



# The Obedience of a Christian Man

(1494 - 1536)



By William Tyndale

THE OBEDIENCE OF A  
CHRISTIAN MAN  
&  
How Christian Rulers  
Ought to Govern

*By*  
*William Tyndale*

*The Obedience of a Christen man, and how Christen rulers  
ought to govern, wherein also (if thou mark diligently)  
thou shalt find eyes to perceiue the crafty conuience of all jugglers.*

Set forth by  
**William Tyndale**  
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## Contents

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE .....	ii
TO THE READER. ....	1
THE PROLOGUE UNTO THE BOOK. ....	10
OBEDIENCE OF CHILDREN TO THEIR ELDERS. ....	12
OBEDIENCE OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS. ....	13
OBEDIENCE OF SERVANTS TO THEIR MASTERS. ....	13
OBEDIENCE TO KINGS, PRINCES, AND RULERS. ....	14
AGAINST THE POPE'S FALSE POWER. ....	19
OFFICE OF A FATHER, AND HOW HE SHOULD RULE. ..	23
OFFICE OF A HUSBAND, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE. 24	
OFFICE OF A MASTER, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE. 24	
DUTY OF LANDLORDS. ....	24
DUTY OF KINGS, JUDGES, AND OFFICERS. ....	25
ANTICHRIST. ....	34
OF THE SACRAMENTS. ....	42
SACRAMENT OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST... 42	
BAPTISM. ....	42
OF WEDLOCK. ....	43
OF ORDER. ....	43
OF PENANCE. ....	45
OF CONFESSION. ....	45
OF CONTRITION. ....	47
SATISFACTION. ....	47
ABSOLUTION. ....	48
CONFIRMATION. ....	50
ANOINTING WITH OIL.....	51
OF MIRACLES AND WORSHIPPING SAINTS. ....	55
OF PRAYER. ....	59
THE FOUR SENSES OF THE SCRIPTURE. ....	62
A COMPENDIOUS SUMMARY. ....	72

# THE OBEDIENCE OF A CHRISTIAN MAN

## INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

In the last paragraph of his *Practice of Prelates*, dated 1530, and published some time before the end of that year, Tyndale says: 'Let them remember, that I well toward three years ago sent forth the True Obedience of a Christian Man. This gives probability to what Ames mentions in an irregular way, namely, that there is an edition of the Obedience of the date of Dec. 11, 1527. It was about that time that Tyndale removed from Worms to Marburg in Hesse, a city on the Lahn, where the landgrave Philip, the bold and uncompromising friend of the Reformation, had just founded an university, and Hans Luft had just established a printing press.

On the 8th of May, 1528, this Hans Luft sent forth an edition of the Obedience in 4to, of which Mr Offor has a copy; and on the 2nd of October in the same year, there came out another edition from his press in small 12mo, of which the Parker Society possesses a copy, which the editor has used for collation with the reprint in Day's folio of 1573, prepared by Foxe the martyrologist.

In the introductory notice to the treatise on the parable of the Wicked Mammon, the reader has had evidence that the Obedience shared in its circulation and influence, and in the consequent hostility of the ruling church. There are, however, two instances of its separate distribution and influence, which should not pass unnoticed. One of the meekest and holiest of the martyrs of Henry VIII.'s reign was Thomas Bilney, a fellow of Trinity hall, Cambridge. In 1529, he had been terrified and tempted by bishop Tonstal into abjuring the faith he really held: but his friend, bishop Latimer, tells us that this brought him 'into such anguish and agony, that nothing did him good, not even the communication of God's word, because he thought that all the whole scriptures sounded his condemnation, till God endued him with such strength,' that he took leave of his Cambridge friends, and said that he would go to Jerusalem; and departing into Norfolk, he there preached publicly the doctrine which he had abjured.

Having done this, he entered Norwich, and 'gave to an anchoress, whom he had converted to Christ, a New Testament of Tyndale's translation, and the Obedience of a Christian Man; whereupon he was apprehended and carried to prison, there to remain till the blind bishop Nix sent up for a writ to burn him.' It seems to have been about the time of Bilney's abjuration, that Anne Boleyn had well nigh been brought into difficulty, by lending the Obedience to one of her attendants. As Strype tells the story from a MS. left by Foxe, and now in the British Museum, she had 'lent it for perusal to a fair young gentlewoman in her service, named Mrs Gainsford; from whose hands it was playfully carried off by the young lady's suitor, a Mr George Zouch.'

Cardinal Wolsey had about the same time 'given commandment to the prelates, and especially to Dr Sampson, dean of the king's chapel, that they should have a vigilant eye over all people for such books; that so, as much as might be, they might not come to the king's reading.' But Mr Zouch was so delighted with what he read, that he could not refrain from reading it, not even in the king's chapel. His close attention to his book caught Dr Sampson's eye; and at length the dean called him up, took the book from him, and required to know what was his name, and 'whose man he was.'

The book was presently delivered over by the dean to the cardinal: but, in the mean while, 'the lady Anne asketh her woman for the book. She on her knees told all the circumstances. The lady Anne shewed herself not sorry, nor angry with either of the two: but, Well, said she, it shall be the dearest book that ever the dean or cardinal took away. So she goes to the king, and upon her knees she desireth the king's help for her book. Upon the king's token, the book was restored. And now, bringing the book to him, she besought his grace, most tenderly, to read it. The king did so, and delighted in the book: for, saith he, this book is for me, and all kings to read.' Strype's *Eccles. Mem.* ch. 15, Vol. 1, p. 173. Oxf. Ed. 1822.

This story has received confirmation from Wyatt's *Memoir*, printed from a MS. in Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*, by Singer, Vol. 2, pp. 202-5. Wyatt indeed represents the cardinal as bringing the book to the king, to point out what he thought Henry would dislike, and to complain of those who countenanced such books. But this is obviously not irreconcilable with the account given in Foxe's MS. Nor is the king's continued hostility to Tyndale incompatible with his being pleased for a time with a powerfully written book, pressed upon his notice by the lady Anne; nor yet with his clearly perceiving that the author had justly rebuked the inroads made upon the authority of princes by an usurping priesthood.]

# WILLIAM TYNDALE, OTHERWISE CALLED HITCHINS, TO THE READER.

GRACE, peace, and increase of knowledge in our Lord Jesus Christ, be with thee, reader, and with all that call on the name of the Lord unfeignedly and with a pure conscience. Amen.

Let it not make thee despair, neither yet discourage thee, O reader, that it is forbidden thee in pain of life and goods, or that it is made breaking of the king's peace, or treason unto his highness, to read the word of thy soul's health. But much rather be bold in the Lord, and comfort thy soul: forasmuch as thou art sure, and hast an evident token through such persecution, that it is the true word of God; which word is ever hated of the world, neither was ever without persecution, (as thou seest in all the stories of the Bible, both of the new Testament and also of the old,) neither can be, no more than the sun can be without his light; and forasmuch as contrariwise thou art sure that the pope's doctrine is not of God, which (as thou seest) is so agreeable unto the world, and is so received of the world; or which rather so receiveth the world and the pleasures of the world, and seeketh nothing but the possessions of the world, and authority in the world, and to bear a rule in the world; and persecuteth the word of God, and with all wiliness driveth people from it, and with false and sophistical reasons maketh them afraid of it; yea, curseth them, and excommunicateth them, and bringeth them in belief that they be damned if they look on it, and that it is but doctrine to deceive men; and moveth the blind powers of the world to slay with fire, water, and sword, all that cleave unto it: for the world loveth that which is his, and hateth that which is chosen out of the world to serve God in the Spirit, as Christ saith to his disciples, John "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but I have chosen you out of the world, and therefore the world hateth you."

Another comfort hast thou, that, as the weak powers of the world defend the doctrine of the world, so the mighty power of God defendeth the doctrine of God: which thing thou shalt evidently perceive, if thou call to mind the wonderful deeds which God hath ever wrought for his word in extreme necessity, since the world began, beyond all man's reason, which are written, (as Paul saith, Romans 15) "for our learning, (and not for our deceiving,) that we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope." The nature of God's word is to fight against hypocrites.

It began at Abel, and hath ever since continued, and shall, I doubt not, until the last day. And the hypocrites have alway the world on their sides; as thou seest in the time of Christ. They had the elders, that is to wit, the rulers of the Jews on their side; they had Pilate and the emperor's power on their side; they had Herod also on their side: moreover they brought all their worldly wisdom to pass, and all that they could think, or imagine, to serve for their purpose. First, to fear the people withal, they excommunicated all that believed in him, and put them out of the temple; as thou seest, John 9. Secondly, they found the means to have him condemned by the emperor's power, and made it treason to Caesar to believe in him. Thirdly, they obtained to have him hanged as a thief or a murderer, which, after their belly-wisdom, was a cause above all causes that no man should believe in him: for the Jews take it for a sure token of everlasting damnation, if a man be hanged; for it is written in their law, Deuteronomy 21 "Cursed is whosoever hangeth on tree." Moses also in the same place commandeth, if any man be hanged, to take him down the same day and bury him, for fear of polluting or defiling the country; that is, lest they should bring the wrath and curse of God upon them. And therefore the wicked Jews themselves, which with so venomous hate persecuted the doctrine of Christ, and did all the shame that they could do unto him, though they would fain have had Christ to hang still on the cross, and there to rot, (as he should have done by the emperor's law,) yet for fear of defiling their sabbath, and of bringing the wrath and curse of God upon them, begged of Pilate to take him down, John 19 which was against themselves.

Finally, when they had done all they could, and that they thought sufficient, and when Christ was in the heart of the earth, and so many bills and poleaxes about him to keep him down, and when it was past man's help, then help God. When man could not bring him again, God's truth fetched him again. The oath that God had sworn to Abraham, to David, and to other holy fathers and prophets, raised him up again, to bless and save all that believe in him. Thus became the wisdom of the hypocrites foolishness. Lo, this was written for thy learning and comfort.

How wonderfully were the children of Israel locked in Egypt! In what tribulation, cumbrance, and

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

adversity were they in! The land also that was promised them was far off, and full of great cities, walled with high walls up to the sky, and inhabited with great giants; yet God's truth brought them out of Egypt, and planted them in the land of the giants. This was also written for our learning: for there is no power against God's, neither any wisdom against God's wisdom: he is stronger and wiser than all his enemies. What help it Pharaoh, to drown the men children? So little (I fear not) shall it at the last help the pope and his bishops, to burn our men children; which manfully confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and that there is no other name given unto men to be saved by, as Peter testifieth, Acts, in the fourth chapter.

Who dried up the Red sea? Who slew Goliath? Who did all those wonderful deeds which thou readest in the bible? Who delivered the Israelites evermore from thralldom and bondage, as soon as they repented and turned to God? Faith verily, and God's truth, and the trust in the promises which he had made. Read the 11th to the Hebrews for thy consolation.

When the children of Israel were ready to despair, for the greatness and the multitude of the giants, Moses comforted them ever, saying, Remember what your Lord God hath done for you in Egypt, his wonderful plagues, his miracles, his wonders, his mighty hand, his stretched out arm, and what he hath done for you hitherto. He shall destroy them; he shall take their hearts from them, and make them fear and flee before you. He shall storm them, and stir up a tempest among them, and scatter them, and bring them to nought. He hath sworn; he is true; he will fulfill the promises that he hath made unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is written for our learning: for verily he is a true God; and is our God as well as theirs; and his promises are with us, as well as with them; and he present with us, as well as he was with them. If we ask, we shall obtain; if we knock, he will open; if we seek, we shall find; if we thirst, his truth shall fulfill our [desire].

Christ is with us until the world's end. Let his little flock be bold therefore.

For if God be on our side, what matter maketh it who be against us, be they bishops, cardinals, popes, or whatsoever names they will?

Mark this also, if God send thee to the sea, and promise to go with thee, and to bring thee safe to land, he will raise up a tempest against thee, to prove whether thou wilt abide by his word, and that thou mayest feel thy faith, and perceive his goodness. For if it were always fair weather, and thou never brought into such jeopardy, whence his mercy only delivered thee, thy faith should be but a presumption, and thou shouldst be ever unthankful to God and merciless unto thy neighbor.

If God promise riches, the way thereto is poverty. Whom he loveth, him he chasteneth: whom he exalteth, he casteth, down: whom he saveth, he damneth first. He bringeth no man to heaven, except he send him to hell first. If he promise life, he slayeth first: when he buildeth, he casteth all down first. He is no patcher; he cannot build on another man's foundation.

He will not work until all be past remedy, and brought unto such a case, that men may see, how that his hand, his power, his mercy, his goodness and truth, hath wrought altogether. He will let no man be partaker with him of his praise and glory. His works are wonderful, and contrary unto man's works. Who ever, saving he, delivered his own Son, his only Son, his dear Son, unto the death, and that for his enemies' sake, to win his enemy, to overcome him with love, that he might see love, and love again, and of love to do likewise to other men, and to overcome them with well doing?

Joseph saw the sun and the moon and the eleven stars worshipping him. :Nevertheless, ere that came to pass, God laid him where he could neither see sun nor moon, neither any star of the sky, and that many years; and also undeserved; to nurture him, to humble, to meek, and to teach him God's ways, and to make him apt and meet for the room and honor against he came to it; that he might perceive and feel that it came of God, and that he might be strong in the spirit to minister it godly.

He promised the children of Israel a land with rivers of milk and honey; but brought them for the space of forty years into a land, where not only rivers of milk and honey were not, but where so much as a drop of water was not; to nurture them, and to teach them, as a father doth his son, and to do them good at the latter end; and that they might be strong in their spirit and souls, to use his gifts and benefits godly and after his will.

He promised David a kingdom, and immediately stirred up king Saul against him to persecute him; to hunt him, as men do hares with greyhounds, and to ferret him out of every hole, and that for the space of many years; to tame him, to meek him, to kill his lusts [desires]; to make him feel other men's diseases; to make him merciful; to make him understand that he was made king to minister and to score [serve] his brethren, and that he should not think that his subjects were made to minister unto his [desires], and that it were lawful for him to take away from them life and goods at his pleasure.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Oh that our kings were so nurtured now-a-days! Which our holy bishops teach of a far other manner, saying, Your grace shall take your pleasure; yea, take what pleasure you list, spare nothing; we shall dispense with you; we have power, we are God's vicars: and let us alone with the realm, we shall take pain for you, and see that nothing be well: your grace shall but defend the faith only.

Let us, therefore, look diligently whereunto we are called, that we deceive not ourselves. We are called, not to dispute, as the pope's disciples do; but to die with Christ, that we may live with him; and to suffer with him, that we may reign with him. We be called unto a kingdom that must be won with suffering only, as a sick man winneth health. God, is he that doth all things for us, and fighteth for us; and we do but suffer only. Christ saith, "As my Father sent me, so send I you;" John and, "If they persecute me, then shall they persecute you." ( John 15) And Christ saith, "I send you forth as sheep among wolves." ( Matthew 10) The sheep fight not; but the shepherd fighteth for them, and careth for them. "Be harmless as doves, therefore," saith Christ, "and wise as serpents." The doves imagine no defense, nor seek to avenge themselves.

The serpent's wisdom is, to keep his head, and those parts wherein his life resteth. Christ is our head; and God's word is that wherein our life resteth.

To cleave, therefore, fast unto Christ, and unto those promises which God hath made us for his sake, is our wisdom. "Beware of men," saith he; "for they shall deliver you up unto their councils, and shall scourge you; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake. The brother shall betray, or deliver, the brother to death, and the father the son; and the children shall rise against father and mother, and put them to death." Hear what Christ saith more: "The disciple is not greater than his master; neither the servant greater, or better, than his lord. If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much rather shall they call his household servants so!" And, Luke 14 saith Christ: "Which of you, disposed to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to perform it? Lest when he hath laid the foundation, and then not able to perform it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to make an end: so likewise none of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, can be my disciple." Whosoever, therefore, casteth not this aforehand, 'I must jeopard life, goods, honor, worship, and all that there is, for Christ's sake,' deceiveth himself, and maketh a mock of himself unto the godless hypocrites and infidels. "No man can serve two masters, God and mammon;" that is to say, wicked riches also. Matthew 6. Thou must love Christ above all things: but that doest thou not, if thou be not ready to forsake all for his sake: if thou have forsaken all for his sake, then art thou sure that thou lovest him.

Tribulation is our right baptism; and is signified by plunging into the water. "We that are baptized in the name of Christ," saith Paul, "are baptized to die with him."

The Spirit through tribulation purgeth us, and killeth our fleshly wit, our worldly understanding, and belly-wisdom, and filleth us full of the wisdom of God. Tribulation is a blessing that cometh of God, as witnesseth Christ: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Is not this a comfortable word? Who ought not rather to choose, and desire to be blessed with Christ, in a little tribulation, than to be cursed perpetually with the world for a little pleasure?

Prosperity is a right curse, and a thing that God giveth to his enemies. "Woe be to you rich," saith Christ, Luke 6 "lo, ye have your consolation: woe be to you that are full, for ye shall hunger: woe be to you that laugh, for ye shall weep: woe be to you when men praise you, for so did their fathers unto the false prophets:" yea, and so have our fathers done unto the false hypocrites. The hypocrites, with worldly preaching, have not gotten the praise only, but even the possessions also, and the dominion and rule of the whole world.

Tribulation for righteousness is not a blessing only, but also a gift that God giveth unto none save his special friends. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer rebuke for Christ's sake. And Paul, in the second epistle and third chapter to Timothy, saith, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution:" and, Philippians 1 he saith, "Unto you it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake."

Here seest thou that it is God's gift, to suffer for Christ's sake. And Peter in the fourth chapter of his first epistle saith: "Happy are ye if ye suffer for the name of Christ; for the glorious Spirit of God resteth in you." Is it not an happy thing, to be sure that thou art sealed with God's Spirit to everlasting life? And, verily, thou art sure thereof, if thou suffer patiently for his sake. By suffering art thou sure; but by persecuting canst thou never be sure: for Paul, Romans 5 saith, "Tribulation maketh feeling;" that is, it maketh us feel the goodness of God, and his help, and the working of his Spirit. And, the twelfth chapter

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

of the second epistle to the Corinthians, the Lord said unto Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect through weakness." Lo, Christ is never strong in us till we be weak. As our strength abateth, so groweth the strength of Christ in us: when we are clean emptied of our own strength, then are we full of Christ's strength: and look, how much of our own strength remaineth in us, so much lacketh there of the strength of Christ. "Therefore," saith Paul, in the said place in the second epistle to the Corinthians, "very gladly will I rejoice in my weakness, that the strength of Christ may dwell in me.

Therefore have I delectation," saith Paul, "in infirmities, in rebukes, in need, in persecutions, and in anguish for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." Meaning, that the weakness of the flesh is the strength of the Spirit. And by flesh understand wit, wisdom, and all that is in a man before the Spirit of God come; and whatsoever springeth not of the Spirit of God, and of God's word. And of like testimonies is all the scripture full.

Behold, God setteth before us a blessing and also a curse: a blessing, verily, and that a glorious and an everlasting, if we suffer tribulation and adversity with our Lord and Savior Christ; and an everlasting curse, if, for a little pleasure sake, we withdraw ourselves from the chastising and nurture of God, wherewith he teacheth all his sons, and fashioneth them after his godly will, and maketh them perfect (as he did Christ), and maketh them apt and meet vessels to receive his grace and his Spirit, that they might perceive and feel the exceeding mercy which we have in Christ, and the innumerable blessings and the unspeakable inheritance, whereto we are called and chosen, and sealed in our Savior Jesus Christ, unto whom be praise for ever. Amen.

Finally: whom God chooseth to reign everlastingly with Christ, him sealeth he with his mighty Spirit, and poureth strength into his heart, to suffer afflictions also with Christ for bearing witness unto the truth. And this is the difference between the children of God and of salvation, and between the children of the devil and of damnation: that the children of God have power in their hearts to suffer for God's word; which is their life and salvation, their hope and trust, and whereby they live in the soul and spirit before God. And the children of the devil in time of adversity fly from Christ, whom they followed feignedly, their hearts not sealed with his holy and mighty Spirit; and get them to the standard of their right father the devil, and take his wages, the pleasures of this world, which are the earnest of everlasting damnation: which conclusion the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews well confirmeth, saying, "My son, despise not thou the chastising of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth, him he chastiseth; yea, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Lo, persecution and adversity for the truth's sake is God's scourge, and God's rod, and pertaineth unto all his children indifferently: for when he said, he scourgeth every son, he maketh none exception.

Moreover saith the text: "If ye shall endure chastising, God offereth himself unto you as unto sons. What son is it that the Father chastiseth not? If ye be not under correction, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

Forasmuch, then, as we must needs be baptized in tribulations, and through the Red sea, and a great and a fearful wilderness, and a land of cruel giants, into our natural country; yea, and inasmuch as it is a plain earnest that there is no other way into the kingdom of life than through persecution, and suffering of pain, and of very death, after the ensample of Christ; therefore let us arm our souls with the comfort of the scriptures: how that God is ever ready at hand, in time of need, to help us; and how that such tyrants and persecutors are but God's scourge, and his rod to chastise us.

And as the father hath alway, in time of correction, the rod fast in his hand, so that the rod doth nothing but as the father moveth it; even so hath God all tyrants in his hand, and letteth them not do whatsoever they would, but as much only as he appointeth them to do, and as far forth as it is necessary for us. And as, when the child submitteth himself unto his father's correction and nurture, and humbleth himself altogether unto the will of his father, then the rod is taken away; even so, when we are come unto the knowledge of the right way, and have forsaken our own will, and offer ourselves clean unto the will of God, to walk which way soever he will have us, then turneth he the tyrants; or else, if they enforce to persecute us any further, he putteth them out of the way, according unto the comfortable ensamples of the scripture.

Moreover, let us arm our souls with the promises both of help and assistance, and also of the glorious reward that followeth. "Great is your reward in heaven," saith Christ, Matthew 5; and, "He that knowledgeth me before men, him will I knowledge before my Father that is in heaven;" and, "Call on me in time of tribulation, and I will deliver thee," Psalm 50; and, "Behold the eyes of the Lord are over them, that fear him, and over them that trust in his mercy, to deliver their souls from death, and to feed them in time of hunger." Psalm 33. And in Psalm 34 saith David: "The Lord is nigh them that are



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

troubled in their hearts, and the meek in spirit will he save. The tribulations of the righteous are many, and out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all the bones of them, so that not one of them shall be bruised. The Lord shall redeem the souls of his servants." And of such like consolation are all the psalms full. Would to God when ye read them ye understood them! And, Matthew 10 "When they deliver you, take no thought what ye shall say; it shall be given you the same hour what ye shall say: for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." "The very hairs of your head are numbered," saith Christ also, Matthew 10. If God care for our hairs, he much more careth for our souls, which he hath sealed with his holy Spirit. Therefore saith Peter, "Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you." ( 1 Peter 5) And Paul, 1 Corinthians 10 saith: "God is true, he will not suffer you to be tempted above your might."

And Psalm 55 "Cast thy care upon the Lord."

Let thy care be to prepare thyself with all thy strength, for to walk which way he will have thee; and to believe that he will go with thee, and assist thee, and strengthen thee against all tyrants, and deliver thee out of all tribulation. But what way, or by what means he will do it, that commit unto him and his godly pleasure and wisdom, and cast that care upon him.

And though it seem never so unlikely, or never so impossible unto natural reason, yet believe stedfastly that he will do it: and then shall he (according to his old use) change the course of the world, even in the twinkling of an eye, and come suddenly upon our giants, as a thief in the night, and compass them in their wiles and worldly wisdom. "When they cry, Peace and all is safe, then shall their sorrows begin, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth with child:" and then shall he destroy them, and deliver thee, unto the glorious praise of his mercy and truth. Amen.

And as pertaining unto them that despise God's word, counting it as a fantasy or a dream; and to them also that for fear of a little persecution fall from it, set this before thine eyes; how God, since the beginning of the world, before a general plague, ever sent his true prophets and preachers of his word, to warn the people, and gave them time to repent. But they, for the greatest part of them, hardened their hearts, and persecuted the word that was sent to save them. And then God destroyed them utterly, and took them clean from the earth. As thou seest what followed the preaching of Noe in the old world; what followed the preaching of Lot among the Sodomites; and the preaching of Moses and Aaron among the Egyptians; and that suddenly, against all possibility of man's wit.

Moreover, as oft as the children of Israel fell from God to the worshipping of images, he sent his prophets unto them; and they persecuted and waxed hard-hearted: and then he sent them into all places of the world captive.

Last of all, he sent his own Son to them, and they waxed more hardhearted than ever before: and see what a fearful example of his wrath and cruel vengeance he hath made of them to all the world, now almost fifteen hundred years.

Unto the old Britons also (which dwelled where our nation doth now) preached Gildas; and rebuked them of their wickedness, and prophesied both to the spiritual (as they will be called) and unto the laymen also, what vengeance would follow, except they repented. But they waxed hardhearted; and God sent his plagues and pestilences among them, and sent their enemies in upon them on every side, and destroyed them utterly.

Mark also, how Christ threateneth them that forsake him, for whatsoever cause it be; whether for fear, either for shame, either for loss of honor, friends, life, or goods. "He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father that is in heaven. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." All this he saith Matthew 10. And in Mark 8 he saith: "Whosoever is ashamed of me, or my words, among this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels."

And Luke 9 also: "None that layeth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is meet for the kingdom of heaven."

Nevertheless yet, if any man have resisted ignorantly, as Paul did, let him look on the truth which Paul wrote after he came to knowledge. Also, if any man clean against his heart (but overcome with the weakness of the flesh), for fear of persecution, have denied, as Peter did, or have delivered his book, or put it away secretly; let him (if he repent,) come again, and take better hold, and not despair, or take it for a sign that God hath forsaken him. For God oftentimes taketh his strength even from his very elect, when they either trust in their own strength, or are negligent to call to him for his strength. And that doth he to teach them, and to make them feel, that in that fire of tribulation, for his word's sake, nothing can endure and abide save his work, and that strength only which he hath promised. For the which strength

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

he will have us to pray unto him night and day, with all instance.

That thou mayest perceive how that the scripture ought to be in the mother tongue, and that the reasons which our spirits make for the contrary, are but sophistry and false wiles to fear thee from the light, that thou mightest follow them blindfold, and be their captive to honor their ceremonies, and to offer to their belly:

First, God gave the children of Israel a law by the hand of Moses in their mother tongue; and all the prophets wrote in their mother tongue, and all the psalms were in the mother tongue. And there was Christ but figured, and described in ceremonies, in riddles, and parables, and in dark prophecies. What is the cause that we may not have the old Testament, with the new also, which is the light of the old, and wherein is openly declared, before the eyes, that which there was darkly prophesied? I can imagine no cause verily, except it be that we should not see the work of antichrist and juggling of hypocrites. What should be the cause that we, which walk in the broad day, should not see as well as they that walked in the night; or that we should not see as well at noon, as they did in the twilight? Came Christ to make the world more blind? By this means Christ is the darkness of the world, and not the light, as he saith himself.

Moreover Moses saith, Deuteronomy "Hear, Israel; let these words which I command thee this day stick fast in thine heart, and whet them on thy children, and talk of them as thou sittest in thine house, and as thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and bind them for a token to thine hand, and let them be a remembrance between thine eyes, and write them on the posts and gates of thine house."

This was commanded generally unto all men. How cometh it that God's word pertaineth less unto us, than unto them? Yea, how cometh it, that our Moseses [the Catholic Chrch] forbid us, and command us the contrary; and threaten us if we do, and will not that we once speak of God's word? How can we [know] God's word (that is, to put it in practice, use and exercise) upon our children and household, when we are violently kept from it and know it not? How can we (as Peter commandeth) give a reason of our hope; when we [know] not what it is that God hath promised, or what to hope? Moses also commandeth in the said chapter, if the son ask what the testimonies, laws, and observances of the Lord mean, that the father teach him. If our children ask what our ceremonies (which are more than the Jews' [traditions] were) mean; no father can tell his son. And in the eleventh chapter he repeateth all again, for fear of forgetting.

They will say haply, the scripture requireth a pure mind and a quiet mind; and therefore the lay-man, because he is altogether cumbered with worldly business, cannot understand them. If that be the cause, then it is a plain case that our prelates understand not the scriptures themselves: for no layman is so tangled with worldly business as they are. The great things of the world are ministered by them; neither do the lay-people any great thing, but at their assignment. 'If the scripture were in the mother tongue,' they will say, 'then would the lay-people understand it, every man after his own ways.' Wherefore serveth the curate, but to teach him the right way? Wherefore were the holy days made, but that the people should come and learn? Are ye not abominable schoolmasters, in that ye take so great wages, if ye will not teach? If ye would teach, how could ye do it so well, and with so great profit, as when the lay-people have the scripture before them in their mother tongue? For then should they see, by the order of the text, whether thou jugglest or not: and then would they believe it, because it is the scripture of God, though thy living be never so abominable. Where now, because your living and your preaching are so contrary, and because they grope out in every sermon your open and manifest lies, and smell your unsatiable covetousness, they believe you not when you preach truth. But, alas! the curates themselves (for the most part) [know] no more what the new or old Testament meaneth, than do the Turks: neither know they of any more than that they read at mass, matins, and evensong, which yet they understand not: neither care they, but even to mumble up so much every day, as the pie and popinjay speak, they [know] not what, to fill their bellies withal. If they will not let the lay-man have the word of God in his mother tongue, yet let the priests have it; which for a great part of them do understand no Latin at all, but sing, and say, and patter all day, with the lips only, that which the heart understandeth not.

Christ commandeth to search the scriptures. John 5. Though that miracles bare record unto his doctrine, yet desired he no faith to be given either to his doctrine, or to his miracles, without record of the scripture.

When Paul preached, Acts 17 the other searched the scriptures daily, whether they were as he alleged them. Why shall not I likewise see, whether it be the scripture that thou allegest? Yea, why shall I not see the scripture, and the circumstances, and what goeth before and after; that I may know

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

whether thine interpretation be the right sense, or whether thou jugglest, and drawest the scripture violently unto thy carnal and fleshly purpose; or whether thou be about to teach me, or to deceive me?

Christ saith, that there shall come false prophets in his name, and say that they themselves are Christ; that is, they shall so preach Christ that men must believe in them, in their holiness, and things of their imagination, without God's word: yea, and that Against-Christ, or Antichrist, that shall come, is nothing but such false prophets, that shall juggle with the scripture, and beguile the people with false interpretations, as all the false prophets, scribes, and Pharisees did in the old testament. How shall I know whether ye are that Against-Christ, or false prophets, or no, seeing ye will not let me see how ye allege the scriptures? Christ saith, "By their deeds ye shall know them." Now when we look on your deeds, we see that ye are all sworn together, and have separated yourselves from the lay-people, and have a several kingdom among yourselves, and several laws of your own making; wherewith ye violently bind the lay-people, that never consented unto the making of them. A thousand things forbid ye, which Christ made free; and dispense with them again for money: neither is there any exception at all, but lack of money. Ye have a secret council by yourselves.

All other men's secrets and counsels know yet and no man yours. Ye seek but honor, riches, promotion, authority, and to reign over all, and will obey no man. If the father give you ought of courtesy, ye will compel the son to give it violently, whether he will or not, by craft of your own laws. These deeds are against Christ.

When a whole parish of us hire a schoolmaster to teach our children, what reason is it that we should be compelled to pay this schoolmaster his wages, and he should have license to go where he will, and to dwell in another country, and to leave our children untaught? Doth not the pope so? Have we not given our tithes of courtesy unto one, for to teach us God's word; and cometh not the pope, and compelleth us to pay it violently, to them that never teach? Maketh he not one parson, which never cometh at us? Yea, one shall have five or six, or as many as he can get, and [does not know] oftentimes where never one of them standeth. Another is made vicar, to whom he giveth a dispensation to go where he will, and to set in a parish priest, which can but minister a sort of dumb ceremonies. And he, because he hath most labor and least profit, polleth on his part; and setteth here a mass-penny, there a trental, yonder dirige-money, and for his beadroll, with a confession-penny and such like. And thus are we never taught, and are yet nevertheless compelled; yea, compelled to hire many costly schoolmasters. These deeds are verily against Christ. Shall we therefore judge you by your deeds, as Christ commandeth? So are ye false prophets, and the disciples of Antichrist, or Against-Christ.

The sermons which thou readest in the Acts of the apostles, and all that the apostles preached, were no doubt preached in the mother tongue. Why then might they not be written in the mother tongue? As, if one of us preach a good sermon, why may it not be written? Saint Jerom also translated the bible into his mother tongue: why may not we also? They will say it cannot be translated into our tongue, it is so rude. It is not so rude as they are false liars. For the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin. The manner of speaking is both one; so that in a thousand places thou needest not but to translate it into the English, word for word; when thou must seek a compass in the Latin, and yet shall have much work to translate it well-favoredly, so that it have the same grace and sweetness, sense and pure understanding with it in the Latin, and as it hath in the Hebrew. A thousand parts better may it be translated into the English, than into the Latin. Yea, and except my memory fail me, and that I have forgotten what I read when I was a child, thou shalt find in the English chronicle, how that king Adelstone caused the holy scripture to be translated into the tongue that then was in England, and how the prelates exhorted him thereto. Moreover, seeing that one of you ever preacheth contrary to another; and when two of you meet, the one disputeth and brawleth with the other, as it were two scolds; and forasmuch as one holdeth this doctor, and another that; one followeth Duns, another St Thomas, another Bonaventure, Alexander de Hales, Raymond, Lyre, Brygot, Dorbel, Holcot, Gorram, Trumbett, Hugo de Sancto Victore, De Monte Regio, De Nova Villa, De Media Villa, and such like out of number; so that if thou hadst but of every author one book, thou couldst not pile them up in any warehouse in London, and every author is one contrary unto another. In so great diversity of spirits, how shall I know who lieth, and who sayeth truth? Whereby shall I try and judge them?

Verily by God's word, which only is true. But how shall I that do, when thou wilt not let me see scripture?

Nay, say they, the scripture is so hard, that thou couldst never understand it but by the doctors. That is, I must measure the [yardstick] by the cloth.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Here be twenty cloths of divers lengths and of divers breadths: how shall I be sure of the length of the meteyard by them? I suppose, rather, I must be first sure of the length of the meteyard, and thereby measure and judge of the cloths. If I must first believe the doctor, then is the doctor first true, and the truth of the scripture dependeth of his truth; and so the truth of God springeth of the truth of man. Thus antichrist turneth the roots of the trees upward. What is the cause that we damn some of Origen's works, and allow some? How know we that some is heresy and some not? By the scripture, I [think]. How know we that St Augustine (which is the best, or one of the best, that ever wrote upon the scripture) wrote many things amiss at the beginning, as many other doctors do? Verily, by the scriptures; as he himself well perceived afterward, when he looked more diligently upon them, and revoked many things again. He wrote of many things which he understood not when he was newly converted, ere he had thoroughly seen the scriptures; and followed the opinions of Plato, and the common persuasions of man's wisdom that were then famous.

They will say yet more shamefully, that no man can understand the scriptures without philautia, that is to say, philosophy. A man must be first well seen in Aristotle, ere he can understand the scripture, say they.

Aristotle's doctrine is, that the world was without beginning, and shall be without end; and that the first man never was, and the last shall never be; and that God doth all of necessity, neither careth what we do, neither will ask any accounts of that we do. Without this doctrine, how could we understand the scripture, that saith, God created the world of nought; and God worketh all things of his free will, and for a secret purpose; and that we shall all rise again, and that God will have accounts of all that we have done in this life! Aristotle saith, Give a man a law, and he hath power of himself to do or fulfill the law, and becometh righteous with working righteously. But Paul, and all the scripture saith, That the law doth but utter sin only, and helpeth not: neither hath any man power to do the law, till the Spirit of God be given him through faith in Christ. Is it not a madness then to say, that we could not understand the scripture without Aristotle? Aristotle's righteousness, and all his virtues, spring of man's free will. And a Turk, and every infidel and idolater, may be righteous and virtuous with that righteousness and those virtues. Moreover, Aristotle's felicity and blessedness standeth in avoiding of all tribulations; and in riches, health, honor, worship, friends, and authority; which felicity pleaseth our spirituality well. Now, without these, and a thousand such like points, couldst thou not understand scripture, which saith, That righteousness cometh by Christ, and not of man's will; and how that virtues are the fruits and the gift of God's Spirit; and that Christ blesseth us in tribulations, persecution, and adversity! How, I say, couldst thou understand the scripture without philosophy, inasmuch as Paul, in the second to the Colossians, warned them to 'beware lest any man should spoil them' (that is to say, rob them of their faith in Christ) 'through philosophy and deceitful vanities, and through the traditions of men, and ordinances after the world, and not after Christ?'

By this means, then, thou wilt that no man teach another; but that every man take the scripture, and learn by himself. Nay, verily, so say I not.

Nevertheless, seeing that ye will not teach, if any man thirst for the truth, and read the scripture by himself, desiring God to open the door of knowledge unto him, God for his truth's sake will and must teach him.

Howbeit, my meaning is, that as a master teacheth his apprentice to know all the points of the [yardstick]; first, how many inches, how many feet, and the half-yard, the quarter, and the nail; and then teacheth him to [measure] other things thereby: even so will I that ye teach the people God's law, and what obedience God requireth of us to father and mother, master, lord, king, and all superiors, and with what friendly love he commandeth one to love another; and teach them to know that natural venom and birth-poison, which moveth the very hearts of us to rebel against the ordinances and will of God; and prove that no man is righteous in the sight of God, but that we are all damned by the law: and then, when thou hast meeked them and feared them with the law, teach them the testament and promises which God hath made unto us in Christ, and how much he loveth us in Christ; and teach them the principles and the ground of the faith, and what the sacraments signify: and then shall the Spirit work with thy preaching, and make them feel. So would it come to pass, that as we know by natural wit what followeth of a true principle of natural reason; even so, by the principles of the faith, and by the plain scriptures, and by the circumstances of the text, should we judge all men's exposition, and all men's doctrine, and should receive the best, and refuse the worst. I would have you to teach them also the properties and manner of speakings of the scripture, and how to expound proverbs and similitudes. And then, if they go abroad and walk by the fields and meadows of all manner doctors and philosophers, they could catch no harm: they should discern the poison from the honey, and bring home nothing but that which is wholesome.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

But now do ye clean contrary: ye drive them from God's word, and will let no man come thereto, until he have been two years master of art. First, they nosel them in sophistry, and in benefundatum . And there corrupt they their judgments with apparent arguments, and with alleging unto them texts of logic, of natural philautia, of metaphysic, and moral philosophy, and of all manner books of Aristotle, and of all manner [of doctrines] which they yet never saw. Moreover, one holdeth this, another that; one is a Real, another a Nominal. What wonderful dreams have they of their predicaments, universals, second intentions, quiddities, hoecceties, and relatives; and whether species fundata in chimera be vera species; and whether this proposition be true, Non ens est aliquid ; whether ens be oequivocum , or univocum . Ens is a voice only, say some. Ens is univocum , saith another, and descendeth into ens creatum , and into ens increatum , per modos intrinsecos . When they have thiswise brawled eight, ten, or twelve or more years, and after that their judgments are utterly corrupt, then they begin their divinity; not at the scripture, but every man taketh a sundry doctor; which doctors are as sundry and as divers, the one contrary unto the other, as there are divers fashions and monstrous shapes, none like another, among our sects of religion. Every religion, every university, and almost every man, hath a sundry divinity. :Now whatsoever opinions every man findeth with his doctor, that is his gospel, and that only is true with him; and that holdeth he all his life long; and every man, to maintain his doctor withal, corrupteth the scripture, and fashioneth it after his own imagination, as a potter doth his clay. Of what text thou provest hell, will another prove purgatory; another limbo patrum ; and another the assumption of our lady; and another shall prove of the same text that an ape hath a tail. And of what text the gray friar proveth that our lady was without original sin, of the same shall the black friar prove that she was conceived in original sin. And all this do they with apparent reasons, with false similitudes and likenesses, and with arguments and persuasions of man's wisdom. Now there is no other division or heresy in the world save man's wisdom, and when man's foolish wisdom interpreteth the scripture. Man's wisdom scattereth, divideth, and maketh sects; while the wisdom of one is that a white coat is best to serve God in, and another saith a black, and another a gray, another a blue; and while one saith that God will hear your prayer in this place, another saith in that place; and while one saith this place is holier, and another that place is holier; and this religion is holier than that; and this saint is greater with God than that; and an hundred thousand like things. Man's wisdom is plain idolatry: neither is there any other idolatry than to imagine of God after man's wisdom. God is not man's imagination; but that only which he saith of himself. God is nothing but his law and his promises; that is to say, that which he biddeth thee to do, and that which he biddeth thee believe and hope. God is but his word, as Christ saith, John 8 "I am that I say unto you;" that is to say, That which I preach am I; my words are spirit and life.

God is that only which he testifieth of himself; and to imagine any other thing of God than that, is damnable idolatry. Therefore saith the hundred and eighteenth psalm, "Happy are they which search the testimonies of the Lord;" that is to say, that which God testifieth and witnesseth unto us.

But how shall I that do, when ye will not let me have his testimonies, or witnesses, in a tongue which I understand? Will ye resist God? Will ye forbid him to give his Spirit unto the lay as well as unto you? Hath he not made the English tongue? Why forbid ye him to speak in the English tongue then, as well as in the Latin?

Finally, that this threatening and forbidding the lay people to read the scripture is not for the love of your souls (which they care for as the fox doth for the geese), is evident, and clearer than the sun; inasmuch as they permit and suffer you to read Robin Hood, and Bevis of Hampton, Hercules, Hector and Troilus, with a thousand histories and fables of love and wantonness, and of ribaldry, as filthy as heart can think, to corrupt the minds of youth withal, clean contrary to the doctrine of Christ and of his apostles: for Paul saith, "See that fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, be not once named among you, as it becometh saints; neither filthiness, neither foolish talking nor jesting, which are not comely: for this ye know, that no whoremonger, either unclean person, or covetous person, which is the worshipper of images, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." And after saith he, "Through such things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of unbelief." Now seeing they permit you freely to read those things which corrupt your minds and rob you of the kingdom of God and Christ, and bring the wrath of God upon you, how is this forbidding for love of your souls?

A thousand reasons more might be made, as thou mayest see in Paraclesis Erasmi , and in his preface to the Paraphrase of Matthew , unto which they should be compelled to hold their peace, or to give shameful answers. But I hope that these are sufficient unto them that thirst the truth.

God for his mercy and truth shall well open them more, yea, and other secrets of his godly wisdom, if they be diligent to cry unto him; which grace grant God. Amen.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

### THE PROLOGUE UNTO THE BOOK.

FORASMUCH as our holy prelates and our ghostly religious, which ought to defend God's word, speak evil of it, and do all the shame they can to it, and rail on it; and bear their captives in hand, that it causeth insurrection and teacheth the people to disobey their heads and governors, and moveth them to rise against their princes, and to make all common, and to make havock of other men's goods: therefore have I made this little treatise that followeth, containing all obedience that is of God; in which, whosoever readeth it, shall easily perceive, not the contrary only, and that they lie, but also the very cause of such blasphemy, and what stirreth them so furiously to rage and to belie the truth.

Howbeit it is no new thing unto the word of God to be railed upon, neither is this the first time that hypocrites have ascribed to God's word the vengeance whereof they themselves were ever cause. For the hypocrites with their false doctrine and idolatry have evermore led the wrath and vengeance of God upon the people, so sore that God could no longer forbear, nor defer his punishment. Yet God, which is always merciful, before he would take vengeance, hath ever sent his true prophets and true preachers, to warn the people that they might repent. But the people for the most part, and namely the heads and rulers, through comfort and persuading of the hypocrites, have ever waxed more hard-hearted than before, and have persecuted the word of God and his prophets. Then God, which is also righteous, hath always poured his plagues upon them without delay; which plagues the hypocrites ascribe unto God's word, saying, 'See what mischief is come upon us since this new learning came up, and this new sect, and this new doctrine.' This seest thou, Jeremiah 44 where the people cried to go to their old idolatry again, saying, "Since we left it, we have been in all necessity and have been consumed with war and hunger." But the prophet answered them that their idolatry went unto the heart of God, so that he could no longer suffer the maliciousness of their own imaginations or inventions; and that the cause of all such mischiefs was, because they would not hear the voice of the Lord and walk in his law, ordinances, and testimonies. The scribes and the Pharisees laid also to Christ's charge, Luke 23 that he moved the people to sedition; and said to Pilate, "We have found this fellow perverting the people, and forbidding to pay tribute to Caesar, and saith that he is Christ a king." And again in the same chapter, "He moveth the people," said they, "teaching throughout Jewry, and began at Galilee even to this place." So likewise laid they to the apostles' charge, as thou mayest see in the Acts. St Cyprian also, and St Augustine, and many other more, made works in defense of the word of God against such blasphemies. So that thou mayest see how that it is no new thing, but an old and accustomed thing with the hypocrites, [against] God's word and the true preachers of all the mischief which their lying doctrine is the very cause of.

Neverthelater in very deed, after the preaching of God's word, because it is not truly received, God sendeth great trouble into the world; partly to avenge himself of the tyrants and persecutors of his word, and partly to destroy those worldly people which make of God's word nothing but a cloak of their fleshly liberty. They are not all good that follow the gospel.

Christ ( Matthew 13) likeneth the kingdom of heaven unto a net cast into the sea, that catcheth fishes both good and bad. The kingdom of heaven is the preaching of the gospel, unto which come both good and bad.

But the good are few. Christ calleth them therefore a "little flock," Luke 12. For they are ever few that come to the gospel of a true intent, seeking therein nothing but the glory and praise of God, and offering themselves freely and willingly to take adversity with Christ for the gospel's sake, and for bearing record unto the truth, that all men may hear it. The greatest number come, and ever came, and followed even Christ himself, for a worldly purpose: as thou mayest well see ( John 6), how that almost five thousand followed Christ, and would also have made him a king, because he had well fed them: whom he rebuked, saying, "Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles but because ye ate of the bread and were filled"; and drove them away from him with hard preaching.

Even so now, as ever, the most part seek liberty. They be glad when they hear the unsatiable covetousness of the spirituality rebuked; when they hear their falsehood and wiles uttered; when tyranny and oppression is preached against; when they hear how kings and all officers should rule christianly and brotherly, and seek no other thing save the wealth of their subjects; and when they hear that they have no such authority of God so to pill and poll as they do, and to raise up taxes and gatherings to maintain their phantasies, and to make war they wot not for what cause. And therefore, because the heads will not so rule, will they also no longer obey; but resist and rise against their evil heads; and one wicked destroyeth another. Yet is God's word not the cause of this, neither yet the preachers. For though that Christ himself taught all obedience, how that it is not lawful to resist wrong, but for the officer that

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

is appointed thereunto; and how a man must love his very enemy, and pray for them that persecute him, and bless them that curse him; and how that all vengeance must be remitted to God; and that a man must forgive if he will be forgiven of God; yet the people for the most part received it not: they were ever ready to rise, and to fight. For ever when the scribes and Pharisees went about to take Christ, they were afraid of the people. “Not on the holy day,” said they, Matthew 26 “lest any rumor arise among the people”: and, Matthew 21 “They would have taken him but they feared the people”: and Luke 20 Christ asked the Pharisees a question unto which they durst not answer, lest the people should have stoned them.

Last of all: forasmuch as the very disciples and apostles of Christ, after so long hearing of Christ’s doctrine, were yet ready to fight for Christ, clean against Christ’s teaching, (as Peter, Matthew 26 drew his sword, but was rebuked; and, Luke 9 James and John would have had fire to come from heaven to consume the Samaritans, and to avenge the injury of Christ, but were likewise rebuked;) if Christ’s disciples were so long carnal, what wonder is it if we be not all perfect the first day? Yea, inasmuch as we be taught, even of very babes, to kill a Turk, to slay a Jew, to burn an heretic, to fight for the liberties and right of the church, as they call it; yea, and inasmuch as we are brought in belief, if we shed the blood of our even christian, or if the son shed the blood of his father that begat him, for the defense, not of the pope’s godhead only, but also for whatsoever cause it be, yea, though it be for no cause, but that his holiness commandeth it only, that we deserve as much as Christ deserved for us, when he died on the cross; or, if we be slain in the quarrel, that our souls go, nay, fly to heaven, and be there ere our blood be cold: inasmuch, I say, as we have sucked in such bloody imaginations into the bottom of our hearts, even with our mother’s milk, and have been so long hardened therein; what wonder were it, if, while we be yet young in Christ, we thought that it were lawful to fight for the true word of God? Yea, and though a man were thoroughly persuaded that it were not lawful to resist his king, though he would wrongfully take away life and goods; yet might he think that it were lawful to resist the hypocrites, and to rise, not against his king but with his king, to deliver his king out of bondage and captivity, wherein the hypocrites hold him with wiles and falsehood, so that no man may be suffered to come at him, to tell him the truth.

This seest thou, that it is the bloody doctrine of the pope which causeth disobedience, rebellion and insurrection: for he teacheth to fight and to defend his traditions, and whatsoever he dreameth, with fire, water, and sword; and to disobey father, mother, master, lord, king, and emperor; yea, and to invade whatsoever land or nation, that will not receive and admit his godhead: where the peaceable doctrine of Christ teacheth to obey, and to suffer for the word of God, and to remit the vengeance and the defense of the word to God, which is mighty and able to defend it: which also as soon as the word is once openly preached, and testified, or witnessed unto the world, and when he hath given them a season to repent, is ready at once to take vengeance of his enemies, and shooteth arrows with heads dipt in deadly poison at them; and poureth his plagues from heaven down upon them; and sendeth the murrain and pestilence among them; and sinketh the cities of them; and maketh the earth swallow them; and compasseth them in their wiles; and taketh them in their own traps and snares, and casteth them into the pits which they digged for other men; and sendeth them a dazing in the head; and utterly destroyeth them with their own subtle counsel.

Prepare thy mind therefore unto this little treatise; and read it discreetly; and judge it indifferently. And when I allege any scripture, look thou on the text whether I interpret it right: which thou shalt easily perceive by the circumstance and process of them, if thou make Christ the foundation and the ground, and build all on him, and referrest all to him; and findest also that the exposition agreeth unto the common articles of the faith and open scriptures. And God the Father of mercy, which for his truth’s sake raised our Savior Christ up again to justify us, give thee his Spirit, to judge what is righteous in his eyes; and give thee strength to abide by it, and to maintain it with all patience and long-suffering, unto the example and edifying of his congregation, and glory of his name. Amen.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

### **THE OBEDIENCE OF ALL DEGREES PROVED BY GOD'S WORD:**

#### **AND FIRST OF CHILDREN UNTO THEIR ELDERS.**

GOD, which worketh all in all things, for a secret judgment and purpose, and for his godly pleasure, provided an hour that thy father and mother should come together, to make thee through them. He was present with thee in thy mother's womb, and fashioned thee and breathed life into thee; and, for the great love he had unto thee, provided milk in thy mother's breasts for thee against thou were born; moved also thy father and mother, and all other, to love thee, to pity thee, and to care for thee.

And as he made thee through them, so hath he cast thee under the power and authority of them, to obey and serve them in his stead; saying, "Honour thy father and mother." Exodus 20. Which is not to be understood in bowing the knee, and putting off the cap only, but that thou love them with all thine heart; and fear and dread them, and wait on their commandments; and seek their worship, pleasure, will and profit in all things; and give thy life for them, counting them worthy of all honor; remembering that thou art their good and possession, and that thou owest unto them thine own self, and all thou art able, yea, and more than thou art able to do.

Understand also, that whatsoever thou doest unto them, be it good or bad, thou doest unto God. When thou pleasest them, thou pleasest God; when thou displeasest them, thou displeasest God; when they are angry with thee, God is angry with thee: neither is it possible for thee to come to the favor of God again, no, though all the angels of heaven pray for thee, until thou have submitted thyself unto thy father and mother again.

If thou obey, though it be but carnally, either for fear, for vain glory, or profit, thy blessing shall be long life upon the earth. For he saith, "Honour thy father and mother, that thou mayest live long upon the earth." (Exodus 20) Contrariwise, if thou disobey them, thy life shall be shortened upon the earth. For it followeth, Exodus 21 "He that smiteth his father or mother shall be put to death for it. And he that curseth," that is to say, raileth or dishonoreth his father or mother with opprobrious words, "shall be slain for it." And, Deuteronomy "If any man have a son stubborn and disobedient, which heareth not the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, so that they have taught him nurture, and he regardeth them not; then let his father and mother take him, and bring him forth unto the seniors or elders of the city, and unto the gate of the same place: and let them say unto the seniors of that city, This our son is stubborn and disobedient: he will not hearken unto our voice: he is a rioter and a drunkard. Then let all the men of the city stone him with stones unto death: so shall ye put away wickedness from among you, and all Israel shall hear and shall fear." (Deuteronomy 21) And though that the temporal officers (to their own damnation) be negligent in punishing such disobedience, (as the spiritual officers are to teach it,) and wink at it, or look on it through the fingers, yet shall they not escape unpunished. For the vengeance of God shall accompany them (as thou mayest see Deuteronomy 28) with all misfortune and evil luck; and shall not depart from them until they be murdered, drowned, or hanged; either until, by one mischance or another, they be utterly brought to nought. Yea, and the world oftentimes hangeth many a man for that they never deserved: but God hangeth them because they would not obey, and hearken unto their elders; as the consciences of many well find, when they come unto the gallows. There can they preach, and teach other, that which they themselves would not learn in season.

The marriage also of the children pertaineth unto their elders; as thou mayest see 1 Corinthians 7 and throughout all the scripture, by the authority of the said commandment, Child, obey father and mother. Which thing the heathen and gentiles have ever kept, and to this day keep, to the great shame and rebuke of us Christians: inasmuch as the weddings of our virgins (shame it is to speak it) are more like to the saute of a bitch than the marrying of a reasonable creature. See not we daily three or four challenging one woman before the commissary or official, of which not one hath the consent of her father and mother? And yet he that hath most money hath best right, and shall have her in the despite of all her friends and in defiance of God's ordinances. Moreover, when she is given by the judge unto the one party, and also married, even then oftentimes shall the contrary party sue before a higher judge, or another that succeedeth the same, and for money divorce her again. So shamefully doth the covetousness and ambition of our prelates mock with the laws of God. I pass over with silence, how many years they will prolong the sentence with cavillations and subtlety, if they be well monied on both parties; and if a damsel promise two, how shameful counsel they will give the second, and also how the religious of Satan do separate unseparable matrimony. For after thou art lawfully married at the commandment of



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

father and mother, and with the consent of all thy friends; yet if thou wilt be disguised like unto one of them, and swear obedience unto their traditions, thou mayest disobey father and mother, break the oath which thou hast sworn to God before his holy congregation, and withdraw love and charity, the highest of God's commandments, and that duty and service which thou owest unto thy wife; whereof Christ cannot dispense with thee: for Christ is not against God, but with God; and came not to break God's ordinances, but to fulfill them. That is, he came to overcome thee with kindness; and to make thee to do, of very love, the thing which the law compelleth thee to do. For love only, and to do service unto thy neighbor, is the fulfilling of the law in the sight of God. To be a monk or a friar, thou mayest thus forsake thy wife before thou hast lain with her, but not to be a secular priest. And yet, after thou art professed, the pope for money will dispense with thee, both for thy coat and all thy obedience, and make a secular priest of thee: likewise as it is simony to sell a benefice, as they call it, but to resign upon a pension, and then to redeem the same, is no simony at all. O crafty jugglers and mockers with the word of God!

### **THE OBEDIENCE OF WIVES UNTO THEIR HUSBANDS.**

AFTER that Eve was deceived of the serpent, God said unto her, Genesis 3 "Thy lust [desire] or appetite shall pertain unto thy husband; and he shall rule thee, or reign over thee." God, which created the woman, knoweth what is in that weak vessel, (as Peter calleth her,) and hath therefore put her under the obedience of her husband, to rule her [desires] and wanton appetites. 1 Peter 3 exhorteth wives to "be in subjection to their husbands, after the ensample of the holy women which in old time trusted in God, and as Sara obeyed Abraham and called him lord." Which Sara, before she was married, was Abraham's sister, and equal with him; but, as soon as she was married, was in subjection, and became without comparison inferior: for so is the nature of wedlock, by the ordinance of God. It were much better that our wives followed the ensample of the holy women of old time in obeying their husbands, than to worship them with a Paternoster, an Ave and a Credo, or to stick up candles before their images. Paul, Ephesians 5 saith, "Women, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

For the husband is the wife's head, even as Christ is the head of the congregation. Therefore, as the congregation is in subjection to Christ, likewise let wives; be in subjection unto their husbands in all things." "Let the woman, therefore, fear her husband," as Paul saith in the said place. For her husband is unto her in the stead of God, that she obey him, and wait on his commandments; and his commandments are God's commandments. If she therefore grudge against him, or resist him, she grudgeth against God, and resisteth God.

### **THE OBEDIENCE OF SERVANTS UNTO THEIR MASTERS.**

"SERVANTS, obey your carnal masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of your hearts, as unto Christ; not with service in the eye-sight as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will, even as though ye served the Lord, and not men." (Ephesians 6) And, 1 Peter "Servants, obey your masters with all fear, not only if they be good and courteous, but also though they be froward. For it cometh of grace, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what praise is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? But and if when ye do well, ye suffer wrong and take it patiently, then is there thanks with God.

Hereunto, verily, were ye called. For Christ also suffered for our sakes, leaving us an ensample to follow his steps."

In whatsoever kind, therefore, thou art a servant, during the time of thy covenants thy master is unto thee in the stead and room of God; and God through him feedeth thee, clotheth thee, ruleth thee, and learneth thee. His commandments are God's commandments; and thou oughtest to obey him as God, and in all things to seek his pleasure and profit. For thou art his good and possession, as his ox or his horse; insomuch that whosoever doth but desire thee in his heart from him, without his love and license, is condemned of God, which saith, "See thou once covet not thy neighbour's servants." (Exodus 20) Paul the apostle sent home Onesimus unto his master, as thou readest in the epistle of Paul to Philemon: insomuch that, though the said Philemon, with his servant also, was converted by Paul, and owed to Paul, and to the word that Paul preached, not his servant only but also himself; yea, and though that Paul was in necessity, and lacked ministers to minister unto him in the bonds which he suffered for the gospel's sake; yet would he not retain the servant necessary unto the furtherance of the gospel without the consent of the master.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

O how sore differeth the doctrine of Christ and his, apostles from the doctrine of the pope and of his apostles! For if any man will obey neither father nor mother, neither lord nor master, neither king nor prince, the same needeth but only to take the mark of the beast, that is, to shave himself a monk, a friar, or a priest, and is then immediately free and exempted from all service and obedience due unto man. He that will obey no man (as they will not) is most acceptable unto them. The more disobedient that thou art, unto God's ordinances, the more apt and meet art thou for theirs. Neither is the professing, vowing, and swearing obedience unto their ordinances, any other thing than the defying, denying, and forswearing obedience unto the ordinances of God.

### **THE OBEDIENCE OF SUBJECTS UNTO KINGS, PRINCES, AND RULERS.**

“LET every soul submit himself unto the authority of the higher powers.

There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.

They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not to be feared for good works, but for evil. Wilt thou be without fear of the power? Do well then, and so shalt thou be praised of the same; for he is the minister of God for thy wealth. But and if thou do evil, then fear: for he beareth not a sword for nought; for he is the minister of God, to take vengeance on them that do evil. Wherefore ye must needs obey; not for fear of vengeance only, but also because of conscience. Even for this cause pay ye tribute: for they are God's ministers serving for the same purpose.

Give to every man therefore his duty: tribute to whom tribute belongeth; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear belongeth; honour to whom honour pertaineth. Owe nothing to any man; but to love one another: for he that loveth another fulfilleth the law. For these commandments, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not desire, and so forth, if there be any other commandment, are all comprehended in this saying, Love thine neighbour as thyself. Love hurteth not his neighbour: therefore is love the fulfilling of the law.”

As a father over his children is both lord and judge, forbidding one brother to avenge himself on another, but, if any cause of strife be between them, will have it brought unto himself or his assigns, to be judged and correct; so God forbiddeth all men to avenge themselves, and taketh the authority and office of avenging unto himself; saying, “Vengeance is mine, and I will reward.” Deuteronomy 32. Which text Paul allegeth, Romans 12; for it is impossible that a man should be a righteous, an egal or an indifferent judge in his own cause, lusts [desires] and appetites so blind us.

Moreover, when thou avengest thyself, thou makest not peace, but stirrest up more debate.

God therefore hath given laws unto all nations, and in all lands hath put kings, governors, and rulers in his own stead, to rule the world through them; and hath commanded all causes to be brought before them, as thou readest Exodus 22 “In all causes (saith he) of injury or wrong, whether it be ox, ass, sheep, or vesture, or any lost thing which another challengeth, let the cause of both parties be brought unto the [judges of] God; whom the [judges of] God condemn, the same shall pay double unto his neighbour.” Mark, the judges are [judges of] God in the scriptures, because they are in God's room, and execute the commandments of God. And in another place of the said chapter Moses chargeth, saying: “See that thou rail not on the [judges of] God, neither speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” Whosoever therefore resisteth them, resisteth God, for they are in the room of God; and they that resist shall receive the damnation.

Such obedience unto father and mother, master, husband, emperor, king, lords and rulers, requireth God of all nations, yea, of the very Turks and infidels. The blessing and reward of them that keep them is the life of this world, as thou readest, “Keep my ordinances and laws; which if a man keep, he shall live therein.” ( Leviticus 18) Which text Paul rehearseth Romans 10, proving thereby that the righteousness of the law is but worldly, and the reward thereof is the life of this world: and the curse of them that breaketh them is the loss of this life; as thou seest by the punishment appointed for them.

And whosoever keepeth the law (whether it be for fear, for vain glory, or profit), though no man reward him, yet shall God bless him abundantly, and send him worldly prosperity; as thou readest, Deuteronomy 28, what good blessings accompany the keeping of the law; and as we see the Turks far exceed us Christian men in worldly prosperity, for their just keeping of their temporal laws. Likewise, though no man punish the breakers of the law, yet shall God send his curses upon them till they be utterly brought to nought, as thou readest most terribly even in the same place.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Neither may the inferior person avenge himself upon the superior, or violently resist him, for whatsoever wrong it be. If he do, he is condemned in the deed-doing; inasmuch as he taketh upon him that which belongeth to God only, which saith, "Vengeance is mine, and I will reward." Deuteronomy 32. And Christ saith, Matthew 26 "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Takest thou a sword to avenge thyself? So givest thou not room unto God to avenge thee, but robbest him of his most high honor, in that thou wilt not let him be judge over thee.

If any man might have avenged himself upon his superior, that might David most righteously have done upon king Saul, which so wrongfully persecuted David, even for no other cause, than that God had anointed him king, and promised him the kingdom. Yet when God had delivered Saul into the hands of David, that he might have done what he would with him; as thou seest in the first book of Kings, the 24th chapter, how Saul came into the camp where David was; and David came to him secretly, and cut off a piece of his garment; and as soon as he had done it, his heart smote him, because he had done so much unto his lord: and when his men encouraged him to slay him, he answered, "The Lord forbid it me that I should lay mine hand on him;" neither [allowed] he his men to hurt him.

When Saul was gone out, David followed him, and shewed him the piece of his garment, and said, "Why believest thou the words of men that say, David goeth about to do thee harm? Perceive and see that there is neither evil nor wickedness in my hand, and that I have not trespassed against thee, and yet thou layest await for my life: God judge between thee and me, and avenge me of thee; but mine hand be not upon thee. As the old proverb saith (saith David), Out of the wicked shall wickedness proceed, but mine hand be not upon thee," meaning that God ever punisheth one wicked by another. And again said David, "God be judge, and judge between thee and me, and behold and plead my cause, and give me judgment or right of thee."

And in the 26th chapter of the same book, when Saul persecuted David again, David came to Saul by night, as he slept and all his men, and took away his spear and a cup of water from his head. Then said Abishai, David's servant, "God hath delivered thee thine enemy into thine hand this day: let me now therefore nail him to the ground with my spear, and give him but even one stripe and no more." David forbid him, saying, "Kill him not; for who (said he) shall lay hands on the Lord's anointed, and be not guilty? The Lord liveth," or by the Lord's life (said he), "he dieth not, except the Lord smite him, or that his day be come to die, or else go to battle, and there perish."

Why did not David slay Saul, seeing he was so wicked, not in persecuting David only, but in disobeying God's commandments, and in that he had slain eighty-five of God's priests wrongfully? Verily, for it was not lawful.

For if he had done it, he must have sinned against God; for God hath made the king in every realm judge over all, and over him is there no judge. He that judgeth the king judgeth God; and he that layeth hands on the king layeth hand on God; and he that resisteth the king resisteth God, and damneth God's law and ordinance. If the subjects sin, they must be brought to the king's judgment. If the king sin, he must be reserved unto the judgment, wrath, and vengeance of God. And as it is to resist the king, so is it to resist his officer, which is set, or sent, to execute the king's commandment.

And in the first chapter of the second book of Kings, David commanded the young man to be slain, which brought unto him the crown and bracelet of Saul, and said, to please David withal, that he himself had slain Saul.

And in the fourth chapter of the same book, David commanded those two to be slain which brought unto him the head of Ishbosheth, Saul's son; by whose means yet the whole kingdom returned unto David, according unto the promise of God.

And, Luke 13th, when they shewed Christ of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their own sacrifice, he answered, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all other Galileans, because they suffered such punishment? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." This was told Christ, no doubt, of such an intent as they asked him, "Whether it were lawful to give tribute unto Caesar?" (Matthew 22) For they thought that it was no sin to resist a heathen prince: as few of us would think, if we were under the Turk, that it were sin to rise against him, and to rid ourselves from under his dominion, so sore have our bishops robbed us of the true doctrine of Christ. But Christ condemned their deeds, and also the secret thoughts of all other, that consented thereunto, saying: "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." As who should say, I know that ye are within, in your hearts, such as they were outward in their deeds, and are under the same damnation: except, therefore, ye repent betimes, ye shall break out at the last into like deeds, and likewise perish; as it came afterward to pass.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Hereby seest thou that the king is, in this world, without law; and may at his [desire] do right or wrong, and shall give accounts but to God only.

Another conclusion is this, that no person, neither any degree, may be exempt from this ordinance of God: neither can the profession of monks and friars, or any thing that the pope or bishops can lay for themselves, except them from the sword of the emperor or kings, if they break the laws. For it is written, "Let every soul submit himself unto the authority of the higher powers." Here is no man except; but all souls must obey. The higher powers are the temporal kings and princes; unto whom God hath given the sword, to punish whosoever sinneth. God hath not given them swords to punish one, and to let another go free, and sin unpunished.

Moreover, with what face durst the spirituality, which ought to be the light and an ensample of good living unto all other, desire to sin unpunished, or to be excepted from tribute, toll, or custom, that they would not bear pain with their brethren to the maintenance of kings and others, ordained of God to punish sin? "There is no power but of God." By power understand the authority of kings and princes. "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth power, resisteth God:" yea, though he be pope, bishop, monk, or friar. "They that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation." Why? For God's word is against them, which will have all men under the power of the temporal sword: for "rulers are not to be feared for good works, but for evil." Hereby seest thou that they that resist the powers, or seek to be exempt from their authority, have evil consciences; and seek liberty to sin unpunished, and to be free from bearing pain with their brethren. "Wilt thou be without fear of the power? So do well, and thou shalt have laud of the same," that is to say, of the ruler. With good living ought the spirituality to rid themselves from fear of the temporal sword; and not with craft, and with blinding the kings, and bringing the vengeance of God upon them, and in purchasing license to sin unpunished. "For he is the minister of God for thy wealth:" to defend thee from a thousand inconveniences, from thieves, murderers, and them that would defile thy wife, thy daughter, and take from thee all that thou hast, yea, life and all, if thou didst resist. Furthermore, though he be the greatest tyrant in the world, yet is he unto thee a great benefit of God, and a thing wherefore thou oughtest to thank God highly. For it is better to have somewhat, than to be clean stript out of all together. It is better to pay the tenth than to lose all. It is better to suffer one tyrant than many, and to suffer wrong of one than of every man. Yea, and it is better to have a tyrant unto thy king than a shadow; a passive king that doth nought himself, but suffereth others to do with him what they will, and to lead him whither they list [desire]. For a tyrant, though he do wrong unto the good, yet he punisheth the evil, and maketh all men obey, neither suffereth any man to poll but himself only. A king that is soft as silk, and effeminate, that is to say, turned into the nature of a woman, — what with his own lusts, [desires] which are as the longing of a woman with child, so that he cannot resist them, and what with the wily tyranny of them that ever rule him, — shall be much more grievous unto the realm than a right tyrant. Read the chronicles, and thou shalt find it ever so. "But and if thou do evil, then fear; for he beareth not a sword for nought: for he is the minister of God, to take vengeance on them that do evil." If the office of princes, given them of God, be to take vengeance of evil doers; then, by this text and God's word, are all princes damned, even as many as give liberty or license unto the spirituality to sin unpunished; and not only to sin unpunished themselves, but also to open sanctuaries, privileged places, churchyards, St. John's hold; yea, and if they come too short unto all these, yet to set forth a neck-verse to save all manner trespassers from the fear of the sword of the vengeance of God, put in the hands of princes to take vengeance on all such. GOD requireth the law to be kept of all men, let them keep it for whatsoever purpose they will. Will they not keep the law? So vouchsafeth he not that they enjoy this temporal life. Now are there three natures of men: one altogether beastly; which in no wise receive the law in their hearts, but rise against princes and rulers, whensoever they are able to make their party good. These are signified by them that worshipped the golden calf: for Moses brake the tables of the law, ere he came at them.

The second are not so beastly, but receive the law; and unto them the law cometh; but they look not Moses in the face: for his countenance is too bright for them; that is, they understand not that the law is spiritual, and requireth the heart. They look on the pleasure, profit, and promotion that followeth the keeping of the law, and in respect of the reward keep they the law outwardly with works, but not in the heart. For if they might obtain like honor, glory, promotion and dignity, and also avoid all inconveniences, if they broke the law, so would they also break the law, and follow their lusts [desires].

The third are spiritual, and look Moses in the open face; and are, as Paul saith, the second to the Romans, "a law unto themselves;" and have the law written in their hearts by the Spirit of God. These

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

need neither of king nor officers to drive them, neither that any man proffer them any reward for to keep the law; for they do it naturally.

The first work for fear of the sword only: the second for reward: the third work for love freely. They look on the exceeding mercy, love, and kindness, which God hath showed them in Christ; and therefore love again, and work freely. Heaven they take of the free gift of God, through Christ's descryings; and hope, without all manner doubting, that God, according to his promise, will in this world also defend them, and do all things for them, of his goodness, and for Christ's sake, and not for any goodness that is in them. They consent unto the law, that it is holy and just; and that all men ought to do whatsoever God commandeth, for no other cause but because God commandeth it. And their great sorrow is, because that there is no strength in their members to do that which their heart lusteth [desires] to do, and is athirst to do.

These of the last sort keep the law of their own accord, and that in the heart; and have professed perpetual war against the lusts [desires] and appetites of the flesh, till they be utterly subdued: yet not through their own strength, but, knowing and [a] knowledging their weakness, cry ever for strength to God, which hath promised assistance unto all that call upon him. These follow God, and are led of his Spirit. The other two are led of lusts [desires] and appetites.

Lusts [Desires] and appetites are divers and many, and that in one man; yea, and one lust [desires] contrary to another, and the greatest lust [desire] carrieth a man altogether away with him. We are also changed from one lust [desire] to another: otherwise are we disposed, when we are children; otherwise when we are young men; and otherwise when we are old; otherwise over even, and otherwise in the morning: yea, sometimes altered six times in an hour. How fortuneth all this? Because that the will of man followeth the wit, and is subject unto the wit; and as the wit erreth, so does the will; and as the wit is in captivity, so is the will; neither is it possible that the will should be free, where the wit is in bondage.

That thou mayest perceive and feel the thing in thine heart, and not be a vain sophister, disputing about words without perceiving; mark this. The root of all evil, the greatest damnation and most terrible wrath and vengeance of God that we are in, is natural blindness. We are all out of the right way, every man his ways: one judgeth this best, and another that to be best. Now is worldly wit nothing else but craft and subtlety, to obtain that which we judge falsely to be best. As I err in my wit, so err I in my will.

When I judge that to be evil which indeed is good, then hate I that which is good. And when I suppose that good which is evil indeed, then love I evil.

As, if I be persuaded, and borne in hand, that my most friend is mine enemy, then hate I my best friend: and if I be brought in belief that my most enemy is my friend, then love I my most enemy. Now when we say, every man hath his free will, to do what him lusteth [desires], I say, verily, that men do what they lust [desire]. Notwithstanding, to follow lusts [desires] is not freedom, but captivity and bondage. If God open any man's wits, to make him feel in his heart that lusts [desires] and appetites are damnable, and give him power to hate and resist them; then is he free, even with the freedom wherewith Christ maketh free, and hath power to do the will of God.

Thou mayest hereby perceive, that all that is done in the world before the Spirit of God come, and giveth us light, is damnable sin; and the more glorious, the more damnable; so that that which the world counteth most glorious is more damnable, in the sight of God, than that which the whore, the thief, and the murderer do. With blind reasons of worldly wisdom mayest thou change the minds of youth, and make them give themselves to what thou wilt, either for fear, for praise, or for profit; and yet dost but change them from one vice to another: as the persuasions of her friends made Lucrece chaste. Lucrece believed if she were a good housewife and chaste, that she should be most glorious; and that all the world would give her honor, and praise her. She sought her own glory in her chastity, and not God's. When she had lost her chastity, then counted she herself most abominable in the sight of all men; and for very pain and thought which she had, not that she had displeased God, but that she had lost her honor, slew herself. Look how great her pain and sorrow was for the loss of her chastity, so great was her glory and rejoicing therein, and so much despised she them that were otherwise, and pitied them not: which pride God more abhorreth than the whoredom of any whore. Of like pride are all the moral virtues of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, and all the doctrine of the philosophers, the very gods of our school-men.

In like manner is it for the most part of our most holy religions. For they of like imagination do things which they of Bedlam may see that they are but madness. They look on the miracles which God did by the saints, to move the unbelieving unto the faith, and to confirm the truth of his promises in Christ, whereby all that believe are made saints; as thou seest in the last chapter of Mark. "They

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

preached," saith he, "every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming their preaching with miracles that followed." And in the fourth of the Acts the disciples prayed that God would stretch forth his hands, to do miracles and wonders in the name of Jesus. And Paul 1 Corinthians 14 saith, that the miracle of speaking with divers tongues is but a sign for unbelievers, and not for them that believe. These miracles turn they to another purpose, saying in their blind hearts, See what miracles God hath shewed for this saint; he must be verily great with God! — and at once turn themselves from God's word, and put their trust and confidence in the saint and his merits; and make an advocate, or rather a god of the saint; and of their blind imagination make a testament, or bond, between the saint and them, the testament of Christ's blood clean forgotten. They look on the saints' garments and lives, or rather lies which men lie on the saints, and this-wise imagine in their hearts, saying: The saint for wearing such a garment, and for such deeds, is become so glorious in heaven. If I do likewise, so shall I be also. They see not the faith and trust which the saints had in Christ, neither the word of God which the saints preached; neither the intent of the saints, how that the saints did such things to tame their bodies, and to be an ensample to the world, and to teach that such things are to be despised which the world most wondereth at and magnifieth. They see not also that some lands are so hot that a man can neither drink wine nor eat flesh therein; neither consider they the complexion of the saints; and a thousand like things see they not. So when they have killed their bodies, and brought them in that case that scarce with any restorative they can recover their health again, yet had they lever [rather] die than to eat flesh. Why? for they think, I have now this twenty, thirty, or forty years eaten no flesh; and have obtained, I doubt not, by this time as high a room as the best of them: should I now lose that? nay, I had [rather] die. And as Lucretia had [rather] have been slain, if he had not been too strong for her, than to have lost her glory, even so had these. They ascribe heaven unto their imaginations and mad inventions; and receive it not of the liberality of God, by the merits and descryings of Christ.

He now that is renewed in Christ, keepeth the law without any law written, or compulsion of any ruler or officer, save by the leading of the Spirit only.

But the natural man is enticed and moved to keep the law carnally, with carnal reasons and worldly persuasions, as for glory, honor, riches, and dignity. But the last remedy of all, when all other fail, is fear. Beat one, and the rest will abstain for fear: as Moses ever putteth in remembrance, saying, Kill, stone, burn; so shall thou put evil from thee, and all Israel shall hear and fear, and shall no more do so. If fear help not, then will God that they be taken out of this life.

Kings were ordained then, as I before said, and the sword put in their hands, to take vengeance of evil-doers, that other might fear: and were not ordained to fight one against another, or to rise against the emperor to defend the false authority of the pope, that very antichrist. Bishops, they only can minister the temporal sword; their office, the preaching of God's word, laid apart, which they will neither do, nor suffer any man to do, but slay with the temporal sword, which they have gotten out of the hand of all princes, them that would. The preaching of God's word is hateful and contrary unto them. Why? For it is impossible to preach Christ, except thou preach against antichrist; that is to say, them which with their false doctrine and violence of sword enforce to quench the true doctrine of Christ. And as thou canst heal no disease, except thou begin at the root; even so canst thou preach against no mischief, except thou begin at the bishops. Kings, they are but shadows; vain names and things idle, having nothing to do in the world, but when our holy father needeth their help.

The pope, contrary unto all conscience and against all the doctrine of Christ, which saith, "My kingdom is not of this world," ( John 18) hath usurped the right of the emperor; and by policy of the bishops of Alman, and with corrupting the electors, or choosers of the emperor with money, bringeth to pass that such a one is ever chosen emperor that is not able to make his party good with the pope. To stop the emperor that he come not at Rome, he bringeth the French king up to Milan; and on the other side bringeth he the Venetians. If the Venetians come too nigh, the bishops of France must bring in the French king. And the Socheners are called and sent for to come and succor. And for their labor he giveth to some a rose; to another a cap of maintenance. One is called Most Christian King; another, Defender of the faith; another, The eldest son of the most holy seat. He blaseth also the arms of other; and putteth in the holy cross, the crown of thorn, or the nails, and so forth. If the French king go too high, and creep up either to Bononia or Naples; then must our English bishops bring in our king. The craft of the bishops is to entitle one king with another's realm. He is called king of Denmark and of England; he, king of England and of France, Then, to blind the lords and the commons, the king must challenge his right. Then must the land be taxed and every man pay, and the treasure borne out of the realm, and the land beggared. How many a thousand men's lives hath it cost! And how many a hundred thousand pounds

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

hath it carried out of the realm in our remembrance! Besides, how abominable an example of gathering was there! such verily as never tyrant since the world began did, yea, such as was never before heard or thought on, neither among Jews, Saracens, Turks, or heathen, since God created the sun to shine; that a beast should break up into the temple of God, that is to say, into the heart and consciences of men, and compel them to swear every man what he was worth, to lend that should never be paid again. How many thousands forswore themselves! How many thousands set themselves above their ability, partly for fear lest they should be forsworn, and partly to save their credence! When the pope hath his purpose, then is peace made, no man [knows] how; and our most enemy is our most friend.

Now because the emperor is able to obtain his right, French, English, Venetians and all must upon him. O great whore of Babylon, how abuseth she the princes of the world! how drunk hath she made them with her wine! How shameful licenses doth she give them, to use necromancy, to hold whores, to divorce themselves, to break the faith and promises that one maketh with another; that the confessors shall deliver unto the king the confession of whom he will, and dispenseth with them even of the very law of God; which Christ himself cannot do!

### **AGAINST THE POPE'S FALSE POWER.**

Matthew 26, CHRIST saith unto Peter, "Put up thy sword into his sheath; for all that lay hand upon the sword shall perish with the sword:" that is, whosoever without the commandment of the temporal officer, to whom God hath given the sword, layeth hand on the sword to take vengeance, the same deserveth death in the deed-doing. God did not put Peter only under the temporal sword, but also Christ himself; as it appeareth in the fourth chapter to the Galatians. And Christ saith, Matthew 3 "Thus cometh it us to fulfill all righteousness," that is to say, all ordinances of God. If the head be then under the temporal sword, how can the members be excepted? If Peter sinned in defending Christ against the temporal sword, (whose authority and ministers the bishops then abused against Christ, as ours do now,) who can excuse our prelates of sin, which will obey no man, neither king nor emperor? Yea, who can excuse from sin either the kings that give, either the bishops that receive such exemptions, contrary to God's ordinances and Christ's doctrine?

And, Matthew 27th, both Christ and also Peter pay tribute; where the meaning of Christ's question unto Peter is, if princes take tribute of strangers only and not of their children, then verily ought I to be free, which am the Son of God, whose servants and ministers they are, and of whom they have their authority. Yet because they neither knew that, neither Christ came to use that authority, but to be our servant, and to bear our burden, and to obey all ordinances, both in right and wrong, for our sakes, and to teach us; therefore said he to St Peter, "Pay for thee and me, lest we offend them." Moreover, though that Christ and Peter, because they were poor, might have escaped, yet would he not, for fear of offending other and hurting their consciences. For he might well have given occasion unto the tribute-gatherers to have judged amiss both of him and his doctrine; yea, and the Jews might happily have been offended thereby, and have thought that it had not been lawful for them to have paid tribute unto heathen princes and idolaters, seeing that he, so great a prophet, paid not. Yea, and what other thing causeth the lay so little to regard their princes, as that they see them both despised and disobeyed of the spirituality? But our prelates, which care for none offending of consciences, and less for God's ordinances, will pay nought. But when princes must fight in our most holy father's quarrel, and against Christ, then are they the first. There also is none so poor, that then hath not somewhat to give.

Mark here, how past all shame our school-doctors are, (as Rochester is in his sermon against Martin Luther, ) which of this text of Matthew dispute that Peter, because he paid tribute, is greater than the other apostles, and hath more authority and power than they, and was head unto them all: contrary unto so many clear texts, where Christ rebuketh them, saying, That is a heathenish thing that one should climb above another, or desire to be greater. To be great in the kingdom of heaven is to be a servant; and he that most humbleth himself, and cometh a servant to other, (after the ensample of Christ, I mean, and his apostles, and not of the pope and his apostles, our cardinals and bishops,) the same is greatest in that kingdom. If Peter in paying tribute became greatest, how cometh it that they will pay none at all? But to pay tribute is a sign of subjection verily; and the cause, why Christ paid, was because he had a household, and for the same cause paid Peter also: for he had a house, a ship and nets, as thou readest in the gospel.

But let us go to Paul again. "Wherefore ye must needs obey, not for fear of vengeance only, but also because of conscience." That is, though thou be so naughty, as now many years our pope and prelates

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

every where are, that thou needest not to obey the temporal sword for fear of vengeance; yet must thou obey because of conscience. First, because of thine own conscience. For though thou be able to resist, yet shalt thou never have a good conscience, as long as God's word, law, and ordinance are against thee. Secondly, for thy neighbor's conscience. For though through craft and violence thou mightest escape, and obtain liberty or privilege to be free from all manner duties; yet oughtest thou neither to sue or to seek for any such thing, neither yet admit or accept, if it were proffered, lest thy freedom make thy weak brother to grudge and rebel, in that he seeth thee go empty, and he himself more laden, thy part also laid on his shoulders.

Seest thou not, if a man favor one son more than another, or one servant more than another, how all the rest grudge; and how love, peace, and unity is broken? What christianly love is in thee to thy neighbor-ward, when thou canst find in thy heart to go up and down empty by him all day long, and see him over-charged, yea, to fall under his burden, and yet will not once set to thine hand to help him? What good conscience can there be among our spirituality, to gather so great treasure together, and with hypocrisy of their false learning to rob almost every man of house and lands; and yet not therewith content, but with all craft and wiliness to purchase so great liberties, and exemptions from all manner bearing with their brethren, seeking in Christ nothing but lucre? I pass over with silence how they teach princes in every land to lade new exactions and tyranny on their subjects, more and more daily; neither for what purpose they do it, say I. God, I trust, shall shortly disclose their juggling, and bring their falsehood to light; and lay a medicine to them, to make their scabs break out. Nevertheless this I say, that they have robbed all realms, not of God's word only, but also of all wealth and prosperity; and have driven peace out of all lands, and withdrawn themselves from all obedience to princes, and have separated themselves from the lay-men, counting them viler than dogs; and have set up that great idol, the whore of Babylon, antichrist of Rome, whom they call pope; and have conspired against all common-wealths, and have made them a several kingdom, wherein it is lawful, unpunished, to work all abomination. In every parish have they spies, and in every great man's house, and in every tavern and alehouse. And through confessions know they all secrets, so that no man may open his mouth to rebuke whatsoever they do, but that he shall be shortly made a heretic. In all councils is one of them; yea, the most part and chief rulers of the councils are of them: but of their council is no man. "Even for this cause pay ye tribute," that is to wit, for conscience' sake to thy neighbor, and for the cause that followeth: "For they are God's ministers, serving for the same purpose." Because God will so have it, we must obey. We do not look (if we have Christ's Spirit in us) what is good, profitable, glorious and honorable for us; neither on our own will, but on God's will only. "Give to every man therefore his duty; tribute to whom tribute belongeth; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear belongeth; honour to whom honour pertaineth."

That thou mightest feel the working of the Spirit of God in thee, and lest the beauty of the deed should deceive thee, and make thee think that the law of God, which is spiritual, were content and fulfilled with the outward and bodily deed, it followeth: "Owe nothing to any man, but to love one another: for he that loveth another fulfilleth the law. For these commandments, Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not desire, and so forth, if there be any other commandment, are all comprehended or contained in this saying, Love thy neighbour: therefore is love the fulfilling of the law." Here hast thou sufficient against all the sophisters, work-holy, and justifiers, in the world; which so magnify their deeds. The law is spiritual, and requireth the heart; and is never fulfilled with the deed, in the sight of God. With the deed thou fulfilllest the law before the world, and livest thereby; that is, thou enjoyest this present life, and avoidest the wrath and vengeance, the death and punishment, which the law threateneth to them that break it. But before God thou keepest the law if thou love only.

Now what shall make us love? Verily, that shall faith do. If thou behold how much God loveth thee in Christ, and from what vengeance he hath delivered thee for his sake, and of what kingdom he hath made thee heir; then shalt thou see cause enough to love thy very enemy without respect of reward, either in this life or in the life to come, but because that God will so have it, and Christ hath deserved it: yet thou shouldest feel in thine heart that all thy deeds to come are abundantly recompensed already in Christ.

Thou wilt say haply, If love fulfill the law, then it justifieth. I say that that wherewith a man fulfilleth the law declareth him justified; but that which giveth him wherewith to fulfill the law, justifieth him. By justifying, understand the forgiveness of sins and the favor of God. Now saith the text, Romans 10 "The end of the law," or the cause wherefore the law was made, "is Christ, to justify all that believe:"



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

that is, the law is given to utter sin, to kill the consciences, to damn our deeds, to bring to repentance, and to drive unto Christ; in whom God hath promised his favor, and forgiveness of sin, unto all that repent and consent to the law that it is good. If thou believe the promises, then doth God's truth justify thee, that is, forgiveth thee, and receiveth thee to favor, for Christ's sake. In a surety whereof, and to certify thine heart, he sealeth thee with the Spirit. Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 4. And ( 2 Corinthians 5) saith Paul, "Which gave us his Spirit in earnest." Now the Spirit is given us through Christ. Read the 8th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and Galatians 3 and 2 Corinthians 3. Nevertheless the Spirit, and his fruits, wherewith the heart is purified, as faith, hope, love, patience, longsuffering, and obedience, could never be seen without outward experience.

For if thou were not brought sometime into cumbrance, whence God only could deliver thee, thou shouldest never see thy faith; yea, except thou foughtest sometime against desperation, hell, death, sin, and powers of this world, for thy faith's sake, thou shouldest never know true faith from a dream. Except thy brother now and then offended thee, thou couldest not know whether thy love were godly. For a Turk is not angry, till he be hurt and offended. But if thou love him that doth thee evil, then is thy love of God. Likewise if thy rulers were alway kind, thou shouldest not know whether thine obedience were pure or no; but and if thou canst patiently obey evil rulers in all thing that is not to the dishonor of God, and when thou hurtest not thy neighbors, then art thou sure that God's Spirit worketh in thee, and that thy faith is no dream, nor any false imagination.

Therefore counselleth Paul, "Recompense to no man evil. And on your part have peace with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but give room unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, and I will reward, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head," that is, thou shalt kindle love in him. "Be not overcome of evil;" ( Romans 12) that is, let not another man's wickedness make thee wicked also. "But overcome evil with good;" that is, with softness, kindness, and all patience win him; even as God with kindness won thee.

The law was given in thunder, lightning, fire, smoke, and the noise of a trumpet and terrible sight; so that the people quaked for fear, and stood afar off, saying to Moses, "Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak unto us, lest we die." No ear, if it be awaked and understandeth the meaning, is able to abide the voice of the law, except the promises of mercy be by. That thunder, except the rain of mercy be joined with it, destroyeth all, and buildeth not. The law is a witness against us, and testifieth that God abhorreth the sins that are in us, and us for our sins' sake.

In like manner, when God gave the people of Israel a king, it thundered and rained, that the people feared so sore, that they cried to Samuel for to pray for them that they should not die. As the law is a terrible thing, even so is the king: for he is ordained to take vengeance, and hath a sword in his hand, and not peacocks' feathers. Fear him, therefore, and look on him as thou wouldest look on a sharp sword that hanged over thy head by a hair.

Heads and governors are ordained of God, and are even the gift of God, whether they be good or bad. And whatsoever is done to us by them, that doth God, be it good or bad. If they be evil, why are they evil? Verily, for our wickedness' sake are they evil; because that when they were good, we would not receive that goodness of the hand of God, and be thankful, submitting ourselves unto his laws and ordinances; but abused the goodness of God unto our sensual and beastly lusts [desires]. Therefore doth God make his scourge of them, and turn them to wild beasts, contrary to the nature of their names and offices, even into lions, bears, foxes, and unclean swine, to avenge himself of our unnatural and blind unkindness, and of our rebellious disobedience.

In the 107th Psalm thou readest, "He destroyed the rivers, and dried up the springs of water, and turned the fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of the inhabitants therein." When the children of Israel had forgotten God in Egypt, God moved the hearts of the Egyptians to hate them, and to subdue them with craft and wiliness. Psalm 104. And Deuteronomy 3 Moses rehearseth, saying, "God was angry with me for your sakes." So that the wrath of God fell on Moses for the wickedness of the people. And in the second chapter of the second book of Kings, God was angry with the people, and moved David to number them; when Joab and the other lords wondered why he would have them numbered; and, because they feared lest some evil should follow, dissuaded the king; yet it help not. God so hardened his heart in his purpose, to have an occasion to slay the wicked people. Evil rulers then are a sign that God is angry and wroth with us. Is it not a great wrath and vengeance, that the father and mother should hate their children, even their flesh and their blood? or that an husband should be unkind unto his wife, or a master unto the servant that waiteth on his profit? or that lords and kings should be

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

tyrants unto their subjects and tenants, which pay them tribute, toll, custom, and rent, laboring and toiling to find them in honor, and to maintain them in their estate? Is not this a fearful judgment of God, and a cruel wrath, that the very prelates and shepherds of our souls, which were wont to feed Christ's flock with Christ's doctrine, and to walk before them in living thereafter, and to give their lives for them, to their ensample and edifying, and to strengthen their weak faiths, are now so sore changed, that if they smell that one of their flock (as they now call them, and no longer Christ's) do but once long or desire for the true knowledge of Christ, they will slay him, burning him with fire most cruelly? What is the cause of this; and that they also teach false doctrine, confirming it with lies? Verily, it is the hand of God, to avenge the wickedness of them that have no love nor [desire] unto the truth of God, when it is preached, but rejoice in unrighteousness. As thou mayest see in the second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, where he speaketh of the coming of antichrist: "Whose coming shall be," saith he, "by the working of Satan, with all miracles, signs and wonders, which are but lies, and in all deceivable unrighteousness among them that perish, because they received not any love to the truth to have been saved. Therefore shall God send them strong delusion, to believe lies." Mark how God, to avenge his truth, sendeth to the unthankful false doctrine and false miracles, to confirm them, and to harden their hearts in the false way, that afterward it shall not be possible for them to admit the truth: as thou seest in Exodus 7 and Exodus 8, how God suffered false miracles to be showed in the sight of Pharaoh, to harden his heart, that he should not believe the truth; inasmuch as his sorcerers turned their rods into serpents, and turned water into blood, and made frogs by their enchantment: so thought he that Moses did all his miracles by the same craft, and not by the power of God, and abode therefore in unbelief, and perished in resisting God.

Let us receive all things of God, whether it be good or bad: let us humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and submit ourselves unto his nurture and chastising, and not withdraw ourselves from his correction. Read Hebrews 12 for thy comfort; and let us not take the staff by the end, or seek to avenge ourselves on his rod, which is the evil rulers. The child, as long as he seeketh to avenge himself upon the rod, hath an evil heart; for he thinketh not that the correction is right, or that he hath deserved it, neither repenteth, but rejoiceth in his wickedness: and so long shall he never be without a rod: yea, so long shall the rod be made sharper and sharper. If he [ac]knowledge his fault and take the correction meekly, and even kiss the rod, and amend himself with the learning and nurture of his father and mother, then is the rod taken away and burnt.

So, if we resist evil rulers, seeking to set ourselves at liberty, we shall, no doubt, bring ourselves into more evil bondage, and wrap ourselves in much more misery and wretchedness. For if the heads overcome, then lay they more weight on their backs, and make their yoke sorer, and tie them shorter. If they overcome their evil rulers, then make they way for a more cruel nation, or for some tyrant of their own nation, which hath no right unto the crown. If we submit ourselves unto the chastising of God, and meekly knowledge our sins for which we are scourged, and kiss the rod, and amend our living; then will God take the rod away, that is, he will give the rulers a better heart. Or if they continue their malice and persecute you for well-doing, and because ye put your trust in God, then will God deliver you out of their tyranny for his truth's sake. It is the same God now that was in the old time, and delivered the fathers and the prophets, the apostles, and other holy saints. And whatsoever he sware to them he hath sworn to us. And as he delivered them out of all temptation, cumbrance, and adversity, because they consented and submitted themselves unto his will, and trusted in his goodness and truth; even so will he do to us, if we do likewise.

Whensoever the children of Israel fell from the way which God commanded them to walk in, he gave them up under one tyrant or another.

As soon as they came to the knowledge of themselves, and repented, crying for mercy, and leaning unto the truth of his promises, he sent one to deliver them, as the histories of the bible make mention.

A christian man, in respect of God, is but a passive thing; a thing that suffereth only, and doth nought; as the sick, in respect of the surgeon or physician, doth but suffer only. The surgeon lanceth and cutteth out the dead flesh, searcheth the wounds, thrusteth in tents, seareth, burneth, seweth or stitcheth, and layeth to caustics, to draw out the corruption; and, last of all, layeth to healing plaisters, and maketh it whole. The physician likewise giveth purgations and drinks to drive out the disease, and then with restoratives bringeth health. Now if the sick resist the razor, the searching iron, and so forth, doth he not resist his own health, and is cause of his own death? So likewise is it of us, if we resist evil rulers, which are the rod and scourge wherewith God chastiseth us; the instruments wherewith God searcheth our wounds; and bitter drinks to drive out the sin and to make it appear, and caustics to draw out by the roots

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

the core of the pocks of the soul that fretteth inward. A christian man, therefore, receiveth all things of the hand of God, both good and bad, both sweet and sour, both wealth and woe. If any person do me good, whether it be father, mother, and so forth, that receive I of God, and to God give thanks: for he gave wherewith, and gave a commandment, and moved his heart so to do.

Adversity also receive I of the hand of God, as a wholesome medicine, though it be somewhat bitter. Temptation and adversity do both kill sin, and also utter it. For though a christian man knoweth every thing how to live, yet is the flesh so weak, that he can never take up his cross himself, to kill and mortify the flesh: he must have another to lay it on his back. In many also sin lieth hid within, and festereth and rotteth inward, and is not seen; so that they think how they are good and perfect, and keep the law: as the young man, Matthew 19 said, he had observed all of a child; and yet lied falsely in his heart, as the text following well declareth. When all is at peace, and no man troubleth us, we think that we are patient and love our neighbors as ourselves; but let our neighbor hurt us in word or deed, and then find we it otherwise. Then fume we, and rage, and set up the bristles, and bend ourselves to take vengeance. If we loved with godly love, for Christ's kindness' sake, we should desire no vengeance; but pity him, and desire God to forgive and amend him, knowing well that no flesh can do otherwise than sin, except that God preserve him. Thou wilt say, What good doth such persecution and tyranny unto the righteous? First, it maketh them feel the working of God's Spirit in them, and that their faith is unfeigned. Secondly, I say that no man is so great a sinner, if he repent and believe, but that he is righteous in Christ and in the promises: yet if thou look on the flesh, and unto the law, there is no man so perfect that is not found a sinner; nor any man so pure that hath not somewhat to be yet purged. This shall suffice at this time as concerning obedience.

Because that God excludeth no degree from his mercy; but whosoever repenteth, and believeth his promises, (of whatsoever degree he be of,) the same shall be partaker of his grace; therefore, as I have described the obedience of them that are under power and rule, even so will I, with God's help, (as my duty is,) declare how the rulers, which God shall vouchsafe to call unto the knowledge of the truth, ought to rule.

### **THE OFFICE OF A FATHER, AND HOW HE SHOULD RULE.**

"FATHERS, move not your children unto wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and information of the Lord." (Ephesians 6) and (Colossians 3) "Fathers, rate not your children, lest they be of desperate mind;" that is, lest you discourage them. For where the fathers and mothers are wayward, hasty and churlish, ever brawling and chiding, there are the children anon discouraged and heartless, and apt for nothing; neither can they do any thing aright. "Bring them up in the nurture and information of the Lord." Teach them to know Christ, and set God's ordinance before them, saying, 'Son, or daughter, God hath created thee and made thee, through us thy father and mother; and at his commandment have we so long thus kindly brought thee up, and kept thee from all perils: he hath commanded thee also to obey us, saying, Child, obey thy father and mother. If thou meekly obey, so shalt thou grow both in the favor of God and man, and knowledge of our Lord Christ. If thou wilt not obey us at his commandment, then are we charged to correct thee; yea, and if thou repent not, and amend thyself, God shall slay thee by his officers, or punish thee everlastingly.' Nurture them not worldly, and with worldly wisdom, saying, 'Thou shalt come to honor, dignity, promotion, and riches; thou shalt be better than such and such; thou shalt have three or four benefices, and be a great doctor or a bishop, and have so many men waiting on thee, and do nothing but hawk and hunt, and live at pleasure; thou shalt not need to sweat, to labor, or to take any pain for thy living,' and so forth; filling them full of pride, disdain, and ambition, and corrupting their minds with worldly persuasions. Let the fathers and mothers mark how they themselves were disposed at all ages; and by experience of their own infirmities help their children, and keep them from occasions. Let them teach their children to ask marriages of their fathers and mothers. And let their elders provide marriages for them in season; teaching them also to know, that she is not his wife whom the son taketh, nor he her husband which the daughter taketh, without the consent and good-will of their elders, or them that have authority over them. If their friends will not marry them, then are they not to blame if they marry themselves. Let not the fathers and mothers always take the utmost of their authority of their children; but at a time suffer with them, and bear their weaknesses, as Christ doth ours. Seek Christ in your children, in your wives, servants, and subjects. Father, mother, son, daughter, master, servant, king, and subject, be names in the worldly regiment. In Christ we are all one thing; none better

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

than another, all brethren; and all must seek Christ, and our brother's profit in Christ.

And he that hath the knowledge, whether he be the lord or king, is bound to submit himself, and serve his brethren, and to give himself for them, to win them to Christ.

### **THE OFFICE OF A HUSBAND, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE.**

"HUSBANDS, love your wives as Christ loved the congregation, and gave himself for it, to sanctify it and cleanse it. Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall continue with his wife, and shall be made both one flesh. See that every one of you love his wife even as his own body." (Ephesians 5) All this saith Paul, And he saith, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter unto them."

And Peter, in the third chapter of his first epistle, saith, "Men, dwell with your wives according to knowledge," (that is, according to the doctrine of Christ,) "giving reverence unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel," (that is, help her to bear her infirmities;) "and as unto them that are heirs also of the grace of life, that your prayers be not let." In many things God hath made the men stronger than the women; not to rage upon them, and to be tyrants unto them, but to help them, but to bear their weakness. Be courteous therefore unto them, and win them unto Christ, and overcome them with kindness, that of love they may obey the ordinance that God hath made between man and wife.

### **THE OFFICE OF A MASTER, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE.**

PAUL (Ephesians 5) saith: "Ye masters, do even the same things to them," (that is, be masters after the ensample and doctrine of Christ, as he before taught the servants to obey to their masters as to Christ,) "putting away threatenings," that is, give them fair words, and exhort them kindly to do their duty; yea, nurture them as thy own sons with the Lord's nurture, that they may see in Christ a cause why they ought lovingly to obey: and "remember (saith he) that your master also is in heaven; neither is there any respect of persons with him;" that is, he is indifferent and not partial: as great in his sight is a servant as a master. And in the 4th chapter to the Colossians saith he: "Ye masters, do unto your servants that which is just and equal, remembering that ye also have a master in heaven." Give your servants kind words, food, raiment, and learning. Be not bitter unto them, rail not on them, give them no cruel countenance: but according to the ensample and doctrine of Christ, deal with them. And when they labor sore, cherish them again. When ye correct them, let God's word be by; and do it with such good manner, that they may see how that ye do it to amend them only, and to bring them to the way which God biddeth us walk in, and not to avenge yourselves, or to wreak your malice on them. If at a time through hastiness ye exceed measure in punishing, recompense it another way, and pardon them another time.

### **THE DUTY OF LANDLORDS.**

LET Christian landlords be content with their rent and old customs; not raising the rent or fines, and bringing up new customs to oppress their tenants; neither letting two or three tenantries unto one man. Let them not take in their commons, neither make parks nor pastures of whole parishes: for God gave the earth to man to inhabit; and not unto sheep and wild deer. Be as fathers unto your tenants: yea, be unto them as Christ was unto us, and shew unto them all love and kindness. Whatsoever business is among them, be not partial, favoring one more than another. The complaints, quarrels, and strife that are among them, count diseases of sick people; and, as a merciful physician, heal them with wisdom and good counsel. Be pitiful and tender-hearted unto them, and let not one of thy tenants tear out another's throat; but judge their causes indifferently, and compel them to make their ditches, hedges, gates, and ways. For even for such causes were ye made landlords; and for such causes paid men rent at the beginning. For if such an order were not, one should slay another, and all should go to waste. If thy tenant shall labor and toil all the year, to pay thee thy rent, and when he hath bestowed all his labor, his neighbors' cattle shall devour his fruits; how tedious and bitter should his life be! See therefore that ye do your duties again; and suffer no man to do them wrong, save the king only. If he do wrong, then must they abide God's judgment.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

### **THE DUTY OF KINGS, AND OF THE JUDGES AND OFFICERS.**

LET kings, if they had [rather] be Christian in deed than so to be called, give themselves altogether to the wealth of their realms after the ensample of Christ; remembering that the people are God's, and not theirs; yea, are Christ's inheritance and possession, bought with his blood. The most despised person in his realm is the king's brother, and fellow-member with him, and equal with him in the kingdom of God and of Christ. Let him therefore not think himself too good to do them service; neither seek any other thing in them, than a father seeketh in his children, yea, than Christ sought in us. Though that the king, in the temporal regiment, be in the room of God, and representeth God himself, and is without all comparison better than his subjects; yet let him put off that, and become a brother, doing and leaving undone all things in respect of the commonwealth, that all men may see that he seeketh nothing but the profit of his subjects. When a cause that requireth execution is brought before him, then only let him take the person of God on him. Then let him know no creature, but hear all indifferently; whether it be a stranger or one of his own realm, and the small as well as the great; and judge righteously, "for the judgment is the Lord's." In time of judgment he is no minister in the kingdom of Christ; he preacheth no gospel, but the sharp law of vengeance. Let him take the holy judges of the old Testament for an ensample, and namely Moses, which in executing the law was merciless; otherwise more than a mother unto them, never avenging his own wrongs, but suffering all things; bearing every man's weakness, teaching, warning, exhorting, and ever caring for them, and so tenderly loved them, that he desired God either to forgive them, or to damn him with them.

Let the judges also privately, when they have put off the person of a judge, exhort with good counsel, and warn the people, and help that they come not at God's judgment: but the causes that are brought to them, when they sit in God's stead, let them judge, and condemn the trespasser under lawful witnesses; and not break up into the consciences of men, after the example of antichrist's disciples, and compel them either to forswear themselves by the almighty God and by the holy gospel of his merciful promises, or to testify against themselves: which abomination our prelates learned of Caiphas, Matthew 26, saying to Christ, "I adjure or charge thee in the name of the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be Christ, the Son of God." Let that which is secret to God only, whereof no proof can be made, nor lawful witness brought, abide unto the coming of the Lord, which shall open all secrets. If any malice break forth, that let them judge only. For further authority hath God not given them.

Moses ( Deuteronomy 17) warneth judges to keep them upright, and to look on no man's person; that is, that they prefer not the high before the low, the great before the small, the rich before poor; his acquaintance, friend, kinsman, countryman, or one of his own nation, before a stranger, a friend or an alien, yea, or one of their own faith before an infidel; but that they look on the cause only, to judge indifferently. For the room that they are in, and the law that they execute, are God's; which, as he hath made all, and is God of all, and all are his sons, even so is he judge over all, and will have all judged by his law indifferently, and to have the right of his law, and will avenge the wrong done unto the Turk or Saracen. For though they be not under the everlasting testament of God in Christ, as few of us which are called Christian be, and even no more than to whom God hath sent his promises, and poured his Spirit into their hearts to believe them, and through faith [engraved the desire] in their hearts to fulfill the law of love; yet are they under the testament of the law natural, which is the law of every land made for the common wealth there, and for peace and unity, that one may live by another: in which laws the infidels, if they keep them, have promises of worldly things. Whosoever, therefore, hindereth a very infidel from the right of that law, sinneth against God, and of him will God be avenged.

Moreover, Moses warneth them that they receive no gifts, rewards or bribes. For those two points, favoring of one person more than another, and receiving rewards, pervert all right and equity; and is the only pestilence of all judges.

And the kings warneth he, that they have not too many wives, lest their hearts turn away; and that they read alway in the law of God, to learn to fear him, lest their hearts be lift up above their brethren. Which two points, women and pride, the despising of their subjects, which are in very deed their own brethren, are the common pestilence of all princes. Read the stories, and see.

The sheriffs, baily-errants, constables, and such like officers, may let no man that hurteth his neighbor [e]scape, but that they bring them before the judges; except they in the mean time agree with their neighbors, and make them amends.

Let kings defend their subjects from the wrongs of other nations, but pick no quarrels for every

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

trifle: no, let not our most holy father make them no more so drunk with vain names, with caps of maintenance, and like baubles, as it were puppetry for children, to beggar their realms, and to murder their people, for defending of our holy father's tyranny. If a lawful peace, that standeth with God's word, be made between prince and prince, and the name of God taken to record, and the body of our Savior broken between them, upon the bond which they have made; that peace, or bond, can our holy father not dispense with, neither loose it with all the keys he hath: no, verily, Christ cannot break it: for he came not to break the law, but to fulfill it.

If any man have broken the law, or a good ordinance, and repent and come to the right way again, then hath Christ power to forgive him: but [license] to break the law can he not give; much more his disciples and vicars, as they call themselves, cannot do it. The keys, whereof they so greatly boast themselves, are no carnal things, but spiritual; and nothing else save knowledge of the law, and of the promises or gospel. If any man, for lack of spiritual feeling, desire authority of men, let him read the old doctors. If any man desire authority of scripture, Christ saith, "Woe be to you lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that come in ye forbid;" ( Luke 11) that is, they had blinded the scripture (**whose knowledge, as it were a key**, letteth into God) with glosses and traditions. Likewise findest thou Matthew 23. As Peter answered in the name of all, so Christ promised him the keys in the person of all. ( Matthew 16) And in the 20th of John he paid them, saying, "Receive the Holy Ghost: whosoever's sins ye remit, they are remitted" or forgiven; "and whosoever's sins ye retain, they are retained" or holden. With preaching the promises loose they as many as repent and believe. And for that John saith, "Receive the Holy Ghost." Luke, in his last chapter, saith, "Then opened he their wits [minds], that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." At preaching of the law repent men; and at the preaching of the promises do they believe, and are saved. Peter in the second of the Acts practiced his keys; and by preaching the, law brought the people into the knowledge of themselves, and bound their consciences, so that "they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the other apostles, What shall we do?" Then brought they forth the key of the sweet promises, saying, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise was made to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar, even as many as the Lord shall call." Of like ensamples is the Acts full, and Peter's epistles, and Paul's epistles, and all the scripture; neither hath our holy father any other authority of Christ, or by the reason of his predecessor, Peter, than to preach God's word. **As Christ compareth the understanding of scripture to a key, so compareth he it to a net, and unto leaven, and unto many other things for certain properties.** I marvel, therefore, that they boast not themselves of their net and leaven, as well as of their keys; for they are all one thing. But as Christ biddeth us beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, **so beware of their counterfeited keys, and of their false net; which are their traditions and ceremonies, their hypocrisy and false doctrine, wherewith they catch, not souls unto Christ, but authority and riches unto themselves.**

Let Christian kings therefore keep their faith and truth, and all lawful promises and bonds, not one with another only, but even with the Turk or whatsoever infidel it be. For so it is right before God; as the scriptures and ensamples of the bible testify. Whosoever voweth an unlawful vow, promiseth an unlawful promise, sweareth an unlawful oath, sinneth against God, and ought therefore to break it. He needeth not sue to Rome for a license; for he hath God's word, and not a license only, but also a commandment to break it. They therefore that are sworn to be true to cardinals and bishops, that is to say, false unto God, the king, and the realm, may break their oaths lawfully, without grudge of conscience, by the authority of God's word. In making them they sinned; but in repenting and breaking them they please God highly, and receive forgiveness in Christ.

Let kings take their duty of their subjects:, and that that is necessary to the defense of the realm. Let them rule their realms themselves, with the help of lay-men that are sage, wise, learned, and expert. Is it not a shame above all shames, and a monstrous thing, that no man should be found able to govern a worldly kingdom, save bishops and prelates; that have forsaken the world, and are taken out of the world, and appointed to preach the kingdom of God? Christ saith that his "kingdom is not of this world." John 18. And, Luke 12, unto the young man, that desired him to bid his brother to give him part of the inheritance, he answered, "Who made me a judge or a divider among you?" "No man that layeth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is apt for the kingdom of heaven." (Luke 9) "No man can serve two masters, but he must despise the one." ( Matthew 6) To preach God's word is too much for half a

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

man: and to minister a temporal kingdom is too much for half a man also. Either other requireth an whole man. One therefore cannot well do both. He that avengeth himself on every trifle is not meet to preach the patience of Christ, how that a man ought to forgive and to suffer all things. He that is overwhelmed with all manner riches, and doth but seek more daily, is not meet to preach poverty. He that will obey no man is not meet to preach how we ought to obey all men. Peter saith, "It is not meet that we should leave the word of God, and serve at the tables." (Acts 6) Paul saith in 1 Corinthians 9, "Woe is me if I preach not." A terrible saying, verily, for popes, cardinals, and bishops! If he had said, 'Woe be unto me if I fight not and move princes unto war, or if I increase not St Peter's patrimony,' as they call it, it had been a more easy saying for them.

Christ forbiddeth his disciples and that oft, (as thou mayest see Matthew 18, and also Matthew 20; Mark 9, and also Mark 10; Luke 9, and also Luke 22; even at his last supper) not only to climb above lords, kings, and emperors in worldly rule, but also to exalt themselves one above another in the kingdom of God: but in vain; for the pope would not hear it, though he had commanded it ten thousand times.

God's word should rule only; and not bishops' decrees, or the pope's pleasure. That ought they to preach purely and spiritually, and to fashion their lives after, and with all ensample of godly living and long suffering to draw all to Christ; and not to expound the scriptures carnally and worldly, saying, 'God spake this to Peter, and I am his successor, therefore this authority is mine only;' and then bring in the tyranny of their fleshly wisdom. In *prosentia majoris cessat potestas minoris*; that is, in the presence of the greater the less hath no power. There is no brotherhood where such philosophy is taught.

Such philosophy, and so to abuse the scriptures, and to mock with God's word, is after the manner of the bishop of Rochester's divinity. For he, in his 'Sermon of the condemnation of Martin Luther,' proveth by a shadow of the old Testament, that is, by Moses and Aaron, that Satan and antichrist, our most holy father the pope, is Christ's vicar and head of Christ's congregation. Moses, saith he, signifieth Christ; and Aaron the pope. And yet the epistle unto the Hebrews proveth, that the high priest of the old law signifieth Christ; and his offering and his going in once in the year into the inner temple signify the offering wherewith Christ offered himself, and Christ's going in unto the Father, to be an everlasting mediator or intercessor for us. Nevertheless, Rochester proveth the contrary by a shadow; by a shadow, verily: for in shadows they walk without all shame, and the light will they not come at, but enforce to stop and quench it with all craft and falsehood, lest their abominable juggling should be seen. If any man look in the light of the new Testament, he shall clearly see that that shadow may not be so understood.

Understand therefore, that one thing in the scripture representeth divers things. A serpent figureth Christ in one place, and the devil in another; and a lion doth likewise. Christ by leaven signifieth God's word in one place; and in another signifieth thereby the traditions of the Pharisees, which soured and altered God's word for their advantage. Now Moses verily in the said place representeth Christ; and Aaron, which was not yet high priest, represented not Peter only or his successor, as my lord of Rochester would have it, (for Peter was too little to bear Christ's message unto all the world,) but signifieth every disciple of Christ, and every true preacher of God's word. For Moses put in Aaron's mouth what he should say; and Aaron was Moses's prophet, and spake not his own message, as the pope and bishops do, but that which Moses had received of God and delivered unto him. Exodus 4, and also Exodus 7. So ought every preacher to preach God's word purely, and neither to add nor minish. A true messenger must do his message truly; and say neither more nor less than he is commanded. Aaron, when he is high priest, and offereth and purgeth the people of their worldly sin which they had fallen in, in touching uncleanly things, and in eating meats forbidden, (as we sin in handling the chalice and the altar stone, and are purged with the bishop's blessing,) representeth Christ, which purgeth us from all sin in the sight of God: as the epistle unto the Hebrews maketh mention. When Moses was gone up into the mount, and Aaron left behind, and made the golden calf, there Aaron representeth all false preachers, and namely our most holy father the pope; which in like manner maketh us believe in a bull, as the bishop of Rochester full well allegeth the place in his sermon. If the pope be signified by Aaron, and Christ by Moses, why is not the pope as well content with Christ's law and doctrine, as Aaron was with Moses'? What is the cause that our bishops preach the pope, and not Christ; seeing the apostles preached not Peter, but Christ? Paul saith of himself and his fellow apostles, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and preach ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake:" (2 Corinthians 4) and, "Let no man rejoice in men, for all things are yours, whether it be Paul, or Apollos, or Peter; whether it be the world, or life, or death; whether they be present things, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." He leaveth out, Ye are Peter's, or ye are the pope's. And in the chapter following he

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

saith, "Let men thuswise esteem us, even the ministers of Christ," etc. And (2 Corinthians 11) Paul was jealous over his Corinthians, because they fell from Christ, to whom he had married them, and did cleave unto the authority of men; for even then false prophets sought authority in the name of the high apostles: "I am (saith he) jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I coupled you to one man, to make you a chaste virgin to Christ; but I fear lest, as the serpent deceived Eve through his subtlety, even so your wits [minds] should be corrupt from the singleness that is in Christ." And it followeth: "If he that cometh to you preached another Jesus, or if ye receive another Spirit or another gospel, then might ye well have been content:" that is, ye might have well suffered him to have authority above me: "but I suppose," saith he, "that I was not behind the high apostles;" meaning in preaching Jesus and his gospel, and in ministering the Spirit. And in the said 2 Corinthians 11 he proveth, by the doctrine of Christ, that he is greater than the high apostles: for Christ saith, to be great in the kingdom of God is to do service and to take pain for other: upon which rule Paul disputeth, saying, "If they be the ministers of Christ, I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more plenteously, in death oft," and so forth. If Paul preached Christ more than Peter, and suffered more for his congregation, then is he greater than Peter, by the testimony of Christ. And in 2 Corinthians 12 he saith, "In nothing was I inferior unto the high apostles: though I be nothing, yet the tokens of an apostle were wrought among you with all patience, with signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." So proved he his authority, and not with a bull from Peter, sealed with cold lead, either with shadows of the old Testament falsely expounded.

Moreover the apostles were sent immediately of Christ; and of Christ received they their authority, as Paul boasteth himself every where. "Christ," saith he, "sent me to preach the gospel." 1 Corinthians 1. And, "I received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you." 1 Corinthians 11. And Galatians 1, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me was not after the manner of men, (that is to wit, carnal or fleshly,) neither received I it of man, neither was it taught me, but I received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ." And Galatians 2, "He that was mighty in Peter in the apostleship over the circumcision, was mighty in me among the gentiles." And 1 Timothy 1, readest thou likewise. And (John 20) Christ sent them forth indifferently, and gave them like power: "As my Father sent me," saith he, "so send I you;" that is, to preach and to suffer, as I have done; and not to conquer empires and kingdoms, and to subdue all temporal power under you with disguised hypocrisy. He gave them the Holy Ghost, to bind and loose indifferently, as thou seest; and afterward he sent forth Paul with like authority, as thou seest in the Acts. And in the last of Matthew saith he: "All power is given me in heaven and in earth; go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe whatsoever I commanded you." The authority that Christ gave them was to preach; yet not what they would imagine, but what he had commanded. "Lo," saith he, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He said not, I go my way, and lo, here is Peter in my stead; but sent them every man to a sundry country, whithersoever the Spirit carried them, and went with them himself. And as he wrought with Peter where he went:, so wrought he with the other where they went; as Paul boasteth of himself unto the Galatians. Seeing now that we have Christ's doctrine, and Christ's holy promises, and seeing that Christ is ever present with us his own self; how cometh it that Christ may not reign immediately over us, as well as the pope which cometh never at us? Seeing also that the office of an apostle is to preach only, how can the pope challenge with right any authority, where he preacheth not? How cometh it also that Rochester will not let us be called one congregation by the reason of one God, one Christ, one Spirit, one gospel, one faith, one hope, and one baptism, as well as because of one pope? If any natural beast with his worldly wisdom strive, that one is greater than another, because that in congregations one is sent of another, as we see in the Acts; I answer that Peter sent no man, but was sent himself; and John was sent, and Paul, Silas, and Barnabas were sent. Howbeit such manner sendings are not worldly, as princes send ambassadors; no, nor as friars send their limiters to gather their brotherhoods; which must obey, whether they will or will not. Here all thing is free and willingly. And the Holy Ghost bringeth them together; which maketh their wills free, and ready to bestow themselves upon their neighbor's profit. And they that come offer themselves, and all that they have, or can do, to serve the Lord and their brethren. And every man, as he is found apt and meet to serve his neighbor, so is he sent or put in office. And of the Holy Ghost are they sent, with the consent of their brethren, and with their own consent also: and God's word ruleth in that congregation; unto which word every man conformeth his will: and Christ, which is always present, is the head. But as our bishops hear not Christ's voice, so see they him not present, and therefore make them a God on the earth, of the kind, I suppose, of Aaron's calf: for he bringeth forth no other fruit but bulls.



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Forasmuch also as Christ is as great as Peter, why is not his seat as great as Peter's? Had the head of the empire been at Jerusalem, there had been no mention made of Peter. It is verily, as Paul saith in the 11th chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, "The false apostles are deceitful workers, and fashion themselves like unto the apostles of Christ:" (2 Corinthians 11) that is, the shaven nation preach Christ falsely; yea, under the name of Christ preach themselves, and reign in Christ's stead: have also taken away the key of knowledge, and wrapped the people in ignorance, and have taught them to believe in themselves, in their traditions and false ceremonies; so that Christ is but a vain name. And after they had put Christ out of his room, they gat themselves to the emperor and kings, and so long ministered their business till they have also put them out of their rooms, and have got their authorities from them, and reign also in their stead; so that the emperor and kings are but vain names and shadows, as Christ is, having nothing to do in the world. Thus reign they, in the stead of God and man, and have all power under them, and do what they list [will].

Let us see another point of our great clerk: a little after the beginning of his sermon, intending to prove that which is clearer than the sun, and serveth no more for his purpose than *Ite missa est* serveth to prove that our lady was born without original sin; he allegeth a saying that Martin Luther saith, which is this: "If we affirm that any one epistle of Paul or any one place of his epistles pertaineth not unto the universal church, (that is, to all the congregation of them that believe in Christ,) we take away all St Paul's authority." Whereupon saith Rochester: "If it be thus of the words of St Paul, much rather it is true of the gospels of Christ and of every place of them." O malicious blindness! First, note his blindness. He understandeth by this word gospel no more but the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and thinketh not that the Acts of apostles, and the epistles of Peter, of Paul, and of John, and of other like, are also the gospel. Paul calleth his preaching the gospel: Romans 2 and 1 Corinthians 4 and Galatians 1 and 1 Timothy 1. The gospel is every where one, though it be preached of divers, and signifieth glad tidings: that is to wit, an open preaching of Christ, and the holy testament and gracious promises that God hath made in Christ's blood to all that repent and believe. Now is there more gospel in one epistle of Paul, that is to say, Christ is more clearly preached and more promises rehearsed in one epistle of Paul, than in the three first evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Consider also his maliciousness; how wickedly and how craftily he taketh away the authority of Paul! 'It is much rather true of the gospels, and of every place in them, than of Paul.' If that which the four evangelists wrote be truer than that which Paul wrote, then is it not one gospel that they preached, neither one Spirit that taught them. If it be one gospel and one Spirit, how is one truer than the other? Paul proveth his authority to the Galatians and to the Corinthians, because that he received his gospel by revelation of Christ, and not of man; and because that when he communed with Peter and the high apostles of his gospel and preaching, they could improve nothing, neither teach him any thing; and because also that as many were converted, and as great miracles shewed by his preaching as at the preaching of the high apostles; and therefore will be of no less authority than Peter and other high apostles, nor have his gospel of less reputation than theirs.

Finally: that thou mayest know Rochester for ever, and all the remnant by him, what they are within the skin, mark how he playeth bo-peep with the scripture. He allegeth the beginning of the tenth chapter to the Hebrews, *Umbram habens lex futurorum benorum*, "the law hath but a shadow of things to come;" and immediately expoundeth the figure clean contrary unto the chapter following, and to all the whole epistle; making Aaron a figure of the pope, whom the epistle maketh a figure of Christ.

He allegeth half a text of Paul, "In the latter days some shall depart from the faith, giving heed unto spirits of error and devilish doctrine." (1 Timothy 4) But it followeth in the text: "Giving attendance, or heed, unto the devilish doctrine of them which speak false through hypocrisy, and have their consciences marked with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with giving thanks." Which two things who ever did, save the pope, Rochester's god? making sin in the creatures, which God hath created for man's use, to be received with thanks. "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink," saith Paul, "but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For whosoever in these things serveth Christ, pleaseth God, and is allowed of men." Had Rochester, therefore, not a conscience marked with the hot iron of malice, so that he cannot consent unto the will of God and glory of Christ, he would not so have alleged the text; which is contrary to none save themselves.

He allegeth another text of Paul, in the second chapter of his second epistle to the Thessalonians, *Erit discessio primum*: that is, saith Rochester, before the coming of antichrist there shall be a notable departing from the faith. And Paul saith, "The Lord cometh not, except there come a departing first."

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Paul's meaning is, that the last day cometh not so shortly, but that antichrist shall come first and destroy the faith, and sit in the temple of God, and make all men worship him, and believe in him (as the pope doth); and then shall God's word come to light again, (as it doth at this time,) and destroy him, and utter his juggling, and then cometh Christ unto judgment. What say ye of this crafty conveyer? Would he spare, suppose ye, to allege and to wrest other doctors pestilently, which feareth not for to juggle with the holy scripture of God, expounding that unto antichrist which Paul speaketh of Christ? No, be ye sure. But even after this manner-wise pervert they the whole scripture and all doctors; wresting them unto their abominable purpose, clean contrary to the meaning of the text, and to the circumstances that go before and after. Which devilish falsehood, lest the laymen should perceive, is the very cause why that they will not suffer the scripture to be had in the English tongue; neither any work to be made that should bring the people to knowledge of the truth.

He allegeth, for the pope's authority, St Cyprian, St Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and Origen; of which never one knew of any authority that one bishop should have above another. And St Gregory allegeth he, which would receive no such authority above his brethren, when it was proffered him. As the manner is to call Tully chief of orators for his singular eloquence, and Aristotle chief of philosophers, and Virgil chief of poets, for their singular learning, and not for any authority that they had over other; so was it the manner to call Peter chief of the apostles for his singular activity and boldness, and not that he should be lord over his; brethren, contrary to his own doctrine. Yet compare that chief apostle unto Paul, and he is found a great way inferior. This I say not that I would that any man should make a god of Paul, contrary unto his own learning. Notwithstanding yet this manner of speaking is left unto us of our elders; that when we say the apostle saith so, we understand Paul, for his excellency above other apostles. I would he would tell you how Jerome, Augustine, Bede, Origen, and other doctors, expound this text, "Upon this rock I will build my congregation:" and how they interpret the keys also. Thereto, Pasce, pasce, pasce, which Rochester leaveth without any English, signifieth not poll, sheer, and shave. Upon which text behold the faithful exposition of Bede.

Note also how craftily he would enfeoff the apostles of Christ with their wicked traditions and false ceremonies, which they themselves have feigned; alleging; Paul, 2 Thessalonians 2. I answer, that Paul taught by mouth such things as he wrote in his epistles. And his traditions were the gospel of Christ, and honest manners and living, and such a good order as becometh the doctrine of Christ: as that a woman obey her husband, have her head covered, keep silence, and go womanly and christianly apparelled; that children and servants be in subjection: and that the young obey their elders; that no man eat but he that laboreth and worketh; and that men make an earnest thing of God's word and of his holy sacraments; and to watch, fast, and pray, and such like as the scripture commandeth: which things he that would break were no christian man. But we may well complain, and cry to God for help, that it is not lawful, for the pope's tyranny, to teach the people what prayer is, what fasting is, and wherefore it serveth. There were also certain customs alway, which were not commanded in pain of hell, or everlasting damnation; as to watch all night, and to kiss one another: which as soon as the people abused, then they brake them. For which cause the bishops might break many things now in like manner. Paul also, in many things which God had made free, gave pure and faithful counsel; without tangling of any man's conscience, and without all manner commanding under pain of cursing, pain of excommunication, pain of heresy, pain of burning, pain of deadly sin, pain of hell, and pain of damnation. As thou mayest see, 1 Corinthians 7, where he counselleth the unmarried, the widows, and virgins, that it is good so to abide, if they have the gift of chastity: not to win heaven thereby; (for neither circumcision neither uncircumcision is any thing at all, but the keeping of the commandments is altogether;) but that they might be without trouble, and might also the better wait on God's word, and freelier serve their brethren: and saith, as a faithful servant, that he had none authority of the Lord to give them any commandment. But, that the apostles gave us any blind ceremonies, whereof we should not know the reason, that I deny, and also defy, as a thing clean contrary unto the learning of Paul everywhere.

For Paul commandeth that no man once speak in the church, that is, in the congregation, but in a tongue that all men understand, except that there be an interpreter by. He commandeth to labor for knowledge, understanding, and feeling; and to beware of superstition, and persuasions of worldly wisdom, philosophy, and of hypocrisy and ceremonies, and of all manner disguising, and to walk in the plain and open truth. "Ye were once darkness," saith he, "but now are ye light in the Lord; walk therefore as the children of light." Ephesians 5. How doth Paul also wish them increase of grace in every epistle! How crieth he to God to augment their knowledge; that they should be no more children, wavering with every wind of doctrine; but would vouchsafe to make them full men in Christ, and in the

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

understanding of the mysteries or secrets of Christ, so that it should not be possible for any man to deceive them with any enticing reasons of worldly wisdom, or to beguile them with blind ceremonies, or to lead them out of the way with superstitiousness of disguised hypocrisy!

Unto which full knowledge are the spiritual officers ordained to bring them. Ephesians 4. So far is it away that Christ's apostles should give them traditions of blind ceremonies, without signification, or of which no man should know the reason; as Rochester, which loveth shadows and darkness, lieth on them: God stop his blasphemous mouth!

Consider also, how studiously Rochester allegeth Origen, both for his pope, and also to stablish his blind ceremonies withal: which Origen of all heretics is condemned to be the greatest. 'He is an ancient doctor,' saith he; yea, 'and to whom in this point great faith is to be given.' Yea, verily, Aristotle and Plato, and even very Robin Hood, is to be believed in such a point, that so greatly maintaineth our holy father's authority, and all his disguisings.

Last of all: as once a crafty thief, when he was espied and followed, cried unto the people, Stop the thief! Stop the thief! and as many, to begin withal, cast first in another man's teeth that which he feareth should be laid to his own charge; even so Rochester layeth to Martin Luther's charge the slaying and murdering of Christian men, because they will not believe in his doctrine: which thing Rochester and his brethren have not ceased to do now these certain hundred years, with such malice, that, when they be dead, they rage, burning their bodies; of which some they themselves, of likelihood, killed before secretly. And because that all the world knoweth that Martin Luther slayeth no man, but killeth only with the spiritual sword, the word of God, such cankered consciences as Rochester hath; neither persecuteth, but suffereth persecution; yet Rochester, with a goodly argument proveth that he would do it if he could! And mark, I pray you, what an orator he is, and how vehemently he persuadeth it! Martin Luther hath burned the pope's decretals; a manifest sign, saith he, that he would have burned the pope's holiness also, if he had had him! A like argument, which I suppose to be rather true, I make: Rochester and his holy brethren have burnt Christ's testament; an evident sign, verily, that they would have burnt Christ himself also, if they had had him!

I had almost, verily, left out the chiefest point of all. Rochester, both abominable and shameless, yea, and stark mad with pure malice, and so adased in the brains with spite, that he cannot overcome the truth that he seeth not, or rather careth not what he saith; in the end of his first destruction, I would say instruction, as he calleth it, intending to prove that we are justified through holy works, allegeth half a text of Paul, of the fifth to the Galatians, (as his manner is to juggle and convey craftily,) *Fides per dilectionem operans*. Which text he thiswise Englisheth: "Faith, which is wrought by love;" and maketh a verb passive of a verb deponent. Rochester will have love to go before, and faith to spring out of love. Thus antichrist turneth the roots of the tree upward. I must first love a bitter medicine, (after Rochester's doctrine,) and then believe that it is wholesome: when, by natural reason, I first hate a bitter medicine, until I be brought in belief of the physician that it is wholesome, and that the bitterness shall heal me; and then afterward love it, of that belief. Doth the child love the father first, and then believe that he is his son or heir? or rather, because he knoweth that he is his son or heir and beloved, therefore loveth again? John saith, in the third of his first epistle, "See what love the Father hath shewed upon us, that we should be called his sons." Because we are sons, therefore love we. Now, by faith we are sons, as John saith in the first chapter of his gospel: "He gave them power to be the sons of God, in that they believed on his name." And Paul saith, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, "We are all the sons of God by the faith which is in Jesus Christ." And John, in the said chapter of his epistle, saith, "Hereby perceive we love, that he gave his life for us." We could see no love, nor cause to love again, except that we believed that he died for us, and that we were saved through his death. And in the chapter following saith John, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to make agreement for our sins." So God sent not his Son for any love that we had to him; but of the love that he had to us sent he his Son, that we might so love, and love again. Paul likewise, in Romans 7, after that he hath declared the infinite love of God to usward, in that he spared not his own Son, but gave him for us, crieth out, saying, "Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall persecution, shall a sword? etc." No, saith he; "I am sure that no creature shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord:" as who should say, We see so great love in God to us-ward, in Christ's death, that though all misfortune should fall on us, we cannot but love again. Now how know we that God loveth us? Verily, by faith. So therefore, though Rochester be a beast faithless, yet ought natural reason to have taught him, that love springeth out of faith and knowledge; and not faith and knowledge out of love. But let us see the text. Paul saith thus: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision is any thing worth, nor uncircumcision,

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

but faith which worketh through love;" or which through love is strong or mighty in working; and not which is wrought by love, as the juggler saith. Faith, that loveth God's commandments, justifieth a man. If thou believe God's promises in Christ, and love his commandments, then art thou safe. If thou love the commandment, then art thou sure that thy faith is unfeigned, and that God's Spirit is in thee.

How faith justifieth before God in the heart; and how love springeth of faith, and compelleth us to work; and how the works justify before the world, and testify what we are, and certify us that our faith is unfeigned, and that the right Spirit of God is in us; see in my book of the Justifying of Faith; and there shalt thou see all thing abundantly. Also of the controversy between Paul and James, see there. Neverthelater, when Rochester saith, if faith only justified, then both the devils and also sinners that lie still in sin should be saved, his argument is not worth a straw.

For neither the devils, nor yet sinners, that continue in sin of purpose and delectation, have any such faith as Paul speaketh of. For Paul's faith is to believe God's promises. "Faith," saith he, Romans 10, "cometh by hearing, and hearing cometh by the word of God." "And how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written," saith he, "How beautiful are the feet that bring glad tidings of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Now when sent God any messengers unto the devils, to preach them peace, or any good thing? The devil hath no promise; he is therefore excluded from Paul's faith. The devil believeth that Christ died, but not that he died for his sins. Neither doth any, that consenteth in the heart to continue in sin, believe that Christ died for him. For to believe that Christ died for us is to see our horrible damnation, and how we were appointed unto eternal pains, and to feel, and to be sure, that we are delivered therefrom through Christ: in that we have power to hate our sins, and to love God's commandments. All such repent and have their hearts loosed out of captivity and bondage of sin, and are therefore justified through faith in Christ. Wicked sinners have no faith, but imaginations and opinions about Christ; as our schoolmen have in their principles, about which they brawl so fast one with another. It is another thing to believe that the king is rich, and that he is rich unto me, and that my part is therein; and that he will not spare a penny of his riches at my need. When I believe that the king is rich, I am not moved: but when I believe that he is rich for me, and that he will never fail me at my need, then love I; and of love am ready to work unto the uttermost of my power.

But let us return at the last unto our purpose again. What is the cause that laymen cannot now rule, as well as in times past, and as the Turks yet do?

Verily, because that antichrist with the mist of his juggling hath beguiled our eyes, and hath cast a superstitious fear upon the world of christian men, and hath taught them to dread not God and his word, but himself and his word; not God's law and ordinances, princes and officers which God hath set to rule the world, but his own law and ordinances, traditions and ceremonies, and disguised disciples, which he hath set every where to deceive the world, and to expel the light of God's word, that his darkness may have room. For we see by daily experience, of certain hundred years long, that he which feareth neither God nor his word, neither regardeth father, mother, master, or Christ himself; which rebelleth against God's ordinances, riseth against the king's, and resisteth his officers, dare not once lay hands on one of the pope's anointed: no, though he slay his father before his face, or do violence unto his brother, or defile his sister, wife, or mother. Like honor give we unto his traditions and ceremonies. What devotion have we when we are blessed (as they call it) with the chalice, or when the bishop lifteth up his holy hand over us? Who dare handle the chalice, touch the altar-stone, or put his hand in the font, or his finger into the holy oil? What reverence give we unto holy water, holy fire, holy bread, holy salt, hallowed bells, holy wax, holy boughs, holy candles, and holy ashes! And last of all, unto the holy candle commit we our souls at our last departing. Yea, and of the very clout which the bishop, or his chaplain that standeth by, knitteth about children's necks at confirmation, what lay-person dare be so bold as to unloose the knot? Thou wilt say, Do not such things bring the Holy Ghost and put away sin and drive away spirits? I say that a stedfast faith, or belief in Christ and in the promises that God hath sworn to give us for his sake, bringeth the Holy Ghost, as all the scriptures make mention, and as Paul saith, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost through faith, or believing?" Faith is the rock whereon Christ buildeth his congregation; against which, saith Christ, Matthew 16, hellgates shall not prevail. As soon as thou believest in Christ, the Holy Ghost cometh, sin falleth away, and devils fly. When we cast holy water at the devil, or ring the bells, he fleeth as men do from young children, and mocketh with us, to bring us from the true faith, that is in God's word, unto a superstitious and a false belief of our own imagination. If thou hadst faith and threwest an unhallowed stone at his head, he would earnestly flee, and without mocking; yea, though thou threwest nothing at all, he would not yet abide.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Though that at the beginning miracles were shewed through such ceremonies, to move the infidels to believe the word of God, as thou readest how the apostles anointed the sick with oil, and healed them; and Paul sent his pertelet or jerkin to the sick, and healed them also; yet was it not the ceremony that did the miracle, but faith of the preacher and the truth of God, which had promised to confirm and stablish his gospel with such miracles. Therefore, as soon as the gift of miracles ceased, ought the ceremony to have ceased also; or else if they needs will have a ceremony to signify some promise or benefit of God (which I praise not, but would have God's word preached every Sunday, for which intent Sundays and holy days were ordained), then let them tell the people what it meaneth; and not set up a bald and a naked ceremony without signification, to make the people believe therein, and to quench the faith that ought to be given unto the word of God.

What helpeth it also that the priest, when he goeth to mass, disguiseth himself with a great part of the passion of Christ, and playeth out the rest under silence, with signs and proffers, with nodding, becking and mowing, as it were jackanapes, when neither he himself, neither any man else [knows] what he meaneth? Not at all, verily; but hurteth, and that exceedingly; forasmuch as it not only destroyeth the faith, and quencheth the love that should be given unto the commandments, and maketh the people unthankful, in that it bringeth them into such superstition, that they think that they have done abundantly enough for God, yea, and deserved above measure, if they be present once in a day at such mumming; but also maketh the infidels to mock us and abhor us, in that they see nothing but such apes' play among us, whereof no man can give a reason.

All this cometh to pass to fulfill the prophecy which Christ prophesied; that there shall come in his name, which shall say that they themselves are Christ. That do verily the pope and our holy orders of religion. For they, under the name of Christ, preach themselves, their own word and their own traditions, and teach the people to believe in them. The pope giveth pardons of his full power, of the treasure of the church, and of the merits of saints. The friars likewise make their benefactors (which only they call their brethren and sisters) partakers of their masses, fasting, watchings, prayings, and woolward goings. Yea, and when a novice of the Observants is professed, the father asketh him, Will ye keep the rules of holy St Francis? and he saith, Yea. Will ye so in deed? saith he. The other answereth, 'Yea, forsooth [in tuth], father. Then saith the father, And I promise you again everlasting life. O blasphemy! If eternal life be due unto the pilled traditions of lousy friars, where is the testament become that God made unto us in Christ's blood? Christ saith, 'That there shall come pseudo- Christi;' which though I, for a consideration, have translated false Christs, keeping the Greek word, yet signifieth it in the English 'false anointed,' and ought so to be translated. "There shall come," saith Christ, "false anointed, and false prophets, and shall do miracles and wonders so greatly, that, if it were possible, the very elect, or chosen, should be brought out of the way." Compare the pope's doctrine unto the word of God, and thou shalt find that there hath been, and yet is, a great going out of the way; and that evil men and deceivers (as Paul prophesied 2 Timothy 3) have prevailed, and waxed worse and worse, beguiling other as they are beguiled themselves. Thou tremblest and quakest, saying, Shall God let us go so sore out of the right way? I answer, It is Christ that warneth us; which, as he knew all that should follow, so prophesied he before, and is a true prophet, and his prophecies must needs be fulfilled. GOD anointed his son Jesus with the Holy Ghost, and therefore called him Christ; which is as much to say as anointed. Outwardly he disguised him not; but made him like other men, and sent him into the world to bless us, and to offer himself for us a sacrifice of a sweet savor, to kill the stench of our sins, that God henceforth should smell them no more, nor think on them any more; and to make full and sufficient satisfaction, or amends, for all them that repent, believing the truth of God, and submitting themselves unto his ordinances, both for their sins that they do, have done, and shall do. For sin we through fragility never so oft, yet as soon as we repent and come into the right way again, and unto the testament which God hath made in Christ's blood, our sins vanish away as smoke in the wind, and as darkness at the coming of light; or as thou castest a little blood, or milk, into the main sea: insomuch that whosoever goeth about to make satisfaction for his sins to God-ward, saying in his heart, This much have I sinned, this much will I do again; or this-wise will I live to make amends withal; or this will I do, to get heaven withal; the same is an infidel, faithless, and damned in his deed-doing, and hath lost his part in Christ's blood; because he is disobedient unto God's testament, and setteth up another of his own imagination, unto which he will compel God to obey. If we love God, we have a commandment to love our neighbor also, as saith John in his epistle; and if we have offended him, to make him amends; or if we have not wherewith, to ask him forgiveness, and to do and suffer all things for his sake, to win him to God, and to nourish peace and unity. But to God-ward Christ is an everlasting satisfaction, and ever sufficient. Christ, when he had

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

fulfilled his course, anointed his apostles and disciples with the same Spirit, and sent them forth, without all manner disguising, like other men also, to preach the atonement and peace which Christ had made between God and man. The apostles likewise disguised no man, but chose men anointed with the same Spirit: one to preach the word of God, whom we call, after the Greek tongue, a bishop or a priest; that is, in English, an overseer and an elder. How he was anointed, thou readest, "A bishop or an overseer must be faultless, the husband of one wife." ( 1 Timothy 3) Many Jews, and also Gentiles, that were converted unto the faith, had at that time divers wives, yet were not compelled to put any of them away; which Paul, because of ensample, would not have preachers, forasmuch as in Christ we return again unto the first ordinance of God, that one man and one woman should go together. "He must be sober, of honest behavior, honestly apparelled, harborous," that is, ready to lodge strangers; "apt to teach, no drunkard, no fighter, not given to filthy lucre; but gentle, abhorring fighting, abhorring covetousness, and one that ruleth his own household honestly, having children under obedience with all honesty. For if a man cannot rule his own house, how can he care for the congregation of God? He may not be young in the faith," or, as a man would say, a novice, "lest he swell and fall into the judgment of the evil speaker;" that is, he may not be unlearned in the secrets of the faith: for such are at once stubborn and headstrong, and set not a little by themselves. But, alas! we have above twenty thousand that know no more scripture than is written in their portesses; and among them is he exceedingly well learned that can turn to his service. "He must be well reported of them that are without, lest he fall into rebuke, and into the snare of the evil speaker;" that is, lest the infidels, which yet believe not, should be hurt by him, and driven from the faith, if a man that were defamed were made head or overseer of the congregation.

He must have a wife for two causes: one, that it may thereby be known who is meet for the room. He is unapt for so chargeable an office, which had never household to rule. Another cause is, that chastity is an exceeding seldom gift, and unchastity exceeding perilous for that degree; inasmuch as the people look as well unto the living as unto the preaching, and are hurt at once if the living disagree, and fall from the faith, and believe not the word.

This overseer, because he was taken from his own business and labor, to preach God's word unto the parish, hath right, by the authority of his office, to challenge an honest living of the parish, as thou mayest see in the evangelists, and also in Paul. For who will have a servant, and will not give him meat, drink, and raiment, and all things necessary? How they would pay him, whether in money, or assign him so much rent, or in tithes, as the guise is now in many countries, was at their liberty.

Likewise in every congregation chose they another after the same ensample, and even so anointed, as it is to see in the said chapter of Paul, and Acts 6; whom, after the Greek word, we call deacon; that is to say in English, a servant or a minister; whose office was to help and assist the priest, and to gather up his duty, and to gather for the poor of the parish, which were destitute of friends, and could not work. Common beggars to run from door to door were not then suffered. On the saints' days, namely such as had suffered death for the word sake, came men together into the church; and the priest preached unto them, and exhorted them to cleave fast unto the word, and to be strong in the faith, and to fight against the powers of the world, with suffering for their faith's sake, after the ensample of the saints: and taught them not to believe in the saints, and to trust in their merits, and to make gods of them; but took the saints for an ensample only, and prayed God to give them like faith and trust in his word, and like strength and power to suffer therefore, and to give them so sure hope of the life to come; as thou mayest see in the collects of St Lawrence and of St Stephen in our lady matins. And in such days, as we now offer, so gave they every man his portion according to his ability, and as God put in his heart, to the maintenance of the priest, deacon, and other common ministers, and of the poor, and to find learned men to teach, and so forth. And all was put in the hands of the deacon; as thou mayest see in the life of St Lawrence, and in the histories. And for such purposes gave men lands afterwards, to ease the parishes; and made hospitals, and also places to teach their children, and to bring them up, and to nurture them in God's word; which lands our monks now devour.

### **ANTICHRIST.**

ANTICHRIST of another manner hath sent forth his disciples, those "false anointed," of which Christ warneth us before, that they should come and show miracles and wonders, even to bring the very elect out of the way, if it were possible. He anointeth them after the manner of the Jews; and shaveth them and sheareth them after the manner of the heathen priests, which serve the idols. He sendeth them forth not with false oil only, but with false names also: for compare their names unto their deeds, and

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

thou shalt find them false. He sendeth them forth, as Paul prophesied of them, with lying signs and wonders. What sign is the anointing? That they be full of the Holy Ghost. Compare them to the signs of the Holy Ghost, which Paul reckoneth, and thou shalt find it a false sign. "A bishop must be faultless, the husband of one wife." Nay, saith the pope, the husband of no wife, but the holder of as many whores as he lusts [desires] after. God commandeth all degrees, if they burn, and cannot live chaste, to marry. The pope saith, If thou burn, take a dispensation for a concubine, and put her away when thou art old; or else, as our lawyers say, *Si non caste, tamen caute*; that is, If ye live not chaste, see ye carry clean, and play the knave secretly. "Harborous:" yea, to whores and bawds; for a poor man shall as soon break his neck as his fast with them, but of the scraps and with the dogs, when dinner is done. "Apt to teach," and, as Peter saith, "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that ye have, and that with meekness." Which thing is signified by the boots which doctors of divinity are created in, because they should be ready always to go through thick and thin, to preach God's word; and by the bishop's two-horned mitre, which betokeneth the absolute and perfect knowledge that they ought to have in the new Testament and the old. Be not these false signs? For they beat only, and teach not. 'Yea,' saith the pope, 'If they will not be ruled, cite them to appear; and pose them sharply, what they hold of the pope's power, of his pardons, of his bulls, of purgatory, of ceremonies, of confession, and such like creatures of our most holy father's. If they miss in any point, make heretics of them, and burn them. If they be of mine anointed, and bear my mark, disgrace them, (I would say, disgrace them,) and after the ensample of noble Antiochus (2 Maccabees 7) pare the crowns and the fingers of them, and torment them craftily, and for very pain make them deny the truth.' ('But now,' say our bishops, 'because the truth is come too far abroad, and the lay-people begin to smell our wiles, it is best to oppress them with craft secretly, and to tame them in prison. Yea, let us find the means to have them in the king's prison, and to make treason of such doctrine: yea, we must stir up some war, one [some]where or another, to bring the people into another imagination.') 'If they be gentlemen, abjure them secretly. Curse them four times in the year. Make them afraid of every thing; and namely, to touch mine anointed; and make them to fear the sentence of the church, suspensions, excommunications and curses. Be they right or wrong, bear them in hand that they are to be feared yet. Preach me and mine authority, and how terrible a thing my curse is, and how black it maketh their souls.

On the holidays, which were ordained to preach God's word, set up long ceremonies, long matins, long masses, and long evensongs, and all in Latin, that they understand not; and roll them in darkness, that ye may lead them whither ye will. And lest such things should be too tedious, sing some, say some, pipe some, ring the bells, and lull them and rock them asleep.' And yet Paul (1 Corinthians 14) forbiddeth to speak in the church or congregation, save in the tongue that all understand. For the layman thereby is not edified or taught. How shall the layman say Amen (saith Paul) to thy blessing or thanksgiving, when he [understands] not what thou sayest? He [understands] not whether thou bless or curse.

What then saith the pope? 'What care I for Paul? I command by the virtue of obedience, to read the gospel in Latin. Let them not pray but in Latin, no, not their Pater noster. If any be sick, go also and say them a gospel, and all in Latin: yea, to the very corn and fruits of the field, in the procession week, preach the gospel in Latin: make the people believe, that it shall grow the better.' It is verily as good to preach it to swine as to men, if thou preach it in a tongue they understand not. How shall I prepare myself to God's commandments? How shall I be thankful to Christ for his kindness? How shall I believe the truth and promises which God hath sworn, while thou tellest them unto me in a tongue which I understand not?

What then saith my lord of Canterbury to a priest that would have had the new testament gone forth in English? "What," saith he, "wouldest thou that the lay-people should wete what we do?" "No fighter:" which I suppose is signified by the cross that is borne before the high prelates, and borne before them in procession. Is that also not a false sign? What realm can be in peace for such turmoilers? What so little a parish is it, but they will pick one quarrel or another with them, either for some surplice, chrisom, or mortuary, either for one trifle or other, and cite them to the Arches? Traitors they are to all creatures, and have a secret conspiracy between themselves. One craft they have, to make many kingdoms, and small; and to nourish old titles or quarrels; that they may ever move them to war at their pleasure; and if much lands by any chance fall to one man, ever to cast a bone in the way, that he shall never be able to obtain it, as we now see in the emperor. Why? For as long as the kings be small, if God would open the eyes of any to set a reformation in his realm, then should the pope interdict his land, and send in other princes to conquer it. "Not given to filthy lucre, but abhorring covetousness;" and, as Peter

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

saith, "Taking the oversight of them, not as though ye were compelled thereunto, but willingly; not for desire of filthy lucre, but of a good mind; not as though ye were lords over the parishes." Over the parishes, quoth he! O Peter, Peter, thou wast too long a fisher; thou wast never brought up at the Arches, neither wast master of the Rolls, nor yet chancellor of England. They are not content to reign over king and emperor, and the whole earth; but challenge authority also in heaven and in hell. It is not enough for them to reign over all that are quick, but have created them a purgatory, to reign also over the dead, and to have one kingdom more than God himself hath. "But that ye be an ensample to the flock," saith Peter; "and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive an incorruptible crown of glory." This "abhorring of covetousness" is signified, as I suppose, by shaving and shearing of the hair, that they have no superfluity. But is not this also a false sign? Yea, verily, it is to them a remembrance to shear and shave, to heap benefice upon benefice, promotion upon promotion, dignity upon dignity, bishoprick upon bishoprick, with pluralities, unions and TOT QUOTS. First, by the authority of the gospel, they that preach the word of God in every parish, and other necessary ministers, have right to challenge an honest living like unto one of the brethren, and therewith ought to be content. Bishops and priests that preach not, or that preach aught save God's word, are none of Christ's, nor of his anointing; but servants of the beast, whose mark they bear, whose word they preach, whose law they maintain clean against God's law, and with their false sophistry give him greater power than God ever gave to his Son Christ.

But they, as unsatiable beasts, not unmindful why they were shaven and shorn, because they will stand at no man's grace, or be in any man's danger, have gotten into their own hands, first the tithe or tenth of all the realm; and then, I suppose within a little, or altogether, the third foot of all the temporal lands.

Mark well how many parsonages or vicarages are there in the realm, which at the least have a plow-land a-piece. Then note the lands of bishops, abbots, priors, nuns, knights of St John's, cathedral churches, colleges, chauntries, and free-chapels. For though the house fall in decay, and the ordinance of the founder be lost, yet will not they lose the lands. What cometh once in, may never more out. They make a free-chapel of it; so that he which enjoyeth it shall do nought therefore. Besides all this, how many chaplains do gentlemen find at their own cost, in their houses? How many sing for souls, by testaments? Then the proving of testaments, the prizing of goods, the bishop of Canterbury's prerogative; is that not much through the realm in a year? Four offering days, and privy tithes. There is no servant, but that he shall pay somewhat of his wages. None shall receive the body of Christ at Easter, be he never so poor a beggar, or never so young a lad or maid, but they must pay somewhat for it. Then mortuaries for forgotten tithes, as they say. And yet what parson or vicar is there that will forget to have a pigeon-house, to peck up somewhat both at sowingtime and harvest, when corn is ripe? They will forget nothing. No man shall die in their debt; or if any man do, he shall pay it when he is dead. They will lose nothing. Why? It is God's; it is not theirs. It is St Hubert's rents, St Alban's lands, St Edmond's right, St Peter's patrimony, say they, and none of ours. Item, if a man die in another man's parish, besides that he must pay at home a mortuary for forgotten tithes, he must there pay also the best that he there hath; whether it be an horse of twenty pound, or how good soever he be; either a chain of gold of an hundred marks, or five hundred pounds, if it so chance. It is much, verily, for so little painstaking in confession, and in ministering the sacraments. Then bead-rolls.

Item chrysome, churchings, banns, weddings, offering at weddings, offering at buryings, offering to images, offering of wax and lights, which come to their vantage; besides the superstitious waste of wax in torches and tapers throughout the land. Then brotherhoods and pardoners. What get they also by confessions? Yea, and many enjoin penance, to give a certain [sum] for to have so many masses said, and desire to provide a chaplain themselves; soul-masses, dirges, month-minds, year-minds, All-souls-day, and trentals. The mother church, and the high altar, must have somewhat in every testament. Offerings at priests' first masses. Item, no man is professed, of whatsoever religion it be, but he must bring somewhat. The hallowing, or rather conjuring of churches, chapels, altars, super-altars, chalice, vestments, and bells. Then book, bell, candlestick, organs, chalice, vestments, copes, altar-cloths, surplices, towels, basins, ewers, ship, censer, and all manner ornament, must be found them freely; they will not give a mite thereunto. Last of all, what swarms of begging friars are there! The parson sheareth, the vicar shaveth, the parish priest polleth, the friar scrapeth, and the pardoner pareth; we lack but a butcher to pull off the skin.

What get they in their spiritual law, as they call it, in a year, at the Arches and in every diocese? What get the commissaries, and officials with their somners and apparitors, by bawdery in a year? Shall



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

ye not find curates enough which, to flatter the commissaries and officials withal, that they may go quit themselves, shall open unto them the confessions of the richest of their parishes; whom they cite privily, and lay to their charges secretly?

If they desire to know their accusers, 'Nay,' say they, 'the matter is known well enough, and to more than ye are ware of. Come, lay your hand on the book; if ye forswear yourself, we shall bring proofs, we will handle you, we will make an ensample of you.' Oh, how terrible are they! 'Come, and swear,' say they, 'that you will be obedient unto our injunctions.' And by that craft wring they their purses, and make them drop, as long as there is a penny in them. In three or four years shall they in those offices get enough to pay for a bishop's bull. What other thing are these in a realm save horseleeches, and even very maggots, cankers, and caterpillars, which devour no more but all that is green; and those wolves which Paul prophesied should come, and should not spare the flock; and which Christ said should come in lamb's skins; and bade us beware of them, and judge them by their works?

Though, as I have before sufficiently proved, a christian man must suffer all things, be it never so great unright, as long as it is not against God's commandment; neither is it lawful for him to cast any burden off his back by his own authority, till God pull it off, which laid it on for our deservings; yet ought the kings everywhere to defend their realms from such oppression, if they were Christians; which is seldom seen, and is a hard thing verily, though not impossible. For, alas! they be captives or ever they be kings, yea, almost ere they be born. No man may be suffered [allowed] about them but flatterers, and such as are first sworn true unto our most holy fathers the bishops; that is to say, false to God and man.

If any of the nobles of the realm be true to the king;, and so bold that he dare counsel him that which should be to his honor and for the wealth of the realm; they will wait a season for him, as men say; they will provide a ghostly father [a Catholic priest] for him. God bring their wickedness to light! There is no mischief whereof they are not the root; nor bloodshed but through their cause, either by their counsel, or in that they preach not true obedience, and teach not the people to fear God. If any faithful servant be in all the court, he shall have twenty spies waiting upon him; he shall be cast out of the court, or, as the saying is, conveyed to Calais, and made a captain or an ambassador; he shall be kept far enough from the king's presence.

The kings ought, I say, to remember that they are in God's stead, and ordained of God, not for themselves, but for the wealth of their subjects.

Let them remember that their subjects are their brethren, their flesh and blood, members of their own body, and even their ownselves in Christ.

Therefore ought they to pity them, and to rid them from such wily tyranny, which increaseth more and more daily. And though that the kings, by the falsehood of the bishops and abbots, be sworn to defend such liberties; yet ought they not to keep their oaths, but to break them; forasmuch as they are unright and clean against God's ordinance, and even but cruel oppression, contrary unto brotherly love and charity. Moreover the spiritual officer ought to punish no sin; but and if any sin break out, the king is ordained to punish it, and they not; but to preach and exhort them to fear God, and that they sin not.

And let the kings put down some of their tyranny, and turn some unto a common wealth. If the tenth part of such tyranny were given the king yearly, and laid up in the shire-towns, against the realm had need, what would it grow to in certain years? Moreover one king, one law, is God's ordinance in every realm. Therefore ought not the king to suffer them to have a several law by themselves, and to draw his subjects thither, it is not meet, will they say, that a spiritual man should be judged of a worldly or temporal man. O abomination! see how they divide and separate themselves: if the lay-man be of the world, so is he not of God! If he believe in Christ, then is he a member of Christ, Christ's brother, Christ's flesh, Christ's blood, Christ's spouse, coheir with Christ, and hath his Spirit in earnest, and is also spiritual. If they would rob us of the Spirit of God, why should they fear to rob us of worldly goods? Because thou art put in office to preach God's word, art thou therefore no more one of the brethren? Is the mayor of London no more one of the city, because he is the chief officer? Is the king no more of the realm, because he is head thereof? The king is in the room of God; and his law is God's law, and nothing but the law of nature and natural equity, which God grayed in the hearts of men. Yet antichrist is too good to be judged by the law of God; he must have a new, of his own making, it were meet verily that they went to no law at all. No more needed they, if they would study to preach God's word truly, and be contented with sufficient, and to be like one of their brethren.

If any question arose about the faith of the scripture, that let them judge by the manifest and open scriptures, not excluding the lay-men: for there are many found among the lay-men, which are as wise as the officers. Or else, when the officer dieth, how could we put another in his room? Wilt thou so teach

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, that no man shall have knowledge or judgment in God's word save thou only? Is it not a shame that we Christians come so oft to church in vain, when he of fourscore years old knoweth no more than he that was born yesterday?

Moreover, when the spiritual officers have excommunicate any man, or have condemned any opinion for heresy; let not the king nor temporal officers punish and slay by and by at their commandment: but let them look on God's word, and compare their judgment unto the scripture, and see whether it be right or no, and not believe them at the first chop whatsoever they say, namely in things that pertain unto their own authorities and power: for no man is a right judge in his own cause. Why doth Christ command the scripture to be preached unto all creatures, but that it pertaineth unto all men to know them? Christ referreth himself unto the scriptures, John 5. And in Matthew 11, unto the question of John Baptist's disciples, he answered, "The blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the dead arise again," etc. meaning that if I do the works which are prophesied that Christ should do when he cometh, why doubt ye whether I be he or no? As who should say, Ask the scripture, whether I be Christ or no, and not myself. How happeneth it then that our prelates will not come to the light also, that we may see whether their works be wrought in God, or no? Why fear they to let the lay-men see what they do?

Why make they all their examinations in darkness? Why examine they not their causes of heresy openly, as the lay-men do their felons and murderers? Wherefore did Christ, and his apostles also, warn us so diligently of Antichrist, and of false prophets that should come? Because that we should slumber or sleep careless? or rather that we should look in the light of the scripture with all diligence, to spy them when they came, and not to suffer ourselves to be deceived and led out of the way? John biddeth judge the spirits. Whereby shall we judge them, but by the scriptures? How shalt thou know whether the prophet be true or false, or whether he speak God's word, or of his own head, if thou wilt not see the scriptures? Why said David, in the second psalm, "Be learned ye that judge the earth, lest the Lord be angry with you, and ye perish from the right way?" A terrible warning, verily: yea, and look on the stories well, and thou shalt find very few kings, since the beginning of the world, that have not perished from the right way, and that because they would not be learned.

The emperor and kings are nothing now-a-days, but even hangmen unto the pope and bishops, to kill whosoever they condemn without any more ado; as Pilate was unto the scribes and Pharisees and the high bishops, to hang Christ. For as those prelates answered Pilate, when he asked what he had done, "If he were not an evil doer, we would not have brought him unto thee;" as who should say, We are too holy to do any thing amiss, thou mayest believe us well enough: yea, and "his blood on our heads," said they; kill him hardly, we will bear the charge, our souls for thine: "We have also a law by which he ought to die, for he calleth himself God's son:" — even so say our prelates, 'He ought to die by our laws, he speaketh against the church.' And, 'Your grace is sworn to defend the liberties and ordinances of the church, and to maintain our most holy father's authority; our souls for yours, ye shall do a meritorious deed therein.' Nevertheless, as Pilate escaped not the judgment of God, even so is it to be feared lest our temporal powers shall not. "Wherefore be learned, ye that judge the earth, lest the Lord be angry with you, and ye perish from the right way."

Who slew the prophets? Who slew Christ? Who slew his apostles? Who the martyrs, and all the righteous that ever were slain? The kings and the temporal sword at the request of the false prophets. They deserved such murder to do, and to have their part with the hypocrites, because they would not be learned, and see the truth themselves. Wherefore suffered the prophets? Because they rebuked the hypocrites which beguiled the world, and namely princes and rulers, and taught them to put their trust in things of vanity, and not in God's word, and taught them to do such deeds of mercy as were profitable unto no man, but unto the false prophets themselves only; making merchandise of God's word. Wherefore slew they Christ? Even for rebuking the hypocrites; because he said, "Woe be to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven before men," (Matthew 23) that is, as it is written, "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge." (Luke 11) The law of God, which is the key wherewith men bind, and the promises, which are the keys wherewith men loose, have our hypocrites also taken away. They will suffer no man to know God's word, but burn it, and make heresy of it: yea, and because the people begin to smell their falsehood, they make it treason to the king, and breaking of the king's peace, to have so much as their Pater noster in English. And instead of God's law, they bind with their own law: and instead of God's promises, they loose and justify with pardons and ceremonies, which they themselves have imagined for their own profit. They preach, 'It were better for thee to eat flesh on Good Friday, than to hate thy neighbor:' but let any man eat flesh but on a Saturday, or break any other tradition of theirs, and he shall be bound, and not loosed, till he have paid

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

the uttermost farthing, either with shame most vile, or death most cruel. But hate thy neighbor as much as thou wilt, and thou shalt have no rebuke of them; yea, rob him, murder him, and then come to them and welcome. They have a sanctuary for thee, to save thee; yea, and a neck-verse, if thou canst but read a little Latinly, though it be never so sorrily, so that thou be ready to receive the beast's mark. They care for no understanding: it is enough if thou canst roll up a pair of matins, or an even-song, and mumble a few ceremonies. And because they be rebuked thus, they rage. "Be learned, therefore, ye that judge the world, lest God be angry with you, and ye perish from the right way." "Woe be to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" saith Christ, Matthew 23: "for ye devour widows' houses under a color of long prayer." Our hypocrites rob not the widows only, but knight, squire, lord, duke, king, and emperor, and even the whole world, under the same color; teaching the people to trust in their prayers, and not in Christ, for whose sake God hath forgiven all the sin of the whole world unto as many as repent and believe. They fear them with purgatory, and promise to pray perpetually, lest the lands should ever return home again unto the right heirs. What hast thou bought with robbing thy heirs, or with giving the hypocrites that which thou robbest of other men? Perpetual prayer? Yea, perpetual pain: for they appoint thee no time of deliverance, their prayers are so mighty. The pope for money can empty purgatory when he will. It is, verily, purgatory; for it purgeth and maketh clean riddance: yea, it is hell; for it devoureth all things. His fatherhood sendeth them to heaven with Scala coeli; that is, with a ladder to scale the walls: for by the door, Christ, will they not let them come in. That door have they stopped up; and that because ye should buy ladders of them. For some they pray daily, which gave them perpetuities, and yet make saints of them, receiving offerings in their names, and teaching other to pray to them. None of them, also, which taketh upon them to save other with their prayers, trusteth to be saved thereby themselves; but hire other to pray for them.

Moses taketh record of God, that he took not of any of the people so much as an ass, neither vexed any of them. Samuel, in 1 Kings 12, asked all Israel, Whether he had taken any man's ox or ass; or had vexed any man, or had taken any gift or reward of any man? and all the people testified, 'Say:' yet these two both taught the people, and also prayed for them, as much as our prelates do. Peter, 1 Peter 5, exhorteth the elders to take the oversight of Christ's flock, not for filthy lucre, but of a good will, even for love. Paul, Acts 20, taketh the priests, or elders, to record, that he had taught repentance and faith, and all the counsel of God; and yet had desired no man's gold, silver, or vesture, but fed himself with the labor of his hands. And yet these two taught and prayed for the people as much as our prelates do, with whom it goeth after the common saying, 'No penny, no Paternoster:' which prelates yet, as they teach not but beat only, so wet [know] they not what prayer meaneth.

Moreover, the law of love, which Christ left among us, is to give, and not to receive. What prayer is it then, that thus robbeth all the world, contrary to that great commandment, which is the end of all commandments, and in which all others are contained? If men should continue to buy prayer four or five hundred years more, as they have done, there would not be a foot of ground in Christendom, neither any worldly thing, which they, that will be called spiritual only, should not possess. And thus all should be called spiritual. "Woe be to you lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens which they are not able to bear, and ye yourselves touch not the packs with one of your fingers," saith Christ, Luke 11, Our lawyers, verily, have laden us a thousand times more. What spiritual kindred have they made in baptism to let matrimony! besides that they have added certain degrees unto the law natural for the same purpose. What an unbearable burden of chastity do they violently thrust on other men's backs, and how easily bear they it themselves! How sore a burden, how cruel a hangman, how grievous a torment, yea, and how painful an hell, is this ear-confession unto men's consciences! For the people are brought in belief, that without that they cannot be saved; insomuch that some fast certain days in the year, and pray certain superstitious prayers all their lives long, that they may not die without confession. In peril of death, if the priest be not by, the shipmen shrive themselves unto the mast. If any be present, they run then every man into his ear: but to God's promises fly they not, for they know them not. If any man have a death's wound, he crieth immediately for a priest. If a man die without shrift, many take it for a sign of damnation. Many, by reason of that false belief, die in desperation. Many, for shame, keep back of their confession twenty, thirty years, and think all the while that they be damned.

I knew a poor woman with child, which longed, and, being overcome of her passion, ate flesh on a Friday; which thing she durst not confess in the space of eighteen years, and thought all that while that she had been damned, and yet sinned she not at all. Is not this a sore burden, that so weigheth down the soul unto the bottom of hell? What should I say? A great book were not sufficient to rehearse the snares which they have laid to rob men both of their goods, and also of the trust which they should have in

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

God's word. "The scribes and Pharisees do all their works to be seen of men. They set abroad their phylacteries, and make long borders on their garments, and love to sit uppermost at feasts, and to have the chief seats in the synagogues;" that is, in the congregations or councils, "and to be called Rabbi;" that is to say, masters, saith Christ, Matthew 23. Behold the deeds of our spirituality, and how many thousand fashions are among them to be known by which, as none is like another, so loveth none another: for every one of them supposeth that all other poll too fast, and make too many captives. Yet to resist Christ are they all agreed, lest they should be all compelled to deliver up their prisoners to him. Behold the monsters, how they are disguised with mitres, crosiers, and hats, with crosses, pillars, and poleaxes, and with three crowns! What names have they? My lord prior, my lord abbot, my lord bishop, my lord archbishop, cardinal, and legate; if it please your fatherhood; if it please your lordship; if it please your grace; if it please your holiness; and innumerable such like. Behold how they are esteemed, and how high they be crept up above all; not into worldly seats only, but into the seat of God, the hearts of men, where they sit above God himself. For both they, and whatsoever they make of their own heads, is more feared and dread than God and his commandments. In them and their deservings put we more trust than in Christ and his merits.

To their promises give we more faith than to the promises which God hath sworn in Christ's blood.

The hypocrites say unto the kings and lords, 'These heretics would have us down first, and then you, to make of all common.' Nay, ye hypocrites and right heretics, approved by open scripture, the kings and lords are down already; and that so low, that they cannot go lower. Ye tread them under your feet, and lead them captive, and have made them your bond-servants to wait on your filthy lusts [desires], and to avenge your malice on every man, contrary unto the right of God's word. Ye have not only robbed them of their land, authority, honor, and due obedience which ye owe unto them; but also of their wits [minds], so that they are not without understanding in God's word only, but even in worldly matters, that pertain unto their offices, they are more than children. Ye bear them in hand what ye will, and have brought them even in case like unto them which, when they dance naked in nets, believe they are invisible. We would have them up again, and restored unto the room and authority which God hath given them, and whereof ye have robbed them. And your inward falsehood we do but utter only with the light of God's word, that your hypocrisy might be seen. "Be learned, therefore, ye that judge the world, lest God be angry with you, and ye perish from the right way." "Woe be to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the utterside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of bribery and excess," saith Christ, Matthew 23. Is that which our hypocrites eat and drink, and all their riotous excess, any other thing save robbery, and that which they have falsely gotten with their lying doctrine? "Be learned, therefore, ye that judge the world," and compel them to make restitution again. "Ye blind guides," saith Christ, "ye strain out a gnat and swallow a camel." Matthew 23. Do not our blind guides also stumble at a straw, and leap over a block; making narrow consciences at trifles, and at matters of weight none at all? If any of them happen to swallow his spittle, or any of the water wherewith he washeth his mouth, ere he go to mass; or touch the sacrament with his nose; or if the ass forget to breathe on him, or happen to handle it with any of his fingers which are not anointed; or say 'Alleluia' instead of 'Laus tibi, Domine;' or 'Ite, missa est' instead of 'Benedicamus Domino;' or pour too much wine in the chalice; or read the gospel without light; or make not his crosses aright, how trembleth he!

How feareth he! What an horrible sin is committed! I cry God mercy, saith he, and you, my ghostly father. But to hold an whore, or another man's wife, to buy a benefice, to set one realm at variance with another, and to cause twenty thousand men to die on a day, is but a trifle and a pastime with them!

The Jews boasted themselves of Abraham; and Christ said unto them, John 8. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the deeds of Abraham." Our hypocrites boast themselves of the authority of Peter, and of Paul, and the other apostles clean contrary unto the deeds and doctrine of Peter, Paul, and of all the other apostles; which both obeyed all worldly authority and power, usurping none to themselves, and taught all other to fear the kings and rulers, and to obey them in all things not contrary to the commandment of God; and not to resist them, though they took away life and goods wrongfully; but patiently to abide God's vengeance. This did our spirituality never yet, nor taught it. They taught not to fear God in his commandments; but to fear them in their traditions: insomuch that the evil people, which fear not to resist a good king and to rise against him, dare not lay hands on one of them, neither for defiling of wife, daughter, or very mother. When all men lose life and lands, they remain always sure and in safety, and ever win somewhat. For whosoever conquereth other men's lands unrightfully, ever giveth them part with them. To them is all thing lawful. In all councils and parliaments are they the chief.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Without them may no king be crowned, neither until he be sworn to their liberties. All secrets know they, even the very thoughts of men's hearts. By them all things are ministered. No king nor realm may, through their falsehood, live in peace.

To believe they teach not in Christ, but in them and their disguised hypocrisy. And of them compel they all men to buy redemption and forgiveness of sins. The people's sin they eat, and thereof wax fat. The more wicked the people are, the more prosperous is their commonwealth.

If kings and great men do amiss, they must build abbeys and colleges; mean men build chantries; poor find trentals, and brotherhoods, and begging friars. Their own heirs do men disherit, to endote them. All kings are compelled to submit themselves to them. Read the story of king John, and of other kings. They will have their causes avenged, though whole realms should therefore perish. Take from them their disguising; so are they not spiritual. Compare that they have taught us unto the scripture; so are we without faith.

Christ saith, "How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another?" (John 5) If they that seek to be glorious can have no faith, then are our prelates faithless, verily. And, John 7, he saith: "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory."

If to seek glory and honor be a sure token that a man speaketh of his ownself, and doth his own message, and not his master's; then is the doctrine of our prelates of themselves, and not of God. "Be learned, therefore, ye that judge the earth, lest God be angry with you, and ye perish from the right way."

Be learned, lest the hypocrites bring the wrath of God upon your heads, and compel you to shed innocent blood; as they have compelled your predecessors to slay the prophets, to kill Christ and his apostles, and all the righteous that since were slain. God's word pertaineth unto all men; as it pertaineth unto all servants to know their master's will and pleasure, and to all subjects to know the laws of their prince. Let not the hypocrites do all things secretly. What reason is it that mine enemy should put me in prison at his pleasure, and there diet me, and handle me as he lusteth [[desires]; and judge me himself, and that secretly; and condemn me by a law of his own making, and then deliver me to Pilate to murder me? Let God's word try every man's doctrine, and whomsoever God's word proveth unclean, let him be taken for a leper. One scripture will help to declare another. And the circumstances, that is to say, the places that go before and after, will give light unto the middle text. And the open and manifest scriptures will ever improve the false and wrong exposition of the darker sentences. Let the temporal power, to whom God hath given the sword to take vengeance, look or ever that they leap, and see what they do. Let the causes be disputed before them, and let him that is accused have room to answer for himself. The powers, to whom God hath committed the sword, shall give accounts for every drop of blood that is shed on the earth. Then shall their ignorance not excuse them, nor the saying of the hypocrites help them, 'My soul for yours, your grace shall do a meritorious deed;' 'your grace ought not to hear them;' 'it is an old heresy condemned by the church.' The king ought to look in the scripture, and see whether it were truly condemned or no, if he will punish it. If the king, or his officer for him, will slay me; so ought the king, or his officer, to judge me. The king cannot, but unto his damnation, lend his sword to kill whom he judgeth not by his own laws.

Let him that is accused stand on the one side, and the accuser on the other side; and let the king's judge sit and judge the cause, if the king will kill, and not be a murderer before God.

Hereof may ye see, not only that our persecution is for the same cause that Christ's was, and that we say nothing that Christ said not; but also that all persecution is only for rebuking of hypocrisy; that is to say, of man's righteousness, and of holy deeds, which man hath imagined to please God and to be saved by without God's word, and beside the testament that God hath made in Christ. If Christ had not rebuked the Pharisees because they taught the people to believe in their traditions and holiness, and in offerings that came to their advantage, and that they taught the widows, and them that had their friends dead, to believe in their prayers, and that through their prayers the dead should be saved; and through that means robbed them both of their goods, and also of the testament and promises that God had made to all that repented in Christ to come; he might have been uncrucified unto this day.

If St Paul also had not preached against circumcision, that it justified not; and that vows, offerings, and ceremonies justified not; and that righteousness, and forgiveness of sins, came not by any deserving of our deeds, but by faith, or believing the promises of God, and by the deserving and merits of Christ only; he might have lived unto this hour. Likewise, if we preached not against pride, covetousness, lechery, extortion, usury, simony, and against the evil living both of the spirituality as well as of the temporality, and against inclosings of parks, raising of rents and fines, and of the carrying out of wool out

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

of the realm; we might endure long enough.

But touch the scab of hypocrisy, or pope-holiness, and go about to utter their false doctrine, wherewith they reign as gods in the heart and consciences of men, and rob them not of lands, goods, and authority only, but also of the testament of God, and salvation that is in Christ; then helpeth thee neither God's word, nor yet if thou didst miracles; but that thou art not an heretic only, and hast the devil within thee, but also a breaker of the king's peace, and a traitor. But let us return unto our lying signs again.

What signifieth that the prelates are so bloody, and clothed in red? That they be ready every hour to suffer martyrdom for the testimony of God's word. Is that also not a false sign? When no man dare, for them, once open his mouth to ask a question of God's word, because they are ready to burn him.

What signifieth the poleaxes that are borne before high legates a latere?

Whatsoever false sign they make of them, I care not; but of this I am sure, that as the old hypocrites, when they had slain Christ, set poleaxes to keep him in his sepulcher, that he should not rise again, even so have our hypocrites buried the testament that God made unto us in Christ's blood; and to keep it down, that it rise not again, is all their study; whereof these poleaxes are the very sign.

Is not that shepherd's hook, the bishop's crose, a false sign? Is not that white rochet, that the bishops and canons wear, so like a nun, and so effeminately, a false sign? What other things are their sandals, gloves, mitres, and all the whole pomp of their disguising, than false signs, in which Paul prophesied that they should come? And as Christ warned us to beware of wolves in lamb's skins, and bade us look rather unto their fruits and deeds than to wonder at their disguisings, run throughout all our holy religions, and thou shalt find them likewise all clothed in falsehood.

### **OF THE SACRAMENTS.**

FORASMUCH as we be come to signs, we will speak a word or two of the signs which God hath ordained; that is to say, of the sacraments which Christ left among us for our comfort, that we may walk in light and in truth, and in feeling of the power of God. For "he that walketh in the day stumbleth not;" when contrariwise he that walketh in the night stumbleth, John 11. And "they that walk in darkness wot [know] not whither they go."

This word, sacrament, is as much to say as an holy sign, and representeth alway some promise of God: as in the old Testament God ordained that the rainbow should represent and signify unto all men an oath, that God sware to Noe and to all men after him, that he would no more drown the world through water.

### **THE SACRAMENT OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.**

So the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ hath a promise annexed, which the priest should declare in the English tongue. "This is my body, that is broken for you." "This is my blood, that is shed for many, unto the forgiveness of sins." "This do in remembrance of me," saith Christ, Luke 22 and 1 Corinthians 11. If when thou seest the sacrament, or eatest his body, or drinkest his blood, thou have this promise fast in thine heart, that his body was slain and his blood shed for thy sins, and believest it, so art thou saved and justified thereby. If not, so helpeth it thee not, though thou hearest a thousand masses in a day, or though thou doest nothing else all thy life long than eat his body or drink his blood: no more than it should help thee, in a dead thirst, to behold a bush at a tavern door, if thou knewest not thereby that there were wine within to be sold.

### **BAPTISM.**

BAPTISM hath also his word and promise, which the priest ought to teach the people, and christen them in the English tongue; and not to play the popinjay with 'Credo say ye,' 'Volo say ye,' and 'Baptismum say ye;' for there ought to be no mumming in such a matter. The priest, before he baptizeth, asketh, saying: 'Believest thou in God the Father Almighty, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, and that the congregation of Christ is holy?' And they say, 'Yea.' Then the priest upon this faith baptizeth the child in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, for the forgiveness of sins, as Peter saith, Acts 2.

The washing without the word helpeth not: but through the word it purifieth and cleanseth us: as thou readest, Ephesians 5, how Christ cleanseth the congregation in the fountain of water through the

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

word. The word is the promise that God hath made. Now as a preacher, in preaching the word of God, sayeth the hearers that believe; so doth the washing, in that it preacheth and representeth unto us the promise that God hath made unto us in Christ. The washing preacheth unto us, that we are cleansed with Christ's blood-shedding; which was an offering, and a satisfaction, for the sin of all that repent and believe, consenting and submitting themselves unto the will of God. The plunging into the water signifieth that we die, and are buried with Christ, as concerning the old life of sin, which is Adam.

And the pulling out again signifieth that we rise again with Christ in a new life, full of the Holy Ghost, which shall teach us and guide us, and work the will of God in us, as thou seest, Romans 6.

### **OF WEDLOCK.**

MATRIMONY, or wedlock, is a state or a degree ordained of God, and an office wherein the husband serveth the wife, and the wife the husband. It was ordained for a remedy, and to increase the world; and for the man to help the woman, and the woman the man, with all love and kindness; and not to signify any promise, that ever I heard or read of in the scripture.

Therefore ought it not to be called a sacrament. It hath a promise, that we sin not in that state, if a man receive his wife as a gift given to him of God, and the wife her husband likewise: as all manner meats and drinks have a promise that we sin not, if we use them measurably with thanksgiving. If they call matrimony a sacrament, because the scripture useth the similitude of matrimony to express the marriage, or wedlock, that is between us and Christ; (for as a woman, though she be never so poor, yet when she is married, is as rich as her husband; even so we, when we repent and believe the promises of God in Christ, though we be never so poor sinners, yet are as rich as Christ; all his merits are ours, with all that he hath;) if for that cause they call it a sacrament, so will I mustard-seed, leaven, a net, keys, bread, water, and a thousand other things, which Christ and the prophets and all the scripture use, to express the kingdom of heaven and God's word withal. They praise wedlock with their mouth, and say, 'It is an holy thing,' as it is verily; but had lever [rather] be sanctified with a whore, than to come within the sanctuary.

### **OF ORDER.**

SUBDEACON, deacon, priest, bishop, cardinal, patriarch, and pope, be names of offices and service, or should be, and not sacraments. There is no promise coupled therewith. If they minister their offices truly, it is a sign that Christ's Spirit is in them; if not, that the devil is in them. Are these, all sacraments, or which one of them? Or what thing in them is that holy sign or sacrament? The shaving, or the anointing? What also is the promise that is signified thereby? But what word printeth in them that character, that spiritual seal? O dreamers and natural beasts, without the seal of the Spirit of God; but sealed with the mark of the beast and with cankered consciences!

There is a word called in Latin sacerdos, in Greek hiereus, in Hebrew cohan, that is, a minister, an officer, a sacrificer or a priest; as Aaron was a priest, and sacrificed for the people, and was a mediator between God and them. And in the English should it have had some other name than priest. But Antichrist hath deceived us with unknown and strange terms, to bring us into confusion and superstitious blindness. Of that manner is Christ a priest for ever; and all we priests through him, and need no more of any such priest on earth, to be a mean [way] for us unto God. For Christ hath brought us all into the inner temple, within the veil or forehanging, and unto the mercy-stool of God, and hath coupled us unto God; where we offer, every man for himself, the desires and petitions of his heart, and sacrifice and kill the lusts [desires] and appetites of his flesh, with prayer, fasting, and all manner godly living. Another word is there in Greek, called presbyter, in Latin senior, in English an elder, and is nothing but an officer to teach, and not to be a mediator between God and us. This needeth no anointing of man. They of the old Testament were anointed with oil, to signify the anointing of Christ, and of us through Christ, with the Holy Ghost. Thiswise is no man priest, but he that is chosen; save as in time of necessity every person christeneth, so may every man teach his wife and household, and the wife her children.

So in time of need, if I see my brother sin, I may between him and me rebuke him, and damn his deed by the law of God; and may also comfort them that are in despair, with the promises of God; and save them if they believe.

By a priest then, in the new Testament, understand nothing but an elder to teach the younger, and to bring them unto the full knowledge and understanding of Christ, and to minister the sacraments which

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Christ ordained, which is also nothing but to preach Christ's promises. And by them that give all their study to quench the light of truth, and to hold the people in darkness, understand the disciples of Satan and messengers of antichrist, whatsoever names they have, or whatsoever they call themselves. And as concerning that our spirituality (as they will be called) make themselves holier than the lay-people, and take so great lands and goods to pray for them, and promise them pardons and forgiveness of sins, or absolution, without preaching of Christ's promises, [it] is falsehood, and the working of antichrist; and (as I have said) the ravening of those wolves which Paul ( Acts 20.) prophesied should come after his departing, not sparing the flock. Their doctrine is that merchandise whereof Peter speaketh, saying: "Through covetousness shall they with reigned words make merchandise of you." ( 2 Peter 2) And their reasons, wherewith they prove their doctrine, are (as saith Paul, Timothy 6.) "Superfluous disputings, arguings or brawlings of men with corrupt minds, and destitute of truth, which think that lucre is godliness."

But Christ saith, Matthew 7, "By their fruits shalt thou know them;" that is, by their filthy covetousness, and shameless ambition, and drunken desire of honor, contrary unto the ensample and doctrine of Christ and of his apostles. Christ said to Peter, the last chapter of John: "Feed my sheep:" and not, 'Shear thy flock.' And Peter saith, ( 1 Peter 5.) "Not being lords over the parishens." But these shear, and are become lords.

Paul saith, 2 Corinthians 2, "Not that we be lords over your faith:" but these will be lords; and compel us to believe whatsoever they lust [desire], without any witness of scripture, yea, clean contrary to the scripture; when the open text rebuketh it. Paul saith, "It is better to give, than to receive," ( Acts 20) but these do nothing in the world but lay snares to catch and receive whatsoever cometh, as it were the gaping mouth of hell. And Corinthians 12, "I seek not yours, but you:" but these seek not you to Christ, but yours to themselves; and therefore, lest their deeds should be rebuked, will not come at the light.

Nevertheless the truth is, that we are all equally beloved in Christ, and God hath sworn to all indifferently. According, therefore, as every man believeth God's promises, longeth for them, and is diligent to pray unto God to fulfill them, so is his prayer heard; and as good is the prayer of a cobbler as of a cardinal, and of a butcher as of a bishop; and the blessing of a baker that knoweth the truth is as good as the blessing of our most holy father the pope. And by blessing understand not the wagging of the pope's or bishop's hand over thine head, but prayer; as when we say, 'God make thee a good man,' 'Christ put his Spirit in thee,' or 'Give thee grace and power to walk in the truth, and to follow his commandments,' etc.: as Rebecca's friends blessed her when she departed, ( Genesis 24) saying, "Thou art our sister: grow unto thousand thousands, and thy seed possess the gates of their enemies:" and as Isaac blessed Jacob, ( Genesis 27) saying, "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn, wine and oil," etc.: and, ( Genesis 28) "Almighty God bless thee, and make thee grow, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a great multitude of people, and give to thee and to thy seed after thee the blessings of Abraham; that thou mayest possess the land wherein thou art a stranger, which he promised to thy grandfather:"] and such like.

Last of all, one singular doubt they have: what maketh the priest; the anointing, or putting on of the hands, or what other ceremony, or what words? About which they brawl and scold, one ready to tear out another's throat. One saith this, and another that; but they cannot agree. Neither can any of them make so strong a reason which another cannot improve: for they are all out of the way, and without the Spirit of God, to judge spiritual things, Howbeit to this I answer, that when Christ called twelve up into the mountain, and chose them, then immediately, without any anointing or ceremony, were they his apostles; that is to wit, ministers chosen to be sent to preach his testament unto all the whole world. And after the resurrection, when he had opened their wits, and given them knowledge, to understand the secrets of his testament, and how to bind and loose, and what he would have them to do in all things; then he sent them forth with a commandment to preach, and bind the unbelieving that continue in sin, and to loose the believing that repent. And that commandment, or charge, made them bishops, priests, popes, and all thing. If they say that Christ made them priests at his maundy, or last supper, when he said, "Do this in the remembrance of me;" I answer, Though the apostles wist not then what he meant, yet I will not strive nor say thereagainst, Neverthelater the commandment and the charge, which he gave them, made them priests.

And, Acts 1, when Matthias was chosen by lot, it is not to be doubted but that the apostles, after their common manner, prayed for him, that God would give him grace to minister his office truly; and put their hands on him, and exhorted him, and gave him charge to be diligent and faithful; and then was



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

he as great as the best. And, Acts 6, when the disciples that believed had chosen six deacons to minister to the widows, the apostles prayed and put their hands on them, and admitted them without more ado.

Their putting on of hands was not after the manner of the dumb blessing of our holy bishops, with two fingers; but they spake unto them, and told them their duty, and gave them a charge, and warned them to be faithful in the Lord's business: as we choose temporal officers, and read their duty to them, and they promise to be faithful ministers, and then are admitted.

Neither is there any other manner or ceremony at all required in making of our spiritual officers, than to choose an able person, and then to rehearse him his duty, and give him his charge, and so to put him in his room. And as for that other solemn doubt, as they call it, Whether Judas was a priest or no? I care not what he then was; but of this I am sure, that he is now not only priest, but also bishop, cardinal, and pope.

### **OF PENANCE.**

PENANCE is a word of their own forging, to deceive us withal, as many others are. In the scripture we find poenitenti a, "repentance:" agite poenitentiam, "do repent;" poeniteat vos, "let it repent you:" metanoyte, in Greek, "for-think ye," or "let it forthink you." Of repentance they have made penance, to blind the people, and to make them think that they must take pains, and do some holy deeds, to make satisfaction for their sins; namely such as they enjoin them. As thou mayest see in the chronicles, when great kings and tyrants (which with violence of sword conquered other kings' lands, and slew all that came to hand) came to themselves, and had conscience of their wicked deeds; then the bishops coupled them, not to Christ, but unto the pope, and preached the pope unto them; and made them to submit themselves, and also their realms, unto the holy father the pope, and to take penance, as they call it; that is to say, such injunctions as the pope and bishops would command them to do, to build abbeys, to endote them with livelihood, to be prayed for for ever; and to give them exemptions and privilege and licence to do what they lust [desire] unpunished.

Repentance goeth before faith, and prepareth the way to Christ, and to the promises. For Christ cometh not but unto them that see their sins in the law, and repent. Repentance, that is to say, this mourning and sorrow of the heart, lasteth all our lives long: for we find ourselves, all our lives long, too weak for God's law, and therefore sorrow and mourn, longing for strength. Repentance is no sacrament: as faith, hope, love, and knowledge of a man's sins, are not to be called sacraments. For they are spiritual and invisible. Now must a sacrament be an outward sign that may be seen, to signify, to represent, and to put a man in remembrance of some spiritual promise, which cannot be seen but by faith only. Repentance, and all the good deeds which accompany repentance, to slay the lusts [desires] of the flesh, are signified by baptism. 'For Paul saith, Romans 6, as it is above rehearsed: "Remember ye not (saith he), that all we which are baptized in the name of Christ Jesus are baptized to die with him? We are buried with him in baptism for to die;" that is, to kill the lusts [desires] and the rebellion which remaineth in the flesh. And after that he saith, "Ye are dead, as concerning sin, but live unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord." If thou look on the profession of our hearts, and on the Spirit and forgiveness which we have received through Christ's merits, we are full dead: but if thou look on the rebellion of the flesh, we do but begin to die, and to be baptized, that is, to drown and quench the lusts [desires], and are full baptized at the last minute of death. And as concerning the working of the Spirit, we begin to live, and grow every day more and more, both in knowledge and also in godly living, according as the lusts [desires] abate: as a child receiveth the full soul at the first day, yet groweth daily in the operations and works thereof.

### **OF CONFESSION.**

CONFESSION is diverse: one followeth true faith inseparably, and is the confessing, and [ac]knowledging with the mouth, wherein we put our trust and confidence. As when we say our Credo, confessing that we trust in God the Father Almighty, and in his truth and promises; and in his Son Jesus, our Lord, and in his merits and descryings; and in the Holy Ghost, and in his power, assistance and guiding. This confession is necessary unto all men that will be saved. For Christ saith, Matthew 10, "He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father that is in heaven."

And of this confession, saith the holy apostle Paul, in the 10th chapter: "the belief of the heart justifieth; and to [ac]knowledge with the mouth maketh a man safe." This is a wonderful text for our

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

philosophers, or rather sophisters, our worldly-wise enemies to the wisdom of God, our deep and profound wells without water, our clouds without moisture of rain; that is to say, natural souls without the Spirit of God and feeling of godly things.

To justify, and to make safe, are both one thing. And to confess with the mouth is a good work, and the fruit of a true faith, as all other works are.

If thou repent and believe the promises, then God's truth justifieth thee; that is, forgiveth thee thy sins, and sealeth thee with his holy Spirit, and maketh thee heir of everlasting life, through Christ's descryings. Now if thou have true faith, so seest thou the exceeding and infinite love and mercy which God hath showed thee freely in Christ: then must thou needs love again: and love cannot but compel thee to work, and boldly to confess and [ac]knowledge thy Lord Christ, and the trust which thou hast in his word.

And this [ac]knowledge[ment] maketh thee safe; that is, declareth that thou art safe already, certifieth thine heart, and maketh thee feel that thy faith is right, and that God's Spirit is in thee, as all other good works do. For if, when it cometh unto the point, thou hadst no lust [desire] to work, nor power to confess, how couldest thou presume to think that God's Spirit were in thee?

Another confession is there, which goeth before faith, and accompanieth repentance. For whosoever repenteth, doth [ac]knowledge his sins in his heart.

And whosoever doth [ac]knowledge his sins, receiveth forgiveness, as saith John, in the first of his first epistle: "If we [ac]knowledge our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" that is, because he hath promised, he must for his truth's sake do it. This confession is necessary all our lives long, as is repentance. And as thou understandest of repentance, so understand of this confession; for it is likewise included in the sacrament of baptism. For we always repent, and always [ac]knowledge or confess our sins unto God, and yet despair not; but remember that we are washed in Christ's blood: which thing our baptism doth represent and signify unto us.

Shrift in the ear is verily a work of Satan; and that the falsest that ever was wrought, and that most hath devoured the faith. It began among the Greeks, and was not as it is now, to reckon all a man's sins in the priest's ear; but to ask counsel of such doubts as men had, as thou mayest see in St Hierome, and in other authors, Neither went they to priests only, which were very few at that time, no more than preached the word of God; for this so great vantage in so many masses saying was not yet found; but went indifferently, where they saw a good and a learned man. And for because of a little knavery, which a deacon at Constantinople played through confession with one of the chief wives of the city, it was laid down again. But we, antichrist's possession, the more knavery we see grow thereby daily, the more we stablish it. A christian man is a spiritual thing; and hath God's word in his heart, and God's Spirit to certify him of all thing. He is not bound to come to any ear. And as for the reasons which they make, [they] are all but persuasions of man's wisdom. First, as pertaining unto the keys and manner of binding and loosing, is enough above rehearsed, and in other places. Thou mayest also see how the apostles used them in the Acts; and, in Paul's epistles, how at the preaching of faith the Spirit came, and certified their hearts that they were justified through believing the promises.

When a man feeleth that his heart consenteth unto the law of God, and feeleth himself meek, patient, courteous, and, merciful to his neighbor, altered and fashioned like unto Christ; why should he doubt but that God hath forgiven him, and chosen him, and put his Spirit in him, though he never crome his sin into the priest's ear?

One blind reason have they, saying, How shall the priest unbind, loose, and forgive the sin which he knoweth not? How did the apostles? The scripture forsake they, and run unto their blind reasons; and draw the scripture unto a carnal purpose. When I have told thee in thine ear all that I have done my life long, in order and with all circumstances after the shamefullest manner, what canst thou do more than preach me the promises, saying, 'If thou repent and believe, God's truth shall save thee for Christ's sake?' Thou seest not mine heart; thou knowest not whether I repent or no; neither whether I consent to the law, that it is holy, righteous, and good.

Moreover, whether I believe the promises or no, is also unknown to thee.

If thou preach the law and the promises (as the apostles did), so should they that God hath chosen repent, and believe, and be saved, even now as well as then. Howbeit antichrist must know all secrets, to stablish his kingdom, and to work his mysteries withal.

They bring also for them the story of the ten lepers, which is written in Luke 17. Here mark their falsehood, and learn to know them for ever.

The fourteenth Sunday after, the feast of the Trinity, the beginning of the seventh lesson is the said

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

gospel; and the eighth and the ninth lessons, with the rest of the seventh, is the exposition of Bede upon the said gospel: where saith Bede, "Of all that Christ healed, of whatsoever disease it were, he sent none unto the priest but the lepers;" and by the lepers interpreteth followers of false doctrine only, which the spiritual officers and the learned men of the congregation ought to examine, and rebuke their learning with God's word, and to warn the congregation to beware of them. Which, if they were afterward healed by the grace of Christ, ought to come before the congregation, and there openly confess their true faith. But all other vices (saith he) doth God heal within, in the conscience. Though they thiswise read at matins, yet at high mass, if they have any sermon at all, they lie, clean contrary unto this open truth. Neither are they ashamed at all. For why? they walk altogether in darkness.

### **OF CONTRITION.**

CONTRITION and repentance are both one, and nothing else but a sorrowful and a mourning heart. And because that God hath promised mercy unto a contrite heart, that is, to a sorrowful and repenting heart, they, to beguile God's word and to stablish their wicked tradition, have reigned that new word attrition, saying, 'Thou canst not know whether thy sorrow or repentance be contrition or attrition, except thou be shriven. When thou art shriven, then it is true contrition.' O foxy Pharisee! that is thy leaven, of which Christ so diligently bade us beware, Matthew 16; and the very prophecy of Peter, "Through covetousness with feigned words shall they make merchandise of you." 2 Peter 2. With such glosses corrupt they God's word, to sit in the consciences of the people, to lead them captive, and to make a prey of them; buying and selling their sins, to satisfy their insatiable covetousness. Nevertheless the truth is, when any man hath trespassed against God, if he repent and [ac]knowledge his trespass, God promiseth him forgiveness without ear-shrift.

If he that hath offended his neighbor repent and [ac]knowledge his fault, asking forgiveness if his neighbor forgive him, God forgiveth him also by his holy promise. Matthew 18. Likewise, if he that sinneth openly, when he is openly rebuked, repent and turn, then if the congregation forgive him, God forgiveth him: and so forth whosoever repenteth, and, when he is rebuked, [ac]knowledgeth his fault, is forgiven.

He also that doubteth, or hath his conscience tangled, ought to open his mind unto some faithful brother that is learned, and he shall give him faithful counsel to help him withal.

To whom a man trespasseth, unto him he ought to confess. But to confess myself unto thee, O antichrist, whom I have not offended, am I not bound.

They of the old law had no confession in the ear. Neither the apostles, nor they that followed martyrs hundred years after, knew of any such whispering.

Whereby then was their attrition turned into contrition? Yea, why are we, which Christ came to loose, more bound than the Jews? Yea, and why are we more bound without scripture? For Christ came not to make us more bound; but to loose us, and to make a thousand things no sin which before were sin, and are now become sin again. He left none other law with us, but the law of love. He loosed us not from Moses to bind us unto antichrist's ear. God hath not tied Christ unto antichrist's ear, neither hath poured all his mercy in thither; for it hath no record in the old Testament, that antichrist's ear should be Propitiatorium, that is to wit, God's mercystool, and that God should creep into so narrow a hole, so that he could no where else be found. Neither did God write his laws, neither yet his holy promises, in antichrist's ear; but hath grayed [engraven] them with his holy Spirit in the hearts of them that believe, that they might have them always ready at hand to be saved thereby.

### **SATISFACTION.**

As pertaining unto satisfaction, thiswise understand, that he that loveth God hath a commandment (as St John saith in the fourth chapter of his first epistle) to "love his neighbor also:" whom if thou have offended, thou must make him amends or satisfaction, or at the leastway, if thou be notable: ask him forgiveness; and if he will have mercy of God, he is bound to forgive thee. If he will not, yet God forgiveth thee, if thou thus submit thyself. But unto God-ward Christ is a perpetual and an everlasting satisfaction for evermore.

As oft as thou fallest [fall] through frailty, repent and come again, and thou art safe and welcome; as thou mayest see by the similitude of the riotous son, Luke 15. If thou be lopen [leaped] out of sanctuary, come in again. If thou be fallen from the way of truth, come thereto again, and thou art safe: if thou be

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

gone astray, come to the fold again, and the shepherd, Christ, shall save thee; yea, and the angels of heaven shall rejoice at thy coming, so far it is off that any man shall beat thee or chide thee. If any Pharisee envy thee, grudge at thee, or rail upon thee, thy Father shall make answer for thee, as thou seest in the fore-rehearsed likeness or parable. Whosoever therefore is gone out of the way, by whatsoever chance it be, let him come to his baptism again, and unto the profession thereof, and he shall be safe.

For though that the washing of baptism be past, yet the power thereof, that is to say, the word of God which baptism preacheth, lasteth ever and sayeth for ever: as Paul is past and gone, nevertheless the word that Paul preached lasteth ever, and sayeth ever as many as come thereto with a repenting heart and a stedfast faith.

Hereby seest thou that, when they make penance of repentance, and call it a sacrament, and divide it into contrition, confession, and satisfaction, they speak of their own heads, and lie falsely.

### **ABSOLUTION.**

THEIR absolution also justifieth no man from sin. "For with the heart do men believe to be justified withal," saith Paul, Romans 10; that is, through faith and believing the promises are we justified, as I have sufficiently proved in other places with the scripture. "Faith" (saith Paul in the same place) "cometh by hearing," that is to say, by hearing the preacher that is sent from God, and preacheth God's promises. Now, when thou absolvest in Latin, the unlearned heareth not: for, "How," saith Paul, Corinthians "when thou blessest in an unknown tongue, shall the unlearned say Amen unto thy thanksgiving? for he wotteth not what thou sayest."

So likewise the lay wotteth [knows] not whether thou loose or bind, or whether thou bless or curse. In like manner is it if the lay understand Latin, or though the priest absolve in English: for in his absolution he rehearseth no promise of God; but speaketh his own words, saying, 'I, by the authority of Peter and Paul, absolve or loose thee from all thy sins.' Thou sayest so, which art but a lying man; and never more than now, verily.

Thou sayest, 'I forgive thee thy sins;' and the scripture, John 1, That Christ only forgiveth, and "taketh away the sins of the world." And Paul and Peter, and all the apostles, preach that all is forgiven in Christ, and for Christ's sake. God's word only looseth; and thou in preaching that mightest loose also, and else not.

Whosoever hath [ears] let him hear, and let him that hath eyes see. If any man love to be blind, his blindness on his own head, and not on mine.

They allege for themselves the saying of Christ to Peter, Matthew 16, "Whatsoever thou bindest on earth, it shall be bound; and whatsoever thou loosest," and so forth. 'Lo, say they, whatsoever we bind, and whatsoever we loose, here is nothing excepted.' And another text say they of Christ, in the last of Matthew: "All power is given to me," saith Christ, "in heaven and in earth: go therefore and preach," etc. Preaching leaveth the pope out; and saith, 'Lo, all power is given me in heaven and in earth;' and thereupon taketh upon him temporal power above king and emperor, and maketh laws and bindeth them. And like power taketh he over God's laws, and dispenseth with them at his lust [desire], making no sin of that which God maketh sin, and maketh sin where God maketh none: yea, and wipeth out God's laws clean, and maketh at his pleasure; and with him is lawful what he lusteth [desires]. He bindeth where God looseth, and looseth where God bindeth. He blesseth where God curseth, and curseth where God blesseth, He taketh authority also to bind and loose in purgatory. That permit I unto him; for it is a creature of his own making. He also bindeth the angels: for we read of popes that have commanded the angels to fet [fetch] divers out of purgatory. Howbeit I am not yet certified whether they obeyed or no.

Understand therefore that to bind and to loose is to preach the law of God and the gospel or promises; as thou mayest see in the third chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, where Paul calleth the preaching of the law the ministration of death and damnation, and the preaching of the promises the ministering of the Spirit and of righteousness. For when the law is preached, all men are found sinners, and therefore damned: and when the gospel and glad tidings are preached, then are all, that repent and believe, found righteous in Christ, And so expound it all the old doctors.

Saint Hierome saith upon this text, "Whatsoever thou bindest," 'The bishops and priests, (saith he,) for lack of understanding, take a little presumption of the Pharisees upon them; and think that they have authority to bind innocents, and to loose the wicked:' which thing our pope and bishops do. For they say the curse is to be feared, be it right or wrong.

Though thou have not deserved, yet if the pope curse thee, thou art in peril of thy soul, as they lie:

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

yea, and though he be never so wrongfully cursed, he must be fain to buy absolution. But Saint Hierome saith, 'As the priest of the old law made the lepers clean or unclean, so bindeth and unbindeth the priest of the new law.' The priest there made no man a leper, neither cleansed any man, but God; and the priest judged only, by Moses' law, who was clean and who was unclean, when they were brought unto him.

So here we have the law of God to judge what is sin and what is not, and who is bound and who is not. Moreover, if any man have sinned, yet if he repent and believe the promise, we are sure by God's word, that he is loosed and forgiven in Christ. Other authority than thiswise to preach, have the priests not. Christ's apostles had no other themselves, as it appeareth throughout all the new Testament: therefore it is manifest that they have not.

St Paul saith, 1 Corinthians "When we say all things are under Christ, he is to be excepted that put all under him."

God the Father is not under Christ, but above Christ, and Christ's head.

Christ saith, John "I have not spoken of mine own head, but my Father, which sent me, gave a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as my Father bade me so I speak."

If Christ had a law what he should do, how happeneth it that the pope so runneth at large, lawless? Though that all power were given unto Christ in heaven and in earth, yet had he no power over his Father, nor yet to reign temporally over temporal princes, but a commandment to obey them. How hath the pope then such temporal authority over king and emperor? How hath he authority above God's laws, and to command the angels, the saints, and God himself?

Christ's authority, which he gave to his disciples, was to preach the law, and to bring sinners to repentance, and then to preach unto them the promises, which the Father had made unto all men for his sake. And the same to preach only, sent he his apostles. As a king sendeth forth his judges, and giveth them his authority, saying, 'What ye do, that do I; I give you my full power:' yet meaneth he not, by that full power, that they should destroy any town or city, or oppress any man, or do what they list, or should reign over the lords and dukes of his realm, and over his own self; but giveth them a law with them, and authority to bind and loose, as far forth as the law stretcheth and maketh mention: that is, to punish the evil that do wrong, and to avenge the poor that suffer wrong. And so far as the law stretcheth, will the king defend his judge against all men. And as the temporal judges bind and loose temporally, so do the priests spiritually, and no other ways. Howbeit, by falsehood and subtlety the pope reigneth under Christ, as cardinals and bishops do under kings, lawless.

The pope (say they) absolveth or looseth a poena et culpa; that is, from the fault or trespass, and from the pain due unto the trespass. God, if a man repent, forgiveth the offense only, and not the pain also, say they, save turneth the everlasting pain unto a temporal pain; and appointeth seven years in purgatory for every deadly sin. But the pope for money forgiveth both, and hath more power than God, and is more merciful than God. 'This do I,' saith the pope, 'of my full power, and of the treasure of the church; of descryings of martyrs, confessors, and merits of Christ.'

First, the merits of the saints did not save themselves, but were saved by Christ's merits only. Secondly, God hath promised Christ's merits unto all that repent; so that whosoever repenteth, is immediately heir of all Christ's merits, and beloved of God as Christ is. How then came this foul monster to be lord over Christ's merits, so that he hath power to sell that which God giveth freely?

O dreamers! yea, O devils, and O venomous scorpions, what poison have ye in your tails! O pestilent leaven, that so turneth the sweet bread of Christ's doctrine into the bitterness of gall!

The friars run in the same spirit, and teach, saying, 'Do good deeds, and redeem the pains that abide [await] you in purgatory; yea, give us somewhat to do good works for you.' And thus is sin become the profitabest merchandise in the world. O the cruel wrath of God upon us, because we love not the truth!

For this is the damnation and judgment of God, to send a false prophet unto him that will not hear the truth. "I know you," saith Christ, ( John 5) "that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him shall ye receive."

Thus doth God avenge himself on the malicious hearts which have no love to his truth.

All the promises of God have they either wiped clean out, or thus leavened them with open lies, to stablish their confession withal. And, to keep us from [the] knowledge of the truth, they do all thing in Latin. **They pray in Latin, they christen in Latin, they bless in Latin, they give absolution in Latin; only curse they in the English tongue. Wherein they take upon them greater authority than ever God gave them. For in their curses (as they call them) with book, bell, and candle, they command God and Christ, and the angels, and all saints, to curse them: 'Curse them God (say they), Father,**

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Son, and Holy Ghost; curse them Virgin Mary,' etc. O ye abominable! who gave you authority to command God to curse? God commandeth you to bless, and ye command him to curse! "Bless them that persecute you: bless, but curse not," saith St Paul, Romans 12. What tyranny will these not use over men, which presume and take upon them to be lords over God, and to command him? If God shall curse any man, who shall bless and make him better? No man can amend himself, except God pour his Spirit unto him. Have we not a commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves?

How can I love him, and curse him also? James saith, "It is not possible that blessing and cursing should come both out of one mouth." Christ commandeth, Matthew 5, saying, "Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Pray for them that do you wrong and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your heavenly Father."

In the marches of Wales it is the manner, if any man have an ox or a cow stolen, he cometh to the curate, and desireth him to curse the stealer; and he commandeth the parish to give him, every man, God's curse and his: 'God's curse and mine have he,' saith every man in the parish. O merciful God! what is blasphemy, if this be not blasphemy, and shaming of the doctrine of Christ?

Understand therefore, the power of excommunication is this: if any man sin openly, and amendeth not when he is warned, then ought he to be rebuked openly before all the parish. And the priest ought to prove by the scripture, that all such have no part with Christ. For Christ serveth not, but for them that love the law of God, and consent that it is good, holy, and righteous; and repent, sorrowing and mourning for power and strength to fulfill it.

And all the parish ought to be warned to avoid the company of all such, and to take them as heathen people. This is not done that he should perish; but to save him, to make him ashamed, and to kill the lusts [desires] of the flesh, that the spirit might come unto the knowledge of truth. And we ought to pity him, and to have compassion on him, and with all diligence to pray unto God for him, to give him grace to repent and to come to the right way again; and not to use such tyranny over God and man, commanding God to curse. And if he repent, we ought with all mercy to receive him in again.

This mayest thou see Matthew 18, and 1 Corinthians 5, and Corinthians 2.

### **CONFIRMATION.**

IF Confirmation have a promise, then it justifieth as far as the promise extendeth. If it have no promise, then is it not of God, as the bishops be not. The apostles and ministers of God preach God's word; and God's signs or sacraments signify God's word also, and put us in remembrance of the promises which God hath made unto us in Christ. Contrariwise, antichrist's bishops preach not; and their sacraments speak not; but as the disguised bishop's mum, so are their superstitious sacraments dumb. After that the bishops had left preaching, then reigned they this dumb ceremony of confirmation, to have somewhat at the leastway, whereby they might reign over their dioceses. They reserved unto themselves also the christening of bells, and conjuring or hallowing of churches and churchyards, and of altars and super-altars, and hallowing of chalices, and so forth; whatsoever is of honor or profit. Which confirmation, and the other conjurations also, they have now committed to their suffragans; because they themselves have no leisure to minister such things, for their lusts and pleasures, and abundance of all things, and for the cumbrance that they have in the king's matters and business of the realm. One keepeth the privy seal; another the great seal; the third is confessor, (that is to say, a privy traitor and a secret Judas;) he is president of the prince's council; he is an ambassador; another sort, of the king's secret council. Woe is unto the realms where they are of the council. As profitable are they, verily, unto the realms with their counsel, as the wolves unto the sheep, or the foxes unto the geese.

They will say that the Holy Ghost is given through such ceremonies. If God had so promised, so should it be; but Paul saith, ( Galatians 3) that the Spirit is received through preaching of the faith. And ( Acts 5) while Peter preached the faith, the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and on his household. How shall we say then to that which they will lay against us, in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the apostles, where Peter and John put their hands on the Samaritans, and the Holy Ghost came? I say, that by putting, or with putting, or as they put their hands on them, the Holy Ghost came. Nevertheless, the putting on of the hands did neither help nor hinder: for the text saith, "They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost."

God had made the apostles a promise, that he would with such miracles confirm their preaching, and move other to the faith. (Mark, the last.) The apostles, therefore, believed and prayed God to fulfill his promise; and God, for his truth's sake, even so did. So was it the prayer of faith that brought the Holy

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Ghost; as thou mayest see also in the last of James. "If any man be sick," saith James, "call the elders of the congregation, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall heal the sick." Where a promise is, there is faith bold to pray, and God true to give her her petition. Putting on of the hands is an indifferent thing. For the Holy Ghost came by preaching of the faith, and miracles were done at the prayer of faith, as well without putting on of the hands as with, as thou seest in many places. Putting on of the hands was the manner of that nation, as it was to rend their clothes, and to put on sackcloth, and to sprinkle themselves with ashes and earth, when they heard of or saw any sorrowful thing, as it was Paul's manner to stretch out his hand when he preached; and as it is our manner to hold up our hands when we pray, and as some kiss their thumb-nail, and put it to their eyes, and as we put our hands on children's heads when we bless them, saying, 'Christ bless thee, my son, and God make thee a good man:' which gestures neither help nor hinder. This mayest thou well see Acts 13, where the Holy Ghost commanded to separate Paul and Barnabas to go and preach. Then the other fasted and prayed, and put their hands on their heads, and sent them forth. They received not the Holy Ghost then by putting on of hands; but the other, as they put their hands on their heads, prayed for them, that God would go with them, and strength them; and couraged them also, bidding them to be strong in God, and warned them to be faithful and diligent in the work of God, and so forth.

### **ANOILING. [ANOINTING WITH OIL.]**

LAST of all cometh the anointing, without promise, and therefore without the Spirit, and without profit; but altogether unfruitful and superstitious. The sacraments, which they have imagined, are all without promise, and therefore help not. For "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14.

Now without a promise can there be no faith. The sacraments which Christ himself ordained, which have also promises, and would save us if we knew them and believed them, them minister they in the Latin tongue. So are they also become as unfruitful as the other. Yea, they make us believe that the work itself, without the promise, sayeth us; which doctrine they learned of Aristotle. And thus are we become an hundred times worse than the wicked Jews; which believed that the very work of their sacrifice justified them: against which Paul fighteth in every epistle, proving that nothing helpeth save the promises which God hath sworn in Christ. Ask the people what they understand by their baptism or washing? And thou shalt see, that they believe how that the very plunging into the water saveth them: of the promises they know not, nor what is signified thereby. Baptism is called volowing in many places of England; because the priest saith, 'Volo [I wish it] say ye.' 'The child was well volowed' (say they); 'yea, and our vicar is as fair a volower as ever a priest within this twenty miles.' Behold how narrowly the people look on the ceremony. If aught be left out, or if the child be not altogether dipt in the water, or if, because the child is sick, the priest dare not plunge him into the water, but pour water on his head, how tremble they! how quake they! 'How say ye, sir John, (say they,) is this child christened enough? Hath it his full christendom?'

They believe verily that the child is not christened; yea, I have known priests, that have gone unto the orders again, supposing that they were not priests, because that the bishop left one of his ceremonies undone. That they call confirmation, the people call bishoping. They think that if the bishop butter the child in the forehead, that it is safe. They think that the work maketh safe, and likewise suppose they of anointing. Now is this false doctrine, verily. For James saith, in the first chapter of his epistle: "Of his good will begat he us with the word of life;" that is, with the word of promise: in which we are made God's sons, and heirs of the goodness of God, before any good works. For we cannot work God's will, till we be his sons, and know his will, and have his Spirit to teach us. And St Paul saith, in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians: "Christ cleansed the congregation in the fountain of water through the word." And Peter saith, in the first of his first epistle: "Ye are born anew, not of mortal seed, but of immortal seed, by the word of God, which liveth and lasteth ever." Paul in every epistle warneth us, that we put no trust in works, and to beware of persuasions or arguments of man's wisdom, of superstitiousness, of ceremonies, of pope-holiness, and of all manner disguising; and exhorteth us to cleave fast unto the naked and pure word of God. The promise of God is the anchor that sayeth [saves] us in all temptations. If all the world be against us, God's word is stronger than the world. If the world kill us, that shall make us alive again. If it be possible for the world to cast us into hell, from thence yet shall God's word bring us again. Hereby seest thou that it is not the work, but the promise that justifieth us through faith. Now where no promise is, there can no faith be, and therefore no justifying, though there be never so glorious works. The sacrament of Christ's body after thiswise preach they. Thou must

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

believe that it is no more bread, but the very body of Christ, flesh, blood and bone, even as he went here on earth, save his coat: for that is here yet; I wet [know] not in how many places. I pray thee, what helpeth all this? Here is no promise. The devils know that Christ died on a Friday, and the Jews also. What are they help thereby? We have a promise that Christ, and his body, and his blood, and all that he did, and suffered, is a sacrifice, a ransom, and a full satisfaction for our sins; that God for his sake will think no more on them, if we have power to repent and believe.

Holy-work men think that God rejoiceth in the deed self, without any farther respect. They think also that God, as a cruel tyrant, rejoiceth and hath delectation in our pain-taking, without any farther respect. And therefore many of them martyr themselves without cause, after the ensample of Baal's priests, which (3 Reg.18) cut themselves to please their god withal, and as the old heathen pagans sacrificed their children in the fire unto their gods. The monks of the Charterhouse think that the very eating of fish in itself pleaseth God, and refer not the eating to the chastening of the body: for when they have slain their bodies with cold phlegm, of fish-eating, yet then will they eat no flesh, and slay themselves before their days. We also, when we offer our sons or daughters, and compel or persuade them to vow and profess chastity, think that the very pain, and that rage and burning which they suffer in abstaining from a make [a match, partner], pleaseth God; and so refer not our chastity to our neighbor's profit. For when we see thousands fall to innumerable diseases thereby, and to die before their days; yea, though we see them break the commandments of God daily, and also of very impiety work abominations against nature, too shameful to be spoken of; yet will we not let them marry, but compel them to continue still with violence. And thus teach our divines, as it appeareth by their arguments. He that taketh most pain, say they, is greatest; and so forth.

The people are throughly brought in belief, that the deed in itself, without any farther respect, sayeth them; if they be so long at church; or say so many paternosters; and read so much in a tongue which they understand not; or go so much a pilgrimage; and take so much pain; or fast such a superstitious fast; or observe such a superstitious observance, neither profitable to himself nor to his neighbor, but done of a good intent only, say they, to please God withal. Yea, to kiss the pax, they think it a meritorious deed; when to love their neighbor, and to forgive him, (which thing is signified thereby,) they study not to do, nor have power to do, nor think that they are bound to do it, if they be offended by him. **So sore have our false prophets brought the people out of their wits, and have wrapped them in darkness, and have rocked them asleep in blindness and ignorance.**

Now is all such doctrine false doctrine, and all such faith false faith. For the deed pleaseth not, but as far forth as it is applied to our neighbor's profit, or the taming of our bodies to keep the commandment.

Now must the body be tamed only, and that with the remedies that God hath ordained, and not killed. Thou must not forswear the natural remedy which God hath ordained, and bring thyself into such case that thou shouldst either break God's commandment, or kill thyself, or burn night and day without rest, so that thou canst not once think a godly thought.

Neither is it lawful to forsake thy neighbor, and to withdraw thyself from serving him, and to get thee into a den, and live idly, profitable to no man, but robbing all men, first of faith, and then of goods and land, and of all he hath, with making him believe in the hypocrisy of thy superstitious prayers and pope-holy deeds. The prayer of faith, and the deeds thereof that spring of love, are accepted before God. The prayer is good, according to the proportion of faith; and the deed, according to the measure of love. Now he that bideth in the world, as monks call it, hath more faith than the cloisterer; for he hangeth on God in all things. He must trust God to send him good speed, good luck, favor, help, a good master, a good neighbor, a good servant, a good wife, a good chapman-merchant, to send his merchandise safe to land, and a thousand like. He loveth also more; which appeareth in that he doth service always unto his neighbor. To pray one for another are we equally bound, and to pray is a thing that we may always do, whatsoever we have in hand; and that to do may no man hire another.

Christ's blood hath hired us already. Thus in the deed delighteth God, as far forth as we do it, either to serve our neighbor withal (as I have said), or to tame the flesh, that we may fulfill the commandment from the bottom of the heart.

And as for our pain-taking, God rejoiceth not therein as a tyrant; but pitieth us, and as it were mourneth with us, and is alway ready and at hand to help us, if we call, as a merciful father and a kind mother. Neverthelater he suffereth us to fall into many temptations and much adversity: yea, himself layeth the cross of tribulation on our backs, not that he rejoiceth in our sorrow, but to drive sin out of the flesh, which can none otherwise be cured: as the physician and surgeon do many things, which are painful to the sick, not that they rejoice in the pains of the poor wretches, but to persecute and to drive



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

out the diseases which can not otherwise be healed. When the people believe therefore, if they do so much work, or suffer so much pain, or go so much a pilgrimage, that they are safe, [it] is a false faith. For a Christian man is not saved by works, but by faith in the promises before all good works; though that the works (when we work God's commandment with a good will, and not works of our own imagination) declare that we are safe, and that the Spirit of him that hath made us safe is in us: yea, and as God, through preaching of faith, doth purge and justify the heart, even so through working of deeds doth he purge and justify the members, making us perfect both in body and soul, after the likeness of Christ.

Neither needeth a Christian man to run hither or thither, to Rome, to Jerusalem, or St James, or any other pilgrimage far or near, to be saved thereby, or to purchase forgiveness, of his sins. For a Christian man's health and salvation is within him, even in his mouth. Romans 10. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thine heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach," saith Paul. If we believe the promises with our hearts, and confess them with our mouths, we are safe. This is our health within us. "But how shall they believe that they hear not? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" saith Paul, Romans 10. For look on the promises of God, and so are all our preachers dumb: or if they preach them, they so sauce them and leaven them, that no stomach can brook them, nor find any savor in them. For they paint us such an ear-confession, as is impossible to be kept, and more impossible that it should stand with the promises and testament of God. And they join [enjoin] them penance, as they call it, to fast, to go pilgrimages, and give so much to make satisfaction withal. They preach their masses, their merits, their pardons, their ceremonies, and put the promise clean out of possession. The word of health and salvation "is nigh thee, in thy mouth and thine heart," saith Paul.

Nay, say they, thy salvation is in our faithful ear. This is their hold; thereby know they all secrets; thereby mock they all men, and all men's wives; and beguile knight and squire, lord and king, and betray all realms. The bishops, with the pope, have a certain conspiracy and secret treason against the whole world: and by confession know they what kings and emperors think. If aught be against them, do they never so evil, then move they their captives to war and to fight, and give them pardons to slay whom they will have taken out of the way. They have with falsehood taken from all kings and emperors their right and duties, which now they call their freedoms, liberties, and privileges; and have perverted the ordinances that God left in the world; and have made every king swear to defend their falsehood against their own selves: so that now, if any man preach God's word truly, and shew the freedom and liberty of the soul which we have in Christ, or intend to restore the kings again unto their duties and right, and to the room and authority which they have of God, and of shadows to make them kings in deed, and to put the world in his order again; then the kings deliver their swords and authority unto the hypocrites, to slay him.

So drunken are they with the wine of the whore.

The text that followeth in Paul will they happily lay to my charge and others. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" saith Paul in the said 10th to the Romans. 'We,' will they say, 'are the pope, cardinals and bishops: all authority is ours. The scripture pertaineth unto us, and is our possession. And we have a law, that whosoever presume to preach without the authority of the bishops, is excommunicate in the deed-doing. Whence, therefore, hast thou thine authority?' will they say. The old Pharisees had the scripture in captivity likewise, and asked Christ, "By what authority doest thou these things?" As who should say, We are Pharisees, and thou art none of our order, nor hast authority of us. Christ asked them another question, and so will I do our hypocrites. 'Who sent you? God? Nay, he that is sent of God speaketh God's word. Now speak ye not God's word, nor any thing save your own laws, made clean contrary unto God's word.

Christ's apostles preached Christ, and not themselves. He that is of the truth preacheth the truth. Now ye preach nothing but lies, and therefore are of the devil, the father of all lies, and of him are ye sent. And as for mine authority, or who sent me, I report me unto my works, as Christ, John 5 and 10, If God's word bear record that I say truth, why should any man doubt, but that God, the Father of truth and of light, hath sent me; as the father of lies and of darkness hath sent you; and that the Spirit of truth and of light is with me, as the spirit of lies and of darkness is with you?' 'By this means thou wilt that every man be a preacher,' will they say. Nay, verily. For God will that not, and therefore will I it not; no more than I would that every man of London were mayor of London, or every man of the realm king thereof. God is not the author of dissension and strife, but of unity and peace, and of good order. I will therefore, that where a congregation is gathered together in Christ, one be chosen after the rule of Paul, and that he only preach, and else no man openly; but that every man teach his household after the same doctrine.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

But if the preacher preach false; then whosoever's heart God moveth, to the same it shall be lawful to rebuke and improve the false teacher with the clear and manifest scripture; and that same is no doubt a true prophet, sent of God. For the scripture is God's, and theirs that believe, and not the false prophet's.

Sacrament is then as much to say as an holy sign. And the sacraments which Christ ordained preach God's word unto us, and therefore justify, and minister the Spirit to them that believe; as Paul through preaching the gospel was a minister of righteousness, and of the Spirit, unto all that believed his preaching. Dumb ceremonies are no sacraments, but superstitiousness. Christ's sacraments preach the faith of Christ, as his apostles did, and thereby justify. Antichrist's dumb ceremonies preach not the faith that is in Christ; as his apostles, our bishops and cardinals, do not.

But as antichrist's bishops are ordained to kill whosoever preach the true faith of Christ; so are his ceremonies ordained to quench the faith, which Christ's sacraments preach. And hereby mayest thou know the difference between Christ's signs or sacraments, and antichrist's signs or ceremonies; that Christ's signs speak, and antichrist's be dumb.

Hereby seest thou what is to be thought of all other ceremonies; as hallowed water, bread, salt, boughs, bells, wax, ashes, and so forth; and all other disguisings and apes'-play; and of all manner conjurations, as the conjuring of church and church-yards, and of altar-stones, and such like.

**Where no promise of God is, there can be no faith, nor justifying, nor forgiveness of sins: for it is more than madness to look for any thing of God, save that he hath promised. How far he hath promised, so far is he bound to them that believe; and further not. To have a faith, therefore, or a trust in any thing, where God hath not promised, is plain idolatry, and a worshipping of thine own imagination instead of God. Let us see the pith of a ceremony or two, to judge the rest by. In conjuring of holy water, they pray that whosoever be sprinkled therewith may receive health as well of body as of soul: and likewise in making holy bread, and so forth in the conjurations of other ceremonies. Now we see by daily experience, that half their prayer is unheard. For no man receiveth health of body thereby.**

No more, of likelihood, do they of soul. Yea, we see also by experience, that no man receiveth health of soul thereby. For no man by sprinkling himself with holy water, and with eating holy bread, is more merciful than before, or forgiveth wrong, or becometh at one with his enemy, or is more patient, and less covetous, and so forth; which are the sure tokens of the soul-health.

They preach also, that the wagging of the bishop's hand over us blesseth us, and putteth away our sins. Are these works not against Christ? How can they do more shame unto Christ's blood? For if the wagging of the bishop's hand over me be so precious a thing in the sight of God that I am thereby blessed, how then am I full "blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ?" as Paul saith, Ephesians 1. Or if my sins be full done away in Christ, how remaineth there any to be done away by such fantasies? The apostles knew no ways to put away sin, or to bless us, but by preaching Christ. Paul saith, Galatians 2, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain." So dispute I here: If blessing come by the wagging of the bishop's hand, then died Christ in vain, and his death blesseth us not.

And a little afore saith Paul, "If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we be yet found sinners," (so that we must be justified by the law or ceremonies,) "is not Christ then a minister of sin?" So dispute I here: If while we seek to be blessed in Christ we are yet unblessed, and must be blessed by the wagging of the bishop's hand, what have we then of Christ but curse? Thou wilt say: When we come first to the faith, then Christ forgiveth us and blesseth us; but the sins, which we afterward commit, are forgiven us through such things. I answer, if any man repent truly, and come to the faith, and put his trust in Christ, then as oft as he sinneth of frailty, at the sigh of the heart is his sin put away in Christ's blood. For Christ's blood purgeth ever and blesseth ever. For John saith in the second of his first epistle, "This I write unto you that ye sin not. And though any man sin" (meaning of frailty, and so repent) "yet have we an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ which is righteous, and he it is that obtaineth grace for our sins." And, Hebrews 7, it is written, "But this man" (meaning Christ), "because he lasteth or abideth ever, hath an everlasting priesthood.

Therefore is he able also ever to save them that come to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." The bishops therefore ought to bless us in preaching Christ, and not to deceive us and to bring the curse of God upon us with wagging their hands over us. To preach is their duty only, and not to offer their feet to be kissed. We feel also by experience that after the pope's, bishop's, or cardinal's blessing, we are no otherwise disposed in our souls than before.

Let this be sufficient as concerning the sacraments and ceremonies, with this protestation: that if any can say better, or improve this with God's word, no man shall be better content therewith than I. For I

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

seek nothing but the truth, and to walk in the light. I submit therefore this work and all other that I have made or shall make (if God will that I shall more make) unto the judgments, not of them that furiously burn all truth, but of them which are ready with God's word to correct, if any tiling be said amiss, and to further God's word.

I will talk a word or two after the worldly wisdom with them, and make an end of this matter. If the sacraments justify, as they say, (I understand by justifying, forgiveness of sins,) then do they wrong unto the sacraments, inasmuch as they rob the most part of them, through confession, of their effect, and of the cause wherefore they were ordained. For no man may receive the body of Christ, no man may marry, no man may be oiled or anointed as they call it, no man may receive orders, except he be first shriven. Now when the sins be forgiven by shrift aforehand, there is nought left for the sacraments to do. They will answer that at the leastway they increase grace; and not the, sacraments only, but also hearing of mass, matins, and even-song, and receiving of holy water, holy bread, and of the bishop's blessing, and so forth by all ceremonies. By grace I understand the favor of God, and also the gifts and working of his Spirit in us; as love, kindness, patience, obedience, mercifulness, despising of worldly things, peace, concord, and such like. If after thou hast heard so many masses, matins, and evensongs, and after thou hast received holy bread, holy water, and the bishop's blessing, or a cardinal's or the pope's, if thou wilt be more kind to thy neighbor, and love him better than before; if thou be more obedient unto thy superiors; more merciful, more ready to forgive wrong; done unto thee, more despisest the world, and more athirst after spiritual things; if after that a priest hath taken orders he be less covetous than before; if a wife, after so many and oft pilgrimages, be more chaste, more obedient unto her husband, more kind to her maids and other servants; if gentlemen, knights, lords, and kings and emperors, after they have said so often daily service with their chaplains, know more of Christ than before, and can better skill to rule their tenants, subjects, and realms christianly than before, and be content with their duties; then do such things increase grace. If not, it is a lie. Whether it be so or no, I report me to experience. If they have any other interpretations of justifying or grace, I pray them to teach it me; for I would gladly learn it. Now let us go to our purpose again.

### **OF MIRACLES AND WORSHIPPING OF SAINTS.**

ANTICHRIST shall not only come with lying signs, and disguised with falsehood, but also with lying miracles and wonders, saith Paul in the said place, 2 Thessalonians 2, All the true miracles which are of God, are showed (as I above rehearsed) to move us to hear God's word, and to stablish our faith therein, and to confirm the truth of God's promises, that we might without all doubting believe them. For God's word through faith bringeth the Spirit into our hearts and also life, as Christ saith, John 6, "The words which I speak are spirit and life." The word also purgeth us and cleanseth us, as Christ saith, John 15, "Ye are clean by the means of the word." Paul saith, 1 Timothy 2, "One God, one Mediator" (that is to say, advocate, intercessor, or an at-one-maker) "between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, which gave himself a ransom for all men." Peter saith of Christ, Acts 4, "Neither is there health in any other: neither yet also any other name given unto men wherein we must be saved." So now Christ is our peace, our redemption or ransom for our sins, our righteousness, satisfaction, and "all the promises of God are yea and Amen in him," Corinthians 1. And we, for the great and infinite love which God hath to us in Christ, love him again, love also his laws, and love one another.

And the deeds which we henceforth do, do we not to make satisfaction, or to obtain heaven; but to succor our neighbor, to tame the flesh, that we may wax perfect and strong men in Christ, and to be thankful to God again for his mercy, and to glorify his name.

Contrariwise the miracles of antichrist are done to pull thee from the word of God, and from believing his promises, and from Christ, and to put thy trust in a man, or a ceremony wherein God's word is not. As soon as God's word is believed, the faith spread abroad, then cease the miracles of God. But the miracles of antichrist, because they are wrought by the devil, to quench the faith, grow daily more and more; neither shall cease, until the world's end, among them that believe not God's word and promises. Seest thou not how God loosed and sent forth all the devils in the old world among the heathen or gentiles? and how the devils wrought miracles, and spake to them in every image? Even so shall the devil work falsehood by one craft or another, until the world's end, among them that believe not God's word. For the judgment and damnation of him that hath no lust [desire] to hear the truth, is to hear lies, and to be stablished and grounded therein through false miracles; and he that will not see is worthy to be blind; and he that biddeth the Spirit of God go from him, is worthy to be without him.

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Paul, Peter, and all true apostles preached Christ only. And the miracles did but confirm and stablish their preaching, and those everlasting promises and eternal testament that God had made between man and him in Christ's blood: and the miracles did testify also that they were true servants of Christ. Paul preached not himself; he taught not any man to trust in him or his holiness, or in Peter or in any ceremony, but in the promises which God hath sworn only: yea, he mightily resisteth all such false doctrine, both to the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and every where. If this be true (as it is true and nothing more true), that if Paul had preached himself, or taught any man to believe in his holiness or prayer, or in any thing save in the promises that God hath made and sworn to give us for Christ's sake, he had been a false prophet; why am not I also a false prophet, if I teach thee to trust in Paul, or in his holiness or prayer, or in any thing save in God's word, as Paul did?

If Paul were here and loved me, (as he loved them of his time to whom he was sent, and to whom he was a servant to preach Christ,) what good could he do for me or wish me, but preach Christ and pray to God for me, to open mine heart, to give me his Spirit, and to bring me unto the full knowledge of Christ? unto which port or haven when I am once come, I am as safe as Paul, fellow with Paul, joint heir with Paul of all the promises of God, and God's truth heareth my prayer as well as Paul's. I also now could not but love Paul, and wish him good, and pray for him, that God would strengthen him in all his temptations and give him victory, as he would do for me. Nevertheless there are many weak and young consciences always in the congregation, which they that have the office to preach ought to teach, and not to deceive them.

What prayers pray our clergy for us, which stop us and exclude us from Christ, and seek all the means possible to keep us from knowledge of Christ? They compel us to hire friars, monks, nuns, canons, and priests, and to buy their abominable merits, and to hire the saints that are dead to pray for us; for the very saints have they made hirelings also, because that their offerings come to their profit. What pray all those? That we might come to the knowledge of Christ, as the apostles did? Nay, verily. For it is plain case, that all they which enforce to keep us from Christ, pray not that we might come to the knowledge of Christ. And as for the saints, (whose prayer was, when they were alive, that we might be grounded, established and strengthened in Christ only,) if it were of God that we should this wise worship them, contrary unto their own doctrine, I dare be bold to affirm, that by the means of their prayers we should have been brought long ago unto the knowledge of God and Christ again, though that these beasts had done their worst to let it. Let us therefore set our hearts at rest in Christ and in God's promises, for so I think it best; and let us take the saints for an ensample only, and let us do as they both taught and did.

Let us set God's promises before our eyes, and desire him for his mercy and for Christ's sake to fulfill them. And he is as true as ever he was, and will do it as well as ever he did; for to us are the promises made as well as to them.

Moreover, the end of God's miracles is good; the end to these miracles are evil. For the offerings, which are the cause of the miracles, do but minister and maintain vice, sin, and all abomination, and are given to them that have too much; so that for very abundance they foam out their own shame, and corrupt the whole world with the stench of their filthiness.

Thereto "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "Faith cometh by hearing God's word." When now thou fastest or doest any thing in the worship of any saint, believing to come to the favor of God or to be saved thereby; if thou have God's word, then is it true faith and shall save thee. If thou have not God's word, then it is a false faith, superstitiousness, and idolatry, and damnable sin.

Also in the collects of the saints, with which we pray God to save us through the merits or deservings of the saints, (which saints yet were not saved by their own deservings themselves) we say, *per Christum Dominum nostrum*; that is, for Christ our Lord's sake. We say, 'Save us, good Lord, through the saints' merits for Christ's sake.' How can he save us through the saints' merits for Christ's sake, and for his deserving merits and love? Take an example. A gentleman saith unto me, 'I will do the uttermost of my power for thee, for the love which I owe unto thy father.'

Though thou hast never done me pleasure, yet I love thy father well: thy father is my friend, and hath deserved that I do all that I can for thee, etc.'

Here is a testament and a promise made unto me in the love of my father only. If I come to the said gentleman in the name of one of his servants which I never saw, never spake with, neither have any acquaintance at all with, and say, 'Sir, I pray you be good master unto me in such a cause: I have not deserved that thou shouldst so do; nevertheless I pray you do it for such a servant's sake: yea, I pray you for the love that you owe to my father, do that for me for such a servant's sake:' if I this wise made

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

my petition, would not men think that I came late out of St Patrick's purgatory and had left my wits behind me? This do we. For the testament and promises are all made unto us in Christ: and we desire God to fulfill his promises for the saints' sake; yea, that he will for Christ's sake do it for the saints' sake.

They have also martyrs, which never preached God's word, neither died therefore; but for privileges and liberties, which they falsely purchased, contrary unto God's ordinances. Yea, and such saints, though they be dead, yet rob now as fast as ever they did, neither are less covetous now than when they were alive. I doubt not but that they will make a saint of my lord cardinal after the death of us that be alive, and know his juggling and crafty conveyance; and will shrine him gloriously for his mightily defending of the right of the holy church, except we be diligent to leave a commemoration of that Nimrod behind us.

The reasons wherewith they prove their doctrine are but fleshly, and, as Paul calleth them, "enticing words of man's wisdom;" that is to wit, sophistry, and brawling arguments of men with corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, whose God is their belly, unto which idol whosoever offereth not, the same is an heretic, and worthy to be burnt. 'The saint was great with God when he was alive, as it appeareth by the miracles which God shewed for him; he must therefore be great now,' say they. This reason appeareth wisdom; but it is very foolishness with God.

For the miracle was not shewed that thou should put thy trust in the saint, but in the word which the saint preached; which word, if thou believest, would save thee, as God hath promised and sworn, and would make thee also great with God, as it did the saint. 'If a man have a matter with a great man, or a king, he must go first unto one of his mean servants, and then higher and higher till he come at the king.' This enticing argument is but a blind reason of man's wit. It is not like in the kingdom of the world, and in the kingdom of God and Christ.

With kings, for the most part, we have none acquaintance: neither promise.

They be also most commonly merciless. Moreover, if they promise, they are yet men, as unconstant as are other people, and as untrue. But with God, if we have belief, we are accounted, and have an open way in unto him by the door Christ, which is never shut, but through unbelief; neither is there any porter to keep any man out "By him," saith Paul, Ephesians 2. that is to say, by Christ, "we have an open way in unto the Father. So are ye now no more strangers and foreigners (saith he), but citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." God hath also made us promises, and hath sworn; yea, hath made a testament or a covenant, and hath bound himself, and hath sealed his obligation with Christ's blood, and confirmed it with miracles. He is also merciful and kind; and complaineth that we will not come unto him. He is mighty and able to perform that he promiseth. He is true, and cannot be but true, as he cannot be but God. Therefore is it not like with the king and God. 'We be sinners,' say they, 'God will not hear us.' Behold how they flee from God, as from a tyrant merciless. Whom a man counteth most merciful, unto him he soonest fleeth. But these teachers dare not come at God. Why? For they are the children of Cain. If the saints love whom God hateth, then God and his saints are divided. When thou prayest to the saints, how do they know, except that God, whom thou countest merciless, tell them? If God be so cruel, and so hateth thee, it is not likely that he will tell the saints that thou prayest unto them.

When they say, 'We be sinners:' I answer, that Christ is no sinner, save a satisfaction and an offering for sin. Take Christ from the saints, and what are they? What is Paul without Christ? Is he any thing save a blasphemer, a persecutor, a murderer, and a shedder of christian blood? But as soon as he came to Christ, he was no more a sinner, but a minister of righteousness: he went not to Rome to take penance upon him, but went and preached unto his brethren the same mercy, which he had received free, without doing penance, or hiring of saints, or of monks or friars. Moreover, if it be God's word that thou should put thy trust in the saints' merits or prayers, then be bold; for God's word shall defend thee, and save thee. If it be but thine own reason, then fear: for God commandeth by Moses, Deuteronomy 12 saying, "What I command you, that observe and do, and put nothing to, nor take ought therefrom;" yea, and Moses warneth straitly in an hundred places, that we do that only which God commandeth, and which seemeth good and righteous in his sight, and not in our own sight. For nothing bringeth the wrath of God so soon and so sore on a man, as the idolatry of his own imagination.

Last of all, these arguments are contrary to the arguments of Christ and of his apostles. Christ disputeth, Luke 11 saying: "If the son ask the father bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask him fish, will he give him a serpent?" and so forth. "If ye then," saith he, "which are evil can give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall your heavenly Father give a good Spirit unto them that ask him!" And a little before, in the same chapter, he saith: "If a man came never so out of season to his

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

neighbor to borrow bread, even when he is in his chamber, and the door shut, and all his servants with him; nevertheless yet, if he continue knocking and praying, he will rise and give him as much as he needeth, though not for love, yet to be rid of him, that he may have rest." As who should say, What will God do, if a man pray him; seeing that prayer overcome an evil man? "Ask," therefore, saith he, "and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And Luke 18, he putteth forth the parable, or similitude, of the wicked judge, which was overcome with the importunate prayer of the widow; and concludeth, saying: "Hear what the wicked judge did. And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry unto him night and day?" Whether, therefore, we complain of the intolerable oppression and persecution that we suffer, or of the flesh that cumbereth and resisteth the Spirit, God is merciful to hear us and to help us. Seest thou not also, how Christ cureth many, and casteth out devils out of many, unspoken to? how shall he not help, if he be desired and spoken to?

When the old Pharisees (whose nature is to drive sinners from Christ) asked Christ why he did eat with publicans and sinners? Christ answered, "That the whole needed not the physician, but the sick;" that is, he came to have conversation with sinners to heal them. He was a gift given unto sinners, and a treasure to pay their debts. And Christ sent the complaining and disdainful Pharisees to the prophet Oseas, saying: "Go and learn what this meaneth, I desire (or require) mercy, and not sacrifice." As who should say, Ye Pharisees love sacrifice and offering for to feed that god your bellies withal; but God commandeth to be merciful. Sinners are ever captives, and a prey to the Pharisees and hypocrites, for to offer unto their bellies, and to buy merits, pardons, and forgiveness of sins of them. And therefore fear they them away from Christ with arguments of their bellywisdom.

For he that receiveth forgiveness free of Christ, will buy no forgiveness of them. "I came," saith Christ, "to call, not the righteous, but the sinners unto repentance." The Pharisees are righteous, and therefore have no part with Christ, neither need they; for they are gods themselves, and saviors. But sinners, that repent, pertain to Christ. If we repent, Christ hath made satisfaction for us already. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that none that believe on him should perish, but should have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that; the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him shall not be damned; but he that believeth not is damned already." (John 3) Paul, Romans 5, saith, "Because we are justified through faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" that is, because that God, which cannot lie, hath promised and sworn to be merciful unto us, and to forgive us for Christ's sake, we believe, and are at peace in our consciences; we run not hither and thither for pardon; we trust not in this friar nor that monk, neither in any thing, save in the word of God only: as a child, when his father threateneth him for his fault, hath never rest till he hear the word of mercy and forgiveness of his father's mouth again; but as soon as he heareth his father say, Go thy way, do me no more so, I forgive thee this fault, then is his heart at rest; then is he at peace; then runneth he to no man to make intercession for him; neither, though there come any false merchant, saying, 'What wilt thou give me, and I will obtain pardon of thy father for thee?' will he suffer himself to be beguiled. No, he will not buy of a wily fox that which his father hath given him freely.

It followeth, "God setteth out his love, that he hath to us;" (that is, he maketh it appear, that men may perceive love if they be not more than stock blind:) "inasmuch (saith Paul) as, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more now, (saith he,) seeing we are justified by his blood, shall we be preserved from wrath through him: for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, seeing we are reconciled, we shall be preserved by his life." As who should say, If God loved us, when we knew him not, much more loveth he us now we know him. If he were merciful to us while we hated his law, how much more merciful will he be now, seeing we love it, and desire strength to fulfill it! And in the 8th he argueth: "If God spared not his own Son, but gave him for us all, how shall he not with him give us all things also?"

Christ prayed, John 17, not for the apostles only, but also for as many as should believe through their preaching, and was heard. Whatsoever we ask in his name, the Father giveth us. Christ is also as merciful as the saints.

Why go we not straightway unto him? Verily, because we feel not the mercy of God, neither believe his truth. 'God will, at the leastway (say they), hear us the sooner for the saints' sake.' Then loveth he the saints better than Christ and his own truth. Heareth he us for the saints' sake? So heareth he us not for his mercy: for merits and mercy cannot stand together.

Finally: If thou put any trust in thine own deeds, or in the deeds of any other man, of any saint, then minishest thou the truth, mercy, and goodness of God. For if God look unto thy works, or unto the works

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

of any other man, or goodness of the saint; then doth he not all things of pure mercy and of his goodness, and for the truth's sake, which he hath sworn in Christ. Now saith Paul, "Not of the righteous deeds which we did, but of his mercy saved he us." (Titus 3) Our blind disputers will say, 'If our good deeds justify us not; if God look not on our good deeds, neither regard them, nor love us the better for them, what need we to do good deeds? I answer, God looketh on our good deeds, and loveth them; yet loveth us not for their sakes. God loveth us first in Christ, of his goodness and mercy, and poureth his Spirit into us, and giveth us power to do good deeds. And because he loveth us, he forgiveth us our evil deeds, which we do of frailty, and not of purpose, or for the nonce. Our good deeds do but testify only that we are justified and beloved. For except we were beloved, and had God's Spirit, we could neither do, nor yet consent unto any good deed. Antichrist turneth the roots of the trees upward. He maketh the goodness of God the branches, and our goodness the roots. We must be first good, after antichrist's doctrine, and move God, and compel him to be good again for our goodness' sake: so must God's goodness spring out of our goodness. Nay, verily; God's goodness is the root of all goodness; and our goodness, if we have any, springeth out of his goodness.

### **OF PRAYER.**

OF prayer and good deeds, and of the order of love, or charity, I have abundantly written in my book of the Justifying of Faith. Neverthelater, that thou mayest see what the prayers and good works of our monks and friars, and of other ghostly people, are worth, I will speak a word or two, and make an end. Paul saith, "All ye are the sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ; for all ye that are baptized have put Christ on you;" (Galatians 3) that is, ye are become Christ himself. "There is no Jew," (saith he,) "neither Greek, neither bond nor free, neither man nor woman, but ye are all one thing in Christ Jesus." In Christ there is neither French nor English; but the Frenchman is the Englishman's own self, and the English the Frenchman's own self. In Christ there is neither father nor son, neither master nor servant, neither husband nor wife, neither king nor subject: but the father is the son's self, and the son the father's own self; and the king is the subject's own self, and the subject is the king's own self; and so forth. I am thou thyself, and thou art I myself, and can be no nearer of kin. We are all the sons of God, all Christ's servants bought with his blood; and every man to other Christ his own self. And Colossians 3 "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in the knowledge of God, after the image of him that made him (that is to say, Christ;) "where is" (saith he) "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarous or Scythian, bond or free; but Christ is all in all things." I love thee not now because thou art my father, and hast done so much for me; or my mother, and hast borne me, and given me suck of thy breasts, (for so do Jews and Saracens,) but because of the great love that Christ hath shewed me. I serve thee, not because thou art my master, or my king, for hope of reward, or fear of pain, but for the love of Christ; for the children of faith are under no law (as thou seest in the epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, in the first to Timothy), but are free. The Spirit of Christ hath written the lively law of love in their hearts; which driveth them to work of their own accord freely and willingly, for the great love's sake only which they see in Christ, and therefore need they no law to compel them. Christ is all in all things to them that believe, and the cause of all love. Paul saith, "Servants, obey unto your carnal or fleshly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of your hearts, as unto Christ: not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, even as though ye served the Lord, and not men. And remember, that whatsoever good thing any man doth, that shall he receive again of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." (Ephesians 6) Christ thus is all in all things, and cause of all, to a Christian man. And Christ saith, Matthew 25, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to any the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me. And inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, ye have not done it to me." Here seest thou that we are Christ's brethren, and even Christ himself; and whatsoever we do one to another, that do we to Christ. If we be in Christ, we work for no worldly purpose, but of love: as Paul saith, Corinthians 5, "The love of Christ compelleth us:" (as who should say, We work not of a fleshly purpose :) "for" (saith he) "we know henceforth no man fleshly; no, though we once knew Christ fleshly, we do so now no more." We are otherwise minded than when Peter drew his sword to fight for Christ. We are now ready to suffer with Christ, and to lose life and all for our very enemies, to bring them unto Christ. If we be in Christ, we are minded like unto Christ; which knew nothing fleshly, or after the will of the flesh, as thou seest Matthew 12, when one said to him, "Lo, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. He answered, Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And stretched his hand over his disciples,

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

saying, See, my mother and my brethren: for whosoever doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother." He knew not his mother in that she bare him, but in that she did the will of his Father in heaven. So now, as God the Father's will and commandment is all to Christ, even so Christ is all to a Christian man.

Christ is the cause why I love thee, why I am ready to do the uttermost of my power for thee, and why I pray for thee. And as long as the cause abideth, so long lasteth the effect: even as it is always day so long as the sun shineth. Do therefore the worst thou canst unto me, take away my goods, take away my good name; yet as long as Christ remaineth in my heart, so long I love thee not a whit the less, and so long art thou as dear unto me as mine own soul, and so long am I ready to do thee good for thine evil, and so long I pray for thee with all my heart: for Christ desireth it of me, and hath deserved it of me. Thine unkindness compared unto his kindness is nothing at all; yea, it is swallowed up as a little smoke of a mighty wind, and is no more seen or thought upon. Moreover that evil which thou didst to me, I receive not of thy hand, but of the hand of God, and as God's scourge to teach me patience, and to nurture me: and therefore have no cause to be angry with thee, more than the child hath to be angry with his father's rod; or a sick man with a sour or bitter medicine that healeth him, or a prisoner with his fetters, or he that is punished lawfully with the officer that punisheth him. Thus is Christ all, and the whole cause why I love thee. And to all can nought be added. Therefore cannot a little money make me love thee better, or more bound to pray for thee, nor make God's commandment greater. Last of all, if I be in Christ, then "the love of Christ compelleth me." And therefore I am ready to give thee mine, and not to take thine from thee. If I be able, I will do thee service freely: if not, then if thou minister to me again, that receive I of the hand of God, which ministereth it to me by thee. For God careth for his, and ministereth all things unto them, and moveth Turks, and Saracens, and all manner infidels to do them good: as thou seest in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how God went with Joseph into Egypt, and gat him favor in the prison, and in every place; which favor Joseph received of the hand of God, and to God gave the thanks. Thus is God and Christ all in all; good and bad receive I of God. Them that are good I love, because they are in Christ; and the evil, to bring them to Christ. When any man doth well, I rejoice that God is honored; and when any man doth evil, I sorrow because that God is dishonored. Finally, inasmuch as God hath created all, and Christ bought all with his blood, therefore ought all to seek God and Christ in all, and else nothing.

But contrariwise unto monks, friars, and to the other of our holy spirituality, the belly is all in all, and cause of all love. Offer thereto; so art thou father, mother, sister, and brother unto them. Offerest thou not? so know they thee not; thou art neither father, mother, sister, brother, nor any kin at all to them. 'She is a sister of ours, he is a brother of ours,' say they; 'he is verily a good man, for he doth much for our religion: she is a mother to our convent; we be greatly bound to pray for them. And as for such and such, (say they,) we know not whether they be good or bad, or whether they be fish or flesh, for they do nought for us: we be more bound to pray for our benefactors (say they) and for them that give us, than for them that give us not.' For them that give little are they little bound, and them they love little: and for them that give much they are much bound, and them they love much: and for them that give nought are they nought bound, and them they love not at all. And as they love thee when thou givest, so hate they thee when thou takest away from them, and run all under a stool, and curse thee as black as pitch. So is cloister-love belly-love; cloister-prayer, belly-prayer; and cloister-brotherhood, belly-brotherhood. Moreover, love that springeth of Christ seeketh not her own self, 1 Corinthians 13, but forgetteth herself, and be-stoweth her upon her neighbor's profit, as Christ sought our profit, and not his own. He sought not the favor of God for himself, but for us; yea, he took the wrath and vengeance of God from us unto himself, and bare it on his own back, to bring us unto favor. Likewise doth a Christian man give to his brethren, and robbeth them not, as friars and monks do; but, as Paul commandeth, Ephesians 4, laboureth with his hands some good work to have wherewith to help the needy. They give not, but receive only. They labor not, but live idly of the sweat of the poor.

There is none so poor a widow, though she have not to find herself and her children, nor any money to give, yet shall the friar snatch a cheese, or somewhat. They preach, sayest thou, and labor in the word. First, I say, they are not called, and therefore ought not: for it is the curate's office.

The curate cannot, sayest thou. What doth the thief there then?

Secondarily, a true preacher preacheth Christ's testament only; and maketh Christ the cause and reward of all our deeds; and teacheth every man to bear his cross willingly for Christ's sake. But these are enemies unto the cross of Christ, and preach their belly, which is their god, Ephesians [Phil.] 3, and they think that lucre is the serving of God, 1 Timothy 6, that is, they think them Christian only, which



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

offer unto their bellies, which when thou hast filled, then spue they out prayers for thee, to be thy reward, and yet wot not what prayer meaneth. Prayer is the longing for God's promises; which promises, as they preach them not, so long they not for them, nor wish them unto any man. Their longing is to fill their paunch, whom they serve, and not Christ; and through sweet preaching, and flattering words, deceive the hearts of the simple and unlearned.

Finally, as Christ is the whole cause why we do all thing for our neighbor, even so is he the cause why God doth all thing for us, why he receiveth us into his holy testament, and maketh us heirs of all his promises, and poureth his Spirit into us, and maketh us his sons, and fashioneth us like unto Christ, and maketh us such as he would have us to be. The assurance that we are sons, beloved, and heirs with Christ, and have God's Spirit in us, is the consent of our hearts unto the law of God. Which law is all perfection, and the mark whereat all we ought to shoot. And he that hitteth that mark, so that he fulfilleth the law with all his heart, soul, and might, and with full love and lust [desire], without all let or resistance, is pure gold, and needeth not to be put any more in the fire: he is straight and right, and needeth to be no more shaven: he is full fashioned like Christ, and can have no more added unto him.

Nevertheless there is none so perfect in this life, that findeth not let and resistance by the reason of original sin, or birth-poison, that remaineth in him, as thou mayest see in the lives of all the saints throughout all the scripture, and in Paul, Romans 7. "The will is present (saith he), but I find no means to perform that which is good. I do not that good thing which I would: but that evil do I, which I would not. I find by the law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. I delight in the law, as concerning the inner man; but I find another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and subduing me unto the law of sin." Which law of sin is nothing but a corrupt and a poisoned nature, which breaketh into evil lusts [desires], and from evil lusts [desires] into wicked deeds, and must be purged with the true purgatory of the cross of Christ: that is, thou must hate it with all thine heart, and desire God to take it from thee. And then, whatsoever cross God putteth on thy back, bear it patiently, whether it be poverty, sickness, or persecution, or whatsoever it be, and take it for the right purgatory, and think that God hath nailed thee fast to it, to purge thee thereby. For he that loveth not the law and hateth his sin, and hath not professed in his heart to fight against it, and mourneth not to God to take it away and to purge him of it, the same hath no part with Christ. If thou love the law, and findest that thou hast yet sin hanging on thee, whereof thou sorrowest to be delivered and purged; as for an ensample, thou hast a covetous mind, and mistrustest God, and therefore art moved to beguile thy neighbor, and art unto him merciless, not caring whether he sink or swim, so thou mayest win by him, or get from him that he hath; then get thee to the Observant, which is so purged from that sin, that he will not once handle a penny, and with that wile doth the subtle fox make the goose come flying into his hole, ready prepared for his mouth, without his labor or sweat: and buy of his merits, which he hath in store; and give thy money, not into his holy hands, but to offer him that he hath hired, either with part of his prayers or part of his prey, to take the sin upon him and to handle his money for him. In like manner, if any person that is under obedience unto God's ordinance (whether it be son, or daughter, servant, wife or subject) consent unto the ordinance, and yet find contrary motions, let him go also to them that have professed an obedience of their own making, and buy part of their merits. If thy wife give thee nine words for three, go to the Charterhouse, and buy of their silence: and so, if the abstaining of the Observant from handling money heal thine heart from desiring money, and the obedience of them that will obey nothing but their own ordinance heal thy disobedience to God's ordinance, and the silence of the Charterhouse monk tame thy wife's tongue; then believe that their prayers shall deliver thy soul from the pains of that terrible and fearful purgatory, which they have reigned to purge thy purse withal.

The spirituality increaseth daily. More prelates, more priests, more monks, friars, canons, nuns, and more heretics, (I would say heremites,) with like draft. Set before thee the increase of St Francis's disciples in so few years.

Reckon how many thousands, yea, how many twenty thousands, not disciples only, but whole cloisters, are sprung out of hell of them in so little space. Pattering of prayers increaseth daily. Their service, as they call it, waxeth longer and longer, and the labor of their lips greater; new saints, new service, new feasts, and new holidays. What take all these away? Sin?

Nay; for we see the contrary by experience, and that sin groweth as they grow. But they take away first God's word, with faith, hope, peace, unity, love and concord; then house and land, rent and fee, tower and town, goods and cattle, and the very meat out of men's mouths. All these live by purgatory. When other weep for their friends, they sing merrily; when other lose their friends, they get friends. The pope, with all his pardons, is grounded on purgatory. Priests, monks, canons, friars, with all other

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

swarms of hypocrites, do but empty purgatory, and fill hell. Every mass, say they, delivereth one soul out of purgatory. If that were true, yea, if ten masses were enough for one soul, yet were the parish priests and curates of every parish sufficient to scour purgatory: all the other costly workmen might be well spared.

### **THE FOUR SENSES OF THE SCRIPTURE.**

THEY divide the scripture into four senses, the literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical. The literal sense is become nothing at all: for the pope hath taken it clean away, and hath made it his possession. He hath partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and reigned lies; and partly driveth men from it with violence of sword: for no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, but under a protestation, 'If it shall please the pope.' The tropological sense pertaineth to good manners (say they), and teacheth what we ought to do. The allegory is appropriate to faith; and the anagogical to hope, and things above. Tropological and anagogical are terms of their own feigning, and altogether unnecessary. For they are but allegories, both two of them; and this word allegory comprehendeth them both, and is enough. For tropological is but an allegory of manners; and anagogical, an allegory of hope. And allegory is as much to say as strange speaking, or borrowed speech: as when we say of a wanton child, 'This sheep hath magots in his tail, he must be anointed with birchen salve;' which speech I borrow of the shepherds.

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way. Neverthelater, the scripture useth proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle, or allegory signifieth, is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently: as in the English we borrow words and sentences of one thing, and apply them unto another, and give them new significations. We say, 'Let the sea swell and rise as high as he will, yet hath God appointed how far he shall go:' meaning that the tyrants shall not do what they would, but that only which God hath appointed them to do. 'Look ere thou leap:' whose literal sense is, 'Do nothing suddenly, or without advisement.' 'Cut not the bough that thou standest upon:' whose literal sense is, 'Oppress not the commons;' and is borrowed of hewers. When a thing speedeth not well, we borrow speech, and say, 'The bishop hath blessed it;' because that nothing speedeth well that they meddle withal. If the porridge be burned too, or the meat over roasted, we say, 'The bishop hath put his foot in the pot,' or, 'The bishop hath played the cook;' because the bishops burn whom they lust [desire], and whosoever displeaseth them. 'He is a pontifical fellow;' that is, proud and stately. 'He is popish;' that is, superstitious and faithless. 'It is a pastime for a prelate.' 'It is a pleasure for a pope.' 'He would be free, and yet will not have his head shaven.' 'He would that no man should smite him, and yet hath not the pope's mark.' And of him that is betrayed, and wotteth [knows] not how, we say, 'He hath been at shrift.' 'She is master parson's sister's daughter;' 'He is the bishop's sister's son;' 'He hath a cardinal to his uncle;' 'She is a spiritual whore;' 'It is the gentlewoman of the parsonage;' 'He gave me a Kyrie eleyson. And of her that answereth her husband six words for one, we say, 'She is a sister of the Charterhouse:' as who should say, 'She thinketh that she is not bound to keep silence; their silence shall be a satisfaction for her.' And of him that will not be saved by Christ's merits, but by the works of his own imagination, we say, 'It is a holy-workman.'

Thus borrow we, and feign new speech in every tongue. All fables, prophecies, and riddles, are allegories; as AEsop's fables, and Merlin's prophecies; and the interpretation of them are the literal sense.

So in like manner the scripture borroweth words and sentences of all manner things, and maketh proverbs and similitudes, or allegories. As Christ saith, Luke 4, "Physician, heal thyself:" whose interpretation is, 'Do that at home, which thou dost in strange places;' and that is the literal sense. So when I say, 'Christ is a lamb;' I mean not a lamb that beareth wool, but a meek and a patient lamb, which is beaten for other men's faults. 'Christ is a vine;' not that beareth grapes; but out of whose root the branches that believe suck the Spirit of life, and mercy, and grace, and power to be the sons of God, and to do his will. The similitudes of the gospel are allegories, borrowed of worldly matters, to express spiritual things. The apocalypse, or revelations of John, are allegories whose literal sense is hard to find in many places.

Beyond all this, when we have found out the literal sense of the scripture by the process of the text,

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

or by a like text of another place, then go we, and as the scripture borroweth similitudes of worldly things, even so we again borrow similitudes or allegories of the scripture, and apply them to our purposes; which allegories are no sense of the scripture, but free things besides the scripture, and altogether in the liberty of the Spirit. Which allegories I may not make at all the wild adventures; but must keep me within the compass of the faith, and ever apply mine allegory to Christ, and unto the faith.

Take an ensample: thou hast the story of Peter, how he smote off Malchus's ear, and how Christ healed it again. There hast thou in the plain text great learning, great fruit, and great edifying, which I pass over because of tediousness. Then come I, when I preach of the law and the gospel, and borrow this ensample, to express the nature of the law and of the gospel, and to paint it unto thee before thine eyes. And of Peter and his sword make I the law, and of Christ the gospel; saying, 'As Peter's sword cutteth off the ear, so doth the law: the law damneth, the law killeth, and mangleth the conscience: there is no ear so righteous that can abide the hearing of the law: there is no deed so good but that the law damneth it. But Christ, that is to say, the gospel, the promises and testament that God hath made in Christ, healeth the ear and conscience, which the law hath hurt. The gospel is life, mercy, and forgiveness freely, and altogether an healing plaister. And as Peter doth but hurt and make a wound, where was none before, even so doth the law: for when we think that we are holy and righteous, and full of good deeds; if the law be preached aright, our righteousness and good deeds vanish away, as smoke in the wind, and we are left damnable sinners only. And as thou seest how that Christ healeth not, till Peter had wounded; and as an healing plaister helpeth not, till the corrosive hath troubled the wound; even so the gospel helpeth not, but when the law hath wounded the conscience, and brought the sinner into the knowledge of his sin.' This allegory proveth nothing, neither can do. For it is not the scripture, but an ensample or a similitude borrowed of the scripture, to declare a text or a conclusion of the scripture more expressly, and to root it and grave it in the heart. For a similitude, or an ensample, doth print a thing much deeper in the wits of a man than doth a plain speaking, and leaveth behind him as it were a sting to prick him forward, and to awake him withal. Moreover, if I could not prove with an open text that which the allegory doth express, then were the allegory a thing to be jested at, and of no greater value than a tale of Robin Hood. This allegory, as touching his first part, is proved by Paul in the 4th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, where he saith, "The law causeth wrath;" and in the 7th chapter to the Romans, "When the law or commandment came, sin revived, and I became dead:" and in the 2nd epistle to the Corinthians, in the third chapter, the law is called "the minister of death and damnation," etc. And as concerning the second part, Paul saith to the Romans in the 5th chapter, "In that we are justified by faith we are at peace with God." And in the 2nd epistle to the Corinthians, in the third [chapter], the gospel is called "the ministration of justifying and of the Spirit." And, Galatians 3, "The Spirit cometh by preaching of the faith," etc. Thus doth the literal sense prove the allegory, and bear it, as the foundation beareth the house. And because that allegories prove nothing, therefore are they to be used soberly and seldom, and only where the text offereth thee an allegory.

And of this manner (as I above have done) doth Paul borrow a similitude, a figure or allegory, of Genesis, to express the nature of the law and of the gospel; and by Agar and her son declareth the property of the law, and of her bond-children which will be justified by deeds; and by Sarah and her son declareth the property of the gospel, and of her free children which are justified by faith; and how the children of the law, which believe in their works, persecute the children of the gospel, which believe in the mercy and truth of God and in the testament of his Son Jesus our Lord.

And likewise do we borrow likenesses or allegories of the scripture, as of Pharaoh and Herod, and of the scribes and Pharisees, to express our miserable captivity and persecution under antichrist the pope. The greatest cause of which captivity and the decay of the faith, and this blindness wherein we now are, sprang first of allegories. For Origen and the doctors of his time drew all the scripture unto allegories: whose ensample they that came after followed so long, till they at last forgot the order and process of the text, supposing that the scripture served but to feign allegories upon; insomuch that twenty doctors expound one text twenty ways, as children make descant upon plain song. Then came our sophisters with their anagogical and chopoligical sense, and with an antitheme of half an inch, out of which some of them draw a thread of nine days long. Yea, thou shalt find enough that will preach Christ, and prove whatsoever point of the faith that thou wilt, as well out of a fable of Ovid or any other poet, as out of St John's gospel or Paul's epistles. Yea, they are come unto such blindness, that they not only say the literal sense profiteth not, but also that it is hurtful, and noisome, and killeth the soul. Which damnable doctrine they prove by a text of Paul, 2 Corinthians 3, where he saith, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Lo, say they, the literal sense killeth, and the spiritual sense giveth life. We must therefore, say they, seek out some chopological sense.

Here learn what sophistry is, and how blind they are, that thou mayest abhor them and spue them out of thy stomach for ever. Paul by the letter meaneth Moses's law; which the process of the text following declareth more bright than the sun. But it is not their guise to look on the order of any text; but as they find it in their doctors, so allege they it, and so understand it. Paul maketh a comparison between the law and the gospel; and calleth the law the letter, because it was but letters graven in two tables of cold stone: for the law doth but kill, and damn the consciences, as long as there is no lust [desire] in the heart to do that which the law commandeth.

Contrariwise, he calleth the gospel the administration of the Spirit and of righteousness or justifying. For when Christ is preached, and the promises which God hath made in Christ are believed, the Spirit entereth the heart, and looseth the heart, and giveth lust [desire] to do the law, and maketh the law a lively thing in the heart. Now as soon as the heart lusteth [desires] to do the law, then are we righteous before God, and our sins forgiven. Nevertheless the law of the letter grayed in stone, and not in their hearts, was so glorious, and Moses's face shone so bright, that the children of Israel could not behold his face for brightness. It was also given in thunder and lightning and terrible signs; so that they for fear came to Moses, and desired him that he would speak to them, and let God speak no more; "Lest we die (said they) if we hear him any more:" as thou mayest see Exodus 20.

Whereupon Paul maketh his comparison, saying: "If the ministration of death through the letters figured in stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; why shall not the administration of the Spirit be glorious?"

And again: "If the administration of damnation be glorious, much more shall the administration of righteousness exceed in glory:" that is, if the law that killeth sinners, and helpeth them not, be glorious; then the gospel, which pardoneth sinners, and giveth them power to be the sons of God and to overcome sin, is much more glorious.

And the text that goeth before is as clear. For the holy apostle Paul saith: "Ye Corinthians are our epistle, which is understand and read of all men, in that ye are known how that ye are the epistle of Christ ministered by us, and written, not with ink," (as Moses's law,) "but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone," (as the ten commandments,) "but in the fleshy tables of the heart:" as who should say, 'We write not a dead law with ink and in parchment, nor grave that which damned you in tables of stone; but preach you that which bringeth the Spirit of life unto your breasts, which Spirit writeth and graveth the law of love in your hearts, and giveth you lust [desire] to do the will of God.' And furthermore, saith he, "Our ableness cometh of God, which hath made us able to minister the new Testament, not of the letter," (that is to say, not of the law,) "but of the Spirit: for the letter" (that is to say, the law) "killeth; but the Spirit giveth life;" that is to say, the Spirit of God, which entereth your hearts when ye believe the glad tidings that are preached you in Christ, quickeneth your hearts, and giveth you life and lust [desire], and maketh you to do of love and of your own accord, without compulsion, that which the law compelled you to do, and damned you because ye could not do with love and lust [desire], and naturally. Thus seest thou that the letter signifieth not the literal sense, and the spirit the spiritual sense. And, Romans 2, Paul useth this term *Litera* for the law; and Romans 7, where he setteth it so plain, that if the great wrath of God had not blinded them, they could never have stumbled at it.

God is a Spirit, and all his words are spiritual, His literal sense is spiritual, and all his words are spiritual. When thou readest (Matthew 1.) "She shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins:" this literal sense is spiritual, and everlasting life unto as many as believe it.

And the literal sense of these words, (Matthew 5.) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy," are spiritual and life; whereby they that are merciful may of right, by the truth and promise of God, challenge mercy. And like is it of these words, Matthew 6 "If you forgive other men their sins, your heavenly Father shall forgive you yours."

And so is it of all the promises of God. Finally, all God's words are spiritual, if thou have eyes of God to see the right meaning of the text, and whereunto the scripture pertaineth, and the final end and cause thereof.

All the scripture is either the promises and testament of God in Christ, and stories pertaining thereunto, to strength[en] thy faith; either the law, and stories pertaining thereto, to fear thee from evil doing. There is no story nor gest, seem it never so simple or so vile unto the world, but that thou shalt

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

find therein spirit and life and edifying in the literal sense: for it is God's scripture, written for thy learning and comfort. There is no clout or rag there, that hath not precious relics wrapt therein of faith, hope, patience and long suffering, and of the truth of God, and also of his righteousness.

Set before thee the story of Reuben, which defiled his father's bed. Mark what a cross God suffered to fall on the neck of his elect Jacob. Consider first the shame among the heathen, when as yet there was no more of the whole world within the testament of God, but he and his household. I report me to our prelates, which swear by their honor, whether it were a cross or no. Seest thou not how our wicked builders rage, because they see their buildings burn, now they are tried by the fire of God's word; and how they stir up the whole world, to quench the word of God, for fear of losing their honor? Then what business had he to pacify his children! Look what ado he had at the defiling of his daughter Dinah. And be thou sure that the brethren there were no more furious for the defiling of their sister, than the sons hero for defiling of their mother. Mark what followed Reuben, to fear other, that they shame not their fathers and mothers. He was cursed, and lost the kingdom, and also the priesthood, and his tribe or generation was ever few in number, as it appeareth in the stories of the bible.

The adultery of David with Bathsheba is an ensample, not to move us to evil; but, if (while we follow the way of righteousness) any chance drive us aside, that we despair not. For if we saw not such infirmities in God's elect, we, which are so weak and fall so oft, should utterly despair, and think that God had clean forsaken us. It is therefore a sure and an undoubted conclusion, whether we be holy or unholy, we are all sinners. But the difference is, that God's sinners consent not to their sin. They consent unto the law that is both holy and righteous, and mourn to have their sin taken away. But the devil's sinners consent unto their sin, and would have the law and hell taken away, and are enemies unto the righteousness of God.

Likewise in the homely gest of Noe, when he was drunk, and lay in his tent with his privy members open, hast thou great edifying in the literal sense. Thou seest what became of the cursed children of wicked Ham, which saw his father's privy members, and jested thereof unto his brethren.

Thou seest also what blessing fell on Shem and Japhet, which went backward and covered their father's members, and saw them not. And thirdly, thou seest what infirmity accompanieth God's elect, be they never so holy, which yet is not imputed unto them: for the faith and trust they have in God swalloweth up all their sins.

Notwithstanding, this text offers us an apt and an handsome allegory or similitude to describe our wicked Ham, antichrist the pope, which many hundred years hath done all the shame that heart can think unto the word of promise, or the word of faith, as Paul calleth it, Romans 10; and the gospel and testament of Christ, wherewith we are begotten; as thou seest, 1 Peter 1: and James 1: And as the cursed children of Ham grew into giants, so mighty and great that the children of Israel seemed but grasshoppers in respect of them; so the cursed sons of our Ham, the pope, his cardinals, bishops, abbots, monks, and friars, are become mighty giants above all power and authority; so that the children of faith, in respect of them, are much less than grasshoppers. They heap mountain upon mountain, and will to heaven by their own strength, by a way of their own making, and not by the way Christ. Neverthelater, those giants, for the wickedness and abominations which they had wrought, did God utterly destroy, part of them by the children of Lot, and part by the children of Esau, and seven nations of them by the children of Israel. So no doubt shall he destroy these for like abominations, and that shortly. For their kingdom is but the kingdom of lies and falsehood; which must needs perish at the coming of the truth of God's word, as the night vanisheth away at the presence of day. The children of Israel slew not those giants, but the power of God; God's truth and promises, as thou mayest see in Deuteronomy. So it is not we that shall destroy those giants, as thou mayest see by Paul, (2 Thessalonians 2.) speaking of our Ham, antichrist: "Whom the Lord shall destroy" (saith he) "with the spirit of his mouth," that is, by the words of truth, "and by the brightness of his coming," that is, by the preaching of his gospel.

And as I have said of allegories, even so it is of worldly similitudes, which we make either when we preach, either when we expound the scripture.

The similitudes prove nothing, but are made to express more plainly that which is contained in the scripture, and to lead thee into the spiritual understanding of the text: as the similitude of matrimony is taken to express the marriage that is between Christ and our souls, and what exceeding mercy we have there, whereof all the scriptures make mention; and the similitude of the members, how every one of them careth for other, is taken to make thee feel what it is to love thy neighbor as thyself. That preacher therefore, that bringeth a naked similitude to prove that which is contained in no text of scripture, nor followeth of a text, count a deceiver, a leader out of the way, and a false prophet, and beware of his

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

philosophy and persuasions of man's wisdom, as Paul saith: "My words and my preaching were not with enticing words and persuasions of man's wisdom, but in shewing of the Spirit and power:" (that is, he preached not dreams, confirming them with similitudes; but God's word, confirming it with miracles and with working of the Spirit, the which made them feel every thing in their hearts:) "that your faith," said he, "should not stand in the wisdom of man; but in the power of God." For the reasons and similitudes of man's wisdom make no faith, but wavering and uncertain opinions only: one draweth me this way with his argument, another that way, and of what principle thou provest black, another proveth white: and so am I ever uncertain; as, if thou tell me of a thing done in a far land, and another tell me the contrary, I wot [know] not what to believe. But faith is wrought by the power of God; that is, when God's word is preached, the Spirit entereth thine heart, and maketh thy soul feel it, and maketh thee so sure of it, that neither adversity, nor persecution, nor death, neither hell, nor the powers of hell, neither yet all the pains of hell could once prevail against thee, or move thee from the sure rock of God's word, that thou shouldst not believe that which God hath sworn.

And Peter saith, "We followed not deceivable fables, when we opened unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but with our eyes we saw his majesty." And again, "We have" (saith he) "a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto if ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, ye do well." The word of prophecy was the old Testament, which beareth record unto Christ in every place; without which record the apostles made neither similitudes nor arguments of worldly wit. Hereof seest thou, that all the allegories, similitudes, persuasions and arguments, which they bring without scripture, to prove praying to saints, purgatory, ear-confession; and that God will hear thy prayer more in one place than in another; and that it is more meritorious to eat fish than flesh; and that to disguise thyself, and put on this or that manner coat, is more acceptable than to go as God hath made thee; and that widowhood is better than matrimony, and virginity than widowhood; and to prove the assumption of our lady, and that she was born without original sin, yea, and with a kiss (say some), are but false doctrine.

Take an ensample, how they prove that widowhood and virginity exceed matrimony. They bring this worldly similitude: he that taketh most pain for a man deserveth most, and to him a man is most bound; so likewise must it be with God, and so forth. Now the widow and virgin take more pain in resisting their lusts [desires] than the married wife; therefore is their state holier.

First, I say, that in their own sophistry a similitude is the worst and feeblest argument that can be, and proveth least, and soonest deceiveth. Though that one son do more service for his father than another, yet is the father free, and may with right reward them all alike. For though I had a thousand brethren, and did more than they all, yet do I not my duty. The fathers and mothers also care most for the least and weakest, and them that can do least: yea, for the worst care they most, and would spend, not their goods only, but also their blood, to bring them to the right way. And even so is it of the kingdom of Christ, as thou mayest well see in the similitude of the riotous son. Moreover Paul saith, (1 Corinthians 7.) "It is better to marry than to burn." For the person that burneth cannot quietly serve God, inasmuch as his mind is drawn away, and the thoughts of his heart occupied with wonderful and monstrous imaginations. He can neither see, nor hear, nor read, but that his wits are rapt, and he clean from himself.

And again, saith he, "circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments" is all together. Look wherein thou canst best keep the commandments; thither get thyself and therein abide; whether thou be widow, wife, or maid; and then hast thou all with God. If we have infirmities that draw us from the laws of God, let us cure them with the remedies that God hath made. If thou burn, marry: for God hath promised thee no chastity, as long as thou mayest use the remedy that he hath ordained; no more than he hath promised to slake thine hunger without meat. Now, to ask of God more than he hath promised, cometh of a false faith, and is plain idolatry: and to desire a miracle, where there is natural remedy, is tempting of God. And of pains-taking, this-wise understand. He that taketh pains to keep the commandments of God, is sure thereby that he loveth God, and that he hath God's Spirit in him. And the more pain a man taketh (I mean patiently and without grudging), the more he loveth God, and the perfecter he is, and nearer unto that health which the souls of all christian men long for, and the more purged from the infirmity and sin that remaineth in the flesh. But to look for any other reward or promotion in heaven, or in the life to come, than that which God hath promised for Christ's sake, and which Christ hath deserved for us with his pain-taking, is abominable in the sight of God. For Christ only hath purchased the reward; and our pain-taking to keep the commandments doth but purge the sin that remaineth in the flesh, and certify us that we are chosen and sealed with God's Spirit unto the reward that Christ hath purchased for us.

I was once at the creating of doctors of divinity, where the opponent brought the same reason to

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

prove that the widow had more merit than the virgin; because she had greater pain, forasmuch as she had once proved the pleasures of matrimony. Ego nego, domine doctor, said the respondent: 'for though the virgin have not proved, yet she imagineth that the pleasure is greater than it is indeed, and therefore is more moved, and hath greater temptation and greater pain.' Are not these disputers they that Paul speaketh of in the sixth chapter of the first epistle to Timothy? that "they are not content with the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and doctrine of godliness; and therefore know nothing, but waste their brains about questions and strife of words, whereof spring envy, strife and railing of men with corrupt minds, destitute of the truth."

As pertaining to our lady's body, where it is, or where the body of Elias, of John the evangelist, and of many other be, pertaineth not to us to know.

One thing are we sure of, that they are where God hath laid them. If they be in heaven, we have never the more in Christ: if they be not there, we have never the less. Our duty is to prepare ourselves unto the commandments, and to be thankful for that which is opened unto us; and not to search the unsearchable secrets of God. Of God's secrets can we know no more than he openeth unto us. If God shut, who shall open? How then can natural reason come by the knowledge of that which God hath hid unto himself?

Yet let us see one of their reasons wherewith they prove it. The chief reason is this: Every man doth more for his mother, say they, than for other; in like manner must Christ do for his mother; therefore hath she this pre-eminence, that her body is in heaven. And yet Christ, in the 12th chapter of Matthew knoweth her not for his mother, but as far forth as she kept his Father's commandments. And Paul, in the 2nd epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 5, knoweth not Christ himself fleshly, or after a worldly purpose. Last of all, God is free, and no further bound than he bindeth himself: if he have made her any promise, he is bound; if not, then is he not. Finally, if thou set this above rehearsed chapter of Matthew before thee, where Christ would not know his mother, and the 2nd of John where he rebuked her, and the 2nd of Luke where she lost him, and how negligent she was to leave him behind her at Jerusalem unawares, and to go a day's journey ere she sought for him; thou mightest resolve many of their reasons which they make of this matter, and that she was without original sin. Read also Erasmus's Annotations in the said places. And as for me, I commit all such matters unto those idle bellies, which have nought else to do than to move such questions; and give them free liberty to hold what they list [desire], as long as it hurteth not the faith, whether it be so or no: exhorting yet, with Paul, all that will please God, and obtain that salvation that is in Christ, that they give no heed unto unnecessary and brawling disputations, and that they labor for the knowledge of those things without which they cannot be saved. And remember that the sun was given us to guide us in our way and works bodily. Now if thou leave the natural use of the sun, and will look directly on him to see how bright he is, and suchlike curiosity, then will the sun blind thee. So was the scripture given us to guide us in our way and works ghostly. The way is Christ; and the promises in him are our salvation, if we long for them. Now if we shall leave that right use and turn ourselves unto vain questions, and to search the unsearchable secrets of God; then no doubt shall the scripture blind us, as it hath done our schoolmen and our subtle disputers.

And as they are false prophets, which prove with allegories, similitudes, and worldly reasons, that which is no where made mention of in the scripture; even so count them for false prophets which expound the scriptures, drawing them unto a worldly purpose, clean contrary unto the ensample, living, and practicing of Christ and of his apostles, and of all the holy prophets. For, saith Peter, (2 Peter 1.) "No prophecy in the scripture hath any private interpretation. For the scripture came not by the will of man; but the holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." No place of the scripture may have a private exposition; that is, it may not be expounded after the will of man, or after the will of the flesh, or drawn unto a worldly purpose contrary unto the open texts, and the general articles of the faith, and the whole course of the scripture, and contrary to the living and practising of Christ and the apostles and holy prophets. For as they came not by the will of man, so may they not be drawn or expounded after the will of man: but as they came by the Holy Ghost, so must they be expounded and understood by the Holy Ghost. The scripture is that wherewith God draweth us unto him, and not where with we should be led from him. The scriptures spring out of God, and flow unto Christ, and were given to lead us to Christ. Thou must therefore go along by the scripture as by a line, until thou come at Christ, which is the way's end and resting-place. If any man, therefore, use the scripture to draw thee from Christ, and to nosel thee in any thing save in Christ, the same is a false prophet. And that thou mayest perceive what Peter meaneth, it followeth in the text, "There were false prophets among the people" (whose prophecies were belly-wisdom), "as there shall be false teachers among you, which shall

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

privily bring in damnable sects,” (as thou seest how we are divided into monstrous sects or orders of religion,) “even denying the Lord that hath bought them.” For every one of them taketh on him to sell thee for money that which God in Christ promiseth thee freely. “And many shall follow their damnable ways, by whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of:” as thou seest how the way of truth is become heresy, seditious, or cause of insurrection, and breaking of the king’s peace, and treason unto his highness. “And through covetousness with reigned [feigned] words shall they make merchandise of you.” Covetousness is the conclusion: for covetousness and ambition, that is to say, lucre and desire of honor, is the final end of all false prophets and of all false teachers. Look upon the pope’s false doctrine: what is the end thereof, and what seek they thereby? Wherefore serveth purgatory, but to purge thy purse, and to poll thee, and rob both thee and thy heirs of house and lands, and of all thou hast, that they may be in honor? Serve not pardons for the same purpose?

Whereto pertaineth praying to saints, but to offer unto their bellies?

Wherefore serveth confession, but to sit in thy conscience and to make thee fear and tremble at whatsoever they dream, and that thou worship them as gods? And so forth, in all their traditions, ceremonies, and conjurations, they serve not the Lord, but their bellies.

And of their false expounding the scripture, and drawing it contrary unto the ensample of Christ and the apostles and holy prophets, unto their damnable covetousness and filthy ambition, take an ensample: When Peter saith to Christ, (Matthew 16.) “Thou art the Son of the living God ;” and Christ answered, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my congregation;” by the rock interpret they Peter. And then cometh the pope, and will be Peter’s successor, whether Peter will or will not; yea, whether God will or will not; and though all the scripture say, ‘Nay,’ to any such succession; and saith, ‘Lo, I am the rock, the foundation, and head of Christ’s church.’ Now saith all the scripture, that the rock is Christ, the faith, and God’s word. As Christ saith, (Matthew 7.) “He that heareth my words, and doth thereafter, is like a man that buildeth on a rock.” For the house that is built on God’s word will stand, though heaven should fall.

And, John 15: “Christ is the vine, and we the branches:” so is Christ the rock, the stock, and foundation whereon we be built. And Paul (1 Corinthians 3.) calleth Christ our foundation; and all other, whether it be Peter or Paul, he calleth them our servants, to preach Christ, and to build us on him. If therefore the pope be Peter’s successor, his duty is to preach Christ only; and other authority hath he none. And (2 Corinthians 11.) Paul marieth us unto Christ, and driveth us from all trust and confidence in man. And, (Ephesians 2.) saith Paul, “Ye are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets;” that is, on the word which they preached; “Christ being, saith he, the head corner-stone, in whom every building coupled together groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom also ye are built together and made an habitation for God in the Spirit.” And Peter, in the 2nd of his first epistle, buildeth us on Christ; contrary to the pope, which buildeth us on himself.

Hell gates shall not prevail against it; that is to say, against the congregation that is built upon Christ’s faith, and upon God’s word. Now were the pope the rock, hell gates could not prevail against him: for the house could not stand, if the rock and foundation whereon it is built did perish: but the contrary see we in our popes. For hell gates have prevailed against them many hundred years, and have swallowed them up, if God’s word be true, and the stories that are written of them; yea, or if it be true that we see with our eyes. “I will give thee the keys of heaven,” saith Christ, and not, “I give;” and, John 20, after the resurrection paid it, and gave the keys to them all indifferently. “Whatsoever thou bindest on earth, it shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou loosest on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven.” Of this text maketh the pope what he will; and expoundeth it contrary to all the scripture, contrary to Christ’s practising, and the apostles’, and all the prophets’. Now the scripture giveth record to himself, and ever expoundeth itself by another open text. If the pope then cannot bring for his exposition the practicing of Christ, or of the apostles and prophets, or an open text, then is his exposition false doctrine. Christ expoundeth himself, (Matthew 18.) saying: “If thy brother sin against thee, rebuke him betwixt him and thee alone. If he hear thee, thou hast won thy brother: but if he hear thee not, then take with thee one or two,” and so forth, as it standeth in the text. He concludeth, saying to them all: “Whatsoever ye bind in earth, it shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven.”

**Where binding is but to rebuke them that sin; and loosing to forgive them that repent. And, “Whose sins ye forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins ye hold, they are holden.” And Paul (1 Corinthians 5.) bindeth; and (2 Corinthians 2.) looseth, after the same manner.**

Also this binding and loosing is one power: and as he bindeth, so looseth he; yea, and bindeth first



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

ere he can loose. For who can loose that is not bound? Now whatsoever Peter bindeth, or his successor, (as he will be called and is not, but indeed the very successor of Satan,) is not so to be understood, that Peter, or the pope, hath power to command a man to be in deadly sin, or to be damned, or to go into hell, saying, Be thou in deadly sin; be thou damned; go thou to hell; go thou to purgatory: for that exposition is contrary to the everlasting testament that God hath made unto us in Christ. He sent his Son Christ to loose us from sin, and damnation, and hell; and that to testify unto the world, sent he his disciples. (Acts 1.) Paul also hath no power to destroy, but to edify. 2 Corinthians 10:13 . How can Christ give his disciples power against himself, and against his everlasting testament? Can he send them to preach salvation, and give them power to damn whom they lust [desire]? What mercy and profit have we in Christ's death, and in his gospel, if the pope, which passeth all men in wickedness, hath power to send whom he will to hell, and to damn whom he lusteth [desires]? We had then no cause, to call him Jesus, that is to say, Savior; but might of right call him destroyer. Wherefore, then, this binding is to be understood as Christ interpreteth it in the places above rehearsed, and as the apostles practiced it, and is nothing but to rebuke men of their sins by preaching the law. A man must first sin against God's law, ere the pope can bind him: yea, and a man must first sin against God's law, ere he need to fear the pope's curse. For cursing and binding are both one; and nothing, saving to rebuke a man of his sins by God's law. It followeth also, then, that the loosing is of like manner; and is nothing but forgiving of sin to them that repent, through preaching of the promises which God hath made in Christ; in whom only we have all forgiveness of sins, as Christ interpreteth it, and as the apostles and prophets practiced it. So is it a false power that the pope taketh on him, to loose God's laws; as to give a man licence to put away his wife to whom God hath bound him, and to bind them to chastity, which God commandeth to marry; that is to wit, them that burn and cannot live chaste. It is also a false power to bind that which God's word maketh free, making sin in the creatures which God hath made for man's use.

The pope, which so fast looseth and purgeth in purgatory, cannot, with all the loosings and purgations that he hath, either loose or purge our appetites, and lust [desire], and rebellion that is in us against the law of God. And yet the purging of them is the right purgatory. If he cannot purge them that are alive, wherewith purgeth he them that are dead? The apostles know no other ways to purge, but through preaching God's word, which word only is that that purgeth the heart, as thou mayest see, John 15. "Ye are pure," saith Christ, "through the word." Now the pope preacheth not to them whom they feign to lie in purgatory, no more than he doth to us that are alive. How then purgeth he them? The pope is kin to Robin Goodfellow; which sweepeth the house, washeth the dishes, and purgeth all, by night; but when day cometh, there is nothing found clean .

Some man will say, the pope bindeth them not, they bind themselves. I answer, he that bindeth himself to the pope, and had lever [rather] have his life and soul ruled by the pope's will than by the will of God, and by the pope's word than by the word of God, is a fool. And he that had lever [rather] be bond than free, is not wise. And he that will not abide in the freedom wherein Christ hath set us, is also mad. And he that maketh deadly sin where none is, and seeketh causes of hatred between him and God, is not in his right wits. Furthermore, no man can bind himself, further than he hath power over himself. He that is under the power of another man, cannot bind himself without licence, as son, daughter, wife, servant, and subject.

Neither canst thou give God that which is not in thy power. Chastity canst thou not give, further than God lendeth it thee: if thou cannot live chaste, thou art bound to marry or to be damned. Last of all, for what purpose thou bindest thyself must be seen. If thou do it to obtain thereby that which Christ hath purchased for thee freely, so art thou an infidel, and hast no part with Christ, and so forth. If thou wilt see more of this matter, look in Deuteronomy, and there shalt thou find it more largely entreated.

Take another ensample of their false expounding the scripture. Christ saith, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but after their works do not." Lo, say our sophisters or hypocrites, live we never so abominably, yet is our authority never the less. Do as we teach therefore, (say they,) and not as we do. And yet Christ saith, they sit on Moses' seat; that is, as long they teach Moses, do as they teach. For the law of Moses is the law of God. But for their own traditions and false doctrine Christ rebuked them, and disobeyed them, and taught other to beware of their leaven. So if our Pharisees sit on Christ's seat and preach him, we ought to hear them; but when they sit on their own seat, then ought we to beware as well of their pestilent doctrine as of their abominable living.

Likewise where they find mention made of a sword, they turn it unto the pope's power. The disciples said unto Christ, Luke 22, "Lo, here be two swords." And Christ answered, "Two is enough."

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

Lo, say they, the pope hath two swords, the spiritual sword and the temporal sword. And therefore is it lawful for him to fight and make war.

Christ, a little before he went to his passion, asked his disciples, saying, "When I sent you out without all provision, lacked ye any thing? and they said, Nay. And he answered, But now let him that hath a wallet take it with him, and he that hath a scrip likewise; and let him that hath never a sword, sell his coat and buy one:" as who should say, 'It shall go otherwise now than then. Then ye went forth in faith of my word, and my Father's promises; and it fed you and made provision for you, and was your sword, and shield, and defender; but now it shall go as thou readest Zechariah 13:"I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered."

Now shall my Father leave me in the hands of the wicked; and ye also shall be forsaken and destitute of faith, and shall trust in yourselves, and in your own provision, and in your own defense.' Christ gave no commandment; but prophesied what should happen: and they, because they understood him not, answered, "Here are two swords." And Christ (to make an end of such babbling) answered, "Two is enough." For if he had commanded every man to buy a sword, how had two been enough? Also, if two were enough, and pertained to the pope only, why are they all commanded to buy every man a sword? By the sword, therefore, Christ prophesied, that they should be left unto their own defense. And two swords were enough; yea, never-a-one had been enough: for if every one of them had had ten swords, they would have fled ere midnight.

In the same chapter of Luke, not twelve lines from the foresaid text, the disciples, even at the last supper, asked who should be the greatest. And Christ rebuked them, and said it was an heathenish thing, and there should be no such thing among them, but that the greatest should be as the smallest, and that to be great was to do service as Christ' did. But this text because it is brighter than the sun, that they can make no sophistry of it, therefore will they not hear it, nor let other know it.

Forasmuch now as thou partly seest the falsehood of our prelates, how all their study is to deceive us and to keep us in darkness, to sit as gods in our consciences, and handle us at their pleasure, and to lead us whither they lust [desire]; therefore I read thee, get thee to God's word, and thereby try all doctrine, and against that receive nothing; neither any exposition contrary unto the open texts, neither contrary to the general articles of the faith, neither contrary to the living and practicing of Christ and his apostles. And when they cry, 'Fathers, fathers,' remember that it were the fathers that blinded and robbed the whole world, and brought us into this captivity, wherein these enforce to keep us still. Furthermore, as they of the old time are fathers to us, so shall these foul monsters be fathers to them that come after us; and the hypocrites that follow us will cry of these and of their doings, 'Fathers, fathers,' as these cry 'Fathers, fathers,' of them that are past. And as we feel our fathers, so did they that are past feel their fathers: neither were there in the world any other fathers than such as we both see and feel this many hundred years; as their decrees bear record, and the stories and chronicles well testify. If God's word appeared any where, they agreed all against it. When they had brought that asleep, then strove they one with another about their own traditions, and one pope condemned another's decrees, and were sometime two, yea, three popes at once. And one bishop went to law with another, and one cursed another for their own fantasies, and such things as they had falsely gotten. And the greatest saints are they that most defended the liberties of the church (as they call it), which they falsely got with blinding kings; neither had the world any rest this many hundred years, for reforming of friars and monks, and ceasing of schisms that were among our clergy. And as for the holy doctors, as Augustine, Hierome, Cyprian, Chrysostomus, and Bede, will they not hear. If they wrote any thing negligently, (as they were men,) that draw they clean contrary to their meaning, and thereof triumph they. Those doctors knew of none authority that one bishop should have above another, neither thought or once dreamed that ever any such should be, or of any such whispering, or of pardons, or scouring of purgatory, as they have feigned.

And when they cry, 'Miracles, miracles,' remember that God hath made an everlasting testament with us in Christ's blood, against which we may receive no miracles; no, neither the preaching of Paul himself, if he came again, by his own teaching to the Galatians, neither yet the preaching of the angels of heaven. Wherefore either they are no miracles but they have feigned them, (as is the miracle that St Peter hallowed Westminster;) or else if there be miracles that confirm doctrine contrary to God's word, then are they done of the devil, (as the maid of Ipswich and of Kent, ) to prove us whether we will cleave fast to God's word, and to deceive them that have no love to the truth of God's word, nor lust [desire] to walk in his laws.

And forasmuch as they to deceive withal arm themselves against them with arguments and persuasions of fleshly wisdom, with worldly similitudes, with shadows, with false allegories, with false

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

expositions of the scripture, contrary unto the living and practicing of Christ and the apostles, with lies and false miracles, with false names, dumb ceremonies, with disguising of hypocrisy, with the authorities of the fathers, and last of all with the violence of the temporal sword; therefore do thou contrariwise arm thyself to defend thee withal, as Paul teacheth in the last chapter of the Ephesians: "Gird on thee the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word, and take to thee the shield of faith:" which is, not to believe a tale of Robin Hood, or Gesta Romanorum, or of the Chronicles, but to believe God's word that lasteth ever.

And when the pope with his falsehead challengeth temporal authority above king and emperor, set before thee the 25th chapter of St Matthew, where Christ commandeth Peter to put up his sword. And set before thee Paul, 2 Corinthians 10th, where he saith, "The weapons of our war are not carnal things, but mighty in God to bring all understanding in captivity under the obedience of Christ;" that is, the weapons are God's word and doctrine, and not swords of iron and steel. And set before thee the doctrine of Christ and of his apostles, and their practice.

And when the pope challengeth authority over his fellow bishops and over all the congregation of Christ by succession of Peter, set before thee the first of the Acts; where Peter, for all his authority, put no man in the room of Judas; but all the apostles chose two indifferently, and cast lots, desiring God to temper them, that the lot might fall on the most ablest. And (Acts 8.) the apostles sent Peter; and in the 11th call him to reckoning, and to give accounts of that he hath done.

And when the pope's law commandeth, saying, though that the pope live never so wickedly and draw with him through his evil ensample innumerable thousands into hell, yet see that no man presume to rebuke him, for he is head over all, and no man over him set before thee where Paul rebuketh Peter openly: and see how both to the Corinthians, and also to the Galatians, he will have no superior but God's word, and he that could teach better by God's word. And because, when he rehearsed his preaching, and his doings unto the high apostles, they could improve nothing, therefore will he be equal with the best.

And when the friars say, they do more than their duty when they preach, and more than they are bound to: ('To say our service are we bound, say they, and that is our duty; and to preach is more than we are bound to:') set thou before thee how that Christ's blood-shedding hath bound us to love one another with all our might, and to do the uttermost of our power one to another. And Paul saith, 1 Corinthians 9: "Woe be unto me, if I preach not:" yea, woe is unto him that hath wherewith to help his neighbor, and to make him better, and do it not. If they think it more than their duty to preach Christ unto you, then they think it more than their duty to pray that ye should come to the knowledge of Christ. And therefore it is no marvel though they take so great labor, yea, and so great wages also, to keep you still in darkness.

And when they cry furiously, 'Hold the heretics unto the wall, and if they will not revoke, burn them without any more ado; reason not with them, it is an article condemned by the fathers;' set thou before thee the saying of Peter, 1 Peter 3. "To all that ask you be ready to give an answer of the hope that is in you, and that with meekness."

The fathers of the Jews and the bishops, which had as great authority over them as ours have over us, condemned Christ and his doctrine. If it be enough to say the fathers have condemned it, then are the Jews to be holden excused; yea, they are yet in the right way, and we in the false. But and if the Jews be bound to look in the scripture, and to see whether their fathers have done right or wrong; then are we likewise bound to look in the scripture, whether our fathers have done right or wrong, and ought to believe nothing without a reason of the scripture and authority of God's word.

And of this manner defend thyself against all manner wickedness of our sprites, armed always with God's word, and with a strong and a stedfast faith thereunto. Without God's word do nothing. And to his word add nothing; neither pull any thing therefrom, as Moses everywhere teacheth thee. Serve God in the spirit, and thy neighbor with all outward service. Serve God as he hath appointed thee; and not with thy good intent and good zeal. Remember Saul was cast away of God for ever for his good intent. God requireth obedience unto his word; and abhorreth all good intents and good zeals which are without God's word: for they are nothing else than plain idolatry, and worshipping of false gods. And remember that Christ is the end of all things. He only is our restingplace, and he is our peace. For as there is no salvation in any other name, so is there no peace in any other name. Thou shalt never have rest in thy soul, neither shall the worm of conscience ever cease to gnaw thine heart, till thou come at Christ; till thou hear the glad tidings, how that God for his sake hath forgiven thee all freely. If thou trust in thy works, there is no rest. Thou shalt think, I have not done enough. Have I done it with so great love as I

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

should do? Was I so glad in doing, as I would be to receive help at my need? I have left this or that undone; and such like. If thou trust in confession, then shalt thou think, Have I told all? Have I told all the circumstances? Did I repent enough? Had I as great sorrow in my repentance for my sins, as I had pleasure in doing them? Likewise in our holy pardons and pilgrimages gettest thou no rest. For thou seest that the very gods themselves, which sell their pardon so good cheap, or some whiles give them freely for glory sake, trust not therein themselves. They build colleges, and make perpetuities, to be prayed for for ever; and lade the lips of their beadmen, or chaplains, with so many masses, and diriges, and so long service, that I have known of some that have bid the devil take their founders' souls, for very impatency and weariness of so painful labor.

As pertaining to good deeds therefore, do the best thou canst, and desire God to give strength to do better daily; but in Christ put thy trust, and in the pardon and promises that God hath made thee for his sake; and on that rock build thine house, and there dwell. For there only shalt thou be sure from all storms and tempests, and from all wily assaults of our wicked spirits, which study with all falsehead to undermine us. And the God of all mercy give thee grace so to do, unto whom be glory for ever! Amen.

### **A COMPENDIOUS REHEARSAL OF THAT WHICH GOETH BEFORE.**

I have described unto you the obedience of children, servants, wives, and subjects. These four orders are of God's making, and the rules thereof are God's word. He that keepeth them shall be blessed, yea, is blessed already; and he that breaketh them shall be cursed. If any person of impatency, or of a stubborn and rebellious mind, withdraw himself from any of these, and get him to any other order, let him not think thereby to avoid the vengeance of God in obeying rules and traditions of man's imagination. If thou pollest thine head in the worship of thy father, and breakest his commandments, shouldest thou so escape? Or if thou paintest thy master's image on a wall, and stickest up a candle before it, shouldest thou therewith make satisfaction for the breaking of his commandments? Or if thou wearest a blue coat in the worship of the king, and breakest his laws, shouldest thou so go quit? Let a man's wife make herself a sister of the Charterhouse, and answer her husband, when he biddeth her hold her peace, 'My brethren keep silence for me;' and see whether she shall so escape. And be thou sure God is more jealous over his commandments than man is over his, or than any man is over his wife.

Because we be blind, God hath appointed in the scripture how we should serve him and please him. As pertaining unto his own person, he is abundantly pleased when we believe his promises and holy testament, which he hath made unto us in Christ; and, for the mercy which he there shewed us, love his commandments. All bodily service must be done to man in God's stead. We must give obedience, honor, toll, tribute, custom, and rent unto whom they belong. Then if thou have ought more to bestow, give unto the poor, which are left here in Christ's stead, that we shew mercy on them. If we keep the commandments of love, then are we sure that we fulfill the law in the sight of God, and that our blessing shall be everlasting life. Now when we obey patiently, and without grudging, evil princes that oppress us and persecute us, and be kind and merciful to them that are merciless to us and do the worst they can to us, and so take all fortune patiently, and kiss whatsoever cross God layeth on our backs; then are we sure that we keep the commandments of love.

I declared that God hath taken all vengeance into his own hands, and will avenge all unright himself; either by the powers or officers which are appointed thereto, or else, if they be negligent, he will send his curses upon the transgressors, and destroy them with his secret judgments. I shewed also, that whosoever avengeth himself is damned in the deed-doing, and falleth into the hands of the temporal sword, because he taketh the office of God upon him, and robbeth God of his most high honor, in that he will not patiently abide his judgment. I shewed you of the authority of princes, how they are in God's stead, and how they may not be resisted: do they never so evil, they must be reserved unto the wrath of God. Neverthelater, if they command to do evil, we must then disobey, and say, 'We are otherwise commanded of God;' but not to rise against them. 'They will kill us then,' sayest thou. Therefore, I say, is a Christian called to suffer even the bitter death for his hope's sake, and because he will do no evil. I shewed also that the kings and rulers (be they never so evil) are yet a great gift of the goodness of God, and defend us from a thousand things that we see not.

I proved also that all men without exception are under the temporal sword, whatsoever names they give themselves. Because the priest is chosen out of the laymen to teach this obedience, is that a lawful cause for him to disobey? Because he preacheth that the layman should not steal, is it therefore lawful

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

for him to steal unpunished? Because thou teachest me that I may not kill, or if I do, the king must kill me again, is it therefore lawful for thee to kill, and go free? Either whether is it rather meet that thou, which art my guide to teach me the right way, shouldest walk therein before me? The priests of the old law with their high bishop Aaron, and all his successors, though they were anointed by God's commandment, and appointed to serve God in his temple, and exempt from all offices and ministering of worldly matters, were yet nevertheless under the temporal sword, if they brake the laws. Christ saith to Peter, "All that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Here is none exception. Paul saith, "All souls must obey." Here is none exception. Paul himself is here not exempt. God saith, "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed again." Here is none exception.

Moreover, Christ became poor to make other men rich, and bound to make other free. He left also with his disciples the law of love. Now love seeketh not her own profit, but her neighbor's: love seeketh not her own freedom, but becometh surety and bond to make her neighbor free. Damned, therefore, are the spirituality by all the laws of God; which through falsehead and disguised hypocrisy have sought so great profit, so great riches, so great authority, and so great liberties, and have so beggared the lay, and so brought them in subjection and bondage, and so despised them, that they have set up franchises in all towns and villages for whosoever robbeth, murdereth or slayeth them, and even for traitors unto the king's person also.

I proved also that no king hath power to grant them such liberty; but are as well damned for their giving, as they for their false purchasing. For as God giveth the father power over his children, even so giveth he him a commandment to execute it, and not to suffer them to do wickedly unpunished, but unto his damnation, as thou mayest see by Eli, the high priest, etc. And as the master hath authority over his servants, even so hath he a commandment to govern them. And as the husband is head over his wife, even so hath he commandment to rule her appetites; and is damned, if he suffer her to be an whore and a mis-liver, or submit himself to her, and make her his head. And even in like manner as God maketh the king head over his realm, even so giveth he him commandment to execute the laws upon all men indifferently. For the law is God's, and not the king's. The king is but a servant, to execute the law of God, and not to rule after his own imagination.

I shewed also that the law and the king are to be feared, as things that were given in fire, and in thunder, and lightning, and terrible signs. I shewed the cause why rulers are evil, and by what means we might obtain better. I shewed also how wholesome those bitter medicines, evil princes, are to right christian men.

I declared how they, which God hath made governors in the world, ought to rule, if they be Christians. They ought to remember that they are heads and arms, to defend the body, to minister peace, health, and wealth, and even to save the body; and that they have received their offices of God, to minister and to do service unto their brethren. King, subject, master, servant, are names in the world, but not in Christ. In Christ we are all one, and even brethren. No man is his own; but we are all Christ's servants, bought with Christ's blood. Therefore ought no man to seek himself, or his own profit, but Christ and his will. In Christ no man ruleth as a king his subjects, or a master his servants; but serveth, as one hand doth to another, and as the hands do unto the feet, and the feet to the hands, as thou seest Corinthians 12. We also serve, not as servants unto masters; but as they which are bought with Christ's blood serve Christ himself. We be here all servants unto Christ. For whatsoever we do one to another in Christ's name, that do we unto Christ, and the reward of that shall we receive of Christ. The king counteth his commons Christ himself; and therefore doth them service willingly, seeking no more of them than is sufficient to maintain peace and unity, and to defend the realm. And they obey again willingly and lovingly, as unto Christ. And of Christ every man seeketh his reward.

I warned the judges that they take not an ensample, how to minister their offices, of our spirituality, which are bought and sold to do the will of Satan; but of the scripture, whence they have their authority. Let that which is secret abide secret till God open it, which is the judge of secrets.

For it is more than a cruel thing to break up into a man's heart, and to compel him to put either soul or body in jeopardy, or to shame himself. If Peter, that great pillar, for fear of death forsook his master, ought we not to spare weak consciences?

I declared how the king ought to rid his realm from the wily tyranny of the hypocrites, and to bring the hypocrites under his laws: yea, and how he ought to be learned, and to hear, and to look upon the causes himself, which he will punish; and not to believe the hypocrites, and to give them his sword to kill whom they will.

The king ought to count what he hath spent in the pope's quarrel, since he was king. The first

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

voyage cost upon fourteen hundred thousand pounds.

Reckon since what hath been spent by sea and land between us and Frenchmen and Scots, and then in triumphs, and in embassies, and what hath been sent out of the realm secretly, and all to maintain our holy father; and I doubt not but that will surmount the sum of forty or fifty hundred thousand pounds: for we had no cause to spend one penny, but for our holy father. The king therefore ought to make them pay this money every farthing, and fet it out of their mitres, crosses, shrines, and all manner treasure of the church, and pay it to his commons again: not that only which the cardinal and his bishops compelled the commons to lend, and made them swear, with such an ensample of tyranny as was never before thought on; but also all that he hath gathered of them: or else by the consent of the commons to keep it in store for the defense of the realm.

Yea, the king ought to look in the chronicles, what the popes have done to kings in time past, and make them restore it also; and ought to take away from them their lands which they have gotten with their false prayers, and restore it unto the right heirs again; or with consent and advisement turn them unto the maintaining of the poor, and bringing up of youth virtuously, and to maintain necessary officers and ministers for to defend the commonwealth.

If he will not do it, then ought the commons to take patience, and to take it for God's scourge; and to think that God hath blinded the king for their sins' sake, and commit their cause to God: and then shall God make a scourge for them, and drive them out of his temple, after his wonderful judgment.

On the other side, I have also uttered the wickedness of the spirituality, the falsehead of the bishops, and juggling of the pope, and how they have disguised themselves, borrowing some of their pomp of the Jews, and some of the gentiles, and have with subtle wiles turned the obedience, that should be given to God's ordinance, unto themselves; and how they have put out God's testament and God's truth, and set up their own traditions and lies, in which they have taught the people to believe, and thereby sit in their consciences as God; and have by that means robbed the world of lands and goods, of peace and unity, and of all temporal authority, and have brought the people into the ignorance of God, and have heaped the wrath of God upon all realms, and namely upon the kings: whom they have robbed (I speak not of worldly things only, but) even of their very natural wits. They make them believe that they are most christian, when they live most abominably, and will suffer no man in their realms that believeth on Christ; and that they are "defenders of the faith," when they burn the gospel and promises of God, out of which all faith springeth.

I shewed how they have ministered Christ, king and emperor out of their rooms; and how they have made them a several kingdom, which they got at the first in deceiving of princes, and now pervert the whole scripture, to prove that they have such authority of God. And lest the lay-men should see how falsely they allege the places of the scripture, is the greatest cause of this persecution.

They have feigned confession for the same purpose, to stablish their kingdom withal. All secrets know they thereby.

The bishop knoweth the confession of whom he lusteth [desires] throughout all his diocese: yea, and his chancellor commandeth the ghostly father to deliver it written. The pope, his cardinals and bishops, know the confession of the emperor, kings, and of all lords: and by confession they know all their captives. If any believe in Christ, by confession they know him. Shrive thyself where thou wilt, whether at Sion, Charterhouse, or at the Observants, thy confession is known well enough. And thou, if thou believe in Christ, art waited upon. Wonderful are the things that thereby are wrought. The wife is feared, and compelled to utter not her own only, but also the secrets of her husband; and the servant the secrets of his master. Besides that through confession they quench the faith of all the promises of God, and take away the effect and virtue of all the sacraments of Christ.

They have also corrupted the saints' lives with lies and reigned miracles, and have put many things out of the sentence or great curse, as raising of rent and fines, and hiring men out of their houses, and whatsoever wickedness they themselves do; and have put a great part of the stories and chronicles out of the way, lest their falsehead should be seen. :For there is no mischief or disorder, whether it be in the temporal regiment, or else in the spiritual, whereof they are not the chief causes, and even the very fountain and springs, and, as we say, the well-head: so that it is impossible to preach against any mischief, except thou begin at them; or to set any reformation in the world, except thou reform them first. Now are they indurate and tough as Pharaoh, and will not bow unto any right way or order. And therefore persecute they God's word and the preachers thereof; and on the other side lie await unto all princes, and stir up all mischief in the world, and send them to war, and occupy their minds therewith, or with other voluptuousness, lest they should have leisure to hear the word of God, and to set an order in

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

their realms.

By them is all thing ministered, and by them are all kings ruled. Yea, in every king's conscience sit they, ere he be king, and persuade every king what they lust [desire]; and make them both to believe what they will, and to do what they will. Neither can any king or any realm have rest for their businesses. Behold king Henry the Vth, whom they sent out for such a purpose as they sent out our king that now is. See how the realm is inhabited. Ask where the goodly towns and their walls, and the people that was wont [known] to be in them, are become; and where the blood royal of the realm is become also? Turn thine eyes whither thou wilt, and thou shalt see nothing prosperous but their subtle polling. With that it is flowing water: yea, and I trust it will be shortly a full sea.

In all their doings, though they pretend outwardly the honor of God or a commonwealth, their intent and secret counsel is only to bring all under their power, and to take out of the way whosoever letteth them, or is too mighty for them. As when they send the princes to Jerusalem, to conquer the holy land, and to fight against the Turks, whatsoever they pretend outwardly, their secret intent is, while the princes there conquer them more bishopricks, to conquer their lands in the mean season with their false hypocrisy, and to bring all under them; which thou mayest easily perceive by that they will not let us know the faith of Christ. And when they are once on high, then are they tyrants above all tyrants, whether they be Turks or Saracens. How minister they proving of testaments? how causes of wedlock? or if any man die intestate? If a poor man die, and leave his wife and half a dozen young children, and but one cow to find them, that will they have for a mortuary mercilessly; let come of wife and children what will. Yea, let any thing be done against their pleasure, and they will interdict the whole realm, sparing no person.

Read the chronicles of England, (out of which yet they have put a great part of their wickedness,) and thou shalt find them always both rebellious and disobedient to the kings, and also churlish and unthankful; so that when all the realm gave the king somewhat to maintain him in his right, they would not give a mite. Consider the story of king John, where I doubt not but they have put the best and fairest for themselves, and the worst of king John: for I suppose they make the chronicles themselves. Compare the doings of their holy church (as they ever call it) unto the learning of Christ and of his apostles. Did not the legate of Rome assoil all the lords of the realm of their due obedience, which they ought to the king by the ordinance of God? Would he not have cursed the king with his solemn pomp, because he would have done that office which God commandeth every king to do, and wherefore God hath put the sword in every king's hand? that is to wit, because king John would have punished a wicked clerk that had coined false money. The laymen that had not done half so great faults must die, but the clerk must go escape free! Sent not the pope also unto the king of France remission of his sins, to go and conquer king John's realm? So now remission of sins cometh not by faith in the testament that God hath made in Christ's blood, but by fighting and murdering for the pope's pleasure. Last of all, was not king John fain to deliver his crown unto the legate, and to yield up his realm unto the pope, wherefore we pay Peter-pence? They might be called the polling-pence of false prophets well enough. They care not by what mischief they come by their purpose. War and conquering of lands is their harvest. The wickeder the people are, the more they have the hypocrites in reverence, the more they fear them, and the more they believe in them. And they that conquer other men's lands, when they die, make them their heirs, to be prayed for for ever. Let there come one conquest more in the realm, and thou shalt see them get yet as much more as they have, (if they can keep down God's word, that their juggling come not to light ;) yea, thou shalt see them take the realm whole into their hands, and crown one of themselves king thereof. And verily, I see no other likelihood, but that the land shall be shortly conquered. The stars of the scripture promise us none other fortune, inasmuch as we deny Christ with the wicked Jews, and will not have him reign over us; but will be still children of darkness under antichrist, and antichrist's possession; burning the gospel of Christ, and defending a faith that may not stand with his holy testament.

If any man shed blood in the church, it shall be interdicted, till he have paid for the hallowing. If he be not able, the parish must pay, or else shall it stand always interdicted. They will be avenged on them that never offended. Full well prophesied of them Paul, in the 2nd epistle to Timothy; chapter 3. Some man will say, 'Wouldest thou that men should fight in the church unpunished?' Nay, but let the king ordain a punishment for them, as he doth for them that fight in his palace; and let not all the parish be troubled for one's fault. And as for their hallowing, it is the juggling of antichrist. A christian man is the temple of God and of the Holy Ghost, and hallowed in Christ's blood. A christian man is holy in himself, by reason of the Spirit that dwelleth in him; and the place, wherein he is, is holy by reason of him, whether he be in the field or town. A christian husband sanctifieth an unchristian wife, and a christian

## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

wife an unchristian husband, (as concerning the use of matrimony,) saith Paul to the Corinthians. If now, while we seek to be hallowed in Christ, we are found unholy, and must be hallowed by the ground, or place, or walls, then died Christ in vain. Howbeit, antichrist must have wherewith to sit in men's consciences, and to make them fear where is no fear, and to rob them of their faith, and to make them trust in that cannot help them, and to seek holiness of that which is not holy in itself.

After that the old king of France was brought down out of Italy, mark what pageants have been played, and what are yet a playing, to separate us from the emperor, lest by the help or aid of us he should be able to recover his right of the pope, and to couple us to the Frenchmen, whose might the pope ever abuseth to keep the emperor from Italy. What prevaileth it for any king to marry his daughter or his son, or to make any peace or good ordinance for the wealth of his realm? For it shall no longer last than it is .profitable to them. Their treason is so secret that the world cannot perceive it. They dissimule those things which they are only cause of, and simule discord among themselves when they are most agreed. One shall hold this, and another shall dispute the contrary: but the conclusion shall be that most maintaineth their falsehead, though God's word be never so contrary. What have they wrought in our days, yea, and what work they yet, to the perpetual dishonor of the king, and rebuke of the realm, and shame of all the nation, in whatsoever realms they go!

I uttered unto you partly the malicious blindness of the bishop of Rochester, his juggling, his conveying, his foxy .wiliness, his bo-peep, his wresting, renting, and shameful abusing of the scripture; his oratory and alleging of heretics, and how he would make the apostles authors of blind ceremonies without signification, contrary to their own doctrine; and have set him for an ensample to judge all other by. Whatsoever thou art that readest this, I exhort thee in Christ to compare his sermon and that which I have written, and the scripture together, and judge. There shalt thou find of our holy father's authority, and what it is to be great, and how to know the greatest.

Then followeth the cause why laymen cannot rule temporal offices, which is the falsehead of the bishops. There shalt thou find of miracles and ceremonies without signification; of false anointing, and lying signs, and false names; and how the spirituality are disguised in falsehead; and how they roll the people in darkness, and do all thing in the Latin tongue; and of their petty pillage. Their polling is like a soaking consumption, wherein a man complaineth of febleness and of faintness, and wotteth [knows] not whence his disease cometh: it is like a pock that fretteth inward, and consumeth the very marrow of the bones.

There seest thou the cause why it is impossible for kings to come to the knowledge of the truth. For the sprites lay await for them, and serve their appetites at all points; and through confession buy and sell and betray both them and all their true friends, and lay baits for them, and never leave them, till they have blinded them with their sophistry, and have brought them into their nets. And then, when the king is captive, they compel all the rest with violence of his sword. For if any man will not obey them, be it right or wrong, they cite him, suspend him, and curse or excommunicate him. If he then obey not, they deliver him to Pilate, that is to say, unto the temporal officers, to destroy them. Last of all, there findest thou the very cause of all persecution, which is the preaching against hypocrisy.

Then come we to the sacraments, where thou seest that the work of the sacrament sayeth not; but the faith in the promise, which the sacrament signifieth, justifieth us only. There hast thou that a priest is but a servant, to teach only; and whatsoever he taketh upon him more than to preach and to minister the sacraments of Christ (which is also preaching) is falsehead.

Then cometh how they juggle through dumb ceremonies, and how they make merchandise with reigned words; penance, a poena eta culpa , satisfaction, attrition, character, purgatory-pick-purse; and how through confession they make the sacraments and all the promise of none effect or value. There seest thou that absolving is but preaching the promises; and cursing or excommunicating, preaching the law; and of their power, and of their keys, of false miracles, and praying to saints. There seest thou that ceremonies did not the miracles, but faith: even as it was not Moses' rod that did the miracles, but Moses' faith in the promises of God. Thou seest also that to have a faith, where God hath not a promise, is idolatry.

And there also seest thou how the pope exalteth himself above God, and commandeth him to obey his tyranny. Last of all, thou hast there that no man ought to preach but he that is called.

Then followeth the belly-brotherhead of monks and friars. For Christ hath deserved nought with them: for his sake gettest thou no favor. Thou must offer unto their bellies, and then they pray bitterly for thee. There seest thou that Christ is the only cause, yea, and all the cause, why God doth aught for us, and heareth our complaint. And there hast thou doctrine how to know, and to be sure, that thou art elect



## *The Obedience of a Christian Man*

and hast God's Spirit in thee.

And hast there learning to try the doctrine of our spirits.

Then follow the four senses of the scripture, of which three are no senses; and the fourth, that is to wit the literal sense, which is the very sense, hath the pope taken to himself. It may have no other meaning than as it pleaseth his fatherhood. We must abide his interpretation. And as his bellies think, so must we think; though it be impossible to gather any such meaning of the scripture. Then hast thou the very use of allegories, and how they are nothing but ensamples borrowed of the scripture, to express a text or an open conclusion of the scripture, and as it were to paint it before thine eyes, that thou mayest feel the meaning and the power of the scripture in thine heart. Then cometh the use of worldly similitudes, and how they are false prophets, which bring a worldly similitude for any other purpose, save to express more plainly that which is contained in an open text. And so are they also which draw the scripture contrary to the open places, and contrary to the ensample, living, and practicing of Christ, the apostles, and of the holy prophets. And then, finally, hast thou of our holy father's power, and of his keys, and of his binding and excommunicating, and of his cursing and blessing, with ensamples of every thing.

**THE END OF THE OBEDIENCE OF A CHRISTIAN MAN.**

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