

## THE VIRGIN AND SAINTS.

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IN a secluded village of France, a good and aged clergyman was quietly settled, having charge of the parish which had been committed to his care. His youth had been passed amidst the stormy scenes of the Revolution of 1789, and he had afterwards, but without much previous study on religious subjects, taken priest's orders. It was, therefore, about the period when the empire commenced, that he found himself in this situation, and he had now, for more than thirty years been endeavouring to improve the state of morals in his parish, but without success, for the men went still to the alehouse, without attending mass, and the women utterly neglected the confessional in their eagerness to join the village dance.

The poor old priest, in the hope that a younger and better educated clergyman might be able to do more good than himself, adopted the plan of taking his nephew to live with him, and of making him his curate; and when the young man arrived, he frankly confessed to him the state of his parish.

"What plans do you adopt with your parishioners," asked his nephew, "in order to make them religious?"

"I always preach to them concerning the goodness of God."

“And of what beside?”

“Sometimes I discourse about the Saints.”

“Ah! but you should just reverse it.”

“Surely, you must admit the knowledge of God to be of far greater value than that of a saint?”

“Why, that is as it may happen to be. It is an acknowledged fact, that if you wish to interest the minds of men, you should talk to them about their equals, with whom they are able to compare themselves.”

“But if they stand in need of an example, can they not endeavour to follow that of God himself?”

“No, no, my dear uncle, God is too great and too holy! He frightens sinners, and they, therefore, remain at a distance from Him; besides this, they find it difficult to realize to themselves a Deity who is invisible and impalpable; whilst, on the contrary, the image of a saint can be placed before their eyes, and put into their hands! It is by thus setting before them sensible objects that they become attached to the *Church*—I would say to *Religion*. But above all, my dear sir, I hope you preach to them about the most Holy Virgin?”

“Indeed, I do so but very seldom.”

“That is so much the worse.”

“But how should that be, for God is always God; whereas (I am, you know, talking to you confidentially), the Virgin is, after all, only a most blessed *woman*?”

“Ah! but the Virgin *is a woman*, and that is the point upon which my argument is founded. If you frequently bring Mary before the minds of your parishioners, you will be astonished at the good effects which will result from doing so. In Mary, mothers of families will see themselves portrayed

for she, like them, has conceived and brought forth children ; young girls will see in her their protectress, for like them Mary is a virgin. The child will look on her as on his mother, the man, as on his wife ; or her who is to become such ; and thus each will be caught by the point on which he is most susceptible. To say the whole in a few words, men have senses, and it is by them that they must be ruled. My advice to you is, therefore, to procure a well-dressed Madonna, to give her the first place in your Church, in your sermons, and in your publications ; and you may rest assured that you will be able to obtain for the Virgin Mary, and through her for the Church, all that imperceptible and gentle influence which her sex so universally exercises."

"Do you really believe this ?"

"I am convinced of it."

"Then, now, listen to me. Since you have so much confidence in the efficacy of your plan, try it on my Church, for I am too old to do so myself. I will retire to my study and end my days peacefully in reading and reflection, wishing that you may meet with full success."

This offer was accepted by the young man, who immediately commenced his labours. His first visit was to a turner in the village.

"Good man," said he, as he entered his shop, "what other things can you make besides tops, and snuff-boxes ?"

"Why many things, your Reverence : I can make you a timepiece, if you like, for in former times——"

"I do not wish to hear anything about former times, my friend, nor do I require a timepiece, but I want a Saint."

“A Saint! Oh, yes; I can make you two Saints if you like; for in former times——”

“*Former times* again; come, come, do not let us have any histories of the past——”

“Very well, as you like; I will think only of the present, so now of what size must your Saint be.”

“Three feet in height.”

“Wait a moment; I must get my measure, and write it down—three feet in height—well, of what wood?”

“Of oak.”

“Oak (*writing*). I understand. Do you wish the Saint to be fat or thin?”

“Thin, thin, to be sure, like a person who has fasted. Make the hands clasped together—the expression *sorrowful*—I mean *holy*—the head slightly bent down.”

“Bent down——there.”

“As for the rest, do it as you like. But be sure to make it kneeling.”

“Kneeling—when must you have it?”

“As soon as possible.”

“You shall have it in a fortnight.”

“What, a fortnight to make a Saint?”

“But then, see here. I have an order for three dozen ladles, which must be made before it—first come, first served.”

“Well, that is but just; however, do not fail, and here are six francs in advance. Good morning.”

“Good morning, sir.”

The curate proceeded to the neighbouring town, and called on one of those Italian dealers, who cry images about the streets. He asked for a Holy Virgin of the largest size. The man took him

into his back shop, and showed him, pell-mell, exposed for sale—a Venus, the three Graces, and a Madonna, holding a child in her arms. The latter was tolerably well executed for a plaster figure, but the curate did not on the whole consider it good enough, and therefore he only purchased two or three little coloured Saints, to be placed in the niches of his chapel, and went away.

His next difficulty was how to get his image of the Virgin manufactured, which very much puzzled him, when as he was passing a hairdresser's shop, his attention was attracted by a large wax-doll which stood at the door; it was splendidly dressed and ornamented, and was so contrived as to turn round of its own accord. He instantly went in to enquire the direction of the artist who made it, and then hastened to find him and give him the commission.

“Make her,” he said, “with blue eyes, black, and very long eyelashes, a small mouth, a large and well developed forehead. I suppose you will find this easy?”

“Oh, very easy; for beauty you know, costs us, artists, nothing. Will you have her fair or dark?”

“Dark; for that is the least injured by dirt.”

“Young or old?”

“Young, undoubtedly. How much will it cost?”

“That is according to circumstances; we have them of all prices. It all depends on the fineness of the colours, the purity of the wax, in short, on the beauty of the image; which you will allow is fair enough. You know that it requires much more time and labour, both with the hands and with tools, to finish a highly delicate figure of the Virgin, suitable for your churches, than one of those

dolls which are shown about at fairs. It actually took me more than a month to make the Saint for our cathedral—it seemed as if it would never be finished—a touch of the finger was wanted here, and a touch there—and at last, when it was done, did you not hear of the misfortune that happened to it ?”

“ No. What misfortune ?”

“ My marmot dug its claws into the eyes of my saint !”

“ Oh, how very unlucky !”

“ It really did ; but you need not be afraid, for I will take better care of yours.”

“ Very well ; but I will not pay too much for it.”

“ Well then. I will make you an offer.”

“ Let me hear it.”

“ I will get a wax model from the hairdresser, and then proceed to arrange it according to your wishes.”

“ And what will be the cost of that ?”

“ A hundred francs.”

“ And how much would a new model be ?”

“ A hundred and fifty.”

“ Well then, I will agree with you for the one at a hundred francs ; so there is my address, send it me as soon as possible.”

The young priest returned home, and his next care was to endeavour to find out which of the ladies of his parish was, at the same time, the most devout and the wealthiest, that to her he might address the following note.

“ Good news, my sister ; in three weeks we mean to consecrate the most holy image of the blessed Virgin Mary. It is to you, therefore, that I am anxious to commit the highly important charge of

preparing her a dress worthy of this solemn occasion. I need not give you any directions concerning this subject, for it is only a just tribute to your good taste, and to your well-known devotion for all things which concern the church, to leave it entirely to your judgment; but I am told that gauze is a more appropriate material than muslin, and that lace is preferable to silk blond; a satin dress pleases the eye, especially when relieved by the brilliancy of a few small diamonds; but your youthful and feminine taste will guide you far better than any hints from me; so that I can only pray that you may receive in heaven a reward commensurate to your pure and generous devotion."

This young lady, who had been married twenty years ago, recollected having laid aside in an old chest many remnants of her bridal finery, so she went to look at them. Unhappily she found them all faded and torn; but this devout lady, economical as generous, mended the lace, washed the dress, ironed the handkerchief, took up the dropped stitches in the silk stockings, darned them, and cut them to the proper size; and, in a word, she arranged an elegant costume for the holy doll. It now only remained to prepare the dress of the holy Patron also, and this was easy enough, for the young priest gave this commission to his maid-servant, and she made him a new mantle out of an old silk apron, and a pair of shoes out of some old gloves.

In a fortnight from this time the image-maker, Jeannette, the maid-servant, the young lady, the hairdresser, and the turner, had all completed their respective works, and on the following day both the wooden saint and the wax-work figure of the Virgin appeared in state, opposite to each other, in the

choir of the church, to the great satisfaction of all the village people, who had assembled to look at them. The bishop himself went there to perform the consecration; and after mass the two images were carried in procession through the streets,—the children of the choir wafting incense; while the young priest bowed down before them; the bishop blessed them, and they were *adored*—I mean *venerated*—by the assembled multitude. It was no longer either wood or wax, or old apron, but all was transformed into these two holy images of the Virgin Mary and the Patron Saint.

From that period the curate scarcely ever preached about anything except the virtues of the Saint, and the merits of the Virgin; and, also, from that time a great change took place in the parish. Persons of both sexes, in the prime and vigour of life, came constantly to attend the services of the church; old men and children came frequently there to kneel before the blessed Saint—young men and maidens before the Madonna. Endless masses, unnumbered hymns, and unlimited oblations took place in their honour, and every thing prospered for the cause of the church. But still, after coming from mass, the men resorted, as usual, to the alehouse; and the women, after leaving the confessional, still hurried to the village dance.

We must now return to the good old pastor, who, in the quiet seclusion of his library, was deeply absorbed in the study of a Bible, which he had recently discovered on his book-shelves covered with dust; and had left his nephew completely free in the management of his church. Now and then only did the good old man leave his retreat to make a friendly visit to some of his parishioners, and as he



had been informed by his nephew that it was from the turner of the village that he had procured the wooden Saint, he called one day to compliment him about it.

"I must congratulate you," he said, "on your *chef-d'œuvre*."

"What *chef-d'œuvre* do you mean, reverend sir?"

"Well then, on your Saint!"

"Oh! that did not give me any great deal of trouble, for in *former times* I made many such.

"You?"

"Yes, your reverence."

"When?"

"Twenty years ago."

"And where?"

"In India."

"What, have you ever been in India?"

"Yes, though you see me such as I am now, yet in *former times* I made the voyage to Hindostan as a sailor; there it was that I saw idols, great and small, white and black, pretty and ugly!"

"Indeed."

"Therefore, I needed only to resume my old trade for the making of your Saint; at that time I worked for a certain Italian statuary, who having been ruined at Rome by too many competitors, went there to carry on his labours amongst the Pagans."

"And do you mean to say that the same kind of thing goes on there as here?"

"Exactly the same, your reverence; for they have their idols of wood, dressed according to the fashion of the country, before which incense is burned, and to which prayers are offered; and when they grow old, or are spoilt, then they are repaired and re-

newed; so now I will offer you my services, if ever your Saint should want to be repaired."

The priest took his leave without making any answer, for a sad thought had arisen in his mind. About a week after this conversation, whilst walking in his fields, the old man met a labourer.

"How do you do?" said he to him.

"Tolerably well, reverend sir; only, as usual, I suffer from cold and rheumatism?"

"You have not then prayed to the Virgin?"

"So much so that I have burnt three wax-candles in her honour."

"And how are your crops this year?"

"Rather worse than they were last."

"Have you then wanted rain?"

"Not at all."

"Nor sun?"

"Nor sun either."

"Then you must have prayed to your patron saint to give you both."

"Yes, I prayed to him."

"And has he not granted your prayers?"

"Yes, certainly; only he gave us rain when we wanted fine weather, and fine weather when we wanted rain."

"Yet, my nephew told me, he made a solemn procession on account of a two months' drought, and then the rain came after it."

"Yes, but I shall always believe that the rain came after the dry weather, rather than after the procession."

"And how are you all at home?"

"I lost ten sheep in the last epidemic."

"I did not mean that: I was enquiring for your family."

"My daughter always keeps her bed."

"Then she does not pray to Mary?"

"Yes she does; so she remains the same, without getting worse."

"But, why do you not pray to God Himself?"

"Ah! that is very true; but then recollect, we hear nothing preached about except the Virgin and the Saints, which is the reason we never think about God."

The poor old priest's doubts, which his studies of late had much strengthened, gave him great uneasiness, so he returned to the parsonage to speak to his nephew; but he found the old servant there alone.

"Jeannette," said he, "where is my nephew?"

"At the Confessional, sir. He has hardly had time enough, for this long while past, to fulfil all his numerous duties. The Saint and the Virgin have made quite a change in the parish."

"And is the change for the better?"

"Why, that is as people may think."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that more people go to confession, and pay more for masses, and burn more wax-candles, and tell their beads oftener, and wear more medals; but as to everything else, it is just as it used to be."

"What do you call everything else?"

"Drunkenness, evil speaking, debauchery, lying, deceit, fraud,"—

"Enough, enough! I quite understand."

"It is even worse now, reverend sir, than it was in our time; three alehouses have been opened during the last six months."

"Quite enough."

"There have been ten country balls."

"Enough! enough!"

“ Twenty head of cattle have been stolen.”

“ Enough, I say.”

“ Fifteen lawsuits amongst the people of our village, of which twelve have been lost.”

“ I will hear no more; but you must perceive that this is not the fault of either the Saint or the Virgin.”

“ Certainly, sir; but still it does them no credit.”

The good priest returned to his library more and more vexed by all he had heard; he resumed his studies with greater earnestness than ever, and scarcely ever left them. His nephew was so astonished at his deep seclusion, that he sometimes went to look through the keyhole, and invariably discovered his uncle engaged in reading and prayer. When he daily enquired about his studies, the old man always evaded a reply, till one day he referred him for his answer to the following morning. The morrow came, and the priest begged the young man to look for a book in his library, before they went together into the garden, who immediately complied with this request, for he was impatient to have the mystery solved; and a few minutes afterwards they were seated on a bank of green turf.

“ My child,” said the aged man, “ let us, in the first place, pray to God;” and he bent down his venerable head on his hands. After remaining a short time in mental prayer, he resumed the discourse in these words.

“ If, my son, I have so long delayed answering your questions, it was only because I wished to have it in my power to satisfy you thoroughly. To-day I will inform you that my study—alas! too tardily pursued—has been, the Holy Bible!”

“ The Bible!”

“ Yes, the Word of God.”

“And what first caused you to begin this study?”

“Your images of the Saint and the Virgin, or, rather, let me say, your *idols* !”

“But——”

“My son, I know all that can be said to redeem our church from the charge of idolatry, but it all comes to this ; that we place sacred images before us, not to worship them, but to assist us in raising our thoughts towards the beings they represent. As to those holy personages themselves, we do not *adore* them, but merely show them honour.”

“It is indeed true, that all is included in these two points ; and I am curious to learn what can be said against the first. Are we not then permitted to kneel-down before an image, provided we worship, not it, but the object it represents ?”

“Certainly not, for when the Israelites made themselves a golden calf, they did not intend to worship the calf which they had molten from the ear-rings of their women, but, as the Bible tells us, they meant to honour the true God, who had brought them out of Egypt ; neither was the feast which they celebrated around their idol, intended to do honour to the golden calf, but to the eternal God. Yet, notwithstanding that, you know that Moses broke the idol, ‘and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water.’ (Ex. xxxii. 20.) Attend also to another instance. The brazen serpent which had brought healing to the Israelites who looked up to it with faith ; *this* serpent was preserved throughout many generations, but at last the Jews burnt incense to it, intending, no doubt, to do honour to God, who had caused it to be set up in the Wilderness ; and yet King Hezekiah, who, as we read in the Bible, ‘did that which was right in

the sight of the Lord,' broke the serpent to pieces, in order that the people might not burn incense to it.

"Let us now pass from the consideration of the idol, to that which it represents. You say, 'we do not adore the Saints, we only honour them,' but you will allow that it is, at any rate, with a *religious* honour?"

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, such honour, be it what it may, is forbidden by the Word of God. Listen to what I am about to say. Cornelius sent for the Apostle Peter, and when he arrived, wished to fall down and worship him, but certainly not with the worship of adoration, for Cornelius, 'a man fearing God,' must well have known that the eternal God alone was to be adored; he, therefore, merely wished to render to Peter an *inferior* worship. Now, how does the Apostle act on seeing him fall on his knees? does he not hasten to prevent him? saying, 'Stand up; I myself also am a man.'" (Acts x. 26.)

"Yes, my dear uncle, but the Apostle Peter, who refused this honour when he was only a man on earth, would not refuse it *now*, that he is become a blessed Spirit in heaven."

"My dear nephew, the Bible itself shall reply to you. We read in the Book of Revelation, that the Apostle John, after the angel had shown him the vision, wished to fall down and worship that heavenly being. Now, who can doubt that St. John, the great Apostle, the inspired Evangelist, the friend of Jesus Christ, the revealer of future events, well knew that God *alone* was to be *adored*? When, therefore, he fell down on his knees before the angel, his intention could have been only to render him homage,

yet what did that messenger from heaven say to him? 'See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant.' (Rev. xix. 10.) Here, then, you see the Apostle Peter on earth, and also an angel from heaven, both alike refusing to receive the same simple honours, which you pay to the Virgin and the Saints."

"But in the Bible, from which you quote so incessantly, is there not anything said about the Virgin and the Saints?"

"Yes; the Virgin is spoken of—but it is only to tell us that she, while on earth, was a creature subject to sin."

"Subject to sin?"

"Yes; for it is said that she was favoured by God, and it is to sinners that favour is granted."

"But, my dear uncle, surely it is, on the contrary, declared that she was *full of grace*?"

"Alas! my son, it is indeed easy to be perceived that you are acquainted with the Holy Scriptures only through the erroneous translations of your own church. Yes, *our* translators have rendered that passage '*full of grace*,' that thus, by an equivocation, people might be led into the belief that Mary was the dispenser of favours to mankind; but the truth is, that in the Greek text, as well as in all faithful translations, the angel said to Mary, thou art '*highly favoured*' (or graciously accepted), that is to say, graced and pardoned, and therefore is she called '*blessed*.' (See Luke i. 28.) Besides this, so far are these words of the angel from declaring Mary to have the power of dispensing grace to others, that she even seems, as we learn from a subsequent chapter, to require it for herself: for Jesus reprimands her, in terms of forcible signifi-

cance, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' (John ii. 4). Again; when they say unto the Saviour, that Mary His mother seeks Him; Jesus, without regarding her, extends His hands towards His disciples, saying, 'Behold my mother and my brethren' (Matt. xii. 49). Thus, we are taught by the testimony of Jesus Himself, that Mary, though highly favoured and blessed, is yet to be counted amongst those human beings who are pardoned and saved."

"But, sir, does not the Bible speak of angels?"

"It does; nay more, it even speaks of their being worshipped."

"Ah! there you see. And what does it say?"

"The Bible condemns it. Listen to what is said by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, second chapter, verse 18th, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen."

"This is strange indeed."

"What I have yet to say upon this subject altogether, will still appear much stranger to you. You know that the history of God's commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, amid the noise of thunder and the brilliancy of lightning, is perhaps the most solemn description given us in the Holy Bible. Now, this is the second commandment, that which relates exclusively to the worship of images, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for—' (Exod. xx. 4, 5.)"

"My dear uncle, you are in error, for the



second commandment is, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.'"

"My son! by what you have just said, you have brought forward a point of most deadly censure against the Church of Rome! The commandment *you* have just repeated is *in truth* the third, though by that church it is declared to be the second, for the precise purpose of *concealing* that, which *I* have, myself, quoted to you from the Word of God."

"But, then, according to what you say, there would be one commandment missing, whilst I still find ten in all our catechisms."

"Yes; because, after having subtracted the second, the church, in order to preserve the well-known number of ten commandments, has divided the last into two."

"What is it you tell me, my dear sir!"

"And even, that is not all; for, as the first fraud has forced the church into a second, so that, in like manner, has led to a third, and to a fourth,—all to conceal the first falsehood."

"But surely it is not sufficient to make this assertion, it ought likewise to be proved."

"Then listen to me attentively, whilst I expose to you the whole of this chain of sacrilege and iniquity. God gave the second commandment—that which I read to you—solely to forbid idols and images; but the Church of Rome, perceiving how much this commandment condemned her own practice, has completely suppressed it, in those verses which are called 'the commandments of God,' and which begin thus:—

'One God alone thou shalt adore,\* &c.'

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\* "Un seul Dieu tu adoreras," &c.

“In our catechisms, when the commandments are cited in prose, care is always taken to suppress the second by uniting it with the first; and thus of the two to make but one. *This is the FIRST falsehood!*”

“But as you have remarked, by thus raising the third out of its proper place, a vacancy has been left. Now what has the Church of Rome done in this case? She has divided into two the commandment against covetousness, that she might thus preserve the number of ten, and thus deceive observation. *This is the SECOND falsehood!*”

“But this is not all; for by this division of the tenth commandment, two were found forbidding the same sin, and therefore it became necessary to weaken their resemblance. The church, in her catechisms, therefore, reversed the order of the phrases. God had said in His holy law, ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox,’ &c., &c.; thus, after having named the house, the objects contained in it are all specified—the wife and the maid-servant, the man-servant and all the other objects: the full meaning, therefore, is, that we are forbidden to covet anything. But here again the church, with her accustomed ingenuity, has extracted from these expressions all that concerns the wife. She has taken it out of this place, and converted it into a separate commandment, forbidding to covet one’s neighbour’s wife. *This is the THIRD falsehood.*”

“But we have not yet done. In thus introducing a ninth commandment, forbidding the desire to commit adultery, the church discovered that she had repeated the seventh commandment, which forbids the same crime. A new deception became therefore

necessary, so she changed the seventh commandment, from a prohibition of adultery, into a law forbidding to commit impurity. So palpable is this alteration, that when, in the Gospel, Jesus quotes the seventh commandment, He does not use the words of the church, 'Thou shalt not commit impurity,' but He says 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' Thus I adopt the simple translation of Jesus Christ, being convinced that, when the church gave to this passage a sense different from that which He had given, her motive for so doing must have been to avoid the similarity between the seventh and the ninth commandments. *This, then, is the FOURTH, but not the last falsehood.*

"In speaking of images in the second commandment, which is placed at the end of the first, it is said, 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them;' but the Roman Catholic catechisms insert the word *adore*, instead of the expression 'bow down thyself,' because the Word of God too clearly condemns those genuflexions before images which are authorized by that church. Here, then, we find that five alterations have been necessary to conceal one; and in this we see an instance in which the criminal is justly punished, who, to conceal one crime, commits others which render the first more palpable to the searching eye of the inquirer, and aggravate its guilt in the sight of God. Yes, my dear nephew, this curtailment of the second commandment by our church, is the strongest and clearest proof that *that* church is guilty of idolatry—that she feels she is so—and that, to conceal her crimes from vulgar eyes, she is constrained to lay a sacrilegious hand upon the Word of God. But let us, with all sincerity and truth, endeavour to tear this mask from her face, let us study

the second commandment, which she strives to annihilate.

“Observe that God’s command is formal and absolute, that it strikes at the root of all idolatry, and that it is impossible for words to express their meaning with greater force. The prescience of God seems to have foreseen every subtilty, and to have determined to provide against it, The absolute nature of the prohibition bears upon three points.

“1st. We are not to make any kind of image.

“2nd. Of any object whatever.

“3rd. To render it any kind of worship.

“It is said, indeed, the one term immediately following the other, ‘Neither *any graven image* nor *any likeness*,’ as if God had been aware that man might forbear to make *images*, whilst yet he might yield to the temptation of making *pictures*.

“Then the Almighty reviews *all* that is in heaven and in the earth, and in the ocean, and says, ‘Thou shalt not make to thyself any image of any’ of these things; that is to say, neither of the True God, nor of false deities; neither of christian saints, nor of pagan heroes; neither of angels, nor of demons, nor of the dead, nor of the living, nor of men, nor of animals—for the whole universe is included in the heavens, the earth, and the ocean. In short, we are absolutely forbidden to render any kind of religious worship to any created being, living or dead, to images or to saints—for the commandment says not only ‘Thou shalt not bow down thyself’ before them, but still more, ‘Thou shalt not serve them.’ God makes it to be clearly understood that every kind of worship is forbidden, the bending of the body as well as of the heart. He might have said in one word, thou shalt not adore them, but he has not

done so, for He knew that the human heart, prone by nature to idolatry, would have made a thousand definitions to avoid a forbiddance so briefly expressed, and He has, therefore, given us a longer, but more complete commandment. As if God had designed thus to shut out the entrance of idolatry into His church, he causes to be inscribed on its portal, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any image, thou shalt not bow down thyself before it, thou shalt not serve it;' but the sight of this prohibition, so clear, so strong, wounds and overpowers our church. She, therefore, disguises it, or obliterates it from her catechisms. This, however, cannot prevent its being for ever recorded, both in the Bible and in heaven, alas! for her condemnation!'

"I own, my dear uncle, the proofs you have adduced, though they may convince my reason, yet they at the same time sadden my heart. I found so much comfort in seeking the intercession of the Virgin and the Saints, that it seems to me, if indeed I must lose them, as if I should find a great gulf placed between me and God, for I should no longer have a Mediator."

"What do you say, my son? no longer a Mediator! Wherefore then has Jesus Christ come on earth? For what has He suffered, even unto death, unless it be to fill up and make smooth that gulf of which you speak? unless it be to take our hand and put it into the hand of God; thus becoming our Mediator, our means of reconciliation! Moreover, this truth is taught by the Bible itself, which tells us that 'there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. ii. 5). Is not this a remarkable passage? Does it not seem written to condemn the mediation of the Virgin

and the Saints, and at the same time to lead the sinner, who dares not approach his Judge, to his advocate, his friend, his mediator, to Jesus Christ? Ah! my dear son, let us not pretend to be wiser than God! He has given us one only Mediator; let us not seek others, for that indeed would be saying that Jesus Christ is not all-sufficient!"

"Yes, my dear uncle, He is all-sufficient between Saints and God, and therefore is it that we pray to those blessed spirits to procure for us His mediation."

"My son, that is another subtle device of the Church of Rome! The Bible says neither more nor less than this: 'There is one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus.' This passage consists of a chain of three links, God is the first, the last is man, and Jesus Christ stands between and unites them together. If, then, you place angels, saints, and the Virgin, between man and Jesus Christ, you add to this chain, you encumber it, you change its very nature; and thus you take from us the blessed privilege of directly addressing our Saviour. You know the proverb, which says 'it is better to have to do with God than with the Saints;' this proverb is perfectly true, for the Bible confirms it, by saying that between God and ourselves, 'There is but one Mediator, even Jesus Christ.' Had this been otherwise, it would have been told us, and the passage would then have been written in words to this effect: 'there is but one Mediator between God and the Saints, even Jesus Christ; but there are other mediators between Jesus Christ and men, even all the Saints.' This, however, is *not* what the Word of God says; on the contrary, it declares and affirms

that the gulf between God and men has been overcome, and passed over by *one Mediator only*, even Jesus Christ!"

"But yet—"

"My son; if yet you hesitate to yield to proof, this hesitation proceeds from the difficulty you find in giving up long cherished prejudices; there is indeed but one power alone which is able to purify our souls—the influence of the Holy Ghost: you will, therefore, do well to re-peruse this Bible attentively; but let it be with prayer to God to enlighten your mind. It will take from you the false support of the Virgin and Saints, but it will teach you how to find the all-powerful, direct, and simple mediation of your Saviour—even of Jesus Christ!"