

DR. JOHN AURIFABER'S PREFACE

To the Honorable and Right Worshipful the Head Governors, the Mayors and Aldermen of the Imperial Cities, Strasburg, Augsburg, Ulm, Nuremberg, Lubeck, Hamburg, Brunswick, Frankfurt-on-the-Maine, etc.

GRACE AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, THROUGH CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

The holy and royal prophet David, in the 78th Psalm, says: God made a covenant with Jacob, and gave Israel a law, which he commanded our fathers to teach their children, that their posterity might know it, and the children which were yet unborn; to the intent, that when they came up, they might show their children the same. That they might put their trust in God, and not forget the works of God, but to keep his commandments. In these words the great benefits of God are set forth and praised, in that he reveals to mankind his Holy Word, his covenants and laws, makes himself known, instructs us of sin and righteousness, of death and life, of condemnation and salvation, of hell and heaven, and in such wise gathers a Christian church to live with him everlastingly; and the prophet wills also, that we should learn God's Word with diligence, and should teach others therein, and should make it known to all people, and in nowise forget the wonderful works of God, but render thanks to him for them. When God had suffered the children of Israel a long time to be plagued with severe servitude in Egypt, and thereby to fall into idolatry and false serving of God; to suffer great persecutions, and many other miseries, then he sent unto them Moses and Aaron, who kindled the light of God's Word again, and drew them from the abominable idolatry of the heathens, and opened unto them the knowledge of the true God. Then he led them also with a powerful hand out of the bondage of Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea, and before their eyes overthrew and drowned the tyrant Pharaoh, with all the Egyptians. He showed unto them great goodness also in the Wilderness; namely, he gave his commandments unto them on Mount Sinai; he fed them with manna, or bread from heaven, and with quails, and gave them water to drink out of the rock; and moreover, he gave manifold victories unto them, as against the Amalekites, and other enemies. Then he gave unto them strict charge that they should always remember those unspeakable benefits, that they should speak thereof unto their children, and should be thankful for the same.

For this cause they were yearly to observe and keep the feasts of Easter, of whitsuntide, and of the Tabernacles, to the end they might always be mindful of God's goodnesses towards them; as is written in Exodus xiii.: Thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the

Lord's law may be in thy mouth; for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. But the children of Israel, after their wonderful deliverance, gave no great thanks to God for so many and great benefits; for, not long after they erected the golden calf, and danced about it. As also at the waters of strife they murmured against God, angered him, and drew his punishments upon them. We should also place before our eyes this admonition of the 78th Psalm, and should thoroughly consider the example of the children of Israel, who so soon forgot their deliverance out of Egypt. For we may also well rejoice, that now, in our days, we have restored to us again God's Word gloriously bright and clear; so that we should show this inestimable treasure to our children's children, and how we are delivered and freed from the kingdom of antichrist, the pope of Rome, and from the traditions of men, which was a right Egyptian captivity, yea, a Babylonian imprisonment; in which our forefathers were worse tormented and plagued than the children of Israel were in Egypt. For God hath given also unto us in Germany a Moses, to be our captain and leader, namely, the much enlightened and famous man, Martin Luther, who, through God's special providence, has brought us out of Egyptian slavery, and has unveiled and cleared all the chief articles of the Christian religion; God so powerfully protecting and defending his doctrine, that it has remained and stood fast against the gates of hell.

For although many learned men, universities, popes, cardinals, bishops, friars, and priests, and after them emperors, kings, and princes, raised their strong battery against this one man, Luther, and his doctrine, intending quite to suppress it, yet, notwithstanding, all their labor was in vain. And this doctrine, which is the true and ancient doctrine of Christ, and of his apostles, remains and stands fast to this present day. We should look back, and consider, how, and in what a lamentable manner it stood with us fifty years past, concerning the religion and government of the church, and in what miserable bondage we have been in Popedom; for this is unknown to our children; yea, we that are old have almost forgotten it. And, first, in the temple of God sat the man of sin, and the child of perdition, namely, the Romish antichrist, of whom St Paul prophesied, 2 Thess. ii; Who exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: he altered and perverted God's Word, laws, and statutes; and, in their place, instituted all manner of divine services, ceremonies, and ordinances, after his own will and pleasure, and in manifold ways and meanings, yea, oftentimes the one contrary to the other; so that in Popedome no man could know what was certain or uncertain, what was true or false, what was commanded or forbidden. He sold all things for money; he forced all people under his yoke, so that emperors were constrained to kiss his feet, and from him to receive their crowns, no king or prince dared to oppose him, nor once to frown at his commands or prohibitions.

Hence he boasted, in his decrees and bulls, that he was God's general vicar on earth; that he was head of the church, supreme bishop, and lord of all bishops and learned men in the universal world; that he was natural heir and an inheritor of the empire, and of all kingdoms when they fell void. His crown at Rome was named regnum mundi, every man must bow to him as to the most holy father and god on earth. And his hypocritical canonists maintained

that he was not only a man, but that he was both god and man together; who could not sin, and who had all divine and human wisdom in the cabinet of his heart; from whose stool or chair even the Holy Scriptures must have and receive their power, virtue and authority.

He was the master of faith; and he only was able to expound the Sacred Writ, and to understand it; yea, he was so sanctified, and so far from reproach, that although he should lead the third part of all the souls of mankind into the pit of hell, yet no man must dare to question or reprove him, or to demand why he did it. For every one ought to believe, that his sacred solitude, and sanctified power, neither would, should, nor could err. He had authority to make void and to annihilate both the New and Old Testaments. The church was built upon him, he could neither err nor fail, whence it followed of necessity that he was higher and more eminent than all the apostles. He had also power and authority to erect new articles of faith, which must be equal in value to the Holy Scripture, and which ought to be believed if people intended to be saved. He was likewise far above all councils and fathers, and to be judged by no terrestrial jurisdiction, but all must be subject only and alone to his judgment and decrees.

He made his Romish church the mother of all other churches, whence it came that all the world appealed thither. He was only and alone the governor of the church, as being far more able and fitter to govern than the apostles themselves if they had been living. He had power to command all people on earth, the angels in heaven, and the devils in hell. To conclude, the chair of Rome was so holy of itself, that although a wicked villain had been elected to be pope, yet so soon as he was set upon that chair, then instantly he was altogether holy.

These boastings the pope gave out himself; and his dissembling trencher-chaplains, the recorders of his degrees, credentials, Clementine's and extravagances, propagated the same of him in writing; so that his gorged paunch was puffed up, and he became so full of pride (as by his acts he showed) that, as a contra-Christ, he brought all into confusion. For it is apparent in what manner he raged in and about the doctrine of the law, or ten commandments, and how these were demolished and taken away by him. He utterly threw down the first three precepts; for he made a god of man's free-will, in that he taught, with his school-divines, that the natural strength of man, after the fall, remained sound and unspoiled; and that a man by his own human strength (if he did but that which only lay in his own power to do) was able to observe and fulfill all the commandments, and thereby should stand justified before God. He taught also, that it was not grounded in the Scriptures, that the assistance of the Holy Ghost, with his grace, was needful to accomplish good works; but that every man, by his own natural strength and ability, has a free-will, in divine duties, to do well, good, and right. The other seven commandments the pope quite beats down, and exalted himself above parents and magistrates, and above the obedience due unto them, and instigated and stirred up children against their parents, and subjects against their rulers (as plainly appears by the imperial histories); great and fearful sins and transgressions against the fifth commandment.

He also usurped and drew to himself the temporal sword, and taught, that it is right and lawful to resist and drive away power with power: and that it is not an absolute command (but only an advice) to love our enemies, to suffer wrong, etc. Such doctrine is quite opposite to the sixth commandment. Contrary to the seventh precept, he forbade his friars, priests, and nuns, to marry; and made way for them to live in licentiousness, without reproof; yea, and moreover received a yearly income and rent of such wretches. Contrary to the eighth commandment, he usurped to himself kingdoms, principalities, countries, people, cities, towns, and villages, and took possession of the most delightful places and dwellings in the world, sucked poor people, and filled his thievish purse in such manner, that his spiritual shavelings are richer than temporal princes. He tore also in pieces, and made void all manner of solemn vows, promises, and covenants of peace, which were made without his popish consent and authority, directly against the ninth commandment. Lastly, and against the tenth commandment, he taught that the wicked lusts of mankind were no sins, but proceeded only out of human weakness.

In such a manner, and out of a diabolical instinct, did the pope throw down all God's commandments, and instead thereof erected human laws and precepts. The like course he took also touching the preaching of the gospel. He preached nothing at all of Christ, of his person, works, precious merits, and benefits; nor in any way comforted distressed sorrowful consciences. And people were altogether ignorant how or where they might obtain true remission of their sins, eternal life, and salvation. The papists declared also to the people, in their sermons, that the only Mediator between God and man, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was a severe and an angry judge, who would not be reconciled with us, except we had other advocates and intercessors besides himself. By this doctrine, people were seduced, and carried away to heathenish idolatry, and took their refuge in dead saints to help and deliver them, and made them their gods, in whom they put more trust and confidence than in our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus; and especially, they placed the Virgin Mary, instead of her Son Christ, for a mediatrix on the throne of grace. Hence proceeded the pilgrimages to saints, where they sought for pardon and remission of sins. They also sought for pardons of the pope, of the fraternities of friars, and of other orders. And people were taught, that they must purchase heaven by their own good works, austerities, fastings, and so on. And whereas prayer is the highest comfort of a Christian, yea, his asylum, his shield and buckler against all adversities; therefore the pope out of prayer made a naked work, a tedious babbling without spirit and truth. People praying in Latin psalters, and books which they understood not; they observed in praying, *Horae Canonicae*, or the seven times, with garlands of roses, with so many Bridget prayers, and other collects to the dead saints; and thereby wrought terror of consciences, so that people received no hope or true comfort at all. Yet, notwithstanding, they were made to believe that such prating should merit pardons and remissions of sins for the space of many thousand years.

Baptism, in Popedom, likewise had almost lost its lustre, for it was not only stained with human toys and additions, as with holy water, lights, oil, etc., but also it was celebrated in

the Latin tongue, so that the laity, standing by, could not understand it; and in its place they constituted monkery as a second baptism, of equal value and operation, through which they were to be as pure and clean as those that received Christ's baptism, taking therein new names, (as the pope at his election,) condemning their first names, that they received in Christ's baptism. The Lord's Supper, in Popedom, also was dishonored, corrupted, turned into idolatry, and wickedly abused; for they used the same not in remembrance of Christ, but as the offering of some wicked priest, and a self-merit of some despairing wretch that daily devoured it without faith, and afterwards sold it to others for money, to be imparted to the souls in purgatory, thereby to redeem them; so that out of the Lord's Supper they made a mere market. Moreover, the pope treacherously stole away from the laity the one part of the sacrament, namely, the wine; while the other part, which was left, was closely shut up and preserved, and yearly, in die Corporis Christi, with great solemnity, was carried about and worshipped, and therewith they wrought fearful idolatry.

With confession, the pope likewise brought into confusion the consciences of the whole world, and the souls of many into despair; giving people absolution, by reason of their own good works and merits; and thereby, instead of solace and comfort, he brought fear, disquiet, and discouragement, into the consciences of distressed and sorrowful people; and, instead of true keys, made false, thievish picklocks, which he used in all his wicked proceedings.

Now, when he had darkened and falsified God's Word, and the doctrine of the law and gospel; had frustrated the sweet and comfortable prayers and true devotion towards God; had dishonored baptism, the Lord's Supper; then, at last, he proceeded to tread under foot the divine state and orders in the world; and of the pulpit and church government, made a temporal rule, wherein he sat as head and monarch, and under him, in order, the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, prelates, abbots, friars, nuns, priests, and innumerable other orders; the poor laity being altogether made a scorned tool of.

By this short relation a man may easily collect in what state and condition the Christian church stood in Popedom. Such fearful darkness did God suffer to go over the wicked unthankful world as a just judgment. But God, who is abundant in grace and mercy, caused the light of the gospel again to rise in our time, and dispersed the gloomy clouds of human traditions, in awakening that most famous man of God, Luther, who, with his preaching and doctrine, joined battle with Popedom, and, through God's Word, threw it to the ground, and thereby delivered us from the captivity of Popedom, led us again into the land of promise, and placed us in a paradise where God's Word is cleared, and, God be praised, the church cleansed from the cobwebs of men's traditions, purified and gloriously reformed, for which we never render sufficient thanks to Almighty God. For God, through Luther, brought forth the Bible, or the Holy Scripture, which formerly lay, as it were, under the table; translated by Luther *ex ipsis fontibus*, out of the Hebrew into the German tongue, it may easily be read and understood by young and old, rich and poor, clergy and laity, so that now, a father or master may daily read the Holy Scriptures to his wife, to his children, and servants, and may instruct them in the doctrines of grace, and direct them in the truth and in the true service of

God. Whereas, before, in Popedom, the Bible was known to none; nay, the doctors in divinity themselves read not therein; for Luther often affirmed in my hearing, that Dr. Andrew Carlstadt was a doctor in divinity eight years before he began to read in the Bible; that if we Germans were not blind like the moles, we should acknowledge these unspeakable graces and benefits of God; with bended knees daily render hearty thanks, therefore, to God; with the 34th Psalm, say: I will always praise the Lord, his praise shall be ever in my mouth: my soul shall ever make her boast in the Lord. And, with the 103d Psalm: Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name: Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not the good that he hath done for thee.

We should also pray heartily to God, that he would not extinguish this light of the Gospel, but suffer it long to shine, that our children's children and posterity may walk also in this saving light, rejoice therein and with us eternally be saved. The devil is a great enemy to this treasure of God's Word and his holy sacraments; he assaults it fiercely to quench this light, as plainly appeared after the death of this holy man of God, Luther. For first, strong attempt was made by the Interim, by what means the doctrine of justification by faith, of good works and a Christian kind of living, of the sacraments and well ordered ceremonies in our Christian church, might utterly be overthrown. Afterwards approached the conciliators, or the qualifiers, who sought to mediate between us and the pope, and to arrange them. They taught, that the nearer one kept himself to the pope, the better; and therefore they proposed to restore the jurisdiction of the church to the popish bishops, and to raise up the fallen ceremonies; and whoso refused to follow them, fell into great danger. The Antinomians, Swenckfelders, Enthusians, co-agents, were also very diligent to eclipse again the true doctrines which Luther had cleared up, and brought again to light.

All that professed to be Christians and upright teachers and preachers should have resisted these false and wicked errors. But many of them were dumb dogs, that would not bark, or set themselves against the ravening wolves to drive them from Christ's sheepfold, to feed the poor sheet, and to provide them sweet and wholesome pasture. Neither were they any way careful of Joseph's miseries as the prophet says. But others, who, like true and constant teachers, fought against those enemies of God, were reviled and held as rebels, boisterous and stiff-necked, that would raise needless strifes and divisions, and were accordingly persecuted and plagued. In like manner the schools and universities began to fall again, and the pure doctrine of God's Word to be by them not much regarded, school divinity being held again in great repute, and many new phrases and other eloquent arts coming into the church, gave occasion to falsities and errors.

Thereupon the politicians, the lawyers, and courtiers essayed to rule the church and pulpits, to put in and put out ministers and church wardens, to try causes of religion, according to their own fancies, as in temporal affairs; so that we see the falsifying of the doctrine, the devastation of the well-disciplined orders of the church in Germany, and the captivity and tyranny of the pope again nigh the door - a result that Luther, in his lifetime, often foretold. Let us, therefore, make good use of Luther's light, and seriously exercise ourselves in the

doctrine of God's Word, as Christ commanded: Walk in the light while ye have the light, that ye may be children of the light. The holy Psalmist prayed: That the divine Word may be a lantern to his feet and a light to his paths, that thereby he might direct his ways, and be preserved from darkness and stumbling. And St Peter charges us: That we should take good heed to God's word, as unto a light that shineth in darkness.

God Almighty, the Father of our loving Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, grant his holy spirit, that Christian kings and princes, cities and towns, may acknowledge these unspeakable benefits of the revealing again of the gospel, and the deliverance out of the Egyptian bondage the kingdom of antichrist; and be heartily thankful to God for the same, and live thereafter in holiness, and not drive away God's Word by condemning thereof, and through sinful and wicked actions bereave ourselves and our posterity of the glorious liberty of the gospel, nor plunge ourselves into the distress and miserable captivity of popish tyranny, under which our forefathers and predecessors suffered; but that this treasure and Depositum of God's Word may remain in Germany, and that this begun work may be sent forward, and preceded to God's glory, honor, and praise, and to the preservation and salvation of the Christian church, throughout all the world. God of his infinite mercy grant this for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

\John Aurifaber, D.D. Anno 1569.

[HOME](#)

[TABLE TALK INDEX](#)