

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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## The Infiltration Which Corrupts the Truth of the Gospel by John Calvin

*Editor's Note: The following is a sermon by John Calvin originally preached in French between November 1557 and May 1558 and translated by Kathy Childress for the Banner of Truth title John Calvin's Sermons on Galatians (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997). It is used by permission. American spelling and usage have been used.*

*Note how apropos this sermon is for today. The enemies of the Gospel continue their attack, with Romanism leading the way. The Federal Vision, New Perspective on Paul, Shepherdism, etc. are not far behind. Additionally, many in the church want to go along to get along and compromise with the enemies of the Gospel in order to have a "broader appeal"; and unity at the expense of truth is the order of the day. Calvin, rightly expounding the Scripture here in Galatians, says otherwise.*

But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. (Galatians 2:3-5)

Many times in our lives, we experience how much of an enemy the devil is to our souls. He is forever striving to prevent the Gospel from having free course, and he will use every possible means to do so. This draws to our attention the fact that God has set the teaching of Scripture as the source of all our well-being, joy and happiness. For the devil would not bother to interfere with this teaching unless he knew that it contained all that men need for salvation. Though he strives to conceal God's glory, he cannot, for [man's salvation and God's glory] are inseparably bound together. For God in his grace has

established the following pattern: he dwells amongst us in order to draw us to himself, and then our highest good is attained by cleaving to him and abiding in him. So Satan raises up numerous enemies to declare war openly on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only this; he also seeks to draw intruders into our ranks who will act as internal foes. This has been the case since time began, as we can see in the example which Paul describes here. We know that everyone made threats against Paul; and we know how many struggles and difficulties he had undergone because of resistance from the heathen and the unbelieving, who withstood the preaching of the Gospel as much as they possibly could. But worse than this, he says that there were certain deceivers who had crept in behind their backs. The Greek word he uses suggests they did so by stealth, but we cannot adequately express it in one word in our language. He is saying that spies had infiltrated secretly amongst the believers with the sole intention of undermining the truth of the Gospel. Let us be sure to notice that these rogues did not openly reject the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, they bore the name and title of Christians. And yet at the same time, they only wished to have some half-gospel, which would have been neither one thing nor the other (as we say) but a mixture according to their taste. Likewise today, there are many such people in the world who seek to design and construct a religion to suit themselves. They take some of God's pure truth and mix in lies and delusions. Notice that even at the time of Paul, there were such liberals. This is what Paul is warning us of here.

However, he says that he did not give place to them by subjection, even for a moment, so that the truth concerning the liberty of the Gospel might continue. This is a summary of what is being said here. Now, first of all, we ought to be armed and equipped ready for our internal

enemies; for they are seeking to confuse and corrupt the message of the Gospel to such an extent that we will no longer know anything for a surety and all will be confusion. We ought not to be surprised when this happens, for it is nothing new. Let us realize that if God was testing the faithfulness of believers at the time of Paul, then it is clear that he will test us nowadays. Indeed, it is written that there must be sects and heresies amongst us, so that by our consistent obedience to God, those who have a living root will be seen and known. Such people will bear a mark which proclaims that they have truly profited in the school of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, if they do not allow themselves to be seduced or corrupted. This is why our Lord permits such intruders who sow discord and strive to pervert pure doctrine. He could easily prevent this if it seemed good to him: but instead, he gives Satan a free rein because this is a better test of our faith. May we not go aside to the left hand or to the right, no matter how many temptations come our way. Rather, may we always press on along the path that we have been shown, knowing that we cannot stray if we are completely grounded on the Word of God. If we can remain faithful, then it has been a good test of our faith. However, let us resist such rogues as may enter in, recognizing that they are like deadly plagues and more harmful even than those who turn aside out of the way altogether and openly declare that they despise the Gospel. Those who have come into our midst are much worse, and we must resist them manfully. If we give up the struggle, it is certain that before long there will be great confusion and people will no longer be able to distinguish between black and white. Let us commit ourselves, therefore, to this task.

Now, let us consider that type of person Paul is referring to here. He says that they “came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus”. He is speaking of liberty with regard to ceremonial rites. For (as we have mentioned before, and as we will soon see at greater length), under the law, God had chosen many types which would keep our forefathers waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and his manifestation to the world. Therefore, the sacrifices, together with all their additional requirements, (the sanctuary and all else that went with it), were of service only because our Lord Jesus Christ (who is the true fulfilment of all this) had not yet appeared. Our forefathers had to be governed and led by such shadows. This is why Paul likens them to little children who are under tutors and governors (*Galatians* 4:1-2). It was good and right that our fathers of old kept the ceremonies of the law, for they confirmed the promise of the Redeemer. This also explains why it was that the sanctuary had been made according to the pattern that

Moses had seen on the mountain top. Surely, its pattern was a spiritual one – symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ and his grace, which is now ministered to us through the Gospel. Indeed, our Lord Jesus came to this world in order that such types and shadows should be no more. For this reason, when he died the veil of the temple was torn in two, to show that God desired us to approach him with greater boldness. In this passage, Paul says that we have liberty in our Lord Jesus Christ, and are no longer subject to the kind of servitude that existed at the time of the law. He continues by taking circumcision as an example, just as he does in the letter to the *Colossians* (2:11). Hence, we are circumcised, not by man’s hands, but by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ within us through the power of his Holy Spirit. And instead of circumcision, which was established for the Jews, we have baptism which speaks of the same thing: that is to say, the fact that we need to be new creatures and to commit ourselves fully to God’s service. Thus, we have seen the liberty which our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for us; the ceremonies of the law have passed away and we are no longer subject to them nor bound by them.

At first sight, we might say that all this is of no great significance. For what does it matter if we have been both baptized and circumcised? Or if we acknowledge that our Lord Jesus Christ alone is the fulfilment and perfection of the law, and yet still retain the types? Well, first of all, to keep the ceremonies as if we are living under the law is to detract from the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. For as it is written, “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” This is how it is expressed in the first chapter of *John* (1:17). Thus, if we do not use the liberty which has been given to us, we are robbing him of the honor which is his due. We ought to realize that we enjoy a better and a more privileged condition today than our fathers of old, since our Lord Jesus Christ has been given to us and in him we have all that was prefigured in former days. Thus, in observing the ceremonies of the law, we wrong the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the first thing.

Secondly, since our Lord is called the “Sun of righteousness” (*Malachi* 4:2), we ought not to live as though there were not even a ray of light to be had. Rather, we should lift our eyes towards the truth which reveals Jesus Christ to us, through which we can gaze upon him face to face and thus come to God the Father; as it says in *Second Corinthians* (3:18). Furthermore, if we take the ceremonies of the law and consider them without our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, if we separate them from him, they bring with them an obligation and a verdict of condemnation and death upon men. This is why, in the

second chapter to the *Colossians*, Paul Stresses that on the cross our Lord Jesus Christ tore up and blotted out the “handwriting of ordinances” that was against us (2:14). For if the sacrifices were still performed today, we would see in them that we are all worthy of eternal death in the sight of God. How is this? Well, when poor animals were killed, it was not because they had deserved it, but to show men in a vivid picture that all were worthy of death. Therefore, if the sacrifices were still in force today, we would stand under the same sentence of death. But we have been set free through the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein is the triumph of his death, as Paul says (*Colossians* 2:15).

Thirdly, our fathers of old recognized that although they had been given the law, it was only through the grace of God that they could obtain the liberty which comes from having all sins forgiven. Thus, if today we were to enforce the necessity of keeping ceremonies, it would become a yoke that we are unable to bear, as it says in the fifteenth chapter of *Acts* (15:10). For maintaining the ceremonies would cause us all to drown in despair. Is it possible for men to do what God has so rigorously and immutably commanded? Not at all; for everything that God requires and demands of us is beyond our capabilities. If we were to fail even in one point only, the weight of sin would crush us. This is why this ‘liberty’ is so important; after all, we could not be assured of our salvation, nor call upon God freely unless we knew that we were no longer under the yoke of bondage with regard to the law.

There is one further point to which we will shortly come, and that is those who wished to make believers observe such ceremonies had the perverse and wicked fancy that in doing so they would be justified and obtain God’s favor. This was to deny the power of the death and passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we can see that Paul had good reason to oppose the ceremonies of the law so forcefully; he did not wish them to be practiced anymore because they held believers in such bondage.

We also need to take heed of this, for today we have a similar disagreement with the Papists. Indeed, they have less plausibility than the deceivers of whom Paul speaks. For although the latter were servants of the devil, and sought only to pervert the truth of the Gospel, they at least were able to say that they were not introducing their own ideas or traditions. Indeed, they claimed to accept the authority of God by saying that the law must be upheld, and that was their apparent excuse. The Papists, however, have no such foundation, for all their rituals have arisen according to the will of men. Yes, they have woven in a little Judaism here and there, but now they have such a mixture that it is not clear which sources they have relied

upon the most. Whatever the answer may be, it is clear that all the ceremonies which are practiced in Popery today have been added by men. When we oppose them, they say that we are creating a big stir over nothing. These lukewarm individuals step in, wishing to please both parties and form a bastard gospel. They reproach us as if we were seditious, and say that we are causing too much trouble in the world by our preciseness. And to prove it, they say, “Is it right that you should argue so much about ceremonies, which are neither here nor there?” Yes indeed, for God intended the ceremonial law (which proceeded from him and came into being by his direct commandment) to cease at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, what does he think when men, in their foolhardiness, want to introduce additional rituals? If God desired his own ceremonies to be abolished, how can men press forward and introduce their own, as if they would have us believe that God has not acted wisely? Is this not an atrocious blasphemy? We know why God intended that the ceremonial law should no longer apply today: it is so that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ can be more widely and more clearly known. For he is the “Sun of righteousness” (*Malachi* 4:2). For this reason, it is necessary that all shadows flee away, since, as Paul says, he is the body and substance of them all (*Colossians* 2:17). This being the reason, we can see that it was in fact vital that the types should fade away into the past. Now what excuse will the Papists proffer, seeing that it is obvious that all their rituals serve only to obscure the Lord Jesus Christ? Indeed, they are made so binding that if you refuse to keep them, you are guilty of mortal sin. Added to this, their rituals seem to imply that one baptism is not sufficient but that a person needs holy water in which to be baptized afresh morning and evening. If you bring together this collection of worthless and ridiculous customs, it becomes apparent that there will always be something to keep poor souls in bondage. Should this be tolerated? Such a tight yoke is placed upon them that the poor folk are strangled by it, for they have been robbed of the liberty which was purchased for them by the death and passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can see how urgent and how great the need is for us to fight against Papal tyranny with regard to rituals, seeing that our Lord Jesus Christ is not given the pre-eminence he deserves, whilst they continue to amuse themselves with such trivialities. Moreover, they keep poor consciences in a constant state of anxiety, believing as they do, that they can merit favor by what they call “serving God.” It seems to them that this is the way for a man to be justified and to obtain salvation.

We have seen that Paul was fighting an important battle of his day. Today, we battle over this same issue, and we

must not remain silent. To do so would be to betray both God and man. We have to struggle constantly against such hellish tyranny, and all the vanities, lies and delusions of Satan. He is seeking either to destroy the Gospel altogether or, at the very least, to so distort it that we no longer know what is and what is not pure truth. We ought always to keep this in mind. Hence, when Paul says that he would not give way to such people, not even for a moment, this confirms to us all the more the very thing that I explained a short while ago. Peace and friendship amongst men is a wonderful thing. This is the truth, and we ought to pursue these things with all our strength. At the same time, however, God's truth ought to be so precious to us that even if we had to set the whole world on fire in order to promote it, we would be only too willing to do so! Yes, as far as we can, we are to seek peace. If only we ourselves and our possessions are at stake, let us endeavor to be at peace with our enemies and to tolerate them, seeking to win them by our patience. This is what pursuing peace entails. However, if God's truth is being ignored or misused, this no longer applies. The kind of peace that men seek will always be under God's curse if he is not acknowledged or praised as he deserves, or if his Word is not kept in all its purity, for that ought to be the knot of our bond. If we wish to please God, and if we want all things to work together for our good, surely it is God who must bind us together, Indeed, he has given us his Son, whom he calls "our peace" so that we all surrender ourselves to him (*Ephesians 2:14*). Therefore, if we desire to have a true and holy peace, we must return to this point: we must yield ourselves in obedience to the Son of God as our Head, we being one body, for there is only one church. But if others are enticing us away from the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than accepting peace on such terms we should prefer to suffer all the rage, fury and hatred of this world against us. Let us not fear the reproaches of men. Today, we may be falsely accused of having stirred up great controversy, but what can we do about it? For woe to us, if we do not abide in the Gospel of truth. Since the Papists do not do this, but remain, instead, in that state of rebellion which they are still in to this day, we are obliged to be at war with them. After all, they would have us turn our backs on the peace that God gives us through his Son (who even bears this title, and not in vain, as we have already noted). When folk cry after us, we ought to be armed with the answer that Elijah gave to Ahab. He was asked, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (*1 Kings 18:17*). The prophet had been accused, much as we are today, because he had sought to bring the people back to the purity of the law, and because he opposed the superstition and idolatry which they had devised. The king believed that Elijah had come to stir up trouble, sedition and rebellion. (How the rulers of this

world love to wallow in their own filthiness, not caring about whether God is worshipped and served! Provided they can maintain their position, nothing else is of any importance to them.) But the prophet answered him by saying, "It is you, and your father's house." It is those who fail to act according to God's will, and who do not serve him as he requires in his Word, that trouble the world. All the rebellion, strife and discord that results should be attributed to them. For (as I have already shown) it is imperative that God be not robbed of his rightful position when men are seeking to join together in harmony. Here, then, are some of the things that we should bear in mind when Paul says here that he would not for a moment be subject to those who had secretly entered the church, since they sought to pervert the Gospel by mixing in their own corruptions. For indeed, the most important thing is that God's truth should be known.

Furthermore, let us not fear the slander that men will spread about us when they say that we are proud and arrogant because we refuse to submit to them. Even today, what do the Papists accuse us of, if not that we seem to be making ourselves wiser than the rest of the world, and thus displaying great pride by not conforming to what is common practice amongst men. Yes, it is an honorable thing to be obedient, as we were saying when we were speaking of peace, but at the same time, God must be obeyed above everyone else. What would become of us if we were to defy him openly and despise him in order to be subject to men and to bend our necks under their yokes, all the while ignoring God? This is why we cannot align ourselves with Papists or be in subjection to them, without turning our backs upon God, and trampling his Word underfoot. (By this, I mean that we would no longer accept its authority and no longer reverence it.) What demands would Papists make on us? They would want us to abandon the Word of God, and desert the Lord Jesus Christ, whilst accepting all that they have fabricated themselves. Of course, they would never use these exact terms, or say that you would be expected to rob God of his honor, and Jesus Christ of his pre-eminence over us; no, they would not declare this openly. Just like the deceivers whom Paul strove against: they professed that they wanted to be Christians and yet he had to go back to the touchstone and examine the whole matter thoroughly. The Papists want us to accept their traditions. And what are they? Well, we know that they virtually obscure the Lord Jesus Christ from view (as I have already said). All is corrupt; all their traditions are delusions of Satan that have been pushed to the foreground so that nothing is certain anymore and no one knows what to believe. Because such is the case, there is no doubt but that obeying men would mean being at war with God. Thus,

we must resist them with, as it were, a forehead of brass. The greatest virtue we could ever possess is seen in not conforming to the ideas of men, whatever shape or color they may take. Instead, we ought to despise all such things as if they were filthy dung and give God his authority. We ought to listen to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Head and the One who governs us. All of us, from the greatest to the least, must submit to his leading. There is nothing for us to do other than simply to listen to him and absorb all that enables us to remain true to the faith of the Gospel. This is what we ought to remember about Paul's words here.

Surely, if we are looking for a modest and peaceable man, Paul fits the description. Indeed, he is like a mirror image of all that is kind and gentle. Again, if we want to find a humble nature, what greater humility could we find than that of Paul, who made himself less than nothing? And yet at the same time, he contended for the purity of Gospel doctrine, and did not care if this stirred up rage in every soul on Earth. In fact, it did not matter to him if he was blamed for all the turmoil that existed in the Galatian church and elsewhere. I say he did not fear the fact that he could have been charged with such a thing, or even accused of being a rebellious or extremely arrogant man. We ought to be like this today. Yes, let us be peaceable as far as we possibly can; let us surrender all that we possess and no longer strive for the good things of this life, such as our own honor and good reputation. Let us bear all insults and injuries rather than stir up contention for our own sakes. But let us contend to the very end for God's truth. If people show contempt for us, either by rising up against us in hatred, or by seeking to weaken us, we ought not to stir up any strife over this. But if they are seeking to keep us from obeying our God, so that we bow to the tyrannical rule of men instead, then let us hold firm and show noble courage in resisting to the end. Let us despise all the lofty things of this world, but not desert the Lord Jesus Christ; he ought to reign over us and we, at the same time, ought to submit to him. This, in brief, is how we can put this passage into practice, and indeed, the times in which we live ought to inspire us to do just that. Today, not only are we persecuted (for we have all seen the fires lit to murder the poor servants of God) but also it is likely that those wicked people who are hired by the Antichrist to pervert the truth of the Gospel will accuse and condemn us as if we were subversive rebels. They will say that we are full of pride since we refuse their traditions. Do they accuse us in this malicious way? Well, let us bear it all patiently and be accused, just as Paul is saying, provided we know that we, for our part, are continuing in the truth of the Gospel, not allowing creatures to reign over us

instead of Jesus Christ. For every knee will have to bow before him and all must worship him.

Now the fact that Paul speaks of "the truth of the gospel" is very significant and teaches us a very practical lesson. For he could just as well have said: "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the gospel might continue with you." But instead he speaks of "the truth of the gospel," not because he is making a distinction between a false one and a true one, but he is speaking with respect to men and saying that the Gospel must remain amongst us in all its truth. Why? Because, however much men may appear to be Christians, they will always try to mix in other things with their Christianity. Indeed, there are many restless souls in this world who cannot bear to be led by God alone. Each one wants to make their own contribution. This is how the Papacy today came to be in such a state of confusion. We may wonder how it is that they have been able to contrive so many fanciful, trifling things and grievous abominations, but it is simply because men could not be content to obey God and, therefore, desired to add their own whims and fancies here and there. This is the main reason why Paul speaks of "the truth of the gospel," just as in *Second Corinthians* (11:3) he speaks of the "simplicity" that is in our Lord Jesus Christ. And what is the "simplicity" that is in Jesus Christ? It rules out anything that men might add. As I have said, men have a foolish desire to introduce what has been conceived in their own minds. It is a corrupt and abominable thing to add our own devices. This explains why Paul says that we must hold to the simplicity that is in our Lord Jesus Christ. When men, claiming to preach the Gospel, seek nevertheless to make up their own many-colored religion (as we say), it is no longer the true Gospel. Much false teaching has been incorporated. Therefore, we should take note of the fact that when Paul uses this expression, he is warning us (or rather the Holy Spirit is warning us through him) that it is not enough to call ourselves Christians, and to appear to adhere to the Word of God and the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must hold to it completely and not allow anything else to be added. Just as little yeast can spoil the dough, so if we admit what men have devised in their heads, the whole will become corrupt. This is how pure the doctrine of the Gospel ought to be: nothing must be added to it. Men must not have the audacity or the opportunity to include anything of their own. Rather, we should all be content with what our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed and should seek to be his true disciples. This means keeping our own mouths closed and not impudently taking it upon ourselves to oppose his doctrine. We must not even lift up our voices to say, "This is what I think," or "This is what I judge to be best." We ought, rather, simply to accept

what the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us, for he has all sovereignty over our souls. This is how we must understand what is meant here by “the truth of the gospel.”

It is all the more important that we should put Paul’s teaching into practice, since many today deliberately mix truth and error, so that nobody will trouble them about their religion. This way, they can choose the type of religion that suits them best, and the one which will be most easily accepted by the world. Having said this, it is true that there are many Papists who are so rigid that they would never allow a single point of doctrine to be dropped, for they know that if even just one deviation occurs, their whole tyrannical system will collapse and fall. For what other hold do they have, except one of tyranny and violence, when they say that we must accept all that they believe without question? Those, therefore, who fully support the Pope wish to keep the filthy abominations that they have always practiced right to the end. However, there are many others who wish to see a reformation take place to the end that they might mix together in one the Pope, Muhammad and Jesus Christ, so that we can no longer discern between them! It makes no difference to them, provided they can bring the whole world together in harmony. They do not have a scrap of reverence for God. This explains why everything is so muddled and confused in our day, hence the abomination known as liberalism has arisen. Because they could not find it in their hearts to agree with Popery in every point, they thought it would be better if they were to reach a compromise between all the extremes. Even today, many would like us to become involved. Yes, they admit that there are excesses and that these need to be corrected, but they are content only to prune some small leaf or branch, whilst the root remains the same as it always has been. Thus, the Gospel of God could still be overshadowed by all the superstitions that hold sway in Popery. What? And here is the Holy Spirit condemning all such liberals and showing that these are Satan’s tricks, delusions and deceptions sent to lead poor souls into perdition.

Furthermore, this detracts from the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. How is this? Well, we have no Gospel if we do not have truth in its purity, where it is not lawful for men to add anything, but where all keep to what has been revealed by our Master. Thus, we have seen that the situation around us demands that we put this teaching into practice. Then, when the enemies of God rebuke us because we will not agree with them, we must give as our reason the fact that the kind of agreement we seek is one where the Lord Jesus Christ unites us together as we all obey his Word and his doctrine. If they accuse us and say

that we are proud in thus rejecting what men who call themselves our superiors have commanded, let us declare that we must obey God before anyone else. Also, we must not detract from the rightful power of the Lord Jesus Christ; rather, men must keep to their proper place. They may say, “But listen! Would it not be better if we adopted a middle path, where we each declare that we do not wish to be separate from the rest, rather than to battle in this way and make Christianity even more fragmented?” But let us reply that it is not a question of who will win the argument, nor of each man lording it over his neighbor, but the issue at stake is this: keeping the whole Word of God. Otherwise, whatever we might call “concord” will, in reality, be an abomination in the sight of God. How is this so? Well, it would be better if all else were to go into confusion and chaos, than that God’s truth, which is so precious and so holy, be corrupted in any way. Indeed, it were better if Heaven and Earth were overthrown together than that we should allow such a thing to happen.

Let us, then, hold firm to this doctrine and use it to our profit, not only in resisting the attacks which are made upon us by the enemies of the truth, but also in yielding ourselves with all meekness and humility. This means being led and ruled by the Word of God alone and the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be strong enough not to be turned aside by men, or taken in by their reputation or authority, nor disturbed by their threats, nor by all the pride and arrogance that is in the world. Let us, instead, continuously devote ourselves to our Lord Jesus Christ. And if any should come to us with something new, let us look well to the end of the matter, to the end to which they are seeking to lead us. Since Satan has so many subtle tricks, and so many agents, let us, for our part, have the wisdom to keep ourselves in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, so that we are led to him. He alone should be our goal and our aim, since he has an abundance of riches in himself. Therefore, we may approach him to supply our wants. May everything that would prevent us coming to him be defeated.

Now let us fall before the majesty of our great God, acknowledging our sins, and praying that he would make us increasingly conscious of them, so that we can ask his forgiveness in true repentance. May we profit more and more from his Word, so that we are led to deny ourselves, and lean upon him and his strength. May he support us in our weakness, until he has brought us to that perfection to which he is calling us today. Thus, we all say, Almighty God, *etc.*