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# ESSAY

For Allaying the

## ANIMOSITIES

### AMONGST

# BRITISH Protestants.

IN

A DISCOURSE founded upon the  
Fourteenth, and Part of the Fifteenth  
Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

*By Mr J. Watts*

*Putting on, as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved, Bowels  
of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness,  
Long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one  
another; Col. 3. 12, 13.*

*Be inclin'd to Peace and Love; and tho our Brains be  
different, yet let our Hearts be one.*

Bishop Hall's Passion-Sermon.

L O N D O N,

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# ESSAYS

For Allaying the

## ANIMOSITIES

A MONGST

### BRITISH PROTESTANTS

A DISSENTING PROTESTANT  
TREATISE, AND ONE OF THE  
CHAPTERS OF THAT HISTORY

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in Great Britain, &c.

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A N  
E S S A Y

For Allaying the Animosities amongst  
BRITISH Protestants, &c.



THEY who have seriously consider'd the *Animosities and Contentions* amongst *British Protestants*, during this last Century and half, cannot but be affected with *Grief and Amazement*. To see them expose their Holy Religion to the *Reproach and Contempt* of their Enemies, is certainly most *sad and discouraging*.

But were there any such encouraging Prospect, that they were likely to grow better of themselves, it might possibly seem too invidious to reproach them with what is past.

But the same *uneasy Spirit*, alas! continues, nay, rather increases; since more *uncharitable Controversies* and *Matters of Debate* are now defended, and industriously propagated, of which our Forefathers were happily ignorant; (as decrying the Validity of all Baptisms, but such as are done in a Diocesan Episcopal Communion, and refusing Burial to all such as want this Episcopal Baptism.)

Our Divisions have been so unhappily fix'd hitherto, as to disappoint all those pacifick Essays which have been

made to compromise them : and tho' this might seem to discourage all further Attempts, yet such is the Amiability of Charity and brotherly Love, and so conducive to the Good of Mankind, if it could be obtain'd, that it doth not only justify an honest, tho' feeble Attempt, when made, but it doth also invite and incourage each one's Endeavour, by all rational Persuasions, to procure it. 'Tis most astonishing to reflect upon the Unreasonableness of Mens Passions, which neither our common Dangers, nor common Deliverances can check. 'Tis very sad to observe, that the Reprieve we have had from our Danger, should be abus'd by so many, to give a further Vent to their angry Resentments.

'Twould grieve one to see that Charity, the essential Demand of real Christianity, should have no more force amongst its Professors, notwithstanding the numerous Obligations we lie under to it, both Divine and Political.

'Twould afflict one to think, that the many important things, in which we are agreed, should not be able to procure a mutual Forbearance amongst us, in those things of less Consequence about which we differ, for supposing our Religion allow'd us to be angry at those who differ from us (which yet I am sure it doth not) yet even by a parity of this kind of Reasoning, since the things in which we are agreed are of so much greater Consequence than the things about which we differ, there is so much the more Reason for the exercise of mutual Charity, than there can be an Allowance for any passionate Resentments.

When I have therefore consider'd, that those promising Schemes, which Men of moderate Tempers have propos'd for a Coalition, have been render'd fruitless by Men of Bigotry and Passion ; when I consider further, that those many Books, written in favour of an Imposing Power, and for the Decency of Ceremonies, on the one hand, and a Liberty from Impositions, and in Defence of Separation, on the other hand ; have serv'd few other Purposes, than to confirm the several Parties in those Opinions, which they had beforehand espous'd : nay, when Silencing, Fines, and Imprisonments, have not been able to extinguish the oppress'd Parties, but each Side have given proof of their suffering for their Opinion ; I seem to have a clear Proof, that these different Apprehensions, being

equally

equally founded in *Conscience*, will be likely to continue, and human Nature will go on to think as it hath done. When I therefore consider the Weakness and Fallibility of human Nature, and the many different ways Men have of coming to the knowledg of things; when I consider how great Influence, *Education*, *Custom*, and *Interest* have in biasing the Minds of Men, I have no more expectation that I shall see them all of *one Mind*, than of *one Stature*, *Air*, or *Complexion*. 'Tis not the Design of this Essay therefore to persuade Men to *debauch their Consciences*, and *put out their Eyesight*, that they may blindly follow the *prevailing Interest*; but, on the contrary, to encourage them in pursuing the Directions of their *best Judgments*, and yet induce them, with their different Apprehensions, to maintain *Brotherly Affection* and *Charity*.

For a strict Uniformity, which some so much talk of, I never expect, because it hath from the first been daily observ'd, that while some have been running into *Superconformity*, others have been accus'd of *uncanonical Abate-ments*. But if it could be effected, I see not any great reason there is why it should be desir'd; because I see not how the different ways of Worship amongst Protestants deface the Beauty of Religion, any more than the variety of Climates, Hills, and Dales lessens the Glory of God's Works in Nature: In short, I see not an Uniformity in Ceremonies any more necessary, than a plain Superficies on the Earth.

Besides, I am fully satisfy'd that there are so many ways to awaken the Passions of Men, that *mere Uniformity* would not allay our Heats, unless the Spirits of Men were better: And if God would give us more *peaceable Tempers*, it might be done without it; for that which seems to be the Foundation of our Uneasiness, is our *Pride* and *Jealousy*; we would have others take us for the Measure and Rule of their Behaviour, which if they will not suffer us to be, we are immediately jealous, that they hereby condemn us, *as in a dangerous Error*, and this makes us uneasy. But now this seems wholly founded upon a Mistake that we have led our selves into; and I would hope that the contrary Proposition will appear plain in the Sequel of this Discourse, *viz.*  
that

that in reference to those things which are *not determin'd of God* (that is, neither appointed nor forbidden) both Sides may be safe, and be accepted of God in their different Observations, and therefore should bear with each other about them. For what can be more weak than to imagine, that when Persons, equally serious, join in the Lord's Supper, one *sits*, another *kneels*, a third *stands*; that therefore one or more of these must be guilty of a dangerous Indecency? Nothing is surely more weak, for the serious Communicant is accepted of God, whether he *sit*, *kneel*, or *stand*.

Further, how weak must it be to imagine concerning two Persons that pray; the one makes use of a *common impos'd Form*, the other speaks from a *Sense of his Necessities*, such words as his *Premeditation* suggests; that therefore one of these must be in a *dangerous Error*? Nothing is surely more weak. The *sincere Worshipper* is undoubtedly accepted of God, whether *using* or *not using* a *Form*: The *Essentials* of Divine Worship are *fix'd* and *settled* in *Scripture*, and the *Assemblies* of Christians *encourag'd* and *directed*, and about these there is no Difference; the greatest Uneasiness ariseth about those things which are of *least Consequence*: for those things which God hath *not impos'd*, Men would fain *impose*.

But this seems very hard and unreasonable, since nothing seems plainer to me than this, that had an *Uniformity* in these things been *necessary* to God's *Acceptance*, he would have *told us so*. That God is to be worship'd thro' Jesus Christ, by the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, *we are all of us agreed*, because God hath appointed it: That God is to be worship'd by Prayer, and Praise, is *not disputed*; but the question is, whether this must be done only by one *common precompos'd Form*, or a *Sense of our Wants* furnishing us with Matter: Words are left to follow, according to a *Person's Ability*: if an *Uniformity* in this case had been *necessary*, God would have *shew'd us*.

That we are to commemorate the Death of Christ at the Lord's Supper, *we are agreed about*; but whether this is to be done *kneeling*, *sitting*, or *standing*, we are not told: but had any one of these been the *only way*, no doubt we should have been *told it*. That Persons are

to be baptiz'd in the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; *we are agreed on*, because it is according to the Institution of Christ; but had *Sponsors*, or the *transient Sign of the Cross* been necessary; we should have been told it. Since therefore no *Uniformity* in those things, *not appointed of God*, nor *circumstantially necessary* to the Performance of Divine Worship, seems to be requir'd in Scripture; and since the different ways of *Interest, Education, and Inclination* necessarily have so great an *Influence* upon the Judgments of Men, we are rather *forbidden* to expect an *Uniformity* in these *lesser Matters*: But tho' *Uniformity* is not requir'd, yet *Brotherly Love* and *Christian Charity* is.

It is made the *Mark* and *Characteristick* of our *Discipleship*, John 13. 35. the *Badg* of our *Christianity*, and our *Love to God*: For unless we love our *Brother*, whom we have seen, it is not likely that we should love *God*, whom we have not seen; 1 John 4. 20. 'Tis made the *Evidence of God's dwelling in us*, 1 John 4. 12. It is the *new Command of Christ*; and the *second great Command*, and is at least a *Part* of that *Charity* which will remain, when *Faith* is turn'd into *Vision*, and *Hope* into *Fruition*: It was the *Mark* by which the first *Christians* were *characteriz'd*, that they *intirely lov'd* each other.

Of so great Importance is *Love*, tho' not *Uniformity*: But the greatest *Difficulty*, as Men have manag'd it, is to find a *Medium*, that might persuade us to *suppress* our *Passions*, and *extinguish* our *Contentions*, notwithstanding our *different Opinions* and *Practices* in things not *fix'd* in the *Word of God*.

And to effect this, I am persuaded, that the *fourteenth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans*, and part of the *fifteenth*, do contain the most proper *Arguments* to *compose* these *Differences*, if duly attended to.

For what can be more clear in its *Consequence* than this, That since an *Extinction of Parties* is not to be expected, nor *Uniformity* at all necessary to our *Acceptance* with *God*; that therefore there should be *mutual Forbearance* and *Charity*, notwithstanding our *different Apprehensions* and *Practices* in *lesser Matters*? All which is fully contain'd in these *Chapters*, the *Subject* of our *following Dissertation*.

In order to our better understanding the Force of the *Apostle's Argument*, it will be proper for us to consider,

*First*, The State of Christianity, between the *Jewish* and *Gentile Converts* to Christianity, in those early times.

*Secondly*, The State of the *British Churches*, and how parallel their Case is to the Case of the former.

*Thirdly*, How far the *Arguments*, made use of by the *Apostle*, to allay those *Uneasinesses*, will be proper to compose ours, and establish a Foundation for mutual *Forbearance* and *Christian Charity*, amongst the several contending Parties.

*First*, I shall give an Account of the first State of Christianity, and the *Uneasiness* that appear'd between the *Jewish* and *Gentile Converts* in those early times.

The blessed *Jesus* assur'd us, in the Course of his Preaching and Converse with Men, that he was principally sent to the *lost Sheep* of the *House of Israel*, *Mat. 15. 24.* and therefore, in a manner, the whole of his own Preaching was spent among them. Nay, so tender were his Regards to them, that when he gave his Disciples the last Charge, *To go into all the World; and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all they could reach*, he orders them to begin at *Jerusalem*, *Luke 24. 47.* By this means it came to pass, that the first *Converts* to Christianity were of the *Circumcision*, and out of the *Jewish Synagogue*; and such were the first *fifteen Bishops* of *Jerusalem*, who possess'd that Seat, from the *Passion of Christ*, to the *eighteenth* of *Adrian*, about 106 years, as *Eusebius* tells us, *lib. 4. cap. 5.* of his *Church-History*.

These *Jewish Christians*, having been bred up in the strict Observation of the *Ceremonial Law*, did not at first understand that it was to be abrogated by the *Death* of *Christ*, and the *Partition-Wall* between them and the *Gentiles* broken down, by putting a Period to the *Observances* and *Distinctions* of that *Law*: Not considering this, the *Jewish Christians* retain'd an extreme Fondness for those *antient Usages*; in which the *Apostles* indulg'd them for a time, that by becoming all things to all Men, they might gain some, *1 Cor. 9. 20, 21, 22.* and remove, what in them lay, all unjust *Prejudices* against Christianity.

This

This *Indulgence* of the Apostles was unhappily *abus'd*; for that which was *allow'd* to them, in *compassion* to their *Weakness*, they were for *imposing* upon others: for these *Judaizing Christians* (as we shall now call them) came down as far as *Antioch*, and preach'd to the *Gentile Converts*, that except they were *circumcis'd*, and kept the *Law of Moses*, they could not be sav'd; Acts 15. 1.

To put a stop to this *Dissension* and *Mistake* of theirs, *Paul* and *Barnabas* are pitch'd upon to go with this Case to the *Apostles*, who were then at *Jerusalem*, about the Year 44, to receive their *authoritative Determination*. The Substance of which was this, That tho they were still willing to *indulge* the *Weakness* of the *Judaizing Christians*, yet they strenuously asserted the *Freedom* of the *Gentiles* from those *Impositions*, and laid on them no other *Burden*, than things *necessary*; Acts 15. 28, 29. And it further appears by their *Practice*, which we have an account of, Acts 21. 20——25. that they still *indulg'd* those *Judaizing Christians*, in the *Observation* of those *antient Usages*, tho they had written to the *Gentile Converts* to observe *no such things*. And in this Estate we may suppose these things continu'd, till the *Destruction* of *Jerusalem*, and the *Temple* there, and the *Dispersion* of the *Judaizers* themselves, when many things must needs fall, thro their *natural Incapacity* to observe them; at least we may suppose the Heat about them to be *very much declin'd*, after *Marcus*, one of the *Heathen Converts*, was chose *Bishop* of *Jerusalem*, about the Year 141. in the time of *Adrian*, as *Eusebius* tells us, lib. 4. cap. 6.

During this uneasy State, tho the Apostles always witness'd against an *imposing Power*, and declar'd the *Freedom* of the *Gentile Converts* from those *Impositions*; yet they always express'd *great Tenderness* and *Compassion* towards those that had been train'd up in these *antient Customs* and *Observations*, and strove what in them lay to preserve *Christian Charity* amongst them, notwithstanding these *different Apprehensions* and *Practices*. And thus the Apostle *Paul* inculcated, Rom. 14. 3. *That they who eat; should not despise them which eat not; and they which eat not, should not judg them which eat*: That is, he would not have those, who preserv'd their natural

Liberty, and *observ'd not* antient Customs and Ceremonies, *despise* and *reproach* those, who did observe them, as *weak* and *superstitious*; and on the other hand, he would not have those, who *continu'd to use* antient Customs and Ceremonies, judg the other *indecent* and *profane* who did *neglect* them: but that, without *censuring* or *reproaching* each other, they should be left to *stand* or *fall* to their own *Master*, and to answer it at that *Tribunal*.

Having thus given an Account of the first *State* of *Christianity*, and of the Causes of its Uneasiness, I shall,

*Secondly*, Also lay before you a Representation of the *State* of the *Protestant Churches* in *Britain*, from the time of the *Reformation*, to the present day. About 170 Years ago, the Corruptions of the Church of *Rome* becoming *odious* and *intolerable*, it pleas'd God in this Kingdom, as well as other Countries, to raise up a *Spirit of Reformation*, to *cleanse* his Church from those *Disorders* it *groan'd* under. The Persons engag'd in this Design had *different Views* and *Apprehensions*; some were for *casting out* all the *Remains* of *Popery*, and reducing the *Publick Constitution* to the *Scriptural Pattern* in *Discipline* and *Worship*, as well as *Doctrin*: of this Party were *Hooper*, *Bradford*, &c. but to others, at that time, a *less Degree* of *Reformation* seem'd more *expedient*, tho from *different Principles*; yet these being the *Majority*, carry'd it. Some form'd this Scheme from a *Fondness* for *Ceremonies*, and a *Love* of *Pomp* and *Ostentation* in *Worship*, and hopes to draw over the *Papists*; others fell in with it, from the *hopes* they had of *bringing* the People back to *Popery* again; and others still thought themselves *oblig'd to comply*, not out of *Love* to the *Ceremonies* retain'd, but out of *fear* lest the *Reformation* should be *ruin'd*, for want of Hands to *support* it, and in hopes that *better Preaching* would *wean* the People from their *Fondness* to *Ceremonies*, and carry on the *Reformation* to the *Satisfaction* of every Man's *Conscience*.

And this appears to be the *Sense* of those *Bishops*, who kept a *Correspondence* with the *Pastors* of the *foreign Protestant Churches*; of which *Correspondence* we have some Account, in *Strype's Annals* of the *Reformation* under

der Queen Elizabeth. What the Effects of this Matter were, is well known; the Debates ran *high*, and the Consequences prov'd *bad*: The *Papists*, who were expected to be *wrought* upon by our Lenity towards their *Ceremonies*, *flew off*, and generally deserted the *Communion* of the *Establiſh'd Church*, about the 12th or 13th of Queen Elizabeth. Those, on the other hand, who waited for a *further* Reformation, *forbore* the things they lik'd not, while they could be *conniv'd* at; yet meeting with no *general* Tendency to a *further* Reformation, tho' *frequently* attempted, but rather the *contrary*, after they had seen a *Variety* of Circumstances, were *finally driven out* by the *Act* of *Uniformity* in the Year 1662. All their *Petitions* for *Peace*, and *Essays* for *Union*, being *not* regarded, they were *forc'd* to form *separate Assemblies* for the Worship of God, where they might serve him *free* from those *Incumbrances* which their *Consciences* could not *comply* with (tho' to others, who saw not with *their Light*, the things might appear *harmless* and *inoffensive*.) And in this Estate they indur'd a *long Course* of *Hardships*, wherein it must be observ'd, that the *Papists* shew'd a *refin'd Policy*, in *irritating* and *provoking* the *Establiſh'd Church* against the *Dissenters*, till at last they had *almost compass'd* the *Ruin* of both, in the Reign of King James II. This being *happily discover'd*, and the *Fidelity* of the *Dissenters* to the *Protestant Religion*, and the *Interest* of their *native Country* being *plain* and *apparent*, they got their *Liberty allow'd* by *Law*, 1st of *William* and *Mary* (tho' *greater things* were *promis'd*) and so the Case continues.

Several *Disputes* and *Controversies* have happen'd upon the account of this *Separation*: the Church's *Authority*, and the *Decency* of *Ceremonies* have been urg'd on the one hand; the *Nullity* of an *imposing Power*, and the *Mischief* of *Impositions* have been *insisted on* on the other hand. And tho' I would have nothing understood here to the prejudice of a *fair Debate*, in order to the finding out of *Truth*; yet it must be observ'd, that these *Disputes* have been far from *answering* the principal *End propos'd*, *viz.* bringing Persons to be of *one Mind*; but have rather been the occasion of *inflaming* Mens *Passions*, and *confirming* the several Parties in those *Opinions* which

they have before *spous'd*: And therefore while there is that *Shew* and *Appearance* of *Reason*, which may satisfy a Man's Conscience, which *Side* soever he takes, and these different Apprehensions being so *conscientiously* taken up, are likely to *continue*; it remains that we study to find out a *Temper* between the *two Parties*, not by demanding that they shall *give up* their *Judgments* or *Consciences* the *one* to the *other*, a thing not to be *desir'd* or *expected*, but by encouraging and cultivating *mutual Love*, under their *different Apprehensions*.

Now in order to procure this, let us reflect a little upon the *Parity* or *Similitude* there is between the Case of the *Primitive Christians*, and that of the *British Protestants*.

1. Their Case is alike, in that they are *agreed* in all the *Essentials* of Christianity; the *Judaizing Christians* and *Gentile Converts* both held fast Christ the Head, they were agreed in all those Duties and Services, that render'd them acceptable to God, or had a Tendency to promote their Fitness for a better World; and all this is true concerning the Members of the *Establish'd Church*, and those of the *Dissenting Churches*, they are both of them *true Churches* of Jesus Christ: *They are Congregations of faithful Men, in the which the pure Word of God is preach'd, and the Sacraments duly administred, according to Christ's Ordinance, in all those things that of Necessity are requir'd for the same.* The Conformists and the Nonconformists are agreed in all those things that contribute to an Holy Life: They are agreed in the Worship of the same God, in the Name of the same Mediator Jesus Christ, by the Assistance of the same Spirit; they *receive* the same *Creeds*, own the same *Articles*, that have any relation to the *Principles* of Faith; they pray for the same *Mercies*, and own the same *Duties* of a religious Life; they are of the same *natural Religion*, in opposition to *Atheism*; they are of the same *Christian Religion*, in opposition to *Deism*; they are of the same *Protestant Religion*, in opposition to the *Idolatry*, and the dangerous *Errors* of Popery; they have the same *common Hope* of their Calling, and are waiting for the Mercy of God unto eternal Life thro' *Jesus Christ*. And no doubt the pious Worshippers among  
them

them are *equally* acceptable to God: For as the Great Mr. Boyle saith, in a Case not much unlike this, ‘ That  
 ‘ the good and pious Men of each contending Party, are  
 ‘ otherwise look’d upon in the sight of God, than by  
 ‘ each other.

2. The Case of the Primitive Christians, and that of *British* Protestants, is somewhat parallel in this, that there was amongst the *Judaizing* Christians a *Fondness* for such antient Customs and Usages, in which they had been educated, and a sollicitous Endeavour to *impose* them on the *Gentile* Converts; whilst these *Gentile* Converts *asserted* their Liberty wherewith Christ had made them *free*, and would not be entangled with that Yoke of Bondage.

And thus the Case of *British* Protestants stands now: Those of the Establish’d Church *retain* those Customs and Ceremonies which *antient* Practice hath brought to them, and which, *in their Opinion*, recommend themselves by their Decency; and these Ceremonies, so valu’d by them, they would feign *impose* upon others.

On the other hand, the Nonconformists seeing no Footsteps or Ground for them in *Scripture*, nor indeed in the *purest Antiquity* (tho they would not be much mov’d by that, if the Scriptures be silent) being persuaded from the Scriptures, that our Saviour hath not left it in the *Power* of *any Man*, or any *Number of Men*, to make any *new Laws*, or Regulations for others, in Matters of Divine Worship, or *impose* these new *Laws* on others; they are resolv’d to stand fast in their natural Liberty, nor will they be brought under the Power of any in Matters of Divine Worship.

’Tis true, they make a great Allowance for those Persons that *chuse* the Ceremonies for themselves *in Conscience*, at the same time desiring for their parts to be *excus’d* from them; and therefore they assert their natural Liberty against an imposing Power in general, and against these Impositions in particular.

3. These different Apprehensions are the mistaken Occasions of much Uneasiness: *Mistaken Occasions* I call them, because I may, with as much Justice, be angry with a Person that is not of my *Stature*, as with one that is not of my *Judgment* in these doubtful Disputations.

tions. But, alas! who can clear themselves of the Guilt of this Charge?

But altho it is true, that the Case of the first Christians, and that of the *British* Protestants, is in some respects parallel; yet it must also be confess'd, that in some Circumstances there is a *Disparity* and *Unlikeness*.

(1.) Those Customs and Usages, which were a Subject of Debate among the Primitive Christians, were such as had once been *appointed* of God to the *Jews*, and therefore were necessarily in great Veneration and Esteem; they were of equal Antiquity and Authority with their *Covenant of Peculiarity*, and were proper to affect and amuse that low and stupid People, and maintain a necessary Distinction between them and other Nations; they were sutable to the *Childhood* and *Infancy* of the *Church*, Gal. 4. 3. and serv'd for *Types* and *Shadows* of good things to come, Heb. 10. 1. And tho they were of such Authority, yet, in their most flourishing use, the *Jews* had frequent Intimations, that they were not appointed *for their own sake*, that there was no *real Value* in the things themselves, and that they were only indulg'd in compassion to *their Weakness*: And when the Fulness of time was come, that the Messiah should appear (who was the Substance to which these Shadows refer'd) and God should set up a more sublime and spiritual way of Worship; that then this Partition-Wall should be broken down, *these Distinctions cease, and these Shadows flee away*.

But, (2.) These Things, which are Matter of Uneasiness and Debate between the Conformists and Nonconformists, *cannot have so much said for them*, as was said for the former: They have no *Foundation*, nor *Countenance* from the *Author* of our Holy Religion, the Lord Jesus Christ: They are things that he *never* appointed, nor directed by his *Precept* or *Example*. The Holy Scriptures, which are the Rule of our Faith and Manners, and our certain Direction in Worship, *give no Command for them*, nor *Incouragement* to them: The first and purest Ages of Christianity *knew little or nothing* of them, they are only the *Invention* of *weak and fallible* Men like our selves, and have ministred occasion to the *Corruptions* and *Superstitions* of *Popery*. And if we  
lay

lay all these together, they are at least *popular Arguments* against the things themselves; however, they seem *sufficient Arguments* against *imposing* them on those that *dislike* them.

If they are not thought *sufficient Reasons* why *none* should use them, they are at least *sufficient Reasons* why those, who do *not like* them, should be *free* from them; which is the principal purpose here aim'd at. And here lest the word [*Impose*] or the like, should be mistaken, I now intend to shew what is to be condemn'd in it.

I do not look on that as *Imposition*, where a Church of Christians shall appoint such an *Hour* of Assembling, or *Place* of Assembly *fittest* for themselves, tho' *inconvenient* for some *others*, if they are allow'd the liberty of going *elsewhere*. Nay, if they chuse for themselves any *Ceremonies*, which are pure Additions to the Ordinances (tho' every Church should be *careful* lest their Worship be thereby *corrupted*) yet if they *allow* others to *omit* them in their Church, who *dislike* them, or allow them to worship *elsewhere*; with these we also meddle not.

But when any Church not only fixeth *Circumstances* and *Ceremonies*, *inconvenient* to, and *dislik'd* by other *Christians*, and yet will by *Fines*, *Excommunications*, *Banishments*, *Imprisonments*, &c. force those that are *dissatisfy'd* to comply; this is the *tyrannical Imposition* condemn'd, and which the Apostle *disallows*.

These Things being premis'd, our Business is, *Thirdly*, To lay down those *Considerations* which the Apostle makes use of, for the *composing* the Matters in Debate among the first Christians; and to shew their *Fitness* for the *allaying* the *Uneasinesses* of the present Times: And these may be reduc'd to these three Heads.

1. By *allowing* each Man to follow the Dictates of his own Conscience, not *forcing* an Uniformity, nor *condemning* either Side, any further than they were *uncharitable*.

2. He commands *mutual Love* and *Charity*, notwithstanding their different Sentiments, and Practices in lesser Matters.

3. He lays down most *convincing Arguments*, why they should not *judg* each other for these *Differences* in Opinion,

Opinion, nor *impose* on each other such *doubtful Disputations*.

(1.) The Apostle, in order to remove the Uneasiness which was between the *Judaizing* Christians, and the *Gentile* Converts, upon the account of their different Apprehensions in lesser Matters, *allows* each Person to follow the *Dictates* of his own *Conscience*, *forceth* no *Uniformity*, nor *condemns* either *Side* as guilty of any *dangerous Error*, any further than they were *uncharitable*. Thus he argues in the second Verse, *One believeth that he may eat all things, another who is weak eateth Herbs*: One, who is weak, is *fond* of those antient Customs and Distinctions that he hath been *brought up in*; another is satisfy'd, that there is *no Obligation* lying upon him from those former *Regulations*, and therefore asserts his *Liberty*. Now doth the Apostle allow them to *censure* or *reproach* each other, upon the account of this *Difference* in Opinion or Practice? or doth he *condemn* the one or the other? No, rather the quite contrary: For the Apostle, tho furnish'd with *sufficient Authority* in the Church, yet *forceth* no *Uniformity*, nor *censures* any for those different Opinions: Doth not call the one *superstitious*, who with a *sincere* Mind retains those *antient Customs* he hath been brought up in; nor doth he call the other *indecent* and *slovenly*, because he doth not observe them: but *allows* them both to follow their own *Inclinations*, provided they *despise* not each other. Nay, further it is observable, that where we read in the second Verse concerning the weak Brother, *ἐδίετ*, he eateth Herbs, referring to his Practice, some Copies (amongst *Valesius's* sixteen *Manuscripts*) read *ἐδίετω*, which signifies an *Allowance* or *Permission*, let him eat Herbs; that is, if his *Judgment* be for such *antient Usages* and *Distinctions*, let him enjoy it: And tho this may arise from somewhat of a *Weakness* in his *Judgment*, yet he is not *accountable* to you for that.

The same Argument is carry'd on in the 5th Verse, and another Instance is alluded to, applicable to the present times: *One Man esteemeth one Day above another, another esteemeth every Day alike, let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind*. The converted Jew was of opinion, that the *Festival Days*, appointed by the Law

of *Moses*, were holier than other Days, and therefore should be observ'd: The *Gentile Convert* is satisfy'd, that those former Regulations and Distinctions are not at all binding, and esteemeth all Days alike, which God hath made no *Distinction* about.

This is applicable to the different Apprehensions between *Conformists* and *Nonconformists*: The *Conformist* thinks himself under some Obligations to observe particular Days in commemoration of Christ, as *Christmas-Day*, *Good-Friday*, *Easter-Day*, *Whitsunday*, &c. The *Nonconformist*, on the other hand, not finding any *Institution* of these things in the *New Testament*, he is satisfy'd no *human Authority* can consecrate them to these Uses, nor doth he think it any part of the Service, that God requires at his hand; the *Lord's Day* being appointed as a weekly Commemoration of the whole Work of Redemption: These are their different Apprehensions. Now let us consider what the Apostle directs in this Case: Is there an *Uniformity* to be forc'd in this Case? Must he that thinks there's no Obligation lying upon him to observe these Days, be forc'd to observe them? Or, on the other hand, must the Person who thinks there is some Obligation lying upon him to observe these Days, be hindered or censur'd about them? Assuredly, no: the Apostle directs the contrary, when he says, *Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind*; let him be satisfy'd as to the Grounds of his Practice; let him act by his own, and not another's Judgment: Words deserving the strictest Observation, worthy to be wrote as with the Point of a Diamond, and graven upon the Rock for ever, as establishing the sacred and unalienable Rights and Liberties of Conscience in Religious Matters, against the In-croachment of any human Impositions whatever.

And having thus establish'd the Sacred Rights of Conscience, he proceeds, in the 6th Verse, to vindicate both, acting according to their Judgment: *He that regardeth a Day, regardeth it unto the Lord*; that is, he doth it as thinking it his Duty to regard it. On the other hand, *He that regardeth not the Day, to the Lord he doth not regard it*; that is, he is satisfy'd God expects it not from him, and therefore he doth it not.

Thus the true Christian is satisfy'd concerning all these Festival Days, that the same may be said of them which *Socrates* the Historian saith of *Easter*, *lib. 5. cap. 21.* 'Neither our *Saviour* nor his *Apostles* have commanded us any where to observe it, neither have they laid it down for a *Law*; neither have the *Evangelists* or *Apostles* threaten'd us, or enjoin'd us under a *Penalty* or *Punishment*. Again, the Drift of the *Apostles* was not to lay down *Canons* and *Decrees* concerning *Feasts* and *Holidays*, but to become *Patterns* to us of *Piety*, *Good Life*, and a *Godly Conversation*.'

Again, speaking of the Differences that were in their Observations, he saith, 'And hereby I gather, that the Observation of this Feast came up rather by *Custom*, than by any *Law* or *Canon*. Every *Sett* and *Denomination* have *sundry* and *divers Rites* and *Ceremonies*, yet conceive they no worse of others than themselves; for they which are of *one Faith* and *Opinion* vary among themselves in *Rites* and *Observations*: For such like Considerations they look on themselves as under no Obligations to observe them.' But the true Christians, whether they observe these Distinctions or not, study to do all to the *Glory of God*, and therefore are all accepted of him. And for this cause the *Apostle* forceth no Uniformity, but vindicates both, acting according to the Dictates of their own Consciences. This is the first Step he takes to reconcile them.

2. Another Step he takes to reconcile them, is this; He commands them *mutual Forbearance* and *Love*, notwithstanding their *different Apprehensions*, as in the 3d Verse: *Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judg him that eateth, for God hath receiv'd him*: that is, let not the *Nonconformist*, who preserves his natural Liberty, in omitting *antient Customs* and *Usages*, despise or reproach the *Conformist*, who retains them as a *weak superstitious Man*; nor, on the other hand, let the *Conformist*, who observes those Rules which *antient Custom* and *Ecclesiastical Authority* hath commended to him, judg his *Nonconforming Brother*, a *refractory, stubborn, or self-will'd Person*, who dislikes them, and whose Conscience is most easy, in standing fast in his natural Liberty: And the Reason is express,

press, for God hath accepted them both, and that is surely a sufficient Reason why they should accept each other; he confines not his *Regards* or *Favour* to this or the other *Denomination* of Christians, but accepts the Good and Pious of all *Denominations*: which is surely a good Reason why they should love each other.

In the 4th Verse he commands, that we should not *judg another's Servant*, who, in these things, must *stand or fall* to his own Master, and must *give an account of himself to God*; and if it appears that he hath, in these lesser Matters, acted according to his *Conscience*, he shall be *accepted*, for *God is able to make him stand*: let us not therefore *judg one another any more*, Ver. 13. but *judg this rather, that no one put a Stumbling-block, or an Occasion to fall in his Brother's way*. Let us not use each other uncharitably for these lesser Matters, who are *Brethren*, and therefore agreed in things of *much greater Importance*; let us not lay an occasion of stumbling in our Brother's way. I cannot but think this Passage is a very *seasonable Reproof* to those eager Men, that will *compass Sea and Land to gain a Profelyte to their own Communion*, from the *Communion* of some of their *Protestant Brethren*; and to effect this, will use all those violent Methods, which either their *Civil Authority*, or any other *Superiority* put into their power to make use of; or if this is not in their hands, they then think themselves oblig'd to do, what in them lies, by *strain'd Innuendo's*, or *forc'd Constructions*, to expose the *contrary Party*, or else *smooth and wiredraw* their own *Opinions*, to make them pass the better.

But I am satisfy'd that such *bigotted Methods* as these have been extremely prejudicial to many *weak Minds*, by either *forcing* or *insnaring* of them into such *Compliances*, as their *serious Thoughts* have afterwards *dislik'd*, till they could quit themselves of those *Ingagements*.

And as this Method is oft extremely prejudicial, so it's needless, a *good Cause* requires it not, nay it's a shreud Sign of a *suspicious Cause*, when we make use of it.

For those Preachers are like to have the most Success, who are more concern'd to draw Converts over to *true Piety*, than to their *respective Parties*.

And, undoubtedly, after a *fair* and *impartial* Representation of the Terms of *Communion* on all sides, without being *driven* by *Force*, or *insnar'd* by *Subtlety*, that is like to be the most useful Choice, and the most advantageous *Communion*, which a Person joins with upon the full *Persuasion* and *Conviction* of his own Conscience, that he hath there the *fewest Hindrances*, and the *greatest Helps* towards Heaven; and such a conscientious Choice as this, I doubt not, is made by *many*, in all the several *Denominations* of Protestants. *Let us thus follow after the things that make for Peace*, as in the 19th Verse, and *wherewith we may edify one another*: instead of *suspending*, *excommunicating*, and *casting* each other out of *Communion*, or *abusing* or *despising* each other for *neglecting* or *using* such *indifferent things*, which not being *commanded* of God, no way *commend* us to him; let us earnestly pursue those things that are for the *common Good* of Christians, and by which one may promote the *common Interest* of our *common Lord*. Nay further, the Apostle, *Ver. 21, 22.* would rather have us to deny our selves the exercise of our *natural Liberty* in some Instances, where we lawfully may (and where this Suspension of our Liberty will do more Good than Hurt) by which we might own them that *differ* from us to be *Christians* and *Brethren*: As suppose, in the *Occasional Communion* of one Denomination of Christians with another in some things, wherein they *lawfully* may, as an *Evidence* of their *Charity*. This might in some Cases be of use, to bring us to a better Temper one with another, altho we should *statedly* join with other Assemblies, whose *general Management* appears to us *more eligible*; by our *occasional Practice* *shewing* our *Charity*, and by our more *stated Practice* asserting the *Liberties* and *Rights* of *Conscience*.

And thus he continues to argue in *Chap. 15. ver. 1, 2.* *That they which are strong, should bear the Infirmities of the Weak, and please our Neighbour for his Good to Edification.* Instead of driving Men of *weak Understandings* to go *contrary* to their Judgments in unnecessary things, we ought to *bear* with their *Weakness*, *compassionate* them even in those things wherein they may appear *mistaken* to us, treating them with *Love* and *Patience*, thus *studying* to please our Neighbours for their Good to *Edification*.

tion. We are to do those things that appear *clear* and *proper* to us, at the same time *bearing* with others that differ from us in such things as they are *not satisfy'd* with. This is the second Step he takes to conciliate Christians, by commanding them mutual Love and Forbearance, notwithstanding their different Apprehensions. And then,

3. In order to reconcile them to each other, he intermixeth proper Arguments why we should *not impose* on each other, nor judg each other upon the account of Matters of *doubtful Disputation*. These I shall endeavour to lay together in one short View :

(1.) We should not judg each other about the Use or Omission of indifferent things, nor impose them on each other, because they are but *doubtful Disputations, indifferent Things*, Things of no Importance or Consequence in the Christian Life: *If we use them, we are not the better ; and if we use them not, we are not the worse*: therefore let us not differ about them. Had either *Kneeling*, or *Sitting*, or *Standing* been the *only lawful Gesture* in receiving the Lord's Supper, no doubt we had been *told it* ; but because we have no Order about this Matter, undoubtedly we may lawfully use *any of those Postures* which seemeth to us best, but to be sure should not impose any one of them upon others, because they see not with our Light. Had praying with a *precompos'd Form*, or *without one*, been the *only lawful way*, I think God would have *told us* ; but because I do not see that he hath *confin'd* us to either, I think Men may lawfully use *either*, or *both*, as they find it most *assisting to true Devotion* : and it seems to me extreme Vanity and Rashness, to impose upon each other those things which *God hath not determin'd*. But,

(2.) We should not offer to impose these things on each other, nor fall out with each other upon the account of our different Apprehensions in lesser Matters, *because God accepts the good Men of both Apprehensions* : as in the 3d Verse, *Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not ; and let not him that eateth not, judg him that eateth, for God hath receiv'd him*. Let not the Conformist or Dissenter judg each other, or despise each other, upon the account of their Differences, *because God*  
accepts

accepts the good Men of both Communions, to their own Master they stand or fall ; but the sincere Christian, of whatsoever Denomination, shall assuredly stand, for God is able to hold him up, tho his Fellow-Christians, it may be by mistake, have condemn'd him, and are endeavouring to cast him down. Whether therefore we sit, or kneel, or stand at the Lord's Supper ; whether we make use of a precompos'd Form or not in Prayer, the sincere Worshipper, the faithful Communicant is undoubtedly accepted of God, and therefore should be receiv'd by Men.

We should therefore receive each other, *ἄνευ διακρίσεως διαλογισμῶν*, without Discrimination of Opinion, or Inequality of Affection ; as a learned Critick thinks those words in the first Verse may fairly be expounded.

(3.) We should not condemn each other about these things, nor impose them on each other ; for consider who it is we condemn and impose on in this Case, they are our Brethren, such as are therefore agreed with us in all the essential Parts and Duties of Religion, the Servants of the same God, Followers of the same Jesus, sanctify'd by the same Spirit ; and therefore the great things in which we are agreed, should make us bear with each other in those lesser things about which we differ : they are our Brethren, and therefore are travelling in the same great Road, have the same common Hope of their Calling ; and it should make us ashamed to differ with each other about things of so little Consequence, when we hope to meet each other in Heaven in perfect Amity and Love, notwithstanding our little Family-Quarrels here.

But further, they are our Brethren whom we judge, who are therefore in equal Circumstances with our selves, and have an equal Right to impose their Opinions upon us, as we have to impose ours upon them, if they get the like Advantage against us. But how dismal would the Consequence of this be ! Let us not therefore judge one another any more, Ver. 13. Besides, these Brethren whom we are judging, and on whom we are imposing our Opinions, are another's Servants, and therefore not accountable to us. God is Lord of their Consciences, and not Men ; and therefore to him they must give an

*Account.*

*Account.* Could those that impose on us *put themselves in our stead*, and answer at the Bar of God for us, they might have *some Pretence* to impose their Judgment on us; or were we not to come before the Bar of God, but to be finally judg'd at *their Bar*, this might excuse them in imposing on us. But since we are all of us *accountable* to God's Tribunal for our *Opinions* and *Practices* in *Religious Matters*, there's the highest Reason we should *judg for our selves*, and not be oblig'd *blindly to follow* any Man's Dictates: Ver. 10. *For why dost thou judg thy Brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? for we shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ.* 'Tis therefore not only an *unjust Anticipation* of the Judgment of Christ, but a *presumptuous Usurpation* of his Authority, to judg or impose upon another Man's Conscience; and let us consider how that will be answer'd. And here I cannot forbear inserting a remarkable Passage out of the Book call'd *Naked Truth*, proper to awaken the Consideration, and put a Check to the Passions of fierce Imposers.

Pag. 23. 'Now I beseech you, in the fear of God, set before your selves the Day of Judgment, when Christ, on his Tribunal, shall require an Account of every Word and Deed, and shall thus question you: Here are several Souls, who taking Offence at your Ceremonies, have forsaken the Faith, and run into Hell (as he represents the Case) *why have you suffer'd this? Will you answer, it was to preserve your Ceremonies? Will not Christ return, Are your Ceremonies more dear than the Souls for which I dy'd? Will you for Ceremonies, which you your selves confess indifferent, no way necessary to Salvation, suffer your Brethren to perish for whom I dy'd? Will you tell Christ they ought to suffer for their Wilfulness and Perverseness, who will not submit to the Laws of the Church as they ought? Will not Christ return, Shall they perish for transgressing your human Laws, which they ignorantly think erroneous? And shall not you perish for transgressing my Divine Laws, which you know to be just and holy? &c.'*

(4.) We should not impose upon others Consciences, nor condemn them for differing from us; for *who are we*

*we that pretend to do it?* We are *weak* and *fallible* Creatures, as liable to Mistakes and Errors as those we *impose* on and condemn. Had an inspir'd Apostle determin'd the Controversies of this nature, or told us, that we must submit our Judgments and Practices to those that are *call'd Church-Governors*, we might then better have borne it: but since none of them have determin'd these Indifferences, but left us to *act*, as we are *persuaded* in our own Minds; who are they, that being *fallible Men*, liable to Mistakes as well as our selves, dare offer to *impose* on, or *condemn* their Brethren, merely because they differ from them? For they that being fallible themselves, impose their Judgments upon others, run a *twofold Hazard*: They are in danger of being mistaken themselves, as they are fallible Men; but the greater Prejudice may be, in *imposing this Mistake upon others*: whereas they that *fall into* an Error themselves, but do not offer to *impose* their Judgments on others, if they should happen to be in a *Mistake*, err *but once*, and their Error perisheth with them.

But further it must be observ'd, in reference to those Rites and Ceremonies, that are Matter of Debate between the *Conformist* and *Nonconformist*, that they may be reduc'd to two sorts:

1<sup>st</sup>. They are either such as are the *necessary Circumstances* of Actions, which *must be determin'd* one way or other, or else the religious Action cannot be perform'd; such are the Gestures at the Lord's Supper, and the Method of Prayer. The Gesture at the Lord's Supper must be fix'd, you must either *sit*, or *kneel*, or *stand*, or *lean*, or the like; but there is indeed no necessity why a Person should be *confin'd* to any *one* of these Gestures, because God will *accept* the sincere Communicant, which Gesture soever he useth; and therefore let him *take* that which he thinks most *proper*.

But then, 2<sup>ly</sup>. There are other Rites and Ceremonies, which are *pure Additions* to the religious Actions which they accompany, and are *perfectly unnecessary*, because they need not be us'd at all; the religious Action being either *wholly over*, or at least may be perform'd as *agreeably* to the Sacred Institution *without* it, or without any thing like it: and of this sort are the *Cross*, and *Godfathers*

*fathers and Godmothers* in Baptism; for the Baptism is *over*, before the Sign of the *Cross* is made, and no doubt may be as *decently* perform'd without *Godfathers*, &c. and as *agreeably* to the *Institution* of Christ, which neither *requires* the *one* nor the *other*. But my Design not leading me to *argue directly* against the use of these things by those that *like them*, but only *against* the *Imposition* of them on those that *dislike* them, and *condemning* each other about them, I have only one *Observation* to make under this Head, which is this; Those who *add Ceremonies* to the *Institutions* of Christ, in order to render them *more decent*, or in order to render his *Worshippers more decent* in their *Approaches*, are more likely to *mistake*, than those who *oppose* these *Additions*, and are for observing the *Institutions* of Christ, *as he hath left them*: For Example, our Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed, that Persons should be admitted into his Church by *Baptism*, in the *Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. Now suppose a Person thinks in his *Conscience*, that he ought to add to this *the transient Sign of the Cross*, and bring *Sponsors* to *contract* for his Children, we are not to *judg* him, but leave him to his *own Master*: But yet he is more in danger of a *Mistake*, in *framing these things of his own head*, especially if he *impose* these things on others; herein he goes beyond his *Commission* or *Power*.

But, on the other hand, he that, without *judging or censuring* others, observes the *Institutions* of Christ, *as he hath left them*, he is more *likely* to be in the *right*: The one *may be safe* in using, with a *sincere Mind*, such things as *seem to him inoffensive*; but the other *certainly is safe*, as observing the *Institutions* of Christ, *as he hath left them*.

(5.) We should not *judg* each other, or *impose* on each other's *Consciences*, because it's an *Injury to Conscience* to have that *impos'd* on it, which it *doth not approve*, Ver. 14, 15, 23. The *Apostle* knew those things the *Jewish* and *Gentile Converts* differ'd about were not *unclean* in themselves: yet *to those that thought them so, they were so*, and he that *doubted of their Lawfulness* was *damned*, or *self-condemn'd* if he did them; that is, tho' the things that are *Matter of Debate* among *Protestants*,

should not be call'd *absolutely unlawful*, or *simply evil*; yet to him that *dislikes* them, they are *unclean*: For tho a Person should *err*, in thinking that to be *unclean* which is *not unclean*, yet so long as he *thinks it is so*, to him it is so, and he ought not to have it *impos'd* on him: For Example, suppose a Dissenter looks on it unlawful to be excluded from *contracting* at Baptism for his own Children, and to be oblig'd to procure three other Persons to *contract for them*; supposing he think it *unlawful* to lay them under *such Obligations*, as are so difficult to discharge; and suppose he should really *be in the wrong* in his Judgment about these things, yet while he thinks them *unlawful*, to him they are *unlawful*, and he ought not to have them *impos'd* on him.

(6.) We ought not to impose on each other's Conscience, nor judg each other about these lesser Matters, *because they no way commend us to God*: Ver. 17, 18. *For the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost; and he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approv'd of Men.* It consists not in Forms and Gestures, Habits nor Ceremonies; Strife about these doth but too often *eat out Charity*, which is an *essential Branch* of true Religion. 'Tis sad to see Men lay as great a stress upon their *mere Conformity or Nonconformity* to these things, as if the whole of their Religion was plac'd in them: 'Tis sad to see Men persecute each other to *Fines and Imprisonment, to Banishment, to Death*, as if the Affirmers or Deniers of these things were the *Off-scouring* of Mankind: 'Tis *dismal* to hear one, who calls himself an *Ambassador of Christ*, the Prince of Peace, or a *Disciple* of the meek and holy Jesus, in a *study'd Invective* tell you, you must shun this and the other Person as a *Plague or Pestilence*, have no *Commerce* with them, shew them no *common Civility*, that their Prayers are like offering Sacrifice to the Devil, because they do not worship God according to our *Rites and Ceremonies*, tho they are not at all *deficient in real inward Devotion to God, or Justice towards Men.* These things turn unhappily to the Reproach of Religion: We ought not to lay so much stress on those things which *commend us not to God*, as the Apostle saith in a like Case, 1 Cor.

8. 8. *If we do them, we are not the better; and if we do them not, we are not the worse.* It was undoubtedly the Design of our Lord Jesus Christ to acquaint us what are the *true Terms* on which Men shall be *accepted* and *bles-sed* of God; and unless the Followers of Christ *think themselves wiser* than their *Master*, it is strange, that what will make a Man a *Disciple of Jesus Christ*, will not also procure his *Admission* into any *Church* of Christ upon Earth.

As the learned Bishop *Stillingfleet* observes, in the Preface to his *Irenicum*: ‘What possible Reason can be assign’d or given why such things should not be sufficient for *Communion with a Church*, which are sufficient for *eternal Salvation*? What Ground can there be why Christians should not stand upon the same Terms now, which they did in the *time of Christ and his Apostles*? Was there ever more *true* and *cordial* *Reverence* in the *Worship of God*?’ Thus he, with more to the same purpose.

But tho’ the Apostles laid no stress upon an *Uniformity of Rites and Ceremonies*, which no way commend us to God, yet they requir’d *Unity of Affection*; for he that honoureth God in the exercise of *Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, is *accepted* of God, and so should be  *approv’d* of his Fellow-Christians: *Let us therefore follow after the things that make for Peace, and things whereby we may edify one another*; Ver. 19.

(7.) We should be so far from condemning others for their Differences from us, or imposing our Judgments upon them, that we should rather *deny our selves the Exercise of our natural Liberty*, or the *suppos’d Advantage of a superior Authority*, where we can do it without *Sin*, in order to answer any good purpose of a *nearer Union* amongst Brethren. This we collect from Ver. 20, 21, 22. *For Meat destroy not the Work of God.* Let us not, by a rigorous imposing of indifferent things, destroy *Charity*, an essential part of true Religion: *All things indeed are pure, but it is Evil to that Man that eateth with Offence.* Altho’ the things, that are Matters of Debate among us, should not be evil in themselves, yet to him that *dislikes* them *they are so*, and should not be *forc’d* on him; for it is good neither to eat *Flesh*, nor drink

*drink Wine, whereby our Brother is offended or made to fall.* And if we are rather to forbear the Exercise of our natural Liberty, surely we should not abridg others of theirs, nor rack their Judgments to our height. For Example, it is a much more reasonable thing for another to forbear *the Exercise* of his imposing Power, than for me to rack up my Conscience to his Standard: It is a much more rational thing, that he should *indulge me the omitting a Ceremony or two*, which he himself thinks *indifferent*, and therefore no way commends me or my Worship to God, than that I should have my Judgment strain'd to his pitch, in being oblig'd to use such things, as I either *reckon unlawful*, or at least *doubt of their Lawfulness*, as they are added to the Worship of God. In short, he that imposeth, may much more easily *abate* things of *no Necessity or Importance*, than I can *comply* with things that I *dislike*. And when he sees that I venture the Salvation of my Soul, in the way that I take, I cannot see but that he ought to judg me as *sincere*, in my *scrupling or omitting* those Ceremonies, as he expects that I should judg him *sincere and conscientious* in using them: And 'tis highly reasonable he should cultivate the *same Charity* for me, he expects I should do for him. To force my Judgment, is altogether improper (as the Author of *Naked Truth* observes, pag. 2, 3.) ' *There is nothing can be more clearly deduc'd from Scripture; nothing more fully express'd in it, nothing more sutable to Natural Reason, than that no Man should be forc'd to believe, for no Man can be forc'd to believe; you may force a Man to say this or that, but not believe it.*

Thus have I finish'd the *Argumentative Part* of this Discourse, *intended* (I am sure) *sincerely*, whatever *Defects* there may be in the *Management* of it. Wherein I have (I think) shewn you, that the Apostle doth not force an *Uniformity* in these indifferent things, but preserth *mutual Charity*, notwithstanding our different *Apprehensions and Practices* in these indifferent things; and lays down several Arguments why we should not judg nor *condemn* each other for our different *Apprehensions*, nor *impose* on each other's Judgments and Consciences.

And

And now could my Invention suggest such a *pathetick Exhortation* to inforce that Temper of Mind, which I have been reasoning for, I would *gladly insert it*.

Shall I beseech you, my Brethren, from the Duty we owe to God, who requires this *charitable and benign Spirit*, and makes it an *essential Badg* of Christianity, *John 13. 35.* and an *Evidence* of our *Love* to him? *1 John 4. 20.* Shall I beseech you, from the very *Nature* of that Religion we profess, which makes Love to Man the *second great Command*? Shall I press you from the *Relation* we stand in to one another? We are *Brethren, Servants of the same God, Disciples of the same Master,* and under the *Guidance* of the *same Spirit*, agreed about the *great Road*, and therefore should not quarrel about the *lesser Foot-paths*. Shall I shew you *Atheism* and *Irreligion* entering in at those *Breaches*, which our *Contentions* make, and *gaining Ground* for want of *uniting* our Endeavours to *oppose* them?

Shall I shew you *Popery*, the *Common Enemy* of all *Protestants*, triumphing at our *Animosities*, pleas'd with seeing us *tear each other in pieces*, and entertaining hopes of making us all the *easier Prey*?

Shall I beseech you by the *Providence* of God, that hath shewn us our *common Danger*, and bless'd us with a *common Deliverance*, by his present *Majesty King GEORGE's* happy *Accession to the Throne* (*whom God long preserve?*) But I am afraid the *Voice of Peace* will scarcely be heard, amidst the *Noise* of so many *impetuous Passions*. *But thou, O Lord! how long*, when wilt thou, *O Prince of Peace*, and *God of Love!* cause us, with all *Lowliness*, and *Meekness*, and *Long-suffering*, to *forbear one another in Love*, that we may keep the *Unity of the Spirit* in the *Bond of Peace*, and join our *common Endeavour* to promote the *common Interest* of our *common Lord*.

Now the *God of Patience and Consolation* grant us to be *like-minded* one towards another, according to *Christ Jesus*, that we may, with *one Mind* and *one Mouth*, glorify God, even the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: Wherefore *let us receive one another*, as *Christ also receiv'd us*, to the *Glory of God*.

I shall

I shall conclude all with that most excellent Collect of our *Establish'd Church*, entitled, *A Prayer for Unity*.

**O** God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace, give us Grace seriously to lay to heart the great Dangers we are in by our unhappy Divisions. Take away all Hatred, and Prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from Godly Union and Concord: that as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all; so we may henceforth be all of one Heart, and of one Soul, united in one holy Bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity; and may, with one Mind and one Mouth, glorify thee, thro Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

F I N I S.









