of Rome during the first years of his reign, but (382), acting under the advice of St Ambrose, he confiscated the property belonging to the Pagan temples, and the incomes of which served for the maintenance of priests and the celebration of sacrifices. He abolished, at the same time, all the privileges and immunities of the Pagan priests, and ordered the altar and statue of the goddess of Victory to be removed from the hall of the senate, the presence of which gave to that assembly, though it already contained many Christian members, the character of a Pagan institution.

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The senate sent a deputation to Gallia, where Gratian was at that time, in order to remonstrate against these measures, and to present to him, at the same time, the insignia of the supreme pontificate of Rome, which none of his Christian predecessors had yet refused. But Gratian rejected these emblems of Paganism, saying that it was not meet for a Christian to accept them. This would have been probably followed by other more decided measures, had he not perished a short time afterwards in a rebellion. Theodosius the Great, whom Gratian had associated with

him, adopted a decidedly hostile policy towards Paganism, and proclaimed a series of laws against it. Thus, in 381, he ordered that those Christians who returned to Paganism should forfeit the right of making wills; but as these apostasies continued, he ordered, in 383, that the apostates should not inherit any kind of property, either left by will or descended by natural order of succession, unless it were left by their parents or a brother. In 385 he proclaimed the penalty of death against all those who should inquire into futurity by consulting the entrails of the victims, or try to obtain the same object by *execrable* and *magic* consultations, which evidently referred to those secret divinations that had been prohibited by Constantine, as well as his Pagan predecessors. In the course of the year 391, he published a series of edicts, prohibiting under pain of death every immolation, and all other acts of idolatry under that of confiscation of the houses or lands where they had been performed.

Theodosius died in 395, but had his life been prolonged, he would probably have developed still farther his policy against Paganism, which was greatly weakened in the course of his reign. Many Pagan temples, particularly in the Eastern provinces, were destroyed during his reign by the Christians, acting without the orders of the emperor, but not punished by him for these acts of violence. He did not, however, constrain the Pagans to embrace Christianity; and, notwithstanding that he proclaimed several laws against their worship, he employed many of them even in the highest offices of the state.³⁶ Notwithstanding the severe laws published by Theodosius against idolatry, Rome still contained a great number of pagan temples, and the polytheist party continued to be strong in the senate, as well as in the army, which is evident from the two following facts. When Alaric elected in 409 Attalus emperor of Rome, the new monarch distributed the first dignities of the state to Pagans, and restored the public solemnities of the ancient worship, in order to maintain himself on the throne by the support of the Pagan party; which proves that, though a century had already elapsed since the conversion of Constantine, this party was not yet considered quite insignificant. About the same time, Honorius having proclaimed a law which excluded from the offices of the imperial palace all those who did not profess his religion, was obliged to revoke it, because it gave offence to the Pagan officers of the army. Arcadius, who succeeded Theodosius on the throne of the Eastern empire, proclaimed, immediately after his accession in 398, that he would strictly enforce the laws of his father against Paganism, and he issued in the following year new and more severe ordinances of the same kind. The blow which may be said to have overturned Paganism in the Roman empire did not, however, come from its Christian monarchs, but from the same hand which destroyed its ancient capital, and inflicted upon the Western empire a mortal wound which it did not survive many years.

The Goths, whom the energy and wise policy of Theodosius had maintained in their allegiance to the empire, being offended by Arcadius, revolted, and invaded his dominions under Alaric, in 396. They ravaged the provinces situated between the Adriatic and the Black Seas, and penetrated into Greece, where Paganism, notwithstanding all the enactments of Theodosius, was still prevailing to a very great extent. The principal cities of Greece were devastated by the Goths, who, recently converted to Arianism, and having no taste for arts, destroyed all the temples, statues, and other pagan monuments, with which they met. Athens escaped the fury of the invaders, but the celebrated temple of Eleusis, whose mysteries continued in full vigour in spite of all the laws which had been published against polytheism, was destroyed, whilst its priests either perished or fled. This catastrophe was so much felt by the adherents of the ancient worship in Greece, that many of them are said to have committed suicide from grief. "Since the defeat of Cheronea, and the capture of Corinth, the Greek nationality had never experienced a severer blow than the destruction of its temples and of its gods by Alaric," says an eminent German writer of our day.³⁷ It was, indeed, a mortal blow to a religion which maintained its sway by acting upon the senses and the imagination, as well as upon the feelings of national pride or vanity, because it destroyed all the means by which such feelings were produced. Alaric and his Goths seem to have been destined by Providence to precipitate the fall of Paganism at Rome, as well as in Greece, because the capture and sack of the eternal city by these barbarians, in 410, accelerated the ruin of its ancient worship more than all the laws proclaimed against it by the Christian emperors. The particulars of this terrible catastrophe have been amply described by Gibbon, and I shall only observe, that though Christians had suffered on that occasion as much as Pagans, the worship of the latter was struck at the very root of its existence by the complete ruin of the Roman aristocracy, who, although frequently indifferent about the tenets of the national polytheism, supported it with all their influence as a political institution, which could not be abolished without injuring the most vital interests of their order.³⁸ The decline of Paganism from that time was very rapid. It is true that we have sufficient historical evidence to show that pagan temples were still to be found at Rome after its sack by the Goths, and that many Pagans were employed, in the Western as well as in the Eastern empires, in some of the most important offices of the state; but their number was fast disappearing, and the exercise of their religion was generally confined to the domestic hearth, to the worship of the *Lares* and *Penates*. It seems to have been particularly prevalent amongst the rustic population of the provinces, and it was not entirely extinct in Italy even at the beginning of the sixth century; because the Goth, Theodoric the Great, who reigned over that country from 493 to 526, published an edict forbidding, under pain of death, to sacrifice according to the Pagan rites, as well as other superstitious practices remaining from the ancient polytheism.

I have given this sketch of the state of Paganism after the conversion of Constantine, and of the policy which was followed towards it by the first Christian emperors, because it seems to explain, at least to a certain degree, the manner in which Christianity was rapidly corrupted in the fourth

and fifth centuries by the Pagan ideas and practices which I shall endeavour to trace in my next chapter.

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Chapter IV. Infection Of The Christian Church By Pagan Ideas And Practices During The Fourth And Fifth Centuries.

I have said that the council of Elvira, in Spain, held in 305, prohibited the use of images in the churches. Other canons of the same council show that even then Christians were but too prone to relapse into the practices and customs of Paganism; because they enact very severe ecclesiastical penances against those Christians who took part in the rites and festivals of the Pagan worship.³⁹

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If such enactments were required to maintain the purity of Christian doctrine, at a time when its converts, instead of expecting any worldly advantages, were often exposed to severe persecution, and consequently had no other motives for embracing it than a mere conviction of its truth, how much more was this purity endangered when conversion to Christianity led to the favour of the sovereign, and when the church, instead of severely repressing the idolatrous propensities of her children, endeavoured to facilitate as much as possible the entrance of the Pagans into her pale! Let me add, that the mixture of Christianity with Paganism in various public acts of the first

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Christian emperors, which I have described in the preceding chapter, could not but contribute to the general confusion of ideas amongst those Christians whom the church was continually receiving into her pale, with all their pagan notions. I have described, in the second chapter of this essay, the policy of compromise adopted by the church after the conversion of Constantine. I shall now describe the consequences of this policy, by giving a sketch of the Christian society which it produced, and which has been drawn, on the authority of ecclesiastical writers, by the same author whose description and defence of that policy I have given in the above-mentioned chapter.

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“Towards the beginning of the fifth century, the propagation of Christianity amongst the upper classes of Roman society met still with many obstacles; but the influential persons who had broken with the error, remained at least faithful to their new creed, and did not scandalise society by their apostasy. The senatorial families which had embraced Christianity gave, at Rome, the unfortunately too rare example of piety and of all the Christian virtues; the case was different with the converts belonging to the lower, and even the middle classes of Roman society. The corruption of manners had made rapid progress amongst them during the last fifty years of the fourth century; and things arrived at such a pass, that the choice of a religion was considered by the people as an act of the greatest indifference. The new religion was embraced from interest, from curiosity, or by fashion, and afterwards abandoned on the first occasion. It was, in fact, not indifference, because indifference induces people to remain in the religion in which they were born; it was a complete atheism, a revolting depravity, an openly-expressed contempt of all that is most sacred. How many times the church, which struggled, but in vain, against the progress of the evil, had occasion to lament the too easy recruits whom she was making amongst the inferior ranks of society!⁴⁰ People disgracefully ignorant, without honour, without a shadow of piety, polluted by their presence the assemblies of the faithful. They are those whom the fathers of the church designated by the name of the *mali Christiani—ficti Christiani*, and against whom their eloquent voices were often resounding. The heretics, the promoters of troubles and seditions, always counted upon those men, who seemed to enter the church only in order to disturb her by their turbulent spirit, or who consented to remain in the true faith only on condition of introducing into the usages of Christian worship, a crowd of superstitions whose influence was felt but too long;⁴¹ whilst the slightest sign of Paganism was sufficient to call back to it those servants of all the parties.

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“It was then, unfortunately, a too common thing to see men who made a profession of passing, without any difficulty, from one religion to another, as many times as it was required by their interests. The principle of that inconceivable corruption in the bosom of a religion which was not yet completely developed, dated from a period anterior to that which we are describing.⁴² The councils and the emperors had struggled in vain against apostasy, which the multitude of heresies, and the vices of the times, had placed amongst legitimate actions.

[pg 056]

“Theodosius began in 381 to punish the apostates by depriving them of the right to make wills. In 383, he modified this law in respect to the apostate catechumens; but the general principle maintained all the apostates *absque jure Romano*. Valentinian II. followed the example of his colleague, and applied the before-mentioned dispositions to those Christians who became Jews or Manicheans. We know, from a law of 391, that the nobility was infected by the general spirit of the age, because Valentinian enacted, by this law, that those nobles who became apostates were to be degraded in such a manner that they should not count even *in vulgi ignobilis parte*. In 396, Arcadius deprived again of the right to make wills those Christians *qui se idolorum superstitione impia maculaverint*.⁴³ The political authorities, therefore, cannot be accused of having remained

indifferent to the progress of the evil. We must now show how little power the laws had in a time like that which we are describing.

“One day, St Augustinus presented to the assembly of the Christians of Hippona, a man who was to become celebrated amongst renegades; born a Pagan, he embraced Christianity, but returned again to the idols, and exercised the lucrative profession of an astrologer; he now demanded to be readmitted into the church, that is to say, to change for the third time his religion. St Augustinus addressed, on that occasion, the above-mentioned assembly in the following manner:

[pg 057] “This former Christian, terrified by the power of God, is now repenting. In the days of his faithfulness, he was enticed by the enemy, and became an astrologer; seduced and deceived himself, he was seducing and deceiving others; he uttered many lies against God, who gave men the power to do good, and to do no evil; he said that it was not the will of men which made men adulterers, but Venus; that it was Mars who rendered people murderers; that justice was not inspired by God, but by Jupiter; and he added to it many other sacrileges. How much money he has swindled from self-styled Christians! How many people have purchased the lie from him! But now, if we are to believe him, he hates the error, he laments the loss of many souls; and feeling himself caught by the demon, he returns toward God full of repentance. Let us believe, brethren, that it is fear which produces this change. What shall we say? perhaps we must not rejoice so much at the conversion of this pagan astrologer, because once being converted, he may seek to obtain the clerical office; he is penitent, brethren, and asks only for mercy. I recommend him to your hearts, and to your eyes. Let your hearts love him, but let your eyes watch him. Mark him well; and wherever you shall meet him, show him to those of your brethren who are not present here. This will be an act of mercy, because we must fear that his seductive soul should change again, and recommence to do mischief. Watch him; know what he says, and where he goes, in order that your testimony may confirm us in the opinion that he is really converted. He was perishing, but now he is found again. He has brought with him the books which have burnt him, in order to throw them into the fire; he wishes to be refreshed by the flames which shall consume them. You must know, brethren, that he had knocked at the door of the church before Easter, but that the profession which he had followed, rendering him suspected of lies and fraud, he was kept back, but shortly afterwards received. We are afraid of leaving him exposed to new temptations. Pray to Christ for him.’

[pg 058] “Socrates⁴⁴ speaks of a sophist of Constantinople, called Ecebolus, who conformed with a marvellous facility to all the changes of fortune which Christianity was undergoing. During the reign of Constantine, he affected the greatest zeal for the new belief; but when Julian became emperor, he resumed his ancient devotion to the gods of Paganism. After the death of that monarch, he gave great publicity to his repentance, and prostrated himself before the churches, crying to the Christians, ‘Tread me under your feet, as the salt which has lost its savour!’ Socrates adds:—‘Ecebolus remained what he has always been,—*i.e.*, a fickle and inconstant man.’ St Augustinus could certainly say the same of his astrologer. Is it not surprising to find apostasy still prevalent at a time when no sensible man could believe in the restoration of the ancient worship? The appearance of Julian must have upset many a mind, shaken many a conscience, and given to the triumph of Christianity the character of a transitory event. But, at the end of the fourth century, it was impossible to abandon the church and return to the idols, except by a feeling which could not but excite profound pity. I therefore understand why St Augustinus had consented to plead with the Christians in favour of a wretch already charged with three apostasies: he wished, above all, to take from him the name of a Pagan, being convinced that whoever consented no longer to sacrifice to the false gods would finally belong to the true religion. A neophyte, restrained by the leaven of all the pagan passions, might remain more or less time on the threshold of the church, but sooner or later he was sure to cross it.⁴⁵ The leaders of the church considered it always a favourable presumption when a citizen consented to call himself no longer a Pagan. This first victory appeared to them a sure presage of a true conversion; and they recommended to the Christians that they should not apply the dangerous epithet of *Pagan* to those of their brethren who had failed, but simply to call them *sinner*s. They endeavoured, in short, to make them forget Paganism; and in order to attain this object, they even forbade to pronounce its name.⁴⁶

[pg 060] “The ancient worship was not only obstructing the development of Christianity by covert and insidious attacks, but it was also vitiating the discipline of the church, because its sway upon the manners of the converts was something more like a real tyranny than the natural remnant of its former influence. It is, indeed, surprising with what facility it introduced into the sanctuary of the true God its superstitious spirit, its relaxed morals, and its love of disorder. How little the church was then,—*i.e.*, seventy years after the conversion of Constantine,—resembling what she ought to have been, or what she became afterwards!⁴⁷ St Jerome had intended, towards the end of his life, to write an ecclesiastical history; but it was in order to show that the church, under the Christian emperors, went on continually declining. *Divitiis major, virtutibus minor* (Greater in wealth, smaller in virtue), was the severe sentence which St Jerome must have pronounced with regret, but the justice of which is proved by all the historical documents of that period. This illustrious leader of Christianity, whose mind was more inclined to enthusiasm than dejection, frequently lost all energy, by reflecting on the deplorable condition of the church, declaring that he felt no longer any power to write. A sufficient number of historians have represented in vivid colours the excessive luxury of the bishops during that time, as well as the greediness, the ignorance, and the misconduct of the clergy; I shall therefore choose from this melancholy picture only those

parts which refer to the history of Paganism.

[pg 061] "All the arts of divination remained still in the highest favour amongst Christians, even when the grave men of the Pagan party had been, for a long time, showing for these practices of idolatry either a conventional respect or an open contempt.⁴⁸ They swore by the false gods,—they observed the fifth day, dedicated to Jupiter,—and they took a part in the sacred games, feasts, and festivals of the Pagans. Christian ceremonies did not preserve almost any thing of their ancient majesty. It was not a rare occurrence to hear pagan hymns chanted at Christian solemnities, or to see Christians dancing before their churches, according to the custom of Paganism. There was no more decency observed in the interior of those churches: people went there to speak about business, or to amuse themselves; the noise was so great, and the bursts of laughter so loud, that it was impossible to hear the reading of the Scriptures; the congregation quarrelled, fought, and sometimes interfered with the officiating priest, pressing him to end, or compelling him to sing, according to their taste. St Augustinus was therefore warranted in calling this so powerful influence of the ancient worship a persecution of the demon, more covert and insidious than that which the primitive church had suffered.

[pg 062] "All these scandalous facts are attested by the bishop of Hippona (St Augustinus) and by that of Milan (St Ambrose); it is therefore impossible to doubt their authenticity. It may, however, be said, that such a state of corruption was local, and peculiar to the churches of Africa and Milan; I must therefore produce new evidence, in order to show that the calamitous effect of the pagan manners was felt in all the provinces.

"St Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia, a contemporary of St Augustinus, vigorously combated idolatry in his diocese; and the following is an extract from one of his sermons:—

[pg 063] " 'You neophytes, who have been called to the feast of this salutary and mystical Easter, look how you preserve your souls from those aliments which have been defiled by the superstition of the Pagans. It is not enough for a true Christian to reject the poisoned food of the demons; he must also fly from all the abominations of the Pagans,—from all the frauds of the idolaters, as from venom ejected by the serpent of the devil. Idolatry is composed of poisonings, of enchantments, ligatures, presages, augurs, sorceries, as well as of all kinds of vain observances, and, moreover, of the festival called *Parentales*; by means of which idolatry is reanimating error; and indeed men, giving way to their gluttony, began to eat the viands which had been prepared for the dead; afterwards they were not afraid of celebrating in their honour sacrilegious sacrifices,—although it is difficult to believe that a duty towards their dead is discharged by those who, with a hand shaking from the effects of drunkenness, place tables on sepulchres, and say, with an unintelligible voice, *The spirit is thirsty*.⁴⁹ I beseech you, take heed of these things, in case God should deliver to the flames of hell his contemners and enemies, who have refused to wear his yoke.'

"Who may wonder that such Christians allowed the pagan idols, temples, and altars to remain, and to be honoured on their estates, as is attested by the same bishop? St Augustinus, whom I am not tired of quoting, because no other doctor of that time expressed so vividly the true Christian ideas, lamented this monstrous worship, which was neither Paganism nor Christianity. 'Many a man,' says he, 'who enters the church a Christian, leaves it a Pagan,' However, far from despairing, he wrote to the virgin Felicia, 'I advise thee not to be affected too much by these offences; they were predicted, in order that, when they should come, we might remember that they had been announced, and consequently not be hurt by them.' But the Pagans, for whom this premature corruption of Christianity was not a predicted thing, rejoiced in contemplating the extent of its progress; they would not believe the duration of a worship which had so rapidly arrived at the period of its decline, and they were repeating in their delusion this celebrated saying, 'Christians are only for awhile; they will afterwards perish, and the idols will return.'"—*Beugnot*, vol. ii. p. 97, *et seq.*

[pg 064] This melancholy picture of Christian society, at the beginning of the fifth century, drawn by M. Beugnot, on the authority of the ecclesiastical writers, is, indeed, as gloomy as that of Roman society in general, which had been so graphically described about the same time by the pagan author Ammianus Marcellinus, and reproduced by Gibbon. It was very natural that such a corrupted soil should produce the rankest growth of superstition, and rapidly bring about that melancholy reaction which was not inaptly styled by Gibbon, "the revival of polytheism in the Christian church." This wretched state of things was, as I have said before, chiefly due to that policy of compromise by which the leaders of the church sought to get as many Pagans as possible into her pale, and who consequently were baptised without being converted. This compromise with Paganism was often carried to great extremes; and the history of the conversion of Florence, which I have extracted from M. Beugnot's work, gives one of the most striking instances of those unprincipled proceedings:—"Florence paid particular honours to the god Mars. It was not without regret that it abandoned the worship of this divinity. The time of its conversion had been assigned to the second or the third century, but the vagueness of this date deprives it of all authority. Yet, whatever may have been the century in which the conversion of Florence took place, it could not be a subject of edification and joy to the Christians. The traditions of that city predicted to it great calamities if the statue of Mars was either sullied, or put into a place unworthy of it. The Florentines stipulated, therefore, on accepting the new religion, that Mars should be respected. His statue was consequently neither broken nor sullied, but it was carefully taken from his temple, and placed on a pedestal near the river, which flows

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through the city. Many years after this, the new Christians feared and invoked that god who was dethroned only by halves. When almost all the pagan temples had fallen either by the stroke of time, or under the blows of the Christians, the heathen palladium of Florence stood still erect on the banks of the Arno; and, according to one of the most enlightened historians that Italy has produced during the middle ages (G. Villani, lib. i., cap. 60), the demon who had remained in the statue realised, in the thirteenth century, the old prediction of the Etruscans.⁵⁰ Compromises of the kind which took place at Florence became very common during the fifth century, and when, at a later period, Christianity wished to annul them, it met with great obstacles.”—(BEUGNOT, vol. i., p. 286.)

[pg 066] The Jews had been brought up in the knowledge of the true God, and their faith could not but be strengthened by the miracles with which their exodus from Egypt was accompanied, and yet a short absence of Moses from their camp was sufficient to make them call for gods that would go before them, and to induce them to worship an image evidently borrowed from the idolatry of those very Egyptians by whom they had been so much oppressed. It was, therefore, no wonder that society, educated for many centuries under the influence of Paganism, were continually returning to their ancient rites, superstitions, and manners, though under a new name, and in a modified form. If we consider further, that such a man as Aaron had not sufficient strength to resist the senseless demands of the multitude, and even consented to mould an object for their idolatry, how could the leaders of the church oppose the pressure of Paganism, which they had incautiously admitted into her pale, and which, under the assumed name of Christianity, was establishing its dominion over the church? There was no inspired prophet amongst the Christians of that time, to restore the purity of their faith in the same manner as Moses did amongst the Jews, after his return from Mount Sinai. The Christian church was therefore left for centuries under the oppression of pagan superstitions, from which, as yet, only a small portion of her has been emancipated, though I firmly believe that she will be one day entirely restored to her pristine purity. This hope, however, is not founded upon the mere advance of human intellect, because, in spite of its boasted progress, it seems now to be powerless against the daily growing reaction of the above-mentioned superstitions, even in places whence they apparently had been banished for ever, but because Christianity is of a divine and not human origin.

[pg 067] There was no lack of opposition to this universal corruption of the church on the part of several true Christians, and there were undoubtedly many more instances of this noble conduct than those which have reached us, but the records of them were probably either lost in the lapse of ages, or destroyed by their opponents. I have already mentioned the prohibition of the use of images in the churches by the council of Elvira in 305. The council of Laodicea, held about 363, declared, in its seventy-fifth canon, “*That Christians ought not to abandon the church, and retire elsewhere in order to invoke angels, and form private assemblies, because it is prohibited. If, therefore, any one is attached to this secret idolatry, let him be anathema, because he has left our Lord Jesus Christ, and has become an idolater.*” It is therefore evident that this superstition, expressly prohibited by St Paul, Col. ii. 18, was then secretly practised in some private assemblies, though it was afterwards introduced into the Western as well as the Eastern church.

[pg 068] The council of Carthage, held towards the end of the fourth century, condemned the abuse of the honours which were paid to the memory of the martyrs by the Christians of Africa, and ordered the bishops to repress them, *if the thing might be done, but if it could not be done on account of the popular emotions*, to warn at least the people. This proves how weak the bishops felt their authority to be against the prevailing superstitions amongst their flocks, and that they preferred suffering the latter to risking the former.

[pg 069] There were, however, Christians who opposed, in a bold and uncompromising manner, the pagan errors and abuses which had infected the church. St Epiphanius, archbishop of Salamis, in the fourth century, celebrated for his learning, and whose virtues St Jerome extols in the most glowing terms, explicitly condemned the worship of created beings, “because,” he observed, “the devil was creeping into men’s minds under the pretence of devotion and justice, and, consecrating human nature by divine honours, presented to their eyes various fine images, in order to separate the mind from the one God by an infamous adultery. Therefore, though those who are worshipped are dead, people adore their images, which never had any life in them.” He further remarked, “that there was not a prophet who would have suffered a man or a woman to be worshipped; that neither the prophet Elias, nor St John the beloved disciple of the Lord, nor St Thecla (who had received the most extravagant praises from the fathers), were ever worshipped; and that, consequently, the virgin was neither to be invoked nor worshipped.” “*The old superstition,*” says he, “*shall not have such power over us as to oblige us to abandon the living God, and worship his creature.*”⁵¹

The same St Epiphanius relates, in a letter addressed to John, bishop of Jerusalem, that having arrived during a journey at a village called Anablatta, he found in its church a veil suspended over the door, with a figure representing *Christ or some saint*. He was so indignant at this sight that he immediately tore the veil to pieces, and advised the wardens of that church to employ it as a shroud to bury a dead body. As the people of the place complained that the veil of their church was destroyed, without giving them in its place another, Epiphanius sent them one; but he exhorted in his letter the above-mentioned bishop of Jerusalem, in whose diocese Anablatta was situated, to order the priests of that place not to suspend any more such veils in the church of Christ, *because they are contrary to our religion*.

The authenticity of this letter, which bears such strong evidence against the use of images in

[pg 070] churches, was rejected by Bellarmine and the ecclesiastical historian Baronius, but it has been admitted by Petau and some of the ablest writers of the Roman Catholic Church. It was translated into Latin by St Jerome, and is found in all the collections of his works.

The most celebrated opponent of the abuses with which the church had been already infected at that time was Vigilantius. His writings have not been preserved, and we know his opinions only from their refutation by St Jerome, and from which we may conclude that this reformer of the fifth century maintained the same doctrines which were afterwards defended by the Waldensians, Wycliffe, the Hussites, and which are now professed by the Protestant Christians. He was born at Calagorris in Gallia; he became a priest at Barcelona, and contracted in that place an intimate friendship with St Paulinus, afterwards bishop of Nola. Vigilantius went to Italy in order to see this friend of his, and having an intention to visit Palestine and Egypt, took from him an introduction to St Jerome. They became great friends with St Jerome, who was much pleased with the marks of approbation shown by Vigilantius during a sermon which he preached. He also acknowledges that he, as well as several others, would have died from starvation, if Vigilantius had not assisted them with his own and his friends' money; and he says, in his answer to Paulinus, "You will learn from the mouth of *the holy priest, Vigilantius*, with what affection I have received him." This affection disappeared, however, as soon as Jerome learned that Vigilantius had accused him in Egypt of being too partial to Origenes, and the *holy priest* became an *impertinent*, whose silly speeches he had observed during their first interview. He made use of several injurious expressions in speaking of the former object of his admiration, and which do not well accord with the gravity of his character, as, for instance, calling him often *Dormitantius* instead of *Vigilantius*. His indignation knew no bounds when he heard, in 404, that Vigilantius, who was then in Gallia, had attacked several practices which had crept into the church, and he dictated in one single night a vehement answer to the opinions of Vigilantius, who, according to this writer, taught as follows:—

[pg 071]

That the honours paid to the rotten bones and dust of the saints and martyrs, by adoring, kissing, wrapping them in silver, and enclosing them in vessels of gold, placing them in churches, and lighting wax candles before them, was idolatry.

That the celibacy of the clergy was heresy, and their vows of chastity a seminary of lewdness.

That to pray for the dead, or desire their prayers, was superstition, and that we can pray for another only as long as we are alive.

That the souls of the departed apostles and martyrs were at rest in some particular place, and could not leave it, in order to be present in various places, for hearing the prayers addressed to them.

[pg 072] That the sepulchres of the martyrs should not be venerated; that vigils held in churches should be abolished, with the exception of that at Easter; that to enter monastic life was to become useless to society, &c. &c.

The answer of Jerome to the above-mentioned opinions of Vigilantius is a curious mixture of violence and casuistry. He declared his *quondam* friend and *holy priest, Vigilantius*, a greater monster than all those which nature had ever produced, the Centaurs, the Behemoths, the Syrens, the triple-bodied Gerion of Spain; that he was a most detestable heretic, venting foul blasphemies against the relics of the martyrs, who were working miracles everyday. "Go," says he to Vigilantius, "into the churches of those martyrs, and thou shalt be cleansed from the evil spirit by which thou art now possessed, and feel thyself burning, not by those wax candles which offend thee, but by invisible flames, which will force that demon who talks within thee to confess that he is the same as that who had personated, perhaps a Mercury, a Bacchus, or some other of the heathen gods, amongst their followers," &c. He is unable, however, to produce any other argument in support of the worship of relics than the example of those who had practised it. "Was it wrong," he exclaims, "of the bishops of Rome to celebrate divine service on the graves containing the bones of St Peter and St Paul, which, according to Vigilantius, were nothing better than dust? The Emperor Constantius must then have committed a sacrilege by translating the holy relics of Andrew, Luke, and Timothy, to Constantinople; the Emperor Arcadius must be then also considered sacrilegious, as he has translated the bones of the blessed Samuel from Judea to Thrace; then all those bishops who consented to preserve mere dust in vessels of gold or wrapt in silk, were not only sacrilegious, but were fools; and, finally, that all these people must have been fools who went out to meet these relics, and received them with as much joy as if they were the prophet himself alive, because the procession which carried them was attended by crowds of people from Palestine to Chalcedon, singing the praises of Christ, whose servant Samuel was."

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There is no abuse in the world which cannot be justified, if the example of persons occupying a high station or that of great numbers is sufficient for it. The advocates of the adoration of relics in our own days may defend it by the fact that about half a million of people went in 1845 to worship the holy coat of Treves, and that still more recently great honours were paid to the relics of St Theodosia at Amiens, by a number of distinguished persons,—bishops, archbishops, and even cardinals. The *autos da fé* of the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions could not be wrong, since kings, queens, and the most eminent persons of the state, approved them by their presence.

[pg 074] Idolatry cannot be an error, since so many monarchs, statesmen, and learned men, had conformed to its rites; whilst, on the other side, the same reason may be pleaded for the penal laws of Ireland, and other enactments against the Roman Catholics, because they were

established and maintained by so many parliaments. Jerome maintained that it was a calumny of Vigilantius to say that the Christians burnt candles in daylight, though he admitted that it was done by some men and women in order to honour the martyrs. He did not approve of it, because their zeal was without knowledge; but he thought that on account of their good intention, they would be rewarded according to their faith, like the woman who had anointed the feet of our Lord. He also tried to justify the use of candles by those passages of the Scriptures where an allusion was made to *lamps and lights*; as, for instance, the parable of the virgins, the expression of the Psalm cxix. 105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

[pg 075] The rest of the arguments which St Jerome employs in refuting what he calls the errors and heresies of Vigilantius are of a similar nature to those which have been given above; and it is really astonishing to see that a man like this celebrated father, who is generally considered as one of the great luminaries of the church, not only by Roman Catholics, but also by some Protestants, could descend to such miserable shifts, and indulge in such violent language as he did, in his answer to Vigilantius, which bears a strong mark of having been dictated more by his personal feelings against his former friend and benefactor, than by a conviction of the justice of the cause which he was defending on that occasion. It is, however, evident from the other writings of the same father of the church, that his imagination was much more powerful than his reasoning faculties, and that he had entirely forgotten the precept of St Paul, to "*refuse profane and old wives' fables*"—(1 Timothy iv. 7)—because no one has ever indulged in more absurd fables than this good father did, in his lives of St Hilarion and St Paul, two celebrated monks, and of which the following is a fair specimen:—

[pg 076] "A Christian citizen of Majuma, called Italicus, kept horses for racing, but was continually beaten by his rival, a pagan ducumvir of Gaza, who, by using certain charms and diabolical incantations, contrived always to damp the spirits of the Christian's horses, and to give vigour to his own. Italicus applied, therefore, for help to St Hilarion, who, thinking that it was improper to make prayers for such a frivolous object, advised Italicus to sell his horses, and to give their price to the poor, for the salvation of his soul. Italicus represented, however, that he was discharging against his inclination the duties of a public office, and that as a Christian could not resort to magical means, he addressed himself to a servant of God, particularly as it was important to defeat the inhabitants of Gaza, who were known as enemies of Christ, and that it was not so much for his own interests as for those of the church that he wished to overcome his rival. Hilarion, convinced by these reasons, filled with water an earthen vessel, from which he usually drank, and delivered it to Italicus, who sprinkled with the water his horses, his chariots and charioteers, his stables, and even the barriers of the racing ground. The whole city was in a great excitement, the idolaters deriding the Christians, who loudly expressed their confidence of victory. The signal being given, the Christian's horses flew with an extreme rapidity, and left those of his rival far behind. This miracle produced a very great effect upon the spectators, and many persons, including the beaten party, became converts to Christianity."

[pg 077] The above-mentioned work is filled with fables still more extravagant than the one which I have related, and which entirely throw into the shade the celebrated tales of Munchausen. Jerome complained that many people, whom, in his Christian meekness, he calls *Scyllean dogs*, were laughing at the stories related in those works, and which he begins by invoking the assistance of the Holy Ghost. Was it then a wonder that a Christianity, defended by such wretched superstitions, was frequently abandoned by individuals, who, comparing the Christian legends of the kind quoted above with the fictions of Pagan mythology, preferred the latter as being more poetical? and, indeed, we have instances of the ridicule which the Pagans attempted to throw upon Christianity, by comparing its saints with their own gods and demigods.

I must, however, return once more to Vigilantius.⁵² The Roman Catholic historian of the church, Baronius, who calls him "*a horned beast, a fool, and furious, who had reached the last degree of folly and fury,*" &c., &c., maintains that his heresy was solemnly condemned by the Pope Innocent I., whom the bishops of Gallia had addressed on this subject. He also says that the same heresy produced terrible consequences; because two years after Vigilantius had spread his doctrines, the Vandals and other barbarians invaded Gallia, and destroyed all his adherents. Admitting even with Baronius that Vigilantius was a damnable heretic, it cannot be denied that this learned historian had a very strange notion of divine justice, because the barbarians alluded to above destroyed a great number of churches and relics, as well as those who prayed at their shrines, whilst Vigilantius died quietly, and, notwithstanding the assertion of Baronius, never was excluded from the communion of the church, or even condemned by her legal authorities.

[pg 078] We know from Vigilantius' opponents that his opinions were approved by many, and there can be no doubt that there was, not only in his days, but long after him, a good number of witnesses for the truth, who opposed the rapid spread of Pagan ideas and practices in the church. Thus, at the end of the sixth century, Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, removed all the images from his church, because the people worshipped them. This produced a great discontent amongst many people of his diocese, who appealed to Pope Gregory I. in favour of the images. The Pope advised a middle course, *i.e.*, that the images should remain in the church, but that it should not be allowed to worship them. Serenus, however, who well knew that the one infallibly led to the other, refused to comply with the papal injunctions, upon which Gregory wrote to him again, saying that he praised his zeal in not suffering the worship of any thing that was made by the hand of man; but that images should not be destroyed, because pictures were used in churches to teach the ignorant by sight what they could not read in books, &c.⁵³

We therefore see that at the end of the sixth century, the celebrated Pope Gregory I., surnamed the Great, considered the worship of images as an abuse to be prohibited, but which was afterwards legalised by his successors, and an opposition to it declared heresy.

[pg 079] I could produce other evidences to show that the worship of images was condemned by many bishops and priests of the period which I have described, though they approved their use as a means of teaching the illiterate, or tolerated them as an unavoidable evil. The limits of this essay allow me not, however, to extend my researches on this subject, and I shall endeavour to give in the next chapter a rapid sketch of the violent reaction against the worship of images in the east by the iconoclast emperors, and of the more moderate, but no less decided, opposition to the same practice in the west by Charlemagne.

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Chapter V. Reaction Against The Worship Of Images And Other Superstitious Practices By The Iconoclast Emperors Of The East.

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The worship of images, as well as other Pagan practices, introduced into the church during the fourth and fifth centuries, were prevailing in the east as much as in the west; and I have mentioned, p. 9, that the monks, particularly those of Egypt, had greatly contributed to the introduction of anthropomorphism into the Christian church. A great blow to image-worship was given in the east by the rise and rapid progress of Mahometanism, whose followers, considering it as idolatry, destroyed many objects to which certain miraculous virtues had been ascribed, and they constantly taunted the Christians with their belief in such superstitions. The Jews addressed the same reproaches to the Christians; "yet," as Gibbon has justly observed, "their servitude might curb their zeal and depreciate their authority; but the triumphant Mussulman, who reigned at Damascus, and threatened Constantinople, cast into the scale of reproach the accumulated weight of truth and victory."⁵⁴ And, indeed, there could not be a stronger argument against the efficacy of images than the rapid conquest by the Mahometans of many Christian cities which relied upon a miraculous defence by some images preserved in their churches. This circumstance could not but produce, in the minds of many thinking Christians, a conviction of the absurdity of image-worship, and the spread of such opinions must have been promoted by congregations who had preserved the purity of primitive worship, and of whom it appears that there were several still extant in the eighth century, as well as by the influence of Armenia, a country with which the eastern empire had frequent intercourse of a political and commercial nature, and whose church rejected at that time the worship of images. This party wanted only a leader and favourable circumstances in order publicly to assert their condemnation of the prevailing practice, which they considered as sinful idolatry. The accession of Leo III., the Isaurian, in 717, who, from an inferior condition, rose by his talents and military prowess to the imperial throne, gave to that party what they required, for he shared their opinions, and was a man of great energy and ability.

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The troubles of the state, which the valour and political wisdom of Leo saved from impending ruin, occupied too much the first years of that emperor's reign to allow him to undertake a reform of the church. But in 727 he assembled a council of senators and bishops, and decided, with their consent, that all the images should be removed in the churches from the sanctuary and the altar, to a height where they might be seen, but not worshipped, by the congregation.⁵⁵ It was, however, impossible to follow long this middle course, as the adherents of the images contrived to worship them in spite of their elevation, while their opponents taxed the emperor with want of zeal, holding out to him the example of the Jewish monarch, who had caused the brazen serpent to be broken. Leo therefore ordered all kinds of images to be destroyed; and though his edict met with some opposition,⁵⁶ it was put into execution throughout the whole empire, with the exception of the Italian provinces, which, instigated by Pope Gregory II., a zealous defender of images, revolted against the emperor, and resisted all his efforts to regain his dominion over them. This monarch died in 741, after a not inglorious reign of twenty-four years, and was succeeded on the throne by his son Constantine VIII., surnamed Copronymus. All

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the information which we possess about this monarch, as well as the other iconoclast emperors, is derived from historians violently opposed to their religious views. These writers represent Constantine VIII. as one of the greatest monsters that ever disgraced humanity, stained by every imaginable vice; and having exhausted all the usual terms of opprobrium, they invent some such ridiculous expressions as a "*leopard generated by a lion, an aspic born from the seeds of a serpent, a flying dragon,*" &c.; but they do not adduce in confirmation of these epithets any of those criminal acts which have disgraced the reigns of many Byzantine emperors, whose piety is extolled by the same writers. We know, moreover, by the evidence of those very historians who have bespattered with all those opprobrious terms the memory of Constantine, that he was a brave and skilful leader, who defeated the Arabs, the most formidable enemies of the empire, and restored several of its lost provinces, and that the country was prosperous under his reign of thirty-four years—741 to 775.

The beginning of Constantine's reign was disturbed by his own brother-in-law, Artabasdes, who,

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supported by the adherents of the images, competed for the imperial throne, but was defeated, and his party crushed. Constantine, desiring to abolish the abuse, which he regarded as idolatry, by a solemn decision of the church declared, in 753, his intention to convoke for this object a general council; and in order that the question at issue should be thoroughly sifted, he enjoined all the bishops of the empire to assemble local synods, and to examine the subject, previously to its being debated by the general council. This council, composed of three hundred and thirty-eight bishops, met at Constantinople in 754, and, after having deliberated for six months, decided that, *conformably to Holy Writ and the testimony of the fathers, all images were to be removed from the churches, and whoever would dare to make an image, in order to place it in a church, to worship it, or to keep it concealed in his house, was, if a clerk, to be deposed, if a layman, to be anathematised.* The council added, that those who adhered to the images were to be punished by the imperial authorities as *enemies of the doctrine of the fathers, and breakers of the law of God.* This decision was pronounced by the assembled bishops unanimously, and without a single dissentient voice, which had never been the case before. This assembly took the title of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and the emperor ordered its decision to be put into execution throughout all his dominions. The images were removed from the churches, and those which were painted on the walls covered with whitewash. The principal opposition to the imperial order was offered by the monks, who were always the chief promoters of image-worship; and Constantine is accused of having repressed this opposition with a violence common to that barbarous age. He is said to have entertained the greatest hatred against these monks, calling them idolaters, and their dresses the *dress of darkness*—an opinion with which many persons will be found to chime, I think, even in our own time. Constantine died in 775, and was followed on the throne by his son, Leo IV., who inherited the religious views of his father; whilst his wife, Irene, a beautiful and talented, but ambitious and unprincipled woman, was a secret worshipper of images. Leo, who was of a weak constitution, died after a reign of five years, appointing Irene the guardian of his minor son Constantine, who was then ten years old. Irene governed the empire with great ability, but was too fond of power to surrender it to her son at his coming of age, and he tried to obtain by force what was due to him by right. The party of Irene proved, however, the stronger; and young Constantine was taken prisoner, and his mother caused him to be deprived of sight. Irene's orders were executed in such an atrocious manner, that the unfortunate prince died in consequence.⁵⁷ Irene governed the empire with great splendour, but her first object was to restore the worship of images; and the machinations by which she accomplished this object have been so well related by Gibbon, that I cannot do better than copy his account of them:—

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“Under the reign of Constantine VIII., the union of the civil and ecclesiastical power had overthrown the tree, without extirpating the root of superstition. The idols, for such they were now held, were secretly cherished by the order and the sex most prone to devotion; and the fond alliance of the monks and females obtained a final victory over the reason and authority of man. Leo IV. maintained with less rigour the religion of his father and grandfather, but his wife, the fair and ambitious Irene, had imbibed the zeal of the Athenians,⁵⁸ the heirs of the idolatry rather than philosophy of their ancestors. During the life of her husband, these sentiments were inflamed by danger and dissimulation, and she could only labour to protect and promote some favourite monks, whom she drew from their caverns, and seated on the metropolitan thrones of the east. But as soon as she reigned in her own name, and in that of her son, Irene more seriously undertook the ruin of the iconoclasts, and the first step of her future persecution was a general edict for liberty of conscience. In the restoration of the monks, a thousand images were exposed to the public veneration; a thousand legends were invented of their sufferings and miracles. By the opportunities of death and removal, the episcopal seats were judiciously filled; the most eager competitors for celestial or earthly favour anticipated and flattered the judgment of their sovereign; and the promotion of her secretary Tarasius gave Irene the patriarch of Constantinople, and the command of the Oriental church. But the decrees of a general council could only be repealed by a similar assembly; the iconoclasts, whom she convened, were bold in possession, and averse to debate; and the feeble voice of the bishops was re-echoed by the more formidable clamour of the soldiers and the people of Constantinople. The delay and intrigues of a year, the separation of the disaffected troops, and the choice of Nice for a second orthodox synod, removed these obstacles; and the episcopal conscience was again, after the Greek fashion, in the hands of the prince.”—*Gibbon's Roman Empire*, chap. xlix. This council, held in 786, restored the worship of images by the unanimous sentence of three hundred and fifty bishops. The acts of this synod have been preserved, and they are stated by Gibbon to be “a curious monument of superstition and ignorance, of falsehood and folly.” I am afraid that there is but too much truth in this severe judgment of Gibbon; and the following passage relating to the same council, which I have extracted, not from Gibbon, or any writer of the school to which he belonged, but from the celebrated Roman Catholic historian of the church, Abbé Fleury, will enable the reader to form his own judgment on this subject.

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After describing the confession of faith signed by that council, which declared that the images of the saints are to be worshipped, because they remind us of those whom they represent, and make us participators in their merits, he says:—

“The last passages showed that God was making miracles by means of images; and in order to confirm it, a discourse, ascribed to St Athanasius, was read. It contained the account of a pretended miracle, which happened at Beryt, with an image of Christ, which, having been pierced by the Jews, emitted blood, which healed many sick persons. The fathers of the council were so much moved by this account that they shed tears. It is, however, certain, that this

discourse is not by St Athanasius, and it is even very doubtful whether the story which it contains is true. Thus it appears that amongst all the bishops present at this council, there was not a single one versed in the science of criticism, because many other false documents were produced in that assembly. This proves nothing against the decision of the council, because it is sufficiently supported by true documents. It only proves the ignorance of the times, as well as the necessity of knowing history, chronology, the difference of manners and styles, in order to discern real documents from spurious ones.”⁵⁹

[pg 089] Thus, according to the authority of one of the most eminent writers of the Roman Catholic Church, the second Council of Nice, the first synod which has given an explicit and solemn sanction to one of the most important tenets of the Western and the Eastern churches, was composed of such ignorant and silly prelates, that an absurd fable, contained in a forged paper, could sway their minds and hearts in such a manner as to make them shed tears of emotion, and that there was not a single individual amongst these venerable fathers sufficiently informed to be able to discover a fabrication so gross that it did not escape the attention of scholars who lived many centuries afterwards.

[pg 090] Irene rigorously enforced the decrees of this council against the opponents of images; and that woman, guilty of the death of her own son, and suspected of that of her husband, is extolled by ecclesiastical writers as a most pious princess. A contemporary Greek writer, and a zealous defender of image-worship, the monk Theodore Studites, places her above Moses, and says that “she had delivered the people from the Egyptian bondage of impiety;” and the historian of the Roman Catholic Church, Baronius, justifies her conduct by the following argument: that the hands of the fathers were raised by a just command of God against their children, who followed strange gods, and that Moses had ordered them to consecrate themselves to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother, Exod. xxxii. 29, so that it was a high degree of piety to be cruel to one's own son; consequently Irene deserved on this account the first crown of paradise; and that if she had committed the murder of her son from motives of ambition, she would be worse than Agrippina, mother of Nero; but if she did it through zeal for religion, as it appears by the encomium which she had received from very holy men who lived at that time, she deserves to be praised for her piety.

Irene's piety, shown by the restoration of images, and the persecution of their opponents, was indeed so much appreciated by the church, that she received a place amongst the saints of the Greek calendar. She was, however, less fortunate in her worldly affairs; because she was deposed in 802 by Nicephorus, who occupied the imperial throne, and exiled to Lesbos, where she died in great poverty. He did not abolish the images, nor allow the persecution of their opponents; and the ecclesiastical writers represent him, on account of this liberal policy, as a perfect monster. Nicephorus perished in a battle against the Bulgarians in 811, and his successor Michael, who persecuted the iconoclasts, unable to maintain himself on the throne, retired into a convent, after a reign of about two years, and the imperial crown was assumed by Leo V., a native of Armenia, and one of the most eminent leaders of the army, which elevated him to this dignity.

[pg 091] Though all that we know about Leo V. is derived from authors zealously opposed to his religious views, yet, notwithstanding all their *odium theologicum*, they are obliged to admit that he was gallant in the field, and just and careful in the administration of civil affairs. Being the native of a country whose church still resisted the introduction of images, he was naturally adverse to their worship, and the manner in which he abolished it in his empire deserves a particular notice; because, though related by his enemies, it proves that he was a sincere scriptural Christian.

[pg 092] According to their relation, Leo believed that the victories obtained by the barbarians, and other calamities to which the empire was exposed, were a visitation of God in punishment of the worship of images; that he demanded that a precept for adoring the images should be shown to him in the gospels, and as the thing was impossible, he rejected them as idols condemned by the Word of God. They also say, that the attention of Leo being once drawn to this passage of the prophet Isaiah, “*To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold and casteth silver chains;*” (xl. 18, 19,) this circumstance irritated him more than any thing else against the images. He communicated his sentiments to the patriarch, and requested him either to remove the images, or to show a reason why they were worshipped, *since the Scriptures did not order it*. The patriarch, who was an adherent of the images, tried to elude this demand by various sophisms, which, not having satisfied the emperor, he ordered divines of both parties to assemble in his palace, and represented to them that Moses, who had received the law, written with the hand of God, condemned, in the most explicit terms, those who adored the works of men's hands; that it was idolatry to worship them, and great folly to attempt to confine the Infinite in a picture of the size of an ell. It is said that the defenders of the images refused to speak for the three following reasons:—1. That the canons prohibited to doubt what had been determined by the second Council of Nice; 2. That the clergy could not deliberate upon such matters in the imperial palace, but in a church; and, 3. That the emperor was not a competent judge on this occasion, because he was resolved to abolish the images. The emperor deposed the patriarch, who defended the images, replacing him by another who shared his own sentiments, and convened a council, which, with the exception of a few of its members, decided for the abolition of the images. The emperor ordered their removal, and sent several of their defenders into exile; he soon, however, allowed them to return, and only some few of the most zealous of them died in exile. The most celebrated of these sufferers was Theodore Studites; and as he has obtained on

[pg 093] this account the honour of saintship, his opinions on the nature of images deserve a particular notice. He maintained that as the shadow cannot be separated from the body, as the rays of the sun are inseparable from that planet, so the images are inseparable from the subjects which they represent. He pretended that an image of Christ should be treated as if it were Christ himself, saying, "*The image is nothing else than Christ himself, except the difference of their essence; therefore, the worship of the image is the worship of Jesus Christ.*" He considered those who were removing images as "*destroyers of the incarnation of Christ, because he does not exist if he cannot be painted. We renounce Christ if we reject his image; and refuse to worship him, if we refuse to adore his image.*"⁶⁰

[pg 094] This defence of image-worship is, I think, a faithful exposition of the anthropomorphic ideas, which, as I have mentioned before, p. 9, had been chiefly generated by the morbid imagination of the Egyptian monks, and were supported by that numerous class, which formed the most zealous and efficient defenders of the images. Leo V. was murdered in a church in 820; and Michael II., surnamed the Stammerer, whom the conspirators placed on the throne, did not allow the images to be restored, though he was moderate in his religious views. He recalled the defenders of the images from exile, and seemed to steer a middle course between the enemies and the defenders of images, though he shared the opinions of the former. He was succeeded in 829 by his son, Theophilus,—a most decided opponent of images,—and whose valour and love of justice are acknowledged by his religious adversaries. He died in 841, leaving a minor son, Michael III., under the regency of his wife, Theodora. This princess, whose personal character was irreproachable, governed the empire during thirteen years, with considerable wisdom; but being an adherent of images, she restored their worship,⁶¹ which has since that time continued in the Greek Church in perhaps even a more exaggerated form than in the Roman Catholic one, and which can be without any impropriety called *iconolatry*, since *idolatry* may be perhaps considered as an expression too strong for ears polite.

[pg 095] The struggle between the iconoclasts and the iconolaters, of which I have given a mere outline, but which agitated the Eastern empire for nearly a century and a half, ending in the complete triumph of the latter, deserves the particular attention of all thinking Protestants; because it is virtually the same contest that has been waged for more than three centuries between Protestantism and Rome,⁶² and which seems now to assume a new phasis. I do not think that the ignorance of those times may be considered as the principal cause of the triumph of the iconolatric party, and that the spread of knowledge in our own day is a sufficient safeguard against the recurrence of a similar contingency. There was in the eighth and ninth centuries a considerable amount of learning at Constantinople, where the treasures of classical literature, many of which have since been lost, were preserved and studied.⁶³ The Greeks of that time, though no doubt greatly inferior to the modern Europeans in physical science, were not so in metaphysics and letters, whilst the gospel could be read by all the educated classes in its original tongue, which was the official, literary, and ecclesiastical language of the Eastern empire. The Byzantine art was, moreover, very inferior to that of modern Europe, and could not produce, except on some coarse and rustic intellects, that bewitching effect, which the works of great modern painters and sculptors often produce upon many refined and imaginative minds. It has been justly remarked, by an accomplished writer of our day, that "the all-emancipating press is occasionally neutralised by the soul-subduing miracles of art."⁶⁴

[pg 096] The Roman Catholic Church perfectly understands this *soul-subduing* power of art, and the following is the exposition of her views on this subject by one of her own writers, whom I have already quoted on a similar subject, p. 51.

"That pictures and images in churches are particularly serviceable in informing the minds of the humbler classes, and for such a purpose possess a superiority over words themselves, is certain.

"Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus et quæ
Ipse sibi tradit spectator."

—*Horace de Arte Poetica*, v. 180.

"What's through the ear conveyed will never find
Its way with so much quickness to the mind,
As that, when faithful eyes are messengers,
Unto himself the fixed spectator bears."

"The remark of a heathen poet is corroborated by the observations of the most celebrated amongst ancient and modern Christian writers. So persuaded was St Paulinus of Nola, fourteen hundred years ago, of the efficacy possessed by paintings for conveying useful lessons of instruction, that he adorned with a variety of sacred subjects the walls of a church which he erected, and dedicated to God in honour of St Felix.

[pg 097] "Prudentius assures us how much his devotion was enkindled, as he gazed upon the sufferings of martyrs, so feelingly depicted around their tombs and in their churches. On his way to Rome, about the year 405, the poet paid a visit to the shrine of St Cassianus, at Forum Corneli, the modern Imola, where the body of that Christian hero reposed, under a splendid altar, over which

were represented, in an expressive picture, all the sufferings of his cruel martyrdom.⁶⁵ So moved was Prudentius, that he threw himself upon the pavement, kissed the altar with religious reverence, and numbering up with many a tear those wounds that sin had inflicted upon his soul, concluded by exhorting every one to unite with himself in intrusting their petitions for the divine clemency to the solicitude of the holy martyr Cassianus, who will not only hear our request, but will afford us the benefit of his patronage.”⁶⁶

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The anecdote of Prudentius evidently proves that what originally had been intended for the instruction of the people, may very easily become an object of their adoration. If a man of a superior education, like Prudentius,⁶⁷ could be carried away by his feelings in such a manner as to address his prayers to a dead man, how much greater must be the effect of images upon less cultivated minds! and I have related, p. 88, on the authority of the great Roman Catholic historian, Fleury, that the fathers of the second Council of Nice, who, according to the same authority, were a very ignorant set, shed tears at the sight of an image represented in an absurd and fictitious story.

Such are the effects produced in teaching religion by means of images. There can be no doubt about the truth of the observations contained in the lines of Horace, which the author of “Hierurgia” quotes in defence of images; but these observations refer to the theatre, and it appears to me that the application of purely scenic precepts to the house of God is something very like converting divine service into a comedy.

The limits of this essay allow me not to discuss the chances of an iconolatric reaction in our days. I shall only observe, that in several countries where the iconoclasts of the Reformation had gained a predominant position, they were entirely crushed by the iconolatric reaction, and that a *fond alliance of females and monks*, supported by the ruling powers of the state, achieved in these parts as great a victory as that which it obtained in the east under Irene and Theodora, not only over the reason of man, but even over the authority of the Word of God; and I believe that the only human means of preventing similar contingencies are free institutions, which allow the fullest liberty of discussion in regard to all religious opinions.

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I have said before, p. 82, that the Pope opposed the abolition of images proclaimed by the Emperor Leo III., and that this opposition was shared by the imperial provinces of Italy, which revolted on that occasion against their sovereign, and separated from the Byzantine empire. It was therefore natural that the second Council of Nice, which restored the worship of images, should obtain the approbation of Pope Hadrian I.; but his desire to impose the enactments of that council upon the churches of the West met with a decided opposition on the part of Charlemagne. This great monarch, who is so celebrated by his efforts to convert the Pagan Saxons, prosecuted with all the barbarity of his age, and whom the church has placed amongst her saints, was so offended by the enactments of the second Council of Nice in favour of the worship of images, that he composed, or what is more probable, ordered to be composed in his name, a book against that worship, and sent it to Pope Hadrian I., as an exposition of his own sentiments, as well as of those of his bishops, on the subject in question. This work, though written in violent language, contains many very rational views about images, and unanswerable arguments against all kinds of adoration offered to them. The substance of this celebrated protest is as follows:—

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Charlemagne says, that there is no harm in having images in a church, provided they are not worshipped; and that the Greeks had fallen into two extremes, one of which was to destroy the images, as had been ordained by the Council of Constantinople, under Constantine Copronymus, and the other to worship them, as was decided by the second Council of Nice under Irene. He censures much more severely this latter extreme than the former, because those who destroyed images had merely acted with levity and ignorance, whilst it was a wicked and profane action to worship them. He compared the first to such as mix water with wine, and the others to those who infuse a deadly poison into it; in short, there could be no comparison between the two cases. He marks, with great precision, the different kinds of worship offered to the images, rejecting all of them. The second Council of Nice decided that this worship should consist of kisses and genuflexions, as well as of burning incense and wax candles before them. All these practices are condemned by Charlemagne, as so many acts of worship offered to a created being. He addresses the defenders of the worship of images in the following manner:—

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“You who establish the purity of your faith upon images, go, if you like, *and fall upon your knees and burn incense before them*; but with regard to ourselves we shall seek the precepts of God in his Holy Writ. *Light luminaries before your pictures*, whilst we shall read the Scriptures. *Venerate, if you like, colours*; but we shall worship divine mysteries. *Enjoy the agreeable sight of your pictures*; but we shall find our delight in the Word of God. *Seek after figures which cannot either see, or hear, or taste*; but we shall diligently seek after the law of God, which is irreprehensible.” He further says:—“I see images which have such inscriptions, as for instance St Paul, and I ask, therefore, those who are involved in this great error, why they do call images *holy (sanctus)*, and why they do not say, conformably to the tradition of the fathers, that these are images of the *saints*? Let them say in what consists the sanctity of the images? Is it in the wood which had been brought from a forest in order to make them? Is it in the colours with which they are painted, and which are often composed of impure substances? Is it in the wax, which gets dirty?” He taunts the worshippers of images, pointing out an abuse which even now is as inevitable as it was then. “If,” says he, “two pictures perfectly alike, but of which one is meant for the Virgin and the other for Venus, are presented to you, you will inquire which of them is the

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image of the Virgin and which is that of Venus, because you cannot distinguish them. The painter will call one of these pictures the image of the Virgin, and it will be immediately put up in a *high place, honoured, and kissed*; whilst the other, representing Venus, will be thrown away with horror. These two pictures are, however, made by the same hand, with the same brush, with the same colours; they have the same features, and the whole difference between them lies in their inscriptions. Why is the one received and the other rejected? It is not on account of the sanctity which one of them has, and the other has not; it is, then, on account of its inscription; and yet certain letters attached to a picture cannot give it a sanctity which it otherwise had not."

This work was published for the first time in 1549, by Tillet, Roman Catholic bishop of Meaux in France, though under an assumed name, and it has been reprinted several times. Its authenticity, which had been at first impugned by some Roman Catholic writers, was finally established beyond every dispute, and acknowledged by the most eminent writers of the Roman Catholic Church, such as Mabillon, Sirmond, &c. It is a very remarkable production, for it most positively rejects every kind of worship offered to images, without making any difference between *Latria* and *Dulia*, and I think that its republication might be of considerable service at the present time.⁶⁸

The Pope sent a long letter in answer to the protest of Charlemagne, which did not, however, satisfy that monarch, because he convened in 794 a council at Frankfort, at which he presided himself. This synod, composed of three hundred bishops of France, Germany, and Spain, and at which two legates of the Pope were present, condemned the enactment of the second Council of Nice respecting the worship of images.

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This decree of the Council of Frankfort is very important, because it not only condemned the worship of images, but it virtually rejected the infallibility of the Popes, as well as of the General Councils, since it condemned what they had established.

The opposition to the worship of images continued amongst the Western churches for some time after the death of Charlemagne. Thus an assembly of the French clergy, held at Paris in 825, condemned the decree of the second Council of Nice as decidedly as it was done by the work of Charlemagne and the Council of Frankfort. Claudius, bishop of Turin, who lived about that time, opposed the worship of images, which he removed from his churches, calling those idolaters who adhered to this practice; he also condemned the adoration of relics, of the figure of the cross, &c.; and he was not inaptly called, on this account, by the Jesuit historian Maimbourg, the first Protestant minister.

There are other traces of a similar opposition during the ninth century, but it seems to have entirely disappeared in the tenth, and it was again renewed by the Albigenses in the eleventh century. Their history, however, is foreign to the object of the present essay; and I shall endeavour to give in my next chapter a short sketch of the legends of the saints, composed during the middle ages.

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Chapter VI. Origin And Development Of The Pious Legends, Or Lives Of Saints, During The Middle Ages.

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A collection of the lives of the saints of the Roman Catholic calendar has been accomplished by the Jesuits, and is well known as that of the Bollandists, from the name of its first originator Bollandus. It extends to fifty-three huge folios, though it has reached only to the middle of October,⁶⁹ each day having a number of saints assigned to it for commemoration. It contains, among a mass of the greatest absurdities, a good deal of valuable information relating to the history of the middle ages, particularly in respect to the customs and prevailing ideas of that period. A great, if not the greatest part of the saints whose lives are described in that collection have never existed, except in the imagination of their biographers; and the best proof of this is that the learned Benedictine monk, Dom Ruinart, an intimate friend and collaborator of the celebrated Mabillon, has reduced the acts of martyrs, whom he considers as true, to one moderate quarto, though the same work contains a refutation of the Protestant Dodwell, who maintained that the number of the primitive martyrs had been greatly exaggerated by their historians.⁷⁰

The Christian church was already, at an early period of her existence, disturbed by a great number of forgeries, relating to the history and doctrine of our Lord and his disciples;⁷¹ but the spirit in which they were written, so contrary to that of the true Gospel, and the gross absurdities which they contain, were convincing proofs of the apocryphal character of those writings, which, consequently, were rejected as such from the canon of Scripture. If the church could not escape such abuses at a time when she was not yet infected by Pagan ideas and practices, she became still more exposed to them after the abovementioned corruptions, and when, as has already been

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said, p. 20, the Christian society was invaded by whole populations, who, notwithstanding their abjuration of heathenism, were Pagans in their manners, their tastes, their prejudices, and their ignorance. There were, moreover, very great difficulties in obtaining authentic information about the lives of the martyrs. I have said, p. 3, that their memory was usually preserved in the churches to which they had belonged. This was, however, entirely a local affair, and though the report of such events had undoubtedly circulated amongst other Christian congregations, there was no general register of martyrs preserved by the whole church, which had no central point of union. The means of communication between various places were, moreover, at that time very imperfect, and this difficulty was increased by the persecutions to which the primitive churches were often exposed. These persecutions dispersed many churches, destroying their registers and other documents belonging to them, whilst even a much greater number of them experienced a similar calamity from the barbarian nations who successively invaded the Roman empire. The accounts of the sufferings and death of the martyrs rest, therefore, with the exception of some comparatively few well-authenticated cases, upon the authority of vague and uncertain traditions. These traditions were generally collected and put in writing only centuries after the time when the event to which they relate had, or is supposed to have taken place. It was therefore no wonder that the subjects of many such accounts are purely imaginary. The nature of the generality of these legends, or lives of martyrs and other saints, may be judged of best from the following opinion expressed on this subject by a Roman Catholic clergyman of unsuspected orthodoxy:—

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“What shall I say of those saints of whose life we don't know either the beginning or the progress, —of those saints to whom so many praises are given, though nobody knows anything about their end? Who may pray to them to intercede for him, when it is impossible to know what degree of credit they enjoy with God? We shall be obliged, indeed, to consider the most part of the acts of martyrs, which are now produced with so much confidence, as so many fables, and reject them as nothing better than romances. It is true that their lives are written, like that of St Ovidius, St Felicissimus, and St Victor! But, O God! what lives! what libels! lives deserving a place in the Index of the Prohibited Books, since they are filled with falsehoods, vain conjectures, or, to say the least, are ascribing to unknown and apocryphal saints the true acts of the most illustrious martyrs. Such things cannot but bring about a great confusion in the history of the church, not to say in religion itself. It is in this manner that the actions of St Felicissimus, who is generally believed to have been a deacon to St Sixtus, are ascribed to a new Felicissimus; and the virtues of St Victor of Milan are now given to a new Victor, who has been recently brought to Paris. As regards the life of St Ovidius, is there anything in it more than words and words? and can we find in it anything solid? This little book speaks of a leaden plate upon which the senatorial dignity and the year of this saint's martyrdom are inscribed. Why is not this inscription given? Why is not at least the precise date of his martyrdom named? It is said that St Ovidius suffered towards the end of the second century; is this the manner of fixing the year of his death? No, no; the ancients did not mark the time in such a manner; they did not take an uncertain century for the certain epoch of a year. I am much afraid that this inscription is by no means so authentic as people wish to persuade us. But there was found in his grave a little glass vessel; a palm is engraved upon his sepulchre; and his skull has the appearance of being pierced with a lance. Well, these marks may prove that St Ovidius was a martyr; but are they sufficient to establish the truth of his life, such as it has been published?”⁷²

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I would, however, observe, that many writers of the lives of saints, without excepting those who are considered legitimate, have rendered themselves guilty of something worse than the plagiarism of which the learned Mabillon complains in the passage given above. They may be accused of having blasphemously parodied the Scriptures, and particularly the Gospels, by ascribing many of the miracles recorded in the Bible to the subjects of their biographies. M. Maury, the French savant whom I have already quoted (p. 11), has traced a great number of miracles ascribed to various saints, which are nothing but imitations of this kind. This sacrilegious plagiarism is not confined to the middle ages, but has been practised in modern times, as is evident from the two following miracles ascribed to the celebrated Jesuit saint, Francis Xavier, who died in 1552. It is said that during his residence in Japan a woman of his acquaintance lost her daughter, after having sought in vain during her illness for St Francis, who was absent on some journey. At his return the bereaved mother fell at his feet, and said, weeping, like Martha to our Saviour, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my daughter had not died,”—(John xi. 21.) The saint, moved by the entreaties of the mother, ordered her to open the grave of her daughter, and restored her to life. Another time the same saint said to a father whose daughter had died, in the same manner as Jesus Christ said to the centurion whose servant was sick, “Go thy way; thy daughter is healed.”⁷³

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Had these miracles been performed in our part of the world, they would have converted crowds of Protestants, and thus greatly advanced the principal object of the order to which St Francis Xavier belonged; but the air of Europe seems to have been unfavourable for such wonderful experiments, since the good saint was obliged to betake himself to Japan in order successfully to perform them.

It is true that the legend writers make no attempt at concealing these imitations, but, on the contrary, insist upon the likeness of the miracles performed by their saint to those of our Saviour, as a proof of the high degree of sanctity attained by the former. No saint, however, of the Roman Catholic or Græco-Russian calendar had so many miracles ascribed to him, particularly of the kind mentioned above, as St Francis of Assisi, the celebrated founder of the mendicant monks,

and who, considering the immense influence which his disciples have exercised on the Catholic world, was perhaps one of the most extraordinary characters which the middle ages produced.

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It has been frequently observed, that genius is akin to madness, and that the partition by which the two are separated is so thin that it occasionally becomes quite imperceptible. Such a condition of the human mind has perhaps never been exemplified in a more striking manner than by the life of this famous saint, which presents a strange mixture of the noblest acts of charity and self-devotion, the wildest freaks of a madman, and of genial conceptions worthy of the most eminent statesman and philosopher. The best proof of his genius is the great influence which the order instituted by him has exercised during several centuries in many countries, and which even now has not yet lost its vitality. It must also be admitted, that neither St Francis nor his disciples can be charged with any of those atrocities by which the life of his contemporary St Dominic, of bloody memory, the founder of the inquisition, and the preacher of the crusade against the Albigenses, as well as the annals of his order, are stained. Neither can it be denied that Francis, as well as his followers, have on many occasions mitigated the barbarity of their age. His immense popularity is, however, as I think, chiefly due to the circumstance that his order, principally destined to act upon the lower classes, was recruited from the most numerous and most ignorant part of the population; and is it necessary to observe that the less men are educated, the more they are prone to credulity and exaggeration? Much learning was not required for the admission to this democratic order, and its ranks were increased by the creation of a class whose members remained in the world, binding themselves only to the observation of some devotional practices and moral precepts. All this contributed to spread the order of St Francis, to which both sexes are admitted, with a marvellous rapidity over many countries; at the same time its members were extolling the virtues and supposed miracles of their founder in the most exaggerated and often ludicrous manner, of which the following anecdote may serve as a specimen:—A Franciscan monk, who was one day preaching about the merits of the founder of his order, began his sermon in the following manner: “Where shall I place the great St Francis? Amongst the saints? This is not enough for his merits. Amongst the angels? no, 'tis not enough. Amongst the archangels? 'tis not enough. Amongst the seraphims? 'tis not enough. Amongst the cherubims? 'tis not enough.” He was, however, on a sudden released, by one of his hearers, from his perplexity about a proper location for his saint, who, rising from his seat, said, “Reverend father, as I see that you cannot find for St Francis a proper place in heaven, I shall give up to him mine on this bench;” which having said, he left the church.

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The story does not say whether this good monk was satisfied with the place so unexpectedly offered to his saint, or where he would have stopped without this timely interruption; but we know, from many other cases, that St Francis was compared by his disciples to our Saviour. Thus, in a work published by the Father Bartholomeus of Pisa, and entitled “The Golden Book of the Conformities of the Life of St Francis with that of Jesus Christ,”⁷⁴ the author maintains that the birth of St Francis was announced by prophets; that he had twelve disciples, one of whom, called John Capella, was rejected by him, like Judas Iscariot by our Lord; that he had been tempted by the devil, but without success; that he was transfigured; that he had suffered the same passion as our Saviour, though he never was subject to any persecution or ill-usage, but died quietly, in 1218, amidst his devoted admirers. Other writers pushed even farther the blasphemous comparison, boasting that St Francis had performed many more miracles than our Lord, because Christ changed water into wine but once, whilst St Francis did it thrice; and that instead of the few miraculous cures mentioned in the Gospels, St Francis and his disciples had opened the eyes of more than a thousand blind, cured more than a thousand lame, and restored to life more than a thousand dead.

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The greatest miracle, however, that has ever been wrought by St Francis has taken place in our own days, and its authenticity admits of no doubt whatever. It is a life of this famous saint, published by M. Chavin de Malan; and my readers may form an adequate idea of its contents by the following extract from an admirable article in the “Edinburgh Review” for July 1847:—“Though amongst the most passionate and uncompromising devotees of the Church of Rome, M. Chavin de Malan also is in one sense a Protestant. He protests against any exercise of human reason in examining any dogma which that church inculcates, or any fact which she alleges. The most merciless of her cruelties affect him with no indignation, the silliest of her prodigies with no shame, the basest of her superstitions with no contempt. Her veriest dotage is venerable in his eyes. Even the atrocities of Innocent III. seem to this all-extolling eulogist but to augment the triumph and the glories of his reign. If the soul of the confessor of Simon de Montfort, retaining all the passions and all the prejudices of that era, should transmigrate into a doctor of the Sorbonne, conversant with the arts and literature of our own times, the result might be the production of such an ecclesiastical history as that of which we have here a specimen,—elaborate in research, glowing in style, vivid in portraiture, utterly reckless and indiscriminate in belief, extravagant up to the very verge of idolatry in applause, and familiar far beyond the verge of indecorum with the most awful topics and objects of the Christian faith.”—(Pp. 1, 2.)⁷⁵

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Now, I ask my reader whether the publication of such a work, in the year of grace 1845, at Paris, is not a perfect miracle, and undoubtedly much more genuine than all those which it describes?

We live indeed in an age of wonders, physical as well as moral, and neither of them have escaped the all-powerful influence of the great moving spring of our time, and the principal cause of its rapid advance,—*i.e.*, competition. England, which is foremost in many, and not behind in any, inventions and discoveries of the day, has maintained her rank, and even perhaps gone ahead, in

the production of such moral miracles as that of which I have given a specimen above. And, indeed, the lives of the English saints, published in the years 1844 and 1845, in the capital of this Protestant country, may fearlessly challenge a comparison with the work of M. Chavin de Malan. They are, moreover, ascribed to a clergyman of the Church of England, who, though he has since gone over to Rome, was at that time receiving the wages of the Protestant Establishment of this country as one of its servants and defenders.⁷⁶ The few following extracts from this curious work will enable my readers to judge whether I have over-estimated the capabilities of this work for a successful competition with its French rival:—

[pg 116] “Many of these (legends) are so well fitted to illustrate certain principles which should be borne in mind in considering mediæval miracles, that they deserve some attention. Not that any thing here said is intended to *prove* that the stories of miracles, said to be wrought in the middle ages, are true. Men will always believe or disbelieve their truth, in proportion as they are disposed to admit or reject the antecedent probability of the existence of a perpetual church, endowed with unfailing divine powers. And the reason of this is plain. Ecclesiastical miracles presuppose Catholic faith, just as Scripture miracles, and Scripture itself, presuppose the existence of God. Men, therefore, who disbelieve the faith, will of course disbelieve the story of the miracles, which, if it is not appealed to as a proof of the faith, at least takes it for granted. For instance, the real reason for rejecting the account of the vision which appeared to St Waltheof in the holy Eucharist, must be disbelief of the Catholic doctrine.”⁷⁷

The miracle alluded to above, and which cannot be rejected without disbelief in the Catholic doctrine, is as follows:—“On Christmas-day, when the convent was celebrating the nativity of our Lord, as the friar was elevating the host, in the blessed sacrifice of the mass, he saw in his hand a child fairer than the children of men, having on his head a crown of gold studded with jewels. His eyes beamed with light, and his face was more radiant than the whitest snow; and so ineffably sweet was his countenance, that the friar kissed the feet and the hands of the heavenly child. After this the divine vision disappeared, and Waltheof found in his hands the consecrated water.”⁷⁸

The whole collection is full of similar stories, some of which are really outrageous; as, for instance, that which it relates about St Augustine, the great apostle of England.

[pg 117] This saint was, during his peregrinations about the country, received with great honours in the north of England; “but,” says the work in question, “very different from this are the accounts of his travels in Dorsetshire. While there, we hear of his having come to one village, where he was received with every species of insult. The wretched people, not content with heaping abusive words upon the holy visitors, assailed them with missiles, in which work, the place being probably a sea-port, the sellers of fish are related to have been peculiarly active. Hands, too, were laid upon the archbishop and his company. Finding all efforts useless, the godly company shook the dust from their feet, and withdrew. The inhabitants are said to have suffered the penalty of their impieties, even to distant generations. All the children born from that time bore and transmitted the traces of their parents' sins in the shape of a loathsome deformity.”⁷⁹

The writer who relates this story had not the courage or the honesty of M. Chavin de Malan to tell that the insult offered to the holy visitors consisted in attaching tails of fish to their robes, and that the loathsome deformity, with which the children of the perpetrators of that insult were born during many generations, was a tail.

[pg 118] Absurd as this monkish story is, it is nevertheless characteristic of the spirit of the sacerdotal pride and vindictiveness which would punish a silly joke, by which the dignity of the priestly order was offended, with a heavy calamity, entailed upon the innocent descendants of its perpetrators through many generations; and yet the fables of this modern mythology cannot be, according to our author, rejected *without disbelief of the Catholic doctrine*. This is not, however, his personal opinion; and he has only asserted, in a more decisive manner than it has been done for a considerable time, a principle which the Roman Catholic Church cannot disavow, though it may place her in an embarrassing position; and as an illustration of this, I shall give the following anecdote:—

[pg 119] Under the reign of Frederic II., a Prussian soldier stole a costly ornament from an image of the Virgin, which enjoyed a great reputation for its miraculous powers. The theft being discovered, the culprit pleaded in his defence that, having addressed a fervent prayer to the above-mentioned image for help in his poverty, it gave him this ornament to relieve him from his distress. This affair was reported to the king, who, being much amused by the soldier's device, required the Roman Catholic bishop in whose diocese this theft was committed to give a positive opinion whether the image in question could work miracles of this kind or not? The bishop could not, without showing *disbelief in the Catholic doctrine*, deny the possibility of the miracle, and was therefore obliged to give an affirmative reply. The king, therefore, pardoned the soldier, on condition of never accepting presents from this or any other image or saint whatever.

The author of this essay, though a firm believer in the existence of God and the truth of the Scriptures, has not the advantage of being inspired with faith in the Catholic doctrine; he therefore will continue his researches in the same manner as before.

Many legends originated from misunderstanding the emblematic character of some pictures. Thus the celebrated Spanish lady saint and authoress, St Theresa, was, on account of her

eloquent and impassioned effusions of love addressed to the Deity, painted by a Spanish artist having her heart pierced with an arrow, in allusion to the words of the Psalmist, "For thine arrows stick fast in me," &c.—(Ps. xxxviii. 2.) She died quietly in her convent towards the end of the sixteenth century, and though the particulars of her life and death are generally known, there were some legend writers who related that she died a martyr, pierced by an arrow. If such confusion of ideas could happen in a time when literature and science had made considerable progress, and when the art of printing was already universally known, how much more frequently such things must have occurred during the prevailing ignorance of the middle ages! And, indeed, there are many wild legends which have originated from a similar source, and of which the most celebrated is that of St Denis, which has been also related of other saints. This martyr, supposed to have been beheaded, was represented holding his head in his hand, as an emblem of the manner of his death. The writer of his legend took this emblem for the representation of a real fact, and loosening the reins of his imagination, related that the saint, after having been beheaded, took up his head, kissed it, and walked away with it.⁸⁰

It is a general tendency of a gross and unenlightened mind to materialise the most abstract and spiritual ideas, and then what is simply an allegory becomes with him a reality. It was this tendency which, during the mediæval ignorance, gave often a literal sense to what is only typical, and it was carried so far that even the parables of our Lord were constructed into real stories. Thus, Lazarus was a poor saint who lived in great want, and was made after his death the patron of beggars and lepers. The parable of the prodigal son has furnished materials for many a legend; and to crown all these pious parodies, a monk has shown to the well-known Eastern traveller Hasselquist, the very spot upon which the good Samaritan assisted the wounded man, who had been left unheeded by the priest and the Levite. Future rewards and punishments, heaven and hell, were also represented in a grossly material manner, that gave rise to many absurd legends, generally invented with the object of supporting the pretensions of the church, to have the power of sending at pleasure the souls of the departed to either of these places.⁸¹

I have already spoken of the effects which the solitary and ascetic life of the early monks produced upon their imagination. The same thing took place amongst the recluses of the convents, but particularly nunneries. "The imaginations of women," says a celebrated author whom I have already quoted, "as their feelings are more keen and exquisite, are more susceptible and ungovernable than those of men; more obnoxious to the injurious influence of solitude; more easily won upon by the arts of delusion, and inflamed by the contagion of the passions." Hence we may account for the rapidity with which in orphan houses, cloisters, and other institutions, where numbers of the sex are intimately connected with each other, the sickness, humour, habits, of one, if conspicuous and distinguished, become those of all. I remember to have read in a medical writer of considerable merit, that in a French convent of nuns, of more than common magnitude, one of the sisters was seized with a strange impulse to mew like a cat, in which singular propensity she was shortly imitated by several other sisters, and finally, without a solitary exception, by the whole convent, who all joined at regular periods in a general mew that lasted several hours. The neighbourhood heard, with more astonishment than edification, the daily return of this celestial symphony, which was silenced, after many ineffectual measures, by terrifying the modesty of the sex with the menace, that, on any future repetition of their concert, a body of soldiers, pretended to be stationed at the gates of the monastery, would be called in to inflict upon them a discipline at once shameful and severe.

"Among all the epidemic fancies of the sex I have found upon record, none equals that related by Cardan to have displayed itself in the fifteenth century,—which forcibly illustrates what has been remarked of the intuitive contagion by which fantastic affection is propagated among women. A nun in a certain German convent was urged by an unaccountable impulse to bite all her companions; and her strange caprice gradually spread to others, till the whole body was infected by the same fury. Nor did the evil confine itself within these limits: the report of this strange mania travelled from one province to another, and every where conveyed with it the infectious folly, from cloister to cloister, through the German empire; from thence extending itself on each side to Holland and Italy, the nuns at length worried one another from Rome to Amsterdam.

"Numberless instances might be quoted to demonstrate the force with which the strangest and most wild propensities fasten themselves on the imagination, and conquer and tyrannise over the will, when the soul is debarred from a free intercourse with its species, and left too uninterruptedly to its own unbridled musings. But those which we have related may be sufficient to show the danger into which he runs who delivers himself unconditionally to the custody of solitude, and does not arm himself against its faithless hospitality. Shut up in a barren and monotonous leisure, without studies to occupy curiosity, without objects to amuse the senses, or to interest and to attract the affections to any thing human, fancy will escape into the worlds of chimerical existence, there to seek amusement and exercise. How fondly does it then embrace and cherish angelical visions, or infernal phantoms, prodigies, or miracles! or should its reveries take another direction, with what increasing eagerness and confidence do its hopes hunt after the delusions of alchemy, the fictions of philosophy, and the delirium of metaphysics! In cases where the mind is less capacious, and its stores less copious, it will attach itself to some absurd notion, the child of its languid and exhausted powers; and bestowing its fondest confidence on this darling of its dotage, will abandon reason and outrage common sense."⁸²

I have given this lengthened extract from Zimmerman, because I think it satisfactorily explains those mystic *visions* as well as *infernal phantoms*, with which the mediæval legends and

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chronicles, generally composed by monks, abound, and which are often unjustly ascribed to fraud and wilful deception. Medical science, as well as all the branches of natural philosophy, being then in a very imperfect condition, such phenomena as those of nuns mewing like cats or biting like dogs, which are mentioned by Zimmerman, were not explained as nervous diseases, but ascribed to the possession of evil spirits; and I frankly confess that I am by no means sure, that if cases like those mentioned above were to happen in our enlightened age, there would not be found many good folks ascribing them to a similar agency. It must be also remembered that, if notwithstanding the extreme rapidity and regularity of communications in our own time, reports of various events are often exaggerated and even completely altered in passing from one place to another; how much more must it have been the case during the time of such defective communication as existed previous to the invention of printing and the introduction of the post! It was therefore no wonder if occurrences of such an extraordinary nature as those alluded to were immensely magnified by report, and if it had, at least in many places, converted the mewing and biting nuns into as many cats and dogs. It is, moreover, now generally admitted that what is called mesmerism, but whose real nature science has not yet explained, was known and practised during the middle ages, as well as in remote antiquity, and that many thaumaturgic operations, described by the mediæval legends, as well as by ancient writers, were produced by means of this still mysterious agency.

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I have dwelt perhaps too long on this subject, because I am afraid that the observations relating to it are not confined to a distant period, but may become but too often applicable to our own times. And, indeed, when we reflect on the rapid increase of convents and nunneries, particularly in this country, and that notwithstanding the present state of civilization these establishments must be filled chiefly by individuals whose imaginations are stronger than their reasoning powers, there can be little doubt that they may again become the stage of those extraordinary manifestations, the cause of which had been too exclusively ascribed to mediæval darkness. It cannot be doubted, that designing individuals of both sexes, possessed of superior talents and knowledge, but particularly endowed with a strong will, may exercise not only an undue influence, but even an absolute power over the inmates of the above-mentioned monastic establishments; and that a skilful application of mesmerism may efficiently promote such unlawful ends.

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Many local superstitious remains of Paganism,—as, for instance, miraculous powers ascribed to certain wells, stones, caverns,—stories about various kinds of fairies, &c.—have furnished ample materials to the mediæval legend writers, who arranged them according to their own views. They generally retained the miraculous part of the story, frequently embellishing it by their own additions, but substituting the agency of the Christian saint, the hero of their tale, for that of the Pagan deity, to whom it had originally been ascribed. It was thus that the localities considered by the Pagans as possessed of some supernatural properties, and resorted to by them on this account, were converted into places of Christian pilgrimages, with the only difference that the Pagan *genius loci* was baptised with the name of a Christian saint, whose existence can often be no more proved than that of his heathen predecessor. Many hagiographers seem to have indulged their humour as much as their fancy in composing these legends, which appears from such ludicrous stories as, for instance, that of St Fechin, whose piety was so fervent that when he was bathing in cold water it became almost boiling hot. This warm-hearted or hot-headed saint is said to have belonged to the Emerald isle, though, considering that his ardent piety was so very much like a manifestation of the *perfervidum Scotorum ingenium*, in a somewhat exaggerated form, I am much inclined to believe him a native of the north country. There are many instances of such humorous miracles, but I shall quote only that of Laquentios, a famous Greek saint, and worker of miracles. Having one day some business with the Patriarch of Constantinople, he was kept waiting in the prelate's ante-chamber, and feeling very warm he wanted to take off his cloak. But as there was not any piece of furniture in the room, nor even a peg on its walls, St Laquentios, embarrassed what to do with his cloak, threw it upon a ray of the sun, which was entering the room through a hole in the shutter, and which immediately acquired the firmness of a rope, so that the saint's cloak remained hanging upon it. It must not, however, be believed that the hot sun and fervid imagination of Greece were absolutely requisite for the performance of such wonderful tricks; for we have sufficient legendary evidence to prove that they were successfully reproduced under the less brilliant sky of Germany and France, because St Goar of Treves suspended his cap, and St Aicadrus, abbot of Jumieges, his gloves upon the same piece of furniture that had been used by St Laquentios to hang his cloak, though probably, considering that the sun is not so powerful in those countries as it is at Constantinople, the western saints did not venture to try its rays with such a heavy load, as had been successfully done by their eastern colleague.

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Some miracles were invented in order to inculcate implicit obedience to the ecclesiastical authorities, which is considered by the Roman Catholic Church as one of, if not the most important virtue to be practised by her children. Thus it is related that when the Spanish Dominican monk, St Vincent Ferrerius, celebrated for the great number of his miracles, was one day walking along a street in Barcelona, a mason, falling from a high roof, called for his assistance. The saint answered that he could not perform a miracle without the permission of his superior, but that he would go and ask for it. The mason remained, therefore, suspended in the air until St Vincent, returning with the permission, got him safely down on the ground.

It must be admitted, that many saints, whose lives are disfigured by absurd stories of their miracles, were men of great piety, adorned with the noblest virtues, and who gave proofs of the

[pg 129] most exalted charity and self-devotion. Unfortunately the honours of saintship have been often bestowed upon such sanguinary monsters as St Dominic, whose shrine would be the most appropriately placed in a temple where human sacrifices are offered, or upon madmen who have outraged every feeling of humanity. Thus it is related that St Alexius left his home on the day of his wedding, and, having exchanged his clothes for the rags of a beggar, adopted his mode of life. After some time, when his appearance had become so wretched that he could no longer be recognised by his friends, he returned to his parental house, asking for shelter. He obtained a place under the staircase, and lived there by alms for seventeen years, continually witnessing the distress and lamentations of his wife, mother, and aged father about his loss, and was recognised only after his death by a book of prayers which had been given him by his mother. And it was for this unfeeling and even cruel treatment of his own family that he was canonised! It is supposed, however, that all this story is but a fiction, and, for the sake of humanity, I sincerely hope that it is so.

The limits of this essay allow me not farther to extend my researches about the legends of mediæval saints, and their miracles; and I shall try to give in my next chapter a short analysis of several practices which the Roman Catholic as well as the Græco-Russian Church have retained from Paganism.

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Chapter VII. Analysis Of The Pagan Rites And Practices Which Have Been Retained By The Roman Catholic As Well As The Græco-Russian Church.

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I have given (p. 14) the opinion of an eminent Roman Catholic modern author (Chateaubriand) about the introduction of Pagan usages into the Christian worship, and a long extract (pp. 16-28) from another no less distinguished Roman Catholic writer of our day, describing the cause of this corruption. The Roman Catholic writers of this country do not, however, treat this subject with the same sincerity as the illustrious author of the "Genie du Christianisme," and the learned French Academician from whose work I have so largely drawn; but they try hard to deny that many usages of their church bear the stamp of Paganism.⁸³ This is particularly the case with the author of "Hierurgia," a work which I have already quoted, and which may be considered as the fairest expression of what the Roman Catholic Church teaches on the subject in question. Thus the use of images in churches is represented as being authorised by Scripture, by the following curious arguments:—

"The practice of employing images as ornaments and memorials to decorate the temple of the Lord is in a most especial manner approved by the Word of God himself. Moses was commanded to place two cherubim upon the ark, and to set up a brazen figure of the fiery serpent, that those of the murmuring Israelites who had been bitten might recover from the poison of their wounds by looking on the image. In the description of Solomon's temple, we read of that prince, not only that he made in the oracle two cherubim of olive tree, of ten cubits in height, but that 'all the walls of the temple round about he carved with divers figures and carvings.'

"In the first book of Paralipomenon (Chronicles) we observe that when David imposed his injunction upon Solomon to realise his intention of building a house to the Lord, he delivered to him a description of the porch and temple, and concluded by thus assuring him: 'All these things came to me written by the hand of the Lord, that I may understand the works of the pattern.'

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"The isolated fact that images were not only directed by the Almighty God to be placed in the Mosaic tabernacle, and in the more sumptuous temple of Jerusalem, but that he himself exhibited the pattern of them, will be alone sufficient to authorise the practice of the Catholic Church in regard to a similar observance."—(*Hierurgia*, p. 371.)

All this may be briefly answered. There was no representation of the Jewish patriarchs or saints either in the tabernacle or in the temple of Solomon, as is the case with the Christian saints in the Roman Catholic and Græco-Russian Churches; and the brazen serpent, to which the author alludes, was broken into pieces by order of King Hezekiah as soon as the Israelites began to worship it.

The author tries to prove, with considerable learning and ingenuity, that the primitive Christians ornamented their churches with images, and I have already given, p. 51, his explanation of the Council of Elvira; but his assertions are completely disproved by every direct evidence which we have about the places of worship of those Christians. I have already quoted, p. 7, the testimony of Minutius Felix, that the Christians had no kind of simulachres in their temples, as well as the indignation of St Epiphanius at an attempt to introduce them into the churches, p. 68, and for which there would have been no occasion if it had been an established custom.

The most important part of his defence of the use of images is, however, the paragraph entitled, "*No virtue resident in images themselves,*" containing what follows:—

[pg 133] "Not only are Catholics not exposed to such dangers (*i.e.*, idolatry), but they are expressly prohibited by the church (*Concilium Tridentinum*, sess. xxv.) to believe that there is any divinity or virtue resident in images for which they should be revered, or that any thing is to be asked of them, or any confidence placed in them, but that the honour given should be referred to those whom they represent; and so particular are their religious instructors in impressing this truth upon the minds of their congregations, that if a Catholic child, who had learned its first catechism, were asked if it were permitted to pray to images, the child would answer, 'No, by no means; for they have no life nor sense to help us;' and the pastor who discovered any one rendering any portion of the respect which belongs to God alone to a crucifix or to a picture, would have no hesitation in breaking the one and tearing the other into shreds, and throwing the fragments into the flames, in imitation of Ezechias, who broke the brazen serpent on account of the superstitious reverence which the Israelites manifested towards it."—(*Hierurgia*, p. 382.)

[pg 134] It is perfectly true that the Council of Trent has declared that the images of Christ, of the virgin, and of other saints, are to be honoured and venerated, not because it is believed that there is any divinity or virtue inherent in them, or that any thing is to be asked of them, or any confidence placed in images, as had been done by Pagans, who put their trust in idols (Psalm cxxxv. 15-18), but that "the honour given should be referred to those whom they represent, so that by the images which we kiss, before which we uncover our heads, or prostrate ourselves (*procumbimus*), we worship Christ and the saints whose likeness those images represent."⁸⁴ But if there is "no divinity or virtue resident in images," as is declared by the Council of Trent, what is to become of all those miraculous images which are the subject of pilgrimage in so many Roman Catholic countries, and the existence of whose miraculous powers has been solemnly acknowledged by the highest ecclesiastical authorities? I shall not attempt to enumerate those miraculous images, because their number is legion, but I shall only ask the rev. doctor whether he considers the image of the virgin of Loretto, which is the object of so many pilgrimages, and to

[pg 135] which so many miracles are ascribed, as having some virtue resident in it or not? and would he break it in pieces on account of the miraculous powers ascribed to it? Is he prepared to act in such a manner with the celebrated *Bambino*⁸⁵ of Rome? and are the miraculous powers ascribed to it, as well as to the virgin of Loretto, and other images of this kind, a reality or an imposture? and, finally, what will he do with the winking Madonna of Rimini, which has lately made so much noise, and which, instead of being broken to pieces or torn to shreds by the priests or the bishop of the place, has been approved by ecclesiastical authority? I can assure the rev. doctor, that by breaking into pieces the miraculous images, carved as well as painted, he will break down many barriers which now separate the Protestant Christians from those who belong to his own church.

[pg 136] I am, however, afraid that he will find many difficulties in attempting such a thing; and I must remind him, that in quoting the above-mentioned canon of the Council of Trent, he forgot an essential part of it, which greatly modifies the declaration that there is *no divinity or virtue resident in images*, saying, "That the holy synod ordains that no one be allowed to place, or cause to be placed, any *unusual* image⁸⁶ in any place or church, howsoever exempted, except that the image be approved by the bishop: also, that no new miracles are to be acknowledged or new relics recognised, unless the said bishop has taken cognizance and approved thereof, who, as soon as he has obtained certain information in regard to these matters, shall, after having taken the advice of theologians and of other pious men, act therein as he shall judge to be consonant with truth and piety."—(Sess. xxviii., &c.)

The real meaning of the above-mentioned canon of the Council of Trent is therefore, I think, that there is no divinity or virtue resident in the images which are not authorised by the bishop to work miracles, and that *unlicensed* images are not allowed to have any such divinity or virtue in them, but that such *unusual* carved or painted images, as those which I have mentioned above, having obtained the required authorization, may work as many miracles as they please, or as their worshippers will believe.

[pg 137] It has been observed by a writer, who certainly cannot be accused of violent opinions, the learned and pious Melancthon, "that it was impious and idolatrous to address statues or bones, and to suppose that either the Divinity or the saints were attached to a certain place or to a certain statue more than to other places; and that there was no difference between the prayers which are addressed to the Virgin of Aix la Chapelle, or to that of Ratisbon, and the Pagan invocations of the Ephesian Diana, or the Platean Juno, or any other statue."⁸⁷ To these observations I shall only add those of M. Beugnot, which I have given p. 27, on the marvellous facility with which the worship of the virgin, established by the Council of Ephesus, 431, has superseded that of the Pagan deities in many countries.

There is scarcely any ceremony in the Western as well as in the Eastern church, the origin of which cannot be traced to the Pagan worship. I shall limit my observations on this subject to the three following objects, which constitute the most important elements in the divine service performed in those churches, namely,—1. The consecrated water; 2. Lamps and candles; and, 3. Incense; giving the Roman Catholic explanation of their origin, as well as that which I believe to be true.

[pg 138] With regard to the consecrated water, it is described by the author of "*Hierurgia*" in the following manner:—

"The ordinance of Almighty God, promulgated by the lips of Moses, concerning the *water of separation*, and the mode of sprinkling it, are minutely noticed in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Numbers. In the book of Exodus, we read that the Lord issued the following declarations to Moses:—"Thou shalt make a brazen laver, with its foot, to wash in; and thou shalt set it between the tabernacle of the testimony and the altar. And the water being put into it, Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet in it when they are going into the tabernacle of the testimony, and when they are to come to the altar to offer incense on it to the Lord."—(Exod. xxx. 18-20.)

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"That it was a practice with the Jews, not only peculiar to the members of the priesthood, but observed amongst the people, for each individual to wash his hands before he presumed to pray, is a well-attested fact. The church adopted this as well as several other Jewish ceremonies, which she engrafted on her ritual; and St Paul apparently borrows from such ablution the metaphor which he employs while thus admonishing his disciple Timothy:—"I will that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands."—(1 Timothy ii. 8.) That in the early ages the faithful used to wash their hands at the threshold of the church before they entered, is expressly mentioned by a number of writers."

As to the use of holy water being of apostolic origin, he says:—

"The introduction of holy or blessed water must be referred to the times of the apostles. That it was the custom, in the very first ages of the church, not only to deposit vessels of water at the entrance of those places where the Christians assembled for the celebration of divine worship, but also to have vases containing water mingled with salt, both of which had been separated from common use, and blessed by the prayers and invocations of the priest, is certain. A particular mention of it is made in the constitution of the apostles; and the pontiff Alexander, the first of that name, but the sixth in succession from St Peter, whose chair he mounted in the year 109, issued a decree by which the use of holy water was permitted to the faithful in their houses."—(*Hierurgia*, pp. 461-463.)

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It is rather a strange thing for Christians to imitate the religious rites of the Jews, whose ceremonial law,—“which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers *washings*, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation” (Heb. ix. 10),—was abolished by the New Testament. However, if this is to be done, why is not the holy water adopted by the Roman Catholic Church prepared in the same manner, and used for the same object, as the Jewish *water of separation*, described in Numbers xix., but, on the contrary, composed in the same manner, and employed for the same purpose, as the *lustral* water of the Pagans? The fact is, that it has been borrowed from the Pagan worship and not from the Jewish ceremonial law, the truth of which is honestly acknowledged by the Jesuit La Cerda, who, in a note on the following passage of Virgil,—

“Idem ter socios pura circumtulit unda,
Spargens rore levi, et ramo felicis olivæ,
Lustravitque viros”

—*Æneid*, lib. vi. 229—

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says, “Hence was derived the custom of the holy church to provide purifying or holy water at the entrance of their churches.”⁸⁸ The same custom was observed in the Pagan temples, at the entrance of which there was a vase containing the holy or *lustral* water, for the people to sprinkle themselves with, just as is now done at the entrance of the Roman Catholic churches. The author of “*Hierurgia*” mentions, as quoted above, that Pope Alexander I. authorised, in the beginning of the second century, the use of holy water; and yet Justin Martyr, who wrote about that time, says “that it was invented by demons, in imitation of the true baptism signified by the prophets, that their votaries might also have their pretended purification by water.”⁸⁹ And the Emperor Julian, in order to vex the Christians, caused the victuals in the markets to be sprinkled with holy water, with the intention of either starving them or compelling them to eat what they considered as impure.⁹⁰

To these evidences of the abomination in which the primitive Christians held the Pagan rite of sprinkling with holy water, I may add the following anecdote, characteristic of the intensity of this feeling:—

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When Julian the Apostate was one day going to sacrifice in the temple of Fortune, accompanied by the usual train of the emperors, the Pagan priests, standing on both sides of the temple gate, sprinkled those who were entering it with the *lustral* or holy water in order to purify them according to the rites of their worship. A Christian tribune, or superior officer of the imperial guards (*scutarii*), who, being on duty, preceded the monarch, received some drops of this holy water on his *chlamys* or coat, which made him so indignant, that, notwithstanding the presence of the emperor, he struck the priest who had thus sprinkled him, exclaiming that he did not purify but pollute him. Julian ordered the arrest of the officer who had thus insulted the rites of his religion, giving him the choice either to sacrifice to the gods or to leave the army. The bold Christian chose the latter, but was soon restored to his rank on account of his great military talents, and raised, after the death of Julian and the short reign of Jovian, to the imperial throne as Valentinian I.⁹¹

This monarch was, however, by no means a bigot; on the contrary, we have the unsuspected testimony of the contemporary Pagan writer Ammianus Marcellinus that he maintained a strict impartiality between the Christians and Pagans, and did not trouble any one on account of his religion. He even regulated and confirmed, by a law in 391, the privileges of the Pagan clergy in a more favourable manner than had been done by many of his predecessors; and yet this monarch, who treated his Pagan subjects with such an extreme liberality, committed, when a private individual, an act of violence against their worship which exposed him to considerable danger. This, I think, is a strong proof of the horror which the Christians felt for a rite which constitutes now an indispensable part of the service in the Western as well as in the Eastern churches, and is most profusely used by them.

With regard to the candles and lamps, which form a no less important and indispensable part of the worship adopted by the above-mentioned churches, the author of "Hierurgia" defends their use in the following manner:—

[pg 143] After having described the candlesticks employed in the Jewish temple, he says:—"But without referring to the ceremonial of the Jewish temple, we have an authority for the employment of light in the functions of religion presented to us in the Apocalypse. In the first chapter of that mystic book, St John particularly mentions the golden candlesticks which he beheld in his prophetic vision in the isle of Patmos. By commentators on the sacred Scripture, it is generally supposed that the Evangelist, in his book of the Apocalypse, adopted the imagery with which he represents his mystic revelations from the ceremonial observed in his days by the church for offering up the mass, or eucharistic sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus.

[pg 144] "That the use of lights was adopted by the church, especially at the celebration of the sacred mysteries, as early as the times of the apostles, may likewise, with much probability, be inferred from that passage in their Acts which records the preaching and miracles of St Paul at Troas:—'And on the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, being to depart on the morrow, and he continued his speech until midnight. And there were a great number of lamps in the upper chamber where we were assembled.'—(Acts xx. 7, 8.) That the many lamps, so particularly noticed in this passage, were not suspended merely for the purpose of illuminating, during the night-time, this upper chamber, in which the faithful had assembled on the first day of the week to break bread, but also to increase the solemnity of that function and betoken a spiritual joy, may be lawfully inferred from every thing we know about the manners of the ancient Jews, from whom the church borrowed the use of lights in celebrating her various rites and festivals."—(*Hierurgia*, p. 372.)

[pg 145] It is really difficult seriously to answer such extraordinary suppositions as that the seven candlesticks, expressly mentioned as types of the seven churches, should be an allusion to the physical lights used in the worship of those churches, and not to the moral and spiritual light which they were spreading amongst Jews and Gentiles. Such an explanation appears to me nothing better than that tendency to materialise the most abstract and spiritual ideas to which I have alluded above, p. 126. With regard to the passage in the Acts xx. 7, 8, which says that there were a great number of lamps in the upper chamber where St Paul was preaching, I think that this circumstance might have been considered as a religious rite if the apostle had been preaching at noon; but as it is expressly said that he did it at night, nothing can be more simple than the lighting of the upper chamber with lamps. It was also very natural that there should be many of them, because as St Paul was undoubtedly often referring to the Scriptures, his hearers, or at least many of them, being either real Jews or Hellenists, must have been continually looking to copies of the Bible in order to verify his quotation. It was, therefore, necessary to have the room well lighted, and consequently to employ many lamps. It is, indeed, curious to see to what far-fetched suppositions a writer of so much learning and ingenuity as Dr Rock is obliged to recur, in order to defend a purely Pagan rite which has been adopted by his church, giving the simplest and clearest things a *non-natural sense*, similar to that which some Romanising clergymen have been giving to the precepts of a church which they were betraying whilst in her service and pay.

The same author maintains that lights were employed from primitive times at divine service, saying:—

"The custom of employing lights, in the earlier ages of the church, during the celebration of the eucharist; and other religious offices, is authenticated by those venerable records of primitive discipline which are usually denominated Apostolic Canons."—(*Hierurgia*, p. 393.)

Now, what is the authenticity of these canons? The author himself gives us the best answer to it, saying:—

[pg 146] "Though these canons be apocryphal, and by consequence not genuine, inasmuch as they were neither committed to writing by the apostles themselves, nor penned by St Clement, to whom some authors have attributed them; still, however, this does not prevent them from being true and authentic, since they embody the traditions descended from the apostles and the apostolic fathers, and bear a faithful testimony that the discipline which prevailed during the first and second centuries was established by the apostles."—(P. 394.)

I shall not enter into a discussion about the value of evidence furnished by a work which is acknowledged to be apocryphal, and not to have been written by those to whom its defenders had

ascribed its authorship;⁹² but I shall only remark, that one of the most eminent fathers of the church, the learned Lactantius, who flourished in the fourth century, and consequently long after the time when the Apostolic Canons are supposed to have been composed, takes a very different view from them in regard to this practice, because he positively says, in attacking the use of lights by the Pagans, *they light up candles to God as if he lived in the dark, and do they not deserve to pass for madmen who offer lamps to the Author and Giver of light?*⁹³ And is it probable that he could approve of a practice in the Christian church which he condemns in the Pagan?

[pg 147] And, indeed, can there be any thing more heathenish than the custom of burning lights before images or relics, which is nothing else than sacrifices which the Pagans offered to their idols?

I have described above, p. 74, the manner in which St Jerome defended the use of lights in the churches against Vigilantius. This defence of St Jerome is adduced by our author in a rather extraordinary manner.

[pg 148] "It happens not unfrequently that those very calumnies which have been propagated, and the attacks which were so furiously directed by the enemies of our holy faith in ancient times, against certain practices of discipline then followed by the church, are the most triumphant testimonies which can be adduced at the present day, both to establish the venerable origin of such observances, and to warrant a continuation of them. In the present instance, the remark is strikingly observable; for the strictures which Vigilantius passed in the fourth age, on the use of lights in churches, as well as on the shrines of the martyrs, and the energetic refutation of St Jerome of the charge of superstition preferred against such a pious usage by that apostate, may be noticed as an irrefragable argument, in the nineteenth century, to establish the remote antiquity of this religious custom. After mentioning as a fact of public notoriety, and in a manner which defied contradiction, that the Christians, at the time when he was actually writing, which was about the year 376,⁹⁴ were accustomed to illumine their churches during mid-day with a profusion of wax tapers, Vigilantius proceeds to turn such a devotion into ridicule. But he met with a learned and victorious opponent, who, while he vindicated this practice of the church against the objection of her enemy, took occasion to assign those reasons which induced her to adopt it. That holy father observes:—"Throughout all the churches of the East, whenever the Gospel is to be recited, they bring forth lights, though it be at noon-day; not certainly to shine among darkness, but to manifest some sign of joy, that under the type of corporeal light may be indicated that light of which we read in the Psalms, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."'"—(*Hierurgia*, p. 298.)

[pg 149] Now, I would observe to the learned doctor, that St Jerome, in answering Vigilantius, maintained, as I have shown above, p. 74, that it was calumny to say that the Christians burnt candles in the daylight, and that it was done only by some people, *whose zeal was without knowledge*. Consequently, the church which has adopted this practice shows, according to the authority of that "holy and learned father," that *her zeal is without knowledge*. With regard to the argument in support of the abovementioned practices given by St Jerome, and reproduced by our author, that the Eastern churches make use of lights, I admit that it is unanswerable, because it is an undoubted fact that the Græco-Russian Church makes an immense consumption of wax candles, chiefly burnt before the images, and it remains for me only to congratulate the advocates of this practice on the support which they derive from such an imperative authority as that of the Græco-Russian Church.

It remains for me now only to say a few words about the *incense*, which forms a constituent part of the service of the Roman Catholic and Græco-Russian Churches, as much as the holy water and lights, and which is defended by the author of "*Hierurgia*" in the following manner. After having described the use of incense in the Jewish temples, he says—

[pg 150] "It was from this religious custom of employing incense in the ancient temple, that the royal prophet drew that beautiful simile of his, when he petitioned that his prayers might ascend before the Lord like incense. It was while 'all the multitude were praying without at the hour of incense, that there appeared to Zachary an angel of the Lord, standing at the right of the altar of incense,'—(Luke i. 10, 11). That the oriental nations attached a meaning not only of personal reverence, but also of religious homage to an offering of incense, is demonstrable from the instance of the magi, who, having fallen down to adore the newborn Jesus, and recognise his divinity, presented him with gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. That he might be more intelligible to those who read his book of the Apocalypse, it is very probable that St John adapted his language to the ceremonial of the liturgy then followed by the Christians in celebrating the eucharistic sacrifice, at the period the evangelist was committing to writing his mysterious revelations. In depicting, therefore, the scene which took place in the sanctuary of heaven, where he was given to behold in vision the mystic sacrifice of the Lamb, we are warranted to suppose that he borrowed the imagery, and selected several of his expressions, from the ritual then actually in use, and has in consequence bequeathed to us an outline of the ceremonial which the church employed in the apostolic ages of offering up the unbloody sacrifice of the same divine Lamb of God, Christ Jesus, in her sanctuary upon earth. Now, St John particularly notices how the 'angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God; and the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel.'—Apocal. viii. 3-5."—(*Hierurgia*, p. 518.)

[pg 151] To this explanation of the use of incense in the churches, I may answer by the same observation

which I have made, p. 144, on a similar defence of the use of lights, namely, that it is a strange materialization of spiritual ideas by embodying into a tangible shape what is simply typical, and which is not warranted by any direct evidence. Such far-fetched and fanciful conjectures cannot be refuted by serious arguments; but as regards the Jewish origin of the use of incense, as well as of many other ceremonies common to the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, I shall give the observation of the celebrated Dr Middleton, on an answer made by a Roman Catholic to his well-known Letter from Rome, and who, defending the ceremonies of his Church in nearly the same manner as the author of "Hierurgia," says, "That Dr Middleton was mistaken in thinking every ceremony used by the heathens to be heathenish, since the greatest part of them were borrowed from the worship of the true God, in imitation of which the devil affected to have his temples, altars, priests, and sacrifices, and all other things which were used in the true worship." This he applied to the case of *incense, lamps, holy water, and processions*, adding, "that if Middleton had been as well read in the Scriptures as he seemed to be in the heathen poets, he would have found the use of all these in the temple of God, and that by God's appointment."

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"I shall not dispute with him," says Middleton, "about the origin of these rites, whether they were *first instituted by Moses, or were of prior use and antiquity amongst the Egyptians*. The Scriptures favour the last, which our *Spenser* strongly asserts, and their *Calmet* and *Huetius* allow; but should we grant him all that he can infer from his argument, what will he gain by it? Were not all those *beggarly elements* wiped away by the spiritual worship of the Gospel? Were they not all annulled, on account of *their weakness and unprofitableness*, by the more perfect revelation of *Jesus Christ*?—(Gal. iv. 9; Heb. vii. 18.) If, then, I should acknowledge my mistake, and recall my words, and instead of *Pagan*, call them *Jewish* ceremonies, would not the use of Jewish rites be abominable still in a *Christian church*, where they are expressly abolished and prohibited by God himself?

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"But to pursue his argument a little farther. While the *Mosaic* worship subsisted by divine appointment in *Jerusalem, the devil likewise*, as he tells us, *had temples and ceremonies of the same kind*, in order to draw votaries to his idolatrous worship, which, after the abolition of the *Jewish* service, was carried on still with great pomp and splendour, and above all places, in *Rome*, the principal seat of his worldly empire. Now, it is certain that in the early times of the Gospel, the Christians of Rome were celebrated for their zealous adherence to the faith of Christ, as it was delivered to them by the apostles, pure from every mixture either of *Jewish* or *heathenish superstition*, till, after a succession of ages, as they began gradually to deviate from that apostolic simplicity, they introduced at different times into the church the particular ceremonies in question. Whence, then, can we think it probable that they should borrow them from the *Jewish* or the *Pagan* ritual? From a temple remote, despised and demolished by the Romans themselves, or from temples and altars perpetually in their view, and subsisting in their streets, in which their ancestors and fellow-citizens have constantly worshipped?⁹⁵ The question can hardly admit any dispute; the humour of the people, as well as the interest of a corrupted priesthood, would invite them to adopt such rites as were native to the soil, and found upon the place, and which long experience had shown to be useful to the acquisition both of wealth and power. Thus, by the most candid construction of this author's reasoning, we must necessarily call their ceremonies *Jewish*, or by pushing it to its full length, shall be obliged to call them *devilish*.

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"He observes that I begin my charge with the use of *incense* as the most notorious proof of their Paganism, and like an artful rhetorician, place my strongest argument in the front. Yet he knows I have assigned a different reason for offering that the first; because it is *the first thing* that strikes the sense, and surprises a stranger upon his entrance into their churches. But it shall be my strongest proof, if he will have it so, since he has brought nothing, I am sure, to weaken the force of it. He tells us that there was *an altar of incense in the temple of Jerusalem*, and is surprised, therefore, how I can call it *heathenish*; yet it is evident, from the nature of that institution, that it was never designed to be perpetual, and that during its continuance, God would have never approved *any other altar*, either in *Jerusalem* or any where else. But let him answer directly to this plain question: Was there ever *a temple in the world, not strictly heathenish*, in which there were *several altars, all smoking with incense, within our view, and at one and the same time*? It is certain that he must answer in the negative; yet it is as certain that there were many such temples in *Pagan Rome*, and are as many in *Christian Rome*; and since there never was an example of it, but what was *Paganish*, before the time of *Poperly*, how is it possible that it could be derived to them from any other source? or when we see so exact a resemblance in the copy, how can there be any doubt about the original?

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"What he alleges, therefore, in favour of *incense* is nothing to the purpose: 'That it was used in the Jewish, and is of great antiquity in the Christian churches, and that it is mentioned with honour in the Scriptures,' which frequently *compare it to prayer*, and speak of its *sweet odours ascending up to God, &c.*, which figurative expressions, he says, 'would never have been borrowed by sacred penmen from heathenish superstition;' as if such allusions were less proper, or the thing itself less sweet, for its being applied to the purposes of idolatry, as it constantly was in the time of the *same penmen*, and, according to their own accounts, on the *altars of Baal*, and the other *heathen idols*: and when *Jeremiah* rebukes the people of *Judah* for *burning incense to the queen of heaven* (Jer. xliv. 17), one can hardly help imagining that he is prophetically pointing out the worship paid now to the *virgin*, to whom they actually *burn incense* at this day under that very title.⁹⁶

"But if it be a just ground for retaining a practice in the *Christian church*, because it was

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enjoined to the *Jews*, what will our Catholic say for those usages which were actually prohibited to the *Jews*, and never practised by any but by the *heathens and papists*? All the *Egyptian priests*, as Herodotus informs us, *had their heads shaved, and kept continually bald*.⁹⁷ Thus the Emperor *Commodus*, that he might be admitted into that order, *got himself shaved, and carried the god Anubis in procession*. And it was on this account, most probably, that the *Jewish priests* were commanded *not to shave their heads, nor to make any baldness upon them*.—(Lev. xxi. 5; Ezek. xlv. 20). Yet this *Pagan rasure, or tonsure*, as they choose to call it, on the crown of the head, has long been the distinguishing mark of the *Romish priesthood*. It was on the same account, we may imagine, that the *Jewish priests were forbidden to make any cuttings in their flesh* (Lev. xix. 28, xxi. 5), since *that was likewise the common practice of certain priests and devotees among the heathens*, in order to acquire the fame of a more exalted sanctity. Yet the same discipline, as I have shown in my *Letter*,⁹⁸ is constantly practised at *Rome* in some of their solemn seasons and processions, in imitation of these *Pagan enthusiasts*, as if they searched the Scriptures to learn, not so much what was enjoined by true religion, as what had been useful at any time in a false one, to delude the multitude, and support an imposture.”—(*Middleton's Miscellaneous Works*, vol. v., p. 11, *et seq.*)

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The same author justly observes, that “under the *Pagan emperors* the use of *incense* for any purpose of religion was thought so contrary to the obligations of *Christianity*, that in their persecutions, the very method of *trying and converting a Christian was by requiring him only to throw the least grain of it into the censer or on the altar*.”

“Under the *Christian emperors*, on the other hand, it was looked upon as a *rite* so peculiarly *heathenish*, that the very *places or houses* where it could be proved to have been done, were, by a law of Theodosius, confiscated to the government.”⁹⁹—(*Ibid.*, p. 95.)

I shall conclude this essay by a short sketch of the superstitious practices prevailing in the Græco-Russian Church, which will be the subject of my next and last chapter.

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Chapter VIII. Image-Worship And Other Superstitious Practices Of The Graeco-Russian Church.

The Græco-Russian Church is perhaps the most important element of the politico-religious complications in which Europe is at present involved. It is, moreover, not a fortuitous cause of these complications, but has been growing during centuries, until it has reached its present magnitude, though its action upon Turkey may have been prematurely brought into play by accidental circumstances. It comprehends within its pale about 50,000,000 of souls, whilst it exercises an immense influence upon 13,000,000 of Turkish, and a considerable one upon more than 3,000,000 of Austrian subjects, professing the tenets of that church, though governed by separate hierarchies. To this number must be added the population of the kingdom of Greece, amounting to about 1,000,000: so that the whole of the followers of the Eastern Church may be computed in round numbers at 66,000,000 or 67,000,000 of souls.¹⁰⁰

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The Russian Church differs from other Greek churches, not in her tenets, but in her government. From the establishment of Christianity in Russia, towards the end of the tenth century, to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, the Russian Church was governed by a metropolitan, consecrated by the Patriarch of Constantinople. After this event, the metropolitans were consecrated by the Russian bishops till 1588, when a patriarch of Russia was instituted by that of Constantinople, who had arrived at Moscow, in order to obtain pecuniary assistance for his church. The patriarch enjoyed considerable influence, which modified in some respects the despotic authority of the Czar. It was Peter the Great who abolished this dignity in 1702, after the death of the Patriarch Adrian, and declared himself the head of the Russian Church.

He introduced several regulations to restrict the power of the clergy, and to improve their education. It appears that the violent reforms by which that monarch tried to introduce the civilization of western Europe amongst his subjects, had produced an intellectual movement in their church, but which, not squaring with the views of the imperial reformer, was violently suppressed by him. Thus, in 1713, a physician called Demetrius Tveritinoff, and some other persons, began to attack the worship of images, and to explain the sacrament of communion in the same sense as has been done by Calvin.

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These reformers were anathematised by the order of the Czar, and one of them was executed in 1714.¹⁰¹ Next year, 1715, a Russian priest, called Thomas, probably a disciple of the above-mentioned reformers, began publicly to inveigh against the worship of saints and other practices of his church, and went even so far as to break the images placed in the churches. He was burnt alive, and nothing more was heard afterwards of such reformers. The Russian clergy regained their influence under the reign of the Empress Elizabeth, 1742-62, a weak-minded, bigoted

woman, who was continually making pilgrimages to the shrines of various Russian saints and miraculous images, displaying on those occasions such a splendour and such munificence to the objects of her devotion, that the finances of her state were injured by it.¹⁰² Elizabeth's nephew and successor, Peter III., Duke of Holstein, who, for the sake of the throne, had passed from the Lutheran communion to the Greek Church, entertained the greatest contempt for his new religion. This half-crazy, unfortunate prince, instead of trying to reform the Russian Church by promoting a superior information amongst her clergy, offended the religious prejudices of his subjects by an open disregard of the ordinances of that church, and his projects of violent reforms. He not only did away with all the fasts at his court, but he wished to abolish them throughout all his empire, to remove the images and candles from the churches, and, finally, that the clergy should shave their beards and dress like the Lutheran pastors. He also confiscated the landed property of the church. Catherine II., who observed with the greatest diligence those religious rites which her husband treated with such contempt, and who greatly owed to this conduct her elevation to the throne, confirmed, however, the confiscation of the church estates, assigning salaries to the clergy and convents who had been supported by that property. She made use of the influence of the Græco-Russian Church for the promotion of her political schemes in Poland and in Turkey; yet, as her religious opinions were those of the school of Voltaire and Diderot, which believed that Christianity would soon cease to have any hold upon the human mind, she seems not to have been fully aware of that immense increase of power at home and influence abroad which a skilful action upon the religious feelings of the followers of that church may give to the Russian monarchs. This policy has been formed into a complete system by the present Emperor, and it was in consequence of it that several millions of the inhabitants of the ancient Polish provinces, who belonged to the Greek United Church, *i.e.*, who had acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope by accepting the union concluded at Florence in 1438, were forced to give up that union, and to pass from the spiritual dominion of the Pope to that of the Czar. This wholesale conversion was necessarily accompanied with a good deal of persecution. Those clergymen who had refused to adopt the imperial ukase for their rule of conscience were banished to Siberia, and many other acts of oppression were committed on that occasion, but of which only the case of the nuns of Minsk has produced a sensation in western Europe. The same system of religious centralization has also been applied to the Protestant peasantry of the Baltic provinces, many of whom were seduced by various means to join the Russian Church; and this policy continues to be vigorously prosecuted in the same quarter, as may be seen by the following extract from the *Berlin Gazette* of Voss, reprinted in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of the 12th March of this year, 1854:—

“Emissaries travelling about the country succeeded by every kind of cunning, and by holding out prospects of gain and other advantages, to convert people from Lutheranism to the Greek Church. All the children, under seventeen years must follow the religion of their father as soon as he has entered the orthodox church. Whoever has received the anointment¹⁰³ can no longer return to his former creed, and those who would try to persuade him to do it would be severely punished. It is even forbidden to the Protestant clergy to warn their congregations from going over to the Greek Church by drawing their attention to the difference which exists between the two religions. A great number of Greek churches have been built in the Baltic provinces, and already, in 1845, it was ordered that the converts to the Greek Church should be admitted into every town; that those peasants who would leave their places of residence in order to join a Greek congregation should be allowed by their landowners to do so;¹⁰⁴ and, finally, that the landowners and Protestant clergymen who would oppose in any way the conversion to the Greek Church of their peasantry and congregations, should be visited with severe penalties. These penalties, directed against those who would attempt to induce any one, either by speeches or writings, to pass from the Greek Church to any other communion, have been specified in a new criminal code. They prescribe for certain cases of such a proselytism corporal chastisement, the knout, and transportation to Siberia.” It is also well known that the Protestant missionaries, who had been labouring in various parts of the Russian empire for the conversion of Mahometans and heathens, have been prohibited from continuing their pious exertions. And yet, strange to say, there is a not uninfluential party in Prussia, which, pretending to be zealously Protestant, supports with all its might the politico-religious policy of Russia, and is as hostile to Protestant England as it is favourable to the power which is persecuting Protestantism in its dominions. On the other hand, it is curious to observe in this country some persons of that High Church party which affects to repudiate the name of Protestant, and with whom *churchianity* seems to have more weight than Christianity, showing an inclination to unite with the Græco-Russian Church; and I have seen a pamphlet, ascribed to a clergyman of the Scotch Episcopal Church, positively recommending such a union, and containing the formulary of a petition to be addressed by the Episcopalians of Great Britain to the most holy Synod of St Petersburg, praying for admission into the communion of its church. I would, however, observe to these exaggerated Anglo-catholics, who chiefly object to the ecclesiastical establishment of England on account of its being a State Church, that the Russian Church is still more so, and that the most holy synod which administers that church, though composed of prelates and other clergymen, can do nothing without the assent of its lay member, the imperial procurator, and that a colonel of hussars was lately intrusted with this important function. The Greek Church being opposed to Rome, some Protestants sought to conclude a union with her in the sixteenth century; and the Lutheran divines of Tübingen had for this purpose a correspondence with the Patriarch of Constantinople, between the years 1575 and 1581, but which did not lead to any result, as the Patriarch insisted upon their simply joining his church. The Protestants of Poland attempted in 1599 a union with the Greek Church of their country, and the delegates of both parties met for this purpose at Vilna; their object was, however, frustrated by the same cause which rendered nugatory the

efforts that had been made by the divines of Tubingen for this purpose, the Greek Church insisting upon their entire submission to her authority. It is true that some learned ecclesiastics of the Græco-Russian Church are supposed to entertain Protestant opinions, but this is entirely personal, and has no influence whatever on the systematic policy of their Church, which hates Rome as a rival, but Protestantism as a revolutionary principle. One of the ablest and most zealous defenders of the Roman Catholic Church in our times, and whom a long residence in Russia had made thoroughly acquainted with her church, Count Joseph Demaistre, is of opinion that this church must finally give way to the influence of Protestantism;¹⁰⁵ and I think that this might be really the case if the Russian Church enjoyed perfect liberty of discussion, which she is very far at present from possessing. I believe, however, that such a contingency is very possible with those Eastern churches that are not under the dominion of Russia, if they were once entirely liberated from Russian influence and brought into contact with Protestant learning. Such a revolution would be most dangerous, not only to the external influence of Russia, but even to her despotism at home, because a Protestant movement amongst the Greek churches of Turkey would sever every connection between them and Russia, and very likely extend to the last-named country. It is therefore most probable, as has been observed by the celebrated explorer of Nineveh, Layard, that the movement alluded to above, which has recently begun to spread amongst the Armenian churches of Turkey, was not without influence on the mission of Prince Menschikoff and its consequences.

I have said above that the mutual position of the Græco-Russian and Roman Catholic Churches towards one another is that of two rivals. The dogmatic difference between them turns upon some abstruse tenets, which are generally little understood by the great mass of their followers, whilst the essential ground of divergence, the real question at issue, is, whether the headship of the church is to be vested in the Pope, in the Patriarch of Constantinople, or in the Czar. The Pope has allowed that portion of the Greek Church which submitted to his supremacy at the council of Florence in 1438, to retain its ritual and discipline, with some insignificant modifications. The Roman Catholic Church considers the Græco-Russian one in about the same light as she is regarded herself by that of England. She acknowledges her to be *a church*, though a schismatic one, whose sacraments and ordination are valid, so that a Greek or Russian priest becomes, on signing the union of Florence, a clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church exactly as is the case in the Anglican Church with a Roman Catholic priest who renounces the pope. The Græco-Russian Church does not, however, return the compliment to the Roman Catholic one, any more than the Catholic does it to that of England; because a Roman Catholic priest who enters the Græco-Russian Church not only loses his sacerdotal character, just as is the case with an Anglican clergyman who goes over to the communion of Rome, but he must be even baptised anew, as is done with Christians of every denomination who join that church, whether Jews or Gentiles.

The system of reaction which the Roman Catholic Church has been pursuing for many years, with a consistency, perseverance, and zeal worthy of a better cause, and not without considerable success, has created just alarm in the minds of many friends of religious and civil liberty. This feeling is but too well warranted by the open hostility which the promoters of that reaction, having thrown away the mask of liberalism, are manifesting to the above-mentioned liberties. I shall, moreover, add, that the political complications in which Europe is now involved may be taken advantage of by the reactionary party in order to advance its schemes, whilst the public attention, particularly of this country, will be absorbed by the events of the present war; and therefore I think that all true Protestants should, instead of relaxing, increase their vigilance, in respect to the movements of the ecclesiastical reactionists. But the dangers which threaten from that quarter are, at least in this country, of a purely moral character, though they are doing much mischief in families, and may throw some obstruction into the legislative action of the government. They must therefore be combated with moral and intellectual means,—with spiritual, and not carnal weapons,—and they may be completely annihilated by a vigorous and skilful application of such means. The Pope of Rome, though claiming a spiritual authority over many countries, cannot maintain himself in his own temporal dominion without the assistance of foreign powers, and is obliged to court the favour of secular potentates, instead of commanding them, as had been done by his predecessors. The case is quite different with the Imperial Pope of Russia, who commands a million of bayonets, and whose authority is supported, not by canon, but by cannon law, and not by bulls, but by bullets. The material force which he has at his disposal is immensely strengthened by his spiritual authority over the ignorant masses of the Russian population, upon whose religious feelings he may act with great facility, because his orders to the clergy are as blindly obeyed as his commands to the army; and it is with the object of extending and consolidating this authority over all his subjects without exception that those measures of persecution and seduction against the Roman Catholics and Protestants, which I have mentioned above, have been adopted. The probable consequence of this religious centralization, and the condition of the church whose exclusive dominion it is sought to establish in Russia, have been sketched in the following graphic manner by an accomplished German writer, who, having resided many years in Russia, and being thoroughly acquainted with the language of that country, may be considered as one of the most competent judges on this subject:—

“He who, with attentive ear and eye, travels through the wide empire of the Czar, surrounding three parts of the world with its snares, and then traces the sum of his contemplations, will tremble in thought at the destiny which the Colossus of nations has yet to fulfil. He who doubts of the impending fulfilment of this destiny knows not history, and knows not Russia.

[pg 170] "However different in origin and interest the strangely mixed hordes may be which constitute this giant realm, there exists one mighty bond which holds them all together,—the Byzantine Church. Whoever remains out of it will soon be forced into it; and ere the coming century begins, all the inhabitants of Russia will be of one faith.

"Already that great net, whose meshes the Neva and the Volga, the Don and the Dnieper, the Kyros and Araxes, form, inclose a preponderating Christian population, in whose midst the scattered Islamitish race, the descendants of the Golden Horde, are lost like drops in the ocean. What a marvellous disposition of things, that the Russian empire, whose governing principle is the diametrically opposite of the Christian law, should be the very one to make of Christianity the corner, the keystone of its might! And a no less marvellous disposition of things is it that the Czar, in whatever direction he stretches his far-grasping arms, should find Christian points of support whereon to knit the threads of fate for the followers of Islam, artfully scattered by him—that he should find Armenians at the foot of Ararat, and Georgians at the foot of Caucasus!

"But of what kind is this Christianity, that masses together so many millions of human beings into one great whole, and uses them as moving springs to the manifestations of a power that will sooner or later give the old world a new transformation?

[pg 171] "Follow me for a moment into the Russian motherland, and throw a flying glance at the religious state of things prevailing there.

"See that poor soldier, who, tired and hungry from his long march, is just performing his sacred exercises, ere he takes his meal and seeks repose.

"He draws a little image of the virgin from his pocket, spits on it, and wipes it with his coat sleeve: then he sets it down on the ground, kneels before it, and crosses himself, and kisses it in pious devotion.

"Or enter with me on a Sunday one of the gloomy image-adorned Russian churches. If the dress of those present is not already sufficient to indicate their difference of station, you may readily distinguish them by the manner in which each person makes the sign of the cross. Consider first that man of rank, as he stands before a miracle-working image of a Kazanshian mother of God, bows slightly before it, and crosses himself notably. Translated into our vernacular the language of this personage's face would run in something like the following strain:—'I know that all this is a pious farce, but one must give no offence to the people, else all respect would be lost. Would the people continue to toil for us, if they were to lose their trust in the assurances we cause to be made to them of the joys of heaven?'

[pg 172] "Now look at that caftan-clad fat merchant, as, with crafty glance and confident step, he makes up to the priest to get his soul freed from the trafficking sins of the past week.

"He knows the priest, and is sure that a good piece of money will meet with a good reception from him; that is why he goes so carelessly, in the consciousness of being able to settle in the lump the whole of his sinful account; and when the absolution is over, he takes his position in front of the miraculous image, and makes so prodigious a sign of the cross, that before this act all the remaining scruples of his soul must vanish away.

"Consider, in fine, that poor countryman, who steals in humbly at the door, and gazes slyly round him in the incense-beclouded spaces. The pomp and the splendour are too much for the poor fellow.

"'God,' he thinks, 'but what a gracious lord the Emperor is, that he causes such fine churches to be built for us poor devils! God bless the Emperor!' And then he slips timidly up to some image where the golden ground and the dark colours form the most glaring contrast, and throws himself down before it, and crosses the floor with his forehead, so that his long hair falls right over his face, and thus he wearies himself with prostrations and enormous crossings, until he can do no more for exhaustion. For the poorer the man in Russia, the larger the cross he signs and wears."¹⁰⁶

[pg 173] This description of the religious state of the Russian people, given by a writer who is not very partial to their country, may be perhaps suspected of exaggeration, or considered as being too much of a caricature; I shall therefore give my readers the observations which have been made on the same subject by another German author, Baron Haxthausen, a great admirer of Russia, who travelled over that country in 1843, under the patronage of the Emperor, in order to study the state of its agriculture and industry, as well as the social condition of the working-classes.

"A foreigner is struck," says the Baron, "by the deep devotion and the strict observance of the ordinances and customs of the church shown by Russians of rank and superior education. I had already, at Moscow, an opportunity of seeing it. Prince T., a young, elegant Muscovite dandy, conducted me about the churches of the Kremlin, and almost in every one of them he knelt down before some particularly venerated object,—as the coffin of a saint, the image of a Madonna,—and touched the ground with his forehead, and devoutly kissed the object in question. I observed the same thing at Yaroslaf. Madame Bariatynski (the wife of the governor) and another lady conducted me about the churches of that city, and as soon as we entered one of them, both these ladies approached an image of the Virgin, fell down before it, *without any regard to their dresses,*

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touched with their foreheads the ground, and kissed the image, making signs of the cross; and these were ladies belonging to the highest society, and of the most refined manners. Madame Bariatynski had been a lady of the court, and the ornament of the first drawing-rooms of St Petersburg. Her mind is uncommonly cultivated, and she has a thorough knowledge of French and German literature; and, indeed, when we were walking to see these churches, along the banks of the Volga, she discussed, in an animated and ingenious manner, the matchless beauty of Goethe's songs, and recited from memory his Fisherman. Even in the strictest Roman Catholic countries, as, for instance, Bavaria, Belgium, Rome, Munster, such public demonstrations of piety are not to be met, except in some exceedingly rare cases, with women, but never with men. The educated classes have in this respect separated from the lower ones. Even people who are very devout consider such excessive manifestations of piety as not quite decent, nay, though they dare not confess it, they are in some measure ashamed of them. In Russia the case is different. There are perhaps as many freethinkers, and even atheists, as in western Europe, but even they submit, at least in public, and when they are in their own country, unconditionally, and almost involuntarily, to the customs of their church. In this respect, no difference whatever may be observed between the highest and the commonest Russian; the unity of the national church and of the national worship predominates everywhere."¹⁰⁷

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It is almost superfluous to observe that a church which has such a hold on the national mind of Russia must be a powerful engine in the hands of her Imperial Pope, whose political authority is thus immensely strengthened by the influence of religion. But I think it will be, perhaps, not uninteresting to my readers to compare this baptised idolatry of the modern Russians with that which had been practised by their unbaptised ancestors about a thousand years ago, and the following account of which is given by Ibn Foslan, an Arabian traveller of the tenth century, who saw Russian merchants in the country of the Bulgars, a Mahometan nation who lived on the banks of the Volga, and the ruins of whose capital may be seen not far from the town of Kazan:—

"As soon as their (Russian) vessels arrive at the anchoring place, every one of them goes on shore, taking with him bread, meat, milk, onions, and intoxicating liquors, and repairs to a high wooden post, which has the likeness of a human face carved upon it, standing surrounded with small statues of a similar description, and some high ones erected behind it. He prostrates himself before this wooden figure, and says, 'O Lord, I have arrived from a distant country; I have brought with me so and so many girls,¹⁰⁸ so and so many sable skins;' and when he has enumerated all his merchandise, he lays before the idol the things which he has brought with him, and continues his prayer, saying, 'Here is a present which I have brought thee, and I wish thou wouldst send me a customer who has plenty of gold and silver, who will not bargain with me, but purchase all that I have to sell at my own price.' When his commerce does not prosper, he brings new presents to the idol, and when he meets with some new difficulties he makes gifts also to the small statues, but when he is successful he offers oxen and sheep."¹⁰⁹

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Kissing constitutes the principal part of the Russian worship of images and relics, and is most liberally bestowed on those objects of adoration, whilst I believe that the Roman Catholic Madonnas maintain a more dignified state, and do not allow such familiarities to their worshippers, unless on some particular occasions or to some privileged persons. The Emperor himself sets the example of this pious *osculation*, a striking instance of which occurred in the summer of last year, 1853, under circumstances which deserve a particular notice.

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I have said above, p. [161](#), that several millions of the followers of the Greek United Church had been forced by the present emperor to transfer their spiritual allegiance from the Pope to himself. Several of their churches contain miraculous images of the Virgin, of more or less repute, and which were obliged to share the fate of their worshippers, and to become schismatics as much as the latter. Their vested rights have not been, however, injured in any way by this revolution, because they continue to be worshipped, and to work miracles as they did before, or, what is the same thing, they are fully authorised to do so. The Russian government followed on this occasion its usual line of policy, which is to promote those who have joined it, forsaking their former party; and thus one of the most distinguished of these miracle-working converts, the Madonna of Pochayoff, a little town in Wolhynia, was transferred from her provincial station to Warsaw, and placed there in a newly built Russian cathedral, probably with the object of inducing the Roman Catholic inhabitants of that capital to imitate an example set to them in such a high quarter, and to acknowledge the spiritual authority of the Czar as much as they are obliged to submit to his temporal dominion. When the emperor was going last year to Olmutz, in order to persuade the Austrian court to support his policy in Turkey, he passed through Warsaw, and repairing, immediately after his arrival in that city, to the Russian cathedral, kissed the above-mentioned miraculous image of the Madonna of Pochayoff with such fervour that it produced quite a sensation upon all those who were present, and was noticed in the newspapers as a proof of the autocrat's piety. Yet whether this Madonna, notwithstanding her outward conversion to the Græco-Russian Church, remains a Romanist at heart, or whether, for some other reason, she could or would not support the views of her imperial worshipper, the result of the Czar's voyage to Olmutz proved that the caresses which he had bestowed upon the Madonna in question were *love's labours lost*. It may be also observed, that the emperor himself seems not to have been quite sure of the effects of his pious addresses to the now schismatic Madonna of Pochayoff, because it is well known that this man, who, as I have said above, p. [161](#), had torn from the spiritual authority of the Pope, by a violent persecution, many millions of souls, knelt during his visit to Olmutz, with all the marks of deep devotion, at a Roman Catholic high mass; whilst the Prince of Prussia, who was also present on that occasion, stood by without taking a

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hypocritical part in a worship which was contrary to his religion.

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This image-kissing propensity of the Russians was the cause of a tragical event during the plague at Moscow in 1771. It usually happens during a public calamity that rumours of a wild and absurd nature are circulated amongst the ignorant part of the population, and it was thus that, when the pestilence was raging in the above-mentioned capital, a report was spread that an image of the Virgin, placed at the entrance of a church, had the power of preventing infection. Thousands of people repaired to the miraculous image, and endless processions were wending along the streets towards the same object of adoration, which was overloaded with rich offerings by its worshippers, and adorned with costly jewels. As was to be expected, this superstitious practice, instead of preventing the infection, powerfully contributed to its increase; because the kisses which the crowd lavishly bestowed on the miraculous image could not but propagate the disease. The Archbishop of Moscow, Ambrose, an enlightened prelate, in order to stop this mischief, removed the image from the place where it had been exposed into the interior of the church; but this wise measure produced a violent riot, and an infuriated mob rushed into the sanctuary and murdered the venerable old man at the foot of the altar, where he was officiating, dressed in his pontificals.

It is probably the same image of which Bodenstedt, whose account of the Russian Church I have quoted above, p. [169](#), relates the following anecdote. After having spoken of the usurpations of Russia beyond the Caucasus, under pretence of protecting the Christian population of those parts, he says:—

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“The Russian policy, which conceals its grasping claws under the cloak of religion, may be not inaptly compared to a lady well known at Moscow, who, to the great edification of the bystanders, kissed the miraculous Madonna, situated close to the Kremlin, with so much fervour, that the most costly diamond of the jewels with which this image is covered remained in her mouth.” And he adds, in a note, “The thing was afterwards discovered, and the writer of this was himself present when this lady, the wife of a Russian general, was obliged publicly to crave the forgiveness of the image for this act of desecration. It is said that when this noble lady was judicially examined about this affair, she pleaded in her defence that having loved and worshipped the image in question devoutly during many years, she believed herself entitled to a little *souvenir* from the Madonna.”¹¹⁰ The Russian lady of rank seems not to have been so ingenious as the Prussian soldier, whose story I have related on p. [118](#). And it must be remarked that the Russian images expose their worshippers to the temptations of mammon much more than the Roman Catholic ones; because, whilst the latter are often valuable as objects of art, the former have usually silver or golden garments, often set with precious stones, which entirely cover the painting except the face, generally by no means a model of beauty. The gifts which the

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Russians bestow on their images are immense, and the most celebrated place for the accumulation of such treasures is the convent of Troitza, or Trinity, situated about fifty English miles from Moscow, and considered as a kind of national sanctuary of Russia.¹¹¹ Baron Haxthausen, whom I have quoted on p. [173](#), says that the value of sacred vases and ornaments accumulated in that place surpasses all that may be seen of this kind any where else, without even excepting Rome and Loretto; and he thinks that the quantity of pearls contained in those ornaments is perhaps greater than is to be found in the whole of Europe.¹¹²

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The grave of St Sergius, the founder of that convent in the fourteenth century, is adorned with gold and precious stones, and the silver canopy over it is said to weigh 1200 pounds. The most remarkable object contained in that convent is, however, the image of that saint which accompanied Peter the Great during all his campaigns, and on which are inscribed the names of all the battles and stormings of towns at which it had been present. I do not know whether this image had a part in other expeditions of the Russian army, but I have read this year in the newspapers that when a division of grenadiers was passing through Moscow, on their way to Turkey, the Archbishop of that capital addressed them, firing their zeal for the religious war in which they were going to take part, and after having blessed them with the image of St Sergius, the same to which I alluded above, gave it them as a companion of their expedition. The allied troops must therefore be prepared to encounter that *bellicose* saint somewhere on the Danube, unless he has been ordered to the shores of the Baltic for the defence of the capital. The custom of taking with them images considered as miraculous, during a campaign, was followed by the generals of the Greek empire on many occasions. Thus it is related by a Byzantine writer,¹¹³ that in 590 Philippicus, a general of the Emperor Mauritius, when going to engage the Persians in battle, took an *image which was not made by the hands of man*, and carried it about the ranks of his army, in order to purify his soldiers, and that he gained, after this ceremony, a complete victory. It must, however, be remarked that when Philippicus was replaced by another general, called Priscus, the latter, relying too much on the protection of the image which *was not made by the hands of man*, diminished the rations of the soldiers, and gave them other causes of offence; they revolted, and when Priscus, in order to subdue the riot, paraded the image in question, the mutineers threw stones at it. I don't know exactly how this business ended, but it is said that the

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Greek generals usually liked to have an image of the kind alluded to, in order to appease their troops in cases of mutiny and discontent; and I believe that, considering the gross ignorance and superstition of the Russian soldiers, the image of St Sergius may do good service in similar cases, and for which these soldiers have but too many reasons. The Greek emperors also sometimes provided with miraculous images the ambassadors who were sent on important missions. I don't know whether the Russian diplomacy, which has performed so many wonders, has ever had recourse to the assistance of such images, or to that of any supernatural agency.

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The miraculous images of the Græco-Russian Church are generally considered as *not made by the hands of man*, whilst those of the Roman Catholic Church are usually believed to be painted by St Luke. The most celebrated Madonnas of Russia, as those of Kazan, Korennaya, Akhtyrka, &c., are believed to have dropt from heaven, in the same manner as the Diana of Ephesus, and other Greek idols of repute. They are called *yavlenneeeye icony*, *i.e.*, revealed images, and their number is considerable, though all of them do not enjoy an equal reputation for miraculous powers. The number of images of various descriptions is, I think, much greater in Russia than in any other country, and they are called by the common people, not images, *icony*, but gods, *boghi*; and many of their worshippers are so ignorant, that they take every kind of picture or engraving for the *boghi*, and devoutly cross themselves before them. A German officer of engineers, in the Russian service, related to the author that he had a Russian servant, a young lad of a very devout disposition, who pasted every engraving which he could lay hold on, upon the wall over his bed, in order to address his prayers to them. This officer once missed some plates, containing mathematical figures, which had dropt from a book of geometry, and he found afterwards that his pious servant, having picked them up, gave them a place in his pantheon. If this strange divinity had been found amongst the objects worshipped by that poor lad by some very profound foreign traveller, unacquainted with the Russian people, it is more than probable that he would have taken it for a mystical object of adoration, and written a learned dissertation to explain its emblematic sense.

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Every household in Russia has its own little sanctuary, consisting of one or more images, ornamented according to the means of the owner, and placed in a corner opposite to the principal door. Every one who enters the room makes a sign of the cross, bowing to these *penates*, the place under whose shrine is considered as the seat of honour, reserved at meals for the father of the family, or the most respected guest.

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The Russians are great *exclusives* in respect to their images, and every believer has at least one of them stuck on the wall near his sleeping place, for his especial use and comfort; whilst people who are continually moving about, as carriers, pedlars, soldiers, &c., have their pocket divinities with them; and the description of the devotional exercises of a Russian soldier, given on p. 171, is by no means a caricature. This exclusiveness was much greater before the reforms introduced by the Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century than it is at present.¹¹⁴ Contemporary travellers relate that people brought into the churches their own images, trying to get for them on the walls of the church the place which they considered the best; and thus it often happened that these images, being placed opposite to the altar, people in praying to them turned their backs to the officiating priest, which generally produced great confusion, and disturbed the performance of divine service. There was a very great competition amongst those people in ornamenting their images as showily as possible; and as the sanctity of an image was increased, according to the opinion of those baptised idolaters, in proportion to the richness of its ornaments, it often happened that a poor man, who could not afford to trim up smartly his own image, addressed his prayers to that of his richer neighbour. Such an adoration, however, was considered as contraband; and when the lawful owner of the image caught one of those pious interlopers, he not only sharply rebuked him, but frequently gave him a sound thrashing, saying that he did not go to the expense of decorating his image that another should obtain its favours.¹¹⁵

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Scandalous scenes of this description have been abolished in the established church by the reforms of the Patriarch Nikon, alluded to above, but something very like it may still be witnessed in the churches of the *Raskolniks*, who have separated from the established church on account of those reforms. These people often bring their own images to the churches to pray before them, and it frequently happens amongst the boys who worship in this way, that some of them, perceiving that their neighbour has a finer image than their own, they steal it from him, substituting that which belongs to them. This produces quarrels and fighting amongst these boys, who reproach one another, saying, You So-and-so, you have stolen my fine image which cost my father two roubles, and left me this wretched one, which is not worth fifty copecs, *i.e.*, half a rouble. These scenes would be ludicrous if they were not positively blasphemous, because these images are called on such occasions, as is always done, by the name of gods, *boghi*.

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It has been observed by some travellers in Russia that the image-dealers of that country do not sell their wares, but, by a kind of legal fiction, exchange them for a certain sum, and that consequently they are disposed of at a fixed price. This is, however, not the case, and the image-dealers of Russia make no exception to the other merchants of that country, who generally ask for their goods the treble of their value, and a reasonable price can only be obtained by hard bargaining. Only consecrated images, *i.e.*, those which have been sprinkled by a priest with holy water, cannot be, I think, made an object of traffic.

The orthodox Russians have no less veneration for fine churches than for splendidly adorned images, and the well-known German dramatic writer Kotzebue gives in the relation of his forced voyage to Siberia,¹¹⁶ under the Emperor Paul, a characteristic trait of this disposition. The titular counsellor¹¹⁷ Shchekatikhin, who conducted him to the place of his exile, Kurgan, in the south of Siberia, showed a great reverence to all the churches which they passed by. Whenever they passed a fine church constructed of solid masonry, he doffed his cap and crossed himself most fervently, whilst he treated very cavalierly all those which were built of wood, making a hardly perceptible sign of the cross in their honour. This national propensity to treat respectfully the great and disdainfully the little, of which M. Shchekatikhin's piety was such a characteristic exemplification, has been, in its application to churches, described by the great admirer of

Russia, Baron Haxthausen, whose account of the devotional practices observed by the upper classes of that country I have given above, p. [173](#), in the following manner:—

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“We saw, in most part of the villages on our road, fine new churches built of stone or brick; but in one of them, called Novaya, I saw for the first time an old wooden church, built of logs, and covered with boards and shingles, such as they generally had been every where in Russia. These wooden churches continually disappear, being replaced by those constructed of masonry. The Russian peasantry consider it a particular honour to have in their village a church of stone or brick. To leave a village with a church of stone in order to settle in a place which has but a wooden one, is considered as a degradation, and the inhabitants of the former would hardly intermarry with those of the latter. The villages which have only a wooden church, therefore, do all that they can in order to rise to an equal grade with those who have one of stone or brick. This shows how the pride of rank pervades the mind of the Russians in every form of life, and in every class of the population. In cases of this kind, no promotion but only a sum of money is required in order to obtain the desired rank. It may be purchased by constructing a church of stone or brick. Such a church costs ten, twenty, or thirty thousand silver roubles (six roubles equal to one pound); but nothing is more easy than to get this sum. A dozen of stout fellows disperse in various directions, to collect by begging the sum required for the construction of the projected church, which is done without any expense, as the collectors are hospitably received in every house. As soon as the necessary sum is obtained, the village petitions the government for a plan and for an architect, because the plan of every such church must be approved at St Petersburg. Thus, in a few years, a fine church is built, constructed in the modern style, and the rank of the village rises in its own and in its neighbours' opinion.

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“Such things cannot be done in Western Europe, partly because an active religious feeling amongst the people disappears more and more,^{[118](#)} and partly on account of the great fluctuation of their ideas, and want of stability in their opinions. With the Russian it is quite otherwise. This nation has no political ideas: but two sentiments pervade its whole being—a common feeling of nationality, and a fervent attachment to the national church. Whenever these two feelings take hold of the Russian's mind, he is ready willingly to sacrifice without a moment's hesitation his life and property.”^{[119](#)}

It is these two national feelings that the Emperor Nicholas is now trying to excite to the utmost pitch, and there can be little doubt that if he succeeds in his object there will be a hard struggle between barbarity and civilization, though the final triumph of the latter, to the advantage not only of the victors, but also of the vanquished, cannot be doubted for a moment. I must, however, return to Baron Haxthausen, who continues his account of the Russian village churches, saying,—

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“It must not be forgotten, in order to understand how such large collections for a church of some obscure village, and made for the most part amongst the peasants, are obtained, that *giving* is as much in the Russian character as *taking*. Nowhere property hangs upon such loose threads and changes hands with such rapidity as in Russia. To-day rich, to-morrow poor. People earn and squander away almost simultaneously; they cheat and are cheated; they steal with one hand, and give away with the other. The common Russian sets not his heart on any kind of property; he loses with perfect equanimity what he had just earned, in the hope of getting it again to-morrow.

“The Russian is, moreover, naturally good-hearted, charitable, and liberal. A shopkeeper who had perhaps just cheated his neighbour of the value of 20 copecs, without feeling any qualms of conscience on the subject, will give one moment after it a rouble for the construction of a church in some village to which he is a perfect stranger.”^{[120](#)}

Thus, what Cicero said of Catiline, *Sui profusus alieni cupiens*, is applicable, not only to individuals, but also to nations, whose actions are swayed by feeling without being regulated by principle. It is almost superfluous to observe that a nation thus disposed, and with whom superstitious practices have a greater weight than religious principles, may be easily precipitated into the most violent and dangerous courses, which to accomplish seems now to be the object of the Emperor of Russia.

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The Græco-Russian Church has an immense number of relics of saints, to which all that Calvin has said of those of the Roman Catholic Church is applicable. I have given, in a note to his treatise on this subject, an account of St Anthony's relics in Russia, as a counterpart to those which the same saint possesses in western Europe. There are, indeed, many relics to the exclusive possession of which both these churches lay an equal claim, each of them representing her own as the only genuine, and that of her rival as a spurious one. The most celebrated of these disputed relics is the holy coat of Treves, and that of Moscow. It is well known what a noise the former of these produced in 1844, when an immense number of pilgrims came to worship it; and it is pretended that it had been found by the Empress Helena, with the true cross, and presented by her to the town of Treves. The coat of Moscow was given as a present to the Czar by a Shah of Persia, and its genuineness was established by a Russian archbishop, who asserted that, when he passed through Georgia on his return from Jerusalem, he saw in a church of that country a golden box placed upon a column, and which, as it was told to him, contained the coat without a seam of our Lord. This statement was corroborated by an eastern monk, then at Moscow, who related that it was generally believed in Palestine, that when the soldiers cast lots for the possession of that coat, it fell to the part of one of them, who, being a native of Georgia, took it with him to his native land. These statements were sufficient to establish the authenticity of the

[pg 193] The most celebrated collection of relics in Russia is found in the town of Kioff, on the Dnieper, and where the bodies of many hundreds of saints are deposited in a kind of crypt called *Piechary*, i.e., caverns. The chronicles relate that the digging of this sacred cavern was commenced in the eleventh century by two monks called Anthony and Theodosius, who had come from the Mount Athos, for their own and their disciples' abode. It was gradually extended, but the living established themselves afterwards in a convent above ground, leaving to the dead the part under it. This statement is considered to be authentic, but the numerous bodies of the saints with which the long subterranean galleries of that cavern are filled, have never been satisfactorily accounted for. It is the opinion of many, that the nature of the soil is so dry, that, absorbing all the moisture, it keeps the dead bodies which are deposited there in a more or less perfect state of preservation; and it is said that an enlightened archbishop of Kioff proved it by a successful experiment, putting into that place the bodies of two women, who had been confined as prisoners in a nunnery for their many vices. Be it as it may, Kioff is the resort of an immense number of pilgrims, who arrive from all parts of Russia, to worship the bodies of the saints, and the riches accumulated by their pious donations at that place are only second to those of Troitza (p. 181).

[pg 194] The shrines of Jerusalem, which attract crowds of pilgrims from all parts of the Christian world, had been for a long time a subject of dispute between the Latins and the Greeks, and it is well known that the politico-religious complications in which Europe is at present involved have arisen from the claims of Russia relating to those shrines. It will, therefore, I think, be not uninteresting to my readers to see the devout manner in which these shrines are worshipped by the pilgrims of the Græco-Russian Church; and I subjoin the two following accounts of this subject, written at an interval of a century and a half, in order that my readers may be able to judge for themselves whether the progress of civilization during this period has had much influence on the pilgrims alluded to above.

The first of these accounts is an extract from the diary of an English clergyman, the Rev. Henry Maundrell, a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, and chaplain to the English factory at Aleppo, who visited Jerusalem in the year 1697:—

“Saturday, April 3d.—We went about mid-day to see the function of the holy fire. This is a ceremony kept by the Greeks and Armenians, upon a persuasion that every Easter Eve there is a miraculous flame descends from heaven into the Holy Sepulchre, and kindles all the lamps and candles there, as the sacrifice was burnt at the prayer of Elijah.—(1 Kings xviii.)

[pg 195] *“Coming to the church of the Holy Sepulchre, we found it crowded with a numerous and distracted mob, making a hideous clamour, very unfit for that sacred place, and better becoming bacchanals than Christians. Getting, with some struggle, through this crowd, we went up into the gallery, on that side of the church next the Latin convent, whence we could discern all that passed in this religious frenzy.*

“They began their disorders by running round the Holy Sepulchre with all their might and swiftness, crying out as they went, ‘Huia!’ which signifies ‘This is he,’ or, ‘This is it,’ an expression by which they assert the verity of the Christian religion. After they had by their vertiginous circulations and clamours turned their heads, and inflamed their madness, they began to act the most antic tricks and postures, in a thousand shapes of distraction. Sometimes they dragged one another along the floor, all around the sepulchre; sometimes they set one man upright on another's shoulders, and in this posture marched round; sometimes they turned men with their heels upwards, and hurried them about in such an indecent manner as to expose their nudities; sometimes they tumbled round the sepulchre, after the manner of tumblers on the stage. In a word, nothing can be imagined more rude or extravagant than what was acted upon this occasion.

[pg 196] *“In this tumultuous frantic humour they continued from twelve to four of the clock, the reason of which delay was because of a suit that was then in debate before the cadi betwixt the Greeks and Armenians, the former endeavouring to exclude the latter from having any share in this miracle. Both parties having expended (as I was informed) five thousand dollars between them in this foolish controversy, the cadi at last gave sentence that they should enter the Holy Sepulchre together, as had been usual at former times. Sentence being thus given, at four of the clock both nations went on with their ceremony. The Greeks first set out in a procession round the Holy Sepulchre, and immediately at their heels followed the Armenians. In this order they compassed the Holy Sepulchre thrice, having produced all their gallantry of standards, streamers, crucifixes, and embroidered habits on this occasion.*

“Toward the end of this procession, there was a pigeon came fluttering into the cupola over the sepulchre, at the sight of which there was a greater shout and clamour than before. This bird, the Latins told us, was purposely let fly by the Greeks to deceive the people into an opinion that it was a visible descent of the Holy Ghost.

[pg 197] *“The procession being over, the suffragan of the Greek patriarch (he being himself at Constantinople), and the principal Armenian bishop, approached to the door of the sepulchre, and cutting the string with which it was fastened and sealed, entered in, shutting the door after them, all the candles and lamps within having been before extinguished in the presence of the Turks and other witnesses. The exclamations were doubled as the miracle drew nearer its*

accomplishment, and the people pressed with such vehemence towards the door of the Sepulchre, that it was not in the power of the Turks set to guard it with the severest checks to keep them off. The cause of their pressing in this manner is the great desire they have to light their candles at the holy flame, as soon as it is first brought out of the Sepulchre, it being esteemed the most sacred and pure, as coming immediately from heaven.

[pg 198] “The two miracle-mongers had not been above a minute in the Holy Sepulchre when the glimmering of the holy fire was seen, or imagined to appear, through some chinks of the door, and certainly Bedlam itself never saw such an unruly transport as was produced in the mob at this sight. Immediately after came out the two priests, with blazing torches in their hands, which they held up at the door of the Sepulchre, while the people thronged about with inexpressible ardour, every one striving to obtain a part of the first and purest flame. The Turks in the meantime, with huge clubs, laid on them without mercy; but all this could not repel them, the excess of their transport making them insensible of pain. Those that got the fire applied it immediately to their beards, faces, and bosoms, pretending that it would not burn like an earthly flame; but I plainly saw none of them could endure this experiment long enough to make good that pretension.

“So many hands being employed, you may be sure it could not be long before innumerable tapers were lighted. The whole church, galleries and every place, seemed instantly to be in a flame, and with this illumination the ceremony ended.

“It must be owned that those two within the sepulchre performed their part with great quickness and dexterity; but the behaviour of the rabble without very much discredited the miracle. The Latins take a great deal of pains to expose this ceremony as a most shameful imposture, and a scandal to the Christian religion, perhaps out of envy that others should be masters of so gainful a business; but the Greeks and Armenians pin their faith upon it, and make their pilgrimages chiefly upon this motive; and it is the deplorable unhappiness of their priests, that having acted the cheat so long already, they are forced now to stand to it, for fear of endangering the apostasy of their people.

[pg 199] “Going out of the church after the event was over, we saw several people gathered about the stone of unction, who, having got a good store of candles lighted with the holy fire, were employed in daubing pieces of linen with the wicks of them and the melting wax, which pieces of linen were designed for winding sheets; and it is the opinion of these poor people that if they can but have the happiness to be buried in a shroud smutted with this celestial fire, it will certainly secure them from the flames of hell.”—(P. 127, *et seq.*, eighth edition, 1810.)

Many people may, however, believe that scenes of such an outrageous description as that witnessed by Maundrell might have happened in his time, viz., 1697, but that their repetition is quite impossible in our own enlightened age. The following account of the same scenes by Mr Calman, whose veracity is attested by a high authority, and who had an opportunity of seeing it only a few years ago, which has been reproduced in a little, and now particularly interesting book, “The Shrines of the Holy Land,”¹²² may enable my readers to judge of the influence which the boasted march of intellect has produced on the Græco-Russian pilgrims, who assemble every Easter at Jerusalem.

[pg 200] “To notice all that was passing,” says Mr Calman, “within the church of the Holy Sepulchre during the space of twenty-four hours, would be next to impossible, because it was one continuation of shameless madness and rioting, which would have been a disgrace to Greenwich and Smithfield. Only suppose for a moment the mighty edifice crowded to excess with fanatic pilgrims of all the Eastern Churches, who, instead of lifting pure hands to God, without wrath and quarrelling, are led, by the petty jealousy about precedence which they should maintain in the order of their processions, into tumults and fighting, which can only be quelled by the scourge and whip of the followers of the false prophet.

“Suppose, farther, those thousands of devotees running from one extreme to the other, from the extreme of savage irritation to that of savage enjoyment, of mutual revellings and feasting, like Israel of old, who, when they made the golden calf, were eating and drinking, and rising to play. Suppose troops of men stripped half naked, to facilitate their actions, running, trotting, jumping, galloping to and fro, the breadth and length of the church, walking on their hands with their feet aloft in the air, mounting on one another's shoulders, some in a riding and some in a standing position, and by the slightest push are all sent to the ground in one confused heap, which made one fear for their safety.

“Suppose, farther, many of the pilgrims dressed in fur caps, like the Polish Jews, whom they feigned to represent, and whom the mob met with all manner of insult, hurrying them through the church as criminals who had been condemned, amid loud execrations and shouts of laughter, which indicated that Israel is still a derision amongst these heathens, by whom they are still counted as sheep for the slaughter.

[pg 201] “About two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, the preparations for the miraculous fire commenced. The multitude, who had been hitherto in a state of frenzy and madness, became a little more quiet, but it proved a quiet that precedes a thunderstorm. Bishops and priests, in full canonicals, then issued forth from their respective quarters, with flags and banners, crucifixes and crosses, lighted candles and smoking censers, to join or rather to lead a procession, which moved thrice

round the church, invoking every picture, altar, and relic in their way to aid them in obtaining the miraculous fire.

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“The procession then returned to the place from whence it started, and two grey-headed bishops, the one of the Greek and the other of the Armenian Church, were hurled by the soldiers through the crowd, into the apartment which communicated with that of the Holy Sepulchre, where they locked themselves in; there the marvellous fire was to make its first appearance, and from thence issue through the small circular windows and the door, for the use of the multitude. The eyes of all—men, women, and children—were now directed towards the Holy Sepulchre with an anxious expression, awaiting the issue of their expectation. The mixed multitude, each in his or her own language, were pouring forth their clamorous prayers to the Virgin and the saints to intercede for them on behalf of the object for which they were assembled, and the same were tenfold increased by the fanatic gestures and the waving of the garments by the priests of their respective communions, who were interested in the holy fire, and who were watching by the above-mentioned door and circular windows, with torches in their hands, ready to receive the virgin flame of the heavenly fire, and carry it to their flocks.

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“In about twenty minutes from the time the bishops locked themselves in the apartment of the Holy Sepulchre, the miraculous fire made its appearance through the door and the two small windows, as expected. The priests were the first who lighted their torches, and they set out on a gallop in the direction of their lay brethren; but some of these errandless and profitless messengers had the misfortune to be knocked down by the crowd, and had their firebrands wrested out of their hands, but some were more fortunate, and safely reached their destination, around whom the people flocked like bees, to have their candles lighted. Others, however, were not satisfied at having the holy fire second hand, but rushed furiously towards the Holy Sepulchre, regardless of their own safety, and that of those who obstructed their way, though it has frequently happened that persons have been trampled to death on such occasions.

“Those who were in the galleries let down their candles by cords, and drew them up when they had succeeded in their purpose. In a few minutes thousands of flames were ascending, the smoke and the heat of which rendered the church like the bottomless pit. To satisfy themselves, as well as to convince the Latins, the pilgrims, women as well as men, shamefully exposed their bare bosoms to the action of the flame of their lighted candles, to make their adversaries believe the miraculous fire differs from an ordinary one in being perfectly harmless.

“The two bishops, who a little while before locked themselves in the apartment of the Holy Sepulchre, now sallied forth out of it. When the whole multitude had their candles lighted, the bishops were caught by the crowd, lifted upon their shoulders, and carried to their chapels, amidst loud and triumphant acclamations. They soon, however, reappeared at the head of a similar procession to the one before, as a pretended thank-offering to the Almighty for the miraculous fire vouchsafed.”—(P. 121, *et seq.*)

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It appears, by comparing these two narratives of one and the same thing, though separated by a distance of a hundred and fifty years, that the only difference which will be found between them is, that in the time of Maundrell, 1697, the miraculous fire was produced in about one minute's time, whilst the performance of the same trick required twenty when it was observed by Mr Calman. And, indeed, it has been justly observed by both these writers, that the exhibitors of the miraculous fire, having continued so long to practise this imposture, cannot leave it off without ruining their authority and influence over those whom they have thus been cheating for many centuries. This circumstance has been most pointedly expressed by the author of the work from which I have extracted Mr Calman's description of this pious, or rather impious, fraud, and who says:—

“Had it been an occasional miracle, as time had rolled on, and truth had more and more illuminated the human mind, the practice might have been gradually discontinued. As the priests had grown more honest, and the people more enlightened, they might have mutually consigned these pious frauds to the oblivion of the darker ages; and if the blush of shame had risen up at the memories of the past, the world would have respected them the more for their honesty of purpose.

“But an *annual miracle*, always of the same specific kind, exhibited on the same spot, and at the same hour,—an *annual miracle*,—at what point of time should this be discontinued? and, if discontinued, would it not be manifest either that heaven had forsaken its favourites, or that all the past had been delusion and imposture?”—(Pp. 127, 128.)

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And it is the authority of a church supported by such impious and shameful impostures as this miraculous fire that a number of Anglicans, including several dignitaries of the church, are anxious of preserving against Protestant encroachments, and protest against the existence of the Protestant bishopric of Jerusalem, for fear that it might injure the faith of the pilgrims, and put an end to such sacred juggleries as the one described above, which outrivals the most superstitious practices of ancient or modern Paganism! And it is for the predominance of this same church that the autocrat of Russia has now plunged Europe into a war which may prove one of the bloodiest that modern times have witnessed, and proclaimed a Græco-Russian crusade against the Ottoman Porte and its Christian allies! This last-named circumstance may, I think, render it not uninteresting to my readers to know the manner in which this question is viewed by Russians of elevated rank and superior education. I would therefore recommend to their attention a little

pamphlet¹²³ recently published in English by an accomplished Russian, who had studied at the University of Edinburgh, and had enjoyed friendly intercourse with the most eminent characters of that learned body, leaving with all those who had known him a most favourable impression of his personal character and talents. His opinions, therefore, are not those of an ignorant fanatic, or a hireling of the Government, but must be considered as an expression of those entertained by the upper classes of Russian society. He compares in this pamphlet the position of Russia towards the followers of the Eastern Church in Turkey, to that of England towards the Protestants of other countries, saying:—

[pg 206] “You translate the Bible into all living languages, not excluding the Turkish idiom, and you distribute the holy volumes to the shopkeeper of Constantinople, and to the shepherd who tends his camels amidst the ruins of Ephesus. We are not as laborious propagators of the faith; but yet we would fain intercede in favour of the Turk when your copy of the Bible has converted him to the Christian faith, and who, by the law of the land, must have his head cut off for this transgression. Mark that the obligation is much more binding on us than it is on you, and not the less binding from the job having been begun by yourselves. The Turks are spread amongst the Greeks and surrounded by them. There are ten thousand chances to one, that if the Moslem be converted at all, it is to that creed of which the church stands in his immediate eye, and that creed is ours. But, strange to say, it is because of that very chance that we are to be prohibited from meddling in the matter. With the French and with the English the case is far different. They, indeed, we are told, claim the right of protection only over thousands; but you claim that same right over millions, and, therefore, you shall not have it. The question you may, however, say, is not fairly put, for should a Turk be converted, and on the point of losing his head, we are ready to interpose with our authority, even though it be to the Greek Church that he should have turned.

[pg 207] Well! but place yourselves for a moment in our situation. Are we to leave to you the work which has been done in our vineyard, and not stand up for those who have embraced the cross, merely because there are millions in that realm who embrace it? The case stands equally the same with regard to the far greater number of human beings who are born and have grown up in the profession of our faith. Without attempting to prove that they are exposed to constant cruelty and oppression, a fact which has been strenuously denied without the denial having ever been proved, it is abundantly known, and an indisputable fact, that the Greeks are in a state of continual bondage, deprived of the dearest rights of men, condemned, in a religious point of view, to a state of thralldom such as exists in no other part of the world, inasmuch as the supreme head of their church is installed in his dignity, maintained in the same, or deposed by a sovereign professing a faith hostile to his own. Is such a state of things to be tolerated by those who are its victims? and is not this in itself a hardship greater than any other that can be imagined? The English have given us, in a period, it is true, of greater zeal for their faith, an example of active sympathy manifested by them towards their brothers in belief, subjects of a neighbouring and powerful sovereign. The case was not as urgent as the one to which I compare it, inasmuch as the

[pg 208] Huguenots of France were not the subjects of a Mussulman sovereign. But this, perhaps, will be brought home as an argument against me, for such is the hatred of sects proceeding from the same faith, that England would, perhaps, have borne more meekly the hardships endured by the Calvinistic brethren, if they had been subjected thereunto by a Soliman, and not by him who styled himself the most Christian king of France. However this may be, it is said at present that, whether oppressed or no, the Greeks never solicited our intervention. To this it may be answered, that the whole difficulty would have been solved by the very fact of the solicitation, for had they had the courage and the means to send a similar and unanimous message to the Emperor of Russia, they would have had the strength and unanimity required themselves to strike the blow, and make all intervention useless. The fact of their having not risen as a man in their own cause, is a sufficient explanation for their want of boldness in soliciting their deliverance at the hands of a foreign state. But laying aside the question of the *subjects* of the Ottoman empire professing the Greek faith, to speak of the much more vital interest of the faith itself, professed as it is by ourselves, let it be permitted to me to submit to your candid decision, if the work of defending that faith does not belong pre-eminently to us, and neither to the English nor the French. We tolerate in the whole extent of our empire both the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran communions of faith; we have millions of subjects professing both creeds; we build churches for them. Long before the Roman Catholics were emancipated in England, the posts of the highest honour, of the greatest confidence, and of the largest perquisites in the army, the senate, and the supreme council of the empire, were opened indiscriminately by us to men professing the Greek, Roman, or Lutheran creeds. Is it because of our tolerance with respect to sects not our own, that we are condemned to be indifferent to the hardships of those of our own faith? Are we not only to allow your church to stand unmolested within our own realm, but also to allow our own church to fall in ruins within the limits of a neighbouring state? If so, you condemn our toleration, you call it indifference and disbelief.”—(P. 9, *et seq.*)

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[pg 210] It is perfectly true that there are in Russia several millions of Protestants and Roman Catholics, and that many of the highest offices, civil as well as military, are occupied by them; for it is well known that the most efficient servants of the Russian government are chiefly foreigners, either by birth or extraction. This tolerance, however, is always getting more and more restricted; and I have alluded above, on pp. [161-163](#), to the persecution of the Greeks united with Rome, as well as the systematical proselytism by force and fraud amongst the Protestants of the Baltic provinces. The author says that a Mahometan who becomes a convert to Christianity must lose his head by the laws of Turkey, but he does not tell us what fate awaits a follower of the Greek Church in Russia who would become a Roman Catholic or a Protestant. M. de Custine relates, in his well-known work on Russia,¹²⁴ that a Russian gentleman, who enjoyed a high social position at

Moscow, published a work, which the censor allowed in an unaccountable manner to pass, maintaining that the influence of the Roman Catholic Church is much more favourable to the progress of civilization than that of the Græco-Russian one, and that the social condition of Russia would have been much more advanced by the former than it has been by the latter. This work produced a great sensation, and the punishment of the author of such a blasphemy was loudly demanded by the orthodox Russians. This affair being submitted to the Emperor, he declared that the author was *insane*, and ordered to treat him accordingly. The unfortunate individual consequently was put into a madhouse, and though perfectly sane, was subjected to the most rigorous treatment as a lunatic, so that he nearly became in reality what he was *officially* declared to be, and it was only after several years of this moral and physical torture that he was permitted to have a little more liberty, though still retained in confinement.

[pg 211] I do not know what has become of this unfortunate man, but the truth of this nameless act of tyranny has been fully admitted by Mr Gretsck, who wrote, by the order of the Russian Government, an answer to the work of Custine. He says that the individual in question, a Mr Chadayeff, having committed an action which the laws of Russia punish with great severity, the Emperor Nicholas, desiring to save the culprit from the penalty which he had incurred, ordered, by an act of mercy, to treat him simply as a madman.

Now, I think that the penalty of physical death, inflicted by the Turkish law on the converts from Mahometanism to Christianity, may be considered as humane, if compared to the murder of soul and intellect by the slow process of a moral and physical torture, to which a man has been subjected in Russia for his religious opinions; and if such an atrocious punishment was inflicted by an act of *imperial mercy*, as a mitigation of the severity of the law, what would it have been if the letter of that law had been fulfilled? "*Ferrea jura, insanumque forum.*"

[pg 212] If, according to the opinion of the Russian writer, his countrymen have a right of interfering in behalf of the followers of their church in Turkey, on account of the community of their faith, the same right is possessed by Great Britain and other Protestant States, as well as by France and other Roman Catholic powers, to interfere in behalf of their brethren in the faith who are oppressed by Russia. With regard to the observation of the same author, "that the Greeks are in a continual state of bondage, deprived of the dearest rights of men, condemned, in a religious point of view, to a state of thralldom such as exists in no other part of the world, inasmuch as the supreme head of their church is installed in his dignity, maintained in the same, or deposed, by a sovereign professing a faith hostile to his own," I must remark that he has forgotten, in saying that such a state of thralldom exists not in any other part of the world, to add, *except in Russia*, because all the Roman Catholic bishops and other dignitaries of their church, as well as the Protestant superintendents, presidents of consistories, &c., "are installed in their dignity, maintained in the same, or deposed, by a sovereign professing a faith hostile to their own." And his question, "Is such a state of things to be tolerated by its victims? and is it not in itself a hardship greater than any other that can be imagined?" is as much applicable to the Protestants and Roman Catholics of Russia as it is to the Christians of Turkey.

The "Russian, Quondam Civis Bibliothecæ Edinensis," carries his zeal for the orthodox Greek Church so far as to recommend its adoption to the English:—

[pg 213] "Do you not see every day, in your own country, the encroaching action of the See of Rome? And here I cannot refrain from exclaiming, how strange it is to see every day converts in crowds passing from the Protestant to the Roman faith, and not pausing for a moment to reflect if they have not a smaller space to cross, and a safer haven to come to in the bosom of the Græco-Catholic Church, the same as that of Rome, minus the anti-apostolic double procession of the Holy Ghost, minus an infallible pope, minus the sale of indulgences, and last, though not least, minus the arbitrary exclusion of the blood of Christ from the holy communion given to laymen! Is it not strange, that on the moment of abjuring your reformations, you should fly into the arms of a church which *has* introduced reformations of its own, and not appeal to that one church which professes with evident truth to have admitted no changes at all, and kept intact the purity of her tradition? But, again, this is no theological disquisition. Witnessing, however, as I said above, in your own kingdom, the daily increasing influence of the Roman See, you can surely understand how legitimately jealous we must be of the same influence extending within the precincts of our sheepfold. And, therefore, not only is our faith to be preserved unmolested, but the saving deed is to be done by *us*, and not through the agency of English and French ambassadors or fleets, to be achieved in the name of the faith we profess in common with our Greek brethren, and by no means stipulated in the name of universal freedom of thought. I think I have said enough to prove the vital and cordial interest which Russia cannot but take in the cause of her own church, and of those who profess it in Turkey, and the paramount necessity she is under of making that cause her own."—(P. 12, *et seq.*)

[pg 214] If the Russian author is so anxious to convert the British Protestants to the Græco-Russian, or, as he calls her, "Græco-Catholic" Church, he may translate her controversial works into English, and build places of worship where image-kissing, prostration, incense, and holy water, may be exhibited for the edification of the British heretics, *ad libitum*. Nobody will interfere with their ceremonies, not even with their preachings against Protestantism, because its disciples in Great Britain are satisfied with defending their religion by spiritual weapons, and do not resort to material arms, except in repressing either public or private acts of violence. As regards the dogmatic pre-eminence of his church over that of Rome,—her rejection of the "*anti-apostolic double procession of the Holy Ghost*,"—which has been, I think, retained by the English Church,

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&c., I leave this subject to the decision of theologians, but shall only observe that the worship of images, relics, and other pagan practices, which I have described in this chapter, do not prove much in favour of the *purity of her tradition*. I would also ask whether it is in accordance with this tradition that the Russian clergy, notwithstanding all their claims to apostolic succession, are governed by the Czar, who sometimes delegates for this purpose a colonel of hussars,¹²⁵ which office, I believe, was never known, even in the most militant of churches? It has been, indeed, well said by the Marquis de Custine, that the Russian clergy are but an army wearing regimentals somewhat different from the dress of the regular troops of the empire. The papas and their bishops are under the direction of the emperor, a regiment of clerks, and that is all.¹²⁶ It is in order to extend the advantages of this military organization to the Christians of Turkey that Russia, according to the opinion of our author, "*is under the paramount necessity of making their cause her own.*" All that I say is, that she felt the same necessity of making the cause of the Greeks and Protestants of Poland *her own*, and that she ended by making the same thing with their country.

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The politico-religious complications into which Europe has now been thrown by the ambition of Russia have induced me particularly to dwell upon the means which the church of that country offers for the promotion of the political schemes of its rulers. With regard to the superstitious practices borrowed from Paganism, and peculiar to that church, the most remarkable is, perhaps, that heathen custom called *parentales*, mentioned before, p. 62, and which may be found in different parts of Russia. People assemble on Monday, after the Easter week, in churchyards, where they eat and drink to great excess, in commemoration of their deceased relatives. There are many other similar practices, as, for instance, that of providing the dead body with a kind of passport or written testimony of his religious conduct, &c., probably imported with the Christian religion by the Greek Church, because at the time of the conversion of Russia, this church had already introduced painted though not carved¹²⁷ images, to which allusion has been made on p. 12 of this Essay.

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Calvin's Treatise On Relics, With Notes By The Translator.

St Augustinus complains, in his work entitled "The Labour of Monks," that certain people were, even in his time, exercising a dishonest trade, hawking about relics of martyrs, and he adds the following significant words, "*should they really be relics of martyrs,*" from which we may infer, that even then abuses and deceits were practised, by making simple folks believe that bones, picked up any where, were bones of saints. Since the origin of this abuse is so ancient, there can be no doubt that it has greatly increased during a long interval of years, particularly as the world has been much corrupted since that age, and has continued to deteriorate until it has arrived at its present condition.

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Now, the origin and root of this evil has been, that, instead of discerning Jesus Christ in his Word, his Sacraments, and his Spiritual Graces, the world has, according to its custom, amused itself with his clothes, shirts, and sheets, leaving thus the principal to follow the accessory.

It did the same thing with the apostles, martyrs, and other saints, and, instead of observing their lives in order to imitate their examples, it directed all its attention to the preservation and admiration of their bones, shirts, sashes, caps, and other similar trash.

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I know well that there is a certain appearance of real devotion and zeal in the allegation, that the relics of Jesus Christ are preserved on account of the honour which is rendered to him, and in order the better to preserve his memory. But it is necessary to consider what St Paul says, that every service of God invented by man, whatever appearance of wisdom it may have, is nothing better than vanity and foolishness, if it has no other foundation than our own devising. Moreover, it is necessary to set the profit derived from it against the dangers with which it is fraught, and it will thus be found that, to have relics is a useless and frivolous thing, which will most probably gradually lead towards idolatry, because they cannot be handled and looked upon without being honoured, and in doing this men will very soon render them the honour which is due to Jesus Christ. In short, the desire for relics is never without superstition, and what is worse, it is usually the parent of idolatry. Every one admits that the reason why our Lord concealed the body of Moses, was that the people of Israel should not be guilty of worshipping it. Now, we may conclude that the act to be avoided with regard to the body of Moses must be equally shunned with regard to the bodies of all other saints, and for the same reason—because it is sin. But let us leave the saints, and consider what St Paul says of Jesus Christ himself, for he protests that he knew him not according to the flesh, but only after his resurrection, signifying by these words,

that all that is carnal in Jesus Christ must be forgotten and put aside, and that we should employ and direct our whole affections to seek and possess him according to the spirit. Consequently the pretence that it is a good thing to have some memorials either of himself or of the saints, to stimulate our piety, is nothing but a cloak for indulging our foolish cravings which have no reasonable foundation; and should even this reason appear insufficient, it is openly repugnant to what the Holy Ghost has declared by the mouth of St Paul, and what can be said more?

It is of no use to discuss the point whether it is right or wrong to have relics merely to keep them as precious objects, without worshipping them, because experience proves that this is never the case.

[pg 220] It is true that St Ambrose, in speaking of Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine the Great, who sought with great trouble and expense for the cross of our Lord, says that she did not worship the wood, but the Lord who was suspended upon it. But it is a very rare thing, that a heart disposed to value any relics whatever should not become to a certain degree polluted by some superstition.

I admit that people do not arrive at once at open idolatry, but they gradually advance from one abuse to another until they fall into this extremity, and, indeed, those who call themselves Christians have, in this respect, idolatrised as much as Pagans ever did. They have prostrated themselves, and knelt before relics, just as if they were worshipping God; they have burnt candles before them in sign of homage; they have placed their confidence in them, and have prayed to them, as if the virtue and the grace of God had entered into them. Now, if idolatry be nothing else than the transfer elsewhere of the honour which is due to God, can it be denied that this is idolatry? This cannot be excused by pretending that it was only the improper zeal of some idiots or foolish women, for it was a general custom approved by those who had the government of the church, and who had even placed the bones of the dead and other relics on the high altar, in the greatest and most prominent places, in order that they should be worshipped with more certainty.

[pg 221] It is thus that the foolish fancy which people had at first for collecting relics, ended in this open abomination,—they not only turned from God, in order to amuse themselves with vain and corruptible things, but even went on to the execrable sacrilege of worshipping dead and insensible creatures, instead of the one living God. Now, as one evil never comes alone but is always followed by another, it thus happened that where people were seeking for relics, either of Jesus Christ or the saints, they became so blind that whatever name was imposed upon any rubbish presented to them, they received it without any examination or judgment; thus the bones of an ass or dog, which any hawker gave out to be the bones of a martyr, were devoutly received without any difficulty. This was the case with all of them, as will be shown hereafter.

For my own part, I have no doubt that this has been a great punishment inflicted by God. Because, as the world was craving after relics, and turning them to a wicked and superstitious use, it was very likely that God would permit one lie to follow another; for this is the way in which he punishes the dishonour done to his name, when the glory due to him is transferred elsewhere. Indeed, the only reason why there are so many false and imaginary relics is, that God has permitted the world to be doubly deceived and fallen, since it has so loved deceit and lies.

[pg 222] The first Christians left the bodies of the saints in their graves, obeying the universal sentence, that *all flesh is dust, and to dust it must return*, and did not attempt their resurrection before the appointed time by raising them in pomp and state. This example has not been followed by their successors; on the contrary, the bodies of the faithful, in opposition to the command of God, have been disinterred in order to be glorified, when they ought to have remained in their places of repose awaiting the last judgment.

They were worshipped; every kind of honour was shown to them, and people put their trust in such things. And what was the consequence of all this? The devil, perceiving man's folly, was not satisfied with having led the world into one deception, but added to it another, by giving the name of *relics of saints* to the most profane things. And God punished the credulous by depriving them of all power of reasoning rightly, so that they accepted without inquiry all that was presented to them, making no distinction between white or black.

[pg 223] It is not my intention now to discuss the abominable abuse of the relics of our Lord, as well as of the saints, at this present time, in the most part of Christendom. This subject alone would require a separate volume; for it is a well-known fact that the most part of the relics which are displayed every where are false, and have been put forward by impostors who have most impudently deceived the poor world. I have merely mentioned this subject, to give people an opportunity of thinking it over, and of being upon their guard. It happens sometimes that we carelessly approve of a thing without taking the necessary time to examine what it really is, and we are thus deceived for want of warning; but when we are warned, we begin to think, and become quite astonished at our believing so easily such an improbability. This is precisely what has taken place with the subject in question. People were told, "This is the body of such a saint; these are his shoes, those are his stockings;" and they believed it to be so, for want of timely caution. But when I shall have clearly proved the fraud which has been committed, all those who have sense and reason will open their eyes and begin to reflect upon what has never before entered their thoughts. The limits of my little volume forbid me from entering but upon a small part of what I would wish to perform, for it would be necessary to ascertain the relics possessed by every place

in order to compare them with each other. It would then be seen that every apostle had more than four bodies,¹²⁸ and each saint at least two or three, and so on. In short, if all the relics were collected into one heap, the only astonishment would be that such a silly and clumsy imposition could have blinded the whole earth.

[pg 224] As every, even the smallest Catholic church has a heap of bones and other small rubbish, what would it be if all those things which are contained in two or three thousand bishoprics, twenty or thirty thousand abbeys, more than forty thousand convents, and so many parish churches and chapels, were collected into one mass?¹²⁹ The best thing would be not merely to name, but to visit them.

[pg 225] In this town (Geneva) there was formerly, it is said, an arm of St Anthony; it was kissed and worshipped as long as it remained in its shrine; but when it was turned out and examined, it was found to be the bone of a stag. There was on the high altar the brain of St Peter; so long as it rested in its shrine, nobody ever doubted its genuineness, for it would have been blasphemy to do so; but when it was subjected to a close inspection, it proved to be a piece of pumice-stone. I could quote many instances of this kind; but these will be sufficient to give an idea of the quantity of precious rubbish there would have been found if a thorough and universal investigation of all the relics of Europe had ever taken place. Many of those who look at relics close their eyes from superstition, so that in regarding these they *see* nothing; that is to say, they dare not properly gaze at and consider what they properly may be. Thus many who boast of having seen the whole body of St Claude, or of any other saint, have never had the courage to raise their eyes and to ascertain what it really was. The same thing may be said of the head of Mary Magdalene, which is shown near Marseilles, with eyes of paste or wax. It is valued as much as if it were God himself who had descended from heaven; but if it were examined, the imposition would be clearly detected.¹³⁰ It would be desirable to have an accurate knowledge of all the trifles which in different places are taken for relics, or at least a register of them, in order to show how many of them are false; but since it is impossible to obtain this, I should like to have at least an inventory of relics contained in ten or twelve such towns as Paris, Toulouse, Poitiers, Rheims, &c. If I had nothing more than this, it would form a very curious collection. Indeed, it is a wish I am constantly entertaining to get such a precious repertory. However, as this is too difficult, I thought it would be as well to publish the following little warning, to awaken those who are asleep, and to make them consider what may be the state of the entire church if there is so much to condemn in a very small portion of it;—I mean, when people find so much deception in the relics I shall name, and which are far from being the thousandth part of those that are exhibited in various parts of the world, what must they think of the remainder? moreover, if those which had been considered as the most authentic proved to be fraudulent inventions, what can be thought of the more doubtful ones? Would to God that Christian princes thought a little on this subject! for it is their duty not to allow their subjects to be deceived, not only by false doctrine,

[pg 226] but also by such manifest impositions. They will indeed incur a heavy responsibility for allowing God to be thus mocked when they could prevent it.

I hope, however, that this little treatise will be of general service, by inducing people to think on the subject; for, if we could have the register of all the relics that are to be found in the world, men would clearly see how much they had been blinded, and what darkness and folly overspread the earth.

Let us begin with Jesus Christ, about whose blood there have been fierce disputations; for many maintained that he had no blood except of a miraculous kind; nevertheless the natural blood is exhibited in more than a hundred places. They show at Rochelle a few drops of it, which, as they say, was collected by Nicodemus in his glove. In some places they have phials full of it, as, for instance, at Mantua and elsewhere; in other parts they have cups filled with it, as in the Church of St Eustache at Rome. They did not rest satisfied with simple blood; it was considered necessary to have it mixed with water as it flowed out of his side when pierced on the cross. This is preserved in the Church of St John of the Lateran at Rome.

[pg 227] Now, I appeal to the judgment of every one whether it is not an evident lie to maintain that the blood of Jesus Christ was found, after a lapse of seven or eight hundred years, to be distributed over the whole world, especially as the ancient church makes no mention of it?

Then come the things which have touched the body of our Lord. Firstly, the manger in which he was placed at his birth is shown in the Church of Madonna Maggiore at Rome.

In St Paul's Church there are preserved the swaddling clothes in which he was wrapped, though there are pieces of these clothes at Salvatierra in Spain. His cradle is also at Rome, as well as the shirt his mother made for him.

At the Church of St James, in the same city, is shown the altar upon which he was placed at his presentation in the temple, as if there had been many altars, according to the fashion of the Popish churches, where any number of them may be erected. This is what they show relating to the time of Christ's childhood.

It is, indeed, not worth while seriously to discuss whence they obtained all this trash, so long a time after the death of Jesus Christ. That man must be of little mind who cannot see the folly of it. There is no mention of these things in the Gospels, and they were never heard of in the times of the apostles. About fifty years after the death of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem was destroyed. Many

[pg 228] ancient doctors have written since, mentioning fully the occurrences of their time, even to the cross and nails found by Helena, but these absurdities are not alluded to. But what is more, these things were not brought forward at Rome during the days of St Gregory, as may be seen from his writings; whilst after his death Rome was several times taken, pillaged, and almost destroyed.

Now, what other conclusion can be drawn from these considerations but that all these were inventions for deceiving silly folks? This has even been confessed by some monks and priests, who call them *pious frauds*, *i.e.*, *honest deceits* for exciting the devotion of the people.

After these come the relics belonging to the period from the childhood to the death of Jesus Christ, such as the water pots in which Christ changed water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee.

One would naturally inquire how they were preserved for so long a time? for it is necessary to bear in mind that they were not discovered until eight hundred or a thousand years after the performance of the miracle.

I cannot tell all the places where these water pots are shown; I only know that they can be seen at Pisa, Ravenna, Cluny, Antwerp, and Salvatierra in Spain.¹³¹

[pg 229] At Orleans they have even the wine which was obtained by that miracle, and once a-year the priests there give to those who bring offerings a small spoonful, saying that they shall taste of the very wine made by our Lord at the marriage feast, and its quantity never decreases, the cup being always refilled. I do not know of what date are his shoes, which are preserved in a place at Rome called *Sancta Sanctorum*, or whether he had worn them in his childhood or manhood; but this is of little moment, for what I have already mentioned sufficiently shows the gross imposition of producing now the shoes of Jesus Christ, which were not possessed by the apostles in their time.

Now, let us proceed to the last supper which Christ had with his apostles. The table is at St John of the Lateran at Rome; some bread made for that occasion at Salvatierra in Spain; and the knife with which the paschal lamb was carved is at Tréves. Now, it is necessary to observe that Christ made that supper in a borrowed room, and on going from thence he left the table, which was not removed by the apostles. Jerusalem was soon afterwards destroyed. How, then, could the table be found after a lapse of eight hundred years?

[pg 230] Moreover, in the early ages tables were made of quite a different shape to those of our days, for people then took their repasts in a lying, not in a sitting posture—a circumstance expressly mentioned in the Gospels. The deceit is therefore quite manifest, without more being added to prove it.

The cup in which Christ gave the sacrament of his blood to the apostles is shown at Notre Dame de l'Isle, near Lyons; and there is another in a convent of Augustine monks in the Albigeois;—which is the true one? Charles Sigonius, a celebrated historian of our times, says, in his fourth book on Italy, that Baldwin, second king of Jerusalem, captured in 1101, with the assistance of the Genoese, the town of Cesarea in Syria, and amongst the spoils taken by his allies was a vessel or cup of emerald, which was considered to have been made use of by Jesus Christ at his last supper. “Therefore,”—these are his own words,—“this cup is even now devoutly preserved in the town of Genoa.”

According to this account, our Lord must have had a splendid service on that occasion; for there would be as little propriety in drinking from such a costly vessel without having the rest of the service of a similar description, as there is in some Popish pictures where the Virgin Mary is represented as a woman with her hair hanging over her shoulders, dressed in a gown of cloth of gold, and riding on a donkey which Joseph leads by the halter. We recommend our readers to consider well the Gospel texts relating to this subject.

[pg 231] The case of the dish upon which the paschal lamb was placed is still worse, for it is to be found at Rome, at Genoa, and at Arles. If these holy relics be genuine, the customs of that time must have been quite different from ours, because, instead of changing viands as we now do, the dishes were changed for the same food!

The same may be said of the towel with which Jesus Christ wiped the feet of the apostles, after having washed them; there is one at Rome at the Lateran, one at Aix-la-Chapelle, and one at St Corneille of Compiègne, with the print of the foot of Judas. Some of these must be false.

But we will leave the contending parties to fight out their own battles, until one of them shall establish the reality of his case. It appears to me, however, that trying to make people believe that a towel which Jesus Christ had left in the place where it was used, had in several hundred years afterwards found its way into Germany and Italy, is nothing better than a gross imposture.

I nearly forgot to mention the bread with which five thousand persons were miraculously fed in the desert, and of which a bit is shown at Rome, and another piece at Salvatierra in Spain.

[pg 232] The Scripture says that a portion of manna was preserved in remembrance of God having miraculously fed his people in the desert; but the Gospel does not say a word respecting the preservation of the fragments of the five loaves for a similar purpose; the subject is not

mentioned in any ancient history, nor does any ecclesiastical writer speak of it. It is therefore very easily perceived that the above-mentioned pieces of bread are of modern manufacture.

The principal relics of our Lord are, however, those relating to his passion and death. And the first of them is the cross. I know that it is considered to be a certain fact that it was found by Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine; and I know also that some ancient doctors have written about the manner in which the discovery was certified that it was the true cross upon which our Lord had suffered. I think, however, that it was a foolish curiosity, and a silly and inconsiderate devotion, which prompted Helena to seek for that cross. But let us take for granted that it was a laudable act, and that our Lord had declared by a miracle that it was the real cross, and let us consider only the state of the case in our own time.

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It is maintained undoubtingly that the cross found by Helena is still at Jerusalem, though this is contradicted by ecclesiastical history, which relates that Helena took a piece of it, and sent it to her son the emperor, who set it upon a column of porphyry, in the centre of a public place or square, whilst the other portion of it was enclosed by her in a silver case, and intrusted to the keeping of the Bishop of Jerusalem; consequently, either the before-mentioned statement or this historical record must be false.

Now let us consider how many relics of the true cross there are in the world. An account of those merely with which I am acquainted would fill a whole volume, for there is not a church, from a cathedral to the most miserable abbey or parish church, that does not contain a piece. Large splinters of it are preserved in various places, as for instance in the Holy Chapel at Paris, whilst at Rome they show a crucifix of considerable size made entirely, they say, from this wood. In short, if we were to collect all these pieces of the true cross exhibited in various parts, they would form a whole ship's cargo.

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The Gospel testifies that the cross could be borne by one single individual; how glaring, then, is the audacity now to pretend to display more relics of wood than three hundred men could carry! As an explanation of this, they have invented the tale, that whatever quantity of wood may be cut off this true cross, its size never decreases. This is, however, such a clumsy and silly imposture, that the most superstitious may see through it. The most absurd stories are also told respecting the manner in which various pieces of the cross were conveyed to the places where they are now shown; thus, for instance, we are informed that they were brought by angels, or had fallen from heaven. By these means they seduce ignorant people into idolatry, for they are not satisfied with deceiving the credulous, by affirming that pieces of common wood are portions of the true cross, but they pretend that it should be worshipped, which is a diabolical doctrine, expressly reprov'd by St Ambrose as a Pagan superstition.

After the cross comes the inscription, "*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,*" which was placed upon it by order of Pilate. The town of Toulouse claims the possession of this relic, but this is contradicted by Rome, where it is shown in the Church of the Holy Cross. If these relics were properly examined, it would be seen that the claims of both parties are equally absurd.

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There is a still greater contradiction concerning the nails of the cross. I shall name those with which I am acquainted, and I think even a child could see how the devil has been mocking the world by depriving it of the power of discernment on this point. If the ancient writers, such as the ecclesiastical historian Theodorite, tell the truth (*Historia Tripartita*, lib. ii.), Helena caused one of the nails to be set in the helmet of her son Constantine, and two others in the bridle of his horse. St Ambrose, however, relates this differently, saying that one of the nails was set in the crown of Constantine, a second was converted into a bridle-bit for his horse, and the third was retained by Helena. Thus we see that twelve hundred years ago there was a difference of opinion on this subject, and how can we tell what has become of the nails since that time? Now, they boast at Milan that they possess the nail which was in Constantine's bridle; this claim is, however, opposed by the town of Carpentras. St Ambrose does not say that the nail was attached to the bridle, but that the bit was made from it,—a circumstance which does not agree with the claims of Milan or Carpentras. There is, moreover, one nail in the Church of St Helena at Rome, and another in that of the Holy Cross in the same city; there is a nail at Sienna, and another at Venice. Germany possesses two, at Cologne and Trèves. In France there is one in the Holy Chapel at Paris, another in the same city at the church of the Carmelites, a third is at St Denis, a fourth at Bruges, a fifth at the abbey of Tenaille in the Saintonge, a sixth at Draguignau, the whole number making fourteen shown in different towns and countries.¹³² Each place exhibiting these nails produces certain proofs to establish the genuineness of its relic, but all these claims may be placed on a par as equally absurd.

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Then follows the iron spear with which our Saviour's side was pierced. It could be but one, and yet by some extraordinary process it seems to have been multiplied into four; for there is one at Rome, one at the Holy Chapel at Paris, one at the abbey of Tenaille in Saintonge, and one at Selve, near Bourdeaux.

With regard to the crown of thorns, one must believe that the slips of which it was plaited had been planted, and had produced an abundant growth, for otherwise it is impossible to understand how it could have increased so much.

A third part of this crown is preserved at the Holy Chapel at Paris, three thorns at the Church of the Holy Cross, and a number of them at St Eustache in the same city; there are a good many of

the thorns at Sienna, one at Vicenza, four at Bourges, three at Besançon, three at Port Royal, and I do not know how many at Salvatierra in Spain, two at St James of Compostella, three at Albi, and one at least in the following places:—Toulouse, Macon, Charroux in Poitiers; at Cleri, St Flour, St Maximim in Provence, in the abbey of La Salle at St Martin of Noyon, &c.¹³³

It must be observed, that the early church has made no mention of this crown, consequently the root that produced all these relics must have grown a long time after the passion of our Lord. With regard to the coat, woven throughout without a seam, for which the soldiers at the cross cast lots, there is one to be seen at Argenteuil near Paris, and another at Trèves in Germany.

[pg 237] It is now time to treat of the "*sudary*," about which relic they have displayed their folly even more than in the affair of the holy coat; for besides the sudary of Veronica, which is shown in the Church of St Peter at Rome, it is the boast of several towns that they each possess one, as for instance Carcassone, Nice, Aix-la-Chapelle, Trèves, Besançon, without reckoning the *fragments* to be seen in various places.¹³⁴

[pg 238] Now, I ask whether those persons were not bereft of their senses who could take long pilgrimages, at much expense and fatigue, in order to see sheets, of the reality of which there were no reasons to believe, but many to doubt; for whoever admitted the reality of one of these sudaries shown in so many places, must have considered the rest as wicked impostures set up to deceive the public by the pretence that they were each the real sheet in which Christ's body had been wrapped. But it is not only that the exhibitors of this one and the same relic give each other mutually the lie, they are (what is far more important) positively contradicted by the Gospel. The evangelists who speak of all the women who followed our Lord to the place of crucifixion, make not the least mention of that Veronica who wiped his face with a kerchief. It was in truth a most marvellous and remarkable event, worthy of being recorded, that the face of Jesus Christ was then miraculously imprinted upon the cloth, a much more important thing to mention than the mere circumstance that certain women had followed Jesus Christ to the place of crucifixion without meeting with any miracle; and, indeed, had such a miracle taken place, we might consider the evangelists wanting in judgment in not relating the most important facts.

[pg 239] The same observations are applicable to the tale of the sheet in which the body of our Lord was wrapped. How is it possible that those sacred historians, who carefully related all the miracles that took place at Christ's death, should have omitted to mention one so remarkable as the likeness of the body of our Lord remaining on its wrapping sheet? This fact undoubtedly deserved to be recorded. St John, in his Gospel, relates even how St Peter, having entered the sepulchre, saw the linen clothes lying on one side, and the napkin that was about his head on the other; but he does not say that there was a miraculous impression of our Lord's figure upon these clothes, and it is not to be imagined that he would have omitted to mention such a work of God if there had been any thing of this kind. Another point to be observed is, that the evangelists do not mention that either of the disciples or the faithful women who came to the sepulchre had removed the clothes in question, but, on the contrary, their account seems to imply that they were left there. Now, the sepulchre was guarded by soldiers, and consequently the clothes were in their power. Is it possible that they would have permitted the disciples to take them away as relics, since these very men had been bribed by the Pharisees to perjure themselves by saying that the disciples had stolen the body of our Lord? I shall conclude with a convincing proof of the audacity of the Papists. Wherever the holy sudary is exhibited, they show a large sheet with the full-length likeness of a human body on it. Now, St John's Gospel, chapter nineteenth, says that Christ was buried according to the manner of the Jews; and what was their custom? This may be known by their present custom on such occasions, as well as from their books, which describe the ancient ceremony of interment, which was to wrap the body in a sheet, to the shoulders, and to cover the head with a separate cloth. This is precisely how the evangelist described it, saying, that St Peter saw on one side the clothes with which the body had been wrapped, and on the other the napkin from about his head. In short, either St John is a liar, or all those who boast of possessing the holy sudary are convicted of falsehood and deceit.¹³⁵

[pg 240] In the Church of St John of the Lateran at Rome, they show the reed which the soldiers, mocking
[pg 241] Christ in the house of Pilate, placed in his hand, and with which they afterwards smote him on the head. In the Church of the Holy Cross at Rome they show the sponge which was filled with vinegar, and given him to drink during his passion. Now, I would ask, how were these things obtained? They must have been formerly in the hands of infidels. Could they have delivered them up to the apostles to be made relics of? or did they preserve them themselves for future times?

What a sacrilege to make use of the name of Jesus Christ in order to invent such absurd fables!

[pg 242] And what can we think of the pieces of silver received by Judas for betraying our Saviour? The Gospel says that he returned this money to the chief priests, who bought with it the potter's field for a burial-place for strangers.

By what means were these pieces of silver obtained from the seller of that field? It would be too absurd to maintain that this was done by the disciples of Jesus Christ; and if we are told that they were found a long time afterwards, it will be still less probable, as this money must have passed through many hands. It is therefore necessary to prove, that either the person who sold his field did so for the purpose of obtaining the silver pieces in order to make relics of them; or that he afterwards sold them to the faithful. Nothing of this kind has ever been mentioned by the primitive church.¹³⁶ To the same class of impositions belong the steps of Pilate's tribunal, which

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are exhibited in the Church of St John of the Lateran, as well as the column to which Christ was fastened during the flagellation, shown in the Church of St Prasedo in the same city, besides two other pillars, round which he was conducted on his way to Calvary. From whence these columns were taken it is impossible to conjecture. I only know that the Gospel, in relating that Jesus Christ was scourged, does not mention that he was fastened to a column or post. It really appears as if these impostors had no other aim than to promulgate the most fallacious statements, and, indeed, they carried this to such a degree of extravagance, that they were not ashamed to make a relic of the tail of the ass upon which our Lord entered into Jerusalem, which they show at Genoa.¹³⁷ One really cannot tell which is most wonderful,—the folly and credulity of those who devoutly receive such mockeries, or the boldness of those who put them forth.

It may be said that it is not likely all these relics should be preserved without some sort of correct history being kept of them. To this I reply that such evident falsehoods can never bear the slightest resemblance to truth, how much soever their claims may be supported by the names of Constantine, Louis IX., or of some popes; for they will never be able to prove that Christ was crucified with fourteen nails, or that a whole hedge was used to plait his crown of thorns,—that the iron of the spear with which his side was pierced had given birth to three other similar pieces of iron,—that his coat was multiplied threefold,—and that from his single sudarium a number of others have issued, or that Jesus Christ was buried in a manner different from that described in the Gospels.

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Now, if I were to show a piece of lead, saying, "This piece of gold was given me by a certain prince," I should be considered a madman, and my words would not transmute the lead into gold.

Thus it is precisely when people say, "This thing was sent over by Godfrey de Bouillon after his conquest of Judea." Our reason shows us that this is an evident lie. Are we then to be so much imposed upon by words as to resist the evidence of our senses?

Moreover, in order to show how much reliance may be placed on the statements which are given about these relics, we must remark that those considered the principal and most authentic at Rome have been, according to those accounts, brought thither by Vespasian and Titus. Now, this is such a clumsy fabrication,—they might just as well tell us that the Turks went to Jerusalem in order to carry off the true cross to Constantinople!

Vespasian conquered and ravaged a part of Judea before he was elected emperor, and his son Titus completed that conquest by the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. They were both Pagans, and had no more regard for Christ than if he had never existed on earth. Consequently to maintain that Vespasian and Titus carried off the above-mentioned relics to Rome, is even a more flagrant falsehood than the stories about Godfrey of Bouillon and St Louis.

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Moreover, it is well known that the times of St Louis were very superstitious. That monarch would have accepted as a relic, and worshipped, any thing that was represented to him as having belonged to the Holy Virgin; and, indeed, King Louis and other crusaders sacrificed their bodies and their goods, as well as a great portion of their country's substance, merely to bring back with them heaps of foolish trifles, having been taught to consider them as the most precious jewels of the world.

It must be here mentioned, that in Greece, Asia Minor, and other eastern countries, people show, with full assurance, counterpart old rubbish, which those poor idolaters imagine they possess in their own country. How are we to judge between the two contending parties? One party says that these relics were brought from the East; but the Christians now inhabiting those lands maintain that the same relics are still in their possession, and they laugh at our pretensions. How can it be decided betwixt right and wrong without an inquiry, which will never take place? Methinks the best plan is to let the dispute rest as it is, without caring for either side of the question.

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The last relics pertaining to Jesus Christ are those which relate to the time after his resurrection,—as, for instance, a piece of broiled fish which St Peter presented to him on the sea-shore. This fish must have been strongly spiced, and prepared in some extraordinary manner, to be preserved for so long a period. But, seriously, is it likely that the apostles would have made a relic of a portion of the fish which they had prepared for their dinner? Indeed, I think that whoever will not perceive this to be an open mockery of God, deserves not to be reasoned with.

There is also the miraculous blood which has flowed from several hosts,—as, for instance, in the Churches of St Jean-en-Greve at Paris, at St Jean d'Angeli at Dijon, and in many other places. They show even the penknife with which the host at Paris was pierced by a Jew, and which the poor Parisians hold in as much reverence as the host itself. For this they were well blamed by a Roman Catholic priest, who declared them to be worse than the Jews, for worshipping the knife with which the precious body of Christ was pierced. I think we may apply this observation to the nails, the spear, and the thorns; and consequently those who worship those instruments used at our Lord's crucifixion are more wicked than the Jews who employed them for that purpose.

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There are many other relics belonging to this period of our Lord's history, but it would be tedious to enumerate them all. We shall therefore pass them over, and say a few words respecting his images,—not the common ones made by painters and carvers, but those considered as actual relics, and held in particular veneration. Some of these images are believed to have been made in a miraculous manner, like those shown at Rome in the Church of the blessed Virgin, in Portici, at

St John of the Lateran, at Lucca, and other places, and which they pretend were painted by angels. I think it would be ridiculous to undertake a serious refutation of these absurdities, the profession of angels not being that of painters, and our Lord Jesus Christ desired to be known and remembered otherwise than by carnal images.

Eusebius, it is true, relates, in his Ecclesiastical History, that our Lord sent the likeness of his face to King Abgarus;¹³⁸ but the authenticity of this account has no better proof than that of a fairy tale; yet, supposing it were true, how came this likeness to be found at Rome (out of Abgarus' possession), where people boast to have it now? Eusebius does not mention where it was in his time, but he merely relates the story as having happened a long time before he wrote; we must therefore suppose that this image reappeared after a lapse of many centuries, and came from Edessa to Rome.

[pg 248] They have forged not only images of Christ's body, but also copies of the cross. Thus they pretend at Brescia to have the identical cross which appeared to the Emperor Constantine. This claim is, however, stoutly opposed by the town of Constance, whose inhabitants maintain that the above-mentioned cross is preserved in their town, and not at Brescia.

But let us leave the contending parties to settle this point between themselves, though it would be easy enough to show the absurdity of their pretensions, because the cross which, according to some writers, appeared to Constantine, was not a material cross, but simply a vision.

There are several carved images, as well as paintings, of Jesus Christ to which many miracles are attributed. Thus the beard grows on the crucifixes of Salvatierra and Orange, and other images are said to shed tears. These things are too absurd for serious refutation, and yet the deluded world is so infatuated that the majority put as much faith in these as in the Gospels.

[pg 249] *The Blessed Virgin.*—The belief that the body of the Virgin was not interred on earth, but was taken to heaven, has deprived them of all pretext for manufacturing any relics of her remains, which otherwise might have been sufficiently abundant to fill a whole churchyard;¹³⁹ yet in order to have at least something belonging to her, they sought to indemnify themselves for the absence of other relics with the possession of her hair and her milk. The hair is shown in several churches at Rome, and at Salvatierra in Spain, at Maçon, St Flour, Cluny, Nevers, and in many other towns. With regard to the milk, there is not perhaps a town, a convent, or nunnery, where it is not shown in large or small quantities. Indeed, had the Virgin been a wet-nurse her whole life, or a dairy, she could not have produced more than is shown as hers in various parts.¹⁴⁰ How they obtained all this milk they do not say, and it is superfluous here to remark that there is no foundation in the Gospels for these foolish and blasphemous extravagances.

The Virgin's wardrobe has produced an abundant store of relics. There is a shirt of hers at Chartres, which has been fully celebrated as an idol, and there is another at Aix-la-Chapelle.

[pg 250] I do not know how these things could have been obtained, for it is certain that the Apostles and first Christians were not such triflers as to amuse themselves in this way. It is, however, sufficient for us to consider the shape of these articles of dress, in order clearly to see the impudence of their exhibitors. The shirt at Aix-la-Chapelle is a long clerical surplice, shown hanging to a pole, and if the Blessed Virgin had been a giantess, she would still have felt much inconvenience in wearing so large a garment.

In the same church they preserve the shoes of St Joseph, which could only fit the foot of a little child or a dwarf. The proverb says that liars need good memories, so as not to contradict their own sayings. This rule was not followed out at Aix-la-Chapelle, otherwise care would have been taken to maintain a better proportion of size between the shoes of the husband and the shirt of the wife. And yet these relics, so devoid of all appearance of truth, are devoutly kissed and venerated by crowds!

I know of only two of her head-dresses; one is at the abbey of St Maximian at Treves, and the other is at Lisio in Italy. They may be considered quite as genuine as the Virgin's girdle at Prato and at Montserrat, as her slipper at St Jaqueme, and as her shoe at St Flour.

[pg 251] Now, those who are at all conversant with this subject well know that it was not the custom of the primitive church to collect shoes and stockings, &c., for relics, and also that for five hundred years after the death of the Virgin Mary there was never any talk of such things. It really seems as if these well-known facts would be sufficient to prove the absurdity of all these relics of the Virgin; but her worshippers, not merely satisfied with the articles I have just enumerated, endeavour to ascribe to her a love of dress and finery. A comb of hers is shown in the church of St Martin at Rome, and another in that of St Jean-le-Grand at Besançon, besides others that may be shown elsewhere. Now, if this be not a mockery of the Virgin, I do not know what that word implies. They have not forgotten her wedding-ring, which is shown at Perusa.

As it is now the custom for a husband to present his bride with a ring at the marriage ceremony, they imagined it to be so in the time of the Virgin, and in her country, consequently, they show a splendid ring as the one used at her wedding, forgetting the state of poverty in which she lived.

Rome possesses four of her gowns, in the churches of St John of the Lateran, St Barbara, St Maria *supra Minervam*, and St Blasius; whilst at Salvatierra they boast of having fragments of a

gown belonging to her.

I have forgotten the names of other towns where similar relics are shown.¹⁴¹

It is sufficient to examine the materials of these vestments in order to see the falsehood of their claims, for their exhibitors give to the Virgin the same sort of robes with which they dress up her images.

[pg 252] It remains now to speak of her images—not of the common ones, of which there are so many everywhere, but of those which are distinguished from the rest by some particular claims. Thus at Rome there are four, which they pretend were painted by St Luke the evangelist. The principal one is in the church of St Augustine, which they say St Luke had painted for his own use; he always carried it about his person, and it was buried with him. Now, is it not a downright blasphemy to turn thus a holy evangelist into a perfect idolater? And what reason had they for believing that St Luke was a painter? St Paul calls him a physician. I do not know from whence they obtained this notion; but supposing it was so, is it possible to admit that he would have painted the Virgin for the same purpose as the Pagans did a Jupiter, a Venus, or any other idol?

It was not the custom of the primitive Christians to have images, and it only became so a long while afterwards, when the Church was corrupted by superstition. Moreover, the whole world is filled with representations of the Blessed Virgin, which are said to have been painted by the same evangelist.¹⁴²

[pg 253] I shall not say any thing about St Joseph, whose shoes at Aix-la-Chapelle I have already mentioned, and whose other similar relics are preserved in many places.¹⁴³

ST MICHAEL.

[pg 254] It may be supposed that I am joking when I speak of the *relics of an angel*, considering how absurd and ridiculous it is to do so, yet, although the hypocrites certainly know this well, they have made use of the name of St Michael to delude the ignorant and foolish; for they show at Carcassone his falchion, which looks like a child's dagger, and his shield, which is no larger than the knob of a bridle. Is it possible for man or woman to exist who can believe such mockery?¹⁴⁴ It is indeed a blasphemy, under a garb of devotion, against God and his angels. The exhibitors of the above-mentioned relics endeavour to support their imposture by the testimony of Scripture that the archangel Michael combated with Satan; but if he was conquered by the sword, it would at least have been one of a different size and calibre than the toy to which I have alluded. People must, however, be very silly to believe that the war waged by angels and the faithful against the devil is a carnal encounter, fought with material weapons. But as I said before, at the commencement of this treatise, the world has rightly deserved to be led astray into such absurdities, for having lusted after idols, and worshipped them instead of the living God.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Proceeding in due order, we must now treat of St John the Baptist, who, according to the evangelical history—*i.e.*, God's Word of Truth—was, after being beheaded, buried by his disciples. Theodoret, the eminent chronicler of the Church, relates that his grave was at Sebaste, a town in Syria, and that some time after his burial the grave was opened by the Pagans, who burnt his bones and scattered their ashes in the air. Eusebius adds, however, that some men from Jerusalem, who were present on the occasion, secretly took a little of these ashes and carried them to Antioch, where they were buried in a wall by Athanasius.

[pg 255] With regard to his head, Sosomen, another chronicler, relates that it was carried to Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius; therefore, according to these ancient historians, the whole body of John the Baptist was burnt with the exception of his head, and the ashes were all lost excepting the small portion secretly taken away by the hermits of Jerusalem. Now, let us see what remains of the head are extant.

The face is shown at Amiens, and the mask which is there exhibited has a mark above the eye, caused, they say, by the thrust of a knife, made by Herodias. Amiens' claim to this relic is, however, disputed by the inhabitants of St John d'Angeli, who show another face of St John.

With regard to the rest of the head, its top, from the forehead to the back part, was at Rhodes, and I suppose must now be at Malta, at least the knights boast that the Turks had restored it to them. The back of the head is at St John's Church at Nemours, the brains at Nogent le Rotrou, a part of the head is at St Jean Maximin, a jaw is at Besançon, a portion of a jaw is at St John of the Lateran, and a part of the ear at St Flour in Auvergne. All this does not prevent Salvatierra from possessing the forehead and hair; at Noyon they have a lock of the hair, which is considered to be very authentic, as well as that at Lucca, and many other places.

Yet in order to complete this collection, we must go to the monastery of St Sylvester at Rome, where the whole and real head of St John the Baptist will be shown to us.

[pg 256] Poets tell us a legend about a king of Spain who had three heads; if our manufacturers of relics could say the same of St John the Baptist, it would greatly assist their lies; but as such a fable does not exist, how are they to get out of this dilemma?¹⁴⁵

I shall not press them too hard by inquiring how could this head be so divided and distributed, or how have they procured it from Constantinople? I shall merely observe, that either St John must have been a miracle, or that those who possess so many parts of his head are a set of the most audacious cheats.

What is more than this, they boast at Sienna of possessing an arm of that saint, which is contrary, as we have already said, to the statements of all the ancient historians; and yet this fraud is not only suffered, but even approved of, for in the kingdom of Antichrist nothing is too bad which can serve to keep people in a state of superstition.

[pg 257] Another fable has been invented respecting St John the Baptist. When his body was burnt, they say that the finger with which he had pointed out our Lord Jesus Christ had remained whole and uninjured by the fire. Now this story may easily be refuted by the ancient historians, because Eusebius and Theodoret distinctly state that the body had already become a skeleton when the Pagans burnt it; and they certainly would not have omitted the relation of such a miracle in their histories if there had been any foundation for it, having been but too eager to narrate such events even as are quite frivolous. But supposing that this miracle had really taken place, let us seek where this finger is now to be found. There is one at Besançon in the Church of St John the Great, a second at Toulouse, a third at Lyons, a fourth at Florence, and a fifth at St Jean des Aventures, near Maçon. Now I request my readers to examine this subject, and to judge for themselves whether they can believe, that whilst St John's finger, which, according to their own tradition, is the only remainder of his body, is at Florence, five other fingers can be found in sundry other places, or, in short, that six are one, and one is six. I speak, however, only of those that have come to my knowledge; but I make no doubt, if a careful inquiry were made, that one might discover half a dozen more of St John's fingers, and many pieces of his head, besides those I have enumerated.¹⁴⁶

[pg 258] There are many relics of another kind shown as having belonged to St John the Baptist; as, for instance, one of his shoes is preserved in the Church of the Carthusians at Paris. It was stolen about twelve years ago; but it was very soon replaced by that sort of miracle never likely to cease so long as there are shoemakers in the world.

At St John of the Lateran, at Rome, they boast of having his haircloth mentioned in the Gospels. The Gospel speaks of his raiment of camel's hair, but they endeavour to convert it into a horse-hair garment.¹⁴⁷

They have also at the same church the altar before which he prayed in the desert, as if altars were in those days erected on every occasion and in every place. I wonder, indeed, that they have not ascribed to him the saying of the mass.

At Avignon they show the sword with which he was beheaded, and at Aix-la-Chapelle the sheet which was spread under him at that time. Is it not absurd to suppose that the executioner would spread a sheet under one whom he was about to kill?

[pg 259] But admitting that this should be the case, how have they obtained these two objects? Is it likely that the man who put him to death, whether a soldier or executioner, should have given away his sword and the sheet we have mentioned, in order to be converted into relics?

ST PETER AND ST PAUL.

It is now time to speak of the apostles, and I shall begin with St Peter and St Paul. Their bodies are at Rome; one part of them in the church of St Peter, and the other in that of St Paul. We are told that St Sylvester weighed their bodies in order to divide them into equal parts. Both their heads are preserved also at Rome in St John of the Lateran. Besides the two bodies we have just mentioned, many of their bones are to be found elsewhere, as at Poitiers they have St Peter's jaw and beard. At Treves there are several bones of the two apostles. At Argenton in Berri they have St Paul's shoulder, and in almost every church dedicated to these apostles there will be found some of their relics. At the commencement of this treatise I mentioned that St Peter's brains, which were shown in this town (Geneva), were found on examination to be a piece of pumice stone, and I have no doubt that many of the bones considered to belong to these two apostles would turn out to be the bones of some animal.

[pg 260] At Salvatierra they have St Peter's slipper. I do not know what shape it is, or of what material it is made; but I conclude it to be similar to the slippers of the same apostle shown at Poitiers, and which are made of satin embroidered with gold. It would seem as if they had made him thus smart after his death as a compensation for the poverty which he suffered during his lifetime. Their bishops look now so showy in their pontificals, that no doubt it would be thought derogatory to the apostles' dignity if they were not dressed out in the same style. They take, therefore, figures which they gild and ornament all over, and name them as St Peter or St Paul, forgetting that it is well known what was the condition of these apostles whilst in this life, and that they wore the raiments of the poor.

They show also at Rome St Peter's episcopal chair and his chasuble, as if the bishops of that age had thrones to sit upon. The bishops then were engaged in teaching, consoling, and exhorting their flocks both in public and private, setting them an example of true humility, but not teaching them to set up idols, as is done by those of our day. With regard to his chasuble, I must say that it

was not then the custom to put on disguises, for farces were not at that time performed in the churches as they are now. Thus, to prove that St Peter had a chasuble, it is necessary to show in the first place that he had played the mountebank, as the priests do now whenever they intend to serve God.

[pg 261] It is, however, no wonder that they have given him a chasuble since they have assigned an altar to him, there being no more truthful foundation for the one than for the other. It is well known what kind of mass was said at that time. The apostles simply celebrated the Lord's Supper, and this requires no altar; but as to the celebration of the mass, it was then not heard of, nor was it practised for a long time afterwards.¹⁴⁸ It is, therefore, evident that those who invented all these relics never expected contradiction, or they would not have devised such audacious falsehoods. The authenticity of St Peter's altar at Rome (which I have just mentioned) is denied by Pisa, that town pretending to possess the real one. The least objectionable of St Peter's relics is undoubtedly his staff, it being most probable that he had made use of one during his travels, but unfortunately there are two of them at Cologne and Treves, each town claiming exclusive possession of the identical one.¹⁴⁹

[pg 262] THE OTHER APOSTLES.

We shall speak of the rest of the apostles together, in order to get quicker over the matter, and we will relate, in the first place, where their whole bodies are to be found, that our readers, by comparison, may be able to form their own opinions on the subject. All know that the town of Toulouse boasts of possessing the bodies of six, namely, St James the Major (brother of St John), St Andrew, St James the Minor, St Philip, St Simeon, and St Jude. At Padua they have the body of St Matthias, at Salerno that of St Matthew, at Orconna that of St Thomas, in the kingdom of Naples that of St Bartholomew.

Now, let us reckon up those apostles who possess two or three bodies. St Andrew has a duplicate at Amalfi, St Philip and St James the Minor both have duplicates at Rome, *ad sanctos Apostolos*, St Simeon and St Jude the same in St Peter's Church. St Bartholomew enjoys an equal privilege at Rome, in the church bearing his name. Here we have enumerated six of them, each provided with two bodies, and St Bartholomew has an additional skin into the bargain, which is shown at Pisa.¹⁵⁰ St Matthew, however, outrivals them all, for besides the body at Padua, which we have before mentioned, he has another at Rome in the church of St Maria Maggiore, a third at Treves, and an additional arm at Rome.¹⁵¹

[pg 263] It is true that the bits and scraps of St Andrew's body, scattered in various places, counterbalance, in some measure, the superiority of St Matthias; for he has at Rome, in St Peter's Church, a head, and a shoulder in that of St Chrysostom, an arm at St Esprit, a rib at St Eustache, I do not know how many bones at St Blaise, and a foot at Aix in Provence.

Now, as St Bartholomew has left his skin at Pisa, so he has left there a hand; at Treves he has also some bones, of which I forget the number; at Frejus a finger, and at Rome there are other of his bones; so that, after all, he is not the poorest of the apostles, others not having such a number of relics. St Matthew and St Thomas are the poorest of all. The first has only, besides his body at Salerno, which we have mentioned, some bones at Treves, an arm in the church of St Maria at Rome, and in that of St Nicolas his head; though it may be that other of his relics may have escaped my knowledge, which would be no wonder, for who is not confused with this ocean of impostures?¹⁵²

[pg 264] As they pretend, in their tales, that the body of St John the Evangelist disappeared immediately after it was deposited in the grave, so they cannot produce any of his bones, and they therefore sought for a compensation amongst his clothing, &c. Thus they show at Bologna the cup from which he was forced to drink poison by order of the Emperor Domitian. Probably owing to some wonderful process of alchemy, the same cup exists also in the church of St John of the Lateran at Rome.

They have also his coat, and the chain with which he was bound when brought from Ephesus to Rome, as well as the oratory at which he used to pray when in prison.¹⁵³

ST ANNA.

[pg 265] We must now hurry on, or we shall never quit this labyrinth. We will, therefore, only briefly mention the relics of those saints who were our Lord's contemporaries, and then proceed to those of the martyrs, &c., leaving our readers to form their own conclusions from these brief sketches.

St Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, has a whole body at Apt in Provence, and another at Notre Dame de l'Isle at Lyons. She has a head at Treves also, a second at Duren near Cologne, and a third at a town called after her name in Thuringia. I shall not speak of her other relics shown in more than a hundred different places. I remember that I myself kissed one of her relics, kept at the abbey of Orcamps near Noyon, on the occasion of a grand festival held in its honour.

LAZARUS, MARY MAGDALENE, ETC.

Lazarus has, to my knowledge, three bodies, at Marseilles, Autun, and Avalon. A protracted lawsuit took place between the two last-named towns concerning the validity of their respective

claims to the possession of the real body of this saint. Yet after an immense expense, both parties may be said to have gained their suit, for neither forfeited its title to ownership. With regard to Mary Magdalene, she owns but two bodies, one at Auxerre, and another of very great celebrity, with its head detached, at St Maximin, in Provence.

[pg 266] Of their numerous relics scattered over the world I shall not speak. I would merely inquire whether Lazarus and his sisters ever went to preach in France; for those who have read the accounts given by ancient historians of those times cannot fail to be convinced of the folly of this fable.¹⁵⁴

ST LONGINUS, AND THE THREE WISE MEN, OR KINGS.

The individual who pierced the side of our Lord on the cross has been canonised under the name of St Longinus, and after having thus baptized him, they have bestowed upon him two bodies, one of which is at Mantua, and the other at Notre Dame de l'Isle at Lyons.¹⁵⁵

[pg 267] The same has been done with the wise men who came to worship our Lord at the nativity. In the first place they settled their number, telling us that there were three. Now the Gospel does not mention how many were present, and some eminent ecclesiastical writers have maintained their number to have been fourteen, as mentioned for instance in that imperfect commentary on St Matthew which is ascribed to Chrysostom.

Moreover, the *Gospel* calls them *wise men*, but they have elevated them to the dignity of kings, without bestowing on them, however, either kingdoms or subjects. Finally, they have been baptized under the names of Balthazar, Melchior, and Gaspar. Now, supposing we concede to them these fables, frivolous as they are, it is certain that the wise men returned to the east, for the Gospel informs us of this, and we may conclude that they died in their native land, there being no reason for thinking otherwise. Now, who transferred their bodies to the west, for the purpose of preserving them as relics? It would be quite ridiculous, however, for me to attempt seriously to refute such a palpable imposture. Let Cologne and Milan, both of which towns pretend to possess relics of these *wise men*, or *kings*, decide this question between themselves.¹⁵⁶

ST DIONYSIUS.

[pg 268] St Dionysius is considered to be one of the most celebrated of ancient martyrs, as a disciple of the apostles, and as the Evangelist of France. Occupying such high rank, it is therefore very natural that his relics should be so liberally dispersed; his whole bodies are, however, only preserved at the Abbey of St Denis in France, and at Ratisbon in Germany. About a century ago Ratisbon instituted a lawsuit at Rome to prove that the body in its possession was truly that of the saint, and the justice of the claim was established by a decision of the Papal Court, delivered in the presence of the French Ambassador. And yet, any one so bold as to dare to assert at St Denis that theirs was not the real body would run the risk of being stoned for blasphemy; whilst those who oppose the claim of Ratisbon are considered as heretics, rebellious to the decision of the Holy See.¹⁵⁷

ST STEPHEN.

The whole body of St Stephen is at Rome, his head is at Arles, and his bones are in more than three hundred places; and the Papists, as if to show themselves to be the partisans of those who murdered him, have canonized the stones with which he was killed.

[pg 269] It may be asked how these stones were obtained, but to my mind this would be a foolish question, as stones may be picked up anywhere, without incurring any trouble or expense in their transport. These stones are shown at Florence, at the convent of the Augustine monks at Arles, and at Vigan in Languedoc, &c.

Whoever will close his eyes and allow his understanding to be set aside, may believe that these are the identical stones with which St Stephen suffered martyrdom, but whoever will exert his reason a little cannot but laugh at this imposition. The Carmelite monks of Poitiers discovered some of these stones only fourteen years ago, to which they ascribed the virtue of assisting women in the pains of travail; but the Dominican monks, from whom a rib of St Margarita which possessed the same virtue had been stolen, were very indignant, and raised a great outcry at the deception practised by the Carmelites, but the latter gained the body by firmly maintaining their rights.

THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

[pg 270] It was not at first my intention to mention the Holy Innocents, for if I were to enumerate a whole army of their relics, it might always be said to me in reply that history is not contradicted by that, as their number has never been mentioned to us. I shall not dwell, therefore, upon their multitude, merely observing that they are to be found in every part of the world. I would ask, however, how it came to pass that their graves were discovered so long after their massacre, since they were not considered as saints when their murder by Herod took place? And then, how were these numerous bodies conveyed to the many places where they are now to be seen? To these questions but one answer can be given—"All this occurred five or six hundred years after their death." How can any but idiots believe such things?

But supposing even that some of their bodies had really been discovered, how came so large a number of them to be transported to France, Italy, and Germany, and to be distributed amongst so many towns situated so far apart? This can only be a *wholesale* deception.

ST GERVASIUS AND ST PROTASIUS.

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The sepulchres of these two saints were discovered at Milan in the time of St Ambrose, as testified by him. This fact is confirmed also by the evidence of St Jerome, St Augustine, and several others; consequently Milan maintains its possession of the real bodies of these saints. Nevertheless, they are likewise to be seen at Brissach in Germany, and in the Church of St Peter at Besançon, besides an immense number of different parts of their bodies scattered throughout the land, so that each of them must have had at least four bodies.

ST SEBASTIAN.

This saint, from the wonderful power his remains possessed of curing the plague, was put into requisition and more sought after than many of his brother saints, and no doubt this popularity was the cause of his body being quadrupled. One body is in the church of St Lawrence at Rome; a second is at Soissons; the third at Pigny, near Nantes, and the fourth at his birth-place, near Narbonne. Besides these, he has two heads at St Peter's at Rome, and at the Dominican church at Toulouse. The heads are, however, empty, if we are to believe the Franciscan monks of Angers, as they pretend to possess the saint's brains. The Dominicans of Angers possess one of his arms, another is at St Sternin, at Toulouse, a third at Case Dieu in Auvergne, and a fourth at Montbrisson. We will pass over the small fragments of his body, which may be seen in so many churches. They did not rest satisfied with this multiplication of his body and separate limbs, but they converted into relics the arrows with which he was killed. One of these is shown at Lambesc in Provence, another is in the Augustine convent at Poitiers, and there are many others in different towns.

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ST ANTHONY.

A similar reason has bestowed on St Anthony the advantage of multiplication of his remains, he being considered as an irascible saint, burning up all those who incur his displeasure; and this belief caused him to be dreaded and revered. Fear creating devotion, and producing also a universal desire to possess his relics, on account of the profits and advantages to be derived therefrom, Arles therefore had a long and severe contest with Vienne (in France) respecting the validity of the bodies of this saint possessed by each of these towns.

The issue was the same as in other similar disputes, *i.e.*, matters remained in the same state of confusion as before; for if the truth had been established, both parties would have lost their cause.

Besides these two bodies, St Anthony has a knee in the Church of the Augustines at Albi, and several other limbs at Bourg, Maçon, Ouroux, Chalons, Besançon, &c.

Such are the advantages of being an object of dread and fear, otherwise this saint might possibly have been permitted to remain quietly in his grave.¹⁵⁸

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ST PETRONILLA—ST HELENA—ST URSULA—AND THE ELEVEN THOUSAND VIRGINS.

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I must not forget to mention St Petronilla, St Peter's daughter, who has a whole body at Rome, in the church dedicated to her father, besides other relics in that of St Barbara. This does not, however, prevent her from owning another body in the Dominican convent at Mans, which is greatly venerated for the virtue it possesses of curing fevers. St Helena has not been so liberally provided for. Besides her body at Venice, she has but an extra head in the Church of St Gereon at Cologne.¹⁵⁹ St Ursula beats her hollow in this respect; for she has a whole body at St Jean d'Angely, and a head into the bargain at Cologne, besides three separate limbs, and various fragments at Mans, Tours, and Bergerat. The companions of this saint are called *the eleven thousand virgins*, and although this is a respectable number, yet it is still too small, considering that the remains of these virgins are to be seen everywhere; for besides there being about one hundred cart-loads of their bones at Cologne, there is hardly a town where one or more churches have not some relics of these numerous saints.¹⁶⁰

If I was to enumerate all the minor saints I should enter a labyrinth without possibility of egress. I shall, therefore, rest satisfied with giving a few examples, leaving my readers to judge from these of the rest. For instance, there are two churches at Poitiers, one attached to the convent of Selle, and the other dedicated to the saint in question, between which a great dispute has been going on as to the possession of the real body of St Hilarion.

The lawsuit upon this point has been suspended for an indefinite time, and meanwhile the idolaters worship two bodies of one and the same individual.

St Honoratus has a body at Arles, and another at the island of Lerins, near Antibes.

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St Giles has a body at Toulouse, and a second in a town bearing his name in Languedoc.

I could quote an infinite number of similar cases. I think that the exhibitors of these relics should

at least have made some arrangement amongst themselves the better to conceal their barefaced impostures. Something of this sort was managed between the canons of Trêves and those of Liège about St Lambert's head. They compounded, for a sum of money, not to show publicly the head in their possession, in order to avoid the natural surprise of the public at the same relic being seen in two different towns situated so near to each other. But, as I have already remarked at the commencement of this treatise, the inventors of these frauds never imagined any one could be found bold enough to speak out and expose their deceptions.

It may be asked, how it came to pass that these manufacturers of relics, having collected and forged without any reason all that their imaginations could fancy in any way, could have omitted subjects pertaining to the Old Testament?

The only reply I can give to this query is, that they looked with contempt on those subjects, from which they did not anticipate any considerable gain.

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Still they have not entirely despised them, for they pretend to have the bones of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the church of *St Maria supra Minervam*, at Rome. They also boast of possessing, at St John of the Lateran, the ark of alliance, with Aaron's rod, though the same rod is also at the Holy Chapel in Paris, whilst some pieces of it are preserved at Salvatierra. Moreover, at Bordeaux they maintain that St Martial's rod, which is exhibited in the church of St Severin, is no other than that of Aaron. It seems, indeed, that they would wish with this rod to perform another miracle; formerly it was turned into a serpent, whereas now they would convert it into three different rods! It is very likely that they may have other relics of objects mentioned in the Old Testament, but the few we have here alluded to show that they have treated them much in the same style as those belonging to Christian times.

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I now beg to remind my readers of what I mentioned at the beginning of this work, that I have had no commissioners for visiting the numerous churches of the different countries enumerated by me, nor must my description be taken for a register or inventory of all that can be discovered respecting relics. I have mentioned about half-a-dozen towns in Germany, but three in Spain I think, about fifteen in Italy, and between thirty and forty in France, and even of these few examples I have not related all that I might concerning them. Now, let us only imagine what a mass might be raised out of all the relics which are to be seen in Christendom, if they were collected and arranged together in proper order. I speak, however, only of those countries which we know and frequent; for it is most important to observe that all the relics belonging to Christ and the apostles which are displayed in the west are also to be seen in Greece, Asia, and all other countries where Christian Churches are in existence. Now, what are we to say when the Eastern Christians assert their claims?

If we contradict them, alleging on our part that the body of such a saint was brought to Europe by merchants, that of another by monks, that of a third by a bishop, that a part of the crown of thorns was sent to a king of France by an emperor of Constantinople, and another part was carried off in time of war, and so on of every object of the kind, they would shake their heads, and laugh at us! How are such differences to be settled? In every doubtful case we can only judge by conjecture, and, in following this out, the adherents of the Eastern Churches are sure of success, because their claims are more probable than those of their opponents. It is indeed a difficult point for the defenders of relics to settle.

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Finally, I beseech and exhort, in the name of God, all my readers to listen to the truth now clearly displayed before them, and to believe that, by God's especial providence, those who have endeavoured thus to lead mankind astray have been rendered so blind and careless as to neglect a proper concealment of their deceptions, but that, like Midianites having their eyes put out, they run one against another, for we all know that they quarrel amongst themselves, and mutually injure each other. Whoever is not wilfully prejudiced against all reason must certainly be convinced that the worship of relics, whether true or false, is an abominable idolatry; yet should not this even be the case with him, he must nevertheless perceive the evident imposture, and whatever may have been his former devotion to relics, he must lose all courage in kissing such objects, and become entirely disgusted with them.

I repeat what I said at the commencement of this treatise, that it would be most important to abolish from amongst us Christians this pagan superstition of canonising relics, either of Christ or of his saints, in order to make idols of them; for this is a defilement and an impurity which should never be suffered in the Church. We have already proved that it is so by arguments, and also from the evidence of Scripture. Let those who are not yet satisfied look to the practices of the ancient fathers, and conform to their examples. There are many holy patriarchs, many prophets, many holy kings, and other saints mentioned in the Old Testament. God ordained at that time the observance of more ceremonies than are needed now. Even funerals were performed then with more display than at present, in order to represent symbolically the glorious resurrection, especially as it had not then been so clearly revealed by the Word of God as it is to ourselves.

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Do we ever read in that book that these saints were taken from their sepulchres as idols? Was Abraham, the father of the faithful, ever thus raised? Was Sarah ever removed from her grave? Were they not left in peace, with the remains of all other saints? But what is more conclusive, was not the body of Moses concealed by God's will, in such a manner that it never has been or can be discovered? Has not the devil contended concerning it with the angels, as St Jude says?

Now, what was our Lord's reason for removing that body from the sight of men, and why should the devil desire to have it exhibited to them? It is generally admitted that God wished to put away from his people of Israel all temptation to commit idolatry, and that Satan desired its introduction amongst them.

It may be said, however, that the Israelites were inclined to superstition. I ask, how stands the case now with ourselves? Is there not, without comparison, more perversity in this respect amongst Christians than there ever was amongst the Jews of old?

[pg 280] Let us call to mind the practice of the early church. It is true that the first Christians were always anxious to get possession of the bodies of the martyrs, lest they might be devoured by beasts or birds of prey, and decently to bury them, as we read was the case with the bodies of St John the Baptist and St Stephen. This solicitude was shown, however, in order to inter them in their graves, and there to leave them until the day of the resurrection; but they did not expose these remains to the sight of men for their adoration.

The unfortunate custom of canonising saints was not introduced into the Church until it had become perverted and profaned, partly by the folly and cupidity of its prelates and pastors, and partly because they were unable to restrain this innovation, as people were seeking to deceive themselves by giving their hearts to puerile follies, instead of to the true worship of God. If we wish, in a direct manner, to correct this abuse, it is necessary to abolish entirely what has been so badly commenced and established against all reason. But if it is impossible to arrive at once at such a clear comprehension of this abuse, let people at least have their eyes opened to discern what the relics are which are presented for their adoration.

This is indeed no difficulty for those who will only exercise their reason, for amongst the numerous evident impostures we have here mentioned, where may we find one real relic of which we may feel certain that it is such as is represented?

Moreover, all those that I have enumerated are nothing comparatively to the remainder yet untold by me. Even whilst this treatise is in the press, I have been informed of many relics not mentioned in it; and if a general visitation of all existing relics were possible, a hundredfold more discoveries would be made.

[pg 281] I remember when I was a little boy what took place in our parish. On the festival day of St Stephen, the images of the tyrants who stoned him (for they are thus called by the common people) were adorned as much as that of the saint himself. Many women, seeing these tyrants thus decked out, mistook them for the saint's companions, and offered the homage of candles to each of them. Mistakes of this kind must frequently happen to the worshippers of relics, for there is such confusion amongst them that it is quite impossible to worship the bones of a martyr without danger of rendering such honours by mistake to the bones of some brigand or thief, or even to those of a horse, a dog, or a donkey.

And it is equally impossible to adore the ring, the comb, the girdle of the Virgin Mary, without the risk of adoring instead objects which may have belonged to some abandoned person.

Now, those who fall into this error must do so willingly, as no one can from henceforth plead ignorance on the subject as their excuse.¹⁶¹

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Postscript.

The following extract from the *Ecclesiastical Gazette* of Vienna has been reproduced in an Extraordinary Supplement of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, of Augsburg, for the 11th May 1854. I subjoin a translation of it in a postscript, as an additional evidence of the persecution to which the Greek Church united with Rome has been subjected in Russia, and which I mentioned on page [161](#) of this work:—

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“Spies appointed for this especial purpose transmitted, in their reports to the Government, lists of such individuals as were suspected to be Catholics at heart; and if all the exaggerated accounts which had been made of the Spanish Inquisition were true, they would be thrown into the shade by the proceedings that were adopted against the above-mentioned individuals. And indeed it is an averred fact, that many of them fell a victim to starvation, blows, and other cruel treatment. The Catholic inhabitants of Worodzkow were forced with stripes, by the Governor and his satellites, to sign a *voluntary* petition, expressing their ardent wish to be received into the pale of the orthodox Russian Church. The names of those who could not write were signed

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by others, and whoever showed the slightest manifestation of his desire to remain a Catholic, after having performed this *voluntary* act, was treated as one guilty of high treason. The same proceedings as at Worodzkow were adopted in a hundred other places, whose *voluntary* petitions were obtained with bloody stripes of the knout. The unfortunate petitioners were, in order to perform this operation, dragged from their homes, sometimes to a distance of 18 or 20 versts (1-½ verst to an English mile), and those who steadfastly refused to sign were treated by the Russian papas with the utmost cruelty and indignity. They were put into irons, barred up in cold prisons without any fire, starved, thrown into large tubs filled with an icy and stinking water, and most mercilessly beaten, so that many, in order to escape from such torments, signed the *voluntary* petition, with hearts as bleeding as their bodies. Many succumbed under these fearful persecutions, which were not much inferior to that which the Christians had suffered under the reign of Diocletian. The Papa Stratanovich extorted the signatures made by the feverishly agitated hands of the clerical victims, whilst his lay associate, Waimainich Zokalinski, performed the same charitable office to other unfortunate individuals. Some of these miserable persons were reduced by starvation and every kind of ill-treatment to such a condition, that they were almost unconscious of what they did in signing the *voluntary* petitions for the reception into the pale of the Russian Church, all of which were obtained by more or less similar means.

“It appears from a great mass of documentary evidence, containing the names of localities and persons, that the proselytism of 1841 was carried out in the following manner:—Military authorities, and Russian papas or priests, visited Catholic villages, and having called together the Catholic peasantry and landowners of the neighbourhood, declared that they must join the Russian Church, throwing into prison those who resisted the summons. In the most part of cases, a petition for this object was signed by some hired wretches in the name of all the community, of whom many often knew nothing about this business, but when they behaved as Catholics, they were punished, as guilty of high treason.”

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The *Allgemeine Zeitung* states, in giving this extract from the *Ecclesiastical Gazette* of Vienna, that this periodical contains many well-authenticated cases of religious persecution against the Roman Catholics of Russia; and I have little doubt that if the Protestants of Western Europe had taken as much pains to ascertain and denounce the persecution of their brethren in the Baltic provinces of Russia, which I have mentioned on p. 162, as is done, be it said to their great honour, by the Roman Catholics, they would find many acts of persecution directed against the above-mentioned Protestants, as flagrant as those which have just been described.

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Footnotes

- [1.](#) An English translation of this Treatise was published under the following title:—"A very profitable Treatise, declarynge what great profit might come to all Christendom yf there were a regester made of all the saints' bodies and other reliques which are as well in Italy as in France, Dutchland, Spaine, and other kingdoms and conntreys. Translated out of the French into English by J. Wythers, London, 1561." 16mo. I have made my translation from the French original, reprinted at Paris in 1822.
- [2.](#) It is well known that more than half a million of pilgrims went to worship the holy coat of Treves in 1844, and that many wonderful stories about the cures effected by that relic were related. Several of these stories are not altogether without foundation, because there are many cases where imagination affects the human body in such a powerful manner as to cause or cure various diseases. It was therefore to be expected that individuals suffering from such diseases should be at least temporarily relieved from their ailings by a strong belief in the miraculous powers of the relic. Cases of this kind are always noticed, whilst all those of ineffectual pilgrimage are never mentioned.
- [3.](#) A translation of this letter was published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Augsburg.
- [4.](#) Thus St Anthony of Padua restores, like Mercury, stolen property; St Hubert, like Diana, is the patron of sportsmen; St Cosmas, like Esculapius, that of physicians, &c. In fact, almost every profession and trade, as well as every place, have their especial patron saint, who, like the tutelary divinity of the Pagans, receives particular honours from his or her *protégés*.
- [5.](#) In his Treatise given below.
- [6.](#) "Quod legentibus Scriptum, hoc et idiotis, præstat pictura, quia in ipsa ignorantes vident quid sequi debeant, in ipsas legunt qui litteras nesciunt," says St Gregory.—*Maury, Essai sur les Legendes, &c.*, p. 104.
- [7.](#) "Quoniam talis memoria quæ imaginibus fovetur, non venit es cordis amore, sed ex visionis necessitate."—*Opus illustrissimi Caroli magni contra Synodum pro adorandis imaginibus*, p. 480, (in 18—1549),—a work of which I shall have an opportunity more amply to speak.
- [8.](#) See his chapter on the "Ill Effects of Solitude on the Imagination"—English translation.
- [9.](#) *Ibid.*
- [10.](#) "Fleury Histoire Eccles.," lib. xxi. chap. 15.
- [11.](#) The author of this sketch says himself, in a note, "Yet this idolatry is far from having entirely disappeared. Pilgrimages, and a devotion to certain images, but particularly to that of the Virgin, are still continuing," &c. This was said in 1843. I wonder what he will say now, when this idolatry is reappearing, even in those parts of Europe where the Calvinists had, according to his expression, struck at its very root.
- [12.](#) "Essai sur les Legendes Pieuses du Moyen Age," par Alfred Maury, pp. 111, *et seq.*

13. "Chateaubriand Etudes Historiques," vol. ii. p. 101.
14. "Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme dans l'Empire d'Orient," par M. Chastel, Paris, 1850, p. 342 *et seq.*
15. "Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme en Occident," par A. Beugnot, Member of the French Institute, Paris, 1835, 8vo, 2 vols.
16. *Translator's Note.*—Was not the introduction of pagan rites into the church the indirect way to idolatry alluded to in the text?
17. *Author's Note.*—The festivals of the martyrs was a very large concession made to the old manners, because all that took place during those days was not very edifying.
18. *Translator's Note.*—I shall give in its proper place a more ample account of Vigilantius.
19. *Author's Note.*—These compromises were temporary, and the church revoked them as soon as she believed that she could do it without inconvenience. She struggled hard against the calends of January, after having for a considerable time suffered these festivities; and when she saw that she could not succeed in abolishing them, she decided to transport the beginning of the year from the first of January to Easter, in order to break the Pagan customs.
20. *Author's Note.*—"The Saturnalia, and several other festivals, were celebrated on the calends of January; Christmas was fixed at the same epoch. The Lupercalia, a pretended festival of purification, took place during the calends of February; the Christian purification (Candlemas) was celebrated on the 2d of February. The festival of Augustus, celebrated on the calends of August, was replaced by that of St Peter *in vinculis*, established on the 1st of that month. The inhabitants of the country, ever anxious about the safety of their crops, obstinately retained the celebration of the *Ambarvalia*; St Mamert established in the middle of the fifth century the *Rogations*, which in their form differ very little from the *Ambarvalia*. On comparing the Christian calendar with the Pagan one, it is impossible not to be struck by the great concordance between the two. Now, can we consider this concordance as the effect of chance? It is principally in the usages peculiar only to some churches that we may trace the spirit of concessions with which Christianity was animated during the first centuries of its establishment. Thus, at Catania, where the Pagans were celebrating the festival of Ceres after harvest, the church of that place consented to delay to that time the festival of the Visitation, which is celebrated everywhere else on the 2d July."—*F. Aprile Cronologia Universale di Sicilia*, p. 601. I would recommend to those who wish to study this subject the work of *Marangoni*, a very interesting work, though its author (whose object was to convince the Protestants who attacked the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church on account of these concessions) tried to break the evident connection which exists between certain Christian and Pagan festivals.
21. *Author's Note.*—"There are at Rome even now several churches which had formerly been pagan temples, and thirty-nine of them have been built on the foundations of such temples."—*Marangoni*, pp. 236-268. There is no country in Europe where similar examples are not found. It is necessary to remark, that all these transformations began at the end of the fifth century.
22. *Author's Note.*—At Rome four churches have pagan names, viz:—*S. Maria Sopra Minerva*, *S. Maria Aventina*, *St Lorenzo in Matuta*, and *St Stefano del Cacco*. At Sienna, the temple of Quirinus became the church of *St Quiricus*.
23. *Translator's Note.*—And still more to their corruption.
24. *Translator's Note.*—Christ has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—Matt. xi. 28-30. I would ask the learned author, whether these words of our Saviour are not sufficiently mild, tender, and consoling, and whether there was any necessity to *consecrate* some new ideas in order to temper their severity?
25. *Author's Note.*—Amongst a multitude of proofs I shall choose only one, in order to show with what facility the worship of Mary swept away in its progress the remnants of Paganism which were still covering Europe:—Notwithstanding the preaching of St Hilarion, Sicily had remained faithful to the ancient worship. After the council of Ephesus, we see eight of the finest Pagan temples of that island becoming in a very short time churches dedicated to the Virgin. These temples were, 1. of Minerva, at Syracuse; 2. of Venus and Saturn, at Messina; 3. of Venus Erigone, on the Mount Eryx, believed to have been built by Eneas; 4. of Phalaris, at Agrigent; 5. of Vulcan, near Mount Etna; 6. the Pantheon, at Catania; 7. of Ceres, in the same town; 8. the Sepulchre of Stesichorus.—*V. Aprile Cronologia Universale di Sicilia*. Similar facts may be found in the ecclesiastical annals of every country.
26. *Translator's Note.*—The time when the church is to accomplish this purification has, alas! not yet arrived.
27. Beugnot, vol. ii., book xii., chap. 1, pp. 261-272.
28. The opinions of different writers on the number of Christians in the Roman empire at the

time of Constantine's conversion greatly varies. The valuation of Staudlin ("Universal Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche," p. 41, 1833) at half of its population, and even that of Matter ("Histoire de l'Eglise," t. i. p. 120), who reduces it to the fifth, are generally considered as exaggerated. Gibbon thinks that it was the twentieth part of the above-mentioned population; and the learned French academician, La Bastie ("Memoires de l'Academie des Inscripter," &c.) believes that it was the twelfth. This last valuation is approved by Chastel ("Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme en Orient," 1850, p. 36) as an average number, though it was much larger in the East than in the West. The celebrated passage of Tertullian's "Apology," in the second century, where he represents the number of Christians in the Roman empire to be so great, that it would have become a desert if they had retired from it, is considered by Beugnot (vol. ii. p. 188) as the most exaggerated hyperbole which has ever been used by an orator.

- [29.](#) *Translator's Note.*—Expression of St Jerome, Op. iv. p. 266. It would be curious to know what this father of the church would have said of the present Rome.
- [30.](#) Beugnot, vol. i., p. 86.
- [31.](#) "Ludorum celebrationes, deoram festa sunt."—Lactantius, *Institutiones Divin.*, vi., 20, *apud* Beugnot.
- [32.](#) "Adite aras publicas adque delubra, et consuetudinis vestræ celebrate solemnia: nec enim prohibemus preteritæ usurpationis officia libera luce tractari."
- [33.](#) The *labarum* was a cross, with the monogram of Christ.
- [34.](#) The Græco-Russian church has, however, given him a place in her calendar on the 21st May, but only in common with his mother Helena. This was done only a considerable time after his death.
- [35.](#) Beugnot, upon the authority of Ausonius, vol. i., p. 321.
- [36.](#) Thus Symmachus, one of the leaders of the old aristocracy of Rome, celebrated for his learning, virtues, and staunch adherence to the national polytheism, was invested by Theodosius with the dignity of a consul of Rome; the well known Greek orator, Libanius, was created prefect of the imperial palace; and Themistius, who had been invested with the highest honours under the preceding reigns, was created by Theodosius prefect of Constantinople, received in the senate, and entrusted for some time with the education of Arcadius. These distinguished polytheists never made a secret of their religious opinions, but publicly declared them on several occasions. Many of Theodosius' generals were avowed Pagans, but enjoyed no less his confidence and favour.
- [37.](#) Fallmerayer, "Geschichte der Morea," vol. i., p. 136.
- [38.](#) *Vide supra*, pp. 30-32.
- [39.](#) I think that it will not be uninteresting to my readers to know how the Roman Catholic Church explains this prohibition, and which may be best seen from the following piece of ingenious casuistry, by one of her ablest defenders in this country:—"Canon xxxvi. of the Provincial Council held in 305, at Eliberis, in Spain, immediately refutes the error of Bingham. (Bingham maintained the same opinion on the images which is expressed in the text.) The pastors of the Spanish church beheld the grievous persecution that Diocletian had commenced to wage against the Christian faith, which had for a lengthened period enjoyed comparative repose, under the forbearing reign of Constantius Cæsar, father of Constantine the Great. They assembled to concert precautionary measures, and amongst other things, they determined that, in the provinces under their immediate jurisdiction, there should be no fixed and immovable picture monuments, such as fresco paintings or mosaics, no images of Christ whom they adored, nor of the saints whom they venerated, on the walls of the churches which had been erected and ornamented during the long interval of peace which the Christians had enjoyed. 'Placuit,' says the council, 'picturas in ecclesia esse non debere, ne quod colitur et adoratur, in parietibus depingatur,' (Con. Elib., *apud Labbeum*, tom i. p. 972.) This economy was prudent and adapted to the exigency of the period. The figures of Christ and of his saints were thus protected from the ribaldry and insults of the Pagans. But this well-timed prohibition demonstrates, that the use of pictures and images had already been introduced into the Spanish church."—*Hierurgia, or Transubstantiation, Invocation of Saints, Relics, &c., expounded by D. Rock, D.D.*, second edition, p. 374, *note*. There can be no doubt that the enactment in question proves that images were used at that time amongst the Spanish Christians, as a law prohibiting some particular crimes or offences shows that they were taking place at the time when it was promulgated; but the opinion that the above-mentioned enactment was not a prohibition of images, but a precautionary measure in their favour, must be supported either by the other canons of the same council, which contain nothing confirmatory of this opinion, or by the authority of some contemporary writer, and is without such evidence quite untenable, and nothing better than a mere sophism, I have given this explanation of the Council of Elvira by a Roman Catholic writer as a fair specimen of the manner in which all other practices of their church, derived from Paganism, are defended.
- [40.](#) *Translator's Note.*—And yet the same writer has defended this manner of recruiting the church.—*Vid. supra*, p. [17](#).

41. *Translator's Note.*—And yet this system of concession has been called by the same author *true wisdom.*—*Vid. supra*, p. 18.
42. *Translator's Note.*—It dated from the time when the Christian church began to make a compromise with Paganism.
43. Who would defile themselves by the impious superstition of the idols.
44. An ecclesiastical writer of the fifth century.
45. *Translator's Note.*—Importing usually into the Christian church that leaven of Paganism which is mentioned in the text.
46. *Translator's Note.*—Retaining meanwhile, however, the thing itself.
47. *Translator's Note.*—It is a great pity that the author leaves us in the dark about the time when this great improvement in the Roman Catholic Church to which he alludes took place.
48. St Augustinus relates, in the fourth book of his Confessions, chap. iii., that he was diverted from the idea of studying astrology by a pagan physician, who made him understand all the falsehood and ridicule of that science.
49. A similar custom is still prevalent in Russia. *Vide infra*, "On the Superstitions of her Church."
50. *Author's Note.*—In 1215, Buondelmonte was murdered by the Amidei at the foot of the statue of Mars. This murder produced at Florence a civil war, which, gradually spreading over all Italy, gave birth to the factions of the Guelphs and Ghibelines.
51. Basnage, "Histoire de l'Eglise," p. 1174.
52. An interesting account of Vigilantius was published by the Rev. Dr Gilly, the well-known friend of the Waldensians.
53. *Vide supra*, p. 8.
54. Gibbon's "Roman Empire," chap. xlix.
55. The Greeks and Russians worship their images chiefly by kissing them, and it was probably on this account that it was ordered to raise them to a height where they could not be reached by the lips of their votaries, because this means could not prevent them from bowing to them.
56. It is related that the women were the most zealous in defending the images, and that an officer of the emperor, who was demolishing a statue of Christ placed at the entrance of the imperial palace, was murdered by them.
57. Gibbon and some other writers think that Constantine survived for some time the loss of his eyes, but I have followed in the text the general opinion on this event.
58. Irene was a native of Athens.
59. Vol. ix. p. 429, *et seq.*
60. Extracts from the works of this celebrated monk, and his life, *apud* Basnage *Histoire de l'Eglise*, p. 1375.
61. Theodora, on being appointed by her husband regent during the minority of her son, was obliged to swear that she would not restore the *idols*. The Jesuit Maimbourg, who wrote a history of the iconoclasts, maintains that, in restoring the worship of images, she did not commit a perjury, because *she swore that* she would not restore the *idols*, but not *images*, which are not idols.
62. I may add, as well as the Russo-Greek Church, which, as I shall have an opportunity to show afterwards, is no less opposed to Protestantism than her rival, the Church of Rome.
63. Thus, for instance, the well-known work of the celebrated patriarch Photius, written in the ninth century, contains extracts from and notices of many works which have never reached us.
64. "Edinburgh Review," July, 1841, p. 17.
65. According to the author of "Hierurgia," Cassianus suffered martyrdom under the reign of Julian the Apostate; we know, however, from history, that no persecution of Christians had taken place under that emperor. Cassianus' body is still preserved at Imola, but according to Collin de Plancy he has besides a head at Toulouse.
66. "Hierurgia," by D. Rock, D.D., second edition, p. 377, *et seq.*
67. Prudentius was known as a man of great learning, and had filled some important offices of the state.
68. The title of this book is—"Opus illustrissimi Caroli Magni, nutu Dei, Regis Francorum, Gallias, Germaniam, Italiamque sive harum finitimas provincias, Domino opitulante, regentis, contra Synodum quæ in partibus Greciæ, pro adorandis imaginibus, stolide sive arroganter gesta est."
69. I think that it has recently been completed at Brussels.

70. The title of Ruinart's work is—"Acta primorum Martyrum sincera et selecta ex libris, cum editis, tum manuscriptis, collecta eruta vel emendata." 4to, Paris 1687, and several editions afterwards.
71. The most important of these Apocrypha of the New Testament, some of which have reached us, whilst we know the others from the writings of the fathers, are the Gospels according to St Peter, to St Thomas, to St Matthias, the Revelations of St Peter, the Epistle of St Barnabas, the Acts of St John, of St Andrew, and other apostles.
72. Mabillon on the Unknown Saints, p. 10. *Apud* Basnage, p. 1047.
73. "Vie de St François Xavier," par le Pere Bouhours, 1716. *Apud* Maury, p. 22.
74. "Liber Aureus Inscriptus, Liber Conformitatum Vitæ Beati ac Seraphici Patris Francisci, ad Vitam Jesu Christi Domini Nostri." It went through several editions.
75. The title of this curious work is "Histoire de St François d'Assise, par Emile Chavin de Malan." Paris: 1845.
76. "Edinburgh Review," April 1847, p. 295.
77. History of St Waltheof, p. 2 in the 5th vol. of the collection.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
79. Life of St Augustine of Canterbury, Apostle of the English, p. 237, in the 1st volume of the English Saints, mentioned above.
80. There is a German story which is evidently a parody of this legend. It says that an individual who was passionately fond of playing at nine-pins committed a crime for which he was sentenced to be beheaded. He requested, as a favour which was usually granted to culprits before their execution, to indulge once more in his favourite game. This demand being conceded, he began to play with such ardour that he entirely forgot his impending execution. The executioner, who was present, got tired of waiting for the culprit, and seizing a moment when he stretched his neck picking up a ball from the ground, cut off his head. The culprit was, however, so keen in the pursuit of his game, that he seized his own head, and having made with it a successful throw, exclaimed, "Haven't I got all the nine?"
81. An old German ballad gives a fair specimen of the ideas which people entertained of the joys of heaven. It says, amongst other things:—"Wine costs not a penny in the cellar of heaven; angels bake bread and cracknels at the desire of every one; vegetables of every kind abundantly grow in the garden of heaven; pease and carrots grow without being planted; asparagus is as thick as a man's leg, and artichokes as big as a head. When it is a lent day, the fishes arrive in shoals, and St Peter comes with his net to catch them, in order to regale you. St Martha is the cook and St Urban the butler."—See Maury, p. 88.
82. Zimmerman's "Solitude Considered with respect to its Dangerous Influence upon the Mind and Heart." English translation. Ed. 1798, p. 102, *et seq.*
83. *Vide supra*, p. 17.
84. "Mandat sancta synodus omnibus episcopis et caeteris, ut juxta catholicae et apostolicae ecclesiae usum, a primaevae Christianae religionis temporibus receptum, de legitimo imaginum usu fideles diligenter instruunt, docentes eos, imaginis Christi et Deiparae Virginis, et aliorum sanctorum, in templis praesertim habendas et retinendas, eisque debitum honorem et venerationem impertiendam; non quod credatur inesse aliqua in divinitas, vel virtus, propter quam sint colendae; vel quod ab iis aliquod sit petendum; vel quod fiducia in imaginibus sit figenda, veluti olim fiebat a gentibus, quae in idolis (Psalm cxxxv.) spem suam collocabant: sed quoniam honos, qui eis exhibetur, refertur ad prototypae, quae illae representant, ita ut per imagines, quae osculamur, et coram quibus caput aperimus et procumbimus, Christum adoremus; et sanctos quorum illae similitudinem gerunt veneremur."—Sessio xxv. *de Invocatione Sanc. et Sacr. Imag.*
85. The following description of this little idol is given by a well-known French writer of last century:—"This morning, when I was quietly walking along a street towards the capitol, I met with a carriage, in which sat two Franciscan monks, holding on their knee something which I was unable to distinguish. Every body was stopping and bowing in a most respectful manner. I inquired to whom were these salutations directed? 'To the *Bambino*,' I was answered, 'whom these good fathers are carrying to a prelate, who is very ill, and whom the physicians have given up.' It was then explained to me what this *Bambino* is. It is a little statue, meant for Jesus, made of wood, and richly attired. The convent which has the good fortune of being its owner has no other patrimony. As soon as any body is seriously ill, the *Bambino* is sent for, in a carriage, because he never walks on foot. Two monks take him and place him near the bed of the patient, in whose house they remain, living at his expense, until he dies or recovers.

"The *Bambino* is always driving about; people sometimes fight at the gate of the convent in order to get him. He is particularly busy during the summer, and his charges are then higher, in proportion to the competition and the heat, which I think is quite right."—*Dupaty, Lettres sur l'Italie*, let. xlviii.

The *Bambino* continues to maintain his credit; and I have read not long ago in the

newspapers, that an English lady of rank, who had joined the communion of Rome, was performing the duties of his dry nurse on a festival of her adopted church.

- [86.](#) *Insolitam imaginem.* I have made use in the text of the English Roman Catholic translation of the canons of the Council of Trent, by the Rev. Mr Waterworth.
- [87.](#) "Omnia hæc impia sunt et cultus idolorum, alloqui ipsas statuas aut ossa, aut fingere Deum aut sanctos magis in uno loco, seu ad hanc statuam alligatos esse quam ad alia loca. Nihil differunt invocationes quæ fiunt ad Mariam Aquensem seu Ratisbonensem ab invocationibus ethnicis, quæ flebant ad Dianam Ephesiam, aut ad Junonem Platæensem, aut ad alias statuas."—*Respon. ad Articul. Bavaric*, art. 17, p. 381.
- [88.](#) Middleton's "Miscellaneous Works," vol. v., p. 96, edition of 1755.
- [89.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- [90.](#) Hospinian, "De Origine Templ.," lib. ii. cap. 23; *apud* Middleton, *loco citato*.
- [91.](#) Beugnot, vol. i. p. 231, on the authority of Sosomenes.
- [92.](#) There are some Protestant writers who attach great value to the apostolic canons, as, for instance, Dr Beveridge, Bishop of St Asaph, who wrote a defence of them.
- [93.](#) "Institutiones Christianæ," lib. vi., cap. 2; *apud*, "Hospinian de Origine Templorum," lib. ii., cap. 10.
- [94.](#) This date is a mistake, and I would have taken it for a misprint if the author had not said before, that "Vigilantius attacked the practices of the church in the fourth age." I have, in speaking of this subject, p. [71](#), followed the authority of the great historian of the Roman Catholic Church, Fleury, who says that Jerome answered Vigilantius in 404.
- [95.](#) *Vid. supra*, p. [14](#), *et seq.*, the opinions of Chateaubriand and Beugnot on the same subject.
- [96.](#) The appellation of *regina cælorum*, queen of heaven, is frequently given to the blessed Virgin in Roman Catholic litanies and hymns addressed to her. The queen of heaven mentioned by Jeremiah is supposed to be the same as Astarte, or the Syrian Venus.
- [97.](#) Herodot., lib. ii., p. 36,—
"Qui grege linigero circumdatus et grege calvo,
Plangentis populi currit derisor Anubis."
Juvenal, vi. 532.
- [98.](#) He describes in it the well-known Roman Catholic practice of flagellation or self-whipping, which has been, and is still, done by the priests and votaries of several Pagan deities.
- [99.](#) "Namque omnia loca quæ thuris constiterit vapore fumasse, si tamen ea fuisse in jure thurificantium probabitur, fisco nostro adsocianda censemus," &c.—*Vid. also supra*, p. [48](#).
- [100.](#) I give these numbers on the authority of the Almanac de Gotha.
- [101.](#) The facts of this curious affair have never been published, but they are preserved in the ecclesiastical archives of Moscow, and a copy of them in the ecclesiastical academy of St Petersburg.—*Strahl's Beyträge zur Russischen Kirchengeschichte*, p. 239.
- [102.](#) Hermann Geschichte von Russland, 1853, vol. v., p. 89.
- [103.](#) Anointment with oil makes a part of the Greek ritual of baptism.
- [104.](#) These regulations may appear strange in a country like this, but in Russia all the population is divided into various classes, and nobody can pass from one of them into another without the authorization of the Government; as, for instance, if a peasant or agriculturist wishes to become a burgher by settling in a town. The peasantry in the Baltic provinces were emancipated under the reign of the Emperor Alexander, but the landowners still maintain a certain authority over them.
- [105.](#) The Pope, book iv., chap. 1.
- [106.](#) Bodenstedt's Morning Land; or, Thousand and One Days in the East. Second Series, vol. i., p. 61, *et seq.*, a work which is particularly interesting at the present time.
- [107.](#) Studien über Russland, vol. i., p. 101.
- [108.](#) The Russians of that time were known as slave dealers, according to Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveller of the same period.
- [109.](#) Travels of Ibn Foslan, German translation, by Frähn, p. 7.
- [110.](#) "Die Völker des Kaukasus," p. 284.
- [111.](#) It owned before the confiscation of the church estates more than a hundred thousand male serfs.
- [112.](#) Studien über Russland, vol. i. p. 87.

- [113.](#) Simocatta, *apud* Basnage, p. 1332.
- [114.](#) This reform, accomplished in the reign of Alexius, father of Peter the Great, consisted chiefly in the correction of the text of the Slavonic Scriptures and liturgical books, which had been greatly disfigured by the ignorance of successive copyists, and in the prohibition of some superstitious practices, which had usurped an important part in the divine service of the Russian Church. These wise reforms produced, however, a violent opposition, and several millions separated from the established church, and are known, though divided into many sects, under the general appellation of *Raskolniks*, *i.e.*, schismatics, whilst they call themselves *Starovertzi*, or those of the old faith, and designate the established church by the name of the Niconian heresy.
- [115.](#) Leveque, *Histoire de Russie* revue, par Malte Brun et Depping, tom. iv. p. 131.
- [116.](#) The title of this book is “Das Merk würdige Jahr Meines Lebens”—“The Memorable Year of my Life.” It has been, I believe, translated into English.
- [117.](#) A civil grade equal to that of a captain in the army.
- [118.](#) The author observes in a note that, in former times, a petty ecclesiastical prince, the Archbishop of Cologne, could conceive and partly execute the gigantic plan of the Cologne minster, and that in the present time, though the whole of Germany had undertaken to build the remainder of it, her people would have abandoned this project long ago, if it were not supported by the kings. He ought, however, I think, to confine his remarks to Germany, because there are certainly more places of worship built by voluntary contributions in England than in Russia.
- [119.](#) *Studien über Russland*, vol. i. p. 91.
- [120.](#) *Studien über Russland*, vol. i. p. 93.
- [121.](#) Leveque, *Histoire de Russie*, vol. iv., p. 133.
- [122.](#) London: Longman & Co. 1854.
- [123.](#) The title of this curious production is, “An Appeal on the Eastern Question to the Senatus Academicus of the Royal College of Edinburgh. By a Russian, Quondam Civis Bibliothecæ Edinensis.” Edinburgh: Thomas C. Jack, 92 Princes Street. London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co. 1854.
- [124.](#) Letter xxxvi., at the end.
- [125.](#) *Vide supra*, p. [184](#).
- [126.](#) “Custine's Russia,” letter xxxvi. The same opinion is expressed by Baron Haxthausen, whom I have quoted above, and who says, “The sons of the papas and other young men acquire in the seminaries and ecclesiastical academies a certain degree of theological learning, after which they indue the monacal dress, and are inscribed on the rolls of some convent, without however remaining in it. They enter the offices of bishops and archbishops to perform their personal as well as clerical service. Their position becomes then exactly the same as that of the military aides-de-camp of the Generals, and of the civil ones of ministers, and it is from amongst them that bishops, archimandrites, abbots, &c., are chosen. It is a career like every other service in Russia. Several of these ecclesiastics may have chosen their calling from a real devotion; the most part of them are, however, driven into it by an immeasurable ambition, selfishness, speculation, and vanity, the curse of the upper classes of Russia.”—(*Studien über Russland*, vol. i., p. 89.) It must be remarked that all the dignities of the Greek church are reserved for the monastic or *regular* clergy, whilst the secular (who cannot take orders without being married) do not rise above the station of a parish priest. This last-named function, which gives no prospects of promotion, is generally left to such theological students as are not fit for any thing better, and, with some few honourable exceptions, they are generally an ignorant and drunken set, treated with very little respect by the upper classes. The following anecdote, characteristic of the moral and intellectual condition of that class of the Russian clergy, was related to the author by a friend who had resided for some time in Russia. A landowner of the government of Kazan, Mr Bakhmetieff, who was very fond of the pleasures of the table in the old style, was in the habit of inviting to his revels the priests of the neighbourhood. Once, when his clerical guests had got so drunk as to lose all consciousness, their host, who was less overpowered by the effect of drink, determined to play them a practical joke, by daubing their beards with melted wax. The distress of these poor fellows, on awaking from their sleep, at this strange unction of their beards, was very great, because it was impossible to get rid of the wax without greatly injuring that hirsute appendage, upon which so much of their personal respectability rests. They became the laughing-stock of their congregations, and the story made a great noise over all the country.
- [127.](#) The Greek Church admits no carved images, as being prohibited by the second commandment.
- [128.](#) They have considerably more, as will be shown presently.
- [129.](#) Every altar in a Roman Catholic church must contain some relic.
- [130.](#) It is said to have been made of pasteboard.

- [131.](#) There are, besides the five water pots mentioned by Calvin, thirteen others, at St Nicolo of the Lido at Venice, at Moscow, at Bologne, at Tongres, at Cologne, at Beauvaia, at the abbey of Port Royal at Paris, and at Orleans, though the Gospel mentions but six. The materials of which they are made are very dissimilar to each other, and so are their respective measures, whilst those mentioned in the Gospel seem to have been all of the same size.
- [132.](#) There are, besides these, thirteen more, unknown probably to Calvin; but it would be too tedious to enumerate where they may be seen.
- [133.](#) If a diligent inquiry were instituted after these relics in particular, four times as many as are here enumerated might be found in other parts.
- [134.](#) I have employed the term Sudary, which has been adopted by Webster, from the Latin word *sudarium*, to designate the relic in question.
- [135.](#) It appears that a kerchief with the likeness of the face of Jesus Christ imprinted on it, and covered with blood and sweat, was kept in a church at Rome in the eleventh century, for it is mentioned in the brief of Pope Sergius IV., dated 1011. We do not know what tales respecting this relic were related at that time, but it appears that copies of it called *Veronies*, *i.e.*, a corruption of *verum icon*, "the true image," were sold; and no doubt this appellation gave rise to the legend of *Sancta Veronica* who wiped the face of Christ with her kerchief as he was going to Calvary. There are many versions of this legend, as for instance that it was this woman whom Christ had cured of the bloody issue, whilst again it is maintained that she was no less a person than Berenice, niece to King Herod. It is also related that after the dispersion of the apostles, St Veronica went in company with Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Lazarus, to Marseilles, where she wrought many miracles with her kerchief. The Emperor Tiberius heard of these miracles, and having fallen ill, he summoned Veronica to Rome. She cured him in a moment, and was rewarded with great honours and rich presents. The remainder of her life was spent at Rome in company with St Peter and St Paul, and she bequeathed the miraculous kerchief to Pope St Clement. It must, however, be observed, that this legend has not obtained the official approbation of the Roman Catholic Church, though St Veronica is acknowledged and has a place in the calendar for the 21st of February; and it is said she suffered martyrdom in France. With regard to the large sudaries or sheets upon which the whole body of Jesus Christ is impressed, and the absurdity of which Calvin has so clearly exposed, the most celebrated of these is that at Turin. Its history is curious, inasmuch as it shows that the efforts of enlightened and pious prelates to prevent idolatrous practices invading their churches proved unavailing against that general tendency to worship visible objects, so strongly implanted in corrupt human nature, that even in this enlightened age we are continually witnessing such manifestation of its revival as may be compared only to that of the dark period of the middle ages. The most striking instances undoubtedly are those of the holy coat of Treves, and the relics of St Theodosia, which have been recently installed at Amiens, with great pomp, and in the presence of the most eminent prelates of the Roman Catholic Church, who seem now to be as anxious to promote this kind of fetishism, as some of their predecessors were formerly to repress the same abuse. But let us return to our immediate subject—the *holy sudarium* of Turin. It is a long linen sheet, upon which is painted in a reddish colour a double likeness of a human body, *i.e.*, as seen from before and from behind, quite naked with the exception of a broad scarf encircling the loins. It is pretended that this relic was saved by a Christian at the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, and it was preserved for many centuries by the faithful.

In 640 it was brought back to Palestine, from whence it was transferred to Europe by the Crusaders. It was taken by a French knight named Geoffroi de Charny, who presented it to the collegiate church of a place called *Liré*, which belonged to him, and which is situated about three leagues from the town of Troyes, in Champagne; the donor declaring, on that occasion, that this holy sheet was taken by him from the infidels, and that it had delivered him in a miraculous manner from a prison dungeon into which he had been cast by the English.

The canons of that church, seeing at once the great profits to be derived from such a relic, lost no time in exhibiting it, and their church was soon crowded with devotees. The bishop of Troyes, Henri de Poitiers, finding however no proofs of the authenticity of this relic, prohibited it to be shown as an object of worship, and it remained unheeded for twenty-four years.

The sons of Geoffroi de Charny, about the year 1388, obtained permission from the Papal legate to restore this relic of their father's to the church of Liré, and the canon exposed it in front of the pulpit, surrounding it with lighted tapers, but the bishop of Troyes, Peter d'Arcy, prohibited this exhibition under pain of excommunication. They afterwards obtained from the king, Charles VI., an authorization to worship the *holy sudarium* in the church of Liré. The bishop upon this repaired to court, and represented to the king that the worship of the pretended sheet of Jesus Christ was nothing less than downright idolatry, and he argued so effectually that Charles revoked the permission by an edict of the 21st August 1389.

Geoffroi de Charny's sons then appealed to Pope Clemens VII., who was residing at

Avignon, and he granted permission for the holy sudarium to be exhibited. The bishop of Troyes sent a memorial to the Pope, explaining the importance attached to this so-called holy relic. Clemens did not, however, prohibit the sudarium to be shown, but he forbade its being exhibited as the *real* sudary of Jesus Christ. The canons of Liré, therefore, put aside their sudary, but it reappeared in other places, and after being shown about in various churches and convents it remained at Chambéry in 1432, where nobody dared to impugn its reality. From that time its fame increased, and Francis I., king of France, went a pilgrimage on foot, the whole way from Lyons to Chambéry, in order to worship this linen cloth. In 1578 St Charles Borromeo having announced his intention of going on foot to Chambéry to adore the holy sudary, the Duke of Savoy, wishing to spare this high-born saint the trouble of so long a pilgrimage, commanded the relic to be brought to Turin, where it has since remained, and where the miracles performed by it and the solemn worship paid to it, may be considered as a proof that its authenticity is no longer doubted.

There are about six holy sudaries preserved in other churches, besides the pieces shown elsewhere.

- [136.](#) Calvin, speaking of the silver pieces for which Judas betrayed our Lord, does not say where they are shown. Two of them are preserved in the Church of the Annunciation at Florence, one in the Church of St John of the Lateran, and another in that of the Holy Cross at Rome. There is one piece at the Church of the Visitandine Convent at Aix in Provence besides many other places where they are displayed.—*Collin de Plancy, Dictionnaire des Reliques.*
- [137.](#) The whole skeleton of the animal is preserved at Vicenza, enclosed in an artificial figure of an ass.
- [138.](#) Eusebius relates, that Abgarus, king of Edessa, having heard of Christ's teaching and miracles, sent an embassy to acknowledge our Lord's divinity, and to invite him to his kingdom, in order to cure Abgarus of a complaint of long standing; upon which Christ sent him the likeness mentioned in the text. Now, it is impossible for one moment to admit, that, if such an important fact had any truthful foundation, it would have been left unrecorded by the apostles.
- [139.](#) The Roman Catholic Church maintains that the Blessed Virgin was carried to heaven by angels, and it commemorates this event by the festival of the Assumption on the 15th August. This belief was unknown to the primitive church; for, according to a Roman Catholic writer of undoubted orthodoxy, the Empress Pulcheria, in the fifth century, requested the Bishop of Jerusalem, Juvenal, to allow her to have the body of the Virgin, in order to display it for the public adoration of the faithful at Constantinople.—(Tillerant's "Memoires Ecclesiastiques.")—There are many other proofs that, even at that time, when many idolatrous practices had begun to corrupt the church, the Virgin's body was generally believed to be in earth, and not in heaven.
- [140.](#) Vials filled with such milk were shown in several churches at Rome, at Venice in the church of St Mark, at Aix in Provence, in the church of the Celestins at Avignon, in that of St Anthony at Padua, &c. &c., and many absurd stories are related about the miracles performed with these relics.
- [141.](#) There are about twenty gowns of the Blessed Virgin exhibited in various places. Many of them are of costly textures, which, if true, would prove that she had an expensive wardrobe.
- [142.](#) The number of miraculous images of the Virgin in countries following the tenets of the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches is *legion*, and a separate volume would be required if we were to give even an abridged account of them.
- [143.](#) "The most celebrated relic of St Joseph is his '*han*,' *i.e.*, the sound or groan which issues from the chest of a man when he makes an effort, and which St Joseph emitted when he was splitting a log of wood. It was preserved in a bottle at a place called Concaiverny, near Blois, in France."—*D'Aubigne's Confessions de Sancy*, chap. ii. *apud* Colin de Plancy.
- [144.](#) It is said that as late as 1784, at Mount St Michael in Bretagne, a Swiss was vending feathers from the archangel Michael's wings, and that he found purchasers for his wares.
- [145.](#) This multiplication of St John's head reminds one of an anecdote related by Miss Pardoe in her "City of the Magyar." A museum of curiosities was kept in the chateau of Prince Grassalkovich in Hungary, and it was usually shown to strangers by the parish priest of that place. This worthy man was once conducting a traveller over the collection, and showed him amongst other curiosities two skulls, of large and small size, saying of the first, "This is the skull of the celebrated rebel Ragotzi;" and of the second, "That is the skull of the same Ragotzi when he was a boy!"
- [146.](#) Calvin has not rendered full justice to the relics of John the Baptist exhibited in various places. He only mentions the different parts of his head and the fingers; and the quantity altogether shown implies no doubt that the head was one of no ordinary dimensions. He evidently was not aware that there are about a dozen whole heads of St John the Baptist, which are or were exhibited in different towns. The most remarkable of them was undoubtedly that one which the notorious Pope John XXIII., who was deposed for his

vices by the Council of Constance, had sold to the Venetians for the sum of fifty thousand ducats; but as the people of Rome would not allow such a precious relic to quit their city, the bargain was rescinded. The head was afterwards destroyed at the capture and pillage of Rome by the troops of Charles V. in 1527. There are, besides, many other parts of St John's body preserved as relics. A part of his shoulder was pretended to have been sent by the Emperor Heraclius to King Dagobert I.; and an entire shoulder was given to Philip Augustus by the Emperor of Greece. Another shoulder was at Longpont, in the diocese of Soissons; and there was one at Lieissies in the Hainault. A leg of the saint was shown at St Jean d'Abbeville, another at Venice, and a third at Toledo; whilst the Abbey of Joienvall, in the diocese of Chartres, boasted of possessing twenty-two of his bones. Several of his arms and hands were shown elsewhere, besides fingers and other parts of his body; but their enumeration would be too tedious here.

- [147.](#) Calvin here alludes to the haircloth worn by the monks of some orders, and other Roman Catholic devotees, instead of the ordinary shirt.
- [148.](#) There is a French edition of the New Testament, published, I think, at Louvaine, in which the 13th chapter of Acts, 2d verse, is thus translated: "*Et quand ils disotent la messe,*"—"And when they were saying mass."
- [149.](#) The relics of Peter and Paul became at an early period the objects of veneration to the Christians of Rome. Gregory the Great relates that such terrible miracles took place at the sepulchres that people approached them in fear and trembling, and he adds that those who ventured to touch them were visibly punished. The Emperor Justinian, desiring some relics of these two apostles, some filings from their prison chains, and sheets that had been consecrated by having been laid over their bodies, were sent to him; but some time afterwards these relics were touched and handled without persons suffering any visible punishment for so doing. Their heads were transferred to the church of St John of Lateran, and their bodies were divided and placed in the churches of St Peter and St Paul in the Ostian Road. We have seen in the text that different parts of their bodies are shown in many places, and the celebrated D'Aubigné relates that France had possessed formerly the entire bodies of Peter and Paul before the Huguenots burnt and destroyed a great number of the relics in that country.
- [150.](#) This relic is considered a very efficient remedy for cutaneous disorders.
- [151.](#) Calvin was evidently in haste to get over his task, as he intimated to us at the commencement of this chapter. He has made very great omissions. In the first place, he appears to have forgotten the body of St James the Major at Compostella in Spain, one of the most celebrated places of pilgrimage of the Western Church. According to the legend, this apostle went to Spain to preach Christianity and then returned to Jerusalem, where he was beheaded by Herod.—(Acts xii.) His body was afterwards removed by his disciples to Spain. This is, therefore, his second body. He has a third at Verona, and a fourth at Toulouse, besides several heads elsewhere. The other apostles have also more bodies than are mentioned in the text, but the limits of this work forbid enumeration.
- [152.](#) St Matthew is not so poor in relics as Calvin supposed, for we could quote several whole bodies, as well as members, with which he was not acquainted.
- [153.](#) An oratory is a small chapel or cabinet, adorned with images of saints, &c., and used by the Roman Catholics for private devotions. The absurdity of ascribing to John the Evangelist the possession of such an oratory is too palpable a falsehood to require any comment.
- [154.](#) According to the well-known Jesuit writer Ribadeneira, the Jews seized Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Marcella, Maximin, Celidonius (supposed to have been the man born blind, who was restored to sight by Jesus Christ), and Joseph of Arimathea, and placing them on board a vessel without helm, oars, or sails, launched it forth into the sea. By a miracle the vessel reached Marseilles, where Lazarus was appointed the first bishop of that town. Maximin became bishop of Aix, Joseph of Arimathea went to England, Martha entered a convent, and Mary, after preaching in various parts of Provence for some time, retired into the desert of St Beaume, to weep and lament over her sins.—*Flower of Saints, July 22.*
- [155.](#) The legends say that the soldier, whom they name Longinus, was struck with blindness immediately after piercing Jesus Christ's side. He perceived the enormity of his crime, recognised the divinity of our Lord, and having rubbed his eyes with the blood which was on his lance, he recovered his sight, and finally became a monk in Cappadocia. It is true that neither the Gospels nor the early ecclesiastical writers mention anything respecting St Longinus, but Ribadeneira and other narrators of legends speak much of him. The reader may possibly object to the tale of his becoming a monk, since in those days there were none; but that difficulty merely requires the addition of another miracle.
- [156.](#) Calvin is wrong here. Milan only assumes to have possession of the graves of the wise men, not their bodies, which were removed to Cologne at the capture of Milan in 1162, by Frederick Barbarossa.
- [157.](#) *Vid. supra, p. 120.*
- [158.](#) St Anthony is venerated, or rather worshipped, by the Eastern as well as the Western Church, and he seems to have bestowed his favours upon each with the utmost

impartiality, for a body of his is shown at Novgorod, in Russia, where a church, with a convent attached to it, is dedicated to him. The legend concerning St Anthony's arrival at Novgorod is curious. It is said that this saint, whilst at Rome, was commanded by an angel, in a dream, to go and convert the inhabitants of Novgorod. In obedience to this angelic injunction, St Anthony embarked on a millstone, and floated on this extraordinary craft down the Tiber, passed over the Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Baltic seas, and arrived safely at the river Wolchow, upon which stream Novgorod is situated, having accomplished the whole voyage in four days—a marvellous speed indeed, and which completely shames all the wonders of modern steam navigation! The date assigned to this wonderful voyage happens to be that of a few centuries *after* St Anthony's death, but we suppose this too must be considered as another miracle.

- [159.](#) Calvin is much mistaken about Helena, who was better provided for than he imagined. Besides the body mentioned in the text, she has one in the Church of *Ara Cæli*, at Rome. There was one also at Constantinople, in the Church of the Twelve Apostles, and another at Hauteville, near Epernay, in Champagne.
- [160.](#) The legend tells us that an English chief, after conquering and taking possession of Lower Brittany, returned to his native land in search of wives for his army and himself. He married Ursula, an English princess, and took eleven thousand maidens as brides for his companions in arms. Ursula, whilst journeying with this bridal train to join her husband, was driven by a storm into the mouth of the Rhine, and arrived at Cologne. There they were beset by a party of Huns, who murdered them all. Their bodies were discovered at Cologne in the 16th century, and the remains of St Ursula, which at first were mixed with those of her companions, were pointed out, by a miracle, for the special veneration of the faithful. Several of these virgins have relics in various parts of Europe, and they are distinguished by proper names, as, for instance, St Ottilla, St Fleurina, &c. &c.. The origin of this absurd legend is ascribed by some antiquarians to the following inscription found upon a tomb:—“*St Ursula et XI. M. V.,*” *i.e., et 11 martyres virgines*, which, through ignorance or wilful deceit, has been converted into *millia virgines*—11,000 virgins. Other savans believe that the inscription meant “*St Ursula et Undecimilla, martyres virgines,*” and that *Undecimilla*, which was the proper name of a virgin martyr, was mistaken by some ignorant copyist for an abbreviation of *undecim millia*, 11,000.
- [161.](#) It must be remarked that many relics described in this Treatise were destroyed during the religious wars, but particularly by the French Revolution. I recommend to those who have an interest in this subject the observations made on it in Sir George Sinclair's Letters, p. 88, *et seq.*

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