

Popery – the Accommodation of Christianity to the Natural Heart



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popery

'pəʊp(ə)ri/

noun *derogatory, archaic*

noun: popery

the doctrines, practices, and ceremonies associated with the Pope or the papal system; Roman Catholicism.

“the Anglicans campaigned against popery”

Why has the word “popery” become archaic? It was a term well used by American Protestants in the 19th century. By the 20th century, Jesuit infiltration had become so great in American Protestant churches that most Protestants no longer considered the Pope or the Roman Catholic Church to be a threat to American democratic institutions.

I have never heard of Edward Hoare before. If he is anywhere typical of the average Protestant minister of the early 19th century, I would say that Protestant churches of that era must have been absolutely overflowing with the truth of the Gospel! How many Protestant ministers today are teaching the truths, principles and insights that Edward Hoare is teaching in his sermon on this post? Not many! Most preachers and evangelists today are deceived by the doctrine of Futurism. They speculate on who the Antichrist *will be* when he already *has been and is*. Protestants in the early 19th century *knew* who the Antichrist was!

If you read this message with an open heart, you will learn some insights about why Roman Catholicism appeals to over a billion people in the world today. The current Pope Francis is busy making it even more appealing! It appeals to what the Bible tells us is of the world and not of the Father, the

lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

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A LECTURE,
DELIVERED BEFORE THE ISLINGTON PROTESTANT INSTITUTE,
ON MONDAY, 26TH JUNE, 1848.

BY THE
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There are two points of view in which every system may be regarded—its external action, and its internal principle. We may examine either the great effects of its machinery, its plans, its purposes, its advances, and its perils; or we may trace its inner principle, and endeavour to detect the secret spring by which the whole is set in motion. It must at once be obvious that this latter inquiry is by far the more difficult; for our attention is directed rather to the philosophy than the action of the system; and we are called to examine the subtle tendencies of the human heart, which, of course, are more difficult both of detection and exhibition than the great, broad, startling facts which lie on the surface of the world's history. This difficulty I have seriously felt in the preparation of the present lecture, the subject of which, is, "Popery the accommodation of Christianity to the natural heart." The subject plainly requires that we should study the secret working of the natural heart, and should also examine into the corresponding principles of Popery, in order to discover their mutual accommodation, and to show how the whole system of the one is dexterously fitted to allay the fears and supply the cravings of the other. Throughout, therefore, we have to deal more with principles than with facts. I must ask your forbearance, therefore, if the lecture assumes a somewhat abstract form, and contains but few of those startling statements which abound in the history of Popery, and which are of the utmost importance in arousing the dormant Protestantism of the land. But yet, as facts are but the development of principles, I must ask the attention of thinking minds, and earnestly beg the candid consideration of all those Christian friends, whose desire it is to be established in the truth.

In its outward dress, then, and external presentation, we see at once that Popery adapts itself to the natural man. The Bible presents the Gospel to us in the most unmixed simplicity; the fruits of the Spirit are its choicest ornament, and the humbling of the heart is its proudest triumph. It goes to the unlettered cottager, places the Bible in his hand, and gives him the saving promise, "Believe in the Saviour as there revealed, and live." In the external aspect of such a system there is nothing to catch the natural eye; to the man who is not taught by the Spirit, there is nothing peculiarly lovely in its fruits, and to the person who is not influenced by his grace, as there is nothing to charm the senses, so there is little to attract his favourable regard. But Popery, in presenting a spurious Christianity, has dressed it up in all the meretricious ornaments of sense. It has summoned to its aid all that may allure the natural tastes, so that if it fail to win the

heart, it may at all events enlist the eye and ear in its behalf. Thus there is no natural taste which is not pre-eminently gratified by Popery. The lover of music and the fine arts will find his highest delight while he hears the sounds of the well-sung anthem thrilling through the vaulted roofs of a magnificent cathedral. The admirer of architecture will draw a contrast unfavourable to truth when he compares the noble ruins of Tintern Abbey with the simple church on the hill side that overhangs it. The antiquarian is provided with an ample supply for the spirit of research in the legends, the brasses, the ruins, and above all, in the claim it sets forth of resting its pretensions on a far-gone antiquity: while the ignorant and superstitious find all their wishes satisfied in the relics, the charms, the pilgrimages, the holy coats, the miracles, and the whole tissue of fanatical deception with which the system abounds. The effect upon such minds is proved by the fact, that in those countries where Popery prevails, there appears to be no room for all the new schemes of quackery which abound in our own. The Church has secured a complete monopoly, and finding that poor death-stricken man is ever craving after some unnatural mitigation of his woe, has undertaken to supply his utmost necessities, and to furnish a thousand charms and remedies to hush his longings, if it cannot cure his ill.

But if this were the only manner in which Popery adapts itself to the natural man, there would be comparatively little cause for complaint. There is no sin in an attractive exhibition of the truth, nor is it wrong to enlist the tastes in favour of the Redeemer's kingdom, for the Apostle to the Gentiles was himself "made all things to all men." So soon, however, as the truth itself is modified in order to suit the prejudices or inclinations of those to whom it is addressed, the accommodation from that moment becomes sinful in its character. Now it is impossible to study the records of Romanism without perceiving that it is perpetually guilty of this sinful modification. Thus in different countries it assumes different external aspects. In catechisms for the Irish, for example, it omits the second commandment, while in those for England it generally inserts it, adapting itself in each case to what it considers that the people's mind can bear. In China the Jesuit missionaries actually went so far as to omit from their teaching the great fact of the crucifixion, because they considered that a truth so humbling would be unwelcome to that proud and self-sufficient people. The foundation of Christianity was removed in order to accommodate it to the pride of the natural heart.

Thousands of other instances might be adduced to show the pliability of the system. It is like the camelion, and varies its colour according to the soil on which it treads. It will even preach justification by faith in those parishes where the people have learned the value of that blessed truth; while, at the very same moment, in the decrees of the Council of Trent, it levels its anathemas against those who venture to maintain it. In Protestant countries it will be foremost in its denunciations of idolatry, while in others, where the people are prepared to bear them, it will fill its churches with its idols. In all cases, it accommodates itself to the existing bias of the mind addressed.

But these things are rather the dress of Popery than its essence; they form

the apparel with which she has arrayed herself in order to appear before the world, but they do not constitute the real deep secret of her strength. They are nothing more than the paint upon the cheek, the arts which the system has assumed, but are not the source from which the system itself has sprung.

To this inner source, then, we have now to turn our thoughts, and we have to shew that Popery has founded itself upon the essential truths of Christianity, but has so altered and perverted them by addition, by subtraction, and by alteration, as to accommodate them to the wants of unconverted men.

And here we must just remark, that Popery did not at any time appear ready made on the world's platform. It was not like Mahometanism, which was constructed by one man, and brought out complete after a certain retirement from the world; but it was like the growth of a little horn, commencing with soft and unnoticed buddings, until, as time advanced, it acquired length and strength, and hardness. In fact, the process has been very much that which we see in dissolving views; you look at one time at a given picture, and at the very time that you most admire it, certain lines become fainter, and others stronger, so that after a while you discover that the whole landscape is completely changed. You have had your attention fixed throughout, but the change has been so gradual, the fading and brightening of the different parts so imperceptible, that though you now see the lofty tower where a few moments back the cattle were grazing in the meadow, you are at a loss to decide when the change commenced, or what were the distinct steps of its accomplishment. Just so it has been with Popery. Men began by looking at Christianity; they beheld its beauty and admired it; but as they looked, a faintness gradually crept over its outline; its finest touches began insensibly to disappear; the lines of a new picture by degrees took their place, till at length the whole scene became changed, and instead of Christianity we found Popery; instead of Christ we saw Antichrist exalted in his room.

Our business to-night is to shew that this transformation is the work of the natural heart when brought into contact with the Gospel: and in doing this, there are a few general principles which it is important we should clearly understand in the outset.

The first of these is, that every living man has a certain conviction of God's existence, combined with a sense of right and of wrong naturally implanted in his heart. This may be deadened and perverted, but it is implanted there at birth, and has remained amidst the wreck of our ruined nature. We do not require revelation to assure us of the sin of murder, nor could any doubt the duty of obedience to parents, even if there were no sanction for it in the written word. Bishop Butler says, "Let any plain, honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself,—Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt that the question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue."

A second universal fact is, that every living man has sinned against this natural law; that there never has been a single individual in the whole race, who has not, in countless instances, done that which he by the light of

nature has known to be offensive to the mind of God.

A third fact is, that there is within every heart a certain faculty which is termed conscience, which sits like a judge, and passes sentence on every action we commit. Like a sensitive nerve, it feels the approach of sin, and, unless it be completely seared as with an hot iron, it is ever sounding within the heart the still small voice of just reproach. Thus every man in a state of nature is uneasy; he may endeavour to palliate sin, and discover excuses for its commission; but he cannot altogether shake off the sense of it. A consciousness of insecurity hangs around him. He is not ready to die; he has no joy in the prospect of the advent; and, though he may have some undefined hope of mercy, he knows nothing of the calm peace of the child of God.

A fourth remark is, that this uneasiness is increased just in proportion as such a character is brought into contact with the Gospel.

There are thousands who feel the power of the Gospel, but who never know its grace. It throws its light beyond the range of its salvation, and just in proportion as that light breaks in upon a natural heart does it quicken conscience, and revive the uneasiness of sin. When the revealed word is never presented, the law of nature becomes gradually obscured, and the voice of conscience gradually silenced, so that the uneasiness begins to die away, and a fatal apathy by little and little creeps insensibly over the soul. But when the revealed word reaches the mind, even though the heart be never new-born by the Spirit, conscience regains much of its power, the waters of the heart are stirred up and troubled, and the sense of uneasiness rises afresh with renewed vigour in the soul. Hence it follows that the sense of uneasiness is always strongest amongst the unconverted members of the visible Church. By their outward profession they are brought into the closest contact with the Gospel, and therefore, if not saved by it, they above all others are rendered most uneasy by its holiness. Whatever effects therefore are likely to result from this uneasiness, those we should expect to find in greatest strength within the limits of the visible Church. Accordingly, within those very limits, we find that which I believe to be its great and chief result, viz., Popery.

That men under such circumstances must seek out a remedy is perfectly obvious, and that there is only one remedy provided by the Lord is equally plain to the student of the Scriptures. That remedy is the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. Let a man be really brought to believe in Him, let him be taught by the Spirit to take home the blessed truth that the whole burden of his blackest sin has been laid on Jesus, and that a pardon, free, immediate, and complete, is granted to the guilty man who stands in Christ, so that "now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and that man being justified by faith has peace with God. But then he is taken out of the rank of natural men, and, by the new birth, he is separated unto the kingdom of his Lord; he ceases to be a natural man, and all his peace now flows into his soul through grace.

But suppose this change does not take place, what then? The uneasiness still remains, and the contact with the Gospel only quickens it. The conscious

heart therefore is forced back upon its own remedies, and these remedies are of two kinds. The first is Infidelity. The heart struggles to get free from the sense of condemnation by clearing itself if possible from the sense of a God. When conscience convicts of sin, Infidelity steps in and strives to hush its voice, saying, "Thou shalt not surely die;" and when the heart persuades the man that he is guilty, he strives to find a refuge in the soothing voice of unbelief, which pretends to teach that there is no God to judge him.

But such a remedy cannot satisfy. There is such a deep conviction of God in the heart, and such unbounded and irresistible proofs of his presence throughout creation, that no man can really rest in such a system. Even Paine himself, when the vessel in which he was crossing to America was on the point of sinking, cried out in his alarm, "Lord Jesus, save me." And Voltaire, with all his blasphemous daring, six weeks after he had said he should die of glory, did die in all the agonies of despair. The nurse who attended him refused many years afterwards to nurse a devoted Christian Protestant, because she confounded a Protestant with an Infidel, and declared that she never again dare witness such horrors as she had seen in the chamber of Voltaire. So it is told of one who moved not many years back in the centre of Infidel society, that on one occasion, being seized with severe illness at midnight, and dreading the near approach of death, the terror-stricken sufferer sent for an intimate friend, and on his arrival, addressed him in words to this effect. "I fear I am dying, and I am greatly alarmed; so I have sent for you to remind me of the arguments which prove that there is no God." A fearful confirmation of a remark once made by a Unitarian to a beloved relative of my own—"Our principles are very well while you live, but they won't do to die upon."

Thus there is no real peace secured by Infidelity, as it cannot still the conscience, and leaves the heart in as much uneasiness as ever. There appears, therefore, no remedy left for the unconverted man. The Gospel is presented to his view, and the effect is to fill his heart with fear. If he were altogether to accept it, he would be at peace; or if he could altogether reject it, then perchance, he might be at ease; but now there is so much power in it, that he cannot altogether shake it off; while, at the same time, there is so much opposed to all his will in it that he will not by faith embrace it as his own. The only hope that remains in such a case is to discover, if possible, some modification of the Gospel—some system which will profess the grand principles so as not to violate his deep and irresistible convictions, but which at the same time will so modify those principles in their practical application, that it may still the conscience without a change of heart, and give him something that he may rest in as a substitute for peace, while, at the same time, it leaves him still a natural man, with his heart unchanged, and his will unsubdued by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Now Popery is neither more nor less than this modification of the Gospel. It retains enough of its fundamental principles to satisfy the conviction that it is the truth of God, while, at the same time, it so modifies and alters them in their application to the individual as to still his conscience, even in those cases where it fails to change the heart.

Let us take a few particulars in illustration of this modifying process, and let us see how it suits the different phases of the character.

I. The mind inquiring after Christian truth.

It is impossible to give the slightest attention to the Word of God without perceiving the vast importance attached to the reception of Christian truth; and it is equally impossible to avoid the conviction that it is declared in Scripture to be there revealed decisively. It is the plain doctrine of the Word of God that there is one way, one truth, and one life, and that we are responsible for its rejection or reception. Now, just in proportion as a man feels the pressure of a surrounding religious atmosphere, does he feel the weight attaching to this responsibility; and the more anxious does he naturally become to have his mind settled and his doubts satisfied. It is true that the humble believer, being led by the Spirit, quickly finds an happy assurance in the simple statements of the Bible; but there are many, like Noah's dove, who can find amidst the troubled waters of the world no resting-place for their soul. Many shrink from the labour of investigation, and many more from the responsibility of decision. The truth is not arranged in a system of dogmatical statements, but lies embodied in every portion of the book, from whence it arises that men must search for it as for hid treasure; a duty in direct opposition to the natural indolence of our nature. But, still more, faith requires conviction and decision—qualifications yet more opposed to the wavering and vacillating tendencies of man. You see many men in life who appear to have no power to take a consistent course alone. If they are led they will follow, and, perhaps, will follow well; but they do not appear to have the mental faculty of decision. Indeed, this power of decision is the characteristic of great men. They are not always either wiser or better than those they lead, but they have this faculty, that they are thoroughly persuaded in their own mind, and are capable of full and unwavering conviction of any truth which they are led to embrace. Such persons are sure to have a cluster of dependent minds around them, and others of superior ability are glad to lean on their superior decision. The fact is, that man is a parasitic plant, and he must lean on something. Now see the influence of such a fact on our connexion with Divine truth. A thoughtful mind at once discovers that the reception of truth is of the utmost importance to his soul, and at the same time his conscience assures him that he is but partially acquainted either with its evidence or its statements. What, then, is the result? He begins to lean on the judgment of those whom he considers better informed, and to pin his faith on other men. Thus there are thousands and tens of thousands who abhor the name of Rome, who are depending wholly on the judgment of others in religion. This is always the danger in those congregations where there is a beloved and gifted minister. It is the case also amongst those whom you would suppose to be at the antipodes of Popery, viz., those who boast that they are peculiarly men of reason in their faith. A friend of mine was conversing the other day with an Unitarian, and proving to him the clear doctrine of the eternal divinity of the Saviour. The man could make no reply to the clear proofs adduced from Scripture, till at length, when completely baffled, he said, "I cannot explain those texts myself, but my minister can." Could you have a stronger proof that it is the tendency of human nature, even when it boasts its own reason, to lean on

other men for truth? Now, from this tendency has arisen the whole system of Romish infallibility. Anxious minds felt the necessity of leaning upon something. Had they leaned on Scripture they would have been at peace; but, in default of that, they required some human judgment. The first and most natural process was to lean on individuals, and, accordingly, most heresies bear the names of their first leaders. But this fails in giving peace, for individuals differ, and the authority of the individual is too often weakened by his faults and errors. Hence it follows, that these leaning minds are often involved in perplexity of the most painful character. Not having the one anchor, they are driven about by every wind that bloweth. Was there ever a system more beautifully adapted to such a case than that which steps in to the chamber of doubt, and says, "Be still, it is not your business to decide at all: it is for you, as a humble believer, to believe what the Church believes?" All responsibility is thus taken off the conscience, and thrown on an ideal object, the Church; the indolence of human nature is at once satisfied, for investigation is represented as a sin; and even the piety of the heart is called into exercise, for blind reliance is honoured by the hallowed name of faith. The whole weight of perplexity is thrown off beyond the reach of investigation, and by that one stroke a false relief is given. There are a thousand questions which ought to be answered before the leap is taken. What is the Catholic Church? Where is the proof of its infallibility? What does it teach? and is the teaching scriptural? But these it is said to be a sin to ask. At one stroke the responsibility is transferred, and the anxious mind finds what it terms "rest in the Church." Hence men often begin with anxious interest, advance as a second step to perplexity, and then, at length, abandon inquiry in a blind reliance on what they are told is the teaching of the Church. One of the late converts to Rome said, when a gentleman quoted to her the Word of God, "I thank God I am not called to perplex myself any more with the perplexities of Scripture. I have placed the interests of my soul in safe keeping, and shall not suffer myself again to be disturbed." She had plainly felt perplexity, and she had found a false peace in throwing off her personal responsibility. So there is mention made in "Milner's End of Controversy," of one Anthony Ulric, Duke of Brunswick, who, having commenced a search for true religion, ended in writing a book entitled his "Fifty Reasons for preferring the Roman Catholic Religion," in which he says, "The Catholics to whom I spoke concerning my conversion, assured me, that if I were to be damned for embracing the Catholic faith, they were ready to answer for me at the day of judgment, and to take my damnation upon themselves." As he could find no Protestants who were willing to undertake a similar responsibility, he decided on joining the Church of Rome:—showing again how a state of perplexity leads on to a blind transfer of personal responsibility to others.

It is not our business to-night to shew the utter fallacy of all such blind reliance, or to point out how widely it differs from the faith with which it is confounded; how infinitely more difficult it is to discover what the Church teaches than what the Bible does; or how such persons receive without investigation a monstrous dogma opposed to every evidence, viz., the pretended infallibility of the Church on which they lean. My one desire has been to show that such a system is a natural accommodation of the doctrine of revelation to the wants and waverings of the natural man.

II. Worship.

It is plain to any man that without worship there can be no true religion, and the Gospel is a grand scheme whereby God enables men to pray. Christ came that we might have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. His blood removes every barrier, and his Spirit gives the needful power. But unless that Gospel be embraced with an appropriating faith, true prayer remains an impossibility; men may repeat their prayers, but, like St. Paul, they will never really pray. Hence, if a man remain in an unconverted state, he must do one of two things; he must either give up prayer altogether, which cannot satisfy an anxious mind; or he must have some modification of true worship. If he cannot rise in heart to heaven, he must have a shadow of the throne provided for him on earth. Now mark the effect of this necessity.

The first great difficulty in the way of earnest prayer is realization. The natural man cannot realize unseen spirits. There is a height and glory in them beyond his reach. But yet there is no peace unless he does realize. So what must he do? He must invent some representation, whereby to lead on his mind; some image, figure, or effigy, which may stand before him, in order to bring the object of his worship to his view, and which may stand as a hallowed emblem, through which he pays God his honour; he invents for himself just such a system as is described in the decree of the Council of Trent, when it says, Sess. xxv., "The honour which is given to the images is given to the prototypes which they represent, so that through the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head and make prostration, we adore Christ, and venerate those saints of whom they are the likeness." Through the image they adore the Saviour, and the image is employed as an accommodated help to assist the process of realization in the worship of an unseen God.

If there were any doubt that this is the true history of image-worship, it would be removed by the fact that the sin has appeared under the same form, under all circumstances, and in all ages. Aaron made the calf as a representation of God, and said, "These be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" and the Hindoo of the present day regards his idol as a representative of his deity. A Jesuit priest was in conversation the other day with a learned Hindoo in the neighbourhood of Madras, and urged him to embrace what he termed the Catholic faith. "What is the good," said the heathen, "of my exchanging one system of idolatry for another?" "Idolatry!" said the priest, "you do not mean to say that ours is idolatry. We do not worship our images; we merely set them before us, and adore our Saviour and the saints in them." "And do you suppose," replied the heathen, "that we actually worship the images? No; we merely set them before us as a representation of our gods. No, Sir; a Christian I may become, but I shall never be a Roman Catholic." There was not a shade of difference between the two systems, both having sprung from the natural tendencies of the human heart.

This identity was on one occasion curiously illustrated by the Church of Rome itself, for when they obtained possession of a magnificent statue of Jupiter Tonans, they removed the thunderbolt out of his hand, and gave him two large keys in its place. By this slight alteration, they changed Jupiter into

Peter, and transferred him from a Pagan temple to a Christian Church. Could anything shew more clearly that Paganism and Romanism were nothing more than different accommodations to the idolatrous tendencies of the human heart? There was no opposition in principle, and the only difference was between the thunderbolt and the keys.

What a refreshing contrast do we find in the records of the Tinnevelly Mission, where the heathen idols have been used for pavement at the Church doors, so that none can enter God's house for worship without first trampling the former idol under foot!

From the same nature has sprung the system of saint worship. There is always a tendency to deify the great, and just in proportion as time advances does this tendency increase. The man's human frailty is daily witnessed by his own contemporaries, and the humanity of his nature kept in view by visible facts; but when the corrective evidence of real life loses its power through the lapse of time, the human failures are forgotten, while the great acts are exaggerated, till something supernatural is attached to the memory, and the earthly benefactor is adored as a god. This is the history of all the tutelary deities of Pagan lands. Romulus, e.g., was no sooner dead than deified; the most popular deity of China, Laoutze, was one of the early emperors, and there is scarcely a nation in the world that has not elevated its benefactors into gods.

Here, then, is the natural tendency of the natural heart—a tendency in direct opposition to Christianity. But, though thus opposed to the Gospel, it is not necessarily eradicated from the heart of every professing Christian; and, hence, it has produced within the Church a new mode of Christianized hero-worship, in which the martyrs have taken the hero's honours, and the Virgin is crowned with the crown of Cybele. There was nothing wonderful in this. They witnessed the martyrs' faith, and met for sacramental communion around the martyrs' tombs; they knew their souls yet lived, and they knew not but what they might be even present. What, then, could be more natural than that the waiting heart should begin to adore them? It was not addressing a Pagan god, but a Christian saint, and the very prayer was an acknowledgment of all the great principles of Christianity. But when once that prayer was uttered, the Rubicon was crossed, and the principle of saint-worship established in the Church. Hence you find the guardian saints and angels of the Church of Rome filling exactly the same office as the tutelary deities of the Heathen. And, as we have just remarked the identity of Pagan and Roman image-worship as illustrated by the alteration of the image, so there is another curious fact which exhibits the similar correspondence between the hero-worship of the ancients and the saint-worship of modern Rome. When the Emperor Phocas issued his celebrated edict in recognition of the supremacy of the See of Rome, he made a present to the Pope of the ancient temple named Pantheon. Now this temple was originally dedicated to Cybele, and all the Pagan gods, and when it fell into the possession of the Pope, he made as slight a change as possible, for he just turned it over to the Virgin Mary and all the saints. The principle was left untouched, though the objects of the idolatry were changed.

But there is a yet further principle involved in this saint and virgin

worship; for the human heart requires tenderness and sympathy, so that we can never breathe out our secret burden to one who has no fellow-feeling with our trouble. We want the sympathy of a common nature, if not the tenderness of a woman's heart. Hence in Heathen systems you constantly find a Heathen goddess to whom pertains especially the office of patronage and mercy. Even Simon Magus had his Helena in his system of Gnosticism; and the poor Buddhist, while he looks with awe to his three Buddhas, has his Kwan-yin, or Goddess of Mercy, to whom he may appeal in trouble. Yes! the human heart needs tenderness, and if there is any one aspect in the Gospel more glorious than another, it is the rich provision made for this very want. There never was a scheme so wonderful, or a Saviour so perfect as that presented in the Gospel. Glorious in his divinity, he sways heaven's mighty sceptre, while, perfect in his humanity, he can be tenderly touched with the faintest cry of human grief. He governs angels, and weeps with men. But the natural man is a stranger to this sympathy; yet he longs for it and feels the need of it. He is exposed to the shocks and buffetings of this rough world, and his bleeding heart needs a friend who himself has bled. If he has not Christ, therefore, he naturally craves a substitute; something which may give him the sense of sympathy amongst the unseen powers. And this desire has gradually run into saint and virgin worship. It has taken hold of the hero-worship of the Heathen, and given it a Christian character by transferring it to the Virgin and the saints. It does not do away with Christ, but provides a system of intermediate mediation which commends itself to the aching heart by the assurance of a woman's love and a fellow-sufferer's compassion. Hence, if any particular saint was subject during life to any especial trial, he is supposed to take a peculiar interest in those who labour under similar affliction. Nor can you read much of the adoration paid by Rome to the Virgin without perceiving that she is the Kwan-yin, the Goddess of Mercy, in the Romish system. There is a halo of awe thrown around the brow of the Redeemer, while the Virgin is described in the attitude of tenderness, "the comforter of the afflicted," "the refuge of the sinner," and the ready listener to the sufferer's cry. We will adduce one instance in illustration, as given by Mr. Tyler in his valuable little work "[What is Romanism?](#)" The worship of the Virgin is especially celebrated in Romish countries during the month of May, and there is a collection of religious poems used in the churches of Paris on these occasions. One of these is as follows:—

"Vouchsafe, Mary, on this day to hear our sighs and second our desires.
Vouchsafe, Mary, on this day to receive our incense, our love: Of thy heavenly husband calm the rage. Let him shew himself kind to all those that are thine! Of thy heavenly husband calm the rage: Let his heart be softened towards us."

Here God is presented in the attitude of terror, while the female advocate is the sole depository of grace; and the whole springs from the natural heart, which, under the sense of sin, feels a dread of God; and longing for sympathy, appeals to a woman's love.

III. Holiness.

We may lay it down as a fundamental axiom, that there can be no religion

without holiness. Whatever be our doctrinal opinions, if we be not holy we cannot see the Lord. And, accordingly, holiness is the great gift of a risen Saviour to his Church. He has shed forth the Holy Ghost to purify our hearts by faith. Now, in this Christian holiness there are two or three leading features to be carefully observed. (1.) It is not a plant which grows naturally in the human heart, but is the especial work of the Holy Ghost himself. (2.) It consists in a sacred principle which controls the whole man, and not in any one class either of actions or omissions. (3.) This ruling principle is the constraining power of the love of Christ. "The love of Christ constraineth us." From which remarks it appears at once that true holiness is from its very nature impossible to the unconverted man. He is not under the influence of the Spirit; he does not know the love of Christ, and he is, therefore, incapable of that hallowed principle which shall bend his whole mind in one direction, and wean him from sin by the consecration of his whole man to God. Hence, the unconverted man, if thoughtful and conscientious, is sure to feel distressed. A holy standard is presented to his view, while his conscience convicts him of lamentable defect. He sees there must be necessity, but has not felt its power. He sees there must be holiness, but he knows he is not holy. He is aware that without righteousness there can be no true religion, but he sees so much sin within his heart that he cannot believe himself righteous.

What, then, is to be done? What is the refuge of the human heart under such circumstances? Either he must stifle conscience, which is impossible, or he must embrace the Gospel, in which case he would find joy in the Holy Ghost, or he must so accommodate that Gospel as to soothe his heart without changing it, which accommodation is Popery. And how is this effected?

One mode is by ritualism.

There are two great classes of Christian duties combined in the formation of Christian holiness—moral and positive; moral being the general effect of Christian principle, positive consisting in certain Christian acts. Now it is plainly in respect to these moral duties or duties of Christian principle that the natural heart finds the chief difficulty, and the outward acts of a ceremonial religion are incomparably easier than the holy dedication of a devoted heart. Hence it follows that the human heart is naturally prone to slide insensibly from the principle to the ritual, and to endeavour to compensate the defects of the one by a rigid attention to the requirements of the other. By such an accommodation no part of Divine truth is professedly set aside, but yet, by altering the proportions of the several parts, by throwing a strong light on one side of the picture, and a deep shade on the other, its whole character is completely changed, and religion is given to the natural man though his heart is left unsanctified by the Spirit.

This tendency to substitute ritual for principle may be daily seen in every society. One thinks himself holy because he has kept his church; another, because he is a regular communicant; a third, because he attends daily service; a fourth, because he never neglects to say his prayers; while a fifth is quite sure that he is born again, because in his infancy he was baptized; although, possibly, neither one nor the other has learned anything of true holiness of heart. Out of this tendency has sprung up the whole

system of Romish righteousness. The weed that grew out of the human heart it has adroitly cultivated, till it has become the strongest flower in its garden. What under the Gospel sprang up by nature against the Gospel it has embodied and arranged so as to become a substitute for the Gospel. Hence, under Popery, ritual has in many cases overpowered principle, and attention to ritual religion is made the substitute for spiritual holiness before God.

It is extremely difficult to produce documentary evidence of any such substitution, for, of course, it is in no case acknowledged. The truth of our charge, however, may be easily seen in the practice of indulgences. It is sometimes thought that this monstrous practice has been abandoned by modern Popery. But such is not the case; for I find in the "Catholic Directory" for 1848, that there are eight plenary indulgences granted to the faithful in the eight districts of England, and four more for the peculiar benefit of the London district. Now the essence of these indulgences is the substitution of ritual for principle, for the remission of moral sin is promised as a reward to the observance of an ecclesiastical rite. Take, e.g., one of the indulgences granted by Pope Sixtus IV.:—"Our holy Father, Sixtus IV., Pope, hath granted to all them that devoutly say this prayer before the image of our Lady the sum of 11,000 years of pardon. Ave Sanctissima Maria, &c." So the late Pope issued an apostolic brief to Ambrose Lisle Phillips, Esq., in which, amongst other things, he promises "indulgences of 100 days as often as the members shall recite their appointed decade of the rosary on working days." He promises at the same time indulgences of seven years and seven lents as often as they shall recite the aforesaid decades on Sundays and holidays, &c. It is impossible to imagine a more glaring preference of ritual above principle. The guilt of moral sin is remitted as a reward for the performance of an ecclesiastical rite.

Another clear illustration of the same principle is seen in the substitution for repentance of what they term the sacrament of penance. Where you find repentance in the Scriptures you find penance taught by Rome, as, e.g., in Ezek. xviii. 30:—"Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions." Luke xiii. 3. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." And Acts ii. 38:—"Repent and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In all these passages the Council of Trent, Sess. xiv. 2, has changed "repent," into "do penance," and has so made the rite a substitute for the principle. Of course the pious Romanist would say, "We have the principle too, for we truly repent in penance." But that does not affect the question. The Bible has promised remission of sin, and connected it with the principle; the Church of Rome has adopted the promise, but transferred it to the rite.

The effects of this on different minds are, of course, very various. In some of a devout and conscientious character, it produces the most earnest attention to the positive duties of religion, and gives them a dim gleam of doubtful hope in the unceasing observance of all prescribed services. But when there is not this spirit of devotion, it enables a wicked man to make a compromise with God, and to follow the natural bent of his natural heart, by attending to the Church's services, while he utterly neglects the weightier matters of the law.

In the late trials for murder in Ireland, it was remarked that many of the guilty culprits were persons remarkable for their attention to the ritual of their Church; and there was a case at the close of the last Irish rebellion in which the hour of a murder was thus proved. One of the witnesses swore that it took place after the hour of twelve o'clock on Saturday night, and he was sure of the fact because the murderers were determined to have a supper before they went on their guilty errand, and that Saturday being a fast-day, they could not touch meat until after the clock had struck. The ritual of fasting was rigidly observed, while the regard for life was altogether gone. In one of the jails at Rome there is a celebrated bandit, by name Gasparoni. This man, by his deeds of bloodshed, had desolated an extensive district in the neighbourhood of Rome, though all the while he avowed himself a very religious man. Sir Fowell Buxton inquired of him whether he had fasted when he was a bandit. He said, "Yes." "Why did you fast?" was the next question. "Because I am of the religion of the Virgin." "Which did you think was worse, eating meat on a Friday, or killing a man?" He answered without hesitation, "In my case it was a crime not to fast; it was no crime to kill those who came to betray me." The man had no true holiness, but had taken the ritual of fasting as its substitute, so that in the midst of his murders he believed himself a very religious man.

The same principle appears in the Romish treatment of the Lord's-day. The moral commandment of the Most High God is abandoned, and for it you find in many Romish catechisms the substitute of human ritual, "Thou shalt keep the festivals." And this appears in the universal practice of Romish countries. They appear to regard it as a duty to attend mass, but that once done, the whole day is devoted to amusement. The rite is observed, and the conscience satisfied, so that the unregenerate heart is left at full liberty to pursue its own course, and take its pleasure on the Lord's holy day. Thus the same persons who are engaged in the utmost apparent devotion at mass in the morning are found in throngs in the dissolute French theatre at night. "Attend to the Church's rites and live as you please," appears to be the maxim of their morality.

You perceive the same thing in Romish literature. It has been one of the characteristics of the late movement toward Rome that amongst its most devoted followers it has let loose the spirit of the world. You will observe, for example, in Burns's Catalogue the strangest possible mixture of ritualism and worldliness, and will see the book of Romish devotion placed side by side with the wild German love story.

Thus has Popery taken hold of the great grand gift of Christianity, and presented it to its votaries in a form accommodated to human nature. It does not deny the necessity of holiness, but it so transforms its character that the unholy man may think he has attained it, and the Italian murderer conscientiously believe himself religious.

A second substitution for true holiness is asceticism: according to which system the unholy heart finds its refuge in a separation from ordinary men. Christianity carries holiness into life, asceticism takes the hermit out of it. But yet it is perfectly natural that men should seek such a refuge. When they feel the burden of sin, and experience the temptations of a surrounding

world, it is no wonder that they should seek a remedy in a complete retirement from its influence. To give themselves up to fasting, penance, and solitary communion with God, must lead, they very naturally argue, to the enjoyment of more holy peace than they can hope to find in the midst of the duties and varied engagements of society. Hence every false faith has produced its devotees. Under different systems they have assumed a different character, but in all the principle is the same. The Hindoo separates himself from the world, and stands with his arm erect till it becomes stiffened into a fixed position; while the Buddhist and the Romanist retire to the convent that they may there withdraw from the world, and devote themselves wholly to spiritual exercises and to God. But though this is natural, it is a mere accommodation. The real evil of the human heart is not corrected by the change, nor have the hair shirt and the leathern girdle the slightest influence in controlling the corrupt passions of the nature. There may be as much pride, self-righteousness, and ill-governed temper in the lonely hermit's cheerless cell, as in the deep current of the world's society. At the same time it is an accommodation, for it employs the name of Christ, and gives the semblance of a very elevated piety. It adopts the language of devotion, and prescribes a course of action and self-denial. It gives the inquirer something to do, and something to bear; it separates him also from other men, and so, though his heart be not purified, it gives him the hope that he is holy. This was remarkably seen in the case of Ignatius Loyola. Like Luther, he was awakened to a deep sense of sin, and it is a remarkable fact that the two greatest phenomena of the sixteenth century, the Reformation, and Jesuitism, should have sprung out of the same uneasiness for sin. Luther found peace through the blood of the Lamb, and holiness in the work of the Spirit; Loyola was as much distressed as he, and failing in his discovery of Christ, he took refuge in the substitute of an ascetic life. He tore himself away from his kindred and father's house, determining to undergo penances of the severest character, and to serve God in Jerusalem. He hung up his shield before an image of the Virgin, and, having clothed himself in coarse raiment, he stood before it for whole nights with his pilgrim's staff in his hand. At Manresa he passed seven hours daily on his knees, and scourged himself regularly thrice a-day. He devoted three whole days to making a general confession for sin, but the more he explored the depths of his heart, the more painful were the doubts which assailed him. Having read in some of the fathers that God had been moved to compassion by a total abstinence from food, he remained from Sunday to Sunday without tasting anything, and at last only broke his fast in obedience to the positive injunctions of his confessor.

Such were the efforts of a master mind, to create for itself an artificial holiness, and such are the principles more or less involved in the whole system of the monasticism of Rome. It substitutes devotion of act, which withdraws men from their appointed sphere, for devotion of heart which glorifies God in its varied duties: and thus presents a spurious holiness within reach of unconverted minds.

IV. But the great root of the matter yet remains in the craving of the soul for Reconciliation.

That there is this craving none can deny. It is seen in all classes, in all nations. Buddhists, Hindoos, Mussulmen, Jews, Protestants, Romanists, and even Infidels, all bear testimony to a certain undefined longing after peace. Now this peace is given by the Gospel, in the free, full justification of the believer through the perfect atonement and imputed righteousness of the Lord. But in the practical application of it to the heart there arises this difficulty. Our safety depends on an invisible union with an invisible Redeemer. Faith is not a thing which can be seen and felt. It looks away from self to Christ, and disappears as soon as you look back on self to find it. Now if a man be enabled by the Holy Ghost to look simply to Christ, this difficulty vanishes through the all-sufficiency of the one object there presented to his view. But if, on the other hand, this faith be wanting, and the freedom of Divine grace remain unknown, the human heart at once makes an effort for some visible, tangible mode of laying hold of acceptance in Christ Jesus. The system, therefore, best accommodated to the natural man would be one which embraced all the rich promises of the Gospel, but connected them with something which could be said or done, so leaving men in no doubt as to their position.

Now this desire is exactly met by the Church of Rome. It presents its pardon in a tangible, visible form, and it leads the soul to rest for its assurance upon something safely done. The sin is confessed, the penance performed, the absolution pronounced, and there the matter ends. The guilty man has no further occasion to distress his mind upon the subject. The language of the catechism of the Council of Trent is very curious as illustrating the endeavour to connect pardon with a visible act. It first draws the distinction between the inward disposition of repentance and the outward act of penance, and adds, § 13, "That it is the outward penance in which the sacrament consists, and which contains certain external actions, which are subjects of sense through which the inner feelings of the mind are manifest." The next section explains the reason why the sacrament of penance is said to have been instituted, viz., to assure us of our pardon, for without it, "there must have been most anxious suspense of mind respecting inward repentance, since every man would have had good reason to doubt his own judgment in those things which he was doing." To avoid this anxiety, therefore, the pardon is connected with a visible act. It is found, accordingly, in practical life, that the priest's absolution is regarded by the Romanist in the same light as God's forgiveness, and that, whatever be the state of heart, that visible act is deemed sufficient. Pat Burns, now a devoted Scripture Reader under the Irish Society, was for ten years the leader of a desperate gang of Ribbandmen, and he told a friend of mine that during that time he frequently went to the priest, paid him all dues regularly, and obtained absolution from time to time, as his conscience felt uneasy after the commission of crime; that the priest generally put a penance upon him, and that when it was performed, he considered himself as good a man as any other, and as fit for heaven. This same person added that the priest had never once directed him to the Word of God, or to the Lord Jesus for

salvation.

The same connexion between confession and reconciliation was curiously illustrated by the following fact. The priest in my friend's parish gave nothing during the late contribution towards Irish distress, but the poor creatures excused his penuriousness on the plea that it was unlucky to take a priest's money—that a priest's money being paid at confession and absolution, is the price of sin, and often comes from murderers and other bad characters, as the price of absolution and pardon; and if, therefore, you buy a horse with it, he will get lame; and if you buy seed corn it will be blighted.

I am perfectly aware that it may be justly argued that these facts among the people do not prove that the principle has been adopted by the Church; but I think it must also be admitted that they do show how exactly suited to the natural man is the connexion which Rome does assert between the pardon of sin and certain visible actions amongst men. God connects his pardon with a deep seated spiritual faith. The human heart says, "Let me do something. Let me work it out. Let me have some assurance that I am forgiven." Popery steps in, and adapts its principles to both, asserting on the one hand the necessity of faith, but prescribing on the other a certain penance, and then sealing the whole with the priest's absolution, so as to leave no doubt on the sinner's mind. According to the language of a late pervert, the priest "shewed her how she must unite her sacrifice with the holy atoning blood of Christ, and then in his name pardoned and blessed her. Thus sin had not been suffered to remain upon her soul." See how the Gospel was retained, and at the same time accommodated to the natural cravings of the anxious heart. The atoning blood was preached, but the act of penance received with it, so as to give it a tangible application.

But this accommodation fails in giving lasting peace. Nothing, in short, can really satisfy but the atoning blood of Christ alone, and to this failure may be traced the whole tissue of Romish rites. Penances, absolutions, masses, holy waters, holy pilgrimages, holy retreats, and, last of all, extreme unction, are nothing more than fresh efforts to satisfy the heart; and, though all be combined, they are all found insufficient. There are, we know, true believers, who, though trammelled by the system, yet rise above it to Christ; and there are others, again, whose conscience is so deadened that they live at ease in Zion; but for conscientious anxious souls the means are insufficient, and anxious fears keep rising up within the heart. From these remaining doubts has arisen the last crowning accommodation in the system, namely, purgatory.

In former days I used to wonder what could be the attraction of the doctrine of purgatory, more especially when I found that there was scarcely any portion of the system which persons embraced with equal readiness. It is said of it in the catechism of the Council of Trent, "Besides hell there is a fire of purgatory, in which the souls of the pious being tormented for a definite time, expiate their sin; that so an entrance may be opened to them into the eternal country, into which nothing defiled can enter." Now it may be fairly asked from what principle in the human heart can such a decree have sprung? We can understand men cheerfully performing penance, and craving the absolution of the priest. But what can make a pious soul desire to be burnt

up in purgatory? It is not merely a heavenly purification of the ransomed spirit to prepare it sweetly for the rich enjoyments of the kingdom, but it is a burning in the fire, and that, strange to say, is the peculiar privilege of pious souls. Can anything be more extraordinary? And yet, when you consider it, can anything be more simple? Just take the case of one of these anxious minds, of which we have been speaking. He has been going about to establish his own righteousness, but his heart is not holy. He has endeavoured to unite his sacrifice of penance with the atoning blood of Christ, and he has received the priest's pardon, but yet sin remains. There it is, eating into his heart's peace, and cleaving like a leprosy to his soul. And now death approaches, the delusions of the lower world begin to vanish, and then comes the question, Is sin forgiven? He has received his last viaticum. Still, is he safe? He has man's absolution. Has he God's pardon? He has performed his penance. Is sin fully expiated? Oh, that we could point him at once to the simple sufficiency of the Lamb's most precious blood! But in default of that, what must be done? There must be a further accommodation of Christianity. The heart tells him that his own penance has been insufficient, so the work of expiation must be carried out beyond the grave. His conscience whispers that he is not yet prepared to die, so he clings readily to the hope that something may still be done, that complete preparation here on earth is not needful, for that an intermediate state is to follow, in which, though unprepared at his dying hour, he may yet be made meet for the kingdom of the saints.

Or take the case of another character, the man who has spent his life in neglect of God. In the day of health he has been occupied with the world's interests, and been enabled to stave off the great question of his soul's salvation. But now the great enemy is upon him, the day of account is near, and the Judge must be met in judgment. Under such circumstances, a man will give anything for time. If possible, time here; but if that is impossible, time hereafter: at all events, time. He will do anything to stave off the great decision,—he will grasp anything that postpones the necessity of preparation. From this mind arises the hope amongst all classes, of doing something for the dead. I was once charged myself with carelessness as to men's salvation, because a certain dead body was not carried into the church at burial. "If," said the woman, "you really believed that you saved souls by carrying the bodies into church, you would have taken him in as well as others." Now the system of Popery has grown out of this anxious fear. It has met the fears of dying men, by giving a system to their ill-founded hopes. It has given the man who knows he is unprepared to die a resting-point beyond the grave. It has shifted the work of preparation to a world unseen and unknown, and so hushed the voice of conscience by assuring it that there still remains the hope of expiation for its sin. Purgatory, therefore, is the last stay for an unsatisfied heart. It gives the hope of pardon after death, and serves as a sedative for death-bed fears.

Thus, then, we have traced some few particulars of the Romish system to their hidden sources in the human heart, and have observed some of the many perversions and modifications which it has provided for the sinner, to assist him in the pursuit of peace.

“Oh, how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven’s easy, artless, unencumbered plan!
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile,
From ostentation, as from weakness, free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words, ‘Believe and Live!’”

Here, therefore, we may safely leave our argument; and we would make, in conclusion, one or two very simple practical remarks.

In the first place, then, we must never feel surprised at seeing amiable, excellent, and apparently religious men brought under the influence of Popery; for it has surely appeared to-night, that the characters most subject to its attraction are those who have felt the power of religious impression, but who have not been led by the Spirit to know the hallowed peace of saving grace. Those who are justified in Christ are at peace, and do not need it; those who are insensible to Divine things are at ease, and do not care for it; while the intermediate class, consisting of those who feel the necessity of the Gospel, but do not enjoy its grace,—they are the persons most open to an accommodated system, and most prepared for the reception of a spurious Christianity. Until a man has felt some perplexity, he has no desire to surrender his responsibility to another; nor until he has felt sin’s burden, does he care for the temporary relief which may be found from penance and absolution. And this explains the at first sight remarkable phenomenon of the rapid progress of Romish principles in latter years, notwithstanding the spread of evangelical truth, and the increased circulation of the Word of God. The preaching of the Cross disturbs more minds than it saves, and so drives the unconverted to have recourse to some substitute for the Gospel.

A second remark is, that we must never be astonished at the alliance often witnessed between Popery and Infidelity, for they spring from the same elements in the human heart. Unbelief and superstition appear, at first sight, to be directly opposed; but in their secret springs they are closely allied. They are two human remedies for the uneasiness of the human heart,—the one rejecting, the other accommodating the Gospel. And whenever the time shall arise, that the witnesses for Christ shall be called on once more to bear their cross for the name of Jesus, they must be prepared to encounter both in a confederate effort against the faith. In two particulars they agree, in one only they diverge. In their uneasiness under the influence of the Gospel, and in their rejection of its simple plan of life, they are one: the difference is only at the third stage, when the one rejects revelation, the other accommodates it to its will.

Lastly, we are surely taught that the one and only remedy for Popery and Popish tendencies is the free, sovereign, and unfettered grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We may discuss the many questions arising out of the system, and overthrow the Romish advocate even on the ecclesiastical

argument; but in so doing we only protect the outposts. If we would strike at the root of the evil, we must do it by setting forth at once the fulness and freedom of the salvation that is in Jesus. Let the doctrine of justification by faith be written on the heart by the Holy Ghost, and there will then be little fear from Popery. Let that one great fundamental truth be neglected and obscured, and the more earnest that we are in an awakening ministry, the more effectually do we prepare the way for Rome. In every point, then, let us meet Antichrist by exalting Christ. If men are harassed by perplexity, let us assure their faith by proclaiming Christ as revealed in Scripture. If men are craving after communion with God, let us set Christ before them as the sinner's advocate. If they long for holiness, let us tell them of Christ as our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. If they seek justification, let Christ be honoured as the Lord their righteousness; and if they look for some further expiation of their in purgatory, let us still tell them of Christ, who "by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." This is the weapon which Peter wielded on the day of Pentecost, and which burst the hold of the Popery of Judaism. This was the message with which St. Paul set at nought the rising Popery of Galatia. This was the mighty power which, in the days of the Reformation, shook Rome to her foundations; and this is the only name whereby the witnesses for Christ can ever look for victory, for they overcome, according to the scriptural record, "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony."