

forms on the Ministers themselves.

Ans. First, I know no man that questioneth but some form of prayer and praise were imposed by God himself, on the Jewish Ministers; And one was taught by Christ to his Apostles: And a form of Profession of faith, and of Baptism and the Lords supper is imposed on all the Ministers of the Church. And Joel 2. 17. a form of prayer is taught the Priests: Secondly, But we are not now pleading for the needless imposing of any forms, nor the causeless restraint of extraordinary prayers. I have fully born my testimony against that in due season: But many things are lawfully and necessarily obeyed, which are not lawfully commanded, as I shall shew you more anon. I could heartily wish that we could say that all Ministers (of any party) were such as were wholly above the need of forms. Or at least such whose own composures were better for the Church, than any that could be offered them by others (If it were not a contradiction)

But all that I now expect from the Objectors is, that they tell me or themselves, what proof they have that it is a sin for a Minister only to use an imposed form; when all the Congregation esse may use it? Answer this well before you go.

And I pray let all the people note here, that it is not, nor cannot be denied, but that a form (even a new one every day) may be lawfully be imposed upon all them; and that the question is only of the Ministers use of imposed forms.

Obj. But our Ministers do not impose their prayers by force.

Ans.

Answ. Do you think that there is no imposition but by force? Your Pastor is your guide in the worship of God; and God hath imposed it on you to follow him, and joyn with him in lawful prayer. And what the *words shall be*, and what the *matter and order* chosen for that time the Speaker *chooseth* for you! And so he bindeth you by his Ministerial authority (which is a true and lawful imposing) though he compel you not by the sword or force.

Obj. But Christ hath given gifts to all his Ministers and commanded them to use them. And they use them not when they use imposed formes; Therefore we must not obey men against Christ.

Answ. No doubt but all that are lawful Ministers, have such gifts as are necessary to the *essential works* of their office. But the *degrees* of their gifts have very great variety, as *Paul* fully sheweth in *1 Cor. 12.* and oft elsewhere.

And the necessary gift for hearty acceptable prayer, is *true Desire* excited by the spirit of supplication, which sometime venteth it self but by *sighes and groans*, *Rom. 8. 16, 26.*

But the Ministerial gift of prayer is *Knowledge and Utterance*; by which a Minister may be able to express the desires and wants of the people unto God: which includeth *memory* in some degree. Even as *Knowledge and Utterance* are his Gift of preaching.

And some have *more Knowledge* and *worser Utterance*; And some have *better Utterance* and *less Knowledge*; And some through want of *memory* are defective in both.

The lowest rank of lawful Ministers, may be so defective in their *own gifts*, both of *Knowledge*, *Memory* and *Utterance*, as to have need of the help of the gifts of others, who much excel them.

As a Minister who hath *tollerable Gifts* for *preaching*, may yet need the writings of other men before hand; and may bring both their *Matter* and *Method* into the Pulpit, yea and oft times their *words*; so that though he have *Gifts*, yet being *weak*, he may use the gifts of others. I have been counselled since I was silenced, to compose Sermons my self, and give them in writing to some weak Minister, that hath an excellent Voice and utterance, and to let him preach them. And really if I had not known that such have good books enough at hand for such a use, I think I should have done it: And who can prove that this had been his sin? And yet this was a using of another mans gifts instead of his own. And I have heard men that are much against Parish Churches and Liturgies wish that some unlearned men of good utterance, might read some excellent Sermon books to the people, in ignorant places that can get no better: And who can prove the reading of a Homily unlawful.

Moreover, Christ hath given to *all his members* such gifts as are suitable to *their places*, as well as to *Ministers* such gifts as are suitable to *theirs*, And the place of a Master of a family requireth the gift of Catechising and instructing the family? And they are as truly obliged to use *their gifts*, as Ministers are *theirs*. And yet who doubteth but it is lawful for Parents to teach and

and catechize their children, by such books and forms of Catechisms as are composed by the gifts of abler men?

Moreover *Prayer* is the duty of every one, and specially of the heads of families: And therefore every true Christian hath gifts procured by Christ, for so much as is his duty. And he is bound to use his gifts. And yet those gifts are so low in many, that I fear not to call that man effectively an enemy to families, souls and prayer, who forbiddeth all such, to use such forms of prayer as are composed by the gifts of others.

The famousst Divines in the Church of God, even *Luther, Zwinglius, Melancthon, Calvin, Perkins, Sibbs*, and abundance of Nonconformists of greatest name in *England*, did ordinarily use a form of prayer of their own, before their Sermons in the Pulpit, and some of them in their families too. Now these men did it not through idleness or through temporizing, but because some of them found it best for the people, to have oft the same words: and some of them found such a weakness of memory, that they judged it the best improvement of their own gifts. Now besides the first composition of these prayers, (which perhaps was done 20 years before) none of these men did use their own gifts, any more than if they had used a form composed by another. For the memory & utterance is the same of both.

These all were famous worthy men, whom no wise man judgeth to be insufficient for the Ministry for want of gifts. But if such as these may so many years forbear the exercise of their gift of extemporary prayer, much more may far weaker

Ministers do it. Abundance of young Ministers are trained up under aged experienced Divines, what if one of these should sometimes make use of the same words of prayer, which the aged Minister used the day before, as finding them fitter than any that he could devise himself. Must he forbear to *do better*, because he cannot do so well, by the use of his own gifts alone?

And in some Ordinances as Baptism and the Lords supper, &c. the same *things* must be daily prayed for: And he that thinketh he must not frequently speak the same things, will quite corrupt the Ordinance of Christ. And he that will *imagine* that he must have always *new words*, will at last have *new things*, or worse than nothing. If then it be meet to use often the *same words*, why may not a weak Minister use the *better words* of others, when he hath none meerly of his own that are so fit?

Nay is it not the *Duty* of such to do it? Every man is bound to do Gods service in the best manner that he can: (Cursed be the *deceiver* that hath a *better* in his flock, and bringeth that which is *corrupt*) But to utter prayers and praise to God, in a full, methodicall and congruous manner, and in words suitable to the Majesty of the worship of God, is *better* (to the people and to the honour of Religion) then to do it in a more *confused, disorderly, broken* manner, with barrenness and incongruity of speech. But this *last* is the *best* that many honest Ministers can do by their *own gifts*, when they may do it in the *former better manner*, by making use of the *words and gifts* of others. Therefore it is a *duty* for such men so far to use others

thers *gifts* of inventing words, before their own.

And among us there is no man forbidden in the Pulpit to use his *own gifts* to the utmost, and pray without any set form of his own or other mens.

And I would at last desire any of the Objectors but to name that text of Scripture which directly or indirectly commandeth every Minister, to use his gift of inventing words and method, or his gift of extemporary prayer, every time that he prayeth to God: Or which forbiddeth to use the gifts of others, though better than his own.

Obj. *But what if the forms imposed be worse than the exercise of our own gifts?*

Ans^w. First, That may be below one mans *own invention*, which is above anothers. Secondly, And that may be more defective than your own invention could reach to, which yet may be more desirable for other advantages. As if all the Churches for some good ends, should agree to use one mode or method or form, (as now we do in singing Psalms) the benefit of that concord might do more to the Churches service than my singular better form or words could do. And if the lawful Rulers commanded me that which perhaps I could somewhat exceed my self, I should do much in obedience to their command: Or if the people had a greater *averseness* or *unfitness* for my more congruous words than for others more defective, I should take that for the best food or physick, which is most agreeable to the stomach and disease. But especially if I am restrained from the publick preaching of the Gospel, or exercise of any of my Ministry, unless I will use a more
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disordered or defective form, I shall take it for my duty then to use it. Because it is more to the Churches edification.

In a word, God hath bound all his Ministers to use all their gifts to the Churches greatest edification: But to use a more *defective forms*, with liberty to use my *best gifts also*, and to exercise my Ministry *publickly to all*, is more to the Churches edification, than to use my *own gifts only a few days* in a corner, and then to lie in prison and use them no more. Though no man must of *choise prefer* the less congruous before the more congruous, when he is free; (which I confess is a sin) yet it is a *duty* to prefer a *less congruous* order before *none*, or before a better for a day, with a restraint of that and all our Ministry hereafter.

For my part I have often truly professed, that I look at many Liturgies which I have read as I do at the prayers of some honest men, who use little method, nor very meet words and often toss Gods name through weakness; who put that last which should be first, & that first which *should* be last, but yet the *matter* is honest & good. I would not prefer such a man in a *Congregation*, before an abler man, who will speak more composedly & agreeable to the matter: But yet I would not be so peevish, as utterly to refuse to joyn with such a one. But as God doth not reject his prayers notwithstanding all his weakness, no more would I. And I had rather have such prayers, than none at all.

O that men would discern what is the true worth of prayer? and how little God is taken with the Oratory of them, in comparison of the
faith

faith and love and desire which is the soul of prayer. And O that men would lay no greater stress on their *peculiar modes and words* than God doth; and condemn no mens prayers further than they are condemnæd by God; nor separate from any further then God rejecteth them or commandeth our separation.

I cannot forbear telling you the aggravation of this kind of sin. It seemeth to me a kind of blasphemy against God. As if you would make the world believe that God is so much for your *mode* and *words*, that he overlooketh all the desires of the Spirit; and all his promises, and all mens interest in Christ, and forgetteth all his love to his people: so that Christ shal not intercede for them, or shal not prevail, unless they pray to God in the *words* and *mode* which you have fancied to be best, whether with a Book or without, in *these* words or in *those*. Me thinks you are renewing the old controversie, whether in this Mount or at *Jerusalem* men ought to worship? and knew not that the time is come that God will neither accept men for worshipping at this Mount or at *Jerusalem*, here or there, with a book or without book; but the true worshippers whom he chooseth, do worship him as a Spirit, in Spirit and in truth, as well with Forms as without them.

And yet some are more wicked than barely to condemn their brethrens prayers, because they be not clothed just as their own. They will also break jests and scorns at them, and take this for the ingenuity of their piety. Like men of several Countreys who think the fashions of all Countreys save their own, to be ridiculous, and laugh

at

at strangers as if they were cloathed in fools Coats. So many do by the cloathing of other mens devotions. Some scorn at *extemporary* prayers, and some scorn at *Forms* and *Liturgies*: And the Litany they call *conjuring*, and the Responses they take for a formal jocular playing with holy things; when in all these, the humble heavenly Christian, is lifting up his soul to God.

By this petulant carnal kind of zeal, I remember our divisions were here raised at the first: To *deride* the *Common prayer*, and deride them that used it, was too common with some kind of religious people: And they excused it by *Elias* his example, As if *Idolaters*, and the true *worshippers* of *God*, that differ from us in a *Form*, or *Ceremony* were all one.

I remember how some of the contrary mind were inflamed to indignation by such scorns, when they were going into the Churches in *London*, and heard some Separatists that lookt in at the Church door, say, [*The Devil choke thee, art thou not out of thy pottage yet?*] because the *Common Prayer* was not ended. So little did men know what spirit they were of. But wise and holy Mr. *Hildersham*, Mr. *John Ball*, Mr. *Bradshaw*, Mr. *John Paget*, and other learned Non-conformists of old, did foresee and greatly fear this Spirit.

It is a dangerous thing to scorn and jest at any thing that is done about Gods worship, though it should be it self unwarrantable; while you scorn at one anothers worship of God, you raise a bold unreverence and contempt of holy things in the bearers, and perhaps before you are aware in *your selves* too. And you will teach the Atheist to
scorn

scorn you all ; unless it be the worship of an I-
dol, where the very object is to be derided, as be-
ing no God, you should be very suspicious of this
way. I am afraid of making a mock of the gros-
sest erroneous worship of the true God. It is fitter
to confute it in a way that more expresseth our re-
verence to the Object, God himself, & our respect
to that pious affection which may be engag'd in it.
I have seldom seen the best tempered people in-
clined to this way of jesting at other mens manner
of worship? nor have I observed much good
come by it : But I have oft seen that it is the way
by which young proud self-conceited persons do
kindle a carnal dividing zeal, and a contempt of
their brethren, and quench all holy sober zeal
and love together.

DIRECT. XXXIII.

*When you are sure that other mens way of
worship is sinful, yet make it not any other
or greater sin, than indeed it is : and speak
not evil of that much in it, which is Good ;
And accuse not God to be a hater or reje-
cter of all mens service which is mixed with
infirmities.*

AS St. James saith, 3. 2. *In many things we
offend all ; but he that offendeth not with his
tongue is the perfect man.* So we may here say in
the same sense, *In many particulars of our prayers
and other worship we all offend God : But he that bridleth*

not his *tongue* from the reproaching of his brothers different way of worship, may prove the greatest Offendor of all. It would move a charitable understanding hearer to grief and pity, to read and hear one party call all prayer by habit, no better than *crudities, whinings, bold talking to God* and *nonsense*; and whatsoever bitter scorn can speak: And to read and hear many on the other extreme, to call the *Liturgy*, no less than *Idolatory*! I desire the Reader to peruse a judicious Treatise of Mr. Tombes in answer to one of this language: As much as he and I have written against each others opinion about Infant Baptisme, our conceiting admonition to you should so much the rather be accepted in this.

And what pitiful arguments have they to prove this charge of *Idolatory*? *False worship of the true God is idolatry as well as worshipping a false God: But such is the Liturgy: Ergo —*

This is all that these rash preachers must trouble the Church, and seduce men into a hating factious zeal with. But what mean these men by *false worship*? Do they mean *worship contrary to Gods word*? That is, which is *sinful*? And do they mean *All such sinful worship or some only*? If they mean *all such sinful worship*, than *these words* of theirs are *Idolatory*; For they are part of their *preaching*, which is part of *Gods worship*; in their own sense: And it is *false doctrine*, and tendeth to mens perdition. And so they and all false Teachers should be idolaters. By this they would turn *all sins in worship into one*: It is *all Idolatry*. Is not every *confused prayer* *sinful*, which hath unmeet expressions and disordered, and hath wand-
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dering thoughts and dull affections? Is there any of these *Love-killers* that dare say they pray without sin? And must we not separate from them then as *Idolaters*? Yea and every man from himself; that is, He must give over praying because its all *Idolatry*?

But perhaps they will say; *This sin is but in the manner and not in the matter.*

Ans. Very good; It seems then that sin in the manner of worship is not *Idolatry*. And how prove you that the faults of the Liturgy are not as far from the *Matter* of the worship, as your own are? Will you find *some words* which you can call *false* in the *matter*? Suppose it were so? When an Antinomian, an Anabaptist, a Separatist, or any one that erreth doth drop some of his errors in his prayers, (as I think none will deny that they use to do) must we needs believe that his prayer is *Idolatry* therefore, as being *false worship*? And is it unlawful to joyn with such? Then we shall have more separation than you yet plead for, or practise your selves. No two men in the world must joyn together if all *sinful worship*, or worship *false* sometime in the very *matter* doth necessitate a separation: At least where no one knoweth before hand what another will say with his tongue, when I know that every man hath some false opinion in his mind.

But where did these men learn to call their brethrens worship *false* any more than their own, upon the account that God hath not commanded the *manner* of it; when he hath neither commanded us to *use a form*, nor to *forbear* it; but by general precepts of doing all to edification?

on; If one man preach in one method and another in another; One by written Notes to help his memory, and another without; one by his own gifts only, and another by the help of others; which of these is the false prophet, the false worshipper or Idolater? Hath God said *you shall use Notes in preaching?* No more hath he said, *you shall preach without Notes:* yet hath he commanded both, to severall persons where *edification* variously requireth it. Is he an Idolater that useth Meeters, Tunes, Versions, Translations, Directories, Pulpits, Cups, Table Cloaths, Fonts, Basins, &c. which God commandeth not. O Lord pity thy poor Church, whose Pastors themselves are so peevish in their ignorance, and tempt other men by their follies, to justifie all their severities against them and others.

But what Text of Scripture is it that ever told these men that *all false worship is Idolatry?* what text do they name, but such as if they did it on purpose, to shew their boldness in adding to Gods Word? The second Commandment is the chief which they insist on. But what ever Expositions they may forge, there is no such word nor sense in the Commandment. We all hold that as the *gross direct Idolatry*, is the worshipping of a *false God*, against the first Commandment; so to make any *such false representation* of the *true God*, by words or deeds, as maketh him like an Idol, and contradicteth his nature, and so to worship him, this is also a *secondary kind of Idolatry*: Because God is *none such* as they represent him, and therefore it is not God indeed, but an Idol which they worship. And because God is not like to any thing corporal

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real in heaven or earth; therefore he that maketh an image of any thing in Heaven or earth as like to God, or to represent him, he maketh an idol of God by blasphemy. *To what will you liken me, that I should be like unto it, saith the Holy one?* This is the idolatry forbidden in the Second Commandment: It is not all false worship, but one sort of false worship, which is idolatry; what else that Commandment forbiddeth, is neither called *Idolatry*, nor can so be proved.

It is an odious sound, to hear an ignorant, rash, self-conceited person, especially a Preacher, to cry out, *Idolatry, Idolatry*, against his brethrens prayers to God, because they have something in them to be amended; while perhaps his own prayers have so much false doctrine in them, or false fire of carnal passions and uncharitableness, as maketh it a much harder question, whether it be lawful to joyn with such as he is, while he abhorreth so much to joyn with others. All that know me know that it is not my own case and interest, that I fit this reprehension to. It is twenty times harder to me to remember a Form of words, than to express what is in my mind without them. But we must not fit our opinions of all our brethrens prayers, to our own temperament.

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DIRECT

DIRE CT. XXXIV.

*Think not that all is unlawful to be obeyed,
which is unlawfully commanded.*

MAny a Ruler sinneth in his Commands, when it is no sin but a duty of the inferior to obey them. He that hath but a *bad end*, or bad circumstances may sin in commanding: As if a Magistrate command Religious Duties in meer Policy for his own Advantage, or if he enforce a lawful Command with unlawful Penalties: And yet it will be the Subjects Duty to obey. Yea, as to the *matter* it self, it may be unlawful for a Ruler to command a thing that will do no good, (because it is a vain Command, and maketh men spend that time in vain:) and yet it may be the Subjects Duty to do it.

If the Magistrate choose an inconvenient place for publike worship, or an unfit hour, or if the Pastor choose a less fit translation, meeter or tune, or other circumstances of worship, it may be their sin to do so, and yet the peoples duty to obey them. If a Father bid his Child but carry a straw from one place to another, it is his fault so to imploy his time in vain; but the Child is not faulty in obeying. Indeed if the thing commanded be such as is simply evil, and forbidden us by God, in all cases whatsoever, than no ones commands can make it lawful. But if it be a thing that is only inconvenient, or unlawful by some lesser accident, then the command of authority

erty may preponderate as a more weighty accident. If it be lawful to give a Thief my purse, to save my life, which is not lawful for him to demand or take; Then sure it is lawful to obey a King, a Parent, a Master or a Pastor, in things not evil in themselves, though they unlawfully command them. I say not that we must do so in all things which are evil but by accident: For some accidents may make it so great an evil, as no mans command can preponderate and make it lawful: But in some cases it is so, though not in all.

Therefore remember that you do not prove it sinful in you to do such things, by proving it a sin in the imposer, unless you have some better reason, and can shew a Law of God forbidding you.

DIRECT. XXXV.

Think not that you are guilty of all the Faults of other mens worship with whom you joyn; no not of the Ministers or Congregations; Nor that you are bound to separate from them in worship; because of all the faults in their performance.

THIS Error is a common cause of separations; but such as will suffer no two men to joyn together, but will turn all Churches into confusion, and crumble them to dust, if it be fully practised. For there is no man alive that worshippeth God without some sin, as I said before.

fore. Do you ever pray your selves in secret or in your families without sin? Must all separate from you for this? Or may not you bear anothers failings as patiently as your own? Your own you are still guilty of, because they are your own: but not of another mans which you cannot help. If I believed that I were partaker of the guilt of all the false doctrine, or faulty preaching, or prayer which was used in the Church where I am, I would flye from all the Churches in the world: But whither to go I could not tell.

Obj. But if I joyn with them that worship God amiss, do I not approve of their sin or signifie my consent to it?

Answ. Approving and consenting are acts of your own mind: and whether you do so or not, is best known to your self: But it is a Profession of consent that we have now to speak of. And I say that our presence at the prayers of the Church, is *no profession of consent* to all that is faulty in those prayers. Why do you not offer to prove it to be so, but barely affirm it without any proof? I never heard a word of proof for this bare assertion to this day. But its easily disproved.

First, no man can in reason and justice take that for my *Profession*, which I never made by word nor deed, according to the common sense of words and actions: But according to this common sense I never did by word or deed profess that I consent to all which is uttered by the Pastor in the publike prayers.

Secondly, When the profession which we make by our Church-communion is publickly declared

to be another thing, totally distinct from this, no man may justly interpret it to be this which is quite different: But it is another thing which we profess by our Church-communion; That is, I profess my self only to be a *Christian*, in my Baptism when I enter into the Church, and in my daily communion with it: And I profess to be a member of a Christian Society, and to hold Communion with them in Faith and Love and in worshipping God according to his word: And I profess subjection to the particular Pastors of that Church, as Christian Pastors, who are to teach the people that word of God, and guide them in worship and discipline according to that word. This is every mans profession in his Church-communion and no more; unless he make some some further particular expression of more, as every sect useth to do, in professing the opinions of their party. Why then should any liar charge me to make a profession which I never made, when my profession in my Christian communion is described by Christ himself who instituted it? And why should I turn liar against myself, and say that my presence is a profession of that consent which I never made the least profession of?

Thirdly, The wording of the publike prayers, is the Pastors work and none of mine: It is part of his office, as the wording and methodizing of his Sermons is: And if he do it well the praise is not mine but his: And if he do it ill the dispraise is not mine but his. Why should any hold me guilty of another mans fault, which I neither can help, nor belongeth to any office of mine to help, any further than to admonish him.

Fourthly, I do not profess an approbation and consent to all the faults of *my own* secret or family prayers: Much less to another mans, who is not in my power. I have disorders, and defects and incongruities and other faults in all my prayers; And if my very *speaking* and *committing* them signifie not my *approbation* of them, how much less is it signified where it is not I but *another man* that speaketh and committeth them.

Fifthly, And as I have said, This opinion would make it unlawful to joyn with *any* Pastor or Church on earth, because no *sin* must be approved of and consented to: and every one mixeth sin with their prayers.

Obj. *But (say those on the one extreame) if I joyn with one that is known to be a Separatist, an Anabaptist, an Antinomian, an Arminian, &c. his own profession doth before hand bid me to expect not only that the manner but the matter of his prayer be erroneous.*

Ans^r. First, it is granted that no man may in his choise, prefer an erring person or mode of worship before a better. Secondly, But when the question is not, whom you should prefer but whom you may joyn with, it is not *his* errors that are *yours*, nor his profession that is *yours*. I come to joyn with him as a *Christian Pastor* whose office is to preach the Gospel: And while men are the agents I know that all that they do will be imperfect and faulty: And it is not *my knowing* their faults that makes them *mine*, but rather may preserve me from them.

Obj. *But for ought I know he may put heresy or blasphemy into his prayers, when I know*

not what he will say, before I hear it.

Ans. For ought you know your Physician, or your Cook, may give you poison, and your Nurse may poison your child: But though that should make you careful whom you trust, yet somebody must be trusted for all that. You go not upon certainty in any case where man is to be trusted, but upon probability. Men are not to be distrusted in their own profession, if they be lawfully called to it, by cautelous and able triers, till they have forfeited their trust: And as he would not mend the matter who should make a Law, that no Physician shall give any medicine but one and the same to all in such diseases, and that fetcht from the Kings Apothecary; And no Cook shall sell any meat but what is drest by the Kings Cooks; for fear lest they should poison men; so he that would say, No Pastor shall preach or pray but in prescribed words, lest he should speak heresie or blasphemy, would but destroy the Pastoral office, for fear lest it should be abused.

But here you have no great temptation to this error; Because though a man may poison your bodies against your wills, yet no one can poyson your souls but by your own consent. If he speak words of heresie or blasphemie, if you disown them in your minds, and consent not to them, they are none of yours, nor can do you hurt: They may be your temptation and your grief, but they are not your sin.

And yet I shall tell you in the next direction, how far they are to be avoided.

Obj. But (say those on the other extream)

When I know before hand by their Common-Prayer-Book, what their error in worship is, and yet joyn in it, do I not seem to approve it?

Answ. Do not barely affirm, but prove, that all fore-known faults of the Pastors words in prayer are mine, if I separate not: How doth fore-knowing them make them mine. Take heed that thus you make not God the greatest sinner and the worst being in all the world.

For God fore-knoweth all mens sins; and God is present when they commit them; and he giveth them all that life and time and strength and breath, by which they do them: and he hath communion with all the prayers of the faithful in the world, what faults soever be in the words or forms: he doth not reject them for any such failings. Will you say therefore that God approveth or consenteth to all these sins?

I know before hand (as is said before) that every man will sin that prayeth (either by defect of desire, love, faith or fervency, or by wandering thoughts, or disordered words, &c.) And I know that every erroneous person (commonly) doth use to put his errours into his prayers and preaching. But how doth all this make it mine? I am bound to hold communion with all Gods people on earth as I have occasion; not as they are sinners, but as they are Saints: And I come as to the Communion of Saints: And though both they and I do bring our sins to that communion, and I fore-know them; yet I lament both theirs and mine; and so far am I from consenting to them, that they are my grief, and I beg forgiveness both for them and me.

Obj. But you said that it belonged to the Pastor's office to word his own Sermons and Prayers: Therefore prescribed forms destroy the Pastors office: And may not consent to such usurpations by tyrannical men.

Answ. First, the Pastor is the mouth of God to the people, & of the people to God: And he doth word his own Sermons and Prayers; or else his voice could not conduct you. But if he that is conscious of his own infirmity, do take the help of others in wording them, that doth not destroy his office, but help him in the exercise of it. If a weak Minister learn a prayer out of the writings of some abler Divine and use it in the Pulpit, this is no destroying of his office.

Secondly, and if they that fear the effect of Ministers weakness shall force them to use the words of others, the speaker still maketh them his own words before you joyn with him. And if it did hinder the free exercise of all his office, it doth not destroy it.

Obj. But he doth it voluntarily, whereas the weakness of conceived prayer is involuntary.

Answ. It is with more probability said, that a man is involuntary, in doing that which another compelleth him to do, than that which no man but himself only is the author of: It is said to him that readeth the Liturgy [Do this, or nothing] But no body saith to an erring, weak, confused Minister, [Put in your errors into your prayers, or pray disorderly or you shall be punished.] Every Separatist, Anabaptist and Antinomian doth too willingly put his errors into his prayers.

Obj. But the Liturgy is imposed on the ablest

as well as on the weakest Ministers.

Answ. Whether it be well or ill imposed, is none of the question now in hand : No nor whether it be lawfully used by the Speaker : But whether *you* may lawfully joyn in it. And however it be imposed, till the Minister consent to use it, you shall not be put to joyn with him in it. And when he doth consent, he maketh it his own words, and (for reasons which seem good to him) he doth choose those expressions rather than others : (Even because he must use those or none) so that he is still in the exercise of his office ; And it is his personal fault, if it be a fault, to use those words, and none of yours : Whether he do it willingly as the best, or do it with a half will as of necessity, or whether there be tyranny in the imposing them or not ; you are not guilty of any of this, by joyning with a Christian Church that useth them.

DIRECT. XXXVI.

Yet know what Pastors you may own, and what not, and what Church-communion you may remove from or forbear: And think not that I am perswading you to make no difference.

THis is a point that I have more largely handled elsewhere, and can give you now but these brief hints, lest I be too tedious.

First, He that is not *at all* able to do the essential

tial works of the Ministry, that is, to teach the people the Christian faith, and a holy life, and to pray and praise God with them, and administer the Sacraments, and in some measure oversee the manners of the flock, is no Minister, nor to be owned: For he wanteth the essential qualifications: As an illiterate man can be no Schoolmaster, nor he a Physician, a Pilot, an Architect, who is utterly ignorant of their work.

Secondly, he that preacheth Heresie, that is, denieth any essential point of Christianity or Godliness, after the first and second admonition is to be avoided.

Thirdly, he that in his application, endeavoureth to disgrace a Godly life, and to dissuade the people from it, on false pretenses, and encourage them to a life of wickedness, is a traitor to Christ, and not to be owned in the Ministry. In a word, *Any one whose Ministry is such, as tendeth to destruction more than to edification and to do more harm than good.* But then remember, that it is not partiality and passion that must here be judge: Nor is every one an opposer of Godliness, who opposeth the errors of a party, or the faults or follies of godly men.

Fourthly, that Pastor or Church who will not let you have communion with them, unless you will say or subscribe some falshood, or commit any sin of wilful choice, doth drive you from their communion by their unlawful terms; and it is not you that are the Separatists, but they.

Fifthly, When you are to choose what Minister or Church you will stately have your ordinary communion with, you should not prefer a
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less reformed Church or a less worthy Pastor, or one that is erroneous, before a better, but choose that which is most to your true edification.

Sixthly, If you live under a worse and unreformed Church, or unprofitable Minister, if necessity hinder not, you may remove your dwelling to a better.

Seventhly, and where Churches are near and there is no great hurt or disorder will follow it, you may joyn with another Church without removing your dwelling: But this you may not do, when the hurt to the publick is like to be greater than the good to you.

Eighthly, and you must not conclude that the more faulty Church and Minister *may not lawfully be commanicated with* though for your benefit you choose a better, for this is the true crime of sinful separation.

But surely a mans soul is so precious, that all men should prefer the greatest helps for their salvation before the less; and think no just means too dear to purchase them.

DIRECT.

DIRECT. XXXVII.

In your judging of Discipline, Reformation, and any means of the Churches good, be sure your Eye be both upon the true End, and upon the particular Rule, and not on either of them alone: Take not that for a means, which is either contrary to the word of God, or is in its nature destructive of the End.

THere are great miscarriages come for want of the true observation of this rule. First, If a thing seem to you very *needful* to a good end, and yet the *word be against it*, avoid it: For God knoweth better than we, what means is fittest, and what he will bless. As for instance, some think, that many self-devised ways of worship, contrary to *Col. 2. 21, 23.* would be very profitable to the Church: And some think that striking with the sword as *Peter* did, is the way to rescue Christ or the Gospel: But both are bad, because the Scripture is against them.

Secondly, and if you think that the Scripture commandeth you this or that positive means, if Nature and true Reason assure you that it is against the End, and is like to do much more harm than good, be assured that you mistake that Scripture. For first, God telleth us in general that the *means as such are for the End*, and therefore are *no means* when they are against it! The Ministry

is for edification and not for destruction. The Sabbath is for man and not man for the Sabbath. Secondly, God hath told us, that no positive duty is a duty at all times. To pray when I should be saving my neighbours life, is a sin and not a duty, though we are commanded to pray continually. So is it to be preaching; or hearing on the Lords day, when I should be quenching a fire in the town, or doing necessary works of mercy: Wherefore the Disciples Sabbath-breaking was justified by Christ; and he giveth us all a charge to learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice; which must needs import, I prefer mercy before sacrifice and would have no sacrifice which hindereth mercy. Therefore if a Sermon were to be preached so unseasonably or in such unsuitable circumstances, as that according to Gods ordinary way of working, it were like to do more hurt than good; it were no duty at that time. Discipline is an Ordinance of Christ: But if sound reason tell me, that if I publickly call this man to Repentance, or excommunicate him, it is like to do much hurt to the Church and no good to him, it would be at that time no duty but a sin. As Physick must be forbore where the Disease will but be exasperated by it. Therefore Christ boundeth our very preaching and reproof, with a [*Shake off the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. And give not that which is holy to dogs, &c. When treading under foot, and turning again and rending us, is likest to be the success,* the wisdom of Christ, and not that of the flesh only, requireth us to take it for no duty. This is to be observed by them that think that Admonitions, and excommunications,

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and exclusion from the Sacrament, must be used in all places and at all times alike, without respect to the End, come of it what will: Or that will tempt God by presuming that he will certainly either bless or at least justifie, their unreasonable and imprudent actions, as if they were a duty at all times. To be either against the *Scripture*, or against the *End*, is a certain proof that an action is no duty, because no means.

DIRECT. XXXVIII.

Neglect not any truth of God, much less renounce it or deny it: For lying and contempt of Sacred truth is always sinful: But yet do not take it for your duty to publish all which you judge to be truth, nor a sin to silence many lesser truths, when the Churches peace and welfare doth require it.

TO speak or subscribe against any truth, is not to be done on any pretense whatsoever: For lying is a sin at all times. But it is the opinion of injudicious furious spirits, that no truth is to be silenced for peace. Truth is not to be sold for carnal prosperity, but it is to be forborn for spiritual advantage, and true necessity.

First, if the publishing of all truths were at all times a duty, then all men live every moment in ten thousand sins of omission, because there
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210 Some Truths may be silenced sometimes.

are more than so many truths which I am not publishing: Nay which I never shall publish whilest I live.

Secondly, Positives bind not always and to all times.

Thirdly, while you are preaching that opinion which your zeal is so much for, you are omitting far greater and more necessary Truths. And is it not as great a sin to omit them as the lesser.

Fourthly, Mercy is to be preferred before sacrifice: What if the present uttering some truth would cost many thousand mens lives? Were not that an untimely and unmerciful word? And is it not as bad if (but accidentally) it tend to the ruine of the Church, and the hurt of souls? It were easie to instance in unseasonable and imprudent words of truth spoken to Princes, which have raised persecutions of long continuance, and ruined Churches, silenced Ministers, and caused the death of multitudes of men.

Fifthly, And where is there any word of God which commandeth us to speak all that we know, and which forbiddeth us to forbear the utterance of any one truth.

Sixthly, And for the most part those men, who are most pregnant and impatient of holding in their opinions on the pretense of the pretiousness of truth, do but proudly esteem their own understandings precious, and do vend some raw undigested notions, vain janglings or errors, under the name of that truth which must by no means be concealed, though the vending of it tend to envy and strife, and to confusion and every evil work. When those that have the Truth indeed,
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have more wisdom and goodness to know how to use it.

It is not *Truth* but *Goodness* which is the ultimate object of the soul. And God who is infinite *Goodness* it self, hath revealed his *Truths* to the world to do men *Good*, and not to *hurt* them. And the Devil, who is the Destroyer, so he may but do men *hurt*, will be content to make use even of *Truth* to do it; Though usually he only pretendeth *Truth* to cover his *lies*: And this angel of Light, hath his ministers of Light and Righteousness; who are known by their fruits; whilst the pretenses of Light and Righteousness are used to Satans ends and not to Christs, to hurt and destroy and to hinder Christs Kingdome, and not to save and to do good: As the Wolf is known by his bloody jaws, even in his sheeps cloathing.

DIRECT. XXXIX.

Know which are the great duties of a Christian life, and wherein the nature of true Religion doth consist; And then pretend not any lesser duty, against those greater; though the least when it is indeed a duty, is not to be denied or neglected.

H *Heaven-work* and *Heart-work*, are the chiefest parts of Christian duty. Christ often giveth us his summaries of the Law, and inculcath his great Command; *Joh. 13. 35. Matth. 22.*

37, 38, 39. Luk. 10. 27. And so doth the Apostle Rom. 13. 10. 1 Pet. 1. 22. 1 John. 3. 11, 14, 23. & 4. 7, 11, 12, 20. 2 Joh. 5. And the fruits of the spirit are manifest Gal. 5. 22, 23. James saith, that pure Religion and undefiled before God even the father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in adversity, and to keep our selves unspotted of the world, Jam. 1. 27. Paul saith, 1 Tim. 1. 5. The end of the Commandment is Charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned: And then addeth, From which some having swerved, have turned aside to vain janglings —

In a word [The effectual belief of pardon and eternal Glory given through Christ, and the Love of God and man, with the denial of our selves, and fleshly desires, and contempt of all things in the world, which are competitors with God and our salvation, with a humble patient enduring of all which must be suffered for these ends] is the nature and sum of the Christian Religion.

Do nothing therefore as a duty which is a hinderance to any of this. Contentious preachings, and factious tidings which weaken Love, are not of God. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, 2 Tim. 2. 24. When you come into a family and find that their Religion consisteth in promoting some odd opinion, and pleading for a party, and vilifying others, be sure that this is a Religious way of serving the devil, being contrary to the great and certain duties of a godly life. When you fall into company, which stifleth all talk of Heaven, and all Heart-searching and Heart-humbling conference, by pleading for this or that opinion, be sure that it is but one way