

THE
VANITY
OF
HUMAN INSTITUTIONS
IN THE
WORSHIP of GOD.
A
SERMON

Preached at *Newark*, *June 2. 1736.* To
which are added, some little Enlarge-
ments.

By *JONATHAN DICKINSON, M.A.*
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*Gal. iv. 9. But now after that ye have known God, or
rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and
beggerly Elements, wherunto ye desire again to be in Bondage?*

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To the Presbyterian Congregation at Newark in New-Jersey.

Dear Brethren,

I was in Compliance with the earnest Sol-
licitations of some of you, that I first prea-
ched ; and then consented to publish the
ensuing Discourse. It is (I must confess)
very disagreeable to me, to bring these contro-
versial Points into the Pulpit ; being sensible
that there are much weightier Matters that
ought to be the ordinary Subjects of our Prea-
ching : Whence this is the first Sermon, where-
in I have particularly insisted upon these
Things in the whole Course of my Ministry.
But the Reasons which were offered me ; and
the Circumstances of your Congregation where
so many were enclined without any known
Cause, to change their Profession and forsake
your Communion ; convinc'd me that a Dis-
course of this kind was at that Time seasona-
ble. And I have this to comfort me amidst
all the Clamours of angry Men, that what I
delivered to you and have herewith emitted,
is agreeable to the Council of God ; and found-
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ed upon the unalienable Rights of Mankind :
 And therefore proper to be urged upon those,
 who seemed so earnest to part with the Li-
 berty wherewith Christ hath made them
 free ; and causelessly to take upon them a Yoke
 of Bondage.

I am not sensible that I have given any
 Cause for those tragical Outcries, that have
 been made upon this Occasion ; having thro'
 the whole Discourse handled the Argument
 with all the Caution and Tenderneſs that I
 could : being as careful to prevent the ſow-
 ring of Mens Tempers, and the alienating
 their Affections one from another ; as to eſta-
 bliſh the important Truths herein aſſerted.
 However I do as heartily forgive the Abuses
 I have met with, as I diſpiſe the Threatnings
 of thoſe, who are willing to ſhew us what
 they would be at, if they had the Power in
 their Hands.

I have herein particularly inſiſted upon the
 Neceſſity of Charity and mutual Forbearance,
 in the Affairs of Conſcience and Salvation ;
 and cannot but again inculcate the ſame
 Doctrines: with the moſt earneſt Application.
 For tho' you have all Faith, that you could

remove

remove Mountains ; and have not Charity, you are Nothing. 1 Cor. xiii. 2. And I here forbear observing to you, that this is one of our greatest Articles of Complaint against the Church of England, that they refuse us their Communion, lay all under Excommunication by their Canons, that scruple a Compliance with their imposed Rites and Ceremonies ; and that their warmest Advocates declare us all incapable of Salvation for want of a Prelacy, whereof we cannot find the least Account in the Oracles of God. Thus since they know that we are grieved with their Meat, they walk not charitably, in destroying him with their Meat for whom Christ dyed. Rom. xiv. 15. From whence we have good Reason to conclude, that they are safest who are most charitable, and that the Error is on the damning Side. And I am willing to refer it to your own Judgments and Consciencs, who walk most agreeably to that brotherly Love, Charity and Kindness, so much insisted upon in the Gospel of Christ. We that treat our episcopal Brethren with the Respect that is due to Christians and fellow Members of the Body of Christ ; and are
willing

willing to receive them into our Fellowship and Communion, in all the Ordinances of Gods House. Or they who reject us from their Society; and put the stumbling Block of their uninstituted Rites and Ceremonies in the Way between us, that we are forced to abstain from their Communion; or to wound our own Consciences. These Things we take to be very great Grievances, and express Violations of the great Laws of Charity and Love. But then, since we make this Complaint of the Church of England, let us be especially careful, that we dont fall into any Degree of the like uncharitableness. Let your Deportment towards those who differ from you, be with the greatest Kindness, Friendship, and Love, that by this all Men may know that you are Christs Disciples, that you love one another. *Job. xiii. 35.* For thou art inexcusable O Man! Whosoever thou art, that judgest; if wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self; and if thou that judgest, dost the same Things. *Rom. ii. 1.*

Let it be always remembered, that tho' we complain of the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church

Church of England ; and especially of their being imposed upon the Consciences of those that religiously scruple them : Yet we heartily consent to their Doctrinal Articles ; and would rejoice to find that all the Ministers of the Church of England did so too. But what represents a Conformity to that Church the most unsafe to me, is, that the generality of their Clergy are professedly Arminians ; and they themselves should best know, how they reconcile those Tenets with the excellent Articles which they subscribe. I should (I confess) think there was a very dark Cloud come over our Churches, that the Glory of the God of Israel was gone up to the Threshold of the House ; and that ICHABOD was become our Motto ; if the Doctrines of original Sin, of our Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Christ, of the Efficacy of the Sovereign free Grace of God ; and of the Preseverance of the Saints, were once exploded and ridiculed among us, as they have been by some of the most eminent Clergy of the Church of England.

I am sure Brethren these Doctrines are dear to you, they are Doctrines upon which
you

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you found your Hopes of Salvation ; and it must therefore appear most reasonable to considerate Persons, to continue in Fellowship with those Churches where they are believed as well as professed, lest they or their Families, are ensnared with the Errors of the Times ; and are brought to forsake the Doctrines, with the Communion of our Churches.

Finally Brethren farewell : Be perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace ; and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.

*I am your Servant for
Christ Sake,
J. D.*



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THE
V A N I T Y
OF
HUMAN INSTITUTIONS
IN THE
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&c.

Mark vii. 7. *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*



It is the Scope and Purport of the first Commandment, that we Worship the only true God; so it is the great Design of the Second, that we worship him in a right
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and acceptable Manner. Our Obedience to the first is taught us by the Light of Nature: But our Conformity to the Second must be altogether directed by divine Institution: For God best knows, what Worship will be most acceptable to him and most serviceable to us. He has therefore particularly instructed us in both the Matter and Manner of his Worship, that neither may be left to the different and contradictory Dispositions, Affections and Opinions of Men; nor their fluctuating Inclinations or capricious Humours: But that all may conform to the *Pattern that was given in the Mount*, to his own Institutions, which are the only Standard of the Sanctuary, and the only Rule of our religious Conduct. *To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them. Isai. viii. 20.* Upon this Account it is, that our Blessed Saviour so sharply reproveth the Scribes and Pharisees in our Text and Context. That not contented with divine Institutions, they must add some of their own, as tho' Gods Worship stood in Need of their refining and polishing, in Order to render it more compleat and perfect. Thus did they *in vain worship God, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

If we take Notice of the special Occasion of this Crimination against the Scribes and Pharisees, it was not for fundamental Errors in Principle; nor for flagitious Lives: But only for a
religious

religious Injunction of what was in it self most innocent and indifferent, *the washing of Hands before Meat*; as appears from the 2 and 3 Verses of the Chapter. *And when they saw some of his Disciples eat Bread with defiled (that is to say with unwasben) Hands they found Fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their Hands oft eat not, holding the Tradition of the Elders.* And to this it is our Lord makes the sharp Reply, in the Words before us.

It must be confessed, that this was a cleanly and decent Custom: But it wanted divine Appointment to warrant its Injunction as a religious Rite. And while it wanted that, it lay open to that Reprimand, *who hath required this at your Hands?* And laid the Imposers open to the just Censures of him, whose Prerogative they invaded.

In the Words we may Note.

1. A declaratory Sentence against their Worship. (*In vain do they worship me.*) Notwithstanding all their shew of Wisdom in this their Will Worship, it was in Christ Account vain, idle, trifling and impertinent. Such as would not find Acceptance with God, nor turn to their own Advantage.

2. Here is the Reason of this Sentence against their Worship. *Their teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

It's observable, that these Commandments were from the Supream Authority in the Jewish Church.

Church. The condemned Institution, was the *Tradition of the Elders*. Verse 5. and by the Decree of the *Sanbedrim*. An Authority from Gods own immediate Institution; and therefore worthy to be honoured and regarded by all Men, while they kept to the Rules, and within the Limits of their delegated Power. But when they came to put a religious Sanction upon any Rites, Ceremonies or Institutions of their own, tho' in themselves never so innocent or indifferent, they usurped the divine Authority; and therefore exceeded the Limits of their own. They certainly had as great Authority as any Church upon Earth, or as any ecclesiastical Rulers in the World, ever had: But yet they had not Power sufficient; to enjoin the indifferent Rite of Washing Hands before Meat, as a religious Duty.

But that we may have a clearer View of the Case before us, it may be proper to consider, what is implied in *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*; and how this renders our Worship vain.

I'm first then to consider, what is implied in teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.

And it must be here premised, that agreeing among our selves upon any meer Circumstantials and Appendages of Worship, is not teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. It's impossible to attend upon any publick Worship, without

without adjusting some external Circumstances with Relation to it, such as the Time and Place of Worship; and such like Things as are altogether extrinsecal to the Worship it self, and which have no Religion placed in them. This is no Addition to, or Detraction from the divine Institution, no Imposition upon any Mans Conscience, no *lording it over Gods Heritage*; and therefore perfectly Innocent and indifferent. Here *Wisdom is profitable to direct*, how these Things may be best adapted to the Circumstances and Occasions of each religious Society. And here that general Rule takes place, *Let all Things be done decently and in Order*. But then,

1. Proposing and requiring as a religious Duty, what God has not proposed as such nor required of us, is *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. This was eminently the Case of the Scribes and Pharisees in our Context. There was no Sin in washing their Hands before Meat, there was no Sin in washing what they brought from Market, or in washing their Cups and Pots, brasen, Vessels and Tables. But their Sin was in placing Religion in them, and requiring them as religious Observances. It was no Apology that these Things were indifferent; and were therefore to be complied with for the sake of Peace and Order. For if they were indifferent, why were they not left indifferent? By what Authority did they make that necessary, which God had left free? Why could they not
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be peaceable and orderly upon Gods Terms, as well as upon Terms of their own devising? Who are chargeable with the Infractions of Peace and Order, they that would peaceably worship God according to his own Appointments, or they that disturb the Peace of the Church with their own Inventions

What Religion can their be in doing what will be no ways pleasing to God? Or how can we suppose that acceptable to him, which he has not required? There can be no Obligation in this Case, but the Commandments of Men; and what Obligation can those Commands lay us under, that are given without Authority, as all human Institutions in Matters of Conscience and Religion are? For *there is but one Lawgiver who is able to save and destroy; and who is he that judgeth another. Jam. iv. 12.*

God himself has given us a compleat and perfect Rule in this Case, sufficient for *Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and for Instruction, in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished to all good Works, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 7.* And if God the Supream Lord of Conscience has given us his Law for our Observance, who should venture to interpose? If this Law be perfect, what Room can there be for any Addition to it?

If it be here replied, that religious Observances may be required, without any Pretence of adding to the divine Law, whilst they have a

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Relation only to the outward Polity, Peace, and Order of the Church, which are Things left by God to the Care and Direction of Church Officers; and necessary to be provided for by them. I answer, if no more be intended, then meer external Circumstances either of Worship or Discipline, the Reply is just, as I observed before: But then, these can't bear the Denomination, of religious Observances. If they once have Religion placed in them, they lose their indifferent Nature; and from Circumstances become integral Parts of God's Worship; and thereby render such Worship vain.

It might be here observed, that the Scribes and Pharisees in our Context, had the same Advantage to make this Plea that any Society whatsoever can now have. They might have argued, that this condemned Rite was a decent Observance, needful for maintaining the Peace, Unity and Order of the Church, that it was withal very significant of that Purity and Holiness, that is necessary to all the true Worshippers of God; and that it was very near of kin to those *divers Washings*, enjoined by God himself in the Levitical Law: But all these Pretences or as many more as could be invented, would not excuse their Superstition; nor acquit them from the Imputation of rendring their *Worship vain*, by *teachings for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. However, this is certain, that such Institutions must be either divine or human. If
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any should pretend that they are divine, they thereby acknowledge them an Invasion of God's Royalty, and an Addition to his Law; for how came they by divine Authority. If they are human, they come under the censure in our Text. And therefore since they are *Commandments of Men*, they cannot lay our Consciences under any Obligation to observe them. For there is but one Lord of Conscience. The Conclusion thereof follows, that all Rites, all Ceremonies, all modes of Worship, not appointed of God, if they have the stamp of Religion put upon 'em; and are enjoined as necessary Observances, are in all Cases unwarrantable.

2. Enjoining Terms of Communion which God has not enjoined, is *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. All true Christians are fellow Members of the mystical Body of Christ; and should therefore be joint Partakers of all the Priviledges of his House and Kingdom. If they are such as we can charitably suppose Christ will own at his Appearing and Kingdom, they are certainly such as we should now own, and admit to Communion in all his Ordinances. If they have a Right to the Kingdom of Glory, they certainly have a Claim to the Benefits of the Kingdom of Grace. And we are accordingly directed, *Rom. xv. 7. to receive one another as Christ also received us, to the Glory of God.* By what Authority then can any enjoin new
 Terms

Terms of Communion, that Christ has not required ; and whence this exorbitant Claim to put Fetters and Shackles upon Mens Consciences, whereby they must be forced, to sin against their own Consciences, or go without the Portion of Meat that God has provided for them ? Its enough, that we have *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*. Its enough, that we observe the Appointment that God has ordained, without taking a Yoke upon our Necks, that *neither we nor our Fathers have been able to bear*.

There is no Place here for the Pretence, of requiring Terms of Communion that are in themselves innocent and inoffensive. For is it possible to suppose any Thing more so, than washing of Hands before Meat ? And yet this as innocent as it was, exposed the Scribes and Pharisees to this severe Reprimand in our Text. And have not every Society in the World just the same Claim to this Pretence, let their Terms of Communion be what they will ? For none will acknowledge that they require what is sinful or unreasonable ; and every one have an equal Right to judge what is, and what is not so : If one Society may require what Terms they think innocent, every Society may require what Terms they think innocent, the Claim of each being founded upon the same Authority ; and justifiable by the same Arguments. There can be no Pretences made by any Church on Earth for enjoining any human Institutions, that can't

be urged with the same Justice, by the *Roman Catholics*, in Favour of all their ridiculous Pageantry, and of their superstitious and idolatrous Observances.

In a Word every Degree, and every kind of *Will-Worship*, when made a Term of Communion, is to subject the Conscience to the *Commandments of Men*; and to bring the scrupulous Conscience to the sad Necessity of neglecting publick Ordinances, or of sinning against their own Light. To say in this Case, that their Scruples are unreasonable, is to say just Nothing; for they dont appear so to them; and they have just the same Reason to avoid these Injunctions, as to avoid the most flagitious Crimes, because they appear sinful; and therefore are certainly so to them; and every one must believe for himself, and answer for himself. If they mistake in their Apprehensions, if they esteem those Things sinful that are in their own Nature innocent and Lawful, they are nevertheless sinful to them; for *he that doubts is damned if he eat*; and *it is evil to that Man that eateth with Offence*. Happy therefore is *he that condemneth not himself in that Thing which he alloweth*. *Rom. xiv. 20. 22. 23.* If their Consciences are weak, there should be the more Care *not to put a stumbling Block, or an Occasion to fall in our Brothers Way*. *Rom. xiv. 13.* It is then our Duty to *receive him that is weak, but not to doubtful Disputations*. *Rom. xiv. 1;* And *not to destroy him with our Meat for whom Christ*

Christ dyed. Rom. xiv. 15. From all which it appears that the impleaded Practice is an unwarrantable assuming the divine Prerogative, and a bold Invasion of Christs legal Authority.

3. Imposing any Terms of Communion by any penal Sanctions, is eminently *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. Every Person in the World has an equal Right to judge for themselves, in the Affairs of Conscience and eternal Salvation. And all have the same natural Right to all the Benefits and Comforts of Life. By what Pretence therefore, may they be deprived of any natural Right; because they don't subject their Consciences to other Mens Dicision? What dreadful Work has been made in the World, by using Methods of Force in Matters of Opinion and Conscience; and what dreadful Work would still be made if the same Methods are pursued! How must the World by this Means become an *Aceldema*; and we *devour and be devoured one of another*! If this be allowed, every Mans Hand must be against his Fellow; and all that have the Power in their Hands, are authorized to oppress and destroy the Weaker Side, whatever their Principles be. If coercive Methods are used at all in this Case, it must be because the Imposers think themselves in the Right. And by the same Reason, all that think themselves in the Right may justifiably force their Principles upon others. The Argument is as good at *Constantinople* or at *Rome*, in Favour

Favour of the *Alcoran* or the *Majs Book*, as in any religious Society whatsoever.

All temporal Injuries, all Force or Violence, all Prejudice to the Estates, Honours or Comforts of Men, on Account of their different Sentiments in Religion, is imposing the Commandments of Men ; and lording it over Gods Heritage with a Witness, a direct Violation of the great Laws of Peace and Love ; and directly opening the Door of all the Cruelties and Barbarities even of a *Spanish Inquisition*. For every Society have the same Right to inflict what Penalties they think proper ; and to judge what Penalties are proper to inflict, upon those that differ from them.

But has the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, any where encouraged these unmerciful Violations of the Laws of Humanity? Are we not therein directed to *love as Brethren*? Are we not admonished *not to judge our Brother, or to set at nought our Brother. Rom. xiv. 13.* And are we not therein informed, that *whosoever sin against the weak Brethren, (as all are esteemed that have not the Power in their Hands) and wound their weak Consciences, sin against Christ. I Cor. viii. 12.* Since therefore, no Acts of Unkindness upon Account of our religious Sentiments, can ever be justified by the Commands of God ; it must be *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

I am now to consider in the next Place, how this renders our Worship vain. And, 1: Be-

I. Because that it is of human Original, and not of divine Institution. As I have observed before, God is the only Lord of Conscience. He has left no Authority upon Earth, to make any Laws for his Subjects, in the immediate Affairs of his Kingdom: But has directed in what Way he will be worshipped. Who then has any Business to *set their Thresholds by Gods Thresholds, and their Posts by his Posts?* It's enough therefore, to render our *Worship vain*, if it can be said of it as of *Jereboams Feast*, that it *was devised out of our own Hearts*. Whatever Appearances of Sanctity and Devotion there may be in any Rites, Ceremonies, or Modes of Worship of human Institution; yet since they are of human Original, they are therefore but a *shew of Wisdom in Will-Worship*, as the Apostle instructs. *Col. ii. 22, 23. Which all are to perish with the using, after the Commandments and Doctrines of Men, which Things have indeed a shew of Wisdom in Will-Worship and Humility.*

No Pretences of Decency and Order will serve in this Case; for God himself is the best Judge of what is decent and orderly in his immediate Service; and cannot be pleased with what is not agreeable to his own Will: And how can we conclude any Thing agreeable to his Will, but what he has appointed.

If our own Inclinations, Imaginations, or Apprehensions are sufficient to direct us, to what
Worship

Worship or Mode of Worship is pleasing to God or agreeable to his Will, without a divine Institution, then every Worship or Mode of Worship in the World must upon that Supposition be acceptable to God, since every one have a like Claim to follow the Dictates of their own Apprehensions in this Case, and every one may with the same Justice conclude, that their Apprehensions are Right. God has given the like Liberty to all Men and to all Societies of Men to judge for themselves. If some may in this Case judge one Way of Worship pleasing to God, others may on the same Grounds judge the direct contrary to be so. And what Contradiction, what Confusion, what blending together of Light and Darknes, what a Justification of all the Worship among the *Papists, Ranters, &c.* would this be! For certainly every one have the Right to follow what appears to them must decent and orderly. But God has left us no Room for any of these Pretences, or any of these Confusions. He has not left this Affair to the Determination of any Men whatsoever; but has himself provided and particularly directed, how he will be worshipped. And thence it is that all the *Commandments of Men* in this Case are but *vain Worship*.

2. Because it's a Reflection upon the Wisdom and Faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ, to introduce our own Inventions into his Worship. It is a Character given of our Blessed Saviour.

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Heb. iii. 2. That he was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was in all his House. And we find Moses was faithful, to keep to the Pattern given him in the Mount, to the very Taches, Pins, and Fillets of the Tabernacle. Accordingly our Blessed Lord has shewed us all the Form of the House, and the Fashion thereof, and the Goings-out thereof, and the Comings-in thereof, and all the Ordinances thereof, and all the Laws thereof, *Ezek. xliii. 11.* And has denounced his Curse against any that shall add to, or diminish from what is contained in his Word. *Rev. xxii. 18. 19.* What Room then can there be for any new Institutions, for any Rites, Modes, or Ceremonies of Worship, which he has not appointed? Are we wiser than Christ? He has appointed what he thought sufficient; and why should not we think it sufficient too? Are the Laws and Institutions of Christ a perfect Rule or not? If they be, what Occasion is there of human Inventions? If they be not, where is his Wisdom, where is his Faithfulness? Nay, if they be not, where shall we stop on this Side Rome? If there be Place for some human Inventions in Gods Worship, there is Place for all human Inventions in God's Worship, unless there can be shewn an exclusive Character for some, and none but they, to add what they think proper and needful. If a Protestant Church may, a Popish Church also may, invent new Methods of Decency and Order

der in the Worship of God. We must therefore reject all, or none, keep only Christs Institutions, or submit to all human Additions that are imposed upon us. The Bible is our only Directory; and they that set up any other, reflect egregiously upon the Author of it.

3. Because this Practice has a direct Tendency to root out vital Piety, and the Power of Godliness. They that place Religion in Form and outward Observances, are ordinarily ready to rest in those Forms and go no further. This was the Case of the Scribes and Pharisees. They had first an Itch at refining upon Gods Law by the Addition of their own Institutions; and then they came to reject Gods Law for the Sake of their own Traditions. *Full well ye reject the Commandments of God, that ye may keep your own Traditions.* Context verse 9. And I venture to appeal to my Audience, whether it has not been their constant Observation, that there has been the least of the Power of Godliness, where there has been the greatest Attachment to human Inventions, to external Pomp and Ceremony in the Worship of God. They that place Religion in what God has not required, are ready to spend their zeal that Way; and grow careless about that Religion which he has required. We often see such as these *make broad their Phylacteries, and enlarge the Hem of their Garments: But neglect the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgement, Mercy and Faith;* and thus
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thus they render *their Worship vain*. — — But it's Time to make some Reflections upon what we have heard. And,

In the first Place, this gives immediate Occasion to gratify the Desires of some of my Hearers, by considering the Reasons why we cannot ordinarily join with the Worship of the *Church of England*; because we think they *teach for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. The Time before us will not allow a distinct and particular Disquisition of this Case, all that I can now do, is very briefly to offer some of the Objections that have been from the beginning of the *Reformation*, and yet are made, against Conformity to that Church.

We can't help but think that stinted and imposed, *Liturgies*, are *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. It's certain that the Scriptures have imposed none, they have prescribed none. And I think its impossible to produce any Direction or Warrant from the Word of God, to any Men upon Earth, to prescribe or impose any Forms of Prayer for constant Worship. We cannot therefore but suppose the Injunction of the *Common-Prayer Book* unwarrantable. For we know no Way to answer this Argument. This Book is imposed either by the Command of God or of Man, if by the Command of God, there must be some Precept for it in Scripture, or at least some Promise that God will accept it, which I think none will pre-

tend to ; if by the Command of Man, our Objection against it is just ; and it comes directly under the Censure in our Text. We have no Account either in the old or new Testament, of any *Forms of Prayer* for stated publick Worship ; and we may therefore presume that there was none imposed by the divine Direction, and Permission. We therefore know of no Authority to appoint, much less to impose them now. And it greatly adds to our uneasiness under these imposed Forms, that they limit both the Matter and Manner of our Prayers, prevent those proper Addresses to God that special Exigencies call for, and which no Form can provide for ; and deprive us of those divine Assistances that may be hoped for, in the Use of conceived Prayers thence they seem inconsistent with that of the Apostle Rom. viii. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities : For we know not what we should pray for as we ought : But the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for us, with Groanings which cannot be uttered.*

It is not the Question, whether any Forms of Prayer are lawful, it is on all Hands, acknowledged. Forms may be very useful to such ignorant Persons, as know not how to pray without them. But we would not by them be deprived of improving the Gift of Prayer which God has given us ; nor be forced to use Crutches, when we have the free Use of our Limbs.

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We cannot help but think that taking a great Part of the Prayer-Book especially the whole Method and Form of it out of the Popish Liturgy, is *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. That this is Fact is beyond Dispute; and may be made evident to any that will take the Pains to compare them. Whence we think that we have just Cause to complain, that the Order and Method, as well as a great Part of the Matter of these Prayers, are not only from the Commandments of Men; but originally from the Commandments of Antichrist himself. It therefore appears to us too great a Symbolizing with Idolaters to stately use them in our publick Worship, contrary to that Rule *1 Cor. x. 28.* and that in *Cor. vi. 17.*

It is true, the *Prayer-Book* has left out the most superstitious and idolatrous Parts of the *Mass-Book*; and contains some Additions to, as well as Alterations of, what is contained in the *Roman Liturgy*; yet we think it also true, that there might be found a better Resort than to the Pope of Rome, both for the Matter and Manner of our Prayers.

We cannot but object against the *Tautologies* in the *Common-Prayer*, as teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. In one Service, the Worshippers must repeat these Words *Good Lord deliver us*, eight Times over; and these Words *We beseech thee to hear us*,
 twenty

twenty Times over. Which appears directly repugnant to our Lords Direction in Mat. vi. 7. *But when ye pray use not vain Repetitions as the Heathen do.*

We cannot but think the Reading of the *Apo-cryphal* Books as a Part of publick Worship, while there are a great many Parts of the canonical Scriptures never read in publick, to be likewise worthy of the same Censure. Does not this look like casting Contempt upon the blessed Book of God, the only *Oracles of Salvation*, when these human, and even trifling and fabulous Compositions, are substituted in the stead of it? Does not this look like paying a Religious Reverence to the Doctrines of fallible Men, when their Commandments are exalted to these high Places, publickly taught for Doctrines; and treated with the Regard that is only due to the Word of God? And must the inspired Pages give Way to these legendary Fables, and much of the Bible be never read in the Church! This adds Weight to the Grievance.

We cannot but think the *Sign of the Cross* in Baptism, is also *teaching the Commandments the Doctrines of Men*. The *Cross* is made on the Forehead in Baptism, in Token that the Party be not hereafter ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ crucified, and that he is to fight manfully under his Banner, &c. Now if this be a Token, of these Invisible Graces, it agrees with the Churches own Definition of a Sacrament.

ment. *A visible Sign of invisible Grace.* Since therefore it is confessed on all Hands, that the *Cross* as abused by the Church of *Rome* has been one of their greatest Idols should the Church of *England* who abhor their Idolatry give the Honour of a Sacrament to a Popish Idol? And I would enquire by whose Commandment is this Honour given to it? Is it by the Commandment of God or of Men? The former is not I think pretended; and if by the latter how can it escape the Censure of our Text? I would further enquire, why this Honour is done to the *Cross* on which Christ was crucified, any more than to the Thorns with which he was crowned, to the Traytor by which he was betray'd, or the malicious Court by which he was condemned. I can think of no Plea that can be made in Favour of this Usage, but what may be also made for it's Companions in this Ordinance among the Papists, *Cream, Salt and Spittle*, and be sure none, but what might have been made for the Practice condemned in our Text.

We cannot but have the same Thoughts of *Kneeling* at the *Lords Supper*. All confess that *Kneeling* is a Posture of Religious Adoration: But what do we adore in the Act of receiving this Ordinance? It's true, the Church of *England* expressly disclaim any Adoration to the Elements: But why then shou'd they use the Posture of Adoration? It is known to the World, that this Method of receiving the Sacrament

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was brought in by the Papists, with their Doctrine of Transubstantiation; and some of them have confessed that they would be torn to Pieces by wild Horses, if they did not believe Christ there bodily present. *Costerus* the Jesuit confesses, that if the Substance of the Bread remain, the *Idolatry of the Papists is more intollerable than the Egyptians was, in worshipping an Ox or a Crocodile.* † It is certain our blessed Master who instituted this Ordinance, did not himself use it kneeling; but in the common Table Gesture *Mat. xxvi. 28.* And can it be Reverence in us, to pretend to a more suitable and decent Method of attending the Ordinance, than either he himself used or appointed? Since the glorious Author of this Feast is pleased to stoop to a friendly Familiarity with his Guests; and has instituted this Ordinance to that End, is it not the highest Reverence to attend it in a Method agreeable to the End of its Institution, especially since we have his own Example to warrant our Conduct?

We cannot but have the same Sentiments of the *Sureties in Baptism*, and the Vows they lay themselves under. These promise and vow in the Name of the Child, that he shall renounce the Devil and all his Works, the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World; and all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh, that he shall believe all
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† *Costerus, Enchiridion, p. 8. Vid. Amos fresh Suit Part. 1. p. 521.*

the Articles of the Christian Faith; and keep Gods Holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the Days of his Life. But it is not within the Compass of human Power, to make and keep these Promises. Who can promise for any Infant, that it shall so much as have the Exercise of Reason, much less that it shall live in the highest Exercise of Grace. It is Gods Prerogative to give a new Heart; and to give the Grace to lead a Life of Faith and Holiness; It does not seem a sufficient Apology for this Conduct, that the Obligation is to be understood in the more lax and general Sense of the Words; and not according to their strict and literal Signification; since all Vows are always to be taken and always to be understood, in the plain natural and received Sense of the Words in which they are made, if we would have any sincerity maintain'd in the World, either towards God or Man. Nor can I see how it helps the Case to alledge, that the *Sureties* depend upon the Divine Assistance for the fulfilment of these Obligations; for God has never given, never promised Assistance to any Man in changing the Hearts, sanctifying the Natures; and governing the Affections and Passions of others. But were it in the Sureties Power to fulfil these Vows, how come the Obligations to be transferred from the *Parents*, to whom it belongs to bring up their Children in the Nature and Admonition of the Lord, *Eph. vi. 4.*

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to *Sureties* that have not the Education of the Children ; nor Advantages to instil into them the Principles of Holiness and Piety ? Not to speak of the general unconcernedness of the most of those that take these Vows upon them, about the religious Conduct of their *God-Children* as they call them.

The like Objection also lies against the *Service* in the *Burial of the Dead*, The Minister is obliged at the Funeral of every one that does not die unbaptized, or excommunicate ; or that has not laid violent Hands upon himself to declare that it has pleased Almighty God of his Mercy to take the Soul of this our Dear Brother to himself ; and to commit his Body to the Dust, in sure and certain Hopes of Resurrection to eternal Life ; and to give hearty Thanks to God, that it hath pleased him to deliver this our Brother out of the Miseries of this sinful World ; Even tho' the Person has lived never so wicked and flagitious a Life, dyed in the very Act of Sinning ; and left no rational Hope of his Salvation. We cannot but look upon this as a mocking of God ; and of a sad Tendency to harden Men in Sin, from the Expectations of Salvation, how carelessly soever they live.

We can't but think in like Manner, that the Absolution of the Sick upon a Profession of Repentance, is a teaching for *Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. To such the Minister must declare, that by the Authority of the Lord
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Jesus Christ committed to him, he absolves them from all their Sins, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. But we know of no such Authority committed to any Man by the Lord Jesus Christ. We know nothing of his having put the Authority of absolving Sinners and forgiving Sins out of his own Hands, into the Hands of any Man or Men in the World. Nor does it satisfy to pretend, that this is but a declarative Absolution, and not authoritative: For whence have they a just claim even to that? I know not where to find any such Powers given by the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever Pretences are made to it. And it is hard to imagine, what Good this can do; unless it can be supposed advantageous to ignorant Sinners, to have their Consciences quieted in a State of Guilt, that they may securely depend upon their Absolution, as a Passport for Heaven.

We have the same Difficulty with Respect to the *Holy Days*, appointed to be observed by the Church of *England*. The Apostle particularly complains of the *Galatians*, that *they observed Days, and Months, and Times, and Years* on which Account *he was afraid he had bestowed Labour upon them in vain.* Gal. iv. 10 11. We may therefore justly demand by what Authority are the *Holy Days* in the Church of *England* enjoined. If by God's, let us see the Institution, if by Mans how are they more innocent than those complained of by the Apostle? If it be

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answered, that these were *Jewish Holy-Days*; and abrogated by Christs coming in the Flesh. I should again enquire what Reason can be given, if we must put off the Yoke that God himself made, why we should put one upon our Necks of our own Wreathing; and not *stand fast in the Liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free*?

I might also insist upon the sad Consequences of these Observances. there being commonly more Wickedness perpetrated upon those Days, than at any other Times, as tho' Christ was honoured by our Sensuality and Impiety.

We have the same Complaint to make of the *Prelate* and it's Attendants, in the Church of *England*. We know nothing, the Scriptures know nothing, of any imparity in the ordinary Ministers of the Gospel; much less do we find any Warrant from the Scriptures, for a *Diocesan Bishop* to claim all the Power of *Jurisdiction* and *Discipline*, as well as of *Ordination* to himself; and thereby deprive the Ministers of the Gospel, of exercising a great Part of the Charge committed to them by the Lord Jesus Christ. And we know nothing but the Commandments of Men, for the *Arch-Bishops, Lord-Bishops, Deans, Prebends, Arch-Deacons Vicars, Curates*, and the like, belonging to the Hierarchy of the Church of *England*.

I might here also observe, that we have like Matter of Complaint, of the *Discipline* of the Church,

Church of *England*. Who notwithstanding they have for above a hundred and fifty Years past, yearly confessed the want of that godly *Discipline*, that was in the primitive Church; yet they take no Care to restore it to this Day: But have all their *Discipline* managed by lay Courts, by *Chancellors, Commissaries, Proctors, Apparitors, &c.* Officers that the Scriptures are altogether Strangers to. And what aggravates the Grievance is, that instead of that spiritual *Discipline* appointed by Christ, theirs is carried on by corporal Inflictions, Imprisonments and Fines, to the vast Charge and temporal Injury of the Delinquents, which we can see no Warrant for but the *Commandments of Men*.

These are some of the chief Objections against our stated Communion with the Church of *England*; tho' many more have been made, and might be insisted on, such as the *Canonical Vestments*, the *broken Responses in Prayer*, *Women speaking in the Churches*, in vocal *Responses* and *Repetition*, contrary to the apostolical Canon, the manifest Corruptions in the old Translation of the *Psalms* yet in Use; with other like Things, that I have no Time to particularly insist upon.

But the chief Objection of all, is the Imposition of all this; and their declaring by their *Canons*, all those excommunicated *ipso Facto*, that don't approve all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of *England*; and that don't ap-
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prove of the Government of the Church of *England* by *Arch-Bishops, Bishops, Deans, Arch-Deacons* and the rest that bear Office in the same; or that pretend to groan under any Grievances imposed upon them, by the Church of *England*; or that dare allow that there are any Congregations or Assemblies in the Realm besides the Church of *England*, that may challenge to themselves the Names of true and lawful Churches. Not to speak of the many dreadful Persecutions suffered by thousands of serious Christians, for their conscientious Nonconformity to these Things, hoping that those Days of Tribulation are come to an End.

What can be a greater Tyranny over Mens Consciences, than this is? What can be more contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel; or more destructive of that Charity, Love and Peace, that are the essential Characteristicks of a true Christian? How can the *Reformation* be justified upon such Principles? For if the Church of *England* have Power to impose these Things upon their fellow Protestants; the Church of *Rome* by the same Reason, had Power to impose their Doctrines and Worship upon them. As I have observed before. And for the same Reason that the *Romish* Impositions were condemnable, are the *English* Impositions likewise to be complained of. — Tho' it be true, that there is greatest Difference in the Nature of the Things imposed by the Church of *Rome* and the Church
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of *England* : Yet I must take Leave to conclude, that there is none at all, in the Authority to impose them.

2. From what has been said there is just Cause to consider, what Reason there can be for those of our Profession, to forsake the Way of Worship in which they were educated, for the sake of these Additions of human Invention. We have all the Essentials and Substantials of Worship, that is found in the Church of *England*, all that Christ has made our Duty to attend upon, all that is a necessary Mean of our Salvation; and what do we want more? Are these controverted Points Indifferent as we are told they be, what Cause then can there be, why we should destroy the Peace of our Churches, forsake their Communion, and set up opposite Societies for indifferent Things? Or are they esteemed necessary to Salvation by any of us? Can any be so weak as to suppose any Thing necessary to Salvation, that wants a divine Institution, and has neither Precept nor Warrant from the *Oracles of God*? It is a sad Case if any built their Hope of Salvation upon the Practice of these Things. The usual Plea, that we must submit to them on Account of their legal Establishment, has no Place among us, where there is no particular Profession or Principles established by Law. I am therefore utterly ignorant, upon what Grounds our new Profelites change their Opinion and Communi.

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Many of my Audience are the Posterity of those who left their delightful Country and pleasant Habitations, crossed the *Atlantick* with their Families, came into a howling Wilderness among innumerable Multitudes of barbarous Salvages, encountred the most amazing Tryals, Difficulties and Discouragements, to fly from the Imposition of these Things; and to worship God in Peace and Purity according to his own Institutions. And how remarkably were they owned of God! How signal were the Appearances of his Providence in their Favour! Would it not therefore be every Way our Interest, to imitate their Purity and Piety in worshipping the God of our Fathers, that he may be with us as he was with our Fathers, that he may *remember the Kindness of our Youth, and the Love of our Espousals, when we came after him into the Wilderness, into a Land not Sown? Why then gad we about to change our Way?*

3. We may also infer from the Text, that we ought to be careful not to censure one another, and not to maintain Contentions, Animosities and Alienation of Affections, on Account of these debated Points. If we can't join with others, because they *teach for Doctrines, the Commandments of Men*, let us not censure others for not submitting to the *Commandments of Men*. If they without Conviction submit to our Opinions, they subject their Consciences to human, and not to divine Authority: And our requiring this of any is demanding a

a Subjection to us, and not to Christ. We have indeed a Right to give the Reasons of our Opinion; and to endeavour to convince others, of what we esteem to be Truth: But we have no Right to claim their Assent without Conviction; nor to be offended with them, for not thinking as we do; any more than they have to be offended with us for not thinking as they do. For every one have the same Claim as we have, to judge for themselves.

To apply this to the present Case, what Cause can there be for any Acts of Unkindness, for any want of Friendship, Charity or Love, on Account of these different Sentiments? If these Principles on both Sides the Question, are consistent with a State of saving Grace, why not consistent with mutual Charity and Forbearance? If there may be such of each Party that are fellow Members of the Mystical Body of Christ, why should they not live in Love and Peace; and not *fall out by the Way, for they are Brethren?* If there be some Things in which we differ, there are much greater in which we agree; therefore *wherein we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Thing.* Let it be our chief Emulation, to excel one another in Holiness, Piety, and Usefulness in the World.

Whatever is wrong, we are sure this is Right, to *have brotherly Love continue.* And let it be always remembered, that there can be no true Christianity, without Charity, Kindness and
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Love. Beware of Strife and Contention; for where there are Contentions, there is Confusion and every evil Work.

Finally, this may be improved by Way of Exhortation to every one, to be awfully careful, that their Worship don't prove in vain. There is a great deal depends upon the regular Practice of Devotion; and it's of infinite Importance that it be so performed, as to find Acceptance with God. There are other Things besides submitting to *human Institutions*, that may render our *Worship vain*; such are in an especial Manner, Unbelief, Hypocrisy, Formality, and trifling Indifference in the Duties of Religion. Let us therefore be serious and solemn, earnest and Diligent, in seeking the Favour of God in all the Ways of his Appointment, depending upon the Merits and Mediation of the blessed Redeemer, to render our Persons and Services acceptable to him; and to entitle us to an Inheritance with the Saints in Light.

F I N I S.

