

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

In the Light of Scripture

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

WORSHIP

THIS SUBJECT must be examined both as to its objects and its methods. When Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and promised to give Him all if He would but fall down and worship him, our Lord replied, "It is written, **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**" In those two sentences He summarized in positive authority all the Old Testament prohibitions of idolatry, declaring that worship must be offered to God alone.

In sharp contrast with this, Rome worships or "venerates" an extensive range of objects: the Triune God, Christ in the host at the sacrifice of the Mass, the Virgin Mary, angels, the apostles, a long list of saints together with their images and relics which may be either fragments of their mortal remains or things they used, together with a multitude of holy places. The line is drawn between worship and veneration in this list—after the host which is worshiped as God, and before the Virgin Mary, who heads the list of persons and things venerated. Rome makes much of this distinction, for only so can she rationalize her breach of the divine law. She compares veneration with "the spirit that prompts a mother to treasure carefully a lock of her dead baby's hair; the same spirit that prompts Americans to treasure the pen of signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Liberty Bell, or the sword of Washington."

But we have only to compare the care bestowed on these personal or national memorials, and the interest they excite, with the veneration accorded to Roman Catholic images and relics, to see that the two things are poles apart. The mother does not bow before her child's hair, nor do men prostrate themselves before Washington's relics. If they did, immediately we would have at least the trappings of worship, and the actual fact of worship could not be denied.

The Council of Trent in its decree authorized kneeling, bowing, and prostration before images and relics, while claiming that these acts referred to the persons represented and not to the visible objects. But even if the bowing, etc., is referred to the persons, it is still worship that is offered to them, and not merely veneration. And worship must be reserved for God alone.

Heathen men kissed their hands to the sun in worship and prostrated themselves before heathen deities in worship (Isaiah 44:14-19; II Kings 5:18; Daniel 3:5, 10, 15), and these same acts of undoubted worship are used in heathen lands today. Since there is no difference in the outward acts of Romish worship and veneration, how and where is the line to be drawn between the two in the emotions? To say that Romish veneration of Mary, the saints, and angels, with or without images and relics, is not worship, is as foolish as it is dishonest. It is a mere juggling with words to cover over practices which are in direct disobedience to the law of God.

Again we have to reject the claim that prayers to images, whether of the Virgin Mary or the saints, are referred not to the image, but to the one represented by it.

If this were so, why do immense crowds travel to the Virgin of Lourdes every year seeking healing, when there are images of the same Virgin Mary in every Roman Catholic church? In enlightened lands there may well be those who, in bowing to the images, are honestly seeking to worship the one represented. But in countries where Rome has power, even a slight acquaintance with image worship in street processions on feast days carries the inevitable conviction that to most of those prostrating themselves, it is the image or relic itself that is worshiped. The oftentimes disgraceful orgies of drunkenness and what not that follow, make it evident that this kind of “veneration” is no different from the idolatry of heathen lands.

In spite of Roman Catholic protests to the contrary, we cannot but conclude that the worship of the Virgin Mary and the rest is idolatrous.

~ end of chapter 21 ~

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