

Propositions on Indifferent Things & Ceremonies in Worship

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Translated by
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Propositions on Indifferent Things & Ceremonies in Worship¹

“I set down a few propositions on rites and indifferent things in general in this chapter so that the many ceremonies following may be carefully examined:

1. A human act is said to be indifferent which has no moral goodness or maliciousness, that is, which is commanded or prohibited by no natural or divine law.
2. Nothing proceeding from deliberative reason is indifferent in the particular exercise or act, according to its species of indifferent things, but for the reason of the circumstances and end it is either morally good or bad.
3. To add sacred things or rites, Jewish or instituted by men, to the sacred things and rites, or ceremonies, of divine worship that are prescribed by God, is not a thing *adiaphora* (indifferent), either in its meaning or its operation.
4. Though if it were lawful to add sacred things and rites instituted by men into the things and rites instituted in the New Testament, yet it is not lawful to convert to or retain the sacred things or rites of idolaters, either of the heathens or papists, whether contrived by them or by others, if only they have been polluted with superstition by them, though they may have been things indifferent in themselves, if their use is not necessary.
5. Though it were lawful to sacred things and rites of the papists to the sacred things and rites instituted by divine law, nevertheless, it is not beneficial, because in order to shun scandal, every appearance of evil is to be abstained from.
6. Though it were lawful to add other things contrived by ourselves, the Fathers, the papists or others to the sacred ceremonies instituted by God, yet nevertheless they must not be vain or frivolous; they are not to be multiplied excessively; and neither their perpetuity, uniformity or observation is necessary, without a case of scandal or contempt.

¹ The translation was kindly checked by Charles F. Johnson.

7. Just as it is not lawful to add other sacred things or rites to the sacred things and rites instituted by God, so neither is it to detract from them, or to institute a rite which may detract from them.
8. Since, therefore, it is neither lawful to add to nor detract from the sacred things and rites instituted by God, it follows that not more than a directing by some general canons given by God in nature and Scripture is permitted to the power of the Church in the administration and management of the sacred things and rites instituted by God, so that all may be done orderly and decently, and so that the sacred things and rites may be administered so that they may edify."

The End