

The Convocation Sermon
of Doctor John Colet
Made at St. Paul's
[1510]

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THE CONVOCATION SERMON OF DOCTOR JOHN COLET MADE AT ST. PAUL'S [1510]¹

Ye are come together today, fathers and right
5 wise men, to enter council, in the which, what ye
will do, and what matters ye will handle, yet² we
understand not. But we wish that once, remem-
bering your name and profession, ye would mind
the reformation of the churches matter. For it was
10 never more need, and the state of the Church did
never desire more your endeavors. For the spouse
of Christ, the Church, whom ye would should³ be
without spot or wrinkle, is made foul and evil-fa-
vored,⁴ as saith Isaiah, “The faithful city is made a
15 harlot.”⁵ And as saith Jeremiah, she hath done lech-
ery with many lovers, whereby she hath conceived
many seeds of wickedness, and daily bringeth forth
very foul fruit.⁶

Wherefore I came hither today, fathers, to warn
20 you that in this your council, with all your mind, ye
think upon the reformation of the Church. But for-
sooth⁷ I came not willingly, for I knew mine unwor-
thiness. I saw besides how hard it was to please the
precise judgment of so many men. For I judged it
25 utterly unworthy and unmeet,⁸ yea and almost too
malapert,⁹ that I, a servant, should counsel my lords;
that I, a son, should teach you, my fathers. Truly it
had been meet¹⁰ for some one of the fathers—
that is to say, you prelates—might have done it with
30 more grave authority and greater wisdom. But the
commandment was to be obeyed of the most rever-
end father and lord the Archbishop,¹¹ president
of this council, which¹² laid upon me this burden,
truly too heavy for me. We read that the prophet
35 Samuel said, “Obedience is better than sacrifice.”¹³
Wherefore, fathers and right worthy men, I pray¹⁴
you and beseech you that this day ye would sustain

my weakness with your goodness and patience; fur-
thermore, to help me at the beginning with your
good prayers. 40

And before all-thing¹⁵ let us pray unto God the
Father Almighty, first remembering our most holy
father the Pope, and all spiritual pastors, with all
Christian people; furthermore the most reverend
45 father and lord the Archbishop, president of this
council; and all bishops, and all the clergy, and all
the people of England; remembering finally this
your congregation, desiring God to inspire your
minds so accordingly to agree, to such profit and
50 fruit of the Church, that ye seem not, after the
council finished, to have been gathered together in
vain and without cause. Let us all say Pater Noster.¹⁶

To exhort you, Reverend Fathers, to the en-
deavor of reformation of the Church's estate,¹⁷
(because that nothing hath so disfigured the face
55 of the Church as hath the fashion of secular and
worldly living in clerks¹⁸ and priests) I know not
where more conveniently¹⁹ to take beginning of
my tale²⁰ than of the apostle Paul, in whose tem-
ple ye are gathered together. For he, writing unto
60 the Romans, and under their name unto you, saith,
“Be you not conformed to this world, but be you
reformed in the newness of your understanding,
that ye may prove what is the good will of God, well
pleasing and perfect.”²¹ This did the Apostle write
65 to all Christian men, but most chiefly unto priests
and bishops.²² Priests and bishops are the light of
the world. For unto them said our Savior, “You are
the light of the world.”²³ And he said also, “If the
70 light that is in thee be darkness, how dark shall the

¹ For an original transcription and brief account of this text, see J. H. Lupton, *A Life of John Colet*, George Bell and Sons, 1887. For the Latin original, see Samuel Knight, *The Life of Dr. John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's*, Oxford, 1823. For a recent discussion of the date and circumstances of this sermon, see John B.

Gleason, *John Colet*, U of California P, 1989. ² still ³ *would should*: want to ⁴ ugly ⁵ Is 1:21 ⁶ See Jer 3:1–2. ⁷ in truth ⁸ unfit ⁹ impudent ¹⁰ more fitting ¹¹ William Warham (*ca.* 1450–1532) ¹² who ¹³ 1 Sm 15:22 ¹⁴ ask ¹⁵ everything ¹⁶ *Pater Noster*: Our Father ¹⁷ state ¹⁸ those in minor

clerical orders; scholars ¹⁹ appropriately ²⁰ speech; talk ²¹ Rom 12:2 ²² See *The Essential Works of Thomas More* (Yale UP, 2020) 662.52–64 where Thomas More reports hearing Colet say what follows. ²³ Mt 5:14

darkness be?"²⁴ That is to say, if priests and bishops, that should be as lights, run in the dark way of the world, how dark then shall the secular people be? Wherefore Saint Paul said chiefly unto priests and bishops, "Be you not conformable to this world, but be ye reformed."²⁵

In the which words the Apostle doth two things. First, he doth forbid that we be not conformable to the world and be made carnal. Furthermore he doth command that we be reformed in the spirit of God, whereby we are spiritual.

I intending to follow this order, I will speak first of conformation,²⁶ then after of reformation.

"Be you not (saith he) conformable to this world."

The Apostle calleth the "world" the ways and manner of secular living, the which chiefly doth rest in four evils of this world: that is to say, in devilish pride, in carnal concupiscence, in worldly covetousness, in secular business. These are in the world, as Saint John the apostle witnesseth in his epistle canonical. For he saith: "All-thing that is in the world is either the concupiscence of the flesh, or the concupiscence of the eyes, or pride of life."²⁷ The same are now and reign in the Church, and in men of the Church; that we may seem truly to say, all-thing that is in the Church is either concupiscence of flesh, or eyes, or pride of life.

And first for to speak of pride of life: how much greediness and appetite of honor and dignity is nowadays in men of the Church? How run they, yea almost out of breath, from one benefice²⁸ to another; from the less to the more, from the lower to the higher? Who seeth not this? Who seeing this sorroweth not? Moreover these that are in the same dignities, the most part of them doth go with so stately a countenance²⁹ and with so high looks, that they seem not to be put in the humble bishopric of Christ, but rather in the high lordship and power of the world, not knowing nor advertising³⁰ what Christ the master of all meekness said unto his disciples, whom he called to be bishops and priests:

The princes of people (saith he) have lordship of them, and those that be in authority have power; but do ye not so: but he that is greater among you,

let him be minister;³¹ he that is highest in dignity, be he the servant of all men. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.³²

By which words our Savior doth plainly teach that the mastery in the Church is none other thing than a ministration and the high dignity in a man of the Church to be none other thing than a meek service.

The second secular evil is carnal concupiscence. Hath not this vice so grown and waxen³³ in the Church as a flood of their lust, so that there is nothing looked for more diligently in this most busy time of the most part of priests than that that doth delight and please the senses? They give themselves to feasts and banqueting; they spend themselves in vain babbling; they give themselves to sports and plays; they apply themselves to hunting and hawking; they drown themselves in the delights of this world. Procurers and finders of lusts³⁴ they set by.³⁵ Against the which kind of men Jude the apostle crieth out in his epistle, saying:

Woe unto them which have gone the way of Cain. They art foul and beastly, feasting in their meats, without fear feeding themselves; floods of the wild sea, foaming out their confusions, unto whom the storm of darkness is reserved for everlasting.³⁶

Covetousness is the third secular evil, the which Saint John the apostle calleth concupiscence of the eyes. Saint Paul calleth it idolatry. This abominable pestilence hath so entered in the mind almost of all priests, and so hath blinded the eyes of the mind, that we are blind to all things but only unto those which seem to bring unto us some gains. For what other thing seek we nowadays in the Church than fat benefices and high promotions? Yea, and in the same promotions, of what other thing do we pass upon³⁷ than of our tithes and rents? That we care not how many, how chargeful,³⁸ how great benefices we take, so that³⁹ they be of great value. O covetousness! Saint Paul justly called thee the root of all evil. Of thee cometh this heaping of benefices upon benefices. Of thee, so great pensions assigned

24 Mt 6:23 25 Rm 12:2 26 adjustment in form or character to some pattern or example 27 1 Jn 2:15-17 28 ecclesiastical living 29 appearance

30 informing 31 servant 32 Mt 20:25-28, Mk 10:42-45 33 increased 34 pleasures, delights 35 set by: value 36 See Jude 1:11-13. 37 pass upon: care

for 38 burdensome; expensive 39 so that: so long as

of many benefices resigned. Of thee, all the suing for tithes, for offering, for mortuaries,⁴⁰ for dilapidations,⁴¹ by the right and title of the Church. For the which thing we strive no less than for our own
 5 life. O covetousness! Of thee cometh these chargeful visitations of bishops. Of thee cometh the corruptness of courts, and these daily new inventions wherewith the seely⁴² people are so sore⁴³ vexed. Of thee cometh the busyty⁴⁴ and wantonness of officials. O covetousness! Mother of all iniquity, of thee cometh this fervent study of ordinaries⁴⁵ to dilate their jurisdictions. Of thee cometh this wood⁴⁶ and raging contention in ordinaries; of thee, insinuation of testaments;⁴⁷ of thee cometh the undue sequestration⁴⁸ of fruits; of thee cometh the superstitious observing of all those laws that sound to any
 10 lucre,⁴⁹ setting aside and despising those that concern the amendment of manners.⁵⁰ What⁵¹ should I rehearse⁵² the rest? To be short, and to conclude at one word: all corruptness, all the decay of the Church, all the offenses of the world, come of⁵³ the covetousness of priests, according to that of Saint Paul, that here I repeat again and beat into your ears: "Covetousness is the root of all evil."⁵⁴

25 The fourth secular evil that spotteth and maketh ill-favored the face of the Church, is the continual secular occupation, wherein priests and bishops nowadays doth busy themselves, the servants rather of men than of God; the warriors rather of this world than of Christ. For the apostle Paul writeth unto Timothy, "No man, being God's soldier, turmoil himself with secular business."⁵⁵ The warring of them is not carnal but spiritual. For our warring is to pray, to read, and study Scriptures, to preach
 30 the Word of God, to minister⁵⁶ the sacraments of health, to do sacrifice for the people, and to offer hosts for their sins. For we are mediators and means unto God for men. The which Saint Paul witnesseth, writing to the Hebrews: "Every bishop (saith he) taken of men, is ordained for men in those things that be unto God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."⁵⁷ Wherefore those apostles,

that were the first priests and bishops, did so much abhor⁵⁸ from all manner of meddling of secular things, that they would not minister the meat⁵⁹ that was necessary to poor people, although that were a
 45 great work of virtue; but they said, "It is not meet⁶⁰ that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables; we will be continually in prayer, and preaching the Word of God."⁶¹ And Saint Paul crieth unto the Corinthians: "If you have any secular business,
 50 ordain them to be judges that be most in contempt in the Church."⁶² Without doubt, of this secularity, and that clerks and priests, leaving all spiritualness, do turmoil themselves with earthly occupations, many evils do follow.

First, the dignity of priesthood is dishonored, the which is greater than either the king's or emperor's; it is equal with the dignity of angels. But the brightness of this great dignity is sore shadowed, when
 60 priests are occupied in earthly things, whose conversation⁶³ ought to be in heaven.

Secondarily, priesthood is despised, when there is no difference betwixt such priests and lay people, but, according to the prophecy of Hosea, "as the people be, so are the priests."⁶⁴

Thirdly, the beautiful order and holy dignity in the Church is confused, when the highest in the Church do meddle with vile and earthly things, and in their stead vile and abject persons do exercise
 70 high and heavenly things.

Fourthly, the lay people have great occasion of evils, and cause to fall, when those men whose duty is to draw men from the affection of this world, by their continual conversation in this world teach
 75 men to love this world, and of the love of the world cast them down headlong into hell.

Moreover in such priests that are so busied there must needs follow hypocrisy. For when they be so mixed and confused with the lay people, under the garment and habit of a priest they live plainly after⁶⁵ the lay fashion. Also by spiritual weakness and bondage fear, when they are made weak with the waters of this world, they dare neither do nor say

40 a customary gift claimed by the incumbent of a parish from the estate of a deceased parishioner 41 wasteful expenditures 42 poor 43 greatly 44 officiousness, fussiness 45 those who have immediate ecclesiastical jurisdiction – archbishops, bishops, or bishop's deputies 46 madness 47 *insinuation of testaments:*

probate of wills 48 an order of court appointing the goods of a deceased person whose executor has renounced probate, to be secured and administered; also, a writ of Chancery empowering commissioners or a sheriff to seize the property of the person against whom it is directed 49 *sound to any lucre:* have a connection with

any financial gain 50 moral conduct 51 Why 52 tell; cite 53 from, out of 54 1 Tim 6:10 55 2 Tim 2:4 56 administer 57 Heb 5:1 58 recoil 59 food 60 fitting 61 Acts 6:2 62 1 Cor 6:4 63 living; society 64 Hos 4:9 65 according to

but such things as they know to be pleasant and thankful⁶⁶ to their princes.

At last, ignorancy and blindness; when they are blinded with the darkness of this world, they see
5 nothing but earthly things. Wherefore our Savior Christ, not without cause, did warn the prelates of his Church: "Take heed," said he, "lest your hearts be grieved with gluttony and drunkenness and with the cares of this world."⁶⁷ "With the cares," saith he,
10 "of this world," wherewith the hearts of priests being sore charged⁶⁸ they cannot hold and lift up their minds to high and heavenly things.

Many other evils there be beside those, that follow of the secularity of priests, which were⁶⁹ long
15 here to rehearse. But I make an end.

These be the four evils that I have spoken of, O fathers, O priests, by the which we are conformable to this world, by the which the face of the Church is made evil-favored,⁷⁰ by the which the state of it
20 is destroyed truly much more than it was in the beginning by the persecution of tyrants, or afterward by the invasion that followed of heretics. For, in the persecution of⁷¹ tyrants, the Church being vexed was made stronger and brighter. In the invasion of
25 heretics, the Church being shaken was made wiser and more cunning⁷² in holy writ. But since this secularity was brought in, after that⁷³ the secular manner of living crept in in the men of the Church, the root of all spiritual life — that is to say, charity — was
30 extinct. The which taken away, there can nother⁷⁴ wise nor strong Church be in God.

In this time also we perceive contradiction of the lay people. But they are not so much contrary unto us, as we are ourselves; nor their contrariness hurteth not us so much as the contrariness of our evil
35 life, the which is contrary both to God and Christ. For he said, "Who that is not with me, is against me."⁷⁵

We are also nowadays grieved of⁷⁶ heretics, men mad with marvelous foolishness. But the heresies of them are not so pestilent and pernicious unto us and the people as the evil and wicked life of priests, the which, if we believe Saint Bernard,⁷⁷ is a certain kind of heresy, and chief of all and most perilous.
45 For that same holy father, in a certain convocation,

preaching unto the priests of his time, in a certain sermon so he said by these words:

There be many Catholic and faithful men in speaking and preaching, the which same men are heretics in working. For that that⁷⁸ heretics do by
50 evil teaching, that same do they through evil example: they lead the people out of the right way, and bring them into error of life. And so much they are worse than heretics, how much their works prevail⁷⁹ their words. 55

This that holy father Saint Bernard, with a great and a fervent spirit, said against the sect of evil priests in his time. By which words he showeth plainly to be two manner of heresies; the one to be of perverse teaching, and the other of naughty⁸⁰ life, of which this later is worse and more perilous. The which reigneth now in the Church in priests not living priestly but secularly, to the utter and miserable destruction of the Church.

Wherefore, you fathers, you priests, and all you of the clergy, at the last look up and awake from this
65 your sleep in this forgetful world; and at the last, being well-awaked, hear Paul crying unto you, "Be you not conformable unto this world."⁸¹

And this for the first part. Now let us come to
70 the second.

THE SECOND PART, OF REFORMATION

*But be you reformed in the newness of your understanding*⁸²

75

The second thing that Saint Paul commandeth is that we be reformed into a new understanding, that we smell those things that be of God. Be we reformed unto those things that are contrary to those I spoke of even now: that is to say, to meekness, to
80 soberness, to charity, to spiritual occupation; that, as the said Paul writeth unto Titus, "renaying⁸³ all wickedness and worldly desires, we live in this world soberly, truly, and virtuously."⁸⁴

66 acceptable, agreeable 67 Lk 21:34 68 burdened 69 would be 70 ugly 71 by 72 learned 73 after

that: after 74 neither 75 Mt 12:30, Lk 11:23 76 grieved of: oppressed by 77 Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)

78 that that: that which 79 surpass 80 wicked 81 Rom 12:2 82 Rom 12:2 83 renouncing 84 See Ti 1:7–8.

This reformation and restoring of the Church's estate⁸⁵ must needs begin of you our fathers, and so follow in us your priests and in all the clergy. You are our heads, you are an example of living unto us. Unto you we look as unto marks of our direction. In you and in your life we desire to read, as in lively⁸⁶ books, how and after what fashion we may live. Wherefore, if you will ponder and look upon our motes, first take away the blocks out of your eyes.⁸⁷ It is an old proverb: Physician, heal thyself. You spiritual physicians, first taste you this medicine of purgation of manners,⁸⁸ and then after offer us the same to taste.

The way whereby the Church may be reformed into better fashion is not for to make new laws. For there be laws many enough and out of number, as Solomon saith, "Nothing is new under the sun."⁸⁹ For the evils that are now in the Church were before in time past, and there is no fault but that fathers have provided very good remedies for it. There are no trespasses, but that there be laws against them in the body of the canon law. Therefore it is no need⁹⁰ that new laws and constitutions be made, but that those that are made already be kept. Wherefore in this your assembly let those laws that are made be called before you and rehearsed:⁹¹ those laws, I say, that restrain vice, and those that further virtue.

First, let those laws be rehearsed, that do warn you fathers that ye put not oversoon your hands on every man, or admit unto holy orders. For there is the well of evils, that, the broad gate of holy orders opened, every man that offereth himself is all-where⁹² admitted without pulling back. Thereof springeth and cometh out the people that are in the Church both of unlearned and evil priests. It is not enough for a priest, after my judgment, to construe a collect,⁹³ to put forth a question, or to answer to a sopheme; but much more a good, a pure, and a holy life, approved manners, meetly⁹⁴ learning of Holy Scripture, some knowledge of the sacraments, chiefly and above all-thing⁹⁵ the fear of God and love of the heavenly life.

Let the laws be rehearsed, that command that benefices of the Church be given to those that

are worthy; and that promotions be made in the Church by the right balance of virtue, not by carnal⁹⁶ affection, not by the acception⁹⁷ of persons; whereby it happeneth nowadays that boys for old men, fools for wise men, evil for good, do reign and rule.

Let the laws be rehearsed, that warreth against the spot of simony. The which corruption, the which infection, the which cruel and odible⁹⁸ pestilence, so creepeth now abroad, as the canker evil in the minds of priests, that many of them are not afeard⁹⁹ nowadays both by prayer and service, rewards and promises, to get them great dignities.

Let the laws be rehearsed, that command personal residence of curates in their churches. For of this many evils grow, because all things nowadays are done by vicaries¹⁰⁰ and parish priests — yea, and those foolish also and unmeet,¹⁰¹ and oftentimes wicked, that seek none other thing in the people than foul lucre,¹⁰² whereof cometh occasion of evil heresies and ill Christendom¹⁰³ in the people.

Let be rehearsed the laws and holy rules given of fathers, of the life and honesty of clerks, that forbid that a clerk be no merchant, that he be no usurer, that he be no hunter, that he be no common player,¹⁰⁴ that he bear no weapon; the laws that forbid clerks to haunt taverns, that forbid them to have suspect familiarity with women; the laws that command soberness, and a measurableness¹⁰⁵ in apparel, and temperance in adorning of the body.

Let be rehearsed also to my lords these monks, canons,¹⁰⁶ and religious men, the laws that command them to go the straight way that leadeth unto heaven, leaving the broad way of the world; that commandeth them not to turmoil themselves in business, nother¹⁰⁷ secular nor other; that command that they sue¹⁰⁸ not in prince's courts for earthly things. For it is in the Council of Chalcedon that monks ought only to give themselves to prayer and fasting, and to the chastening¹⁰⁹ of their flesh, and observing of their rules.

Above all things, let the laws be rehearsed, that pertain and concern you my Reverend Fathers and Lord Bishops, laws of your just and canonical

85 state, condition 86 living; vital
87 See Mt 7:3–5, Lk 6:41–42. 88 moral conduct 89 Eccl 1:9 90 no need: unnecessary 91 repeated; remunerated 92 everywhere 93 Mass prayer 94 fittingly, properly 95 everything

96 worldly; familial 97 favoritism; undue partiality 98 odious; repulsive 99 afraid 100 subordinates acting in place of the office holders 101 unfit 102 financial gain 103 Christianity 104 merry-maker; gambler

105 moderation 106 members of religious orders who are not as strictly bound as monks, but more so than friars 107 neither 108 follow, attend; sow 109 chastening

election, in the chapters of your churches, with the calling of the Holy Ghost. For because that is not done nowadays, and because prelates are chosen oftentimes more by favor of men than by the grace of God; therefore truly have we not a few times bishops full little spiritual men, rather worldly than heavenly, savoring more the spirit of this world than the spirit of Christ.

Let the laws be rehearsed of the residence of bishops in their dioceses, that command that they look diligently, and take heed to the health of souls, that they sow the word of God, that they show themselves in their churches at the least on great holy days, that they do sacrifice for their people, that they hear the causes and matters of poor men, that they sustain fatherless children and widows, that they exercise themselves in works of virtue.

Let the laws be rehearsed of the good bestowing of the patrimony of Christ; the laws that command that the goods of the Church be spent, not in costly building, not in sumptuous apparel and pomps,¹¹⁰ not in feasting and banqueting, not in excess and wantonness, not in enriching of kinsfolk, not in keeping of dogs, but in things profitable and necessary to the Church. For when Saint Augustine,¹¹¹ sometime bishop of England, did ask the Pope Gregory¹¹² how that the bishops and prelates of England should spend their goods, that were the offerings of faithful people, the said pope answered (and his answer is put in the Decrees, in the twelfth chapter and second question),¹¹³ that the goods of bishops ought to be divided into four parts; whereof one part ought to be to the bishop and his household, another to his clerks, the third to repair and uphold his tenements, the fourth to the poor people.

Let the laws be rehearsed, yea, and that oftentimes, that take away the filths and uncleanness of courts, that take away those daily new-found crafts for lucre, that busy them to pull away this foul covetousness, the which is the spring and cause of all evils, the which is the well of all iniquity.

At the last let be renewed those laws and constitutions of fathers of the celebration of councils, that command provincial councils to be oftener used for the reformation of the Church. For

there never happeneth nothing more hurtful to the Church of Christ than the lack both of council general and provincial.

When these laws and such others are rehearsed, that be for us, and that concern the correction of manners, there lacketh nothing but that the same be put in execution with all authority and power; that once, seeing we have a law, we live after the law. For the which things, with all due reverence, I call chiefly upon you fathers. For this execution of the laws and observing of the constitutions must needs begin of you, that ye may teach us priests to follow you by lively¹¹⁴ examples; or else truly it will be said of you, "They lay grievous burdens upon other men's backs, and they themselves will not as much as touch it with their little finger."¹¹⁵

Forsooth¹¹⁶ if you keep the laws, and if you reform first your life to the rules of the canon laws, then shall ye give us light, in the which we may see what is to be done of our part—that is to say, the light of your good example. And we, seeing our fathers so keeping the laws, will gladly follow the steps of our fathers.

The clergy's and spiritual's¹¹⁷ part once reformed in the Church, then may we with a just order proceed to the reformation of the lay's part, the which truly will be very easy to do, if we first be reformed. For the body followeth the soul; and, such rulers as are in the city, like¹¹⁸ dwellers be in it. Wherefore if priests that have the charge of souls be good, straight¹¹⁹ the people will be good. Our goodness shall teach them more clearly to be good than all other teachings and preachings. Our goodness shall compel them into the right way truly more effectuously than all your suspendings and cursings.

Wherefore, if ye will have the lay people to live after¹²⁰ your wish and will, first live you yourself after the will of God; and so, trust me, ye shall get in them whatsoever ye will.

Ye will be obeyed of¹²¹ them, and right it is. For in the epistle to the Hebrews these are the words of Saint Paul to the lay people: "Obey," saith he, "to your rulers, and be you under them."¹²² But if ye will have this obedience, first perform in you the reason and cause of obedience, the which the said Paul doth teach, and it followeth in the text—that is,

110 splendid displays; magnificent ceremonies 111 Augustine of Canterbury (d. ca. 605) 112 Pope

Gregory I (ca. 540–604) 113 See *Decretals of Gregory IX*. 114 living; vital 115 Mt 23:4, Lk 11:46 116 In

truth 117 the spirituality's 118 similar 119 immediately 120 according to 121 by 122 Heb 13:17

“Take you heed also diligently, as though ye should give a reckoning for their souls,”¹²³ and they will obey you.

You will be honored of the people. It is reason.¹²⁴
 5 For Saint Paul writeth unto Timothy, “Priests that rule well are worthy double honors, chiefly those that labor in word and teaching.”¹²⁵ Therefore, if ye desire to be honored, first look that ye rule well, and that ye labor in word and teaching, and then shall
 10 the people have you in all honor.

You will reap their carnal¹²⁶ things, and gather tithes and offerings without any striving. Right it is. For Saint Paul, writing unto the Romans, saith:
 15 “They are debtors, and ought to minister unto you in carnal things.”¹²⁷ First sow you your spiritual things, and then ye shall reap plentifully their carnal things. For truly that man is very hard and unjust, that will “reap where he never did sow, and that will gather where he never scattered.”¹²⁸

20 Ye will have the Church’s liberty, and not to be drawn afore¹²⁹ secular judges; and that also is right. For it is in the Psalms: “Touch ye not mine anointed.”¹³⁰ But if ye desire this liberty, first unloose yourself from the worldly bondage, and from
 25 the services of men; and lift up yourself into the true liberty, the spiritual liberty of Christ, into grace from sins; and serve you God, and reign in him. And then, believe me, the people will not touch the anointed of their Lord God.

30 Ye would be out of business in rest and peace, and that is convenient.¹³¹ But if ye will have peace, come again to the God of peace and love. Come again to Christ, in whom is the very true peace of the

Ghost,¹³² the which passeth all wit.¹³³ Come again to yourself, and to your priestly living. And, to make an end, as Saint Paul saith, “Be you reformed
 35 in the newness of your understanding, that you savor those things that are of God; and the peace of God shall be with you.”¹³⁴

These are they, Reverend Fathers and right famous men, that I thought to be said for the reformation of the Church’s estate.¹³⁵ I trust ye will take them of¹³⁶ your gentleness to the best. And if peradventure¹³⁷ it be thought that I have passed my bounds in this sermon, or have said anything out of temper,¹³⁸ forgive it me; and ye shall forgive a man
 45 speaking of very¹³⁹ zeal, [to] a man sorrowing the decay of the Church. And consider the thing itself, not regarding any foolishness. Consider the miserable form and state of the Church, and endeavor
 50 yourselves with all your minds to reform it. Suffer¹⁴⁰ not, fathers, this your so great a gathering to depart in vain. Suffer not this your congregation to slip for naught.¹⁴¹ Truly ye are gathered oftentimes together, but—by your favor to speak the truth—
 55 yet I see not what fruit cometh of your assembling, namely to the Church.

Go ye now in the spirit that ye have called on, that, by the help of it, ye may in this your council find out, discern, and ordain those things that
 60 may be profitable to the Church, praise unto you, and honor unto God. Unto whom be all honor and glory forever more.

Amen.

123 a paraphrase. See Heb 13:17.

124 reasonable 125 1 Tim 5:17

126 material 127 a paraphrase. See Rom 13:5–6. 128 See Mt 25:24–26,

Lk 19:21–22. 129 before 130 Ps

104(105):15 131 appropriate

132 (Holy) Spirit 133 *passeth all wit:* surpasses all learning 134 Rom 12:2

135 state 136 out of 137 perhaps

138 proportion 139 *of very:* out of true

140 Permit 141 wickedness