









TO  
THE ONE  
HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH,  
AS A TRIBUTE OF VENERATION AND LOVE,  
THIS WORK IS DEDICATED,  
BY HER DEVOTED SERVANT AND SON.



## PREFACE.

Members of the Church of Rome, and members of the Church of England, have too long entertained towards each other feelings of hostility. Instead of being drawn together as brethren by the cords of that one faith which all Catholics hold dear, their sentiments of sympathy and affection have been absorbed by the abhorrence with which each body has regarded the characteristic tenets of its adversary; whilst the terms "heretic" on the one side, and "idolater" on the opposite, have rendered any attempt to bring about a free and friendly discussion of each other's views almost hopeless.

Every Christian must wish that such animosities, always ill-becoming the servants and children of the God of love, should cease for ever. Truth indeed must never be sacrificed to secure peace; nor must we be tempted by the seductiveness of a liberality, falsely so called, to soften down and make light of those differences which keep the Churches of England and Rome asunder. {Pref 5} But surely the points at issue may be examined without exasperation and rancour; and the results of inquiries carried on with a singleness of mind, in search only for the truth, may be offered on the one side without insult or offence, and should be received and examined without contempt and scorn on the other.

The writer of this address is not one in whom early associations would foster sentiments of evil will against members of the Church of Rome; or encourage any feeling, incompatible with regard and kindness, towards the conscientious defenders of her creed. From his boyhood he has lived on terms of friendly intercourse and intimacy with individuals among her laity and of her priesthood. In his theological pursuits, he has often studied her ritual, consulted her commentators, and perused the homilies of her divines; and, withal, he has mourned over her errors and misdoings, as he would have sighed over the faults of a friend, who, with many good qualities still to endear him, had unhappily swerved from the straight path of rectitude and integrity.

In preparing these pages, the author is not conscious of having been influenced by any motive in the least degree inconsistent with sentiments of charity and respect; at all events, he would hope that no single expression may have escaped from his pen tending to hurt

unnecessarily the feelings of any sincere Christian. He has been prompted by a hope that he may perhaps {Pref 6} induce some individuals to investigate with candour, and freedom, and with a genuine desire of arriving at the truth, the subjects here discussed; and that whilst some, even of those who may have hitherto acquiesced in erroneous doctrines and practices, may be convinced of their departure from Christian verity; others, if tempted to desert the straight path of primitive worship, may be somewhat strengthened and armed by the views presented to them here, against the captivating allurements of religious error.

Whether the present work may, by the Divine favour, be made in some degree instrumental in forwarding these results, or in effecting any good, the author presumes not to anticipate; but he will hope for the best. He believes that the honest pursuit of the truth, undertaken with an humble zeal for God's glory, and in dependence on his guidance and light, is often made successful beyond our own sanguine expectations.

With these views the following pages are offered, as the result of an inquiry into the doctrine and practice of the Invocation of Saints and Angels, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To prevent misconception as to the nature of this work, the author would observe, that since the single subject here proposed to be investigated is, "The Invocation of Saints and Angels and the Blessed Virgin Mary," he has scrupulously avoided the discussion of many important and interesting questions usually considered {Pref 7} to be connected with it. He has not, for example, discussed the practice of praying for the dead; he has investigated no theory relating to the soul's intermediate state between our dissolution and the final judgment; he has canvassed no opinion as to any power in the saints and the faithful departed to succour either by their prayers or by any other offices, those who are still on earth, and on their way to God. From these and such like topics he has abstained, not because he thinks lightly of their importance, nor because his own mind is perplexed by doubts concerning them; but because the introduction of such points would tend to distract the thoughts from the exclusive contemplation of the one distinct question to be investigated.

He is also induced to apprise the reader, that in his work, as he originally prepared it, a far wider field, even on the single subject of the present inquiry, was contemplated than this volume now embraces. His intention was to present an historical survey of the doctrine and practice of the invocation of Saints and Angels, and the Virgin, tracing it from the first intimation of any thing of the kind through its various progressive stages, till it had reached its widest prevalence in Christendom. When, however, he had arranged and filled up the results of the inquiries which he made into the sentiments and habits of those later writers of the Church, whose works he considered it necessary to examine with this specific object in view, {Pref 8} he found that the bulk of the work would be swollen far beyond the limits which he had prescribed to himself; he felt also that the protracted investigation would materially interfere with the solution of that one independent question which he trusts now is kept unmixed with any other. He has, consequently, in the present address limited the range of his researches on the nature of Primitive Christian Worship, to the writers of the Church Catholic who lived before the Nicene Council, or were members of it.

In one department, however, he has been under the necessity of making, to a certain extent, an exception to this rule. Having found no allusion to the doctrine of the Assumption of the Virgin, on which much of the religious worship now paid to her seems to be founded, in any work written before the middle of the fifth century, he has been induced, in his examination of the grounds on which that doctrine professes to be built, to cite authors who flourished subsequently to the Nicene Council.

The author would also mention, that although in substance he has prepared this work for the examination of all Christians equally, and trusts that it will be found not less interesting or profitable to the members of his own Church than to any other, yet he has throughout adopted the form of an address to his Roman Catholic countrymen. Such a mode of conveying his sentiments he considered to be less controversial, while the facts and the arguments would remain the same. His object {Pref 9} is not to condemn, but to convince: not to hold up to obloquy those who are in error, but, as far as he may be allowed, to diminish an evil where it already exists, and to check its further prevalence.



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## PART I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE DUTY OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

Fellow Christians,

Whilst I invite you to accompany me in a free and full investigation of one of those tenets and practices which keep asunder the Roman and the Anglican Church, I am conscious in how thankless an undertaking I have engaged, and how unwelcome to some is the task in which I call upon you to join. Many among the celebrated doctors of the Roman Church have taught their disciples to acquiesce in a view of their religious obligation widely different from the laborious and delicate office of ascertaining for themselves the soundness of the principles in which they have been brought up. It has been with many accredited teachers a favourite maxim, that individuals will most acceptably fulfil their duty by abstaining {2} from active and personal inquiries into the foundations of their faith; and by giving an implicit credence to whatever the Roman Church pronounces to be the truth<sup>1</sup>. Should this book fall into the hands of any who have adopted that maxim for the rule of their own conduct as believers, its pages will of course afford them no help; nor can they take any interest in our pursuit, or its results. Whilst, however, I am aware, that until the previous question (involving the grounds on which the Church of Rome builds her claim to be the sole, exclusive, and infallible teacher of Christians in all the doctrines of religion,) shall have been solved, many members of her body would throw aside, as preposterous, any treatise which professed to review the soundness of her instructions; I have been at the same time assured, that with many of her communion the case is far otherwise; and that instead of their being averse to all investigation, a calm, candid, and friendly, but still a free and unreserved inquiry into the disputed articles of their creed, is an object of their sincere desire. On this ground I trust some preliminary reflections upon the duty of proving all things, with a view of holding the

more fast {3} and sure what is good, may be considered as neither superfluous nor out of place.

**Footnote 1:** (return)

It is sometimes curious to observe the language in which the teachers and doctors themselves profess their entire, unlimited, and implicit submission of all their doctrines, even in the most minute particulars, to the judgment and will of the authorities of Rome. Instances are of very frequent occurrence. Thus Joannes de Carthagera, a very voluminous writer of homilies, closes different parts of his work in these words, "These and all mine I willingly subject to the judgment of the Catholic Roman Church, ready, if there be written any thing in any way in the very least point contrary to her doctrine, to correct, amend, erase, and utterly abolish it." *Hom. Cath. De Sacris Arcanis Deiparf et Josephi*. Paris, 1615. page 921.

But just as it would belong to another and a separate province to examine, at such length as its importance demands, the claims of the Church of Rome to be acknowledged as that universal interpreter of the word and will of God, from whose decisions there is no appeal; so would it evidently be incompatible with the nature of the present address, to dwell in any way corresponding with the magnitude and delicacy of the subject, on the duty, the responsibility, and the privilege of private judgment; on the dangers to which an unchastened exercise of it may expose both an individual, and the cause of Christian truth; or on the rules which sound wisdom and the analogy of faith may prescribe to us in the government of ourselves with respect to it. My remarks, therefore, on this subject will be as few and brief as I believe to be consistent with an acknowledgment of the principles upon which this work has been conducted.

The foundation, then, on which, to be safe and beneficial, the duty of private judgment, as we maintain, must be built, is very far indeed removed from that common and mischievous notion of it which would encourage us to draw immediate and crude deduc-

tions from Holy Scripture, subject only to the control and the colouring of our own minds, responsible for nothing further than our own consciousness of an honest intention. Whilst we claim a release from that degrading yoke which neither are we nor were our fathers able to bear, we deprecate for ourselves and for our fellow-believers that licentiousness which in doctrine and practice tempts a man to follow merely what is right in his own eyes, uninfluenced by the example, the precepts, {4} and the authority of others, and owning no submissive allegiance to those laws which the wise and good have established for the benefit of the whole body. The freedom which we ask for ourselves, and desire to see imparted to all, is a rational liberty, tending to the good, not operating to the bane of its possessors; ministering to the general welfare, not to disorder and confusion. In the enjoyment of this liberty, or rather in the discharge of the duties and trusts which this liberty brings with it, we feel ourselves under an obligation to examine the foundations of our faith, to the very best of our abilities, according to our opportunities, and with the most faithful use of all the means afforded to us by its divine Author and finisher. Among those means, whilst we regard the Holy Scriptures as paramount and supreme, we appeal to the witness and mind of the Church as secondary and subsidiary; a witness not at all competing with Scripture, never to be balanced against it; but competing with our own less able and less pure apprehension of Scripture. In ascertaining the testimony of this witness, we examine the sentiments and practice of the ancient teachers of the Church; not as infallible guides, not as uniformly holding all of them the same opinions, but as most valuable helps in our examination of the evidence of the Church, who is, after all, our appointed instructor in the truths of the Gospel, — fallible in her individual members and branches, yet the sure witness and keeper of Holy Writ, and our safest guide on earth to the mind and will of God. When we have once satisfied ourselves that a doctrine is founded on Scripture, we receive it with implicit faith, and maintain it as a sacred deposit, entrusted to our keeping, to be delivered down whole and entire without our adding {5} thereto what to us may seem needful, or taking away what we may think superfluous.

The state of the Christian thus employed, in acting for himself in a work peculiarly his own, is very far removed from the condition of

one who labours in bondage, without any sense of liberty and responsibility, unconscious of the dignity of a free and accountable agent, and surrendering himself wholly to the control of a task-master. Equally is it distant from the conduct of one who indignant-ly casting off all regard for authority, and all deference to the opinions of others, boldly and proudly sets up his own will and pleasure as the only standard to which he will submit. For the model which we would adopt, as members of the Church, in our pursuit of Christian truth, we find a parallel and analogous case in a well-principled and well-disciplined son, with his way of life before him, exercising a large and liberal discretion in the choice of his pursuits; not fettered by peremptory paternal mandates, but ever voluntarily referring to those principles of moral obligation and of practical wisdom with which his mind has been imbued; shaping his course with modest diffidence in himself, and habitual deference to others older and wiser than himself, yet acting with the firmness and intrepidity of conscious rectitude of principle, and integrity of purpose; and under a constant sense of his responsibility, as well for his principles as for his conduct.

Against the cogency of these maxims various objections have been urged from time to time. We have been told, that the exercise of private judgment in matters of religion, tends to foster errors of every diversity of character, and leads to heresy, scepticism, and infidelity: it is represented as rending the Church of Christ, and totally {6} subverting Christian unity, and snapping asunder at once the bond of peace. So also it has been often maintained, that the same cause robs individual Christians of that freedom from all disquietude and perplexity and anxious responsibility, that peace of mind, satisfaction, and content, which those personally enjoy, who surrender themselves implicitly to a guide, whom they believe to be unerring and infallible.

For a moment let us pause to ascertain the soundness of such objections. And here anticipating, for argument's sake, the worst result, let us suppose that the exercise of individual inquiry and judgment (such as the best teachers in the Anglican Church are wont to inculcate) may lead in some cases even to professed infidelity; is it right and wise and justifiable to be driven by an abuse of God's gifts to denounce the legitimate and faithful employment of

them? What human faculty — which among the most precious of the Almighty's blessings is not liable to perversion? What unquestionable moral duty can be found, which has not been transformed by man's waywardness into an instrument of evil? Nay, what doctrine of our holy faith has not the wickedness or the folly of unworthy men employed as a cloke for unrighteousness, and a vehicle for blasphemy? But by a consciousness of this liability in all things human, must we be tempted to suppress the truth? to disparage those moral duties? or to discountenance the cultivation of those gifts and faculties? Rather would not sound philosophy and Christian wisdom jointly enforce the necessity of improving the gifts zealously, of discharging the moral obligation to the full, and of maintaining the doctrine in all its integrity; but guarding withal, to the utmost of our power and watchfulness, against the abuses to which {7} any of these things may be exposed? And we may trust in humble but assured confidence, that as it is the duty of a rational being, alive to his own responsibility, to inquire and judge for himself in things concerning the soul, with the most faithful exercise of his abilities and means; so the wise and merciful Ruler of our destinies will provide us with a sure way of escaping from all evils incident to the discharge of that duty, if, in reliance on his blessing, we honestly seek the truth, and perseveringly adhere to that way in which He will be our guide.

It is a question very generally and very reasonably entertained among us, whether the implicit submission and unreserved surrender of ourselves to any human authority in matters of faith, (though whilst it lasts, it of course affords an effectual check to open scepticism,) does not ultimately and in very deed prove a far more prolific source of disguised infidelity. Doubts repressed as they arise, but not solved, silenced but not satisfied, gradually accumulate in spite of all external precaution; and at length (like streams pent back by some temporary barrier) break forth at once to an utter discarding of all authority, and an irrecoverable rejection of the Christian faith. From unlimited acquiescence in a guide whom our associations have invested with infallibility, the step is very short, and frequently taken, to entire apostasy and the renunciation of all belief.

The state of undisturbed tranquillity and repose in one, who has divested himself of all responsibility in matters of religious belief

and practice, enjoying an entire immunity from the anxious and painful labour of trying for himself the purity and soundness of his faith, is often painted in strong contrast with the {8} lamentable condition of those who are driven about by every wind of novelty. The condition of such a man may doubtless be far more enviable than theirs, who have no settled fixed principles, and who wander from creed to creed, and from sect to sect, just as their fickle and roving minds suggest some transitory preference. But the believer must not be driven by the evils of one extreme to take refuge in the opposite. The whirlpool may be the more perilous, but the Christian mariner must avoid the rock also, or he will equally make shipwreck of his faith. He must with all his skill, and all his might, keep to the middle course, shunning that presumptuous confidence which scorns all authority, and boldly constitutes itself sole judge and legislator; but equally rescuing his mind from the thralldom which prostrates his reason, and paralyzes all the faculties of his judgment in a matter of indefeasible and awful responsibility.

Here, too, it is questioned, and not without cause, whether the satisfaction and comfort so often represented in warm and fascinating colours, be really a spiritual blessing; or whether it be not a deception and fallacy, frequently ending in lamentable perplexity and confusion; like guarantees in secular concerns, which as long as they maintain unsuspected credit afford a most pleasing and happy security to any one who depends upon them; but which, when adverse fortune puts their responsibility to the test, may prove utterly worthless, and be traced only by losses and disappointments. Such a blind reliance on authority may doubtless be more easy and more free from care, than it is to gird up the loins of our mind, and engage in toilsome spiritual labour. But with a view to our own ultimate safety, wisdom bids us look to our foundations in time, and assure ourselves {9} of them; admonishing us that if they are unsound, the spiritual edifice reared upon them, however pleasing to the eye, or abounding in present enjoyments, will at length fall, and bury our hopes in its ruin.

On these and similar principles, we maintain that it well becomes Christians, when the soundness of their faith, and the rectitude of their acts of worship, are called in question, "to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." Thus, when the unbeliever charges us