

God alone is to be honored and enthroned in the affections ; and therefore any tribute of reverence or homage that does not centre in Himself, how high or how low, how great or how small the object that draws off the affections, even should it be the chief angel in the realms of glory, is in the true and proper sense of the word, idolatry. If any one will explain to me the degrees of guilt between the image and idol worship of Jews, Pagans, and papal Rome, I will use his own arguments and shew the difference in the sin of paying homage to angels, wooden stocks, and images formed according to the ideal capacity of the painter.

Any object, then, that we adore other than God, is an idol ; and any worship that has not God for its author and its supreme end, is idolatry. To this sentence I invite especial attention. It is submitted to the wisdom of the wise and the knowledge of the prudent.

The second enquiry refers to the prevalence of idolatry,—not its prevalence in times past, when ancient paganism reigned, or when the horns of the papacy were younger and stronger, but its prevalence in this our own day. And in relation to this question, if what I have already said be admitted, it will be a task far too easy to shew that idolatry is fearfully prevalent. For we have only to repeat over the names of a multitude of professors and professions, shew how spiritually empty they all are, and shew how this vacancy has been supplied by the barrenness of earthly subtlety, in order to shew the power, extent, and popularity of modern idolatry.

As we prove that where there is no light there is darkness, so we can demonstrate where there is little of the true worship of God there must be a consequent prevalency of the worship of false gods, or as the inspired David says, “the gods of the nations.” If the affections of men are not above, they are below ; if their treasures are not in heaven, they are on earth ; if the gospel is not received, it is rejected ; if God be not adored then Satan is the divinity. In this view, then, because the righteous are so few and the true worship so rare, I affirm that idolatry has at least as many votaries and altars now as in some of the best periods of the world’s history.

But I am not losing sight of the text which says that sects are idolators. Observe, it is not *a sect* but *sects* that I have charged with this sin. A sect, such as the one to which Paul belonged, may be free from idolatry ; but sects, taken in the plural, of necessity are idolators : for the very fact of denominational and factional interests which constitute and perpetuate sects, proves that they are “carnal, and walk as men.” “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh ;” and it makes little difference whether the gods are fleshly appetites or fleshly honors, a supreme regard to either is alike idolatrous. On this ground I feel as strong as the bul-