

“The beginning of all this is to be found a long distance back, when, for the promoting of a more spiritual state of religion, Christians began to undervalue external institutions, putting them at the mercy of individual or local caprice and fancy. The beginning, apparently inconsiderable and unobserved, except by a few that were wise, was as ‘the letting out of water.’ By making all kindred streams its tributaries, it hath swollen to a desolating flood. Its first object was a more vital faith;—its last result will be a more hardened infidelity. Its exciting cause was, in part, the fear of a supposed remnant of Popery in the prescribed forms and dignified ritual of a portion of Protestant Christendom. It will not have run its course, before, under an abhorrence of what are comparatively only the accidents of Popery, it will have adopted all that is evil in its essential nature,—the *formality* of godliness without *its power*,—a formality with *fanaticism* and *all its power*, that compasseth sea and land for proselytes, establishing its inquisition, and proclaiming its anathemas.—Such Popery, with its miracle-working machinery, and its *opus operandum* of ‘anxious seats’ and ‘confessions,’ its dependence upon saints, though living, for ‘marvellous things,’ more than upon the power of God; its substitution of measures and talismanic words, for the operations of the Holy Ghost, and its effect of satisfying the sinner’s conscience by certain ceremonial conformities, which each leader, as the infallible head of his party, may have adopted, and which act like an authoritative absolution upon a weak but troubled mind. Popery, such as this, the essence of genuine Popery, with a new form and a Protestant name, doth already work to a most alarming and yet unobserved extent.”

Such is the view of the state of religion in the United States taken by Dr. McIlvaine, the pious, the talented and beloved Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio. I have adduced his invaluable testimony, because his name is above suspicion, and because he treats of the fruits of the very same practices that I have conceived it my duty to condemn. In so doing I may be in error. I lay no claim to infallibility. But having viewed them in all their bearings,—having brought them to the test of Scripture, having tried their fruits by the only test within our reach, the evidence of our senses, and the testimony of others who have witnessed the fruits of similar plans,—I am fully convinced that we should be doing wrong in giving any countenance to them. What then is our duty