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Writer: Christopher Goodman

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Extract from Christopher Goodman's first sermon to the English exile congregation at Geneva

An Extract out of Mr Christopher Goodman's Speech to the English Congregation at Geneva, when he began to expound the Scriptures to them in the absence of their Pastour. A(nn)o 1555.²

Mr Goodman after having made an Apology for his undertaking of the office, proceeds thus:

This much being said privately concerning my self to the end that no man should be offended with this my enterprize, there remain also a few words to be spoken

¹ The date is taken from the first service held by the English exile church in Geneva, see C. Martin, *Les Protestants Anglias réfugiés à Genève au temps de Calvin, 1555-1560* (Geneva, 1915) 39; and *Livre des Anglois* p. 49 printed in Martin p. 334.

² This heading, the concluding sentence and the 18th century orthography suggest that the copyist has extracted this section of Goodman's sermon from Goodman's notes or a longer text of the sermon rather than [as was his normal practice with the correspondence] transcribing the entire document.

generally concerning you all, especially us that are come to this Godly City onely seeking the establishing of an English church wherein god may be purely honoured to all our comforts, & their's that seek after his glory. First that we in no wise forget the cause of our travell hither, & heavy departure from whence we came. Secondly that with all diligence we travell to attain the end & purpose where fore & why we are here assembled.³ The first that is the cause of your painfull & costly travell requireth many words & a long discourse to satisfy all men. But I will contain that which I purpose to speak (without offence of any man I trust) in as few words as may be, as well for that it is not unknown to the most part of this Assembly, as also for that I may not mention all things that otherwise were expedient for some that be present: except I should seem to reprove & inveigh against the absent; which I purpose in no wise to do. For if there be any not fully satisfied in the cause, he may at all times (if he please) be better instructed privately.⁴ Neither do I this say for that I mistrust the goodness of your cause, or else do fear to have it openly uttered & known, for I would wish nothing more. But rather for this do I abstain to speak thereof to the end that all men may see & understand that we seek nothing more than quietness: not coveting in words to commend all our doings, but rather committing the whole matter to god & time, when all things shall be truly tryed & all hypocrisy revealed. Nothing regarding in the mean season the unjust & slanderous reports, which it pleaseth some persons liberally to use, as well in their uncharitable letters as in private conversation.⁵ Lord grant them better minds & greater fear of god. But to the purpose. Thus much of the

³ Goodman is referring directly to those who had seceded from the Frankfurt congregation, there was a pre-existing group of English exiles within Geneva but they had not organised themselves into a separate church.

⁴ Although Goodman was not naming names in his sermon, he was prepared to explain further in private.

⁵ Although Goodman was not recounted the details of the Frankfurt disputes, he criticised those who had written reports in their letters and made charges in private conversations, see the letter from Edmund Grindal to Bishop Nicholas Ridley and the reply, Ridley *Works* 386-7; 533-5.

cause I would were printed in your memories, & that it might never be forgotten: That there is no company so assuredly knit together, no friendship or brotherly love so fervent, no congregation so willing & desirous to establish a church & pure religion, nor any occasions or opportunities of time & place so fit for the purpose, which the Divell either cannot or will not by one means or other labour to break & sunder, so little can he abide the unity of god's children, & the true honouring of the living Lord.⁶ For as the property of Christ & his true disciples is to joyn & knit together in unfeigned love & religion: so it is contrary-wise the nature of Satan & his Angels to dissolve, disperse, & scatter [p. 18] abroad Christ's poor flock & simple sheep. And therefore no marvell if he have kept his old wont with you, & have played his accustomed part, which he hath practised from the beginning of the world in dispersing & scattering the children of god.

To rehearse from the beginning the malicious practice which our old enemy Satan hath used in all ages in dispersing & dividing Christ's sheepfold it were too long a story. You know what sedition he sowed even in Adam's family, how he troubled just Noah's household, how he disquieted Abraham & his brother Lot, what stir he raised between Joseph and his brethern, & also what strange parts he practised amongst the children of Israel in provoking them to repine, to murmur & rebell against their living Lord and mercifull god; who had a little before so wonderfully and mightily delivered them of their miserable servitude, to the end that they might be his chosen & onely people, which should with one mind & heart honour and serve so loving & mercifull a Lord god.⁷ But I will not speak of these & the like examples practised by Satan so long ago. Let us come nearer home & speak of things within our memories; the effect

⁶ Goodman takes the opportunity to draw at length the general moral about the work of Satan in undermining the unity of the church.

⁷ The frontispiece of the Geneva Bible, later produced by this congregation, portrayed the children of Israel before the Red Sea.

whereof remaineth as yet before our eyes, which without lamentable hearts & weeping eyes we may not well behold.

Who would have thought that in our miserable country (to which the Lord be mercifull) over which god had placed so godly a prince & governour, so delighted in his word & so desirous to set forth & defend the same, where were so many & godly ministers as this day by their martyrdom & imprisonment is manifest to all the world (God be praised there fore) where his gospell was truly and universally preached, & where all men would seem to be professours & favourers of the same.⁸ Who would have thought, I say, that the gates of dissimulation, hypocrisy, unthankfulness & dissolute living in all sorts & all states of men & women had been so large & wide open, whereat the divell with so great an host of his evill angels should freely enter, & have liberty again with such tyranny & hurly burly to erect & establish his old kingdom of abomination, setting himself in place of god & enforcing man to honour him as god. But here will some man say, that our sins, our ingratitude, & hypocrisy was so much & horrible in the sight of god, that it was no marvel though he have given Satan such power over the whole realm.

Then will I bring you another example. Who would have thought that amongst them Satan should find an entrance, who professing one living god & his son Jesus Christ, for whose word they had lately forsaken their native country, their nearest friends & kinsfolk, some their goods their lands & possessions, other their fathers & mothers their wives & naturall children, all for Christ, & all seeking his kingdom & glory, or at least would appear so to all men. Who would have thought but amongst this sort of men there should have been [p. 19] a most sure agreement & perfect union as well in religion as brotherly love & conversation? And yet, all this notwithstanding, you see

⁸ The standard, exile view of the triumph of Protestantism under King Edward VI. The Genevan congregation was established after the executions for heresy had begun in England and this coloured their whole attitude, see J. Dawson, "Satan's bludy clawes"

by experience what part Satan that old & malicious serpent hath lately played among them to their great unquietness, & slander of god's word which they professed. You see how he hath disappointed their study & endeavour, in no case suffering the members of one body & head to knit & joyn together in uniformity & godly order, except withall be recieved & nourished up among the pure seed of god's holy word, his seditious cockle and darnell. Except superstitious ceremonies have place with true religion & worshiping of god: which at all times from the beginning hath been the chief & principall means to trouble & evert all Christian congregations. (2 Cor 6 in margin) For what agreement can there be between lightness and darkness, man's traditions with God's precepts, Christ with Belial?⁹ For this agreement & no other do we seek, whensoever we will adjoyn any other ceremonies or order in worshiping of God & his son Jesus Christ to that which is by them, their holy word & spirit commended to us & plainly set forth in his comfortable gospell,¹⁰ to which onely Christ's flock & sheep ought to be bound, who neither can nor yet will hear the voice of any other than of their Master & true shepherd Christ (Jo 10 in margin), as he himself in John doth witness. Wherefore if seditious Satan have rushed into Christ's sheepcoat with his drafsack of cockle and darnell¹¹ never so cunningly painted with man's inventions, coveting to enforce the sheep of Christ's fold to receive the same for good pasture & wholesom feeding, it is no wonder though he have troubled the whole fold, & scattered abroad the simple sheep.

Now brethern for as much as you know, this to be the onely working of Satan by the permission of god, & for our sins & impenitent hearts; seeing furthermore that this

⁹ This gave a very black-and-white view of the disputes at Frankfurt.

¹⁰ This is the 'regulative principle' of later Puritanism.

¹¹ A 'drafsack' was a sack full of draff or rubbish or figuratively a big paunch or lazy glutton and in this sense used in Protestant polemic against Roman Catholic priests. In Goodman's phrase there seems to be a major mixing of metaphors with the drafsack full of weeds from the parable of the sower and Satan in his sheepskin coat from the parable of the good shepherd.

hath been always his common practice to molest & disperse god's children, lest they should at any time or in any place agree & joyn together in one true & upright worshiping of the living god without all kind of superstitious traditions, decrees, & ordinances (which thing as it most of all others pleaseth god & maketh for his glory, so is there nothing more odious to Satan or sooner confoundeth his kingdom) seeing I say ye have lately proven this point of his wonted practice, let us with all circumspection beware & take diligent heed that he play not again amongst us the like part or tragedy; let him have no more entry into this sheepfold. For if he have, you know what to trust to & assure your selves, brethren, he will not so leave us, but will creep in at one hole or other, unless we keep diligent watch in the Lord with carefull hearts & unfeigned prayers.

[p.20] Think not your selves the surer for that you are yet but few in number, as though he should thereby be the sooner espied: but fear you him so much the more, for the fewer ye are in number the more enemies shall you find. & it is evermore dangerous striving against a multitude, although ye have the truth upon your side: & the right of a few is many times overcome by the might of many. Furthermore, where the number is but small, the watch is also small, & where the watch is small, the enemy is nothing so soon espied. Wherefore trust not to your small number: neither yet take opportunity of the place, which here the Lord be praised is very great to the withstanding & keeping forth of Satan: but let all our trust be in Christ our onely defence & buckler, let us seek onely his glory as well in our doctrine as godly conversation with all humbleness of heart & brotherly love; whereby onely we shall be his sheep & preserved in his fold, if we flee from all manner of contention, & love one another, studying by all means to keep his commandments: then will our Master

keep watch over us [Jo. 15 in margin] & for us; & then no power of Satan can pluck us forth of his hands. [Jo. 10 in margin]

Now seeing you are warned of Satan's malice & crafty compasses which he at all times hath & yet doth imagine & invent against the household of god, & therefore what carefull watch ye ought to keep against him; I will also according to promise speak of the end & purpose wherefore & why you are hither comen. Which I take to be nothing else but to seek the onely glory of god, & to worship him in such sort as his word onely [~~declareth - crossed out~~] doth prescribe, seeing that for the same cause you have already forsaken your native country with all the worldly commodities therein. Which glory also of god you have sought after in other places; but failing of your purpose, god at length hath brought you hither, where (praised be his name) he is purely [~~worshipd - crossed out~~] preached & sincerely worshiped without all fond superstition & beggarly traditions. Then seeing you are comen to the place you sought for, & may without all restraint use that which you so much desired, What great cause have you & we all to rejoyce & be thankfull for so great a benefit, to which there is no worldly pleasure comparable? The poor & needy creature that in digging his field happeneth upon a pot of gold or silver, not once thinking thereon, how glad & chearfull will he be? What thanks also (if he fear god) will he render to him, which hath so mercifully provided for his extreme necessity? How much more ought we Brethren, to be glad & thankfull, which are comen after all our travell & received into that fold of the Lord's, where we may find (if we will) not corporall & eathly treasure, but the spirituall & heavenly riches of our souls, the true & unfeigned worship of god, which with so much a do & carefull minds we have or [p. 21] ought to have sought? Our Master Christ compareth his kingdom to a treasure [Mat. 15 - in margin] hid in the ground, which when a man findeth, he maketh sale of all his substance, & buyeth

that piece of ground, thinking his labour & goods well bestowed: for he is assured to gain 10 times the worth that he hath laid forth. Let us therefore be bold to think all our travell & charges well spent seeing we have bought therewith, or may, if we will, buy the liberty & freedom of a Christian conscience to honour & worship our Lord & God in such sort & means as in his word onely is prescribed. Which when we follow, we are assured not to err, being indeed the right path & onely way to immortality; all others, what shew soever they have of religion or piety, art nothing else but plain superstition & hypocrisy.

Mr Goodman afterwards proceeds to exhort his Auditors [~~to - crossed out~~] chearfully to bear all the troubles & difficulties that might befall them in the prosecution of their enterprize: & concludes with commendations of the Holy Scripture.