

Richard Baxter on Worship & Catholicity  
against Separatism & John Owen

Richard Baxter

1684

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# Editor's Introduction

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The great value of this work by the English puritan Richard Baxter is its thorough demolishing of separatistic tendencies and principles. Separatism, that one must separate from (nearly) every Church or worship-impurity, rarely goes under that name and often expresses itself in tendencies and shades of varying degrees. Many Christians who do not think of themselves as Separatists may yet be separatistic. Separatism's principles and conclusions are often promoted as the very standard of Christian piety and righteousness, yet the separatistic tendency is a vice, thoroughly contrary to the Scriptures and the love of Christ for his body, and is schismatic.<sup>2</sup> Once separatistic principles take root in one's way of thinking, they are very hard to root out. Baxter will help you do just that.

## Owen's Manuscript

The separatistic tendencies and conclusions of John Owen, a famed English puritan, are little known or appreciated. Shortly after Owen died in 1683, Baxter received from someone a manuscript with "twelve arguments, famed to be Dr. John Owen's."

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<sup>1</sup> Fentiman, MDiv. is the webmaster of ReformedBooksOnline and lives in Vermont with his wife and four children. Baxter's work has been minimally edited (2024). The whole of this work is in the public domain. For any textual question, see the original: Richard Baxter, *An Account of the Reasons why the Twelve Arguments said to be Dr. John Owen's Change not my Judgment about Communion with Parish Churches* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1684).

<sup>2</sup> See the 'Intro' and 'Principles of Union & Separation about Church Assemblies with Impurities of Worship in Them' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO), and the numerous sections on the same page (with the Bible verses under each section). See also the many reformed writings against Separatism at 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO). For where it is right to separate from Churches which tend to overturn the fundamentals of the faith, see 'Of Fundamental, Secondary & Tertiary Matters of Christianity, of Errors Therein & of Communion, Discipline & Separation Thereabout' and 'On the Legitimacy & Necessity of Separation from Rome' at 'On the Roman Church being a Church, She being Apostate, her Baptism being Valid, that the Reformers' Ministerial Calling was Valid, Necessity of Separation from Her & Whether Romanists may be Saved' (RBO).

Baxter said, "Whether fame truly or falsely father them, I know not."<sup>3</sup> The arguments were first published a generation later in 1720 under the printer's general title, "An Answer unto Two Questions by the late Judicious John Owen, D.D., with Twelve Arguments against any Conformity to Worship not of Divine Institution".<sup>4</sup> Baxter had written:

"I was willing, as long as I could, to believe that they were not his; they being as fallacious and frivolous as any... But... his own friends that have more of his on the same subject (chiding me for answering them) professed that they are his..."<sup>5</sup>

All the evidence, it appears, is consistent with and points toward Owen as the manuscript's author.<sup>6</sup> Due to Owen's fame, backlash to any who might reply would be inevitable.<sup>7</sup> Baxter chose to, in part because he, in his own words:

"was going out of the world in pain and languor, did think that I was fittest to bear men's censures, and to take that reproach on myself which my brethren were less fit to bear, who might live for further service."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Preface below

<sup>4</sup> It should not be concluded this was Owen's title. As the thesis in the printer's title goes farther than Owen himself apparently did, it shows how easily Owen's argumentation may encourage an even stronger separatism than Owen may have intended. John Owen, *Seventeen Sermons Preach'd by the Reverend Dr. John Owen...* (London: William & Joseph Marshall, 1720), vol. 2, pp. 377-400.

<sup>5</sup> From the [Postscript](#) to the work below, though the Postscript is not included below. For it, see [Catholic Communion Defended against both Extremes... in Five Parts...](#) (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1684), not paginated.

<sup>6</sup> Numerous footnotes have been added below where published sentiments of Owen on key points align with those in the manuscript. More could be added. Owen had prolonged history throughout his life being closely associated with Independents, Separatists and their radical political movements, including in preaching a sermon to the "Rump Parliament" the day after king Charles I's execution, being Oliver Cromwell's chaplain and serving on a parliament under Cromwell. William Orme, a biographer of Baxter and Owen, does not dispute Owen as the author. The manuscript was reprinted as a [monograph](#) in 1839 as Owen's by a London publisher. The work was included in Owen's *Works* (1853), edited by William H. Goold, in volume 16, pp. 240-53, and was subsequently reprinted in modern times by the Banner of Truth. I am not aware of any case, or even a claim, that Owen was not the author.

<sup>7</sup> For the numerous subsequent replies to Baxter, defending Owen, see William Orme, 'The Life & Times of Richard Baxter' in *The Practical Works of the Reverend Richard Baxter with a Life of the Author*, 23 vols., ed. William Orme (London: Duncan, 1830), vol. 1, p. 610.

<sup>8</sup> Baxter's stated reasons for replying to Owen are quoted by Orme: "Seeing so many in prison for this error, to the dishonor of God, and so many more likely to be ruined by it, and the separating party, by the temptation of suffering, had so far prevailed with the most strict and zealous Christians, that a great number were of their mind; and the nonconformable ministers, whose judgment was against this separation, durst not publish their dislike of it, partly because of sharp and bitter censures of the Separatists, and partly for fear of losing all opportunity of teaching them; and some that had no hope of any other

## The Non-Conformist Controversy

The Owen-Baxter exchange was part of a larger controversy amidst the English non-conformists after the strict civil imposition of the impure Anglican Church Liturgy in 1662. The dispute was known by one side of the non-conformists as the “occasional conformity controversy”.<sup>9</sup> However that title is itself biased, making the question to be, from the default perspective of remaining separate: Whether laypersons should occasionally conform and attend the Liturgy or not? Rather, from Baxter’s side, the question may be more aptly put: Whether one must totally and always separate from God’s worship in the established churches and the Liturgy?

To refine the issue further: the point at hand only necessarily respected the service for the Lord’s Day,<sup>10</sup> which was less objectionable than other parts of the Service-Book, and that in the parish-churches, which had a more simple and Biblical service compared to the diocesan, city churches, which had many more man-made, showy additions in worship. Nor was the issue necessarily participation in any specific part of the Liturgy-

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friends or maintenance, or auditors, thought they might be silent. On all these accounts, I that had no gathered church, nor lived on the contribution of any such, and was going out of the world in pain and languor, did think that I was fittest to bear men's censures, and to take that reproach on myself, which my brethren were less fit to bear, who might live for further service. So at the importunity of the bookseller, I consented to publish the reasons of my communicating in the parish churches, and against separation. Which, when it was coming out, a manuscript of Dr. Owen's, who was lately dead, containing twelve arguments against such joining with the liturgy and public churches, was sent me, as that which had satisfied multitudes: I thought, that if this were unanswered, my labor would be much lost, because that party would still say, Dr. Owen's twelve arguments confuted all: whereupon, I hastily answered them, but found after, that it had been more prudent to have omitted his name. For, on that account, a swarm of revilers in the city poured out their keenest censures, and three or four wrote against me, whom I answered. I will not name the men that are known, and two of them are yet unknown; but they went on several principles, some charged all communion with the liturgy, with idolatry, anti-Christianity, perjury and backsliding. One concealed his judgment, and quarreled at my words. Another turned my treatise of Episcopacy against me, and said it fully proved the duty of separation. I was glad that I was hereby called to explain that treatise, lest it should do hurt to mistakers when I am dead; and that as in it I had said much against one extreme, I might leave my testimony against the other. I called all these writings together, 'A Defence of Catholic Communion.' And that I might be impartial, I adjoined two pieces against Dr. Sherlock, who ran quite into the contrary extremes...” Orme, “Life & Times”, pp. 607-8.

<sup>9</sup> So William H. Goold in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (1853; Banner of Truth, 2006), vol. 16, p. 240. See the numerous resources on the topic, from Baxter’s side of things, at ‘[On Occasional, Qualified, Material Communion & Conformity without Sin](#)’ at ‘[On Schism & Separatism](#)’ (RBO).

<sup>10</sup> See “[The Order for Divine Service on the Lord’s Day](#)” (1661) in *The Book of Common Prayer...* ed. Charles Shields (Philadelphia: James Claxton, 1867), pp. 36-47

service, but solely one's presence at it.<sup>11</sup> Those who answered the question(s) with the necessity of perpetual separation were in continuity with the Separatists, whose cause had been being continued in England since at least the late-1500's.

### Owen's Moderation<sup>12</sup>

On the one hand it appears Owen was less separatistic than many today and did not advocate the necessity of separation upon (nearly) any impurity. The eighteenth-century printer's specific title for Owen's piece read, "Twelve Arguments against any Conformity of Members of Separate Churches, to the National Church".<sup>13</sup> In laying down his position, Owen writes, "It is not lawful for *us* to go to, and join in public worship by the Common-Prayer". That "*us*" may likely refer back to those persons mentioned in the first question that had preceded the twelve arguments as printed: "persons, who have engaged unto reformation and another way of divine worship, according to the Word of God".<sup>14</sup> Hence Owen was not intending to necessarily argue regarding persons in the established Church who continued to attend the Liturgy, but only regarding those who had "engaged unto reformation," and, according to the printer, were already a part of separate, more outwardly pure congregations.

In a previous work Owen had listed out six accumulated circumstantial grounds for separation that were current in England at that time,<sup>15</sup> which are not all present in

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<sup>11</sup> Notice that Baxter does not speak of any outward participation (such as in responsive readings): "I know nothing in the common Lord's-Day worship spoken in the name of the Church which a godly Christian may not join in with the exercise of the spirit of prayer with faith and comfort..." *Catholic Communion Doubly Defended by Dr. Owen's Vindicator & Richard Baxter...* (London: Parkhurst, 1684), [section 2](#), p. 12. Owen likewise makes the issue to be about one's presence (and nothing more) in numerous places.

<sup>12</sup> Owen: "we wholly deny that the mistakes or disorders of Christians in complying with, or joining themselves unto such churches as have no warrantable institution ought to be any cause of the diminishing of our love towards them, or of withdrawing it from them." *A Discourse concerning Evangelical Love, Church-Peace and Unity* (London, 1672), [ch. 3](#), pp. 66-67

<sup>13</sup> Owen, *Seventeen Sermons*, 2.391.

<sup>14</sup> It is not clear this is the case though, as it would make the propositions being defended in the first question and in the twelve arguments identical, and hence redundant. If "*us*" in the twelve arguments refers to people or Christians in general, it explains the need for the twelve arguments, in advancing the issue, but makes Owen much more separatistic.

<sup>15</sup> Owen, *A Brief Vindication of the Non-Conformists from the Charge of Schism...* (London: Ponder, 1680), pp. 35-37.

America today. One chief ground was that the Liturgy was imposed by law as exclusive to any other form of worship.<sup>16</sup> Given the Liturgy's impurity, the law's exclusion of pure-Gospel worship and the appearance of scandal and backsliding for persons attending the Liturgy when they might have better public worship, Owen's position may seem to be sound divinity.

### Owen's Separatistic Principles

On the other hand, Owen's six circumstantial grounds for separation, and that the Liturgy was exclusively imposed, equally applied to persons within the established Church. Owen's (apparent) attempted application of his principles only to "persons, who have engaged unto reformation"<sup>17</sup> rests on the assumption that such an engagement unto reformation binds one to a higher standard than those who have not so engaged. While it is acknowledged such persons have a greater obligation unto God's Word by such an engagement, it is absolutely impossible for the creature ever to morally bind himself beyond God's Law ([Mt. 15:3-8](#); [Jm. 4:12](#)).<sup>18</sup> That puts engagers to reformation and those who have not so engaged under the same standard, and God's Law is exactly that which Baxter will be arguing below for all alike. But see it in Owen himself: eleven of his twelve arguments below are not specific to persons of separate congregations, but, if they are sound, constrain all Christians.

Owen was well aware, with Baxter reminding the reader of the obvious,<sup>19</sup> that some persons who had engaged to reformation and were even members of separate congregations, might one year worship at a dissenting congregation safely, and the next year incur more hurt by it (whether due to employment issues, being imprisoned, persecution, etc.) than benefit received. Some may prefer the more pure public worship

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<sup>16</sup> See "As armed with laws", p. 25 below. Owen: "Wherefore the question about lay-communion is concerning that which is absolute and total, according unto all that is enjoined by the laws of the land, or by the canons, constitutions and orders of the Church." [Brief Vindication](#), p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Owen had said in Question 1, which prefaces the twelve arguments in the printed editions: "And as unto the persons intended in the inquiry, we judge this practice unlawful unto them, as contrary unto sundry rules of the Scripture, and wherein it is condemned." *Works*, 16.241.

<sup>18</sup> See '[Vows, Oaths, Covenants & Constitutions can Never bind Beyond God's Law](#)' and '[All Vows & Oaths are Qualified](#)' at 'On Oaths & Vows' (RBO).

<sup>19</sup> Argument 8, pp. 77-78 below

in its outward acts some of the time, and yet be more edified by the more godly minister with better praying and preaching in the closer conformed church. Or, if the weather be bad, making a five mile trip outside the city infeasible (as was common), would not going to the closer established church be better than staying at home?

Even if Owen's principles could be limited to persons who have engaged to reformation, his conclusion of necessary separation from the established worship is still contrary to Scripture. Wouldn't this condemn many of the righteous saints in the Old Testament, and Jesus, who remained attendant upon the legally enforced established Church and worship, which was often much more corrupt than England's, while seeking her reformation? (1 Sam. 2:1-3, 11-20; 1 Kings 8:31-39; 22:42-43; 2 Kings 12:2-3; 14:1-4; 2 Chron. 7 with 1 Kings 11:1-12; 2 Chron. 15:15-18; 20:9; Neh. 13:7-14; Jer. 26 & 28; Eze. 9:4, 6 with Eze. 8-9; Joel 1:13-14; 2:15-19; Mt. 21:13; 23:1-5, 13, 16-25, 34-35; Lk. 1:5-6; 19:45-48; Jn. 2:13-17; Jn. 18:20; the high priests, who represented all the worshippers in the highest acts of their worship, Ex. 28:29; Lev. 16:16; Heb. 5:1, were supposed to serve for life, Lev. 16:32; Num. 20:25-28; 35:25, but they were not doing so, Lk. 3:2; Jn. 18:13; Acts 4:6, contrary to God's ordinance, due to civil impositions of heathen magistrates)<sup>20</sup>

Numerous of Owen's arguments below conclude for the sinfulness of liturgies and forms of prayer as such (despite his prefacing otherwise).<sup>21</sup> More alarmingly, some of Owen's principles, if they are sound, necessitate separation from every church or worship-error. To set forth only a few highlights:

"Position. It is not lawful for us to go and join in public worship by the Common-prayer, because that worship itself, according to the rule of the Gospel, is not lawful."

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<sup>20</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. 18, ch. 2, sect. 1-2; ch. 4, sect. 3; ch. 5, sect. 3; bk. 20, ch. 1, sect. 3; ch. 5, sect. 2; ch. 8, sect. 5, 8, 11; ch. 9, sect. 1-4, 7; ch. 10; *Jewish War*, bk. 4, ch. 3, sect. 6; ch. 4, sect. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Owen: "The present question is not about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of forms of prayer in general; nor about the lawfulness of that form, or those forms, which are prescribed in the Common-Prayer-Book, as unto their matter and manner of composure, absolutely considered; nor yet about the expediency of the whole system of worship limited thereunto..." Question 1 in *Seventeen Sermons*, 2.380. Baxter: "Had not the MS. been against all forms of liturgy, but only against the real or supposed faults of the English one; and had it been only against owning the faults, and not against communion in necessary duty, I had not troubled you, by my Defense." "To the unknown Author of a Letter lately sent me" in *Catholic Communion Defended against both Extremes... in Five Parts*, not paginated.

“he that joins in the worship of the Common-prayer does, by his practice, make profession that it is the true worship of God, accepted by him, and approved of him, and wholly agreeable to his mind...”

“Fourth Argument. That which gives testimony against the faithfulness of Christ in his house... is not to be complied withal...”

If Owen’s principles and arguments are not sound, his separatist conclusion does not follow.

### Owen’s Continuation of the Separatist Trajectory

Owen cannot be thought to be ignorant or even novel in how far he was going in all this, as if he was treading the way in breaking new theological ground. Those who argued the hardest and at greatest length with the most publications against the Separatists in the late-1500’s through the greater share of the 1600’s (more than any of the Anglican bishops, as Baxter mentions), were the puritans.<sup>22</sup> By far and away the dominant share of them argued for and practiced at least occasional communion with the parish-churches,<sup>23</sup> including the Westminster divines,<sup>24</sup> which was a major distinguishing mark between them and the Separatists. Owen’s repeated qualification of speaking of the Anglican Church “in its present state” (in the 1680’s) is of no help to him: for most of the history of the Anglican Church since the beginning of her reformation, the Liturgy was exclusively civilly imposed; some eras were worse for non-conformists than the 1680’s. Baxter was not singular in his opinion: he was defending the main tide of puritanism.

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<sup>22</sup> See their writings against the Separatists at ‘*On Schism & Separatism*’ (RBO).

<sup>23</sup> See Baxter, *The Nonconformists’ Plea for Peace* (London, 1679), 7. ‘*Some Matters of Fact Preparatory...*’, sect. 3, pp. 121-22; James Owen, *Moderation Still a Virtue* (London: Taylor, 1704), pp. 42-43; John Williams, ‘*The Non-Conformists’ Plea for Lay-Communion with the Church of England*’ in *A Collection of Cases & other Discourses lately written to recover Dissenters to the communion of the Church of England by some Divines of the City of London* (London, 1685), vol. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Baxter, *Nonconformists’ Plea*, 7. ‘*Some Matters of Fact Preparatory*’, sect. 3, p. 127; Owen, *Moderation Still a Virtue*, pp. 43-44.

Be aware that Baxter does not always interpret Owen in the best light possible:<sup>25</sup> While Owen did share the practical conclusion of the Separatists, he cannot be wholly identified with them.<sup>26</sup> Strangely enough, Owen's ethics of political involvement and cooperation unto good ends greatly differed from his understanding of the same in the church-sphere. Despite Owen's close association and working with the Separatists and other radicals politically for long periods of time, in truly scandalous contexts,<sup>27</sup> Owen justified it saying that he (emphasis added):

*"never had a hand in, nor gave consent unto the raising of any war in these nations, nor unto any political alteration in them; no, not to any one that was among us, during our revolutions."*<sup>28</sup>

The author of Owen's 1720 "Life" continues in describing Owen's thought in the matter:

*"he acknowledged that he lived and acted under them the things wherein he thought his duty consisted, and challenges all men to charge him with doing the least personal injury unto any, professing himself ready to give satisfaction to any one that can justly claim it."*<sup>29</sup>

One could wish Owen's political ethics of, in necessity, cooperating with what is less than good in something not inherently wrong, for higher goods, while seeking to avoid the greater hurt and scandal, without consenting to the bad, had carried over in greater measure to his ecclesiastical ethics. Baxter will be arguing just this.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Owen elaborated on numerous of his points in previous publications with greater qualifications and detail. Baxter does not show knowledge or appreciation of this.

<sup>26</sup> The Separatists typically denied the Anglican Church to be a Church at all, or at least not a "true Church". Owen affirms the Anglican Church to be in a "Church-state" in *An Enquiry into the Original, Nature, Institution, Power, Order & Communion of Evangelical Churches...* (1681), [ch. 1](#), pp. 5-6. He allows that at least some of the parochial churches were "true churches," having "the being and nature of churches," in *Ibid.*, ["polemic"](#), pp. 249-50 & 283-84.

<sup>27</sup> See [footnote 6](#) above.

<sup>28</sup> "Life" in *Seventeen Sermons*, 1.xxvi.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.xxvi.

<sup>30</sup> To see this principle defended and opened up, see '[An Extended Introduction](#)' at 'On the Ethics of Material Cooperation with, & Associations with Evil' (RBO).

## The Scottish Covenanters

It may be of interest how the two English sides represented here compare to how the same issues simultaneously played out amongst the Scottish covenanters. Though a liturgy was not imposed in Scotland at the time,<sup>31</sup> the established churches were constrained by certain legally exclusive civil impositions. While acknowledging a complexity of varied factors and reasons at play, since the beginning of that era in 1662, the majority of the Scottish covenanters that resisted from outside the establishment, while holding separate worship assemblies, yet thought it not wrong to attend the conformed churches, as Baxter. In 1679, a minority of them, who would come to be known as the Cameronians (followers of Richard Cameron), split from the majority, holding it wrong to at all attend the conformed churches,<sup>32</sup> as Owen.

## Baxter's Treatment

One need not agree with every claim, interpretation and statement of Baxter below, or even his paradigm for worship in general (which leaves some to be desired).<sup>33</sup> Yet, as with much of Baxter's writings, one will learn and profit greatly from him. Baxter has some truly profound sentiments. His brief history of English Separatism below, largely from his personal experience and knowledge, is insightfully fascinating. Don't be tempted to think that the historical details lessen the relevance of Baxter's work for today: If there was no excuse for the necessity of separation in England in their circumstances, there is even less excuse for Separatism today. Please enjoy Baxter's very valuable work as he theologically decimates the principles and tendencies of Separatism.

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<sup>31</sup> Gordon Donaldson, ch. 4, "Covenant to Revolution" in eds. Duncan Forrester & Douglas Murray, *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), pp. 63-64.

<sup>32</sup> The arguments of the majority of the resisting Scottish covenanters outside the establishment are better. For a secondary account of the whole, with the reasons of both sides, see pp. 328-30 & 334-36 of Thomas M'Crie, *Story of the Scottish Church* (1875). For primary sources with more details and reasons, see Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol. 3, pp. 91 (rt col) & 93 (rt col).

<sup>33</sup> Baxter's paradigm is more Anglican than that of numerous of the English puritans, including Owen. However Owen is not right in everything, nor is what he says sufficient to account for all of the issues regarding worship.

# An Account of the Reasons why the Twelve Arguments said to be Dr. John Owen's change not my Judgment about Communion with Parish-Churches

## Preface

Reader, when the last sheet of the foregoing paper<sup>34</sup> was printed, I received these twelve arguments, famed to be Dr. John Owen's. Whether fame truly or falsely father them, I know not: it is the cause that I am concerned in. After three and twenty years' practice since the bishops' return [in 1660], I was by accusations called to give the reasons of my practice, which yet I had often done in part before.<sup>35</sup> They said that my communicating in the parish-churches, even when myself and others were maliciously persecuted by a sort of proud and worldly clergymen, did more harm than ever I did good. Though I am bound with meekness to tender them a reason of my practice, I have found by experience that neither side can bear the account which they call for.

Some wise and good men will blame me for making our differences to be so much known, especially for remembering old miscarriages: I obey my conscience. All these things are commonly known already, and we hear sharply of them from God and man, because men hear not our repentance, but our justification. Had we confessed, God is faithful to forgive. Impenitence threatens our yet greater suffering. When we give glory to God and take shame to ourselves, our hopes will revive. Nothing brings so much scandal and arms enemies against us as owning sin or hiding it.

I durst no longer see thousands of good Christians misguided into mistakes and like to be ruined for them, and hereby hardening their persecutors, rejoicing the Papists

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<sup>34</sup> Baxter, 'Unnecessary Separating Disowned, in the Reasons of the Author's Censured Practice' in *Catholic Communion Defended against both Extremes... in Five Parts*.

<sup>35</sup> Baxter had at least six (very good) books before this arguing for non-conformity and against separatism. See them under the 'Books' section at 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO).

who join with them in separation, reducing the Protestant religion into corners and giving it up as public to—we may know whom, censuring one another and dividing on these mistakes and fathering all this on God: I say I durst not stand by in silence to see all this, no more than to see men drowning or the city on fire without endeavoring to save men. It is an exceeding great quiet to my conscience under all the confusions and divisions that have befallen us that in 1660 and 1661 I plainly and earnestly foretold the king and bishops of them<sup>36</sup> and did my best to have prevented them.

And the author that I deal with necessitates me to recite the late fruits of Separation, in pulling down all governments, casting out all the ministers in Wales and were near casting down those of England, with tithes and universities, persecuting and killing godly men and fathering all on God, and now flying from the bishops when they had opened them the door to return. He lays his main cause on the ill fruits of liturgies<sup>37</sup> (which indeed are rather the fruits of pride and malignity) and constrains me to show the fruits of Separation.<sup>38</sup> I dare not bury that in silence which God so dreadfully disowned by their own dissolution, without any blood [in the Restoration of 1660]; and that when multitudes are running into the old error, by mistaking the judgment of the nonconforming ministers, thinking that they took that for unlawful which they did not, and condemning all the excellent old nonconformists and conformists, and almost all the Churches on earth. Let wiser men deal wiselier: I use the best wisdom that I have.

It's true that abundance of good people fear and distaste communion in the Liturgy: What wonder, when such reasonings as these twelve arguments (which how gross soever, poor people have not the skill to answer) persuade them it is false worship and heinous sin, and others say idolatry. They are conquered as the Mexicans were by the Spaniards, by the frightful roaring of their cannons the militia used: Acts 15:1-2, "Ye cannot be saved," and as the Pope conquered kings and kingdoms by threatening to keep them out of Heaven. Even as since men tell me that they medicate their wines with arsenic and mercury: I am afraid to drink them, which before I feared not; so are honest souls affrightened from liturgies and communion.

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<sup>36</sup> Baxter may be referring to his book, [Catholic Unity, or the Only Way to bring us all to be of One Religion](#) (London, 1660).

<sup>37</sup> Under argument two below

<sup>38</sup> Under argument two below

How much in them I dissent from myself I have openly intimated to the world:<sup>39</sup> But he that will join in no good that is mixed by men with faultiness and evil must separate from all the world, and all from him: But how will he separate from himself? England in her [Thirty-Nine] Articles and ordination professes to cleave to Scripture-sufficiency as being the Protestant religion.<sup>40</sup> I go to join in this professed religion: If the speaker of any side add any unwarrantable passages by [Service] book or without book, let him answer for them; I own them not: Did my presence own all that I hear, I would join with no man living. The Lord fit us for a wiser and more loving world.

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<sup>39</sup> Baxter may be referring to Question 78, 'Whether are set forms of words or free praying without them the better way? And what are the commodities and incommunities of each way?' in *Christian Directory* (London, 1673), pt. 3, Christian Ecclesiastics, Cases of Conscience, pp. 851-53

<sup>40</sup> Thirty-Nine Articles, Article 6, 'Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation'

# The Twelve Arguments said to be Dr. Owen's, Impartially Considered

## Positions

Owen:

Position: It is not lawful for us to go to, and join in public worship by the Common-Prayer, because that worship itself, according to the rule of the gospel, is not lawful.<sup>41</sup>

Baxter:

1st Answer: I shall use the same method that he has used and first give you my positions, and then the supposed matter of fact, and then consider his arguments.

Position: It is not only lawful, but a duty for (1) those that cannot have better public church-worship without more hurt than benefit, and are near a competent parish minister, to go to and join in public worship performed according to the Liturgy and in sacramental communion; and for (2) those that can have better, to join sometime with such parish churches when their forbearance scandalously seems to signify that they take such communion for unlawful, and so would tempt others to the same accusation and uncharitable separation.

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<sup>41</sup> Contra Owen, see 'On the Distinction & Difference between Impurities of Worship & Idolatry, & being Present & Worshipping Lawfully at an Assembly with certain Impure Acts of Worship by Some in it (Lev. 10:16-20; 1 Cor. 11-14) vs. Fleeing an Assembly with Literal Idolatry (Ex. 32:4; 1 Kings 13:1-10; 2 Chron. 11:13-16; 1 Jn. 5:21; Rev. 18:4)', 'One May & Ought to Separate or Abstain from Sinful Acts of Impure Worship while Not Separating from the Rest of the Divine Worship Service' and 'On Performing Necessary Duties though Others Sin in Them' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

## History of Liturgies & Parish-Communion<sup>42</sup>

The history of the matter of fact must be premised for the right deciding of the case, which is as follows:

1. God has commanded us to preach, pray, praise Him and administer his sacraments and discipline, and has told us what doctrine we must preach, what things we must pray and give thanks for and what sacraments and discipline we must administer. But He has not told us in what words we must do these, nor in what posture, nor in what particular method, nor whether we must use ofttest the same words or various, nor whether they shall be before prepared or spoken immediately without preparation of words, nor whether written or remembered, nor whether prepared and composed by ourselves or by others, with such like.
2. God prescribed diverse forms of prayer [Num. 6:23-27], confession [Dt. 26:5-15] and praise to the Jews in Moses's Law, and a prophetical song, which they were all to learn (Dt. 32).<sup>43</sup>
3. The psalms were a chief part of the Jews' liturgy, in which there are many forms of prayer and praise, some made by David, some by Asaph, some by others and some in or after the captivity (no one knows by whom). And those psalms were not in meter and sung in tunes like ours now, but loudly said over.<sup>44</sup>
4. John taught his disciples to pray, not only as to the matter, but as to the words [Lk. 5:33; 11:1]; and so did Christ his disciples at their request, who had not then the after-pouring out of the Spirit (nay, knew not that Christ must die for sin, rise and reign in heaven, etc.): "and He said, 'When ye pray, say, 'Our Father,'" etc. [Lk. 11:2-4] though not tying them only to these words, yet giving them a form of words to be used as they had occasion, as well as a perfect directory for method [Mt. 6:9].

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<sup>42</sup> Owen had given his own history of liturgies in *A Discourse concerning Liturgies, and their Imposition* (London: 1662), chs. 5 & 6, pp. 24-38.

<sup>43</sup> Besides these cited texts, there are not more forms of prayer, confession or praise in Moses's Law.

<sup>44</sup> Baxter understates this, which lends support to his framework of understanding worship. It is likely in the synagogues the psalms were loudly, rhythmically said over, that is, in a chanting way, being distinguished from other things merely read or recited. In the temple, with the instruments and Levitical choirs, it is more likely the rehearsing of the psalms was done in a way more corresponding with our singing.

5. Christ Himself joined with the Jews in synagogues [Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 13:54; Mk. 1:21] and temple [Mt. 26:55; Mk. 11:11; Mk. 12:35; Mk. 14:49] when they used forms, and so did the apostles [Acts 2:46; 3:1; 9:20; 13:5, 14-15; 14:1; 18:4, 21; 21:26], and never blamed them for the use of such forms.

6. Christ prescribed a form of words in baptism [Mt. 28:19]<sup>45</sup> and in the administration of the Lord's Supper [Lk. 22:19-20], and used a hymn in form [Mt. 26:30].<sup>46</sup>

7. There are diverse forms of prayer and thanksgiving in the New Testament in Lk. 1 & 2, and the Acts [4:24-30] and Paul's epistles [Rom. 15:5-6, 13, 33; 16:25-27; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:20-21; 6:23-24; 1 Thess. 3:11-13; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:16-17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 13:20-21; Jude 24-25; etc.], and the Revelations [1:4-6; 4:8, 11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 15:3-4; 22:21; etc.] which it's lawful and laudable to use.<sup>47</sup>

8. We are commanded to use "psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs," [Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16] which are forms of prayer and praise (and was not then in rhyme). And it was not everyone in the Church that composed these extempore, but some made them for the rest to use. And if none impose them (by office, authority or persuasion), the churches will never use the same. Christians in the primitive ages of the Church were known to the heathen by their constant use of such hymns sung to Christ and of Christ.<sup>48</sup>

9. The churches from Christ's time to this had a creed or form of sound words, or necessary articles of faith, which they used in catechizing and in baptism, which

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<sup>45</sup> That Christ did not prescribe a form of words in baptism, see 'The Baptismal Formula' at 'Baptism' (RBO).

<sup>46</sup> Given the Talmudic evidence, this "hymn" was likely the Great Hallel (Ps. 113-118) or a part of it. Baxter's numerous reasons mentioned below for singing hymns in public worship do not constitute necessary warrant for so doing. See Michael Bushell, *Songs of Zion: the Biblical Basis for Exclusive Psalmody*, 4th ed. (Norfolk Press, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Note there is no evidence any of these prayers were composed aforehand or were intended to be set forms for prayer in public worship, though it is very true they may be used.

<sup>48</sup> This refers to Pliny the Younger (c. 112), *Letters*, bk. 10, letter 96: "on a stated day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god [carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem]..." The Latin does not necessarily speak of singing, but of saying, and *carmen* is not necessarily a hymn, but may be (1) a song generally, such as one of the messianic psalms (Ps. 2, 45, 110, etc.), (2) a regular psalm, or (3) it could be a prose response of praise or prayer (see *Logeion*). There is nothing in the passage which specifies singing a man-composed hymn.

were a great means to keep out heresy; and Church-tyranny and heresy were the introducers of all their alterations.

10. The lay-Christians of the first ages were so full of zeal that they would have taken it ill to have been forbidden to speak their answering and consenting parts in the Church<sup>49</sup> (as the Jews before did), and as now we would take it ill for the minister to sing alone and forbid the people: And though the scantness of history in the first two ages [centuries] tell us not what words were then used as a liturgy (and no doubt but praying by habit was used chiefly), yet some few sentences that are recorded tell us that they used some forms.

11. Constantine himself made prayers for his soldiers and every bishop then used what prayers he thought best in his own church, and composed himself the forms which he used constantly, till heresy and weakness of ministers caused a council to decree that everyone should first show his form of prayer to the synods to be examined and approved before he used it.

12. I do not read or hear of many Churches on earth at this day that used not a liturgy, except New England and some nonconformists here. Nor did I ever read that any one Church on earth for a thousand years after Christ's time did ever scruple it or speak against it (to my remembrance), so that it was for many ages the practice of the whole Church on earth. At this day the Greeks, Armenians, Muscovites [Russians], Georgians, Circassians, Mengrelians, Indian and Persian Christians, the Syrians, Abassines, Egyptians, all the countries that have Nestorians, Jacobites, Maronites, beside the Papists, have a liturgy very far more faulty than ours: even those ascribed to James, Mark, Chrysostom. The Lutherans have one (or diverse in diverse countries). And -these called the Reformed have one, though a shorter and more simple one in France, Geneva, Holland, the Palatinate [Germany], Helvetia [Switzerland], etc.

13. The nonconformists in England were generally for the lawfulness of a form or liturgy and for communion of the parish churches therein in the days of King

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<sup>49</sup> On the absence or paucity of any responsive readings, responsive exhortations or responsive prayers in the first two centuries of the early Church, see [‘The Early Church’](#) at [‘Responsive Readings in Worship’](#) (RBO).

Edward VI, Queen Elizabeth, King James and King Charles I,<sup>50</sup> and wrote more against Separation<sup>51</sup> by far than the bishops did, as is yet visible in their books, especially: Cartwright, Hildersham, Bradshaw, Paget, Gifford, Brightman, Baynes, Rathband, John Ball, etc.<sup>52</sup>

14. Those then counted the fathers of Independency were of the same mind, for parish communion and against Separation: Mr. Jacob, Bradshaw, Ames, (see his *First and Second Manuduction*).<sup>53</sup>

15. Yea, those called Brownists or Separatists were for communion in the Liturgy in the usual parts and for the truth of those parish churches that had good ministers: I have cited their own words before, though all of them were not of the same mind.<sup>54</sup>

16. The martyrs in Queen Mary's days had a chief hand in composing our Liturgy and rejoiced in it, and worshipped God according to it. And none that I read of separated for this from the rest as false worshippers.

17. When before 1639 there were but about one or two nonconformable ministers for each county. If it had been unlawful to communicate in the public churches with the Liturgy, all England must have lived like atheists without any church worship for lack of ministers, except for about thirty or forty [ministers]. Yea, those few kept up no usual church worship, except those of them that by connivence had small chapels or peculiars. And of them most used much of the Liturgy.

18. All the congregations of the nonconformists in England that I have heard (save one now broken, not counting such as Quakers, etc.) have used, and do use,

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<sup>50</sup> See Baxter, *Nonconformists' Plea for Peace*, 7. 'Some Matters of Fact Preparatory', sect. 3, pp. 121-22; James Owen, *Moderation Still a Virtue*, pp. 42-43; John Williams, 'The Non-Conformists' Plea for Lay-Communion with the Church of England' in *A Collection of Cases & other Discourses*, vol. 1.

<sup>51</sup> See 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO).

<sup>52</sup> For the works of all these authors except Baynes, see 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO). For Baynes, see his quote under 'When Impurities in Worship cannot be Reformed' at 'On Impurities of Worship' (RBO).

<sup>53</sup> The works of Bradshaw and Ames can be found at 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO). Henry Jacob's works are at PRDL.

<sup>54</sup> See 'Works of Separatists' at 'Congregationalism & Independency' (RBO).

stinted, imposed forms of worship to this day, and therefore judge it not unlawful, merely as forms or as imposed:

1. Parents teach their children a form of words in catechisms, in prayers, in giving thanks for their meat, and impose these on them.
2. Ministers impose on the assemblies their own method and words in prayer, which are a form to the people; yea, and a form which they know not till they hear it, and have no time to examine it while it flows from the speaker. And their sermons are imposed forms of doctrine (sometimes written also, and read).
3. Few men that retain any sobriety in religion are against the [Apostles'] Creed to be used as a form of confession of faith.
4. The Independents drew up at the Savoy about 1658 or 1659 a form of confession of their faith and discipline.
5. They attempted (Dr. Owen, Mr. Nye, Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Sidrach Sampson, Dr. Cheynell and others), by appointment of a committee of parliament, to have drawn up a catalogue of fundamentals to have been imposed for consent on all that should be tolerated in the land in church-worship: they are yet to be seen in print. (But Archbishop Ussher being chosen for one, and refusing, and I being by his consent substituted in his room, broke that attempt, finding that their fundamentals were lamentably composed and that Christianity was not an unknown thing, and that baptism, the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue were a far better catalogue of fundamentals than theirs).
6. We all constantly use an English form of translation of the Scripture where all the English words, the division of chapters and verses are man's invention, imposed on all.
7. We all use constantly forms of confession, prayer, thanksgiving and praise in the singing of psalms, where, when David's and the Jews' psalms are used, the translation (or rather paraphrase), the rhyme or meters and the tune are human and imposed: and the Separatists themselves make no question of it;

but other psalms (such as that of Ambrose, etc.) more suited to the state of the gospel-Church, may be fitly used, as Paul requires, which must be composed by man and imposed on the Churches or never unanimously used. Our common use of singing psalms and hymns is the use of stinted, imposed forms.

8. He that does not celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper often in words of the same signification shall corrupt those sacraments by his affectation of variety of words, the matter being the same.

9. No man knows beforehand whether a minister has studied and sore composed his prayer or sermon, and yet all join with him.

10. Many affect to compose all their prayer in Scripture sentences,<sup>55</sup> which do but make up one form of many.

19. When the King [Charles II] came in [1660], the ministers of London were invited to attempt a concord with the bishops, and they offered to join in the use of the Liturgy if it were corrected. And they offered additional forms, or a Reformed liturgy, which they would have used. I know it will be objected that I plead in this but for my own works, but I answer: 1. The exceptions and emendations of the old Liturgy offered<sup>56</sup> were none of my work; 2. and the new one which I drew up by their appointment<sup>57</sup> had their common review and consent.

It will be said that these were not all the then nonconformists. I answer it was the main body of the London ministers and it was as many as would meet about it when they were desired to come to Zion College; and after they printed a

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<sup>55</sup> The later, presbyterian Matthew Henry's *Method for Prayer, with Scripture Expressions Proper to be used under each Head* (London, 1710) is a notable example of this.

<sup>56</sup> Appendix II, *The Presbyterian Exceptions Against the Book of Common Prayer in "Liturgia Expurgata; or, The Prayer-Book Amended according to the Presbyterian Revisions of 1661"* in *The Book of Common Prayer...* ed. Charles Shields (Philadelphia: James Claxton, 1867), separately paginated. Despite the title, only half of those that drew up the exceptions were presbyterians, the other half were congregationalists. Congregationalists were sometimes known as "presbyterians" in that era as they held to sessions of elders, or presbyters.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Petition for Peace with the Reformation of the Liturgy, as it was presented to the right reverend bishops, by the divines appointed by his Majesty's commission to treat with them about the alteration of it* (London, 1661).

thanksgiving to the King for his declaration, so that then they were not against all imposed liturgies so [long as] that the imposition had no unmercifulness in it.

20. The foreign Churches (in Holland, France, Germany, etc.) are so much used to praying in the same form of words that if they were put to do all *ex tempore*, it would be lamentably done by most even far worse than it is [now].

21. I have formerly told the world that many of the most noted nonconformists in London met and concluded for communicating in the parish-churches about 1664; and two things done by the conformists stopped them: One was a storm then arising against those that could not do it, which they feared to seem to countenance by their compliance; and plague and fire interrupting the purposes of some. The Oxford Act of Confinement made it impracticable, because to be seen in a church would have cast them six months in the gaol [prison] with malefactors.<sup>58</sup>

22. Being thus hindered and delayed, the King's Declaration, after giving them liberty to have assemblies otherwise, they were then kept from the parish-churches by their labors with their own flocks, as the parish-ministers be kept from hearing one another.

23. Some in the city, and more in the countries, all this while went constantly to the parish-churches before this liberty, and as oft as they could after, lest they should by their practice draw the people to think that they took it for unlawful.

24. Others that thought it lawful, judge it not necessary when they might do that which they judged better. And finding many hearers offended at it, were loath to displease them and bear their censures till at last, by long disuse [of parish-communion], the people thought their judgment was against it: And when necessity drives them to declare their judgments and change their practice, their [own] hearers (and their adversaries) call them unconscionable temporizers.

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<sup>58</sup> That is by the Act the non-conformists would have been put in prison thereby for publicly professing dissent, holding or attending separate worship assemblies, or for some similar matter related to nonconformity.

25. Though Mr. Tombes wrote for parish-communion,<sup>59</sup> few Anabaptists<sup>60</sup> followed him; and though Mr. Nye wrote for hearing the parish-ministers,<sup>61</sup> few Independents consented. But some of their ministers took the advantage of the foresaid forbearance of others and so brought Separation [by their propagandizing] to pass for a common duty with many. And renewed sufferings made it easier to draw men from the communion of those that they so much suffered by, following the example of St. Martin<sup>62</sup> and saying that persecutors obtruded without their consent were none of their pastors;<sup>63</sup> and that it's no schism not to communicate with the Church which causelessly has, *ipso facto*, excommunicated them in [the Anglican] canons six, seven, eight, etc.

This is the true premised history.

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<sup>59</sup> John Tombes (c. 1603-1676) was a leading, English baptist minister, though he is said to have been presbyterian in his views of Church government. His book is learned and much of it is good: Tombes, *Theodulia, or a Just Defence of Hearing the Sermons & other teaching of the present Ministers of England against a book unjustly entitled, A Christian Testimony against them that Serve the Image of the Beast...* (London: E. Cotes, 1667).

<sup>60</sup> Baxter regularly called the baptists "Anabaptists". This was not without reason, as he and other writers of the day (e.g. the presbyterians Thomas Edwards, Samuel Rutherford et al.) documented and traced the lineage of the baptists of their day (post-1640) to the previous Anabaptists, contra the claims of many "reformed baptists" today.

<sup>61</sup> Philip Nye (c. 1595-1672) was a Westminster divine. See his work at 'For Occasional Hearing' at 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO).

<sup>62</sup> Martin of Tours (316/336 - 397)

<sup>63</sup> The presbyterians argued that ordinarily a minister may not be imposed apart from the congregation's consent, and that any such minister, not coming to have the congregation's consent, was not the congregation's minister. However, this is significantly different than the case Baxter is speaking to with Separatists, that where a minister is received by the congregation, yet individual persons not consenting, thereby are not church members under the minister. Rutherford (rightly, according to Scripture) allows pastors to be imposed on people not willing in righteous, extraordinary circumstances; see 'Consent of the People is Not Wholly Necessary in Extraordinary Circumstances, God Supplying the Call' at 'On Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

## Owen's Confirmations of his Position

Owen:

Some things must be premised to the confirmation of this position:

1. The whole system of Liturgical worship, with all its inseparable dependences, are intended; For as such it is established by Law, and not in any part of it only; as such it is required that we receive it and attend unto it.<sup>64</sup> It is not in our power, it is not left to our judgment or liberty to close with, or make use of any part of it as we shall think fit.

There are in the mass-book many prayers directed to God only by Jesus Christ, yet it is not lawful for us thereon to go to mass under a pretense only of joining in such lawful prayers.

As we must not affect their drink-offerings of blood, so we must not take up their names in our lips (Ps. 16:4). Have no communion with them.<sup>65</sup>

Baxter:

§2. I shall now examine the doctor's premises. To the first I answer:

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<sup>64</sup> So Owen, *Enquiry*, ch. 11, pp. 227-29.

<sup>65</sup> Contra Owen, see 'On the Distinction & Difference between Impurities of Worship & Idolatry, & being Present & Worshipping Lawfully at an Assembly with certain Impure Acts of Worship by Some in it vs. Fleeing an Assembly with Literal Idolatry' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO). Owen's employment of Ps. 16:4 evidences not just a withdrawing, or even separation, but is equivalent to excommunication. Baxter on a separation which does not imply excommunication versus that which does: "To hold that any congregations are such whose worship is faulty, but such as God forgives and accepts, but that it is unlawful for us to join with them, lest it make us guilty of their sin, this (though it should be erroneous, and uncharitable and sinful) yet is not to excommunicate that congregation as no Church or no Christians. But to say of any congregation that they want [lack] anything essential to Christianity or [that they lack anything] to make them capable to be loved as Christians, or that their worship of God is idolatry, or so bad as that God accepts it not, the evil of it being greater than the good (as poison in our food), and on this reason to declare that no good Christian should communicate with them, this is to excommunicate such [a] congregation, as far as one Church may excommunicate another, which is but by such renouncing their communion." *Catholic Communion Doubly Defended*, sect. 2, p. 14.

1. If he will include all that is in the Liturgy, the nonconformists confess that there is somewhat in it which they dissent from as unjustifiable: and so there is in all men's worship of God.

2. He intimates that it is not in our power to close with some and not withal. This is his first error.

Though man give us no such power, God does: as it is in my power to believe all that one speaks truly and well, and not that which he speaks amiss. I am not bound to own all that any preacher or priest shall say in the church. God put it in the disciples' power to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees [Mt. 16:6], and yet to hear them [Mt. 23:1-3]. Proving all things [1 Thess. 5:21] is not approving all things.

2. Though the mass have many good prayers, the corruption by twisted idolatry and heresy makes communion there unlawful: [just as] heathens and Turks have good prayers. Prove any such heresy or idolatry in the Church-worship by the Liturgy and we will avoid it.<sup>66</sup> But if I may join with your own good prayers and preaching, notwithstanding your many failings, and such errors as are here pleaded for, why not with others?

3. Ps. 16:4 is too sadly abused, which speaks only of sacrificing to and worshipping false gods [and not worship of the true God].

Owen:

2. It is to be considered as armed with laws: (1) such as declare and enjoin it as the only true worship of the Church; (2) such as prohibit, condemn and punish all other ways of the worship of God in church-assemblies. By our communion and conjunction in it we justify those laws.

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<sup>66</sup> See 'One May & Ought to Separate or Abstain from Sinful Acts of Impure Worship while Not Separating from the Rest of the Divine Worship Service' at 'On Impurities of Worship' (RBO). Note that, as some of the reformed affirm from Scripture on the same page, not every instance or degree of idolatry warrants separation from a worship service.

Baxter:

§3. That our communion justifies all the laws that impose the Liturgy, yea, the penal severities, is too gross an error to be written with any show of proof. What if the Creed or Lord's Prayer were too rigorously imposed, or presbytery or Independency, must we forbear them or justify the law? I can prove episcopacy to be excluded too severely by the [Solemn League and] Covenant;<sup>67</sup> But everyone that is against it justifies not the imposition of that Covenant in that rigor. What if rigorous laws should make it imprisonment or death not to use our translation of the Scriptures, our approved catechisms, our meter and tunes of the psalms, not to put off the hat at prayer,<sup>68</sup> not to meet at the appointed place and hour, etc. Does every man justify the rigor of the imposition who obeys the law? Then a rigorous lawmaker may take away our Christian liberty by commanding us to use such things too strictly: yea, he may turn duty, by too strict commanding it, into sin. These are your unproved premises.

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<sup>67</sup> The [Solemn League and Covenant](#) (1643), between Scotland and the English parliament, did not forbid episcopacy in name, but rather “prelacy”, and bishops only necessarily as a part of the prelatic system (as the Covenant’s wording may be so interpreted). Baxter wrote previous to this: “The Assembly of divines at Westminster were men that... received the Covenant, but were divided about the sense of the word ‘prelacy,’ many professing their judgment to be for moderate episcopacy, whereupon the describing additions ‘archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons’ were added. And upon such a profession that it disclaimed not all episcopacy, Mr. [Thomas] Coleman is said to have given the Covenant to the House of Lord’s...” *The Nonconformists’ Plea for Peace* (London, 1679), [sect. 7](#), p. 127. Baxter here, though, to make his point, appears to say the SL&C did exclude episcopacy, and that too severely. Baxter had proposed a compromise platform for English Church government of qualified, low, episcopacy, where bishops were not of divine right, but only of a temporal ecclesiastical right, with other qualifying factors, which numerous of his day were willing to materially accommodate, though the plan was rejected by the English authorities.

<sup>68</sup> English male puritans typically wore their hats (which was a cultural, public sign of honor) for much of the worship service, but took them off (as a sign of subservience) at prayer, as they held prayer, in speaking directly to God, was to convey more natural reverence than other parts of worship. On English puritan, cultural head covering practices, both outside of church and in it, see “Reformation History: Preaching with Caps on” and Digression 4, “Reformation: Men Wearing Hats during Worship” in Travis Fentiman, [1 Corinthians – Head-Coverings are Not Perpetual & they were Hair-Buns, with or without Cloth Material: Proven](#) (RBO, 2022), pp. 65-68 & 176-78, as well as ‘English Puritans, Presbyterians, etc.’ at ‘Head Coverings in the Post-Reformation Era’ (RBO). See also [footnote 144](#) below.

Owen:

3. This conjunction in communion by the worship of the Liturgy is the symbol, pledge and token of an ecclesiastical incorporation with the Church of England in its present constitution: it is so in the law of the land; it is so in the canons of the Church; it is so in the common understanding of all men. And by these rules must our profession and practice be judged and not by any reserves of our own, which neither God nor good men will allow of. Wherefore.

Baxter:

§4. To the third premise I answer:

1. The “Church of England” is an ambiguous word:

1. As it signifies a part of the universal Church, agreeing in Faith, one God, one Christ and all essential to the Church, so we desire the honor of being parts of it.
2. And also as it is a Christian kingdom under one [civil] king.
3. And as it is a confederacy of many churches to keep concord in lawful circumstantial as well as integrals.<sup>69</sup> In all these senses it is a lawful association.
4. But if any church go beyond these bounds, and on good pretenses shall agree upon any error or evil, it is a mistake to hold that all that incorporate with them in the three foresaid lawful respects do therefore confederate with them in their error.

This is your fourth error. I will give you a general instance and a particular one:

1. You cannot name me one combined company of churches from the apostles’ days till now that had no error. You take episcopacy to be an error in the very constitution. Name one Church from the 3rd or 4th century, for

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<sup>69</sup> “Integrals” is here being used of things not necessary to the essence of the Church, but rather are necessary to the whole well-being of the Church.

a thousand years, that was without it, either catholics or heretics, that were indeed a Church. And must Christians have forborne associating with any of them? Or might not own the good in their associations without owning the evil?

2. The Independents gathered a synod at the Savoy [1658], and there among their doctrinals or articles of faith laid down two points expressly contrary to Scripture...<sup>70</sup> Now does it follow that everyone that there confederated with you owned these errors?

The Churches of Helvetia are a very honorable part of the Reformed Churches. They are commonly such as we call Erastian for having no discipline but the magistrate's. Are all that confederate with them as Churches guilty of this error?

2. But I further distinguish between the many parish-churches and the diocesan, and the Church of England as constituted of such diocesan churches. The old nonconformists commonly owned the parish-churches (and the Church of England as made up of such), but not the diocesan. This they openly professed. It is therefore another of your mistakes that owning the parish-churches and worship is an owning of the present diocesan constitution.

Also it is your mistake to say that communion by the Liturgy is the symbol and pledge of the foresaid incorporation in the Church of England in its present constitution: It is only a part of the communion commanded, but no such symbol, for:

1. The rulers openly declare that they take multitudes to be none of their Church who join in the Liturgy. And it is subscribing, declaring and swearing obedience which is the symbol: yea, they excommunicate many that come to the Liturgy-service.

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<sup>70</sup> Baxter's enumeration of these two points regarding the interpretation of the Savoy Declaration, ch. 11 on faith in justification and the believer's righteousness in light of Christ's righteousness has been omitted. Owen was a leader at Savoy.

2. And many come to it who openly disown the diocesan present constitution: so did, as I said, the old nonconformists, and many foreigners, French, Dutch, etc. that come over hither.

3. If one may join in communion of worship with a presbyterian, Independent or Anabaptist church without owning the errors of their constitution, then so one may with a parish-church: but, etc.

You mistake when you say, "It is so by the law of the land." You mistake again when you say, "It is so by the canon." You mistake again when you say, "It is so in the common understanding of all." I formerly instanced in one of the sharpest nonconformists, old Mr. Humphrey Fen of Coventry,<sup>71</sup> who would say aloud, "Amen," to all the Common-Prayer, save that for the bishops, by which all there knew his mind. Whether it were right or wrong, I now determine not. So here are three more of your mistakes.

4. You make all other reserves of our own to be allowed neither by God or good men. Here are two more mistakes:

1. God makes it our great duty to hold communion with most, or almost all, Churches on earth with such reserves; that is, to own them in all that is good and disown all their evil, though their laws command the owning of them. Without this reserve I would not join with yours or any church on earth, that is, if my communion were an owning of all their faultiness.

2. And it's an immodest error to say that none are "good men" that in this are not of your mind. Is there any spotless Church on earth? or must we renounce the communion with them all, or reserve exception against their faults and mis-performances?

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<sup>71</sup> [Humphrey Fenn](#) (d. 1634) was an English, puritan divine.

Owen:

4. He that joins in the worship of the Common-Prayer does by his practice make profession that it is the true worship of God, accepted with Him,<sup>72</sup> approved of Him and wholly agreeable to his mind and will. To do it with other reserves is hypocrisy and worse than the thing itself without them. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth." ([Rom. 14:12](#)).

Baxter:

§5. This is your twelfth mistake and one that has dreadful consequents:

1. It contradicts the express profession of the communicants who openly tell the world that they take not all in the Liturgy to be "wholly agreeable to God's mind and will," and you are not to fain a profession of men contrary to their open protestation.
2. It is most direful to your own separating followers who by this are supposed to profess all your worship to be "wholly agreeable to God's mind and will," and so the honest well-meaning people are made guilty of all the errors which you put into your worship.
3. It is contrary to your own former profession that you could in charity communicate with presbyterians or Anabaptists, etc.; and so you approved of all the errors of their worship.
4. It makes it a down-right sin to communicate with any church on earth: For all have their faults and errors, even in worship, which you fain all that communicate with them to justify as "wholly agreeable to God's will." And to justify sin and teach men so to do and to father it on God are sad aggravations: such shall be called least in the Kingdom of God [[Mt. 5:19](#)]. By this rule you would have separated from every Church on earth that we have notice of for a thousand years, yea, and to this day; and is not that near separating from Christ? And when no man knows before you speak in prayer what you will say, how

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<sup>72</sup> See '[God may Graciously Accept Impure Obedience & Worship](#)' at 'On Impurities of Worship' (RBO).

shall any man that joins with you know but he may be guilty of your sin at the next sentence.

5. It is a breach of the Ninth Commandment thus to charge all the ancient Churches and reformers, and the nonconformists with hypocrisy and worse than open sinning who have all communicated on the contrary supposition.

6. It is no friendly act to the Church to lay down such a principle of perpetual Separation and condemning of each other's communion, and so to make the communion and concord of the churches impossible.

7. It is self-condemnation to judge the present bishops to be Church-tyrants for excommunicating good Christians according to the canons for professed dissent about their governing offices, liturgies and ceremonies, and for imposing assent and consent to all things, etc., and yet to go much further than they by making it sin against God to communicate where the worship is not "wholly agreeable to God's will." Prove that ever the bishops went so far from concord.

8. I only humbly ask whether this make not Christ and all his apostles hypocrites and worse than professed sinners: Did Christ by his usual joining in the synagogue and temple-worship and commanding men to go to the priests [Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44], to hear the scribes and Pharisees [Mt. 23:1-3], etc. profess that He took their worship to be wholly agreeable to God's will?<sup>73</sup> Or did the apostles so, while they long joined in the synagogues with the Jews?

Owen:

5. There may be a false worship of the true God as well as a worship of a false god. Such was the worship of Jehovah the Lord by the calf in the wilderness (Ex. 33:5-6). Such was the feast unto the Lord ordained by Jeroboam in the eighth month, the fifteenth day of the month, which he had devised of his own heart (1 Kn. 12:32-33).

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<sup>73</sup> The answer is no: Mt. 12:1-8; 15:1-14; 16:12; 23:1-5, 14, 16-28; see the material pertaining to footnote 20 above.

Baxter:

§6. Your fifth premise is unquestionable, but if you distinguish not of false worship, you will make but false work about it:

1. There is that which is the corrupting of God's own necessary worship-ordinances in so gross a manner, either outwardly in the matter or inwardly in the mind, as that God will not own or accept the worship and worshippers.<sup>74</sup>
2. There is that which is false in integrals, accidents or degrees by pardoned failings and infirmities.<sup>75</sup>

To be “false” is to be disagreeable to the rule; such in some measure is every prayer, sermon or sacrament that ever you administered.<sup>76</sup> He that says he has no sin is a liar [1 Jn. 1:10]. All sinful worship is so far false worship, which the best of men are guilty of: If you put all the errors that are in this paper of yours in a sermon or prayer, will not so many falsehoods make it false worship?

## Argument 1

Owen:

On these suppositions the proposition laid down is proved by the following arguments:

1<sup>st</sup> Argument. [Major proposition:] Religious worship not divinely instituted and appointed is false worship, not accepted with God.<sup>77</sup> [Minor proposition:] But

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<sup>74</sup> On this distinction see especially the presbyterian Zachary Crofton at ‘On the Distinction & Difference between Impurities of Worship & Idolatry, & being Present & Worshipping Lawfully at an Assembly with certain Impure Acts of Worship by Some in it vs. Fleeing an Assembly with Literal Idolatry’ at ‘On Impurities in Worship’.

<sup>75</sup> See ‘God may Graciously Accept Impure Obedience & Worship’ at ‘On Impurities of Worship’ (RBO).

<sup>76</sup> See ‘All Worship is Impure before his Uncreated Being & Infinite Perfections: that of Sinners, the Holy Angels & of Spotless Glorified Saints, Forever’ at ‘On Impurities in Worship’.

<sup>77</sup> See ‘God may Graciously Accept Impure Obedience & Worship’ at ‘On Impurities of Worship’ (RBO).

the Liturgical-worship intended is a religious worship, not divinely instituted and appointed, therefore, not accepted with God.<sup>78</sup>

The [major] proposition is confirmed by all the divine testimonies wherein all such worship is expressly condemned; see [Dt. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Jer. 7:31; Isa. 29:13](#), etc., and that especially where the Lord Christ restrains all worship to his own command ([Mt. 28:20](#)).<sup>79</sup>

Baxter:

§7. To your first argument I answer: I have fully answered this to Mr. Raphson:<sup>80</sup>

1. As to the bare name, either you will call all acts done to signify immediately the soul's honoring of God by the name of "worship," or you will not; if not, then that which is no "worship," is no false worship. If you will, then your proposition is false; so that either your major or minor is another error.

For I take it for granted that by God's instituting you mean not a general command to man to institute it, such as, "Let all be done to edification" [[1 Cor. 14:40](#)]; if you did, then your minor is not true: kneeling at prayer rather than

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<sup>78</sup> Owen: "But the principal reason of the separation we defend, is the practicing and imposing of sundry things in the worship of the Church not of divine institution, yea in our judgment contrary thereunto, and the framing of a rule of government of men's devising, to be laid on all the members of them, this is the primary cause pleaded herein." [Enquiry](#), pp. 341-42; "Whoever departs from the observance of the gospel and the institutions thereof, does in so doing depart from the living God... Men think it almost a matter of nothing to play with gospel institutions at their pleasure... For, First. In their so doing, the authority of God over their souls and consciences is utterly rejected, and so consequently is God Himself. For where his authority is not owned, his being is despised... Every way whereby he reveals Himself, He also makes known his sovereign authority over us... Whatever men may say or do, or pretend as to the worship of God, if it be not in and by the name of Christ, if it be not appointed and revealed in the gospel, it is not performed unto the living God, but to an idol of their own hearts... He says of all such worship, as he did of the sacrifices of the Israelites, when their hearts went after their idols, Amos 5:26, 'It is all to Moloch and Chiun, and not to Him.' Such, I say, is all the worship that men design to offer unto the living God, but not according to the gospel." [Hebrews](#), vol. 2, pp. 623-24

<sup>79</sup> See the [Bible verses](#) that 'God may Graciously Accept Impure Obedience & Worship'.

<sup>80</sup> 'The Second Part against Schism, etc. the Reasons of Mr. Raphson and such others against going to the Parish-Churches, Considered' in Baxter, *Catholic Communion Defended against both Extremes, and Unnecessary Division Confuted in Five Parts* (London, 1684), pp. 1-18. See especially pp. 14-17.

sitting,<sup>81</sup> putting off the hat, using white linen and silver plate at the sacrament, praising God by new hymns and in English meter and tunes, and many such, are worship in the secondary sense,<sup>82</sup> and yet not imposed by any determining divine institution.

Your wrong exposition of all the texts of Scripture here cited by you is more than one mistake. Dt. 4:2 and 12:32; Prov. 30:6, forbid adding to God's worship, which is broken by all that either say that that is in God's Word which is not there (as you here do), or that devise any worship-ordinances coordinate, or of the same sort, with his own, as if they were imperfect. But there is not a word forbidding subordinate, secondary acts of worship, such as kneeling, putting off the hat, using written notes in preaching or forms of singing, praying, catechizing, laying the hand on the Book,<sup>83</sup> or putting it under the thigh, or lifting it up in swearing, the formal words of vows, oaths, covenants, confessions, professions and many such.

Jer. 7:31 condemns them that offered their children in fire to idols because God never commanded such cruelty and idolatry. It is not true that therefore we may not kneel or put off the hat, or preach, pray or sing in a human form of words till God determine it by command. It was forbidden things which in Isa. 29:13 and Mt. 15 are reproved, as being the precepts of men or things fained to be necessary acts of obedience to God, which were not so. But this you yourself think does not forbid your form of church-covenant,<sup>84</sup> nor your books, translation of

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<sup>81</sup> Puritanism typically held, though not all postures are of equal appropriateness, yet they may be variable in worship, and are not regulated as equal with formal parts of worship, but are to be in accord with nature's light, Christian prudence and the general rules of the Word (WCF 1.6); see 'On Posture & Gestures in Worship' (RBO).

<sup>82</sup> For an explanation and elaboration of this necessary secondary sense, namely of otherwise indifferent material actions coming under formal acts of worship, and hence becoming material worship, yet without becoming worship *per se*, see Fentiman, [Head-Coverings are Not Perpetual](#), pp. 73-74.

<sup>83</sup> On this and other items in this list, see 'On Laying One's Hand on the Bible to Swear' at 'On Natural Gestures, Signs & Customs about Worship, & of Reverence & Veneration as Distinguished from the Worship of Adoration' (RBO).

<sup>84</sup> A church-covenant was commonly used by congregationalists, they generally holding a written, man-composed covenant (enumerating Scriptural duties) between all the initial members of the congregation was morally necessary for the proper establishment of a particular church. The presbyterians argued rightly according to Scripture that such was not necessary: 'A Local Church Covenant is Not Necessary for Church Membership' at 'Church Membership' (RBO).

Scripture, hymns,<sup>85</sup> written sermons, because they are devised by man, nor children's forms of prayer for being commanded by parents.

[Mt. 28:20](#): It follows not that because Christ bid the apostles teach all, that He commanded therefore nothing else subordinate may be taught. He commanded not the additional form of the Creed, but only the form of baptism in three articles; nor the hymns and spiritual songs in form mentioned by Paul, nor the kiss of peace [[1 Pet. 5:14](#)], the women's veils, the men's being uncovered, not wearing long hair [[1 Cor. 11:2-16](#)], the selling all and laying it down at the apostles' feet [[Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2](#)], etc.

Owen:

It is answered [by our opponents] to the minor proposition that the Liturgical-worship is of Christ's appointment as to the substantials of it, though not as to its accidentals, namely, prayers and praises; not unto its outward rites and form, which do not vitiate the whole.<sup>86</sup>

Baxter:

Our answer you well recite, if you add that (call it "substantial," or what you will) the common Lord's-Day worship according to the Liturgy has not many, if any words in it whose signified matter is not sound and true; and as to the manner, extemporate prayer has oft as great unaptness of words (which every age changes), disorder and defectiveness.

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<sup>85</sup> While there are many instances of Owen approving psalms being sung as a public ordinance of worship in his published works, there are no instances of Owen approving hymns for the same.

<sup>86</sup> It is here being acknowledged by Owen's opponents that the Liturgy was impure with respect to its accidentals and outward rites and form. See the presbyterian Zachary Crofton delineate what corruptions do not vitiate the whole of worship and which do, under the section '[On the Distinction & Difference between Impurities of Worship & Idolatry, & being Present & Worshipping Lawfully at an Assembly with certain Impure Acts of Worship by Some in it vs. Fleeing an Assembly with Literal Idolatry](#)' at '[On Impurities of Worship](#)' (RBO).

Owen:

But it is replied: There is nothing accidental in the worship of God.<sup>87</sup> Every thing that belongs to it, is part of it.<sup>88</sup> Some things are of more weight, use and importance than others (Mt. 23:27), but all things duly belonging to it, are parts of it, or of its

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<sup>87</sup> On the one hand Baxter below does not interpret Owen here in the best light possible. Owen's words are most true in speaking of worship formally considered, as divinely prescribed. See '[On Formal vs. Material Worship](#)' at '[On the Definition of Worship](#)' (RBO). Yet, Owen is evidently using this principle as an argument for why there can be nothing deemed accidental in the material Anglican worship, any undue accident therein becoming and corrupting a part of the prescribed worship of God as such (and hence, according to Owen, necessitating separation). While undue natural accidents, circumstances or adjuncts may hinder or obstruct prescribed formal worship in some degree or manner, yet they do not thereby necessarily become formal worship, though adjoined (in whatever way) to the material worship. The accident or circumstance may still simply remain an undue accident or circumstance, and not be formally worship (nor considered such by the people). This was commonly held in early English puritanism and after, as can be seen from the very fact that the puritans had "[Rules for Indifferent Things in Worship](#)," (at '[On Ceremonies](#)' at RBO), and that they considered unnecessary, hindering indifferent things in worship to remain such. While unnecessary indifferent things may become part of material worship and are worthy of being complained of as useless, obstructive, hindering, etc. they do not constitute of themselves a new part of formal worship, or idolatry. It seems impossible Owen could have been ignorant of this; rather, it seems more likely he was conscious of his separatistic trajectory. The persuasiveness of Owen's argument essentially rests on the ambiguity of whether "worship" be taken and applied formally or materially. Baxter rightly exposes and blows up this latent ambiguity, and hence the force of Owen's argument. Owen's paradigm here given cannot account for all the issues that go into worship; hence he is reducing things that cannot be so reduced. Numerous reformed theologians saw a need to delineate an accidental-worship, such as Daniel Chamier and William Ames, or allowed for such, as George Gillespie. See '[Proper vs. Accidental Worship](#)' and '[On Essential vs. Accidental Worship](#)' at '[On the Definition of Worship](#)' (RBO).

<sup>88</sup> John Corbet, an English, congregationalist puritan that tended in the same strain as Baxter: "Here it may be considered whether every adjunct of worship instituted of God does by that institution become a matter or part of worship, which otherwise it would not be. Some say that in the old Law the least ceremony prescribed of God was a part of worship, which assertion I do not now so far examine as to declare my assent or dissent. But if it were so, I think it was not merely as prescribed of God, but upon some further reason. For I do not see that God cannot prescribe a mere adjunct of worship, but it must thereby lose its formal state, or become formally another thing, viz. a matter of worship, but think it may remain in its own state, a mere adjunct still. Nevertheless, the observation of that divinely prescribed adjunct may be an act of worship so far as every act of obedience to God as such may be so called. But here we speak of worship, not in so large, but in the stricter sense." *The Remains of the Reverend & Learned Mr. John Corbet* (London, 1684), *Of Divine Worship*, pt. 1, §16. '[Of Time & Place considered as Adjuncts, or as Matter of Worship](#)', pp. 184-85.

subsistence;<sup>89</sup> outward circumstances are natural and occasional,<sup>90</sup> no accidental parts of worship.<sup>91</sup>

Baxter:

§8. As to your reply, it is the strangest that ever I read from so learned a man, and is a great mistake: What is there in the world that is a subject without any accidentals? God's worship has a multitude of accidents, as: the hour, the place, the pulpit, the tables, the cups of silver, the linen and other ornaments, the books as printed, the meter, the tunes, the chapters and verses, the words of translation, the building, the gestures, vestures, treasures, etc.

You add another mistake, that "everything that belongs to it, is a part of it." Then all these forementioned things are parts of it, for they all belong to it. What a strange thing make you of God's worship? Then your time, place, notes, words, tunes, gestures, covenant-form, catechism-forms, etc. are all parts of God's worship, for they belong to it: and then you must be separated from for adding them.

But after this mistake you say, "Outward circumstances are natural and occasional, no accidental parts of worship." Answer: Just now all accidents were parts (or else accidents belong not to it), and now "it has no accidental parts." Certainly this [latter statement] is the truer, for I remember not that ever I heard of mere accidents that were parts. A man's name, relation, trade, clothing, age, house, etc. belong to him

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<sup>89</sup> Owen: "These are not circumstances attending the nature of the thing itself, but are arbitrarily superadded to the things that they are appointed to accompany. Whatever men may call such additions, they are no less parts of the whole wherein they serve, then the things themselves whereunto they are adjoined... such additionals that are called circumstantial, are made parts of worship, as are made necessary by virtue of command to be observed." *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, ch. 7, pp. 42-43

<sup>90</sup> That some circumstances are not merely natural or occasional, but are regulated worship, see 'The Sabbath is a Morally Regulated Circumstance of Worship' and Fentiman, 'How Head-Coverings are Different from the Regulated Circumstances of the Lord's Supper' in *Head-Coverings are Not Perpetual*, pp. 87-90. Owen appears to agree with this in *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, ch. 7, pp. 41-43.

<sup>91</sup> The phrase "accidental parts of worship" was coming from certain defenders of the Liturgy, who Owen mentions and argues against further in *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, ch. 7, pp. 41-43. Gillespie also refers to such persons: *A Dispute Against the English-Popish Ceremonies...* (Leiden, 1637), pt. 3, ch. 7, pp. 120-21.

and are accidents, but are no parts of him: no, nor his hair, if it be a mere accident. But do none of these duly belong to him?

2. The word “worship,” as I said before, is equivocal, as signifying only the things made necessary to the honoring of God directly by divine command, or the subordinate acts, modes, circumstances left to human choice.<sup>92</sup> In the former sense, the order, words and forms in the Liturgy and in all our usual devotions are accidents and not parts. In the latter sense, they are parts. But whether this latter sense of “worship” be apt is but a strife about a word.

But you say they are “natural and occasional.” Answer: Dark words!

1. I think the translations, meter, tunes, notes, your words and method, table, cups, cloth, temples, etc. are rather artificial than natural; art and not nature made them what they are.<sup>93</sup> If you mean that nature commands them, then God by the Law of nature commands them, and what greater authority can they have? But yet that is not so: nature does not determine us to this or that, but leaves all to apt and prudent choice. And so He does as to the form or words of prayer.

2. If by “occasional” you mean such as must be mutably fitted to just occasions, there is no doubt of it: and while the occasion is constant, so may the accidents be. But sure while they are such, yea and relatively appropriated or separated to worship (as buildings, utensils and maintenance may be), they belong to that worship, which they are no parts of.

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<sup>92</sup> See [footnote 87](#) above.

<sup>93</sup> A more fitting category may be the secondary laws of nature. These are founded on more basic and necessary natural laws, but also involve degrees of positive human choice, are partly artificial and may partake of art. This category encompasses the best of what Owen and Baxter are seeking to get at while excluding that which is not appropriate from either view. For more on this see Fentiman, “Men’s Long Hair: ‘Nature’ in v. 14 & Custom” in [Head-Coverings are Not Perpetual](#), pp. 27-28.

Owen:

2. Prayers and praises absolutely considered are not an institution of Christ;<sup>94</sup> they are a part of natural worship<sup>95</sup> common unto all mankind. His institution respects only the internal form of them and the manner of their performance; but this is that which the Liturgy takes on itself, namely to supply and determine the matter, to prescribe the manner and to limit all the concerns of them to modes and forms of its own, which is to take the work of Christ out of his hand.

Baxter:

§9. Your second answer is no better:

1. If by “absolutely,” you mean not generally (but as opposite to conditional), it has no sense here that I can find. But if it be *in genere* [in the genera] that you mean, as the context intimates, they are no part of worship at all, natural or instituted: for there is praying which is cursing and striving against God and goodness, and praying to idols.

But I suppose you mean *de specie* [concerning the species], praying to the true God for good things needful. And so it is another mistake that this prayer is not of Christ's institution, because it is a part of natural worship.<sup>96</sup> All is of Christ's

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<sup>94</sup> Both Owen and Baxter here, being congregationalists, judged that church ordinances must have been warranted from Christ in the New Testament specifically. Presbyterians held that the warrant may come from the Lord in either Testament, as appropriate.

<sup>95</sup> For the differences between natural and instituted worship, see: ‘[Natural vs. Instituted Worship](#)’ (RBO). That prayer is a part of natural worship was variably judged in that era. The Westminster Confession does not affirm it (21.1), but rather says: “The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who... is therefore to be... praised, called upon...”, rightly citing [Ps. 18:3](#); [Rom. 10:12](#) (see also [Gen. 4:26](#); [Jer. 10:25](#)). The main issues are the measure of God’s condescension under the light of nature, of freedom of access to Him by such (considered before and after the Fall, and in distinction from the Covenant of Works), and whether regular stated prayer may be directed and set up by nature’s light alone. Rutherford: “for if prayer was a worship enjoined to Adam before the Fall, no less then public worship of praising for the workmanship of creation, [Gen. 2:2-3](#), it may be said, if Adam was to suit anything in prayer to God, then especially was he to pray that he might not sin, and might not be led into temptation, but might stand in obedience, and so might have influences to determine his will to stand and continue therein, and this the law of nature seems to say.” *Influences of the Life of Grace* (London, 1659), bk. 1, [ch. 1](#), pp. 2-3.

<sup>96</sup> That natural law was understood by numerous in that era to be in a way instituted, see Travis Fentiman, ‘[A Commentary on Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1 on Worship & its Theological Context](#)’ at ‘[Natural vs. Instituted Worship](#)’ (RBO).

institution which is part of his commanding Law: The Law of Nature is now Christ's Law, who by redemption is become Lord of nature and of all<sup>97</sup> (Jn. 17:2-3; Mt. 28:18-19; Eph. 1:22-23; Rom. 14:9-10; Jn. 5:22, etc.) He most strictly commands natural duties. The Ten Commandments were of natural obligation, and yet instituted. And as love was called a new and special commandment [Jn. 13:34; 2 Jn. 1:5], as required on new and special grounds and ends, so is prayer thus far also new.

2. And it is another mistake that Christ's institution respects only the internal form and the manner of performance. The internal form is inward desire offered mentally to God. And is not this natural, if prayer be? Sure the form is the thing.<sup>98</sup> But the institution of Christ reaches the matter of prayer as well as the inward form and outward manner: That we pray for the things mentioned in the Lord's Prayer, for God's glory, Kingdom will to be obeyed, etc. for pardon, the Spirit, grace, glory, etc. that the gospel may have free course, etc.

It is another mistake that the manner of performance is sinful which is not of Christ's institution. The words and method, and length, are the manner of performance. Can you show an institution determinative of all the words, method and length of all our prayers? Or of all our psalms, rhymes and tunes, and all our gestures and utensils? etc. By these words I am induced to hope that the common report that you were against the ordinary use of the Lord's Prayer in words<sup>99</sup> is false: for here you seem to

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<sup>97</sup> Baxter took, to put it anachronistically, the Reformed Presbyterian view of the Mediatorial Kingship of Christ, yet, as is evident, this for him was founded on his view of a universal atonement (unlike the Reformed Presbyterians). Rutherford: "That opinion is not to be held which lays ground that Christ-Mediator is a temporary king, has under Him magistrates, even heathenish, who have nothing to do with a mediator, to bear a temporal sword for a supernatural and spiritual end, as Christ under-heirs, He himself being the first-heir of all such and so makes heathens within the verge of the Mediatorial Kingdom; as if Christ were as Mediator, a King to heathen and all and everyone of mankind, who must have magistrates, and so [it] makes the Kingdom of men as men, and the Kingdom of Grace commensurable, and of alike latitude and extension, and makes nature and grace of equal comprehension: But such is the former opinion; the proposition cannot be denied, except by Arminians, Socinians, Papists, who do maintain an universal redemption, a grace universal, a catholic Kingdom of Grace comprehensive of all and every man, of Pharaoh, Evil Merodach, Belshazzar, all the kings of Romans, Persians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and of Turk[s], India, and such as worship the sun and moon, the Devil, and the work of men's hands..." *The Divine Right of Church-Government...* (London, 1646), ch. 27, p. 614.

<sup>98</sup> That is, in the Aristotelian notion of form.

<sup>99</sup> Owen gives reasons tending to the conclusion that the Lord's Prayer should not be regularly used in public worship in *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, ch. 3, pp. 15-18.

be more for it than you ought. For if all the outward manner must be instituted by Christ, sure the Lord's Prayer will be at least the chief part.

You say the Liturgy takes on itself to supply and determine matter. Answer:

1. Matter is more than manner. But this is another mistake: For the Liturgy supposes that Scripture is the rule and Christ the Commander of all the matter of prayer which is of constant use and need (as the Articles of Religion<sup>100</sup> and the ordination-covenant show); and you give no instance of the contrary. But as to mutable matter, which vary as occasions by providence do (as days of humiliation and thanksgiving, the 5th of November<sup>101</sup> and those things that are specially suited to some times and places), you determine of such yourselves in all your prayers.

It is another mistake that thus to limit the concerns of prayer to modes and forms is to take Christ's work out of his hands. If so, then you must show us where Christ Himself undertook so to limit us to his modes and forms only, else it is not Christ's proper work: Is there a liturgy of his making more than we ever heard of?

2. And then do not all ministers in every public prayer take Christ's work out of his hands? Do they not limit the people in matter, mode and form of words? What heavy charges lay you on yourselves? Do not the composers of hymns and psalms so limit them to mode and form? It's clear that they do.

Owen:

3. Outward rites and modes of worship divinely instituted and determined do become the necessary parts of divine worship.<sup>102</sup> See the instance, [Lev. 1:16](#).

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<sup>100</sup> Thirty-Nine Articles, Article 6, 'Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation'

<sup>101</sup> Guy Fawkes Night marked the overturning of the Romanist Gunpowder Plot in 1605, which threatened to assassinate King James I and blow up the House of Lords.

<sup>102</sup> This is not in all respects true. [Ps. 95:6](#) says, "let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker." Yet kneeling of its nature is a civil custom, not wholly natural, and it is not necessarily sinful if a person goes their whole life without kneeling to God, as kneeling is not made by God's command in Scripture to be in its nature formally worship *per se*. There is much of this sort in Scripture that is variable. One New Testament instance is female head-coverings in [1 Cor. 11:2-16](#), which was an "ordinance" (v. 2)

Therefore such as are humanly instituted, appointed and determined are thereby made parts of worship,<sup>103</sup> namely that which is false, for lack of divine institution.<sup>104</sup>

Baxter:

§10. Your third reply is no better than the rest, viz. that because divine institution makes rites and modes necessary, therefore human institution makes such parts of false worship for lack of divine institution. I cannot imagine how so worthy a man could mistake so widely, but by studying only what to say for his cause and never thinking what may be replied. God's determination can make any indifferent thing a duty, and does it follow that therefore He has left nothing to man's determination?

God's choice of Jerusalem for his worship, of the tabernacle-shape, of the priests, etc. made these necessary: Is therefore man's determination of the fixed places for ordinary worship, of the form of the temple [church building], of ordained ministers, false worship? God made it a duty to sing the psalm, Dt. 32, and others since: Is it therefore false worship now to make hymns for public use? Christ taught his disciples a form of prayer: may you therefore not teach your children or scholars any? Christ chose a text, Lk. 4, and preached, and that on a mountain, in a ship, etc. Therefore we may [not] choose a text, and place, etc. God appointed anniversary fasts

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divinely instituted by the apostle Paul under inspiration for the context, which yet retained its nature as a social custom; see Fentiman, [Head-Coverings are Not Perpetual](#). Something materially instituted of God does not of itself mean its mode is formally instituted and becomes a part of necessary worship: another example is 1 Tim. 2:8, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands..." Lifting up one's hands is not necessary for praying, as approved examples to the contrary abound in Scripture. If "modes of worship divinely instituted and determined do" not therein "become the necessary parts of divine worship," how much more are "humanly instituted, appointed and determined" modes of worship not "thereby" inherently "made parts of worship"?

<sup>103</sup> Owen: "for every circumstance observed religiously, or to be observed in the worship of God, is of the substance of it;" [A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God...](#) (London, 1667), p. 65. Owen: "1. They will receive nothing, practice nothing, own nothing in his worship, but what is of his appointment. They know that from the foundation of the world He never did allow, or ever will, that in any thing the will of the creatures should be the measure of his honor, or the principle of his worship, either as to matter or manner..." *Of Communion with God the Father, Son & Holy Ghost...* (Oxford, 1657), pt. 2, ch. 5, pp. 169-71.

<sup>104</sup> Owen's basic mistake here is equivocating on the word "worship": modes of material worship "humanly instituted, appointed and determined are" not "thereby made parts of" formal "worship." If the instituted mode be undue in some degree (lacking divine institution, whether by Scripture or nature), it only necessarily remains an undue mode of material worship, hindering formal worship to that degree. Compare [footnote 87](#) above.

and feasts: Is it therefore false worship to keep the 5th of November or the like? God determined of the priests' maintenance: Is it a sin now to determine of ministers' maintenance? If God should institute and command all the words of your church-covenants, prayers, sermons, they would become necessary: Are they therefore sinful if man determine them? If God had made all the articles of your Savoy Confession or all the laws of the land, they would have been necessary: Are they now all unlawful because man made them?

That which God has commanded is no false worship: But God has commanded the churches to determine undetermined modes and circumstances needful *in genere*, so as all may be done to edification, decently and in order, and not causelessly to cross the customs of the Churches of God, and to obey those that are over them in the Lord.

Owen:

4. Prayer and praise are not the things prescribed and enjoined in and by the Liturgy: It is so far from it that thereby all prayers and praises in church-assemblies, merely as such, are prohibited; but it is its own forms, way and mode, with their determination and limitation alone, that are instituted, prescribed and enjoined by it: But these things have no divine institution and therefore are so far false worship.

Baxter:

§11. Here are two more strange mistakes:

1. Are there so many prayers enjoined and the people called on with a "Let us pray," and yet is not prayer enjoined? There is some secret meaning in this, for doubtless you would never else affirm it and expect that all men renounce their senses. You can mean nothing less than that their imposed forms, when used as commanded, are no prayers, which is another error. If so, then all the prayers of the Church of God for 1,300 years at least, that we read of, were no prayers: and then you desire no part in the prayers of any churches on earth at this day, save New England's or a few Separatists'. What wonder then if you be left without

the benefit of all those prayers? Is this the communion of saints in the catholic Church?

2. And are there no praises enjoined. Are none of their psalms, hymns and doxologies the praises of God when used: You suppose that Christ will call them none, or else you durst not. And is such a slander of Christ and the universal Church no sin?

Your next misreport is that “by the Liturgy, all prayers and praises in church assemblies are prohibited.” This is too rash: Where is there a word forbidding them? This can have no sense but that either none are church-assemblies that have a liturgy, or that nothing commanded in the Liturgy is prayer and praise in a church-assembly. But if this be your meaning, it is both ways untrue:

1. Is there no church on earth out of England? Or do they forbid any out of England to pray and praise God?
2. Do they forbid the Dutch and French in England to pray and praise God?
3. Do they forbid all prayer and praises in the pulpits in the parish-churches?
4. Have you proved all the parish-churches in England to be no churches? Where is your proof? How much soberer were the old Brownists?
5. Have you proved that commanding men to pray in such words is forbidding them to pray? When you set a psalm for praise, is that to forbid all praise? Is not *omnis modus entis modus* [every mode a mode of a thing] and includes the thing?

## Argument 2

Owen:

2<sup>nd</sup> Argument: That which was in its first contrivance, and has been in its continuance, an invention and engine to defeat or render useless the promise of Christ unto his Church of sending the Holy Spirit in all ages to enable it unto the due discharge and performance of all divine worship in its assemblies, is unlawful to be

complied withal, nor can be admitted in religious worship; but such is the Liturgical worship. That the Lord Christ did make such a promise, that He does make it good, that the very being and continuance of the Church (without which, it is but a dead machine) does depend thereon, I suppose will not be denied; it has been undeniably proved.

Baxter:

§12. To your second argument I answer:

1. To the minor: Do you mean that this was the intent of the first contrivers and continuers? or only that it had this effect, contrary to their intent? The first seems your sense, which is another misreport, for:

1. You know not who the first inventor was.
2. You know not all the continuers.
3. And so high a charge is to be taken for a slander, till it be proved.
4. Are you sure that you lay not this charge of malignity on the men of God that made the Jews' psalms? and on Christ, that composed a form of praying and baptizing? and on Paul, that commands hymns and imposed on Timothy a form of sound words [[2 Tim. 1:13](#)]?

And if you meant it but of the English Liturgy, you could never prove that our martyrs and confessors that made it had so malignant an end. But you speak it of liturgical worship in general, which obliges you to prove almost all the pastors for 1,120 years and more to be such malignants. And it's easily disproved, whether you meant it of their intent or of the effect, by assigning the true and better intent and effect. They did it not to render useless the Spirit's help, but:

1. To be useful where such abilities were lacking. It was the antecedent disability of men that occasioned liturgic forms.
2. And it was to be a help subordinate to the Spirit's help, to those that have it but in part, as spectacles to dark sights and sermon notes to weak memories.

3. They are really a great help to many, and therefore not made only to hinder them. When fitter and more sound and moving words are set before an unready speaker, they help his affection more than his own shorter and unmeeter words would do; and his mind, being not taken up with the study of words, is the freer to attend its affections.

You must not measure all men's volubility of speech by your own. I can truly say that forms are oft a help to me. I find young and old Christians are more fit to use them than the middle-aged: for the young cannot at first pray well (at least before others) without them till use has taught them; and the old have discretion to fit their affections to sound words oft repeated. But the middle-aged, that have a greater heat and a lesser light, are much more taken with their own sudden effusions and expressions.

Do you think that when Calvin formed the liturgy for Geneva and France, he had so malignant a design as to defeat the Spirit's help? Or do our English psalms and tunes quench the Spirit? and are they used to keep men from the gift of making hymns *ex tempore* [out of the temporal circumstances]?

2. I answered your minor first because it is matter of fact, but your major also is untrue, for that which is imposed with an ill intent may be used to a good one: and that which hurts some may be a help to others. If the parish-churches were all built to serve Popery and the mass, and were dedicated to saints, yet we may use them lawfully to better purposes. If priests' marriages be forbidden for ill ends, it may be forborne for good ends. If glebe and tithes were here given first to maintain the mass, they may be used to maintain sound teachers. It was Popes that reversed the old custom of not-adoring-kneeling on any Lord's Day: and yet you may lawfully kneel then in prayer, yea, though they brought in kneeling to the [sacramental] host by that alteration. So that this is another error; and your confirmations are not true.

Owen:

Hereon the Church lived and acted for several ages, performing all divine worship in their assemblies by virtue of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit and no otherwise.<sup>105</sup>

When these things were neglected when the way of attaining and the exercise of them appeared too difficult to men of carnal minds, this way of worship by a prescribed liturgy was insensibly brought in to render the promise of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost in the administration of gifts useless. And herein two things do follow.

Baxter:

§13:

1. It is a great error to think that the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit may not be exercised if we use the same words or if they be prescribed. The chief help of God's Spirit lies in giving us a due esteem of the things prayed for, and a holy desire after them and a lively faith and hope that we shall obtain them, and a fixed resolution to use all other means for them and avoid all that would deprive us of them. And doubtless he that has these mental dispositions has thereby a great help for his expression of them, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. But:

1. It's well known that use and knowledge can enable a hypocrite to pray as long and in as good words and earnest tone as a sincere Christian.

2. That which is easiest needs the least help: It is to me so much easier to speak my own thoughts in prayer *ex tempore* than to remember a form of words that never since I was twenty years old did I ever learn [memorize] and say without a book the words of one prayer or one sermon since I preached; to have learned a prayer or sermon without a book would have

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<sup>105</sup> Owen: "...if... before the end of the second century, any proof or undoubted testimony can be produced, of the imposition of the necessary use of liturgies, or of stated ceremonies of the practice of Church discipline consistent with that now in use in the Church of England, it will go a great way in the determination of the whole controversy between us." [Enquiry](#), p. 360

cost me ten times and more both time and labor, and fear of being out, than I ever used or could afford.

3. Pardon me for asking whether if this author put all the errors of this his writing into a prayer or sermon, he did not need more help of the Spirit to have avoided them and to have spoken nothing but truth, than to have fluently uttered so many mistakes? He has heard those called Arminians on one side and Antinomians on the other oft fluently express their opinions in God's worship. The former he took to be heinous errors. Had not all these had more of the help of God's Spirit if they had uttered nothing but true and good in a form than they had to speak so much error and evil to God or man with extemporate fluency.

4. May not a man use the Lord's Prayer by the Spirit's help? If I have any help of God's Spirit, it is more in the use of that prayer than at any other time.

5. May not one sing psalms by the help of the Spirit unless he make them *ex tempore*? I doubt you lay too much on words: God's Spirit works on the heart and its greatest help is in its greatest gifts, which are faith, repentance, love, desire, etc. and not words. Words must be used and weighed, but the main work is heart-work, and God knows the meaning of the Spirit when we have but groans which we cannot express and cry but "Abba, Father."

But you come to history and add another misreport in the words, "and no otherwise," that the Church for several ages worshipped "no otherwise" than by such gifts as you describe, which exclude liturgic forms. It's plain in the descriptions of Justin and Tertullian that they did use extemporate prayer then, but not that they did no otherwise:

1. Tertullian himself gives you their form of a creed and so do many others.
2. They used a set form of words in baptizing.
3. And they constantly used singing psalms and hymns, which were not made *ex tempore*, nor by every singer.
4. They used the Lord's prayer in form often.

5. At the Lord's Supper they had diverse words of form and responses. In Cyprian some parcels are to be seen, and in diverse others.

6. The truth is our history of the Church's manner of worship for the first two hundred years is so little that we know but little how they did it, beside the foresaid two passages in Justin and Tertullian. But by what is in the historians of the next ages, and by the Churches' general use of the liturgies without contradiction soon after, and what Daille has gathered, *De cultu Latinorum*, etc.,<sup>106</sup> we know that "no otherwise" is not true.

2. It's too true that the carelessness, sloth and worldly alienations of ministers made all useful sufficiency for the work of the ministry in praying and preaching to be neglected, and does to this day. But I hope no wise man dreams that all the pastors had one soul or one mind and design. If any malignants used or enjoined forms to make Christ's promise and the Spirit's help useless, others used them and promoted the use of them for the performance of Christ's promise and the Spirit's help:

1. Because there were not (when public countenance increased the churches) half enough men for the ministry that had the extemporate gifts of prayer and preaching.

2. And you confess that each church had then many elders for oversight besides those that labored in the Word and doctrine. Do you believe that all these had such extemporate gifts of utterance? Or that these might not on occasion pray and preach.<sup>107</sup>

3. If parents teach children necessarily to pray in a prescribed form of words, without designing to defeat Christ or his Spirit, but to subserve them; how can you tell, but the first prescribers of public forms did mean as well, when

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<sup>106</sup> John Daille, *Adversus Latinorum de cultus religiosi objecto traditionem, disputatio* (Geneva: Joann Antonius & Samuel de Tournes, 1664).

<sup>107</sup> While ruling elders do not have the calling, gifts or authority for congregational prayer or preaching by office, yet they may do such by God's call of, and provision in, necessity: 'Ruling Elders do Not have the Authority for Congregational Prayer by Office' and 'Ruling Elders do not have the Authority for Preaching, or Laboring in, or Ministering, the Word in Public Worship by Office' at 'Ruling Elders' (RBO), and 'Teachers, Elders, Deacons & Laymen may Publicly Preach in Necessity' at 'Preaching' (RBO).

they found few persons able to do so well without, and abundance of heretics ready to corrupt God's worship with their errors?

4. Let it be soberly considered whether men's long and hard study for all the words which they write in books and for their sermons be done to defeat Christ and his Spirit, or to subserve them? And why the use of words studied by others and weighed by us before we utter them should defeat the Spirit any more than words premeditated by ourselves? Or at least is not the Spirit as much defeated in the people that join [in hearing sermons], whoever prepares the words? For they do not themselves put them up by their gift of utterance. And it's impossible when you speak for the people to know whether those words were before studied, and whether by yourself or by another from whom you borrowed them. I have heard Mr. Philip Nye wish that some men were sent into Wales and other such places with an injunction to read good sermon books to the people, such as Dr. Preston's, Sibbes's, etc. Was this spoken to defeat the Spirit, or to serve Him?

Owen:

1. A total neglect of all gifts of the Holy Ghost in the administration of Church-worship and ordinances.

Baxter:

§14. The first consequence is an untruth: No doubt but liturgies were abused to cherish ignorance and negligence, but that the neglect was total is not true, whether you respect all the churches or all the parts of worship and ordinances:

1. The many holy and excellent men whose fame and writings are transmitted to us did not totally neglect all gifts of the Holy Ghost. Were all the great volumes of sermons preached and written by Chrysostom without any gift of the Holy Ghost? Or was preaching no ordinance? Were all Augustine's elaborate volumes done without Him? Or all Cyprian's, Macarius's, Ephrem Syrus's, Basil's, Gregory's, yea, or Bernard's homilies and works?

2. Are the gifts of holy desire, faith, hope, repentance, no gifts of the Holy Ghost? Or can you prove that these were all totally neglected in the administration of Church-worship?

3. It's known that in the exercise of discipline, which is a church-ordinance, and in catechizing and preaching, they were not tied only to a form of words; no, nor in all confession, prayer and thanksgiving.

4. It's a great blow to the universal Church to say that it totally neglected all the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Owen:

2. When a plea for the work of the Holy Ghost began to be revived, it produced all the enmity, hatred and contempt of and against the Spirit of God Himself and his whole work in the Church, which the world is now filled withal.

Baxter:

§15. That word, "his whole work in the Church," is another misreport. It is not "his whole work" that is so contemned. A man may preach for mercy to the poor, for obedience to authority, for love, etc. and he may sing psalms of praise and pray for pardon and for kings and magistrates, and for daily bread and may profess to believe the Creed and Scripture, etc. without the contempt which you describe.

But no doubt but malignity will take advantage of liturgies and of almost anything, and so has still done: All is not unlawful which bad men abuse. What is more turned against Christ in the world abroad than his two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry? What more abused to strife than the sacrament of love, union and communion? Are all these therefore unlawful?

Owen:

All the reproaches that are daily cast upon the Spirit of prayer, all the concontempt and scorn which all duties of religious worship performed by his aid and assistance are entertained withal, arises from hence alone, namely a justification of this devised way of worship as the only true way and means thereof.

Take this away and the wrath and anger of men against the Spirit of God and his work in the worship of the Church will be abated; yea, the necessity of them will be evident.

This we cannot comply with lest we approve the original design of it and partake in the sins which proceed from it.

Baxter:

And it's a palpable mistake that the foresaid scorn of all done by the Spirit "arises from hence alone," [from] a justification of the devised way of worship. It arises more from a malignant enmity to serious godliness and from worldly interests and designs, and from the slanders of seducers that accuse good men, and too much from the miscarriages of many that have boasted most of the Spirit, as Quakers, Ranters, Familists, etc. do.

And experience confutes you, for all those countries that make but little use of liturgies have yet malignant parties that hate and oppose spiritual, serious exercises of religion.

§16. Because you lay the main stress of your cause on history and experience, you constrain me to add some more history which I had rather have passed by. But if I set not experience against experience, I shall leave abundance unto the danger of error [for those] who can judge by little else than experience and that see and feel what's present, and forget what is long past and gone.

## The Pros & Cons of Liturgies & Free Prayer

The truth I have opened in my *Christian Directory*, that both ways are liable to great abuse and all human actions have their inconveniences.<sup>108</sup>

1. The benefits of a sound liturgy are:

1. to keep out heresy and ill words from public worship,
2. to be a help to men of unready utterance,
3. that the people may know beforehand what they join in.

The inconveniences are:

1. the dulling of affection in hearing still the same words,
2. the tempting of slothful worldly candidates and ministers to learn no other way of praying when this will serve all their worldly turns.

But I must add that this follows not from the imposing of a liturgy, but from the exclusion of other prayer and taking up with this alone.

2. The conveniences of praying from a habit are:

1. a just variation, as occasions vary,
2. help to fresh affection,
3. forcing ministers to get ability for utterance.

The inconveniences are:

1. That the people know not till the words are past whether they may own them, and so they hardly try all and follow with just consent.
2. That abundance of young, raw, unskillful men do ordinarily disgrace prayer by their unskillful methods and expressions.

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<sup>108</sup> Question 78, 'Whether are set forms of words or free praying without them the better way? And what are the commodities and incommunities of each way?' in *Christian Directory* (London, 1673), pt. 3, *Christian Ecclesiastics, Cases of Conscience*, pp. 851-53.

3. That heretics and erroneous men have great opportunity to put their sins into their prayer, which yet the people should by joining in make their own were they sound (which they are not bound to do by sermons): And no man of understanding can choose, but suspect that weak ignorant ministers will be showing their weakness in the highest duties, and so must suspend their consent till late.
4. That less care will be taken in speaking to God than in speaking to men, while most sober ministers study their sermons.
5. That when to avoid disgraceful words and manner of praying, men must decree that no such weak or unready men shall be ministers, the number that can do it better will be so small as that most churches on earth must be so deprived of ministers and all public worship if that take place.
6. That by this means young ignorant men that by use can speak fluently and fervently in prayer shall be followed by the people when many great divines, judicious and holy that have not that readiness of utterance, shall be rejected as having not the Spirit.
7. That as all men's bodies and minds be not in the like quickness and fitness at all times, but sometimes clouded by fumes or weakness, the public worship shall be as mutable, uncertain and various as men's tempers are.

All these on both sides are so great inconveniences that though both Formalists and Fanatics have derided me for it, I have formerly said, and still say that I believe that the best way to avoid both sorts of evils is to have meet set forms, which shall be owned by the Church as their professed desires, not being so long as to take up too much time from freer prayer, much less to forbid it, which Calvin wisely ordered for France and Geneva.

And now as you have historically told us the ill consequences of a liturgy, I shall first tell you it is a mistake: None of these arise from a sound liturgy, but from the using that alone and not using also free prayer with it. And next I shall add some more of the history of Separation from churches that have liturgies, though it be as displeasing to me as it is necessary to the people.

## A History of Separatism

I will pass by the histories of Muncer and Muntzer, and of David George in Holland, and of Henry Nicols, and the Familists, which were the offspring of Separation: and the sad conflicts which they had against the sober nonconformists, and their sad divisions among themselves in Holland, and how many of them went further to Anabaptistry and more, when Brown their leader here turned conformist. It is only what I have lived to see that I briefly mention:

When the [Long] Parliament began, 1640, there were few Separatists known, comparatively, in England: But when they were encouraged by hope of success, they began to stir and show themselves; and two sorts fell in with them and quickly increased them, that is:

1. the exasperated sufferers,
2. women and weak young men who thought it a great honor in religion to go far enough from persecutors and formal or ungodly ministers, not seeing the danger on the other extreme.

Holy and learned John Ball foresaw the danger and wrote his book called *The Trial of Separation*,<sup>109</sup> and after, two more: one against [the Separatist] Canne and another against two New England ministers.<sup>110</sup>

The [Westminster] Assembly being called, even sober and excellent men that were for the old conformity in case of necessity (but not otherwise), five of their number, differing from all the rest save two more, wrote for Independency.<sup>111</sup> This controversy began the great breach, while the five dissenters stood stiffly for a liberty that men might gather new churches out of the churches of the other ministers, of as many as should come to them in all places, and should have all church-power in those separated churches. The others did not what might have been done skillfully

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<sup>109</sup> John Ball, *A Friendly Trial of the Grounds tending to Separation...* (Cambridge, 1640).

<sup>110</sup> Ball, *An Answer to Two Treatises of Mr. John Can, the Leader of the English Brownists in Amsterdam* (London: 1642); idem, *A Trial of the New-Church Way in New-England and in Old...* (London, 1644).

<sup>111</sup> Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs, William Bridge, *An Apologetical Narration, humbly submitted to the Honourable Houses of Parliament* (London, 1643).

to heal the breach, though they did much. The two parties drew others into the division.

Those called presbyterians were the more quiet, because they thought the dissenters to be few. Independency might have been tolerated, but Separation was that which would not be endured when nothing was imposed in doctrine or worship which the dissenters excepted against. The Separaters, finding themselves few, were the more industrious, especially to get interest in the parliament and army. In the parliament they could never get near the major vote; but they had some, whose policy and industry made up what was lacking in number. And by them they got the army new-modeled, all parliament men thence put out and Cromwell put in power, second in name and first in deed.

He placed his interest (as Constantine did, in owning the persecuted Christians who had no other outward help but him) in declaring himself to be for liberty in religion and the Protector of all godly men that suffered for conscience-sake, or feared it, whereby the dissenters that feared lest the presbyterians would master them came in to him, and he got enough to head his army (and great numbers also of common soldiers) who were for Separation, and being men of other parts and interest than those that fight only for pay, would not run away but conquered almost wherever they came.

I lived in Coventry quietly and with godly, understanding men who thought all the accusations against Fairfax's (or rather Cromwell's) army as turbulent, overturning men had been slanders. After Naseby Fight [1645],<sup>112</sup> being near them, I went for novelty to see them. There some sober men among them told me how they had discouraged all the orthodox ministers, save one or two, and were deserted by them; and [how they had] turned preachers themselves, they that had the most self-conceit being the speakers, and in a word foretold me what changes they would attempt against king, parliament and ministry.

I went home and told what I saw and heard, and being invited by some of the soberest to the army, I told an assembly of ministers my willingness to venture life and labor among them to undeceive as many as I could. The ministers consented to my going

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<sup>112</sup> See Wikipedia: "[Battle of Naseby](#)".

(Dr. Grew and Mr. Simon King, yet living, were two of them). There Cromwell, having notice of all before I came, gave me no opportunity to come near himself or the chief in power: But where I came, I did my best, for I found the Separatists half Arminians and the other half contrary, Antinonians, agreeing to use their power for the changes that were after made. The Scots and presbyterians they designedly and bitterly reproached (the book called *Martin Mar-Priest*,<sup>113</sup> and other such, tell you their dialect): their usual titles were, "The Priest-byters," "the Drivines," "the sinners of Westminster," "the Dissembly Men," and such like. The godly, able ministers were more scorned by them than formerly I had heard among the drunkards.

What they did after this England and Scotland felt. They cut off the king [Charles I, in 1649], they cast out eleven members from the parliament. After that they cast out and imprisoned the major part, which was the House of Commons, and cast out all the House of Lord's. Then by these they made the people take an Engagement [1649] against the old form of government to be true to the Commonwealth as then established without a king and House of Lord's. They ordered the sequestring of all ministers that would not fast and pray before and give thanks after for their victories in Scotland. They then pulled down this remnant of the Commons and called themselves, without the people's choice, two persons out of each county and called them a parliament. These put it to the vote whether all the parish-ministers in England should not be put down at once; and as credible report went, it was carried against them but by three voices. These gave up their commissions to Cromwell.

He now becomes the defender of the ministers. The government is again changed and he is made Protector and fundamental laws were made among themselves, by we know not whom. Parliament lords were made by him, with parliaments called and broken at his pleasure. The government of the counties were put into the hands of major generals.

After the death of Oliver [in 1658], his son [Richard] was set up and his parliament was first pulled down (in which the reverend author now opposed told me he was an agent), and next himself. Then the Commons, called "the Rump," were made

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<sup>113</sup> The Leveller [Richard Overton](#) (fl. 1640–1664) had written several tracts under the satirical pseudonym "Martin Marpriest", a play off of the earlier, late-1500's tracts by "Martin Marprelate" against clerical vestments and other ceremonies.

sovereign again. Then they were pulled down again and a Council of State out of the army that did it is set highest, till at last, by God's most remarkable hand, this conquering army dissolved utterly without one drop of blood and the king [Charles II was] restored without opposition [in 1660].

It's true that serious godliness all this while much increased in most parts of the land, but how? It was mainly by the excellent preaching and living of that ministry whom these Separatists vilified, such as the Assembly-men had been, and by a middle sort of peacemakers, who engaged in no sect, but would fain have healed all;<sup>114</sup> for the effects of the Separating party were these:

1. The land was cast into division and confusion by them.
2. Ranters and Quakers sprung from them.
3. Their overthrow of government brought a reproach on religion.
4. Separated churches of Anabaptists kept up a religious war in many places.
5. All the parish-ministers in Wales were put down and most of the churches shut up, itinerant preachers being set up in their stead lest the parishes should be thought to be churches. Perhaps you will say that these itinerants were better than the old ignorant ministers, but:

1. Their number was so small that there was commonly but one to six or eight parishes: so that the people publicly worshipped God but once in six or eight weeks: And had not a liturgy been better than nothing, or than to live like atheists?

2. The most famous of the itinerants were Mr. Walter Cradock and Vavasor Powel: I knew them both. The former was a most zealous man for practical godliness, with whom I conversed in my youth when in Mr. Richard Simond's school in Shrewsbury he was concealed from the bishops' pursuit by the name of Mr. Williams. But how gross an Antinomian he turned after he had learned Separation before he was itinerant there, his printed sermons

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<sup>114</sup> This included Baxter, as per his account, and description of their method, in *The Nonconformists' Plea for Peace* (London, 1679), [section 7](#), pp. 130-31.

tell us,<sup>115</sup> where he so earnestly persuades men not to question their justification after conversion for any sin whatsoever they shall commit, and more such like. And his printed writings show that Mr. Erbery, of whom he learned Separation, fell so far as that it's hard to discern that he was at all a Christian. And Vavasor Powel was an Antinomian.

Now I crave a sober answer to this: 1. Whether a liturgy had not been better than no worship for six days in seven? 2. Whether these itinerants that so dangerously erred in doctrine were not more sadly destitute of the help of the Spirit than they that only lacked ability to utter sound words without a form or books? And had not good forms been safer for that people than the doctrine of Mr. Erbery, Mr. Cradock, Vavasor Powel, Morgan Lloyd of Wrexham (known also in print)?

It grieved me to talk with one of these itinerants in 1663 who came to me for counsel: He had been an Anabaptist set up for an itinerant over many parishes. I examined him and found that he had not anymore learning than to read English, and was grossly ignorant in divinity. He was ordained for all that by a bishop and conformed. I wondered how he past their examination. He told me that they asked him no questions about his learning or knowledge, but only whether he would conform, and so ordained him.

I have now opened some of the fruits of Separation in England, as you have done the supposed fruits of the liturgies, but indeed of the exclusion of free prayers; and judge now whether all the ill effects have come from one extreme. The truth is, having impartially observed the mischiefs of the age in which I have lived, I have found that both the extremes have been the chief causes and the peacemakers both the most understanding and the most innocent; and the nearer any of the several parties have come to them, the more innocent they have been.

It is not mere episcopacy or liturgies that have done the mischief, for such excellent men as Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, Farrar, Parker, Jewel, Grindal, Davenant, Ussher, etc. could use both profitably. It's not mere presbytery, for such as Calvin, Beza,

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<sup>115</sup> Walter Cradock, *Gospel-Liberty, in the Extensions [and] Limitations of it...* (London: M. Simmons, 1648).

Daneau, Sadeel, Rivet, Chamier, Daille, Blondel have been excellent lights in the Church. It is not mere Independency, for Ramus, Ames, Henry Jacob, Jeremiah Burroughs and many others of that mind have been excellent, peaceable men. It is not mere Anabaptistry [baptists], for there have been many peaceable worthy men against infant baptism (and some bishops thought it not of divine institution); and when they were rebaptized, continued in love and communion with others. But it is proud ignorance and lack of Christian love causing excommunicating, persecuting, Separation or schism in some, and withdrawing censorious Separation in others, who (neither party) understand the truth nor ever loved their neighbors as themselves, nor learned to do as they would be done by. The worldly PR. IGs.<sup>116</sup> and the unruly PR. IGs. by persecution and by causeless Separation and alienation have done the hurt.

But I will tell the bishops that they should not be too angry with the learned author of these twelve arguments, for I know not three men alive whom they are more beholden to for their restitution by opening the door and sweeping the way and melting down or pulverizing all that was like to have resisted them. I speak not of the intention, but of the action by which the Separatists cut down the banks, and when they had let in the prelacy and Liturgy, which they dislike, then write and talk against them.

I will add one question to this unpleasant section: If there be as few in all the Christian world, yea among the reformed Calvinists and Lutherans out of our king's dominions, that can pray as well without a form as with it, as we have great cause to believe, would he have all these nations dissolve all their churches and like atheists, cast off all public church-worship till they have ministers enough that have learned to pray better without a form or liturgy than with it? If this be desired, I appeal to

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<sup>116</sup> This may likely mean "Proud Ignorants", as a contemporary critic of Baxter, who was unsure, so inferred in *A Vindication of... Owen... by a Friendly Scrutiny into the Merits and Manner of Mr. Richard Baxter's Opposition to Twelve Arguments concerning Worship by the Liturgy...* (London, 1684), p. 26. This is confirmed by Baxter's anti-party spirit and morally adjudged perspective in the immediate context. Another option is "Presbyterians and Independents" as "G" may stand for "Gatherers", as Independents were sometimes called; yet much of the persecution was done by bishops, prelates and Formalists, as Baxter notes, so this alternative seems less likely. Baxter though may have meant both, or left his meaning ambiguous so as not to be able to be blamed for it by the named parties (note that he was reckoned an Independent by some, though he called himself a presbyterian at times). It is not to be missed that the abbreviations spell "prigs", which word was current in that era with its current meaning.

any that can difference Christianity from heathenism, whether liturgies or such a Separation from liturgies would do more hurt?

And I will add yet one question more: If there be not above two or three (or at last no) church-assemblies in a county which have nonconforming ministers and opportunity to worship God as churches, would you have all the rest of the countries<sup>117</sup> dissolve their church-assemblies, or forbear all and live like unbelievers? If so, I am a separatist from such destructive principles and Separations.

### Argument 3

Owen:

Argument 3: That in religious worship which derogates from the kingly office of Jesus Christ, so far as it does so, is false worship.

Unto the office of Christ it inseparably belongs that He be the sole Lawgiver of the Church in all the worship of God.<sup>118</sup> The rule of his government herein is, "Teach men to do and observe whatsoever I command." [Mt. 28:20]<sup>119</sup>

But the worship treated about consists wholly in the institutions, commands, prescriptions, orders and rules of men; and on the authority of men alone does their

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<sup>117</sup> i.e. counties. "Countries", in such a context, meant those living in the country-side, and was often synonymous with counties.

<sup>118</sup> Owen: "our principal assertion is that Christ alone is the Author, Institutor, and Appointer, in a way of authority and legislation, of the gospel Church-state, its order, rule and worship, with all things constantly and perpetually belonging thereunto, or necessary to be observed there-in. What is not so is of men and not from heaven;" *Enquiry*, p. 33

<sup>119</sup> Owen: "there is so much negligence in all sorts of persons about the observance of evangelical institutions, so little conscientious care about them... This indeed is no other but that solemn covenant between God and the whole church, wherein the church takes upon itself their due observance. This renders our obedience in them and by them no less necessary than any duties of moral obedience whatever." *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews...* 4 vols., new ed. (London: Tegg, 1840), on Heb. 9:18, p. 152. Owen's saying positive evangelical institutions are "are no less necessary than any duties of moral obedience" is false. "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.'" (Mt. 9:13) See 'On the Relations Between the 1st & 2nd Tables of the Law' (RBO) and 'On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church' (RBO).

impositions on the practice of the Church depend. What is this but to renounce the kingly office of Christ in the Church?

Baxter:

§17. To the major of your third argument I answer:

1. There is that in worship (as the badness of the men, etc.) which is no part of the worship, and therefore it is no false worship.
2. True worship materially may be so abused as to derogate from the kingly office of Christ.
3. But it is granted that all your own or other men's errors or sin in worship (which no man is totally free from) do in some degree practically derogate from the kingly office of Christ (which should be better obeyed) and so is so far false worship.

That it belongs to this office of Christ to be the sole lawgiver in all the worship of God is another mistake:<sup>120</sup>

1. There is that in God's worship which is no part of his worship.
2. There is a secondary worship subservient to God's institutions which men may make laws about.
3. There are temporary by-laws and mandates which have the essence of law (which is to signify the ruler's will, making the subjects' duty), besides general laws, by excellency so called.

1. And so princes may make laws for the use of the best translation of Scripture,<sup>121</sup> for the version of psalms, for ministers' due ordering worship, to restrain some

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<sup>120</sup> Owen, again, is speaking of worship formally considered, yet applies this to material worship and makes a separatistic conclusion therefrom; compare [footnotes 87 & 104](#). While Baxter does not agree where he can with Owen up front, Baxter is not wrong to press the issues with regard to material worship, wherein the greatest difference between the two lies, and regarding which the tracts of both Owen and Baxter were written.

<sup>121</sup> Under the notion of *circa sacra*, that the magistrate has power around sacred things, though not in sacred things, Baxter, [in common with congregationalists](#), gave more authority to the magistrate than

seducers, for time, place, utensils, to be uncovered and to kneel or stand at prayer, etc.<sup>122</sup> and the pastor may by mandate oblige the people to much of the like.

Mt. 28:20, by saying “whatever I command you,” does not say, “Do nothing which your parents, prince or pastor command you besides my commands.” Sure it was his Spirit that said, Heb. 13:7, “Obey them that have the rule over you.” Christ never particularly commanded any of the twenty things in which I instanced to Mr. Raphson.<sup>123</sup> Must not children obey parents or servants their masters in learning any form of catechism, or others choose any minister or write sermons, etc. till Christ will particularly command them? This is a false exposition.

2. It is another mistake that the worship treated about consists wholly in the command, etc. of men. This worship contains:

1. In general: praying, praising, preaching. Is this none of God's command?
2. It contains for the matter signified the confession of sins of omission and commission, the petitioning for all contained in the Lord's Prayer and for all graces (though prayers for faith or its increase was much forgotten, save on St. Thomas's day or such an odd occasion), and for the Church and others as well as ourselves, for kings and all in authority, and thanksgivings for all sorts of men. I can find little in the common public worship whose matter is not of divine command; and can you find none such at all? Wonderful difference of eye-sight!
3. The matter signifying is much of it: the psalms of David, the Old Testament and the New read, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, Scripture hymns,

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the presbyterians. Consider the presbyterian Rutherford: “the right translation of the Bible out of the Hebrew and the Greek in the vulgar language is a cause merely ecclesiastical, belonging to the Church Assembly; it were hard to make the king, being ignorant of these mother languages, the judge of that version as he is made by them judge in all causes ecclesiastical; howbeit, *de jure* [by right], he is a politic judge, even in this judging by a coactive and kingly power; howbeit, *de facto*, and through ignorance he cannot exercise the kingly power that God has given him in this act.” *A Peaceable & Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland* (1642), ch. 19, p. 306.

<sup>122</sup> Again, while Baxter here expresses his own view, and it ought to be more qualified, as the presbyterians held, it is not entirely wrong. On the more accurate classic, reformed, and presbyterian, view, see Travis Fentiman, “The Nature of Civil Power about Worship Ordinances” in *The Civil Government's Authority about Religion & the Church, Circa Sacra: An Extended Introduction...* (Reformed Books Online, 2021), pp. 18-20.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Second Part against Schism... Reasons of Mr. Raphson... Against going to the Parish-Churches’, pp. 4-8 in *Catholic Communion Defended against both Extremes*.

a Scripture-benediction: Is none of all this commanded by God? What Christian should believe it?

It is also a mistake that “on the authority of men alone does their imposition on the practice of the Church depend,” for:

1. The foresaid parts are imposed by God Himself.
2. The lawful modes imposed by men depend not on their authority alone, but on God's, who authorizes rulers to do it: For he has said, “Let all be done to edification,” [1 Cor. 14:26] “in order;” [1 Cor. 14:40] “Obey them that have the rule.” [Heb. 13:7] They that obey a pastor for time, place, utensils, translations, psalms, etc. or that obey the king depend not herein on man alone.

Your conclusion also is a mistake. This is not to renounce the kingly office of Christ in the Church no more than you did when you wrote your Savoy Articles of Confession, or when you draw up the form of a church-covenant for your flock. All that is a sin against Christ's kingly office is not a renouncing of it.

#### Argument 4

Owen:

4<sup>th</sup> Argument: That which gives testimony against the faithfulness of Christ in his House as a Son and Lord of it above that of a servant, is not to be complied withal; let all his disciples judge.

Unto this faithfulness of Christ it does belong to appoint and command all things whatever in the Church that belongs to the worship of God, as is evident from this comparison with Moses herein and his preference above him (Heb. 3:3-6). But that institution and prescription of all things in religious worship, of things never

instituted nor prescribed by Christ in the forms and modes of them,<sup>124</sup> arises from a supposition of a defect in the wisdom, care and faithfulness of Christ, whence alone a necessity can arise of prescribing that in divine worship that He has not prescribed.

Baxter:

§18. To your fourth argument I answer:

1. To the major proposition (1. To give testimony) signifies either by remote, unseen consequence to cross Christ's faithfulness (and so do many of the mistakes of you and every party), or it signifies a known denial of Christ's faithfulness. No Christian complies with this.

2. "Complying" also is an ambiguous word: if it mean an approbation of any sin, so no man must comply. If it mean communicating in good<sup>125</sup> where there is a faulty mixture of some evil, so he that will not comply must join with no Church and with no man living.

2. To your minor I answer (passing by the misforming) in your supposition: It is not true that it belongs to Christ's faithfulness to appoint and command all things whatever in the Church which belongs to the worship of God: Else He were unfaithful in bidding them appoint many things belonging to his worship. I have named instances now which I must not still repeat: You and all ministers belong

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<sup>124</sup> Owen's reasoning holds good if such prescriptions are held to be absolute and unconditional, however it ignores that such material prescriptions could have been prescribed derivatively, conditionally, for the here and now (as they manifestly were), without claiming to be absolute or unchangeable, as was standard reformed doctrine. On the lawfulness and inherent mutability of Church ordinances (though they be enforced in specific times and places) see, '[On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church](#)' (RBO).

<sup>125</sup> Thomas Goodwin: "I have found by trial of things that there is some truth on all sides. I have found holiness where you would little think it, and so likewise truth; and I have learned this principle, which I hope I shall never lay down... To acknowledge every good thing, and hold communion with it, in men, in churches, or whatsoever else. I learn this from Paul; I learn this from Jesus Christ Himself: He fills all in all; He is in the hearts of his people, and fills them in his ordinances to this day; and where Jesus Christ fills, why should we deny an acknowledgment and a right hand of fellowship and communion." *Works*, 12 vols. (d. 1680; Edinburgh: Nichol, 1861), vol. 1, *Exposition of Eph. 1* (1681), sermon 36, on 1:22-23, p. 559.

to his worship and yet Christ has not in Scripture named you, but left the choice of you to man. So of all accidents undetermined.

It is another error that the prescription of forms and modes of things in worship not commanded by Christ can arise from nothing but from supposition of a defect in the wisdom, care and faithfulness of Christ. I confute it:

1. You know not the hearts of all the world and therefore cannot say that this can arise from nothing else: Did you know Ambrose, that made the *Te Deum* ["Thee, God, we praise"], and all that made and prescribed psalms, hymns and prayers, and Calvin that made a liturgy, and Bucer, and the martyrs here and all that prescribed translations and meters, etc. so well as to know that all these and almost all the Churches on earth do suppose Christ to be unfaithful?
2. Is it only such a charge or supposition against Christ which made you yourself prescribe your form of church-covenant, your Savoy Articles, your catalogue of fundamentals, your lay-elders, your time and place of meeting, your utensils and ornaments at the sacraments, etc.?
3. I tell you another possible end: They did it because they thought that these modes are mutable according to persons, place, time, occasion, etc.,<sup>126</sup> and therefore that it belonged not to Christ's faithfulness to determine them, and that they should deny his faithfulness if they did deny that it has left them to human determination under general rules and bid the people obey them that have the rule over you, etc.

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<sup>126</sup> On the mutability of Church ordinances as standard reformed doctrine, see '[On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church](#)' (RBO).

## Argument 5

Owen:

5<sup>th</sup> Argument: That which is a means humanly invented for the attaining of an end in divine worship which Christ has ordained a means for, unto the exclusion of that means so appointed by Christ, is false worship and not to be complied withal.

The end intended is the edification of the Church in the administration of all its holy ordinances; this the Service-book is ordained and appointed by men for, or it has no end or use at all; but the Lord Christ has appointed other means for the attaining this end, as is expressly declared. He has given gifts unto men for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body ([Eph. 4:7-8, 11-12](#)), that is, in all gospel administrations. But this means ordained by Christ, namely the exercise of spiritual gifts in gospel administrations unto the edification of the Church is excluded, yea, expressly prohibited in the prescription of this Liturgical worship.

Baxter:

§19. To the major of your fifth argument I answer:

1. As to the former, no man is to comply by approbation with anything that excludes any of God's means; for instance, not with you that exclude the great duty of catholic communion. But we may so far comply with you and others as to join with you in God's worship, though you mix some evil.

Mr. Faldo at Barnet was fain many years to preach to a people that excluded singing psalms. He did what they would bear when he could not do what he would. He complied not by approbation with exclusion, for he spake against it.

Are you sure that all your ways have tended to the edification of the Church? Every weak minister that preaches or prays when an abler might be had, hinders the edification of the Church. Is it a sin therefore to hear any but the ablest?

2. That which hinders the Church's edification by the ruler's fault, it may be the people's duty to obey for a greater good.<sup>127</sup> For instance, it is less edifying to use our old singing psalms than a better version. And yet for concord, if the ruler appoint them, the people must use them because concord with that imperfection is better than to sing everyone a several better version or diverse versions at once. So a faulty translation of Scripture, a weak sermon, an inconvenient hour and place, when concord is necessary and cannot be had in the more edifying circumstances, it must be had in the best way we can. If the sheriff appoint an unfit time and place to meet to choose parliament-men, it's a duty to comply rather than not to meet at all. Every evil so far excludes good, and yet we must not renounce communion in all good where men mix any evil lest we also give over all good ourselves.

3. Christ gives gifts to men now in the due use of means and not by miracle: Therefore He gives them in great diversity and by hard study and long time, [Heb. 5:12](#), "For the time they ought to have been teachers," etc. Therefore a novice must not be a bishop, but an elder [older person], whence the office had its name.

All your pupils, people or ministers that had the Spirit's gifts had not your redundancy of expression. And many can talk more fluently for falsehood than good men can for truth. I was never much troubled myself for want of words to express what I know, but I have ten thousand times more begged hard for more knowledge, faith, love and hope than ever I did for the gift of utterance; a full heart is earnest, fervent and ready [[Ps. 45:1](#)].

It is another mistake that the exercise of spiritual gifts is expressly forbidden, unless you had meant that just at the use of the Liturgy extemporate utterance is forbidden: but it is not so in the pulpit.

And you should not confound things so different as is the use of the Liturgy and the forbidding of other prayers, nor yet the act of the commander and of the people. If rulers should command preaching, prayer, etc. to exclude the singing

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<sup>127</sup> For an introduction to materially complying with what is impure for a greater good, see '[An Extended Introduction](#)' at 'On the Ethics of Material Cooperation with, & Associations with Evil' (RBO).

psalms, that is their sin and not the people's, who must not (like peevish children at meat) refuse all because they cannot have what they would.

Owen:

The pretense of men's liberty to use their gifts in prayer before sermons and in preaching is ridiculous;<sup>128</sup> they are excluded in all the solemn worship of the Church.

Baxter:

§20. This answer is not only a mistake, but of an ill aspect on yourselves. It's not true that the use of gifts "is excluded in all the solemn worship of the Church." As if prayer, praise, thanksgiving, confession, explication of the Scripture, reproof, exhortation, comfort, direction, benediction, were no part of the solemn worship of the Church. Indeed some super-conformists have said so, but I had hoped you would not.

2. I said it's of an ill aspect, for:

1. If preaching and pulpit-prayer before and after be none of the solemn worship of the churches, then all those Churches which seldom use any other (saving a psalm, which is a liturgic form) have no solemn worship at all.
2. But if it be otherwise (as it is), then the parish-churches so far excel most of you that they have all that you have (pulpit prayer and sermon, and sometimes a chapter) and all the Common-Prayer more. And is not that better than your nothing (except at sacraments)? I know that the nonconformists that I have conversed with are in judgment for more (for reading the psalms, chapters, Creed, Lord's Prayer, Decalogue, etc.), but I have come into so few of their churches that do any more than the common pulpit work (sing a psalm, pray and preach there) that I have in that respect preferred the churches that do all that and add all the liturgy besides, more than you use.

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<sup>128</sup> The 1720 edition of Owen's tract in the second volume of his *Sermons* has "ridiculed".

## Argument 6

Owen:

Argument 6: That which has been and is obstructive of the edification of the Church, if it be in religious worship, it is false worship:<sup>129</sup> For the end of all true public worship is edification.

But such has been and is this Liturgical worship, for:

Baxter:

§21. Your sixth argument is but a former one repeated. To the major I grant it: All that is bad is so far false.

To the minor: 1. And such is all your errors and all the disorder, ill reflections, slovenly expressions which any weak minister uses, and the faults that all men have in some degree.

Owen:

1. It puts an utter stop to the progress of reformation in this nation, fixing bounds unto it that it could never pass.
2. It has kept multitudes in ignorance, etc.
3. It has countenanced and encouraged many in reviling and reproaching the Holy Spirit and his work.
4. It has set up and warranted an ungifted ministry.
5. It has made great desolations in the Church:

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<sup>129</sup> It is false worship so far as it is impure, yet mere impurities do not overturn the validity of God's ordinances; and if they are God's ordinances, they have some obliging respect unto us. See '[Ordinances of Worship with Impurities in them are Valid](#)' and '[One May & Ought to Separate or Abstain from Sinful Acts of Impure Worship while Not Separating from the Rest of the Divine Worship Service](#)' at '[On Impurities of Worship](#)' (RBO).

1. in the silencing of painful<sup>130</sup> ministers,
2. in the ruin of families innumerable,
3. in the destruction of souls.

It is not lawful to be participant in these things; yea, the glory of our profession lies in our testimony against them.<sup>131</sup>

Baxter:

§22. To your reasons:

1. It's not the use of a liturgy that hinders reformation, but the abuse of it and forbidding other ways of duty.
2. The same I say of keeping men in ignorance: Use all other means and the Liturgy with it and it will keep none in ignorance. Some Helvetia ministers who endeavored to have practiced my *Reformed Pastor*,<sup>132</sup> in personal conference told me that there the common people go customarily, almost every day in the week, to a sermon, without ceremonies or liturgies, (usually) with a Bible in their hands and continue as ignorant as those here that have no preaching.
3. I think it was not the esteem of a liturgy that made Quakers and Separatists here revile and scorn the best ministry, I think, in all the world.
4. Nor was it the Liturgy that set up and warranted such ill-gifted teachers as Mr. Erbery, Dell, Den, Paul Hobson, Chillington, Lilhurne, Prince, Wallwin, William Sedgwick, no, nor Mr. Saltmarsh,<sup>133</sup> who wrote for comfort that Christ has repented and believed for us, and we should no more question our faith and repentance than we would question Christ. I pass by multitudes of army-

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<sup>130</sup> That is, ministers that take great pains in fulfilling their work.

<sup>131</sup> This is a false dichotomy: one may participate, in some circumstances, in materially good things, though they have from impurities mixed with them deleterious consequences for some, while testifying against those impurities.

<sup>132</sup> Baxter gives a filled out paradigm for the duties and functions of pastors in this work, emphasizing accountability, diligence and spiritual disciplines, both for the pastor and in seeing such instilled in the people. *Gildas Salvianus, the Reformed Pastor showing the Nature of the Pastoral Work...* (London: 1656).

<sup>133</sup> A number of these men were Antinomians and Levellers. William Sedgwick (1610-1669), a radical Millenarian, is distinguished from Obadiah Sedgwick the Westminster divine (1600?-1658).

preaching-soldiers, such as those in major Bethel's troop in the same regiment that I was with, against whom, one day in Amersham Church, I was put to dispute from morning till near night, to save multitudes, whom they drew every week to hear them, from their absurd errors (and at last they turned Levellers<sup>134</sup> and Cromwell was put to hunt them to death). The like I was put to with Brown, an army chaplain and an Arian that maintained that Christ was not God, in a Church at Worcester: And this life I had with them long. Was all this caused by a liturgy?

5. The desolations made in the Church malignant men would make with or without a liturgy. What may not be abused? The authors must answer for it. Such as aforesaid, Jewel, Grindal, Ussher, etc. Preston, Sibbes, Bolton and a thousand such made no such havoc.

It is not lawful to partake in persecution but we must partake in much good which bad men will abuse to persecution. An excellent foreign Church has decreed to reject all ministers that are not (1) for the antiquity of the Hebrew [vowel] points, (2) against universal redemption.<sup>135</sup> Our learned author here was for both these, though men abused them to persecution.

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<sup>134</sup> The [Levellers](#) were a political movement during the English civil war promoting radical political egalitarianism.

<sup>135</sup> The Swiss Reformed Churches in the [Helvetic Consensus Formula](#) (1675). Baxter's characterization of the Hebrew vowel point issue is not precise: One could hold the vowel points as written were not of antiquity, but largely and in their final condition came in with the Medieval Jewish Masoretes (as in fact historically occurred), and yet still affirm in the Formula that "the power of the points" (an ambiguous phrase) was inspired, having been handed down and now so preserved. The sentence runs in Canon 2: "The Hebrew original of the OT which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Hebrew Church... is, not only in its consonants, but in its vowels either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points not only in its matter, but in its words, inspired by God."

## Argument 7

Owen:

Argument 7: That practice whereby we condemn the suffering saints of the present age, rendering them false witnesses of God and the only blamable cause of their own sufferings, is not to be approved. But such is this practice; and where this is done on a pretense of liberty, without any plea of necessary duty on our part, it is utterly unlawful.

Baxter:

§23. To your seventh argument: The major means either saints that suffer for well-doing or for ill-doing. If the Anabaptists should be suffering-saints, I would be none of those that they suffer by, but yet I would not be for Anabaptistry for fear of condemning them as the cause of their own suffering. By that rule I must own every error or sin that any saint suffers for.

2. The truth bids me say more than I am willing to confute this error. I have heard army-officers say that they believed abundance of the ten thousand Scots killed at Dunbar [Scotland, 1650] were godly men: and yet you were one that publicly, in pulpit and print, accused them<sup>136</sup> and did not justify their cause for being saints. Do you think none of the ministers in England were saints that refused the Engagement [1649] and were sequestered for that and not keeping fasts and thanksgivings for blood?<sup>137</sup> Are you sure that Christopher Love (beheaded)<sup>138</sup> was no saint? Or did you therefore own their causes?

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<sup>136</sup> The [Battle of Dunbar](#) was triggered by Scotland accepting Charles II as king of Britain and raising troops to support him, after the execution of his father, Charles I by the Rump English parliament. Cromwell, the new *de facto* English leader, invaded Scotland and gained a decisive victory at Dunbar. Owen had been sympathetic with the context and proceedings of the Rump parliament executing Charles I, preaching a sermon to that parliament the day after. He later served as an aid and chaplain to Cromwell.

<sup>137</sup> Owen was likely for this [Engagement](#) (to be distinguished from that of 1647) which sought express allegiance to Cromwell's government contra the old royal regime.

<sup>138</sup> [Love](#) (1618-1651) was a presbyterian minister who plotted to restore Charles II to the English throne. He was executed by the government aligned with Cromwell (who was an Independent, like Owen, as far as Church government).

To your minor: It is a gross mistake to say that going to the liturgy makes the refusers "the only blamable cause of their own sufferings." What! are you one that acquit all their prosecutors if it be but proved that the refusers are mistaken? Who could have suspected this? What if presbyterians, Anabaptists and such others err (as you believe they do)? If any would therefore silence, imprison, banish or hang them, dare you justify it and say that the dissenters are the only blamable cause of their own sufferings? Sure you consider not what you wrote: You thought not so.

2. But are there no saints that go to Common-Prayer? Why do not you distinguish saints? I hope there are many times more saints (and wiser) that separate not [from Common-Prayer] than that do so: And are not you as faulty for saying they sin, as they for saying, "You sin," if their cause be true? This sounds as too much of a sect.

3. The truth is, repentance is so hard a work that I see both extremes fly from it on a proud pretense of constancy and that they may not confess that they have erred. It was the grand argument that bore down me and others when we pleaded with some bishops to have prevented our divisions by some alterations, "Oh then it will be thought that we erred and gave cause for old complaints." And now we must none of us hold communion with the parish-churches lest some saints that separate should be rendered false witnesses of God and blamable. But were not the old nonconformists and conformists as real saints as the old Separatists, and a thousand for one? And do not you now make them all as false witnesses?

If really you have fathered any love-killing, dividing error on God, repent of it and do not justify it for fear of being thought blamable. This is it that keeps England in confusion and threatens worse: Neither of the extremes that have caused our calamities are humbled, nor can endure a motion to repent; but overturners justify their former and their present love-destroying ways. The Lord give England repentance unto life: and the Lord help me to see all my errors and to repent the more because I see that proud nature is so much against it.

And you mistake if you think that we plead only liberty for this communion. It is duty that we plead: but not duty to all persons, nor all times, as if the case of all were the same.

We have not the happiness of innocency: repentance is next to it. When we confess our sins we vindicate Christ and religion, which are against them. When we justify them, we falsely honor ourselves and lay all on Christ, as if he would justify that which He abhors and died for. God will yet more shame us if we will shame his cause instead of taking shame to ourselves. Impenitence is more dangerous than any sin which we should repent of. Carnal policy will be angry with me for mentioning the old faults which adversaries sufficiently reproach us with.

(And I must say that God in his time will justify the generality of the sober godly people of England from the false accusation of those malignants and papists who charge them with all the guilt of the sins of a few sectaries got into an army, even the subversion of Church-order and civil power, when it could not be done but by a conquest and oppression of these religious people first, both parliaments, ministers and their flocks; in comparison of whom, the army separatists [whom Owen was sympathetic with] were inconsiderable for number. They [such army separatists] that would destroy thousands of faithful subjects as guilty of that which they opposed, till they were conquered and suffered for opposing, do but show their own iniquity.)

But yet God never taught men that way of policy: repentance, and not impenitence or self-justification, is the way to take off men's reproach. God permits them to do it because we do it not. To confess our own sins is no extenuation of the wickedness of any malignant persecutors or debauched men. What they truly upbraid us with in malice, let us openly lament in serious penitence, and not stand to a sinful dividing principle and cause lest the saints be blamed that have fathered it on God. This learned author has done otherwise himself, and so has the party now opposed.

He and I knew the man who was pastor to the commanders of the army when they pulled down and set up, and again pulled down, till they had turned their armed bulwark into atoms; and when he saw what they had done, said, "I wonder the people do not cast stones at us as we go along the streets." Was not this a blaming of his flock [his own Separatist people]? He knew how oft the addresses of the Separatists to the several suddenly-erected-sovereignties did change their minds and cry *peccavimus* [we sin] by their new addresses for the old: And why may we not blame them that blamed themselves for fathering their mistakes on God

## Argument 8

Owen:

Argument 8: That practice which is accompanied with unavoidable scandal, engaged in only on pretense of liberty, is contrary to the gospel; but such is our joining in the present public worship.

It were endless to reckon up all the scandals which will ensue herein. That which respects our enemies must not be omitted. Will they not think, will they not say that we have only falsely and hypocritically pretended conscience for what we do, when we can on outward considerations comply with that which is required of us? Woe to the world because of such offences: but woe to them also by whom they are given.

Baxter:

§24. To the major of your eighth argument I answer: 1. It is not true when there is far greater scandal by forbearing that practice [of joining in the present public worship], but only when there is less scandal on the other side.<sup>139</sup>

To the minor I answer: It is not true that it is only liberty that is pleaded for the communion in question. It is great duty that is pleaded:

1. The duty of Christian union and concord, and love and peace.
2. The duty of obeying the commands and example of Christ and his apostles.
3. The duty of avoiding the principles of schism and the condemning and false accusing the Church of Christ on earth.
4. The duty of bearing witness against the principle of the sinfulness of communicating with a Church in liturgies, which would make Christ in most ages to be no King, as having no Kingdom or Church on earth.

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<sup>139</sup> Baxter: "Though we think not that men may [morally] command us to destroy our neighbors' souls by scandal, yet when disobedience to a ruler's law is likely to do more hurt than the scandal taken at it comes to, we are for avoiding the greater hurt." *The English Nonconformity as under King Charles II & King James II Truly Stated & Argued* (London, 1689), [ch. 2](#), p. 14.

5. The duty of taking warning by the mischiefs of causeless Separation in ages that have so much smarted by it.
6. The duty of seeking our own edification.
7. The duty of keeping thousands of Christians from ceasing all public worship where they can have no other but in the parish-churches.
- 8 The duty of keeping thousands of good people from being ruined for mistakes and evil doing.
9. The duty of obeying magistrates in lawful things.
10. And the duty of avoiding scandal on the other side.

Is all this nothing but “pretense of liberty”?

As to the scandal mentioned by you, no doubt adversaries will reproach you whether you communicate in the parish-churches or not. But note: 1. That if any be guilty of such sin as for outward considerations to do any evil or any good which they take to be evil, these men deserve some reproach. But:

1. If they before were in circumstances which made it no duty, and after by God's providence are in circumstances which make it a duty, the reproachers do but show their ignorance or malice, whether they be persecutors or Separatists that so reproach them.
2. Or if men see the error of their former Separation, they must not forbear repentance and amendment for fear of reproach.

There is so great a difference of men and cases that it's gross sottishness to think that their duties and sins are the same in mutable circumstances:

It's a sin to preach or pray when we should be quenching a fire, saving men's lives. Christians, as well as Pharisees, are yet to learn what that means, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice, and therefore accuse the guiltless.” [[Mt. 12:7](#)]

Some men have no possibility of any other church-worship but in the parish-churches. Some have no other possibility but what is worse. Some may have abler teachers, but at the cost of imprisonment and ruin. It is not lawful to lie in

prison merely for refusing to hear a weak nonconformist when you might hear an abler: and so it is in the case of conformists, else all were bound to a few men.

Some have liberty to hear fitter men, or at the least, more agreeable to them, without greater hurt than good (as the Dutch and French here have). Some are commanded by husbands, parents and masters to one church, and some to another. Some have more able and godly ministers in the parish-churches, and some have such as I would never own or encourage in the ministry by seeming to own them.

Some can remove their dwelling and some cannot. Some had liberty the last year that cannot have it this year without more hurt than their benefit will compensate.

In these cases where God has not at all tied us to a [Service-]book, or no book, to this church or to that, he that can truly tell which way he shall do and get most good or hurt, may by that better know his duty than by these arguments or men's censures.

But verily, my chief reason for communion in public is the very same which you bring against it: even the avoiding of heinous scandal. I have told the world:

1. That scandal is not displeasing men, but laying before them a temptation to sin.<sup>140</sup>
2. That if the Separatists be the best Christians, they are farthest out of the danger of scandal. It is the worst that are easiliest tempted to sin, and so whom we should be most fearful to scandalize.
3. And it's a greater sin to scandalize many than few.
4. And it's worse by scandal to tempt men to the mortal sins<sup>141</sup> of persecuting or scorning godly men than merely to tempt them to some small mistakes or to grieve them.

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<sup>140</sup> See 'Simply Displeasing People is Not Scandal' at 'On Scandal & Offenses' (RBO).

<sup>141</sup> Protestants commonly appropriated the mortal and venial sin distinction from Romanism, in protestant senses; see 'On the Classifications & Degrees of Sin, & the Distinction Between Venial & Mortal Sin' (RBO). Baxter is here using "mortal sins", as other reformed divines did, with regard to either greatly hurting and hardening one's conscience, or in respect to the sin against the Holy Spirit, which they often

5. And to scandalize our rulers is worse than to scandalize inferiors (other things being equal).

And now I tell you, I the rather join in public worship:

1. Lest I should harden thousands in the opinion that we take that to be unlawful which is not, and that we are for sinful Separation, and that we separate from and unchurch almost all Christ's Church, and that we are enemies to order and peace and concord, and that we are unruly enemies to government and giddy, ignorant, self-conceited people.

2. And so, lest we breed throughout the land such a contempt of conscience in God's service, as they have of Quakers, and thousands by this should be alienated from the reverence of serious religion, and youth should be educated to the like contempt under these temptations.

3. And lest if any in Church-matters be guilty of sinful extremes on the other side (in oaths, professions, ceremonies or practices), we should harden them therein, by tempting them to think that we have no worse against their way than the use of a liturgy.

4. Lest the conceit that we are but a company of giddy fanatics encourage any contentious preachers to render us odious and rail at us in the pulpits to their own shame and the widening of our breaches.

5. And lest the same error should tempt any bishops or magistrates to think they do God and their Church and country service, in silencing, imprisoning, reproaching and ruining God's faithful servants without cause and bring the land under God's wrath by persecution. Are these no scandals? or not greater than offending or displeasing the dissenting separators? to say nothing of occasioning our reproach in all the foreign Churches which have a liturgy.<sup>142</sup>

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interpreted as involving knowingly persecuting Christian righteousness and the kingdom of Christ; see '[Of the Sin Against the Holy Spirit](#)' (RBO).

<sup>142</sup> The German Lutheran theologian, George Calixt: "LXXXV... Nor does there appear to be much hope of bending the Puritans, as they are called in England, a turbulent and seditious race of men, to moderation and mutual tolerance. Their spirits are too lofty to concede anything to others besides themselves; they are more eager for novelty than for antiquity, and more prone to wild behavior than to

If against all this, the displeasing of your mistaken flocks should prevail, then their weakness and error would constitute them our chief governors.

## Argument 9

Owen:

Argument 9: That worship which is unsuited to the spiritual relish of the new creature, which is inconsistent with the conduct of the Spirit of God in prayer, is unlawful: For the nature, use and benefit of prayer is overthrown hereby in a great measure. Now let anyone consider what are the promises, aids of the Holy Spirit, with respect to the prayers of the Church, whether as to the matter of them or as unto ability for their performance, or as unto the manner of it, and he shall find that they are all rejected and excluded by this form of worship, as is pretended comprising the whole matter, limiting the whole manner and giving all the abilities of prayer that are needful or required: This has been proved at large.

Baxter:

§25. To your ninth argument I answer:

1. O! confine not the new creature to those of your opinion. Do you think none of the old nonconformists or conformists, none of the reformed Churches and no Church on earth for a thousand years had any of the new creature? When you have affrighted people with telling them it is heinous sin and a returning to Babylon, and also by long disuse made a liturgy uncouth to them, do not ascribe all their averseness to the new creature which is from prejudice and disuse. For my part, when God taught me first to pray, I had no averseness to a form. When I heard it charged with sin, I began to be averse to it. When I had studied the

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seeking tranquility." *Judgment on Theological Controversies agitated between the Lutherans & Reformed, and on the mutual brotherhood and tolerance of parties because of consensus in the fundamentals*, tr. by AI by WesternCatholike (1650; Leiden, 1652), p. 35.

case I was cured of that averseness, but never reconciled to the forbidding of all other prayer, nor to the faults of any forms.

And who knows not that man's culpable nature loves novelties and are hardly kept in lively affections under anything that is very often said? A book or sermon, though never so good, affects us not so much after many times reading and hearing as at the first. We must not lay this weakness on the new creature, though it should teach imposers to suit the remedy to the disease and give children such food as is not too displeasing to their appetites.

And yet I find not that the generality of appetites even in your flocks is against the forms of psalms, being not prejudiced against them.

It is not true that liturgies are inconsistent with the conduct of the Spirit in prayer. It is a mistake also that this form of worship rejects and excludes the matter of prayer, whenas the visible book tells all the contrary. Do all those words express none of the matter of prayer? It is untrue that it rejects and excludes the manner, as to the chief part: For the Lord's Prayer is a perfect form for matter, order and method: and the psalms read and sung are for matter and manner neither evil nor excluded. And sure there is much of the rest laudable. If all matter and manner be rejected and excluded, then the martyrs that used it and all the Churches on earth almost have no Church-prayers. But again I tell the use of forms and the forbidding all other prayers are two different things which you ill confound.

## Argument 10

Owen:

Argument 10: That which overthrows and dissolves our church-covenant,<sup>143</sup> as unto the principal end of it, is as to us unlawful. This end is the professed joint subjection

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<sup>143</sup> See [footnote 84](#) above.

of our souls and consciences unto the authority of Christ, in the observation of whatever He commands, and nothing else, in the worship of God.

But by this practice, this end of the church-covenant is destroyed, and thereby the church-covenant itself broken: For we do and observe that which Christ has not commanded: And while some stand unto the terms of the covenant, which others relinquish, it will fill the Church with confusion and disorder.

Baxter:

§ 26. To your tenth argument I answer:

1. What your church-covenant is I know not, but if it profess subjection to nothing in worship but what Christ commands, it is your church-error: For then you are in covenant not to obey the pastor (even yourself), if he set a psalm, a tune, a translation of Scripture, nor if he appoint time, place and utensils for worship: For these are in the worship. Then you are covenanted to disobey the magistrate if he command any of these, or command men not to put on their hats<sup>144</sup> or sit at prayer, or for concord tie all the land to one translation of Scripture or any such undetermined mode.

2. It is a greater disgrace to your churches than ever I knew of before, not only to covenant against God's Word, [Heb. 13:7, 17](#); [1 Thess. 5:12-13](#), etc. and against the Fifth Commandment, but also to make this necessary to concord that your churches must break if the members agree not all herein. This is a plain demand of conformity to a human, unsound imposition. No wonder if they are dividers who set up by church-covenants false terms of unity.

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<sup>144</sup> The main Anglican tradition was for men to take off their hats when entering the church building, and consequently for the whole worship service, in contrast to the puritans. See [footnote 68](#) above.

## Argument 11

Owen:

Argument 11: That which contains a virtual renunciation of our church-state, and of the lawfulness of our ministry and ordinances therein, is not to be admitted or allowed.

But this also is done in the practice inquired into: for it is a professed conjunction with them in Church-communion and worship by whom our church-state and ordinances are condemned as null: And this judgment they make of what we do, affirming that we are gross dissemblers, if after such a conjunction with them, we return anymore unto our own assemblies. In this condemnation we do outwardly and visibly join.

Baxter:

§27. If your church-state be essentiated [defined as essential] by a covenant, to be subject to nothing else in worship (even the accidents which God bids men determine by his general rules of edification, order, decency, love, peace, church-custom, etc.), then I commend the generality of nonconforming ministers that they set up no such church-state: And they do well to renounce all that you do ill to invent and impose while you talk against imposition and adding to God's Word such human forms.

But yet it's an error to hold that if any unjustly condemn other churches, it is a renunciation of that condemned church-state to have communion with them that condemn. Who would have thought the two separating extremes had so agreed in their principles? This is just the very core of the evil of the book of the contrary party which I here answer. Alas! how few Churches on earth have not peevishly condemned one another: it may be for Easter-day, for the choice of a bishop, as the Donatists (striving whose bishop was the right one): The case of the [early Church groups, the] Novatians, Audians, Luciferians and even of most in East and West are sad instances: And will such censoriousness unChurch them and forbid us communion with them? This is plain revenge and to curse them that curse us and

abuse them that abuse us. I like Calvin 's spirit better than this, who said, "Though Luther should call me a devil, I would call him the excellent servant of God."<sup>145</sup> Too many Lutherans now renounce communion with the Calvinists, who yet renounce not communion with them.<sup>146</sup>

## Argument 12

Owen:

12<sup>th</sup> Argument: That which deprives us of the principal plea for the justification of our Separation from the Church of England in its present state ought not justly to be received or admitted.<sup>147</sup> But this is certainly done by a supposition of the lawfulness of this worship and a practice suitable thereunto, as is known to all who are exercised in this cause.

Many other heads of arguments might be added to the same purpose if there were occasion.

Baxter:

§28. To your 12<sup>th</sup> argument I answer:

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<sup>145</sup> John Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1900), letter 122, to Bullinger (1544), p. 433.

<sup>146</sup> At 'On Lutheranism' (RBO) see 'On Lutheran Worship & Attending it', 'On Marriages with Lutherans', 'A Christian (Reformed or Otherwise), with Right Knowledge, may Partake of a Lutheran Lord's Supper' and 'Lutherans may be Admitted to the Lord's Supper'.

<sup>147</sup> This argument makes it appear that for Owen separation from the Church of England in her then circumstances was primary and preconceived, and the supposition of the unlawfulness of her worship, or at all attending it, was secondary and perhaps even determined by supporting this preconceived end. That is, separation was not a consequence of the unlawful worship, but the worship being thought unlawful and to be separated from was a consequence of Owen's greater priority of Separation from the then Church of England.

1. That which discovers the unsoundness of anyone's plea for Separation is to be received. There are several cases in which separation from the Church of England is sinful, as:

1. If any separate as the Papists do, because they are against sound doctrine or any good that is in the Church.
2. If any renounce communion with all the parish-churches under the name of the Church of England.
3. If any renounce communion with the Church of England as it is a Christian kingdom, headed by one Christian protestant king.
4. If they renounce communion with the Church of England as it is called one from the association or concord of its pastors or Church governors.
5. If any renounce communion with faulty bishops or worship, or discipline, simply and absolutely, and not only *secundum quid* [according to what; that is in a qualified manner], and so forsake the good that is in them for the sake of the evil.

In a word, 1. all that separate for a wrong cause, 2. or further than they separate from Christ, or than Christ would have them separate, do sin.

2. But they that renounce any corruption as such, and the Church no further than *secundum quid*, as it is faulty, do well: For we must so renounce the faults of all Churches and Christians in the world (and our own first), but not the Churches and Christians for any tolerable faults, so that we commit no sin ourselves, which they impose as the condition of their communion.

## Conclusion

Reader, I displease my own disposition as well as others in the answering of these arguments. But when I had read them, my conscience would not suffer me to see many thousand good people so misguided who have not skill themselves to discern the fallacies, and by silence to betray them.

Let it be noted that it is not all, nor the greatest objections I confess which I here deal with, having done it oft elsewhere; but these twelve militate so much against all the liturgies in the world as well as ours that I durst not pass them by in silence.

1. Some object against the faults, which they supposed to be very great in diverse by-offices, baptizing, confirmation, the Lord's-Supper-impositions, burial circumstances and forms: but these are nothing to the common worship of the Church on the Lord's Days.

2. Some object against the ministers as usurpers, being chosen by [civil] patrons and not consented to by the flocks. But this is nothing against them that are consented to by acceptance, though not by election.<sup>148</sup>

3. Some object the heinousness of the sins of ministers' conformity as being deliberate covenanting to (I am loath to name them), and so the command, "from such turn away" [2 Tim. 3:5], with such "not to eat" [1 Cor. 5:11], and the case of Martial and Basilides in Cyprian, and that of miracle-working Martin [of Tours] (which on another occasion I have mentioned). But these sins were never so surely proved as great as alleged:

1. Every minister cannot be proved guilty of the worst part.

2. And the matter of a sin may be heinous, and yet ignorance take off much of the guilt, as it did of Paul's persecution [1 Tim. 1:13]. An unlawful war in which thousands were murdered and countries ruined is materially one of the greatest sins in the world; and yet woe to the abundance of princes and people if ignorance excuse it not and if we must renounce communion with all countries and persons that are guilty of it.

3. And when whole countries and Churches are in sin which we cannot cure and have no government of, the case of commanded communion much

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<sup>148</sup> Gillespie and Rutherford, amongst other reformed divines, rightly taught that a permissive, implicit consent in elections, or otherwise, whether temporally concurrent or even possibly *ex post facto*, seals agreements. Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellaneous Questions* (1649), ch. 2, p. 4 in *The Presbyterian's Armoury* (Edinburgh: Ogle, 1846), vol. 2; *An Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland...* (Edinburgh: Bryson, 1641), pt. 2, ch. 1, p. 120; Rutherford, *Lex Rex*, pp. 2-3, 35, 37, 47, 188; *The Due Right of Presbyteries...* (London, 1644), pt. 1, ch. 8, p. 207; pt. 2, ch. 5, p. 272; *A Survey of the Survey of that Sum of Church Discipline Penned by Mr. Thomas Hooker...* (London, 1658), bk. 2, ch. 9, pp. 257, 259; bk. 3, ch. 3, p. 307.

differs from that which is with single offenders, and that which is in our power to choose or refuse.

4. Some object that the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth canons have excommunicated us already. Therefore we separate not, but they cast us out. Answer: Let them that are concerned in those canons defend them if they can and justify themselves, for it's past my skill; but we are not bound (though excommunicated) to execute them on ourselves: Let others do it if it must be done.

The End