

ordained it was once removed, the thing itself they notwithstanding kept for a *monument of God's mercy*, as in like consideration they did the pot of manna, the rod of Aaron, and the sword which David took from Goliath. In process of time they made of a monument of divine power a plain idol, they burnt incense before it contrary to the law of God, and did it the services of honour due unto God only. Which gross and grievous abuse continued till Ezechias restoring the purity of sound religion, destroyed utterly that which had been so long and so generally a snare unto them.

It is not amiss which the canon law hereupon concludeth, namely¹ that "if our predecessors have done some things which at that time might be without fault, and afterward be turned to error and superstition, we are taught by Ezechias breaking the brazen serpent that posterity may destroy them without any delay and with great authority." But may it be simply and without exception hereby gathered, that posterity "is bound to destroy" whatsoever hath been either at the first invented, or but afterwards turned to like superstition and error? No, it cannot be.

The serpent therefore and the sign of the cross, although seeming equal in this point, that superstition hath abused both, yet being herein also unequal, that neither they have been both subject to the like degree of abuse, nor were in hardness of redress alike, it may be that even as the one for abuse was religiously taken away, so now, when religion hath taken away abuse from the other, we should by utter abolition thereof deserve hardly his commendation whose example there is offered us no such necessary cause to follow.

[15.] For by the words of Ezechias in terming the serpent but "a lump of brass²," to shew that the best thing in it now was the metal or matter whereof it consisted, we may probably conjecture, that the people whose error is therein controlled had the selfsame opinion of it which the heathens had of

¹ [Decr. i.] Dist. 63. (§ 28.) cap. Quia. ["Quia Sancta." Corp. Jur. Can. 75. "Per hoc magna auctoritas ista est habenda in Ecclesia, ut si nonnulli ex prædecessoribus et majoribus nostris fecerunt aliqua, quæ illo tempore potuerunt esse

"sine culpa, et postea vertuntur in errorem et superstitionem, sine tarditate aliqua, et cum magna auctoritate, a posteris destruantur."]

² [Grot. in loc. "Q. d. *Æs est, præterea nihil.*"]

idols; they thought that the power of Deity was with it, and when they saw it dissolved haply they might to comfort themselves imagine as Olympius the sophister did beholding the dissipation of idols¹, "Shapes and counterfeits they were, fashioned of matter subject unto corruption, therefore to grind them to dust was easy, but those celestial powers which dwelt and resided in them are ascended into heaven."

Some difference there is between these opinions of palpable idolatry and that which the schools in speculation have bolted out concerning the cross. Notwithstanding forasmuch as the church of Rome hath hitherto practised and doth profess the same adoration to the sign of the cross and neither less nor other than is due unto Christ himself, howsoever they varnish and qualify their sentence, pretending that the cross, which to outward sense presenteth visibly itself alone, is not by them apprehended alone, but hath in their secret surmise or conceit a reference to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the honour which they jointly do to both respecteth principally his person, and the cross but only for his person's sake, the people not accustomed to trouble their wits with so nice and subtle differences in the exercise of religion are apparently no less ensnared by adoring the cross, than the Jews by burning incense to the brazen serpent.

It is by Thomas ingenuously granted², that because unto reasonable creatures a kind of reverence is due for the excellency which is in them and whereby they resemble God, therefore if reasonable creatures, angels or men, should receive at our hands holy and divine honour as the sign of the cross

¹ Sozom. lib. vii. cap. 15. [ἽΟ-λύμπιός τις ἐν φιλοσόφου σχήματι συνὼν αὐτοῖς, καὶ πείθων χρῆναι μὴ ἀμελεῖν τῶν πατριῶν, ἀλλ' εἰ δέοι ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν θνήσκει καθαιρουμένων δὲ τῶν ξοάνων, ἀθυμοῦντας ὁρῶν, συνεβούλευε μὴ ἐξίστασθαι τῆς θρησκείας, ὕλην φθαρτὴν καὶ ἰνδάλματα λέγων εἶναι τὰ ἀγάλματα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀφανισμόν ὑπομένειν δυνάμεις δὲ τινὰς ἐνοικῆσαι αὐτοῖς, καὶ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀποπτήναι. This happened at Alexandria in the reign of Valentinian and Theodosius.]

² Tho. p. iii. q. 25. art. 3. Resp. ad tert. [t. xii. 98. "Creaturæ rationali debetur reverentia propter seipsam; et ideo si creaturæ rationali, in qua est imago Dei, exhiberetur adoratio latriæ, posset esse erroris occasio, ut scilicet motus adorantis sisteret in homine, in quantum est res quædam, et non referretur in Deum cujus est imago: quod non potest contingere de imagine sculpta, vel picta in materia sensibili."]

doth at theirs, to pretend that we honour not them alone but we honour God with them would not serve the turn, neither would this be able to prevent the error of men, or cause them always to respect God in their adorations, and not to finish their intents in the object next before them. But unto this he addeth, that no such error can grow by adoring in that sort a dead image, which every man knoweth to be void of excellency in itself, and therefore will easily conceive that the honour done unto it hath an higher reference.

Howbeit, seeing that we have by over-true experience been taught how often, especially in these cases, the light even of common understanding faileth, surely their usual adoration of the cross is not hereby freed. For in actions of this kind we are more to respect what the greatest part of men is commonly prone to conceive, than what some few men's wits may devise in construction of their own particular meanings. Plain it is, that a false opinion of some personal divine excellency to be in those things which either nature or art hath framed causeth always religious adoration. And as plain that the like adoration applied unto things sensible argueth to vulgar capacities, yea leaveth imprinted in them the very same opinion of Deity from whence all idolatrous worship groweth. Yea the meaner and baser a thing worshipped is in itself, the more they incline to think that every man which doth adore it, knoweth there is in it or with it a presence of divine power.

[16.] Be it therefore true that crosses purposely framed or used for receipt of divine honour be even as scandalous as the brazen serpent itself, where they are in such sort adored. Should we hereupon think ourselves in the sight of God and in conscience charged to abolish utterly the very *ceremony* of the cross, neither meant at the first, nor now converted unto any such offensive purpose? Did the Jews which could never be persuaded to admit in the city of Jerusalem¹ that image of Cæsar which the Romans were accustomed² to adore,

¹ Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 8. [c. 6. § 2. ed. Huds.] et lib. xviii. cap. 3. [§ 1.] et de Bell. lib. ii. cap. 9.
² Their eagles, their ensigns, and the images of their princes, they car-

ried with them in all their armies, and had always a kind of chapel wherein they placed and adored them as their gods. Dio, lib. xl. [c. 6. p. 128. D. ed. Leunclav. ó δερὸς

make any scruple of Cæsar's image in the coin which they knew very well that men were not wont to worship¹? Between the cross which superstition honoureth as Christ, and that ceremony of the cross which serveth only for a sign of remembrance, there is as plain and as great a difference as between those brazen images which Salomon made to bear up the cistern of the temple², and (sith both were of like shape but of unlike use) that which the Israelites in the wilderness did adore³; or between the altars which Josias destroyed because they were instruments of mere idolatry⁴, and that which the tribe of Reuben with others erected near to the river Jordan⁵, for which also they grew at the first into some dislike, and were by the rest of their brethren suspected yea hardly charged with open breach of the law of God, accused of backwardness in religion, upbraided bitterly with the fact of Peor, and the odious example of Achan, as if the building of their altar in that place had given manifest shew of no better than intended apostasy, till by a true declaration made in their own defence it appeared that such as misliked misunderstood their enterprise, inasmuch as they had no intent to build any altar for sacrifice, which God would have no where offered saving in Jerusalem only, but to a far other end and purpose, which being opened satisfied all parts, and so delivered them from causeless blame.

[17.] In this particular suppose the worst, imagine that the immaterial ceremony of the Cross had been the subject of as gross pollution as any heathenish or profane idol. If we think the example of Ezechias a proof that things which error and superstition hath abused may in no consideration be tolerated, although we presently find them not subject to so vile abuse, the plain example of Ezechias proveth the contrary. The temples and idols which under Salomon had been of very purpose framed for the honour of foreign gods⁶ Ezechias destroyed not, because they stood as forlorn things and did now

ὠνομασμένους (ἔστι δὲ νεὸς μικρὰς, καὶ δὸν προσκυνεῖται.)

ἐν αὐτῷ ἀετὸς χρυσοῦς ἐνίδρυται· καθίσταται τε ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ καταλόγου στρατοπέδοις.)] Herodian lib. iv. [c. 8. ἐπέπεσεν εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον, ἔς τε τὸν νεὸν ἔνθα τὰ σημεία καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα τοῦ στρατοπέ-

¹ Matt. xxii. 20.

² 2 Chron. iv. 3.

³ Exod. xxxii. 4.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxxiv. 7.

⁵ Josh. xxii. 10.

⁶ 1 Kings xi. 7.

no harm, although formerly they had done harm. Josias¹ for some inconvenience afterwards razed them up. Yet to both there is one commendation given even from God himself, that touching matter of religion they walked in the steps of David and did no way displease God².

[18.] Perhaps it seemeth that by force and virtue of this example although in bare detestation and hatred of idolatry all things which have been at any time worshipped are not necessarily to be taken out of the world, nevertheless for remedy and prevention of so great offences wisdom should judge it the safest course to remove altogether from the eyes of men that which may put them in mind of evil.

Some kinds of evil no doubt there are very quick in working on those affections that most easily take fire, which evils should in that respect no oftener than need requireth be brought in presence of weak minds. But neither is the Cross any such evil, nor yet the brazen serpent itself so strongly poisoned, that our eyes, ears, and thoughts ought to shun them both, for fear of some deadly harm to ensue the only representation thereof by gesture, shape, sound, or such like significant means. And for mine own part I most assuredly persuade myself, that had Ezechias (till the days of whose most virtuous reign they ceased not continually to burn incense to the brazen serpent) had he found the serpent, though sometimes adored, yet at that time recovered from the evil of so gross abuse, and reduced to the same that was before in the time of David, at which time they esteemed it only as a memorial, sign, or monument of God's miraculous goodness towards them, even as we in no other sort esteem the ceremony of the Cross, the due consideration of an use so harmless common to both might no less have wrought their equal preservation, than different occasions have procured, notwithstanding the one's extinguishment, the other's lawful continuance.

[19.] In all persuasions which ground themselves upon example, we are not so much to respect what is done, as the causes and secret inducements leading thereunto. The question being therefore whether this ceremony supposed to have

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 13.² 2 Kings xviii. 3, 6; xxii. 2.

been *sometimes* scandalous and offensive ought for that cause to be *now* removed; there is no reason we should forthwith yield ourselves to be carried away with examples, no not of them whose acts the highest judgment approveth for having reformed in that manner any public evil: but before we either attempt any thing or resolve, the state and condition as well of our own affairs as theirs whose example presseth us, is advisedly to be examined; because some things are of their own nature scandalous, and cannot choose but breed offence, as those sinks of execrable filth which Josias did overwhelm¹; some things albeit not by nature and of themselves, are notwithstanding so generally turned to evil by reason of an evil corrupt habit grown and through long continuance incurably settled in the minds of the greatest part, that no redress can be well hoped for without removal of that wherein they have ruined themselves, which plainly was the state of the Jewish people, and the cause why Ezechias did with such sudden indignation destroy what he saw worshipped; finally some things are as the sign of the Cross though subject either almost or altogether to as great abuse, yet curable with more facility and ease. And to speak as the truth is, our very nature doth hardly yield to destroy that which may be fruitfully kept, and without any great difficulty clean scoured from the rust of evil which by some accident hath grown into it. Wherefore to that which they build in this question upon the example of Ezechias let this suffice.

[20.] When heathens despised Christian religion, because of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the Fathers to testify how little such contumelies and contempts prevailed with them chose rather the sign of the Cross than any other outward mark, whereby the world might most easily discern always what they were. On the contrary side now, whereas they which do all profess the Christian religion are divided amongst themselves, and the fault of the one part is that in zeal to the suffering of Christ they admire too much and over-superstitiously adore the visible sign of his Cross, if you ask what we that mislike them should do, we are here advised to cure one contrary by another. Which art or method is not yet so current as they imagine.

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

For if, as their practice for the most part sheweth, it be their meaning that the scope and drift of reformation when things are faulty should be to *settle* the Church in the contrary, it standeth them upon to beware of this rule, because seeing vices have not only virtues but other vices also in nature opposite unto them, it may be dangerous in these cases to seek but that which we find contrary to present evils. For in sores and sicknesses of the mind we are not simply to measure good by distance from evil, because one vice may in some respect be more opposite to another than either of them to that virtue which holdeth the mean between them both. Liberality and covetousness, the one a virtue and the other a vice, are not so contrary as the vices of covetousness and prodigality; religion and superstition have more affiance, though the one be light and the other darkness, than superstition and profaneness which both are vicious extremities. By means whereof it cometh also to pass that the mean which is virtue seemeth in the eyes of each extreme an extremity; the liberal hearted man is by the opinion of the prodigal miserable, and by the judgment of the miserable lavish; impiety for the most part upbraideth religion as superstitious, which superstition often accuseth as impious, both so conceiving thereof because it doth seem more to participate each extreme, than one extreme doth another, and is by consequent less contrary to either of them, than they mutually between themselves. Now if he that seeketh to reform covetousness or superstition should but labour to induce the contrary, it were but to draw men out of lime into coaldust. So that their course which will remedy the superstitious abuse of things profitable in the Church is not still to abolish utterly the use thereof, because not using at all is most opposite to ill using, but rather if it may be to bring them back to a right perfect and religious usage, which albeit less contrary to the present sore is notwithstanding the better and by many degrees the sounder way of recovery.

[21.] And unto this effect that very precedent itself which they propose may be best followed. For as the Fathers when the Cross of Christ was in utter contempt did not superstitiously adore the same, but rather declare that they so esteemed it as was meet: in like manner where we find the Cross to have that honour which is due to Christ, is it not as lawful for us to

retain it in that estimation which it ought to have and in that use which it had of old without offence, as by taking it clean away to seem followers of their example which cure wilfully by abscission that which they might both preserve and heal?

Touching therefore the sign and ceremony of the Cross, we no way find ourselves bound to relinquish it, neither because the first inventors thereof were but mortal men, nor lest the sense and signification we give unto it should burden us as authors of a new gospel in the house of God, nor in respect of some cause which the Fathers had more than we have to use the same, nor finally for any such offence or scandal as heretofore it hath been subject unto by error now reformed in the minds of men.

LXVI. The ancient custom of the Church was after they had baptized, to add thereunto imposition of hands with effectual prayer for the illumination of God's most Holy Spirit¹ to confirm and perfect that which the grace of the same Spirit had already begun in baptism.

Of Confirmation after Baptism.

For our means to obtain the graces which God doth bestow are our prayers. Our prayers to that intent are available as well for others as for ourselves. To pray for others is to *bless* them for whom we pray, because prayer procureth the blessing of God upon them, especially the prayer of such as God either most respecteth for their piety and zeal that way, or else regardeth for that their place and calling bindeth them above others unto this duty as it doth both natural and spiritual fathers.

With prayers of spiritual and personal benediction the manner hath been in all ages to use *imposition of hands*, as a ceremony betokening our *restrained desires* to the party, whom we present unto God by prayer. Thus when Israel *blessed* Ephraim and Manasses Joseph's sons, he *imposed* upon them his hands and prayed², "God, in whose sight my fathers "Abraham and Isaac did walk, God which hath fed me all "my life long unto this day, and the Angel which hath delivered me from evil bless these children." The prophets which healed diseases by prayer, used therein the selfsame ceremony. And therefore when Eliseus willed Naaman to

¹ Tertull. de Resur. Car. [c. 8.] "bratur, ut et anima Spiritu illuminetur." ² Gen. xlviii. 14.

wash himself seven times in Jordan for cure of his foul disease it much offended him; ¹“I thought,” saith he, “with myself, surely the man will come forth and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and put his hand on the place to the end he may so heal the leprosy.” In consecrations and ordinations of men unto rooms of divine calling, the like was usually done from the time of Moses to Christ². Their suits that came unto Christ for help were also tendered oftentimes and are expressed in such forms or phrases of speech as shew that he was himself an observer of the same custom³. He which with imposition of hands and prayer did so great works of mercy for restoration of bodily health, was worthily judged as able to effect the infusion of heavenly grace into them whose age was not yet depraved with that malice which might be supposed a bar to the goodness of God towards them. They⁴ brought him therefore young children to put *his hands* upon them and *pray*.

[2.] After the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that which he had begun continued in the daily practice of his Apostles, whose prayer and imposition of hands were a mean whereby thousands became partakers of the wonderful gifts of God. The Church had received from Christ a promise that such as have believed in him these signs and tokens should follow them⁵. “To cast out devils, to speak with tongues, to drive away serpents, to be free from the harm which any deadly poison could work, and to cure diseases by imposition of hands.” Which power, common at the first in a manner unto *all believers*, all believers had not power to derive or communicate unto all other men, but whosoever was the instrument of God to instruct, convert and baptize them, the gift of miraculous operations by the power of the Holy Ghost they had not but only at the Apostles’ own hands⁶. For which cause Simon Magus perceiving that power to be in none but them, and presuming that they which had it might sell it, sought to purchase it of them with money⁷.

¹ 2 Kings v. 11.² Num. xxvii. 18.³ Matt. ix. 18; Mark v. 23; viii. 22.⁴ Matt. xix. 13; Mark x. 13; Luke xviii. 15.⁵ Mark xvi. 17.⁶ Acts xix. 6.⁷ Acts viii. 17, 18.

[3.] And as miraculous graces of the Spirit continued after the Apostles’ times¹; (“for,” saith Irenæus, “they which are truly his disciples do in his name and through grace received from him such works for the benefit of other men as every of them is by him enabled to work; some cast out devils, insomuch as they which are delivered from wicked spirits have been thereby won unto Christ, and do constantly persevere in the church and society of faithful men; some excel in the knowledge of things to come, in the grace of visions from God, and the gift of prophetic predictions; some by laying on their hands restore them to health which are grievously afflicted with sickness; yea there are that of dead have been made alive and have afterwards many years conversed with us. What should I say? The gifts are innumerable wherewith God hath enriched his Church throughout the world, and by virtue whereof in the name of Christ crucified under Pontius Pilate the Church every day doth many wonders for the good of nations, neither fraudulently nor in any respect of lucre and gain to herself, but as freely bestowing as God on her hath bestowed his divine graces;”) so it no where appeareth that ever any did by prayer and imposition of hands sithence the Apostles’ times make others partakers of the like *miraculous gifts* and graces, as long as it pleased God to continue the same in his Church, but only Bishops the Apostles’ successors for a time even in that power. St. Augustine acknowledgeth that such gifts were not permitted to last always, lest men should wax cold with the commonness of that the strangeness whereof at the first inflamed them². Which words of St. Augustine declaring how the

¹ Iren. lib. ii. cap. 57. [p. 188. Διὸ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐκείνου ὀνόματι οἱ ἀληθῶς αὐτοῦ μαθηταί, παρ’ αὐτοῦ λαβόντες τὴν χάριν, ἐπιτελοῦσιν ἐπ’ εὐεργεσία τῇ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνθρώπων, καθὼς εἰς ἕκαστος αὐτῶν τὴν δωρεὰν εἴληψε παρ’ αὐτοῦ· οἱ μὲν γὰρ δαίμονας ἐλαυνουσι βεβηλῶς καὶ ἀληθῶς, ὥστε πολλάκις καὶ πιστεύουσιν αὐτοὺς ἐκείνους τοὺς καθαρισθέντας ἀπὸ τῶν πονηρῶν πνευμάτων, καὶ εἶναι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· οἱ δὲ καὶ πρόγνωσιν ἔχουσι τῶν μελλόντων, καὶ ὄπτασις, καὶ ῥήσεις προφητικὰς· ἄλλοι δὲ τοὺς κάμνοντας διὰ τῆς τῶν χειρῶν ἐπιθέσεως ἰῶνται, καὶ ὑγιεῖς ἀποκαθιστᾶσιν· ἦδη δὲ, καθὼς ἔφαμεν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἠγέρθησαν, καὶ παρέμειναν σὺν ἡμῖν ἰκανοῖς ἔτεσι. καὶ τί γάρ; οὐκ ἔστιν ἀριθμὸν εἰπεῖν τῶν χαρισμάτων, ὧν κατὰ πάντος τοῦ κόσμου ἡ ἐκκλησία παρὰ θεοῦ λαβοῦσα, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, ἐκάστης ἡμέρας ἐπ’ εὐεργεσία τῇ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐπιτελεῖ, μήτε ἐξαπατώσά τινας, μήτε ἐξαργυρίζομένη· ὡς γὰρ δωρεὰν εἴληψε παρὰ θεοῦ, δωρεὰν καὶ διακονεῖ.]

² August. de Vera Relig. cap. 25. [t. i. 763. “F. Accepimus majores