

and established the idea that the bishop of Rome has an apostolic commission, and that he, aided by his councils, is the supreme spiritual legislator of the world, competent to decree, and authorized to enforce, that uniformity. It is this principle that has afforded that church a reason for its vast secular aggrandizement, thus leading the way to those corruptions of a pecuniary and political nature, which have brought such scandal upon the name of Christ. It is upon this principle that the Scriptures have been wrested from the hands of men, lest notions should be derived from them inconsistent with Christianity, that is, with the Romish system, notions that would disturb this essential uniformity. It is this principle that has built inquisitions, kindled fires, and persecuted and murdered good men. It is this principle that has made Catholic countries peculiarly prolific in infidelity and irreligion. Here is the worst consequence. It has excluded and denounced every other system. It has striven by all means to keep all minds fast bound down to this one. It has not permitted those minds that never could, or had ceased to be able to embrace that system and be influenced and christianized by it, — it has not permitted them to seek and adopt for themselves a different system, with which they might have an affinity, in which they might have a belief, and the peace and sanctifying influence of believing. Accordingly such minds have had no faith and no Christian influence, and hence infidelity and irreligion. The history of France at the time of the first Revolution, when she voted herself a nation of atheists, illustrates this evil, the process and extent of it. And whatsoever else we might find to deplore in Popery, it has its origin in this same fundamental principle, that there must be a