

sufficient for the craving heart of humanity. Hence there is a multiplication of ceremonies and rites, the introduction of rituals and chants, and new and cumbrous forms of church service. There is attention to everything that gratifies the eye and the ear, the gorgeous ceremonial, the priestly robes, the outward trappings and all the other glitter and tinsel of religion. We see this tendency of the present age bearing its natural fruit in the corruption of doctrine and practice, which has crept into our sister church of the Reformation, and in the semi-return to popery of such a large proportion of her members. We see it in her open performance and vindication of penances, auricular confession, prayers for the dead, establishment of nunneries, and the unduly magnifying of the clerical office and authority. That which is the great vitiating centre of Romanism, and the fruitful mother of much of her darkness and intolerance, viz., the exalting of the Church above the Gospel, making her authority more binding than that of the Bible, is now rapidly impregnating Episcopalianism, and in fact is practically avowed by many of its ministers. Some of the latter have even gone the length of refusing the simple title of ministers, ministers of men for Jesus Christ's sake, and arrogate to themselves the name and function of priests. We see this tendency even in our own beloved Church, in the additions which have lately been made, or attempted to be made, to our customary forms of Church service; those encroachments upon the simplicity of our public worship, which is the crowning glory of Presbyterianism. Now we hold that the antidote to this corrupting tendency of the present age, lies in the answer which our Lord gave to the lawyer. The latter is a type of the formal ritualistic, puseyite class of the present day. It is just his spirit, in a different phase, which is now vitiating religion. Now, the great power which we have to put forth in order to meet and overcome this, is the simple Gospel, in its purity of native truth and divinity. The more we have of this the less we will have of ceremonialism; and the experience of this and all ages proves that the more we have of ceremonialism,

the less we will have of the pure, undefiled religion of the Gospel. Just as the clouds and mists obscure the light and glory of the morning sun, so do the rites and ceremonies of men encloud and obscure the efficacy and real glory of the Gospel. The Gospel needeth not the inventions and additions of man in order to enhance its saving and sanctifying efficacy; on the contrary it is robbed of half its power and all its beauty by being robed in these wide flowing garments of human externalism.

It is said that a great painter once exerted his whole skill and power in drawing a picture of our Saviour; when finished it was a master-piece of artistic beauty; then, enclosed in a splendid frame, it was exposed to public view; two peasants passing by rivited their gaze solely on the frame, "Oh, what a beautiful frame," they exclaimed. The artist in disgust drew his brush through the picture, and painted no more. Thus when the Gospel is encircled with a framework of gorgeous ceremonialism and exuberant ritual, the attention of weak, perishing sinners, is distracted from it and fixed only on this showy externalism, which can no more nourish and save the soul, than the dry husks of corn can feed the body. The grace of God comes home to the sinner's heart with double power and efficacy when it flows direct from the Gospel fountain, unincumbered by human inventions and ornaments. The more direct the channel, the simpler the form of our approaches to divinity, the more free and copious will be the backflowings of his healing and saving grace into our souls.

Let us not therefore forget Christ's answer to the lawyer; let its spirit and practice actuate all our services of religion. Let us divest ourselves of any tincture of the insincere, unholy spirit of the lawyer, and with perfect hearts and minds let us come direct to the Gospel fountain and bathe in its healing waters; then our worship will be the genuine outpouring of a heart conscious of guilt and misery, and God in his mercy will make us the recipients of his saving and sanctifying grace here, and the joyful heirs of his glory hereafter.