

Sinfulness of being present at Popish Ceremonies

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Surely no inconsistency can be more glaring than that of which persons calling themselves Protestants are guilty, when they attend as spectators or hearers, the idolatrous services of Popery. To any one taking a plain scriptural view of the matter, such conduct will hardly appear credible. For what is it against which Protestants more decidedly protest than the idolatry of Romish worship? When we are present only as bystanders, during the celebration of Romish rites, we tacitly countenance what in Scripture is everywhere described as a fearful outrage on him whom we profess to honour. The command to "flee from idolatry" is one of the plainest in the whole book of God. In the law of the Ten Commandments, it follows immediately the declaration, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods but me." The bowing down to any image, or the likeness of anything in heaven or earth, is pronounced by the Almighty to be an act of which he is especially jealous, and for which he will avenge himself on the guilty unto the third and fourth generation. If the Church of Rome were not conscious of her own guilt in this respect, why in her formularies for the instruction of her laity should she omit the second commandment altogether? What reason can be given for this, or for her refusal of the bible to her people, but an apprehension that a comparison of her conduct and practice with the express command of God, and the injunctions of his holy Scripture, would lead her members to convictions inconsistent with the arbitrary authority which she seeks to exercise over their minds and consciences? Again, is this not Jesus, our adorable Redeemer, "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" do we not worship him as such? Do we not ascribe to him power and glory, and dominion for ever and ever? and yet, if you go to mass in a Popish chapel, you will see a man who professes to be a priest of the most High God, holding between his finger and thumb a lump of paste, a piece of senseless matter, which, after having sprung up out of the earth, was first ground by the miller, then kneaded by the baker, and lastly stamped in a mould with some fanciful figure; and this worthless trumpery he announces to the prostrate crowd to be Jesus, to be "the body, blood, soul, and divinity", as their blasphemous devices have it, of Jesus Christ; to be that identical body whole and entire, which was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pilate on the cross, and afterwards ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven! The Protestant bystander may not himself kneel to this fearful mockery of

Christ, but he looks on at this gross violation of the commandment of his God, this outrage on his Redeemer, and treats with decent and decorous respect the exhibitors of such mummery, and would by no means let the dupes of it perceive that he is shocked, as he must be, if indeed we can suppose his feelings to be such as they ought to be. Moreover, do not they who maintain that the natural and very body of Christ is substantially there present (and of course in every other place through the world where the same exhibition is made, and at the same time), manifestly contradict the Holy Ghost, who declares that body to be in heaven, there to remain till his second coming with power and great glory? Must not those who hold that the same material body shall be in two, not to say ten thousand, different places at one and the same time, be under a "strong delusion that they should believe a lie?" (2 Thess. 2: 11). In such a frightful maze of impiety do the frequenters of the mass-house involve themselves; and can any Protestant for the sake of witnessing a pompous ceremony, or listening to sweet sounds of music, deliberately present himself as an apparent partaker in these sins, who would not for all the world be seduced by such allurements to enter the resorts of gamblers and drunkards, or obscene profligates? Would he, to indulge their curiosity, take his wife and daughters to such places, and thus sanction by their presence the wretched victims who frequent them? And is an offence against the holiness and majesty of God, less flagitious than any outrage against public morality and private decency? The lust of the eye is a snare which Satan well knows how to employ, in order to deaden the souls of God's children to the errors of Papery, by accustoming their eyes to its outward embellishments. This is no light matter, the increase of mass-houses is greatly owing to the countenance given by nominal Protestants to the work, and do the frequenters of these places never reflect that the Lord may in anger allow them to be tempted to believe a lie? Oh! if the time thus presumptuously perverted were occupied in endeavours to circulate the doctrine of salvation among the poor ignorant worshippers, instead of strengthening their delusion by seeing Protestants present at their rites, what results might we not expect to rebound to the glory of God? In the meantime let sincere Protestants adopt the language of dying Israel to his sons Simeon and Levi, "O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. (Gen. 49: 6).

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