

I am almost tempted to break the tenth commandment of the law of Moses by coveting the pleasure of that person who feels he has transgressed and is forward to attest it by words and works. Yet I am now writing under the impression that at least the first volume of our testimony shall have been completed before I can lawfully realize this pleasure. Still, should I in this be mistaken, and should further evidence be produced leading to another decision, I will most certainly avow it openly; for, when convicted, I am neither afraid nor ashamed to say I have erred.— While infallibility belongs only to Rome and some of the highest peaks of Protestantism, I shall always regard it as one of the traits and graces of Christian humility in any one to believe it is possible for him to mistake or mis-act, and, on conviction, frankly confess.

But I will proceed without further introduction to submit my convictions and disclose my reflections to all whom it may concern. Two questions shall receive some attention before many arguments are deduced or applied. 1st, What is idolatry? 2nd, Does it now prevail? Other queries will find a place in due course, but these will make together a good firstly.

But here at the very threshold I am met by an objector who says that idols are only of the material form, wrought out by the craft of man and fashioned from wood, or stone, or some one of the precious metals, and that idolatry can only be ascribed to the people who literally bow down to these. The objection, indeed, is understood; but we take nothing for granted, and a little proof along with the assertion would be acceptable. Are they not idolators who worship the sun? who worship the host of heaven? who worship an unknown god? and who worship demons? Of what material are all these, and who made them! So easy is it to disprove what never was proved.

It is not the form, nor the artist, nor the material, nor the source whence derived, nor the peculiarity of the ceremony in paying homage, that makes the idol or constitutes idolatry. The idol, or the object of illegal worship, may have been made by God or by man; it may be in the earth or in the regions above; it may be carved from a tree or moulded from iron ore; it may be a statue or a painted picture; it may be in the person of a living man or a bodiless spirit; or it may be in lands, merchandize, or money: for, 'covetousness,' says an apostle, 'is idolatry.' The Persian who religiously honors the sun, the Egyptian who bows down to the crocodile, the Barbarian who sacrifices his fellow savage to appease the god of his fathers, the Infidel who loves his doubts and worships his reason, and the Civilian whose affections are supremely taken up with the joys and honors of earth, are all equally without the compass and jurisdiction of moral authority and alike idolators in the sight of heaven.