

A
VINDICATION
OF
CHRISTMAS-DAY;
OR THE
SOLEMNITY
Of the Nativity of
CHRIST:

Shewing the grounds upon which the Observati-
on of that and other Festivalls is justified
in the Church.

With a short Answer to certain Quarries propounded
by divers, in opposition to the aforesaid
practise of the Church.

By Thomas Warmstry, D. D.

Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,
Luke 1.11.

Let us follow after things that make for peace, and things where-
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Printed in the year 1659.

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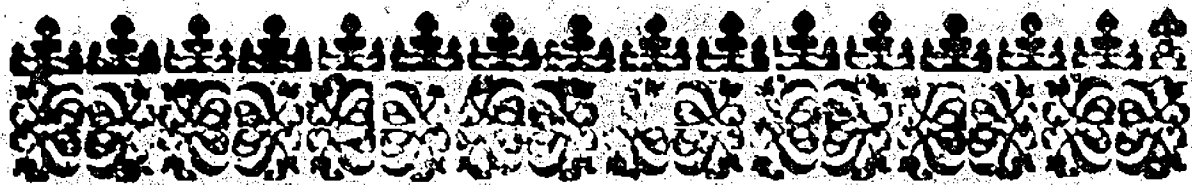
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Witt. Boothby



The Vindication of the solemnity of the Nativity of Christ, &c.



Before I come to answer these Querries, that I may make way for the clearing of mens judgements, I shall briefly lay downe the grounds upon which the observation of this, and other Festivalls is justified in the Church; which are these.

First, It is a thing not onely lawfull, but justly due unto God, that he should be praised publickly and solemnely for this, and other such like great blessings as he hath bestowed upon the Church by Christ, and that to this end the memory of them should be preserved in the Church.

Secondly, That for these ends, the Observation of a yearly day of memoriall is a meanes conducible in it selfe, and approved by God in Scripture, who made use thereof among the ancient people to summon, and stirre them up thereby to the praise of God for those great blessings and deliverances which were bestowed upon them.

Thirdly, That the appoyntment of such dayes being conducive to those ends before named, which are Scripture ends, hath so far its ground in the word of God.

Fourthly, That the Church hath a power from God to promote those ends which are commanded in his word, by all kinde of meanes which are not contrary thereto, and such a meanes is this appointment of dayes, which hath been with approbation practised by the Church, even in the time of the Jewish Bondage, in the designation and ordaining of Festivalls yearly to be ob-

erved, which were not enjoined by any expresse command of God, as is cleerely to be seene in the institution of the Feast of Purim, *Ester. 9. 17. &c.* and of the Feast of Dedication, *Matth. 4. 59.* honoured and confirmed by the presence of our Saviour, *John 10. 2. 23.*

Fifthly, That this power in the Church is, though unobservedly, yet in cleare consequence, is confirmed by divers arguments from the allowance and practise of Adversaries themselves.

As first, looke what power private Ministers challenge, that they must much more allow the Church: But they challenge a power to appoynt times for publick worship, which are not expressly commanded by God as upon Lecture dayes: *Ego,* And there can be no reason why they should have more power to appoynt an houre or more in a day, then the Church a day or more in a year.

Secondly, There is as good reason that the Church should appoynt dayes of feasting, which are not commanded by God, as dayes of fasting, which are not commanded by God; since the end of the former is as exceptable to God, and more excellent then the latter, and hath no plea against it, that lyes not equally against the latter.

Thirdly, That there is much more reason that the Church should appoynt sollemne dayes for praising God for Christ, and for spirituall blessings, then for temporall ones: But the latter is allowed and practised by the Parliament, as may appeare by the late Ordinance for the observation of the fifth of *November*, in memoriall of the deliverance of that very State, Church, and Religion from an outward destruction, which themselves now persecute; by the Army, in appoynting dayes of Thanksgiving for their bloody Victories over their enemies, in an insidious way: Therefore the former, viz. the appoyntment of sollemne dayes for greater and spirituall blessings, cannot reasonably be condemned by them.

Sixthly, This appoyntment of dayes to the purposes aforesayd, is not onely harmelesse, as not lying in opposition to any Law of God, but of excellent use and benefit to Gods people. 1. To preserve and recall the memory of these great blessings. 2. To stir up the people to the duties of praise.

3. To call upon the Ministers in their severall charges to study, and handle these great, and necessary parts of Christian knowledge. 4. To give so many opportunities for the assembling of the people to holy duties. 5. For the rendering of those great and mytticall blessings familiar unto the people, thereby that being fulfilled in this sense, that the Psalmist speaketh in the 9. *Psal One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another; there is neither speech nor language, yet their speeches are heard among them.* Thus it comes to passe that the Calender of the Church, & the Cycle of the Festivalls presents, is as it were an easie and familiar Catechisme unto the people, and doth instruct them almost whether they will or no in the apprehensions of those high points and comfortable motions of the conception, nativity, Circumcision, Manifestation to the Gentiles, presentation in the Temple, of the death and passion, resurrection, Ascension of Christ into Heaven, and of the sending of the holy Ghost, to bring home the fruit of all; which are as so many parts of the holy Anthem of the Church the Epiphonema, or close of all which is in the Festivall of the Trinity, which is unto all the rest as the *Glorie be to the Father, to the Sonne, and to the holy Ghost &c.* at the close of a Psalm, calling upon us to give honour and praise unto the Trinity for all those incomprehensible blessings and benefits whereby the works of mans redemption is perfected and brought home unto us: This wisdom and piety of the Church is not understood, nor considered by those heavy and haire brain'd people, that waigh things in the corrupt scales of their owne contradictory and antiecclesiasticall spirit; but they that are sober and peaceable discover and admire it, and bless God for it, and do foresee with sad hearts the designs of Satan moving against this Church of ours, by the abolishing of these and other useful Ordinances and customes, to blot out by degrees the memory of the great and inestimable blessings of God in Christ, and to open the doore to prophane and infidelity: to the former benefits may be added, the mercy that doth hereby accrue unto servants, and the profitable relaxation of their labours upon such daies, the incitements that they admitte unto works of charity, neighbourhood, and hospitality; things very pleasing in the sight of God, howsoever disliked by those of this age that place religion in cruelty, Faction, and Sedition

dition; and the nurcery, and supply that is thereby suggested unto the exercise of our spirituall joy, and delight in God, and his goodnesse.

Lastly, The authority of the Church both ancient and modern, both generall, and of this particular Church, comming upon us with all these warrants, and conveniences to serve the ends of God and Scripture, and strengthened by the power of the civill Magistrate, and by the authentickall Lawes of the Kingdome in those Acts of Parliament which have establisht these things, mu't either engage all that are within the verge of the Church, and of this Church and State especially, unto a peaceable and pious obedience thereunto, or else leave the staine of Impiety, Faction, and of a turbulent and disorderly spirit, or else of folly and blindness upon all those that oppose it.

Indeed there is nothing free from temptations; but it is well said of one, as I remember, and may be well considered of others, *that it is not (at least not alwaies) the infirmity, but the excellency of things that maketh them the matter of temptation*: Abuses of things that are good must teach us wisdom and caution, but not set us upon confusion.

And truly there is need of more warines in the observation of these daies then hath been used by many.

1. That superstition be avoided, that we think not one day in it self better or more holy then another, but only so far as they are actually designed or applyed unto the service of God: we must remember that these and other particular times, as places, are but circumstances in the time of the Gospell, the substance is in the worship and service that is given unto God thereupon, not in the observation of this or that particular day, which is in it selfe a matter of liberty, as the Apostle sheweth, *Rom. 14. 5. &c. Col. 2. 16.* And that may be a satisfactory reason why in the new Testament these things are not particular, or expressly enjoined in Scripture, because these are but matters of Order, and of liberty; not of absolute necessity, and therefore left to the moderation of the Church; but then we must remember that the liberty of Christians is first the right and interest of the Body, and then of the Members, who must not urge their particular interest against publique moderations and constitutions in these things; yea, it is a maine liberty that belongs

unto

unto the whole body of the Church, that she hath power to re-
 straine the liberty of private Members by publique authority for
 the publique good; but Superstition must be avoided, as I have
 said; noe humane authority must impose these, or any such like
 things, as substantiall, unalterable, or absolutely necessary to salva-
 tion; but as matters of Order, as holy circumstances, and meanes
 conducive unto higher ends, and so and no otherwise they are to
 be received and obeyed by the people: according to this is that
 of a late learned Father of our Church, *Non putandum plus sancti-
 tatis uni dici posse quam alteri, sed sciendum quod propter ordinem &
 preceptum Ecclesie aliaq; causas supra memoratas uno die magis
 quam alio convenimus, ad hac exercitia sanctitatis.*

And againe, *Non putandum &c.* we are not to thinke that the
 Church of God is tyed by any necessity to the immutable observation of
 these particular Festivall daies: Sed statuendum. *Jaith he, dies hosce*
humana auctoritate constitutos eadem posse tolli & mutari, si utilitas &
necessitas Ecclesie id postulaverit, nam omnes res per quas cur q;: Causas
nascentur per easdem dissolvitur: But it must be so judged, that these daies
which are appointed by humane authority may be abolished, and altered
by the same: where the profit and necessity of the Church doth require it;
for all things are dissolved by the same causes whereby they are establi-
shed: But then this ought to be done upon good and true grounds,
and by a power equall at least to that that hath established them.

Bishop
 Davenant
 upon the
 Colossic.
 2. v. 16.

2. There must be care taken that there be a prudent modera-
 tion used in the number of such daies, that nothing be imposed o-
 ver burdonsome upon the people.

3. That they be rightly employed, not in Superstitious wor-
 shipping of Saints or Angels, as is in use in the Church of Rome,
 nor yet in riot, intemperance, or any other sinfull liberty, as hath
 been the practise of too many amongst us, making little or no o-
 ther use of such times, but to give themselves to idlenesse, loose-
 nesse, and vanity; an evill that hath not onely violated the holi-
 nesse of these Festivals we speak of, but also the Lords day, which
 some have turned into *Sabbatum Vituli aurei*, into the Sabbath of
 the Golden Calf, of which it is said, *Exod. 32.* That The people sate
 downe to eat and drinke, and rose up to play: Others into *Sabbatum*
B. um & Ajinorum, the Sabbath of the Ox and the Ass. depending it
 in eating and drinking, and doing nothing; and too many
 make

make little or no other difference betweene that and other dayes : But onely in putting on such better cloathes , and giving themselves to none , or else worse employment then all the rest of the weeke , as if *bono vestiri & nihil agere*, To be well attired , and to doe nothing were to celebrate the Christian Sabbath.

And indeed it cannot be denyed , but as this hath been the ill lot that too many have cast upon the Lords day , and other Festivalls : So it hath been too too much the share of the Solemnities appoynted for the celebrating the Birth of our Saviour, and the rest of the Festivalls that the Church hath joyed with it , which instead of being made dayes of prayse and thanksgiving to God , and of the exercise of other holy , christian , and charitable duties with that sobriety that becomes Christians , have been made dayes of riot , and gaming , and wantonness , and unlawfull liberty , as if men were to sacrifice to the Devill for these great and incomprehensible mercies of God : A great and intollerable abuse of such blessed opportunities, and such as (although it doth not at all justify men in the abolition of them , but should rather have set them upon the Reformation of these miscarriages , and the restitution of such times unto the first and profitable institution of them, That these evils and corruptions being removed, the divine Solemnities, and Religious Duties might have been returned and advanced still amongst us, to the comfort of the Church , and the honour of the name of God) Yet they may justly provoke God to deprive us of the comfort of these joyfull Celebrities , which wee have so miserably abused to his dishonour, and the hurt of our selves, and of our brethren : But these being the errors of particular men , they do not blemish the constitution of the Church in these things, which intendeth not such times for such evill purposes, but for the service and honour of God, and the edification of his people. And therefore as it must be the care of all good Christians to separate the abuses in practice : So it is their part and duty to yeeld a ready obedience unto so profitable and wholesome a constitution ; and as in other Festivalls , so in this of the Nativity of Christ &c. This being as it were the rising of the Sunne of righteousness upon us with healing in his wings ; and that whereon all the succedent worke of our redemption and salvation doth depend : And therefore as this doth in an eminent and speciall manner challenge

lenge our praises and solemne services and acknowledgments unto God for so great a mercy : So the Authority of the Church in ap-
 poynting a solemne time , for such solemne service doth serve an ho-
 ly and Scripture end, very acceptable to God , and by such a meanes,
 which he himselfe hath approved , and allowed the Church of God
 to make use off , and doth justly require our obedience thereunto,
 which wee cannot withdraw ordinarily , without making a breach in
 that Communion of Saints, which is both our comfort to enjoy, and
 our duty to maintaine,

And these grounds being thus layd , and well understood , I hope
 may satisfie any peaceable minded Christians , and arme them against
 all materiall temptations that your Queries (which you seeme to
 thinke such Giants) can offer against it ; and therefore I might well
 enough perhaps set a period heere unto this present businesse : But
 lest you should thinke your selfe despised, or grow wise in your owne
 conceipt, and for your further correction, and the more full satisfacti-
 on of others , I offer you and them this short answer unto your Que-
 ries ; and if you or any other shall thinke them in any thing wanting
 in that clearenesse which yours , and some other mens apprehensions
 may perhaps require ; I shall by Gods grace be ready if I may be al-
 lowed liberty to doe it : To render all things out of question and to
 resolve all doubts that may rest behinde in a faire, calme, and Christi-
 an disputation, and discussion of the point with you or any other that
 shall in a sober and ingenuous way desire to enter into discourse with
 me thereabout.

In the meane time take this brieft Reply unto your Demands.

To your first Quære.

*Whether such religious customes as are binding to all the Chur-
 ches of Iesus Christ , ought not to have sure footing upon the
 Word of God or Apostolicall practice ?*

Answer , That it is ground enough for the establishment of Cust-
 omes in the Church, and to bind all Churches to the Christian obser-
 vation thereof, so far as is required unto Church Customes , and mat-
 ters of order. &c. That such Customes and Observations being in
 themselves harmelesse , and conducive to these ends which Gods

word prescribeth, are commanded unto us by the Authority of the Church Catholick; and because this Quære is somewhat too wide for the particular drift you aime at; give me leave to take away all doubt, to contract it a little by adding this Corolary: That in such things the Authority of any particular Church is sufficient to binde those that are within the Verge of it. The Examples of the Feast of Purim and of Dedication before mentioned will come in seasonably heere for the confirmation of this.

To your second Quære.

Whether you can substantially prove that Christ was borne on the 25 of December? And what your proofes are?

Answer. That because as wee have layd downe the designation of this or that particular day is a thing in it selfe indifferent (though the day being knowne wherein such mercies were performed may seeme more convenient then another.) The maine thing that wee rest upon being this: That God may be solemnly praised for so great a mercy, and to this end, that that day what ever it be, which is set apart by the Church for that holy purpose be duely observed: Therefore although there is perhaps more to be sayd heerein then you are aware of; yet to make short worke, and that they may be the easilier satisfied, who are not able to examine Antiquities: I answer that it is not at all necessary for us to prove substantially that Christ was borne upon the 25 of *December*; it is sufficient for us that the Authority of the Church hath appoynted that day to performe the duty of praise therefore unto God, neither doe wee so much depend upon that day, but if upon good reason an equall Authority had designed any other, it might be indifferent to us; so that God may have his honour in the solemnization of his great mercies, whether in this moneth, or that moneth. on this day, or that day, is of small concernment. but in poynt of order peace uniformity, and obedience; to dote upon this or that day otherwise were superstitious.

To your third Quære.

Whether the celebration of that day (grant he was borne on it)

can be clearely warranted by you from Scripture ? And what your Scriptures are ?

Answer, It is answered already in the Reply made to the two former, where you have beene shewed, that it is neither necessary to be proved that Christ was borne upon that day, nor yet that there needes any particular Scripture warrant for the observation of such dayes, more then is expressed in the answer to the first, and the grounds that are layd before you, and so much as hath been shewed wee have abundantly for this day. *Viz.* That the Church hath power to appoynt a day for so holy and excellent an end prescribed in Scripture, and warranted unto us by the practice of a Quire of Angells, of *Simcon* and *Anna*, *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, in the Divine Story.

To your fourth Q.æ.e.

Whether you can cleare it by sound consequence from the New Testament, though not set downe there in totidem verbis ?

Answer, That which hath been sayd may suffice, in that the celebration of this day is appoynted by sufficient Authority, for those ends which are commanded in the New Testament, as is the rendring praise to God for so great a blessing of the New Testament, and is a meanes allowed by God for such purpose, and conducive thereunto, as hath been shewed in the grounds.

To the fifth Q.æ.e.

Whether you can doe it by universall tradition ?

Answer, That it is well knowne that the observation of this day hath been very Ancient, and doth appeare to be of universall reception; as if leasure and opportunity would permit; might be manifested more abundantly, but for the present it may suffice to set down that notable testimony of St. *Cyprian*, a very Ancient Father, in his booke *de Nativitate Christi in initio. Adest* (saith he, speaking of this Festiwall of the Nativity of Christ) *Christi multum desiderato &*

*in expectata Nativitas, adeſt Solemnitas inclita, & in preſentia ſal-
vatoris, grates, & laudes, Viſitatori (no per orbem terrarum Sancta
reddis Eccleſia. There is now preſent the much deſired, and long expected
Nativity of Chriſt; now is preſent that famous Solemnity or Feſtival,
and the holy Church throughout all the World doth render thanks and
praiſes to her viſiter in the preſence of our Saviour; and though it be
ſufficient to binde us; that ſo wholeſome cuſtome is enjoyned by
Authenticall Authority in this Church and Nation; yet this and other
teſtimonies that might be brought of the Antiquity and univerſality
thereof, doe much ſtrengthen the obligation that lyes upon us, for the
Religious obſervation thereof.*

To your fixt Queſt.

*Whether (in caſe it can be evidenced by: one of theſe, v'z
plaine Text, ſolid Inference, univerſall Tradition) it be not a
meere humane invention, and ſo Will worſhip? And how you
will one day acquit yourſelves before God, for placing, and crying
up mens Inventions, inſtead of the inſtitutions of Jeſus Chriſt?
And whether it were not ſ. iſhfull dealing with poore ſimple people
to tell them that you have neither of theſe to warrant it?*

I anſwer, it is already avoyded, and needeth no further Reply but
this; firſt, that you have been taught if you can learne that wee have
influence enough to ſatiſſie men that will be content with evidence,
and wiſh you would attempt nothing in the Church, but what you
could pleaſe haſt ſo much for: Secondly, that the obſervation of
theſe particular dayes is not enjoyned by the Church, or uſed by us,
as any ſubſtantiall part of worſhip, but as a circumſtance of worſhip,
and ſo can be no will-worſhip, no more then your appoynting this or
that particular heure for preaching, and prayer upon a Lecture day,
or the appoynting of dayes of thankſgiving for Victories, for tempo-
rall deliverances, or of Publique Faſts by humane Authority (which
as to the designation of the particular times are unqueſtionably of
humane invention) are therefore to be accounted will-worſhip; un-
leſſe you will have the will-worſhip to lye in this; that theſe dayes
wee ſpeake off are appoynted by good and full Authority, and that
Chriſt

Christ is remembered therein; and now I intreate you to consider how you will one day acquit your selfe before God, for slandering and crying downe the wholesome orders and constitutions of the Church, to bring in division, confusion, and prophanation; and whether it were not faithfull dealing with those poore simple people, that you or others have seduced into seditious and factious courses, and murmurings against Government and Order, to tell them that you understood not things your selves, nor have taught them in the wayes of peace and righteousnesse, as you should have done.

To your seaventh Q^uest.

(Since daies and times commanded by God himselfe to be observed under the Law, were, and are unlawfull under the Gospell, Whether daies and times commanded by men, and not by God, under the Gospell, are not lesse lawfull.

Ans. Those daies and times that were commanded by God himselfe to be observed under the Law, were appointed by him for that time, as types and signes of the things of Christ, as Saint *Paul* will instruct you *Coloss.* 2. 16. 17. and in regard of that typicall use, and the Legall necessity thereof are vanished at the coming of Christ, which is the body and substance of those shaddowes; and therefore though they be so far become unlawfull, it will by no meanes infer that therefore those daies and times which are commanded by men with sufficient warrant from God under the Gospell as conducive meanes unto Gospell-ends, and for the solemnizing of the glory of God for Gospell blessings, should be concluded unlawfull, since the aforesaid reason of the abolition of those things of the Law, is no way appliable unto the Festivals, or other wholesome constitutions in the time of the Gospell, which are neither enjoined as types, nor as things necessary to salvation, but as matters of order, and circumstantiall meanes for the promotion of other substantiall duties, not opposing, but asserting and magnifying the great blessings that God hath revealed, and imparted unto us in, and by, the Messias now come. But for your further instruction, I desire you to take notice, that in the Feasts of the Jewes, as there was something Ceremoniall, so there was

was something Morall: that they were of unalterable necessity restrained to such and such particular times, that they were to be celebrated with such and such particular Ceremonies, and were therein types and figures of the things of Christ, and the time of the Gospell, and that by the indispenible obligation of the divine præcept; in these and such like considerations, they were Ceremoniall and temporary, belonging unto that State of the Jewish Church; But if they be considered as they were certaine soleinne and conuerient times set apart for the publique worship of God, and for the more soleinne testification of their thankfullness unto him, for those great blessings and deliverances that they received from him; This was, as a learned Author tells us, *morale, & naturale, & cum ceteris omnibus gentibus commune*, it was *morall* and *naturall*, and *common* with them unto other nations. Now though that which is typicall and ceremoniall be abolished as a shadow by the coming of the substance, yet that which is *morall* and *naturall* remayneth; it is still not only lawfull, but pious for the Jewes to set apart some times to prayse God for their deliverance out of Egypt, and for those other blessings which that Church received from him. and so that the typicall and properly legall use, together with the indispenible necessity of those particular times and ceremonies be cast away, it were no impiety in them, as matters of order, to make use of some or more of the same times which they formerly observed for this morall purpose. Yea we find St Paul Acts 18. 21. and 20. 16. resolving and indeavouring to keepe one of those Jewish feasts at Jerusalem, long after the ascension of Christ and the abolition of the ceremoniall part of the Jewish Law, and to take advantage of that solemnity to glorifie God amongst them. And if all this will not save you from a wonder, I intreat you to consider that the effect of the abolition of the Ceremoniall Law, was the taking away of the legall necessity and the typicall use of them, not the rendering of the matter of those Ceremonies unlawfull; and for your better satisfaction in this point, I refer you to a Treatise of mine lately set forth, called, *The signes of the Church and Common Wealth of England*, pag. 312. 313. &c. where I hope you will find this matter abundantly cleared. And now the foundation of your seventh Quære being thus searched and found to be of so sundy a constitution, we need not trouble our selves any more about the Quære it selfe: but to tell you in the words of a Reverend Divine, *Quicquid nonnulli contrà afferre solent*

pie & prudenter prospectum est ab Antiquis patribus, ut anniversarie in Ecclesia celebrarentur ingentia illa beneficia incarnationis filii Dei, passionis, resurrectionis, ascensionis, missionis Spiritus Sancti, quorum omnium memoriam sollemnitatibus constitutis consecramus, ne volumine temporum ingrata surreperet nobis oblivio, ut loquitur Aug. de Civit. Dei lib. 10. c. 4. Whatsoever some are wont to bring to the contrary, it was piously and prudently provided of the ancient Fathers, That there should be anniversary or yearly celebrations of those great benefits, of the incarnation of the Sonne of God, of his passion, resurrection, ascension, and of the sending of the Holy Ghost; the memorialls of all which, we consecrate by appointed solemnities, lest, as S. Aug. speaketh, by the course of the times an unthankfull forgetfulness thereof should steale upon us. And the same learned Authour will shew you that we are invited heereunto by the obligation of gratitude that we owe unto God, as publique benefits are to be publickly acknowledged, and to be celebrated with publique thanksgiving: which cannot commodiously be done, unlesse they that have the rule of the Church and Common wealth, doe appoint set dayes for the people to come together to that purpose Joel. 2. 15.

That we are encouraged heereunto by the peoples benefit which they may reape heereby in being upon such occasions made acquainted with the chiefe mysteries of salvation, which whether they shalbe instructed in, or no, is a matter of too great concernment. to be left to the discretion of every private Minister; and therefore the Church hath thought fit to call upon them for it by these Festivals. And I pray God the attempts of the abolition of these memorialls, be not the drifts of some secret plot of Sathan, to make way for the stealing of Christianity out of this Nation: if we consider the motions of some other engines of his, together with this in these times, I doubt wee may find but too much cause to suspect it, and cause enough for all good people to desire to prevent it, by being unwilling to part with any the least lawfull meanes, that may serve to keep up the memory and impressions of Christ, and his wonderfull mercies in our hearts.

He will shew you also, as I have done, how this practise is confirmed unto us by the examples of the godly people in the Scripture, who have appointed set and yearly dayes for such purposes, besides those that were commanded expressly and particularly by God himselfe. And I can adde that the same is yet further confirmed unto us, by the judgement and practice of holy men in the Christian Church, not only of the Ancients, but of many famous moderne Protestant Divines.

vines. As *Melancthon, Hemingsus, Scultetus, &c.* all which being put into the same scale with the Authority of the Church of England, and the Law, which hath yet found no Authority equall unto it, to dissolve the Acts thereof in this kinde, will I doubt not weigh downe all the seeming reasons or divinity upon which you have grounded your Quarries.

To your eighth Quære.

Whether the true and genuine Interpretation of Christmas be Christ man? And whether to perswade people 'tis so, be not to abuse and delude them? And whether we may not as well interpret Candlemas Candleman, Michæmas Michæman, or Christmas Christman?

Answer, That this is a question so childish of so vaine importance, and so of no concernement at all to the businesse propounded: That I might be excused if I should say no more, but either to wish you more wisdom and sobriety in the things of God and his Church, or if you know any that is guilty of making so foolish a descant upon that name of *Christmas* as your Quære presents, to leave you to him for a Reply; neither the Church of England nor I are bound to justify the follies of particular men: But least your insinuated quarrell at the name of *Christmas*, should meete with any such weake judgments, as to produce any scruple (premisng this, that these are things that neither the Church of England, nor I conceive any discreet childe thereof will stand upon any further then they serve to make us understand one another, and I wish all quarrels about names were so at an end amongst us) I say yet further, that the interpretation of learned Bishop *Andrews* might have beene better thought on by you, then that fond one you have mentioned, reducing *Christ-mas* to *Christi missa*, and taking *missa* for *missio*; so that it may present the importance of the Feast *Viz.* The sending of Christ into the world, or if this be liable to some exception; yet it cannot be denyed but the word *Masse*. however it hath been corrupted in latter times, is from *missa*, and I believe you may finde that the word *missa* hath been of good use in the Church, and derived from a good and laudable custome
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are bound at all times to rejoyce in the birth of Christ, which is sufficient to condemne the boldnesse of those that forbid men upon any time or day to do it by that rule of the Apostle, *Philipp. 4. 4.* Rejoyce in the Lord alway, and againe I say rejoyce; yet to helpe our infirmities, and to stir up our backwardnesse, and to make for the greater cheerfulness and solemnity of this joy, the Church hath done well and piously to appoint some speciall times to call us together to rejoyce in the great mercies of God, and in that regard it is more especially required of all her Children to do it at such times then at other times, and the fault is the greater to omit it then, in as much as to the neglect of the universall duty is added the sinne of disobedience against the wholesome orders of the Church, and a division therein of our selves from the Body, and a denyall of that concurrence and assistance that wee ought to give in the communion and fellowship of Gods people in those things which are publickly performed for the celebration of the praise and worship of God, and for the advancement of divine comforts in the Congregations. And though it be true that the Lords day is a day wherein they ought to rejoyce, which yet as to the particular day, is but an holy circumstance, and a matter of order, though established by great Authority, notwithstanding it is not (the) day in such a sence, as your parenthesis would perhaps insinuate, as to exclude all other dayes from the businesse of solemne rejoycing in Gods mercies; for how then will the fifth of *November*, and the dayes of Thanksgiving, that have beene of late appoynted, be justified? and therefore your question makes nothing against our conclusion; for though that day be to be observed for a day of joy in God, it doth not forbid others to be so employed.

To the tenth Que. .

Whether Christmas day ought in any respect to be esteemed above another of the weeke dayes? And whether people may notwithstanding offence to God follow their lawfull vocations on that day.

Answer. In it selfe no day is necessarily to be esteemed better then another; for as the Apostle tells us, *he that esteemeth all dayes alike doth it*

it to the Lord. But in the use of it, as a matter of order, and as it is dedicated by a lawfull power in the Church, in a more especiall manner then the rest, in respect of obedience, order, and compliance with those sacred ends for which they are so designed, Christmas day, and other Festivalls of the Church ought to be esteemed above another day: For it is the duty of Christians to comply with one another, and to obey Authority in those things that are profitable and conducive to holy and good purposes: And therefore it will follow, that without necessity, for people to depart from this Rule, and to doe it with contempt of Authority, and to the discouragement and hinderance of such holy ends and duties, by following their ordinary vocations which are lawfull at other times, is a breach of good order, a violation of unity, an hinderance to piety, and the holy Solemnity of such times, as well as to doe it upon a day of Fasting or Humiliation, instituted by humane Authority: and cannot be so done without an offence to God.

To your eleaventh Q^{ue}stion.

Whether you thinke the Parliament and Assembly have erred and played the fooles in condemning and raising out Holy dayes not warranted in the Word? And whether to observe them, be not highly to dislike and flatly to contradict (in point of practice at least) their proceedings in order to a Reformation?

Answer, I doubt not to say that they have erred in divers respects: First, in making unnecessary changes in the Church, which ought not to be done, but upon urgent causes; but doth discover in them that doe it a love unto change, which the wise man condemneth, *Prov. 24. 21.* and is ordinarily of evill consequence to the Church, as wee finde by too lamentable experience; for whilst the people like those that are sick of a Feaver have thought good *mutationibus pro remediis uti*, to take such kinde of changes for medicines, their remedies have proved their greatest diseases; and now wee see how sick they are grown of their Physitians, and how sick the Physitians are of their owne administrations: Secondly, they have erred in going about to abolish so harmelesse and usefull a meanes of the promoting of Gods glory,

and of the edification of the people : Thirdly, in undertaking to dissolve so laudable customes, and so universally and anciently received, and established by full power of the State and Church, either without any Authority thereunto or by a power inferiour unto that, whereby they were constituted : Fourthly, in doing those things without any admission of those that are contrary minded to be heard, or any faire discussion or debate of those differences that are in mens judgements thereabout : and therefore their proceedings therein are, and may be justly disliked and contradicted both by declaration and practice, without lying open to any such charge as you mention of opposing proceedings in order to Reformation, properly so called ; such undertakings with the rest that are like them, being rather in order to a deformation. But whether in this they have playd the fooles, or no, I leave that to you to determine.

To your twelfth *Quæst.*

Whether (since most men and women in England doe blindly and superstitiously beleieve Christ was borne that day) preaching on it, doth not nourish and strengthen them in that beliefe ?

Ans. Although it be admitted to be a matter of some uncertainty whether our Saviour were borne upon that day, or no, yet (it being not materiall unto the lawfulnessse and wholsomnesse of the observation of the solemnity, as hath beene declared) if it bee an error in the people to apprehend so, yet it is an harmelesse one, and without the danger of superstition, which yet Preaching upon that day doeth neither necessarily nourish nor strengthen in them. I shall not deny but there hath beene some difference in Antiquity concerning the very day upon which Christ was borne ; but *Hesperi*an, who was no friend unto the Church in these things, confesseth, That from the most ancient times, it was celebrated on the 25. of *December* ; which hee prooveth out of *Theophylus*, a very ancient Bishop of *Cesarea Palestina*, who lived about the time of *Commodus* and *Severus* the Emperours. The Arguments that are brought against the reception of this day, for the very day of our Saviours Birth, from the imposition of the Taxe of the Romane Emperour, and from the shepherds watching of their
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sheepe by night, are not at all concludent, but of weake importance, to overthrow so ancient and received an opinion in the Church: Though that time might be lesse convenient for people to travell into their owne Countries, as was required in that imposition of *Augustus*, yet it is no strange thing in Magistrates, and those both prudent and pious, to passe through such small and private inconveniences for the obtaining supplies of publike necessities; it would be a very weake argument, if any should heereafter undertake to prove this unhappy Parliament began not in *November*, because that Moneth is usually none of the best seasons to travell from the severall parts of this Kingdome to *London* in. And though sheepe are tender creatures, yet that season is not of the same bitterness in all Climates, and if I mistake not, as tender as they are, they are even in this Northerne and cold Climate folded sometimes without dores in the winter: if the difference about this point be such that no certaine resolution can bee found, it is lawfull for the Church to make choice of such a day for the purpose of this solemnity, as appeares most convenient. And what day more convenient, then that which as it is confessed to have beene most anciently received, so is commended too by the universality of the practise and consent at least of all the Westernne Churches therein? and if God be served and prayesed by us in such holy and solemne manner as is due for so great a mercy, upon that day which the Church hath injoynd, it will be, no doubt, as acceptable to God, as if it were done upon some other day of your choyce, whether it be the very day of Christs birth or no: and I hope you doe thinke it fit, that some day or other may bee imployed in so good a businesse. The onely question then will remaine, whether the Church and Magistrate, or you bee fitter to choose, which is not worth the discussing.

To the thirteenth Quære.

Whether this Feast had not its rise and growth from Christians conformity to the mad Feasts Saturnalia (kept in December to Saturne the Father of Gods) in which there was a Sheafe offered to Ceres Goddesse of Corne; a hymne in her praise called
ἄσθι or ἱερὰ ὄψις. And whether those Christians by name, to cloake

it, did not afterwards call it Yule ; and Christmas (as though it were for Christs honour ?) And whether it be not yet by some (more ancient then truly or knowingly religious) called Yule, and the mad playes (wherewith 'tis celebrated like those Saturnalia) Yule games ? And whether from the offering of that Sheafe to Ceres ; from that song in her praise ; from those gifts the Heathens gave their friends in the Calends of January, ominis gratia. did not arise or spring our blazes ; Christmas Kartles, and New yeares gifts ?

Ans. That the originall and growth of so pious and holy a practise in the Christian Church, should be allowed no other root but a supposed conformity of Christians to the madde feasts of *Saturnalia*, when there are so many better and clearer fountaines to derive this from, in the order that it hath unto Scripture end and duties, to Gospel and Christian performances, and in the warrant that it hath from Scripture examples in like matters, is an argument of some want of charity in those that goe about to infect men with such perswasions. Charity engageth us to judge the best even of the actions of private men, much more of the publike constitutions and observations of the Church ; what ever abuses have beene brought in by wicked and loose men to corrupt and deprave these wholesome ordinances, (which we approve not nor will undertake to justifie) There is no conformity nor compliance at all, betweene the holy ayms and intentions of the Church of God, in the appointment of this or other festivalls, and the franticke, loose, and impious manage of the *Saturnalia* among the Heathens. These are appointed by the Church to bee dayes of piety and sobriety, of prayse unto God for his great mercies, of spirituall joy in his divine comforts and holy delights in our Christian societies, of hospitality and mutuall offices of Christian love one to another, which are the true and proper employments of holy festivalls, commended and warranted unto us by the word of God. If any practises have crept in (as there have too many) to the deprivation of these times, and disappointment of those ends for which they were instituted, by riot and loosenes. or such rude cariages and demeanours which may be too truly sorted with the Heathenish *Saturnalia*, they have been anciently reprov'd, as *Hospinian* will informe you by that which hee hath

hath cited out of that famous Oration of *Gregory Nazianzen* upon the Nativity of Christ : And he will tell you a Story too if you will beleeve it of one *Otherus* and some others to the number of 15. who being reprov'd by *Rupertus* a Priest for prophaning that night of our Lords Nativity, by light and lascivious dancing and singing, and required from him, *ut ab hujusmodi levitate in nocte tam sancta desisterent: That they would desist from such levity in so holy a night*, when they would not yeeld unto this wholesome advice, But persisted in the vaine exercises they were about, upon the prayer of *Rupertus* that they might continue dancing so all the yeare long, They did so continue night and day for the space of a whole yeare : and he cites *Tribemius in chron. Hirsaug.* for the Authour of this Story ; which if it be true doth not at all oppose, but confirme these constitutions of the Church, as the judgements of God sent upon those that are the prophaners of the Lords day, are brought to justifie the observation thereof, it doth indeede disallow the abuses thereof, which as they were anciently condemned, so wee condemne them still, being contrary to the righteous commands of God, so to the wholesome institutions of the Church : I earnestly exhort all Christians carefully to avoyd all such courses and miscarriages, and to sanctifie this and other such like Festivalls unto God in holy and Christian duties as they ought, and the Church enjoynes, lest they answer the contrary dearly unto God, as well for the enormity of their vicious carriages, 'as for the prophanation and scandall that they thereby bring upon these profitable Orders of the Church, and their sacrilegious robbing of God of such times which are consecrated to his Divine Worship, That they may employ them in the service of the Devill : But in the meane time I cannot but wonder at the strange dispensations of these times, wherein for ought appears, there is more strictnes used against the preaching of the word of God, and holy exercises upon these dayes, then against any of the foresayd abuses and miscarriages. Wee have heard of the persecution and imprisonment of Ministers for attempting to preach the Word of God, upon the festivall of Christs Nativity, and of strict and forcible prohibition thereof ; but whether there hath beene halfe so much strictnesse against riot, or lightnesse, or vanity, at such times, let it be considered ; and surely such dealing is no good character
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of a Reformation. They that do so, winnow not with Gods sieve, but the Divels, shaking out the wheat, and retayning the chaffe; they are no good Physicians, that purge out the good and wholesome humours, and leave those that are corrupt and distempred behind, nor is this the way to procure health unto the body. In the name of God if they meane to reforme, as they talke, let them distinguish betweene good and evill, betweene healthfull and profitable institutions, and pernicious and abusive depravations, and let these be removed, and those established: if it doth appeare that the time of this Festivall doth comply with the time of the Heathens *Saturnalia*, This leaves no charge of impiety upon it; for since things are best cured by their contraries: It was both wisdom and piety in the ancient Christians, (whose work it was to convert the Heathens from such as well as other superstitions and miscarriages) To vindicate such times from that service of the Devill, by appoynting them to the more solemne and especiall service of God and to recall people from that practise of wickednesse by calling them unto the practise of true holinesse thereupon. As for that you adde about your *Tule* games, it is not materiall, after that which hath beene sayd, and therefore for brevity sake I passe it over. The Blazes are foolish and vaine, and not countenanced by the Church. Christmasse Kariles if they be such as are fit for the time, and of holy and sober composures, and used with Christian sobriety and piety, they are not unlawfull, and may be profitable, if they be sung with grace in the heart. New yeares gifts, if performed without superstition (and you must have ground ere you may charge them with it) may be harmles provocations to Christian love, and mutuall testimonies thereof to good purpose, and never the worse, because the Heathens have them at the like times. The Heathens use to eat at noone, and to doe wee; if it be harmlesse to joyne with them in houres designed for acts of nature; why not in dayes designed by us for acts of love and mutuall affection; if those dayes and their practice thereupon be tainted with superstition, it will not follow that ours must needs be so, or is it not lawfull for us to employ those dayes well, because they doe ill? But this is no Religious but a Civill matter, and therefore not requisite to stand much upon it; no great matter whether that custome be held up or no, and yet there is no need

in such times as these to discourage and forbid acts of love and mutuall kindenesse. This Age is not sick of any superfluities in this kinde in the generall, and therefore no great neede of physick for such diseases : Trouble not your selfe therefore any more about this matter ; if you dislike New-yeares gifts. I would advise your Parishioners not to trouble your conscience with them , and all will be well.

To your fourteenth Question.

Whether conformity to and retention of Heathenish Customes be commendable in Christians , suitable or agreeable with Gospel Principles , though under pretext of Christs Honour and Worshipp ?

Answer, You seeme to me to be ignorant , and have taken up opinions at too easie a rate ; give me leave therefore to informe you a little : All Customes are not Heathenish that are observed among Heathens ; it is a custome with Heathens to kneele at prayer , yet this is no Heathenish custome ; it is a custome with Heathens to institute publique Fasts , and dayes of Humiliation in times of danger and calamity will you say therefore that Christians are Heathenish , or comply with Heathenish customes in doing the like ? Or if wee may joyne with them in appoynting dayes of fasting , why not as well in appoynting dayes of feasting , as long as wee joyne not with them in superstition about either ? Wee must not deny Christ because the Devils confessed him. It is no good Christianity in the people of this Age to hate their brethren , because the Publicans are friendly unto theirs , *Math. 5. 47.* Wee are not sure bound to prophane all times that the Heathens have superstitiously consecrated. if wee are I doubt you will scarce have halfe an houre in the day or night left you for your devotions : Wee may joyne with Heathens or any in those things , that are good and wholesom. Heathenish customes cannot be good , but many customes of Heathens may : They have learnt, it is probable many practises of Religion from
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the people of God, and have corrupted the Coppies that they have taken from the Originalls, it is not necessary therefore for Gods people to cast away the Originalls which are pure and good. Heathenish customes are such as stand opposite to the doctrine of Christ and the Gospel: The Religious observation of these Festivalls makes for both; to appoynt and observe a day holyly and religiously for the solemne praise of God for Christ, and Gospel mercies, cannot be sayd to be against Christ or the Gospel; since the former is honoured, and the latter preached and published by this meanes: This therefore is no Heathenish custome; take you heed of complying with an Heathenish designe of abolishing the memory of Christ and Christianity from amongst us, it is a danger worthy of a double caution, it is not a pretext of Christs honour, But the truth thereof that justifies these dayes, and is the proper and holy businesse of them; we desire not to march under such colours, but leave them rather to those that under pretext of Religion are busie to overthrow all Religion amongst us: I neede not tell you who they are, but wish you take heed of them.

To your fifteenth Q^uerie.

Whether you are not bound to prove your practice for the conviction and satisfaction of your Brethren, whose duty it is to walke with you in things agreeable to the minde of Christ? And in case you cannot; Whether you ought not to acknowledge your error, lay downe your practice (as others have done theirs) no longer befooling and misleading the people committed to your charge?

Answer, I have sayd thus much for your conviction and satisfaction, and wish it may worke so well with you, that as it is your duty, so it may be your practice to walke with us in things agreeable to the minde of Christ; and therefore I hope wee are sufficiently discharged from any necessity of confessing any error in these

these things ; and that it doth by this time appeare that there is much more neede of reforming yours , and of laying downe your practice as others have done theirs , no longer befooling nor misleading the people committed unto your Charge ; that you may from hence forth teach them the wayes of peace and righteousness.

To your sixteenth Quærie.

Whether in case you returne no Answer to these Quæries , I have not ground sufficient to conclude you utterly unable to give any rationall account of your practice now put upon it ?

Answer, Sir, you have an Answer to your Quæries, and therefore have no ground left you sufficient to conclude us unable to give any rationall account of our practice, which I wish you may receive with a Christian minde, that you and others may reap the fruit thereof : Let your Study be Unity , for that is the way to felicity .

The God of peace and holynesse direct you and us all into the wayes of peace and holynesse , that wee may no longer foster divisions and strife amongst us , to the joy of our adversaries , and the reproach of the Gospel ; but tha following the truth in love, wee may in all things grow up into him, which is the head , even Christ.

Now for all the paines I have taken to answer your Quæries, I shall desire you to answer but one of mine, *viz.*

Whether you think doth savour of most piety and good will unto Christ and his honour , to forbid the preaching of Gods word , and the celebration of the praise of God for his great mercies upon the 25th of December , or upon any other day , or to enioyne it ? Or whether it becomes Christians to prohibit the worke of God at any time ?

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An addition of some testimonies out of Antiquity concerning this Festivall.

Theophaniam hoc nostrum festum nominamus, in quo mundi salutarem concelebramus diem Domini natalem, Basil. in Sermon. de humilitate Christi generatione.

Festum est omnium Festorum maxime venerandum, quod si quis appelleret omnium Festorum Asterion, haud quaquam aberret, Crysostomus in Oratione pro Parlogorio.

Incipit & natus servatoris & Mariae adventum seu apparitionem vocat. Nazianz.

Natalem Domini sicut & pascha, & pentecostem majora secula vocat, Beda. lib. 5. c. 19.

The Antiquity of this Feast is so great, that *Hesychius* confesseth, *Quando & a quo hoc Festum institutum sit certo sciri non potest*: So that for ought he or any can say against it, it may have its institution even from the Apostles themselves.

The same Authour acknowledgeth the mention of it to have been very Ancient in the Church, by *Theophilus* Bishop of *Cæsarea Palæstina*, who lived about the time of *Commodus* and *Severus*.

And he sheweth how afterwards in the time of *Maximinus* this Festivall was glorified by the Martyrdom of divers Christians at *Nicomedia*, who were there burnt together with the Church wherein they were celebrating this holy day, see *Nicephorus, lib. 7. cap. 6.* and wee have good reason to believe these Martyrs were as good Christians as some that would sequester the holynesse of Feasts, Churches, and all other men upon earth, scarcely sparing the Saints in Heaven, that they may arrogate the Title of holynes and saintship onely to themselves.

F I N I S.

