

Separation From False Worship, Idolatry & Popish Principles

by John Calvin

Christians must separate from false worship and idolatry, and doubly detest the papal mass, in order to remain faithful to God's worship.

Duration: 48:09

Scripture: Exodus 20:3, Deuteronomy 6:5, Psalm 16:4, Psalm 69:9, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 10:14, 1 John 5:21

Topics: "Idolatry", "Faithfulness"

Description

In this sermon on Psalm 16:4, John Calvin emphasizes the importance of dedicating ourselves to God once we have come to know Him as our Father and Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. He warns against idolatry and the worship of false gods, stating that those who give idols the honor due to God are estranged from Him. Calvin urges believers to reject superstitions, idolatries, and abuses that go against God's truth and obscure His honor. He encourages Christians to persevere in their faith and remain steadfast in the pure profession of their beliefs.

Transcript

This is a sermon on the fourth verse of Psalm 16, by John Calvin, in which all Christians are exhorted to flee outward idolatry. The fourth verse of Psalm 16, Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, Nor take up their names into my lips. Here we must treat a rather clear and simple doctrine, although most of those who call themselves believers have left no subtlety untried to conceal their evil.

The sum of the matter is that once we have come to know the living God as our Father, and Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, we must dedicate body and soul to Him, who by His infinite goodness has adopted us as His children. And we must take care to do homage to this good Savior for what cost Him so dearly. We must likewise not only renounce every sort of unfaithfulness, but also distance ourselves from all superstitions which are contrary both to the service of God and to the honor of His Son, and which cannot be reconciled with the pure doctrine of the gospel and the true confession of faith.

I said that this teaching is inherently simple enough and that it would only remain to put it into good practice, were it not that many people seek out little cavils in order not to appear at fault in what is thus condemned by the mouth of God. We are therefore constrained to dwell further on the exposition of it so that everyone may know his duty, and in order that no one may deceive himself, supposing to have

escaped by covering himself with a wet paper bag. However, since some suppose this a needless argument regarding us, who by God's grace have purged our churches of the corruptions and idolatries of potpourri, before proceeding further it would be well to show that such people are grossly mistaken.

In the first place, when we are shown what an offense it is to pollute ourselves with idolatries by pretending to consent to their impieties or to cling to them, we are instructed to groan concerning our past wrongs and to ask God's forgiveness in all humility and to recognize the incalculable favor he did us in drawing us up out of such a mire into which we had cast ourselves. We cannot overly magnify such a mercy, and since we do not know what may befall us or what God has in store for us, it is good for us to be forearmed, so that wherever we end up and whatever temptations assail us, we may not turn aside from the pure word of God. There may be some among us who have had to travel in papal slants.

Such ones being in the battle must be armed. On the other hand, if God today gives us freedom to serve him purely, we do not know how long this will last. Let us therefore take this time, during which we are at rest, not as if it should last indefinitely, but as a ceasefire which affords us the opportunity to strengthen ourselves so that when we are called upon to confess our faith, we may not be unprepared, because we did not give it thought when we had time.

We must likewise consider our poor brethren who are under the tyranny of the Antichrist in order to take pity on them and to beseech God to fortify them in the steadfastness required in his word. We ourselves must also entreat them not to fall asleep or flatter themselves, but rather, having understood their duty, to make the effort needed to glorify God. For we are not only taught for our own benefit, but rather that each one, according to the measure of his faith, may share with his neighbors out of what he was taught in God's school.

We therefore see that it is useful, yea, needful, both for us and for our brethren, that our memory of this teaching be refreshed often. And this is so, above all, when the text which we must expound leads us there. In this passage, David makes a great affirmation in something of a solemn vow that he will never share in the sacrifices of idolaters, and even that he will have idols in such hatred and detestation that he will abstain from pronouncing their names, as if it were polluting his mouth in naming them.

This is not merely one man's personal doing. Rather, the example of David is a general rule for all of God's children. However, that we may better understand this and be more affected by it, note the motive that he attaches to it, which is like the basis of his terror being associated with idolaters.

He says, The Lord is mine inheritance. Psalm 16.5 Is not this true for all believers? At least, there is no believer who does not glory in this. And indeed it is very certain that once God has given himself to us in the person of his Son, he daily invites us to lay hold on him.

Yet there are precious few who are moved at this point as the thing demands, for we can only lay hold on God if we are also entirely his. It is therefore with just cause that David, on the basis of this theme of God being his inheritance, determines to abstain from all idol pollutions which turn us away from God and alienate us from him. This is the way the prophet Isaiah, 57 verse 6, after reproaching the Jews for abandoning themselves to false gods which they had fashioned, adds, They are their lot.

By these words he indicates that God forsakes any union with idolaters and strips and disinherits them of the infinite good that he had done them in giving him than himself. Someone will retort that this deals with those who trust in idols and deceive themselves through unbelief. This I grant.

Yet I answer on the contrary that if those who give idols all the honor which is due to God are entirely cut off from him, then they who because of fear and weakness pretend to consent to superstitions are also at least partly estranged from him. For whether sincerely or by bearing with them, or by being willing, or appearance, there is no way that one can draw near to idols without withdrawing just as far from God. Let this therefore be a settled matter for us that they who seek to lay hold on God for their inheritance truly and from a pure heart will have no truck with idols from which he has so utterly divorced himself that he desires that all of his own fight them to the death.

It is noteworthy that in this passage David declares that he will not participate in their offerings and that their names will not cross his lips. He could certainly have said, I will not be deceived in the stupid rites of unbelievers. I will not put my trust in such abuses.

I will not leave the truth of God to follow such lies. He does not talk like that. Rather, he says he will not involve himself in their ceremonies.

He thus promises to keep his body pure in God's service as well as his soul. In the first place, we must see here whether it is idolatry to indicate outwardly that one agrees with the superstitions by which God's worship is corrupted and perverted. Those who straddle the fence allege that since God desires to be worshipped in spirit that one cannot worship idols without trusting them.

But the answer is plain, that God does not so desire to be worshipped in spirit that he forsakes the rest as if it were not his. There are plenty of other passages that speak of bending our knees before him and of lifting up our hands toward heaven. What then? The main service he demands certainly is spiritual, but the declaration the faithful make to serve and honor him alone comes next and must be promptly added.

One passage alone will suffice to refute the use they make of this saying. It is found recorded in the second chapter of Daniel that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to go along with the superstition that Nebuchadnezzar had instituted declared that they would not worship his gods. Had these fine sophists been there they would have mocked at the naivety of these three servants of God.

They would have said, poor wretches, it is not worshipping if you don't do it with faith. There is no idolatry unless there is devotion. But these holy persons followed a better counsel and indeed their answer does not stem from their own mind but it is the Holy Spirit who prompts their tongues.

Unless we care to resist him we must get from this passage the real definition that it is a genuine type of idolatry when one commits an outward act which is repugnant to the true worship of God even though it may be performed only faintly. It is in vain that these hypocrites cavil it is not idolatry since our trust is not in it. They stand condemned by this sentence pronounced by the great judge.

Now such people quibble aiming merely to diminish in part the offense which they cannot entirely excuse. They grant that it is ill done yet they would like such an act to be considered a venial sin. If one were to concede what they seek they still would not have gained anything.

Suppose we do not call such a pretense of worshipping idols idolatry. It will not be any less a disloyalty against God a deed repugnant to confession of faith a pollution and sacrilege. I ask you is not God's honor wronged if we betray the promise we made him? If we are so cowardly as to renounce our Christianity indirectly if we are too faced and pollute ourselves in the things that God has cursed ought we to twist our mouth and say that we have committed a minor offense? Let us therefore be done with such subterfuges

seeing as they only serve to make us bolder in evil doing without diminishing our guilt.

There are others whose effrontery is greater misrepresenting the passage they not only seek to make men believe that it is not such a great and shocking sin they maintain pure and simple that it is no sin. It is enough, they say that God be served in the heart. Well and good if the heart were not too faced.

For in the case of true integrity the body will not pull in the other direction. I ask them what directs their feet to the temple when they go to hear the Mass? Their legs will never take off on their own impulse. Thus they are persuaded that they do have some affection for serving idols and that they desire to placate the enemies of the truth and that their life is more precious to them than God's honor.

Yet their impudence is too apparent so much so that I am embarrassed to contend with them as if there were some color of plausibility in their position. Yet it is needful to do so since they are so pleased with it and are like drunken men in it. It is enough, they suppose, that God be worshipped in spirit.

To whom then will the body belong? Saint Paul exhorts us to bear the Lord in both because both are his. 1 Corinthians 6.20 Shall we be permitted to use the body which God created to do homage to the devil? It would be better if they would simply declare themselves Manichaeans denying that God is the creator of the whole man. If they had even the slightest taste for the gospel they would never wander into such license for they show that they do not know what it is to have been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God.

Suppose it is as they maintain. How shall we expect the resurrection of the flesh unless Jesus Christ is the redeemer of both body and soul? Saint Paul instructs us not to become the servants of men since we were bought so dearly. 1 Corinthians 7.23 Does not anyone who gives himself over to the service of idols trample underfoot the blood of Jesus Christ who is the price of immortal glory which we await in our bodies? What point is there in defiling and profaning our bodies before idols since they are promised the crown of life in heaven? Is this the way to enter God's heavenly kingdom? A wallowing in the realms of Satan? Furthermore, it is not for nothing that it says that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore those who do not know that we must keep them, that is, our bodies in all holiness, make it abundantly clear that they have never understood the gospel at all. They also demonstrate that they don't know the first thing about Jesus Christ nor about his grace. For when it says that we are bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, Ephesians 5.30 it is surely to indicate that we are united with him both in body and in soul.

One may not therefore defile his body in any superstition except at the cost of this sacred union by which we are made members of the Son of God. Let these subtle scholars answer me whether they received baptism in their souls alone. Has not God ordained that this sign be engraved in our flesh? Should the body upon which the mark of Jesus Christ has been stamped be polluted with opposing abominations? Is the supper received only in spirit and not also by the hands and by the mouth? God sets his sons' pantries in our bodies and shall we defile them with filth and garbage? It is unlawful to print two coins on one piece of gold or to put two contradictory seals on one government document the one on top of the other.

And shall mortal men take the liberty of falsifying baptism and the holy supper of Jesus Christ and say that there is no harm in it? Such folk deserve to have their servants tell them that their heart is set on serving them when they sleep and make merry and don't move so much as a finger to get anything done. If they counter that it is not the same thing since we are talking about those who are under us I answer that since

God who has no need of us is pleased to employ us to honor him it is disgraceful for us to do the opposite and expect to be all right as far as he is concerned. It is even more disgraceful that an earthworm and a carrion such as man should seek to enjoy greater preeminence than his creator.

Such beasts must be addressed even more plainly. They say it is lawful for them to dissemble among the papists. Who is it that gives them the food they eat there? And who makes the earth bring forth? If they cannot deny that God feeds them there as elsewhere why do they honor the devil with their bodies? If they were Christians I would employ loftier reasons and fine I would ask them why we dwell here below.

Yet sadly they who toy with God by their cowls make themselves so foolish that they must be handled as one handles crazy people. They suppose it enough to say that everything where they are must be done through fear. But if there were ground for such reasoning one would be obliged to see that Joseph would have done no wrong had he lain with his master's wife not to enjoy her body but only to yield to the force to which she was subjecting to him.

He would have done foolishly in suffering so much and exposing himself to such trouble since he had a means of escape. However, we do better to hold to the testimony of the Holy Spirit which praises Joseph's faithfulness. If one does no wrong in practicing idolatry to avoid the rage of the papists then whoever betrays his master will also be found guiltless.

A man who poisons his neighbor or commits any other treachery out of fear of offending his master will be excused. This is insisting too much on this point which presents no difficulty or confusion as I said. Yet it is worthwhile to see how confounded people wind up when they seek to escape God's judgment by their subtleties.

There are people today who use yet another way of escape. Though they confess that it is detestable to involve oneself in the idolatries of pagans they are unwilling to extend this to the superstitions of the papacy as if all the impieties of the pagans were not corruptions of the true service of God. I ask you, from where did the pagans get all their ceremonies if not from the Holy Fathers? The evil consisted in bastardizing what God had instituted.

All the abominations which have ever existed in the world have had this fair cover, the name of God and of religion. Yet that has not justified them nor permitted the faithful to participate in them. Let us go further.

Although I grant from here that there is a difference between the idolatry of papists nigh that God forbade his ancient people the idolatry of Bethel as well as that of foreign lands. When the calves are set up in Dan and Bethel it is under pretense of the name of God even of the one who delivered his people from Egypt. 1 Kings 12:28 Yet since the worship established there is repulsive to the teaching of the law God condemns all who go there to pollute themselves.

The supper of Jesus Christ and the papal mass are just as incompatible as the sacrifices of Moses and of Jeroboam. Therefore, from where does this liberty come to go to mass under the pretext that it is a disguised version of the supper of Jesus Christ? On the contrary, I say that those who truly fear God must doubly detest it because it more openly profanes the holy ordinance of the Son of God than it would if it were not set up in opposition to it. So let us hold to this rule that all human inventions which are set up to corrupt the simple purity of the word of God and to undo the worship which he demands and approves are true sacrileges in which the Christian man cannot participate without blaspheming God and trampling his honor underfoot.

I know how hard and intolerable this strictness seems to those who desire to be handled according to their own appetite. What, however, would they have me do? Knowing how delicate they are, I would gladly spare them if I could. Yet they and I must both suffer condemnation as soon as God has spoken.

They find no one, so they say, stricter than me. Now I would have them see that thus far I have treated them only too gently. Be this as it may, they cannot exempt themselves from what the prophet Jeremiah requires of the Jews who are captives in Babylon.

Jeremiah 10.11 Not only does he permit them from attending the abominations of the Chaldeans or pretending to consent to them, but he gives them express orders to indicate that it is repulsive to them. His message is like this. You are to tell them, the gods which did not make heaven and earth will perish from the earth and from under heaven.

There is something here which ought to be noted. While the prophet wrote his book in Hebrew, he couches this verse in the broad dialect of Chaldea. As if he oppressed the Jews to speak another language in order to show their disagreement with the idolaters more clearly.

Now let our big babies go and complain about me as if I were too extreme. In fact, I have never required of them half of what the prophet demands. Now whether I talk about it or hold my peace on the subject, we are none of us any less bound by this law that God imposes on us.

And indeed it is not for nothing that God addresses the faithful saying, Ye are my witnesses and my servant whom I have chosen. Isaiah 44.8 Anyone who would be approved as a member of Jesus Christ must show that this title suits him. Therefore they who bury the testimony to the truth by their dissembling and hypocrisy have no excuse.

So I ask you, what will become of them who undermine it, that is the testimony, all their life? For that is what these ones do, who not only hide their Christianity so as to show no sign of it before men, but also commit actions which are entirely contrary to it. The children of God who are in the midst of such pollutions therefore have no recourse but to afflict their souls according to the example of good lot. Yea, they must speak against the evil as God gives them means and occasion.

Now let us specify the idolatries which are the fashion nowadays. I have already touched somewhat on the mass, although it is a blasphemy more gross and shocking than anything else. Yet there are still lost case lawyers who equivocate about it.

Willy nilly, they are obliged to grant what I say. The mass in itself is a renunciation of the death of Jesus Christ and a sacrilege fashioned by Satan to snuff out the sacrament of the supper. Neither can they deny that the prayers made to saints and the dispensations made regarding trespasses are so many abuses which profane the invocation of the name of God, which is the holiest of all things.

Yet they do not think themselves to be at all at fault for taking part in such garbage among the papists. What can we do about it, they say? We are not permitted to reform the things we know to be bad because we are private persons and those who have public authority support them, so we must conform. I grant everything that they say, but none of it is relevant.

It is not up to them to reform the general state of the nation. Nor does anyone require that of them. Yet we admonish them to reform their own persons, which is within their calling.

They are not told to purge the temples and the streets, but let every man keep his body and his soul in purity and take care that God be honored in his house. Abolishing the mass in the nation and forsaking it if one cannot prevent it from being practiced are two very different things. Again, they return to the refrain of their song.

They say they do not renounce the death and passion of Jesus Christ because it is not their intention. However, ask them what it is that a Christian confesses with his mouth if it is not what he believes in his heart. That what they do is entirely contrary to Christian confession.

It is plain enough. They have faith as much as they possibly can. I shall speak even more pointedly.

The mass is a sacrifice in which the papists think to offer Jesus Christ in order to reconcile themselves with God. If that were right, Jesus Christ would not have obtained righteousness and salvation for us through his death and passion. Let men squirm as much as they like.

They must come to this at last. All such as attend the mass in the name of devotion proclaim their consent to it. Thus as far as in them lies, they show that they do not have perfected redemption through the death of Jesus Christ.

There are some who are a bit more restrained. They keep only the parochial mass which they find to be more in conformity with the supper of Jesus Christ. And indeed one might say that the masses said by monks and canons and chaplains and all which are based on the devotion of a particular individual or which are bought day by day are like provincial whores.

The parochial mass is like a debauched woman who hides behind her husband's name in order to be thought an honest woman. However, the analogy is not entirely apt. A promiscuous married woman will be somewhat ashamed of giving herself to all comers.

Yet the parochial mass is the most common of all idolatries. Although these people dress it up as retaining some trace of the supper of Jesus Christ as if a braggart were a better man because he dressed in the clothes of the man whose throat he had cut and mounted on his horse. They say, we seek the supper of Jesus Christ.

Since we cannot have it in purity under the tyranny in which we dwell we must make do with this vestige waiting on God to deal with it. That is a fine excuse. As long as they lack the sound and complete form of the supper by way of temporary provision they profess that they do not consider Jesus Christ the eternal and unique priest and that they seek a new sacrifice every week to blot out their sins.

For a parochial mass signifies all this just as much as a mass of St. Nicholas or one for the dead. They pretend to worship an idol and claim to seek Jesus Christ. And in order to avoid warring against God without sword or shield they advance the authority of this one here or that one there as if a man's absolution could exempt them from God's judgment.

I need not say that they simply lie when they bring forth the ones they do bring forth as their advocates. Even if some holy personage had long thought that it was not such a great wrong to attend the parochial mass. If afterward he understood what was involved one should give so much the more credence to his condemnation of it since one sees that God's glory constrained him to it that is to express the condemnation.

And that he found himself overcome concerning his former position. But what point is there in muddying the waters? Do they think to rebuff God by the dictum of a mere man? We know that truth alone rules in his judgment without regard to persons. Now the fact is that the parochial mass is instituted for the purpose of sacrificing Jesus Christ and to make intercession with God both for the living and the dead.

And that a piece of bread is worshipped there as if it were the Son of God. I'm certainly not examining things in detail. There are a thousand other corruptions.

I'm only addressing the greatest of them. But those who pretend to agree with them wash their hands to their heart's content. They will at last be no more righteous than Pilate.

Yet it is amazing that these good parishioners, when it comes to Easter go looking for an out-of-the-way chapel where some half-Christian monk can celebrate a bastard supper for them. If the parochial mass approaches the supper of Jesus Christ, why don't they stick with it? Once they have been there every Sunday of the year to participate in the sacrament of the supper, they then renounce it. However, one must not wonder too much at such inconsistency.

It is the true reward of all who are not grounded in God's truth. God avenges Himself on them by causing them to be always wavering and contradicting themselves in their conduct. I know that they fancy themselves greatly wronged when anyone reproves them regarding such a disguised supper.

But what recourse have we since it does not conform to the Master's rule? I do not condemn it because it is done in secret. I know that the supper was never observed better or in a more holy manner than when the disciples withdrew to celebrate it because of the tyranny of enemies. There are, however, two intolerable vices here.

One is that those who erect this monkey cage of a supper pretend that it is their mass, and they want others to think that it is so. The other is that the father from whom they receive it does not give it to them as a Christian pastor, but in his office as a papal priest. They think it is a good defense to say that their celebrant does not intend for them to worship the bread or the wine.

That he omits the canon which contains the greatest impieties, and that he gives both elements to the entire assembly. However, when this comes before the great judge, they will know what good such cloaks have done them. They must sense it already, and I appeal to the pricks and stings which they have in their consciences.

It is here that this case must be thrown out of court, for without further inquiry, they know what they seek to reflect, both to God's enemies and to the people in general. God would have to renounce himself in order to approve such a profession. If everyone on earth conspired together to justify them, the most able of them would never be able to absolve himself of halting between two sides.

Well, God has declared by his prophet that no one will ever get him to approve such wavering. 1 Kings 18.21 As to the man whom they get to administer their supper, it is a mockery to try to pass him off as competent for such a job. However, they say that the virtue of the sacraments does not depend on the worthiness of persons.

This I grant, and say further that if a devil administered the supper, it would be no worse for it, and on the contrary, if an angel celebrated the mass, it would not be any better for that. But another matter concerns us at present, namely whether the Pope's orders conferred upon a monk qualify him to discharge the

function of a pastor. If they answer that they do not suppose that has anything to do with it, and that they do not choose him because of his qualifications, the facts indicate the contrary.

Let us suppose, as they maintain, that they do not care about that, that is, about his ordination. Still, I must insist upon their outward profession. It appears that they are protecting themselves with the mask of a priest.

To celebrate the Lord's supper properly, they ought to separate themselves from the line of idolaters, so that they would not have nothing in common with them in this regard. Instead of that, they go, as it were, to register and pretend to belong to the body. They further seek to make us out to be like the ancient heretics who condemned the use of the sacraments because of the vices of men, as if we had an eye to personal vices, and not rather to the state.

I pass over this briefly, but however little I touch on it, it is ample to confound such a vile impudence. However, if they are so senseless as to feel nothing, the word of God must suffice us. He says through the prophet Jeremiah 4, verse 1, Israel, if thou wilt return, return unto me.

These words show what simplicity we should use in our dealings with God without beating around the bush. And this is why St. Paul declares that he has been sent to convert unbelievers from their vanities to the living God. Acts 14, 15.

This is like saying that it accomplishes nothing to turn from an accustomed evil to other counterfeits. Rather, superstitions must be abolished altogether, so that the true religion may be established in its purity. For otherwise, men do not come directly to God, but waver and wander, not knowing which way they are to turn.

There are others who go so far as to forsake the mass, but still want to keep some other patches of what they call divine worship. They say their purpose is to avoid being considered simply irreligious. There are perhaps some who do this out of good intentions.

At least I am happy to think so. But whatever their desire, this is certainly not to say that they hold to a good rule, nor to a good measure. Some will say, we can attend baptisms, for they involve no evident idolatry.

As if the sacrament was not disfigured in so many ways that it seems Jesus Christ is still in the house of Pilate in order to be buffeted and subjected to all manner of abuse. As to their saying that their purpose is to show that they are not irreligious people, ask of their consciences and they will answer that it is in order to make the papists happy, and that they disguise themselves to avoid persecution. Others watch the time in order not to encounter masses.

Yet, they go to the temple so that others will think they have been there to mass. Some keep only vespers. I would like to know from them if they think nothing of offering incense to the idols, or of a solemn prayer being based on the intercession and merit of some saint, or the singing of the Salve Regina, Hail Mary Queen, a thing so laden with execrable and diabolical blasphemies.

I need hardly say that the song, being as it is in an unknown tongue, is an entirely patent profanation of the Holy Scripture and of the praises of God, as St. Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 14. Let us pardon this last offense. If they attend vespers to make some show of their Christianity, they will do so especially at the great festivals.

Well, there the main idols will be solemnly perfumed with incense, which is a type of sacrifice as Scripture teaches. It was also the way in which the pagans commonly had the weak deny God. Here is the issue over which the majority of the martyrs suffered death.

They were unwilling to offer odors and incense to idols. These people, in going to sniff the scent of the censers, go to defile themselves in the pollution which is committed there. And they think we should let this go? I, however, beseech them in God's name that they mark well what is said here, that the believer must so detest idols that he does not let them, that is their names, cross his lips for fear of defiling them.

This saying should certainly make us draw back from whatever might involve us in the corruptions of idolaters. Now to speak plainly of those who practice hypocrisy, trying to compromise between God and the devil, I can find no better illustration to show their real nature than that of Esau. When he saw his father Isaac send Jacob off to Mesopotamia to take a wife, because they, that is the marriageable women of Canaan, were unacceptable to him and Rebekah his wife, he took action designed to trouble them grievously.

He indeed took a new wife, as if to satisfy his parents in part, but he did not forsake the one he had already. He thus retained the ill of which Isaac complained. But to fix it up in some way he throws in this new marriage.

So it is with people who are so entangled with the world that they cannot obey God's commandments. They make all sorts of mixtures and cook up all sorts of stews in order to somehow conform to the will of God. Yet they invariably retain some corruption so that nothing they do is pure and right.

I know there are many poor, perplexed souls who, without hypocrisy, long to walk aright and yet cannot rid themselves of many scruples. Nor am I at all surprised by this, given the dreadful confusion of potpourri. Indeed, I greatly pity those who seek some way to be able to worship God and to get along among His enemies, if possible.

What then shall we say? All I know to do for either of these groups is to show them their failings so that they may remedy them. If anyone comes to inquire of me regarding this or that point in detail, I will send them back to the general rule that I have from God. I say this because there are some who are so persistent that I would never have done with them if I were to address all their concerns.

Such people could well be compared to others who, after hearing a sermon exhorting them to attire themselves modestly without excess or showiness, would like the preacher to tailor their pants and stitch their shoes. What then shall we do? In all of this there is a certain goal we must aim for. Let the zeal of God's house tug at our hearts.

Let us bear whatever reproach may befall His name. When such a zeal burns in our hearts, not for a bit, but unceasingly, we will care so little whether we are permitted to pretend to approve abominations which dishonor God, that we will be unable to hold our peace and dissemble when we see them. That is the abominations.

Note carefully what was said. The zeal of God's house, Psalm 69.9. This has to do with the outward order of the church which we are to use in professing our faith. I am not bothered by detractors who say that we speak this way from a comfortable position because their argument is not with me.

Since there is nothing here of my personal opinion as one can see, I say the same for all such philosophers who give their judgment without understanding. Since they do not care to listen to God, who addresses them to teach them, I leave them before His judgment seat, where they will hear His judgment, which will not be open to debate. Since they do not deign to hear Him as their master now, they will know Him for their judge despite themselves.

The quickest and most clever of them will find themselves sadly deceived, but they do as they please to overturn or obscure what is right. Hiding their heads in the sand to blind themselves will not win their point for them. I say this because the counselors, judges, and lawyers not only undertake to argue against God in order to mock Him, but they vomit their blasphemies as sovereign constraints rejecting all of Holy Scripture.

These little gargoyles are so proud that once they have spoken they cannot bear for reason or truth to enter in. This is why I mentioned in passing that they ought to consider what terrible vengeance is in store for all who turn the truth into a lie. Let the bedroom and armchair scholars refrain from presumption, from reeling against the heavenly Master whom we ought to all hear.

Here, fair titles will be of no avail to anyone. Rather, the lord abbots, priors, directors, and archdeacons will be obliged to lead the dance in the condemnation God will execute. If, my lords, the courtiers have been accustomed to satisfying men with their holy water, let them not expect to do the like with God.

Let all the high and mighty bow their heads and cast off their customary brocade unless they care to feel the mighty hand of Him at whose word they ought to tremble. It is too crude a deceit for them to suppose that in making me their adversary they will no longer have God for their judge. Let them scratch my name from off their papers in this matter, for I only seek to have God heard and obeyed.

I do not seek to rule men's consciences according to my own pleasure, nor to impose any necessity or law upon them. As for the others who do not reject God's word with such arrogance, yet are so weak and cowardly that one cannot make them budge, I exhort them to look to themselves a little better and not to flatter themselves as they have been doing. Let them open their eyes and wake up to see and feel their evil.

I know the difficulties they are in, and I do not speak to them of serving God purely among idolaters as if it were an easy thing to do. But if they lack strength, let them turn to God, that He may strengthen them, and so that they may learn to prefer His glory to everything else. But if they lack strength, let them turn to God, that He may strengthen them, and so that they may learn to prefer His glory to everything else in the world.

Let all poor believers who live in popery hear this, as the prophet Jeremiah, being in Jerusalem, sent this same instruction to the people held captive in Babylon. If the tyranny of the Pope and of his minions is harsh and cruel, the Jews in that time had their share of the same treatment. Yet they are commanded to despise the idolatry of the Chaldean, in the very jargon of that land.

For it is not right that the tyranny of men should diminish God's right to be honored by us. Here there is neither exemption nor special privilege for great or small, for rich or poor. Let all therefore bow the neck.

Let the poor man fear, lest if he say, I do not know what to do, God also say, neither do I have any use for you. Let not the rich become drunk with their ease, as if they were wallowing in the dregs. Rather let them

learn from St. Paul's example to consider all that keeps or hinders them from living as Christians, to be so much garbage and loss.

However, we also, for our part, must not forget what I mentioned in the beginning. Let us apply this for our own learning. Wherever we land and whatever may befall, may we always be ready to persevere in the pure profession of our faith, despising all superstitions, idolatries and abuses which are contrary to God's truth, which obscure His honor and overturn His worship.

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Although the book is not to be available until the summer of 2001, Lord willing, the text form of this book is now available on the new Presbyterian Heritage Publications CD. This CD is available from Stillwater's Revival Books. On the web, we are at www.swrb.com. It can also be reached by email at swrb@swrb.com. Our phone number is 780-450-3730.

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