

Extract from "The Character of a Godly Man"
by Thomas Watson
1666

A godly man is very exact and curious about the worship of God; the Greek word for *godly* signifies a right worshipper of God; a godly man doth reverence divine institutions, and is more for the purity of worship than the pomp; mixture in sacred things is like a dash in the wine, which though it gives it a colour, yet doth but adulterate it; the Lord would have Moses make the tabernacle according to the pattern in the mount, *Exod. 25:40*. If Moses had left out anything in the pattern, or added anything to it, it would have been very provoking; the Lord hath always given testimonies of his displeasure against such as have corrupted his worship; Nadab and Abihu "offered strange fire," (other than God had sanctified) "upon the altar;" "And fire went out from the Lord, and devoured them," *Lev. 10:1*. Whatsoever is not of God's own appointment in his worship, that he looks upon as strange fire; and no wonder he is so highly incensed at it, for as if God were not wise enough to appoint the manner how he will be served, men will go to prescribe to him, and as if the rules for his worship were defective, they will attempt to mend the copy, and superadd their inventions.

A godly man dares not vary from the pattern which God hath shewn him in the scripture; and probably this might not be the least reason, why David was called a man after God's own heart, because he kept the springs of God's worship pure, and in matters sacred, did not superinduce anything of his own devising.

Use. By this character we may try ourselves whether we are godly: are we tender about the things of God? Do we observe that mode of worship which hath the stamp of divine authority upon it? It is of dangerous consequence to make a medley in religion.

1. Those who will add to one part of God's worship, will be as ready to take away from another, *Mark 7:7*. 'Laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the traditions of men.' They who will bring in a tradition, will in time lay aside a command: this the Papists are highly guilty of; they bring in altars and crucifixes, and lay aside the second commandment; they bring in oil and cream in baptism, and leave out the cup in the Lord's supper; they bring in praying for the dead, and lay aside reading the scriptures intelligibly to the living; they who will introduce that into God's worship which he hath not commanded, will be as ready to blot out that which he hath commanded.

2. Those who are for outward commixtures in God's worship, are usually regardless of the vitals of religion; living by faith, leading a strict mortified life, these things are less minded by them: wasps have their combs, but no honey in them; the religion of many may be likened to those ears which run all into straw.

3. Superstition and profaneness kiss each other; hath it not been known that those who have kneeled at a pillar, have reeled against a post ?

4. Such as are devoted to superstition, are seldom or ever converted, *Matt. 21:31*. "Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you;" It was spoken to the chief priests, who were high formalists; and the reason why such persons are seldom wrought on savingly, is because they have a secret antipathy against the power of godliness. The snake is of a fine colour, but it hath a sting, so outwardly men may look zealous and devout, but retain a sting of hatred in their hearts against goodness. Hence it is that they who have been most hot for superstition, have been most hot for persecution. The church of Rome wears white linen, (an emblem of innocency) but the Spirit of God paints her out in scarlet, *Rev. 17:4*. Whence is this? Not only because she puts on a scarlet robe, but because her body is of a scarlet dye, having embued her hands in the blood of the saints, *Rev. 17:6*.

Let us then, as we would demonstrate ourselves godly, keep close to the rule of worship, and in the things of Jehovah, go no further than we can say, "It is written,"
