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THE
Indecency and Unlawfulness
OF
Baptizing Children
IN
PRIVATE,

Without Necessity, and with the Publick Form.

Seriously recommended to the Consideration of both
the Clergy and Laity of the Church of *England*.

By *Martin Strong*, M. A. and Vicar of *Yeovill*
in *Somersetshire*.

To which is added, A brief Exhortation to the constant
Receiving of the Lords Supper.

Let all things be done decently, and in Order, 1 Cor. 14. 40.

*Administrari debent Sacramenta Cœlu Ecclesiæ & non alibi; quando
scilicet congregata est tota Ecclesiæ, vel illius pars magna, non Extra
Cœlum Ecclesiæ.* Gul. Bucani Instit. Theol. p. 607.

LONDON, Printed for *Tho. Bennet* at the *Half-Moon* in *St. Paul's*
Church-yard, 1692.

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THE HISTORY OF THE

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TO MY

Honoured Friend and Patron

Sir EDWARD PHELIPPS,
Of MONTACUTE.

Honoured Sir,

I need not make Apologies for *devoting* the ensuing Papers to your *Patronage*; The *trifle* I confess is too mean to be presented to so great a Name, but yet not to have done it, would have been both *Ungrateful* and *Unjust*. For 'twas composed for the benefit of a place, in which I am now happily fixed by your *generous* and *uncorrupted* Charity, and in bestowing of which, you made no other *demands*, beside a promise under my hand of *living* on the *place*, and taking *care* of the *People*. So far were you from making *Merchandise* of Souls, that you esteem'd your right of Patronage only as a *sacred trust*, for which you must give account to Almighty God; And may this pious Example never want its followers. I desire that this *Dedication* may remain as a last-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

ing Monument of my Gratitude, tho I am very sensible it does not *lessen*, but *add* to my obligations; for the prefixing of your Name to this little *Treatise*, will, I doubt not, supply the *want* of a *Character* in its Author, and make it the more acceptable to the World.

May all the Blessings of Heaven attend your Person, your Vertuous Lady, and every member of your Family; May your *Unwearied Assiduity* in serving your Country never want encouragment; May you continually enjoy the *Advantages* of doing good *here* on Earth, and receive a glorious reward for all in a *better World*. These, Sir, shall be the constant Prayers of

Your most Obliged Humble Servant,

M. Strong.

To my Beloved Parishioners
THE
Inhabitants of YEOVILL.

My Dear Neighbours,

THE design of this little Book is purely to reform (if possible) a Bad Custom, which has too long prevailed among you, I mean, The Baptizing of your Children in Private, without Necessity and with the Publick Form; You all know I have already from the Pulpit told you both of the Indecency and Unlawfulness of this Practice, and solemnly protested to you that these were the only reasons that prevailed with me not to comply with it; After all which I could not but hope, that you would have granted the request I then made to you, and not have pressed me any more to do a thing, which I had so evidently proved, to be against both your duty and my own. But to my great concern I have found it otherwise.

In my own Vindication therefore, as well as for your Satisfaction, I have now committed what I formerly Preached, to the Press, with such additions and alterations, as I thought necessary to make it fit for a Publick view: And that I might not be wanting in any part of my duty to you, I have printed these Papers to attend you at your houses; hoping by this means to remove those mistakes and prejudices which some of you may have entertained in this matter, and to convince you fully, that the thing I here argue against, is really an Error: Nor should any thing less than this unhappy necessity, have ever tempted me to appear in Print.

In the management of this Argument, I have endeavoured to be both as Brief and Plain as possible, to set every thing in a clear and convincing light, and to come down to the meanest Understanding; which I desire the Reader in general to remember, and then I need not make Apologies for the Style, which might easily have been of another nature, but I was to consult chiefly the capacities of my own People, and in a mat-

The Epistle to the Reader.

ter of Universal concern, I was willing All might understand me. As for other imperfectians, they may justly be imputed to my multiplicity of business, diversions, and avocations in a large and populous Town; I am conscious enough how many they are, but yet I have this satisfaction, that these papers had (at least as was protested) the Undissembled approbation of a worthy and judicious Friend, a person of a considerable Character and Authority in the Church; for whose particular favours, I cannot but take this occasion of making a publick and grateful acknowledgment.

And now (Neighbours) I have only one thing to desire of you; that in reading this discourse you would consider every thing calmly and impartially, without passion, humour, or prejudice; Read it with that simplicity and indifferency of mind, that becomes humble, teachable and Charitable Christians; Do not Nickname or misconstrue, what is by me well intended. Almighty God, the searcher of hearts, knows that I aim at nothing but your benefit, and Conviction: I have worded every thing after the mildest and most inoffensive manner I was able; If any thing seem closely or severely spoken, 'tis no more than what I thought absolutely necessary for the exposing of the weakness of those objections, which are usually urged in justification of what I here oppose; And after all, if you find that the Arguments here insisted on, are such as cannot be answered, then as you love your own Souls, let me beseech you not wilfully to resist the truth, but be glad and thankful rather, that you are freed from your mistakes.

I have added at the end, a Brief Exhortation to the constant receiving of the Lord's Supper, which is a duty too much neglected amongst you, as well as in other places. In return for all which I desire nothing but your Prayers, as you ever have mine. And God Almighty follow you all with his Blessings, and give you hearts willing both to learn and obey the truth.

Your Sincere Friend and Servant,

A. Strong.

The Indecency and Unlawfulness of Baptizing Children in Private, without Necessity, and with the Publick Form, &c.

TIS a strange prevailing power that *Custom* has upon the minds of all mankind; The very *Custom* and *Commonness* of dying, seems to have taken off the thoughts of death from the World; *Manna* itself was slighted when 'twas rained down every day; And that most sacred and venerable rite of Christianity, the blessed *Sacrament* itself, by being *daily* administred in the Primitive Church, in a little time began to be despis'd: And be the thing never so apparently *vicious*, or evidently *unlawful*, yet such is the bewitching force of an habitual *Customary* Practice, that it hinders men from perceiving it, and begets such inveterate *prejudices* in their minds, as *darken* the *Reason*, and *corrupt* the *Judgment*, and bear down the force of the strongest *Arguments*, and of the most convincing *Reasons* in the World.

Nothing but *This* could possibly have prevailed with so many members even of our own Communion, to persevere so obstinately in Baptizing their Children in *Private houses*, without any just Necessity, and with the *Publick Form*; a *Custom* confessedly *Indecent*, and undeniably *Unlawful*; That it is so, is the design of this following *Treatise* to evince; and I hope to do it *Unanswerably*, by insisting on these several Arguments.

1. That the Baptizing Children in *Private houses*, is contrary to the nature and design of Christian Baptism.

2. 'Tis contrary to the constant and universal Practice of the Catholick Christian Church in all ages.

3. 'Tis contrary to the express Laws and Rubrick of our own established National Church of *England*.

4. 'Tis contrary to every Ministers solemn Promises and Subscriptions. And

5. 'Tis Absurd, and Irrational. If I can prove beyond denial these several Assertions, I hope it will be granted, that I have sufficiently performed my promised Undertaking, and that I had good reason for refusing to comply with this *Illegal Custom*.

But to prevent all mistakes, it must be remembered, that Exception and Allowance is still to be made for the Case of *irreversible* Necessity, of extreme Sickness, and danger of Death ; at which time the Church admits of *Private Baptism*, and has composed a particular Form for that purpose ; of which I shall say more in its proper place. This being premised, I assert

First, That the Administration of Baptism in Private houses, is contrary to the *Nature* and *Designs* of Baptism ; for Baptism is a great and most solemn part of Gods Publick Worship ; 'Tis that Divine Sacrament by which we are entred and admitted into the Christian Church and Covenant, by which we are made members of that *Holy Catholick Church*, and united to that *Communion of Saints*, and common Society of Christians, which makes one fundamental Article of our Creed. Baptism is also an open and solemn profession of our belief in the Sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose names we are Baptized ; but especially 'tis a Publick declaration of our Faith in *Jesus* the *Mediator*, an open acknowledgment to all the Woorld that we heartily embrace that Gospel and Religion, which Christ reveal'd from his Father to mankind, and which distinguishes us from *Jews*, and *Mahometans*, and all other Religions in the World. For this reason 'twas, that the Font was always placed near the door or entrance into the Church, to signifie to us that 'tis by Baptism we are first entred into the Christian Faith, into the Religion and Church of Christ. Now all this evidently proves, that Baptism is not of a *Private*, but of a *Publick* Nature, and that its ends and designs are *Publick* ; And from hence it as evidently follows, that it ought to be administred *according* to its *Nature*, that is, not *Privately*, but in the *Publick* Assembly and Congregation of Christians.

The force and reason of this Argument is plainly founded upon that Apostolical precept, 1 Cor. 14. 40. *Let all things be done decently, and in order.* If this be Scripture, and the word of God, it certainly obliges us, to perform all the Sacred and *Publick* offices of our Religion, with all that *Decency*, and *Solemnity*, that the *Nature* of the things, and the *Majesty* of God requires. In this sense the most learned *Commentators* understand the words ; Nor can any other interpretation be put upon them, without offering a manifest violence to the design of the Apostle throughout that whole Chapter, which was to correct *abuses* and *indecencies* in the service of God, and to give such standing rules and general directions, as he thought necessary to be observed

Vid. Dr. Pa-
ricks Aqua
Genitalis

See Dr. Sher-
locks Rel. Af-
femb. p. 291.

ἡ ἀρετὴ ἡ
κατασκευασμένη

in Gods Publick worship by all Christian Congregations. This being granted, I now appeal to the sense and reason of all the world, whether it be not more for the *Decency* and *Solemnity* of Christian Baptism, to be administred in the *Church* and House of God, than in a *Private* room of common and ordinary use? The Sacraments of our Religion are certainly the most solemn parts of it; We admit but *two* of these, and Baptism is *one*; And does it not best agree with the solemn Nature of this Sacrament, that it should be Administred in the solemn place of Gods worship? Since Baptism is an *open* profession of our Faith in Christ, how can this be duly performed in *Private*, or any where out of the *Publick* Assemblies of Christians? And since Baptism is designed to enter and admit us into the Church, what place can be so decent for its Administration, as the Church? To this purpose we have Dr. *Burnet* telling us, 'That Baptism being the Admission of a New Member to the Church, 'tis most suitable to the design of Baptism, to do it before the whole Congregation; and withal adds. that the Liberty of baptizing in *Private*, which was at first indulged by the Church, only as a provision for Weakness, is since become a *Mark* of *Vanity*, and a piece of affected *State*. If Baptism be designed to make us members of the Christian Church, I would willingly be satisfied, how this can be *decently* performed out of the Church, and out of the presence of the Church; or can any *other* place be so fit and convenient for so sacred a thing, as the *Place* that is dedicated and devoted to the service of God? These are *plain* Questions I know, but I believe they are *unanswerable*, and I leave them to the Conscience of all Unprejudiced Readers; with this serious and earnest Exhortation, *viz.* That they would not look on Baptism to be a trifling or inconsiderable thing, as if it were only the giving a *Name* to the Child, and no more; but that they would consider it, as a most solemn part of Gods Worship, as that *Divine Sacrament*, by which their Children are dedicated to God, and to the Religion of Christ; The want of which Consideration, I am convinced is the cause, why so many, *otherwise good and well meaning*, Persons, are so regardless, (provided it be done at all) *how* or *where*, in *what place*, or *after what manner* this sacred duty is performed.

I do not say that there is any *Positive* Holiness in one place above another, or that the place alone can sanctify the worship performed in it, without other due Qualifications; but this I do affirm, and all the sober part of Mankind did ever yet grant, that

Hist. Reform
Abridged. Li
2. p. 63.

e Dr. Caves
Primitive Chr.
pap. 6. Part 1.
id Cap. 9.

as there is a *Relative* Holiness in the Lords day, above other days of the Week, so there is at least a *Relative* Holiness in the Church above other places; both as 'tis set apart and consecrated to the service and worship of God, and as Almighty God is more *especially* and *immediately* present in it; Upon this account it was, that the pious and Primitive Christians, always paid such an extraordinary Respect and Veneration to the public places of Gods Worship, both at their first Entrance *into*, and all the while they continued *in* them. And for this reason 'tis, that the Public place of Gods Worship is in Scripture set forth by so many honourable Names and Titles; such as are, the *Temple*, the *Tavernacle*, and the *Sanctuary of the Lord*; the *Habitation of his Holiness*, and the *place where his Honor dwelleth*; the *House of Prayer*, and the *Church of God*; All which things put together, do strongly prove, that there is at least a *Relative* holiness in the Church above other places, and that God is more immediately present there; to hear the Petitions, and to answer the Prayers of his humble Supplicants, and to give a due vertue and efficacy to his blessed Sacraments.

Dr. Sparrow
Bp. of Norwich
in his Rationa-
le on the Com-
Prayer, p. 371.

But lest I should be thought to be *singular* in this opinion, I shall beg leave for the satisfaction of every *unbyas'd* Reader, to transcribe the words of a pious and learned Bishop of this Church; who speaking of the Dedication of Churches and Chappels to Service of God, tells us, ' That our Prayers, and public Services, are most readily accepted in such holy separate places; and he proves it from 2 Chron. 7: 15. *Now mine Eyes shall be open, and mine Ears attent to the Prayer in this place*; which promise of acceptance belongs to any *other* place so dedicated and consecrated to Gods holy Worship and Service, as was *this* house which *Solomon* built; for the reason which God gives of his gracious readiness to hear the Prayer of *that* holy place. is in general *this*, v. 16. *For now have I chosen and sanctified this House, that my Name might be there for ever*; Now, that this house is dedicated and solemnly set apart by religious Rites and Prayers to my Service, *now* I have chosen it for mine. And a little farther he adds, ' By the like reason whatsoever *other* place shall be dedicated to him, shall have the Eyes of God open, and his Ears attentive to the Prayer of it. And God Almighty promises a much, Exod. 20. 24. *In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee; and bless thee*; that is, in all places dedicated to me, and my Service, and so made mine. And a little farther (p. 385.) are these *very remarkable* words. ' The Church is the

A quatenus ad
vime valet con-
sequentia.

‘ most convenient place for the service of God, and adds much
 ‘ to the beauty of holiness ; And he that should neglect that de-
 ‘ cency, and *despising the Church*, should offer up the *Publick Wor-*
 ‘ ship (of which we have already proved Baptism to be a most
 ‘ solemn part) in *Private*, He would by so doing, sin against
 ‘ that law of God, that says, *Cursed be he that having a better Lamb*
 ‘ *in his flock, offers up to God a worse*, Mal. i. 14. For God Al-
 ‘ mighty must be served with the *best* we have, otherwise we
 ‘ *despise him* ; He that *can* have a *Church*, and will offer up the
 ‘ holy Service in a *worse place*, Let him fear that Curse.

This I think is home to the purpose, and an evident proof of
 my former assertion, from the plainest Texts of Scripture ; and
 if it seem *severely spoken*, let it be remembered that ’tis *substantially*
proved ; and that they are not mine, but a *Reverend Prelates* words
 of this Church, whose name and authority ought to be had in
 veneration by all its members ; And would to God those per-
 sons who contend so earnestly for Baptizing their Children at
 home, without any just necessity, would consider seriously,
 whether This be not very like that sin, of *despising the Church of*
God, which *St. Paul* so severely condemned in the *Corinthians*,
 I *Ep. 11. 22.* and not only making their own houses *equal* to the
 Church, but in this respect *preferring* them before it.

Upon the whole of this first Argument, I think it is undeni-
 ably proved, that Baptism is not of a *Private*, but of a *Publick*
 Nature, and that the Church is the fittest and most decent place
 for the Administration of it ; And therefore, that to administer
 it in *Private* houses, is both contrary to the *Nature* and *Designs* of
 Baptism, and a plain transgression of this precept of *St. Paul*, *Let*
all things be done decently, and in order.

Secondly, To Administer Baptism in *Private* houses, is con-
 trary to the constant practice of the *Catholick Christian*
 Church in all ages ? For the proof of this, I cannot take a bet-
 ter Method, than to give you the words of the judicious and
 learned *Dr. Cave* ; who speaking of the place where Baptism was ^{Pv im.}
anciently administred, tells us, ‘ That ’twas always as near as ^{10. p.}
 ‘ might be to the place of their *Public Assemblies*, and that ’twas ^{pr.}
 ‘ seldom performed without the presence of the Congregation ;
 ‘ and that for very good reasons, both as ’tis a principal act of
 ‘ Religious Worship, and as ’tis the initiating of Persons into
 ‘ the Church, which therefore ought to be as *Public* as possible,
 ‘ that so the whole Congregation might be *Speçtators* and *Wit-*
 ‘ *nesses* of that Profession and Engagement, which the baptized

Person then took upon him; And this the Primitive Christians so zealously kept to, that the *Trullan Council* (*Can. 59.*) allows not Baptism to be administred in a Private Chappel or Oratory, but only in the Public Churches, punishing the Persons offending in this particular with *Deposition* from their Office, if they were Clergy-men, and if Laity with *Excommunication*. For this reason they had their Baptisteria or Fonts, built at first in some place near the Church, then in the Church * Porch, till afterward they were placed in the Church itself. This I think is very plain, and I have chose to transcribe the very words of this reverend and learned Person, because of his great Name and Eminency in the Church, especially as a faithful and diligent Inquirer into the *Customs* and *Practice* of *Antiquity*, of which this *Book* called *Primitive Christianity*, is, amongst the rest, *One* illustrious proof.

I was once thinking to add some other Observations of my own relating to this affair, But I *since* find this particular so largely and unanswerably proved by an ingenious Author who has lately writ on this very subject, that, (because I can add nothing new) I think it better to refer the inquisitive Reader thither. The Book is licensed by the *Arch-Bishop*, and dedicated to the *Bishop of London*; Of both whose pious Endeavours to reform this *Unlawful Custom*, the Author gives us an account in his *Epistle Dedicatory*; which I observe for this reason; that the Reader may know, that what I *here* write against has been condemned by the *Metropolitan*, and the whole *Church of England* in general. Whoever reads this little book from the 5th to the 16th page, will find it undeniably proved, that *St. John* and the *Apostles* themselves baptized in Public; That both the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches do the same at this day, and that several of the *Antient Fathers*, and most learned *Writers* of the *Primitive Church*, (whose Names are in the Margin) do all contend for Baptism in Public. He will find it proved that the *Baptizing in Private houses*, has been often condemned and prohibited by whole *Councils* of *Bishops*. And all this abundantly strengthened by the *Testimonies* of several other learned *Writers*, Men of great esteem in their times. After all which I presume we may very justly conclude with the learned *Dr. Sherlock*, 'That the *Primitive Christians* always administred Baptism in *Public* places, and in the presence of the *Congregation*, and never allowed of *Private* Baptism, but in danger of *Death*; And

Arwaker's
Suasive from
Baptizing Chri-
stians in Private,
London 1687.

Arwaker's
Suasive from
Baptizing Chri-
stians in Private,
London 1687.

Justin Martyr, Tertullian,
Athanasius, Greg. Nazianzen,
St. Ambrose, and Chrysostom, St. Cyril.

Concilium
Meldenense,
Vernense.
Sander, Hof-
man, Chamier,
Squez, &c.
Assemblys,
294.

‘ that the Custom thus continued in all the following Ages:

Now the force of *this* Argument amounts to this; That in all cases not *positively* determined by the Scripture, The Practice of the Primitive Church, is the surest way for us to understand the Mind of Christ and his Apostles. For we cannot but think, that those who convers’d with the Apostles, and with the Apostolical men of the next ages, are the safest guides for us to be directed by, who live so remote from those times. The Authority of *Antient and Universal Tradition*, has always been esteemed sacred and venerable, and whatever men may think *now*, yet to contradict the concurring Testimony and Practice of the Universal Church, was *heretofore* always thought, one of the greatest Sins and Follies, that a Man could be guilty of. The Fathers themselves do often confute the Heretics of their times from prescription, or the constant Traditionary *Faith and Practice* of the Church. For tho we do not make Tradition to be a *Primary* and Infallible Rule, as the Holy Oracles are; Yet, where the thing is doubtful or disputable, where the Scripture is silent, there certainly the received Practice of the *ancient Universal Church*, is the surest guide for us to follow. There is an Obligation upon us of the present times; to conform, as much as may be, to the *Practice* of the Universal Church, and to avoid *Novelty*, and *Singularity* in all things relating to the Worship of God; And therefore when we have so many plain Testimonies of Antiquity for baptizing in Public, and can find no one Church in the Christian World that ever practised otherwise; when we have so many Ancient Fathers, Councils, and learned Writers, condemning Private Baptism, and pleading for that which is Public, and not any one single Author produced of a contrary persuasion; There is certainly so much respect due to this *Unanimous Consent* of all our *Pious Ancestors*, as proves it, to be very *rude*, *indecent*, and *immodest* for us of the present age, to contradict the general sense of Christianity, to affront and condemn the Holy Catholic Church of Christ, by our contrary Practices, and to think our selves wiser than all the Christians that went before us; who for 1600 years together, have always Baptized in *Public*, and no doubt for good reasons.

Thirdly, The Administration of Baptism in Private houses, without just Necessity, and with the Public Form, is contrary to the Express *Laws* and *Rubrick* of our own National established Church of *England*. This is so plain and undeniable a Truth, that a modest man would think it needless to go about to prove

ir, to any man who has got a Common-prayer book, and is but able to read the Rubrick without *coloured Spectacles*; which is as plain, and exprefs in this particular, as words can make it. For

1st. The very appointing of two distinct Offices, and the calling one of them by the Name of *Public*, and the other by the Name of *Private Baptism*, is a plain demonstration of the mind of the Church in this respect. For to what purpose has the Church compos'd a *distinct* Form of Baptism for cases of sickness and extreme Necessity, if she had ever thought that the Public Form might have been *then* used as well? But let us examine the several Titles of those two Offices; And the first we find is call'd, *The Public Baptism of Infants, to be used in the Church*; Now the very word, *Public*, proves that 'twas never intended to be used *Privately*; And the addition of that Clause, *To be used in the Church*, is an unanswerable Argument, that it ought not to be used in *Private* houses. But let us proceed from the *Title* to the *Rubrick* for *Public Baptism*; And the first thing we meet with is *This*.

' The People are to be admonish'd that 'tis most convenient
' that Baptism should not be administred, but upon Sundays and
' other Holy-days, when the most number of People come to-
' gether. And this our Church requires for two very good rea-
sons, which immediately follow; both which reasons conclude
strongly for *Public*, and against *Private* Baptism. The first is

' That the Congregation there present, may testify the re-
' ceiving of them that be newly baptized, into the number of
' Christs Church. The second is

' That by the Baptism of the Infant in the Church, every
' Person present may be put in mind of his own solemn vow and
' profession made to God in his own Baptism. To this purpose
the learned Dr. Comber tells us, ' That Infants ought to be
' brought to the Church, that there may be many Witnesses of
' this solemn act, and that *others* may be put in mind of their
' Vow, as also because they may be admitted Members of our
' Religious Assemblies in the *proper* place. And he that has a
mind to see farther, how much Public Baptism tends to the Edi-
fication of the Church, Let him read Dr. Sherlocks *Rel. Assemblies*
p. 293. and consider withal, how the Custom of Baptizing in
Private can be reconciled with that Precept of St. Paul 1 Cor. 14.
26. *Let all things be done to Edifying*; that is, in all acts of Pub-

Discourse upon
the whole Com-
mon Prayer. p.
338.

we's or 1000.
1417

lic Worship, let every thing be so performed, as may tend most to the benefit and advantage of others; which is the Paraphrase of a very learned man on the words.

In the third Section or Paragraph of the Rubrick before Public Baptism, 'The Godfathers, and Godmothers, and the People with the Children are required to be ready at the *Font*; Now, I hope, this may pass for a plain Command for the bringing of Children to the Church; for where else is the *Font*? Are there any in *Private* houses? Or how can Children be brought to the *Font*, if they are not first brought to the *Church*, where *alone* the *Font* is placed? But this is not all, the *time* is also specified as well as the *Place*; 'The Children are to be ready at the *Font* immediately after the second Lesson at 'Morning or Evening Prayer, which still farther concludes for its being in the *Church*, where *alone* the *Prayers* and *Lessons* are usually read; And all this is abundantly confirmed by that which follows, *viz.* *And the Priest standing there, at the Font, shall say, &c.* So far I think nothing can be more plain or undeniable. But let us go on to the *Office for Private Baptism of Children in houses*, for so 'tis called.

The very *Name* or *Title* of which, is enough to satisfy any sober man, that this *alone*, and not the *Public Form* is to be used in *Houses*. But the Rubrick is more express.

'There in the 2^d Paragraph, the *Curates* or *Ministers* of every Parish are required often to admonish and warn the People, that without great Cause and Necessity, to be approved by the *Curates* themselves, they procure not their Children to be baptized at home; And in Obedience to this *Command* of the *Church*, I do now desire and beseech you of my Care not to do it; But when need shall compel, then the Rubrick expressly orders, that Baptism be administered on *This Fashion*, namely by that *Form of Private Baptism*, which there follows, and not by the *Publick Form*.

So that, as the *Ancient Church* never did, so neither does the *Present Church of England* allow of any *Private Baptism*, except in danger of death; and in such a case she has provided a *Form* for that purpose, and required the use of that alone. And upon the whole, I think it undeniably follows, that To Baptize Children in *Private*, with the *Publick Form*, and without *just Necessity*, is, (as *Dr. Sherlock* tells us, *Rel. Assemblies* p. 295.) 'a plain transgression of the *Rule*; and therefore such a disorder, as no man should be guilty of, who professes himself a Member of

Dr. Hamm
in locum,
Dr. Bever
his Serm
on this T

our Church ; 'Tis a plain breach of the exprefs *Laws* and *Com-
mands* of our own *Communion*, which was the thing to be
proved.

Now as for this Argument, it equally concerns all in general, who own themselves of the Church of *England*, *Rich* and *Poor*, *Laity*, as well as *Clergy*. For by the 20th Article of our Church, we all profess to believe, 'That the Church has full power to decree and command all such Rites and Ceremonies, as are not contrary to the word of God ; Nor did ever any yet deny this power, but those who were professed Dissenters from us, and against them it has been largely, and unanswerably proved, by many learned Divines of this Church, whose Names I have set in the Margin, if any one please to consult them.

By Dr. Stillingfleet *Unrea-
sonab. of Separation*. Dr. Sher-
lock in his *Vindication of that
Book* ; and in his *Answer to the
Protestant Reconciler*.

By Dr. Goodman in his
Compass. Enquiry.

By Dr. Scot, *Christian Life*,
part 2. Vol. 2. p. 433.

And instead of all by the Ve-
nerable Hooker *Eccl. Polity*,
Lib. 3. and others.

Now then, thus I argue ; if the Church has Power to make *Laws* in things indifferent, and not forbidden by the Scriptures, it hence necessarily follows, that 'tis our absolute duty to obey and submit to those *Laws*, when once they are made: For a *Power to Command*, necessarily infers the *duty of Obedience*, these are *Relative* things, the one of which unavoidably follows from the other ; Nor

can we disobey the *Lawful* Commands of the Church, without disobeying *Heaven* at the same time, and Christ Jesus himself, from whom, as from a Supreme Head, the Church has received this *Legislative* Power ; and how then can it become any true Member of the Church, to be thus wilfully guilty of transgressing its plainest *Laws* ? Or why should any pious and genuine Son of the Church, carry himself thus refractory to his spiritual Mother ? Or can there be any thing more absurd, than to profess to believe, that the Church has Power to make *Laws* in indifferent things, and yet whenever those *Laws* come to be obeyed, to dispute, and deny its Authority ? Especially considering, how pious and primitive a duty this is, and what great reason the Church has to require it. This certainly is not to do things according to Order, that is (as the great Dr. Hammond tells us upon the place) *According to the Order and Direction of the Church*. I know not what low thoughts men may now have of this Disobedience, But I am sure the pious Dr. Sherlock had another sense of things, when he made this a part of his Form of Confession of Sin.

Dr. Rich. Sher-
locks *Practical
Christian*, p. 85

'I have not made Conscience to obey the *Laws* and *Orders* of thy Church, whether *Universal* or *particular*, not acknow-

‘ ledging or submitting to the Authority of Either; and I am
 ‘ justly therefore to be rankt amongst Publicans and Sinners.

‘ My Ghostly Fathers and Pastors, in the several orders of
 ‘ Bishop, Priest and Deacon, I have disbelieved, disrespected,
 ‘ disobeyed, in their Callings, in their Admonitions for my
 ‘ Souls health. I have hated him that reproveth in the Gate, I
 ‘ have hardned my heart, and refused when admonished, to re-
 ‘ turn from the Errour of my ways.

Nor is this a Law of the *Church* only, but of the *Civil State* too,
 The whole Rubrick is confirmed by *Act* of *Parliament*, as well
 as by *Convocation*; and the *Act* of *Uniformity* before our *Com-
 mon Prayer Books*, expressly enjoyns under the severest Penalty, that
*No other Form of Prayer or Administration of the Sacraments be used,
 beside that which is set forth and allowed by that Book.* So that who-
 ever refuses Obedience to those *Laws* of the *Church* concerning
 Baptism, does at the same time disobey a *Law* of the *State* too,
 his *Civil* as well as his *Spiritual* Parents and *Governors*; and if this
 be not a plain Breach of the fifth *Commandment*, Let every
 mans *Conscience* judge.

There is, I foresee, one *fond* pretence, that may possibly be re-
 turn’d to this Argument, and that is the *present Act* of *Toleration*, or
Liberty of Conscience, which may be thought to discharge the *Du-
 ty* of *Obedience* to the *Established* *Laws* of the *Church*. But in
 answer to this vain *Cavil*, I say,

First, That I write not at present to those who are *Dissenters*
 from the *Church*, but to those who profess themselves *Members*
 of our own *Communion*; and what have such to do with the *Tolera-
 tion*? Let the *Act* it self be read, and ’twill appear that the *Tole-
 ration* was intended only for the *Ease* of those few (for I verily
 believe they are not many) who are *sincerely* persuaded in their
Consciences, that ’tis not *Lawful* for them to *obey* the *Orders*,
 or joyn in the *Worship* of the *Established* *Religion*; Now what-
 ever service the *Plea* of a *Toleration* may do such mistaken Per-
 sons, yet certainly it looks very unaccountable in one of our *own
 Communion*, to make this pretence in excuse for *his* *Disobedience*
 to those *Laws*, and to that *Constitution*, to which he himself be-
 longs. I envy no man the *Liberty of Conscience*; My *Charity* is
Universal, I heartily wish well to, and pray for all the *World*;
 But the *Toleration* is for *Dissenters*, not for us; We have still
 (blessed be God) the same *Church*, the same *Public* *Liturgy*, the
 same *Articles*, *Canons*, and *Constitutions* established by the

Law of the Land, by several Acts of Parliament which stand yet unrepealed; And therefore *our Obedience* is still as due to those Laws, as ever; Nor can the *Toleration* with any shew of Modesty or Reason be thought to excuse *us*, so long as we own our selves *Members* of the *Church of England*, as of a *good* and an *Orthodox Communion*. But suppose I were concern'd with a *professed Dissenter*, yet I might justly answer,

2. That all that any *Toleration* in the World *does*, or can do, is to excuse only from the *Penalty*, not at all from the *fault* of Disobedience to the Laws and Orders, of an *Established Lawful Communion*; it gives a *Liberty of Impunity* 'tis true, (whether *justly* or *unjustly* I will not now dispute) but not of *justification*; it takes away the *civil Punishment*, but it can never take away the *Sin* of Non-conformity or Disobedience; my reason for it is this, because *these* are Sins forbidden by the plain Laws of God, which no Laws of Man can alter or dispense with. For every *Orthodox* and *lawfully constituted Church*, has a full power from *Christs own Institution*, to make *Canons* and *Constitutions* for its own Regulation, for the security and preservation of its own Peace and good Order; And this lays a sufficient Obligation on all Christians to obey those Laws, tho there should be no *Civil Authority* to back and enforce them; The *Church*, considered as a *Church*, is a *distinct* body, and has a *distinct* Government inherent in it self, without any regard had to the *State*; And consequently all disobedience to the *Lawful Commands* of the *Church*, is an Evil in it self, *Morally* and *intrinsically* sinful, and therefore can never be altered by any *Humane Dispensation* or *Toleration*. Hence we find the *Primitive Christians* decrying *Schism*, and branding it with the most odious Characters, before there were any *Civil Laws* in *Defence* of *Christianity*; nay when all the *Civil Laws* were *against* it; as well before the Empire became *Christian*, and again in the intervals of *Persecution*, as when *Christianity* was *Established* by a *Law*. So the *Donatists* were accounted *Schismaticks* by the *Primitive Christians*, as well under those *temporal Princes* that *favoured*, as under those who *persecuted* them; *Arianism* was condemned, as well under *Constantinus* and *Valens*, who *countenanced*, as under *Constantine* who *opposed* it; so that tho a *Toleration* do take away *Civil Penalties*, yet the *Laws* of God, and of *Scripture* that require *Unity*, *Communion* and *Compliance* with an established *Orthodox Church*, do stand still uncancel'd; and in as much force as ever. If any one doubt the truth

of this, Let him only read the ingenious Mr *Norris* his *Charge of Schism continued*, and if he can fairly answer what that learned *Author* there urges, in defence of this Assertion, I promise him I will instantly give up the Cause, and become his Profelite.

There is a passage in the learned Dr. *Stillingsfleets* Sermon of the *Mischief of Separation*, so apposite to our present Argument, that I cannot forbear setting it down; 'Tis Page the 45th, in these words; 'Let us who continue in the Communion of our Church, walk by the same Rule and mind the same things; While we keep to one Rule, all People know what it is to be of our Church; if men set up their own Fancies above the Rule, they charge it with Imperfection; if they do not obey the Rule, they make themselves wiser than those that made it; It hath not been the Doctrine or Rules of our Church, which have ever given advantage to the Enemies of it, but the Indiscretion of some, in going beyond them, and the Inconstancy of others, in not holding to them. This being the Judgment and Opinion of so great a man, and of so pacifick a Temper, deserves a serious Consideration, by all who wish well to the Church of England.

4. The Baptizing Children in *Private*, by the *Public* Form, is contrary to every Ministers solemn Promises and Subscriptions; For by the 36th Canon of our Church, Every Minister is required, both at his receiving of Orders, and at his Admission to any *Benefice* or *Living*, to make this Promise, and to subscribe it with his own hand, in these very words, viz. *That he himself will use the Form prescribed in the book of Common Prayer, both in Public Prayer, and in the Administration of the Sacraments, and none other.* And now I appeal to the sense of all the world, whether that Minister who uses that Form of *Public* Baptism in *Private* Houses, which is prescribed to be used in the Church, does not break this Promise; And whether he who does not in *Private* houses, use the Form Prescribed for that purpose, does not do the same? Does such a Man use the Form prescribed, by the *Book of Common Prayer, and none other*, as he promised, and subscribed? Perhaps it will be said, that he uses the same words, tho in a different Place; But still I answer, That this is not the Form prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer*; The Form prescribed is perfectly of Another Nature; The Church has composed two Forms for Baptism of Infants; the one for the Church, the other for *Private* houses; the one for ordinary and common cases, the other for the extraordinary cases of sickness, and necessity; Now he that

confounds these two Offices, which the Church has made distinct and wholly omitting that Form which is designed for Private, Uses that in Private, which is commanded to be used in Public, that Person does not use the Form prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer, and none other, but perfectly another, than what is commanded. If any one in the World can deny this assertion, or without Tricks and Fallacies fairly justify this Practice from Breach of Promise, I will never more trust my discursive Faculty so long as I live; can any thing be more indisputably clear? If to doubt in this case, be not to seek Knots in a Bulrush, I know not what is.

This Argument very nearly concerns us of the Clergy, and we should all do well seriously to consider it; and the rather, because our own undue Compliances in this respect, are made use of by the Laity, as the greatest Argument for the Continuance of this Unlawful Practice. But if the most solemn Promises, and repeated Subscriptions signify any thing, we are all certainly bound to do our utmost for the reforming of this unhappy Custom; in doing of which there would be far less difficulty than now there is, were we our selves Unanimous in the Attempt, were we All resolved to be just to our own Engagements, and would not undermine each others Endeavours, by our contrary Practices. 'Tis plain, we are not left at Liberty to do as we please in this case; we are bound by Laws, by Promises and Subscriptions; And when the Laity know and consider this, I cannot but hope, that they will think the better, and not the worse of us, for being just to our Rule, and true to our Promises; Nor will they be so unreasonable as to expect our compliance in a thing so manifestly unlawful; Much less conceive any Pet or Prejudice against us, only because we cannot make the plainest Laws of the Church, and our own Promises too, bend and bow to their humors. And since the London Clergies Practice, is most taken notice of in this affair, it would be happy, if they would joyn with us, in this Reformation.

5. The Form of Public Baptism is so composed, that it cannot be used in Private Houses, without manifest Absurdities, which is another demonstration that the Church never intended it should be so used. The forementioned Mr *Armaker* reckons up four several instances of this Nature in the Office of Public Baptism, where he that has a mind may see them (pag. 29.) I shall only mention One at present, and that is in the Preface to the Baptismal Covenant, in these words.— *Dearly beloved, Ye have brought*

brought this Child here to be Baptized. How can this be truly or rationally spoken, when instead of the Childs being brought by the Sureties, the Minister himself comes home to the house, and is brought into the very Chamber were the Child was born? We have already proved that the Church at the beginning of this Office requires the Child to be brought to the Font, and that the Priest standing at the Font shall say—From whence 'tis manifest, that by the word (*Here*) in this place, is meant the Church where alone the Font stands; And how then can the Minister in the very place where the Child was born, say to the Sureties, *Ye have brought this Child here* (viz. to the Font) to be Baptized: Or ought he not rather to alter the words to a quite contrary sense, and say, *Ye have brought me here to baptize this Child*; For this is true, and proper, but the former is evidently false and absurd; and the Absurdity is so plain, that I am verily perswaded, that he that does not perceive it, 'Tis not because He cannot, but because He will not understand it. Now whether it becomes either Minister or People to use such gross Absurdities in so solemn a part of Gods sacred Worship, is a Question, to which I would beg a serious Answer.

There is the same Absurdity in the Office for Churching Women, when 'tis used in Private houses; The very Title proves this Practice to be absurd; It ought to be called Chambering or Houseing of Women, But Churching of them it can never be in any place out of the Church. But not to insist on that, the Rubrick before this Office says, *The Woman shall come into the Church, decently apparalled, and there shall kneel down in some convenient Place, &c.* than which, no command can be more plain; The Rubrick at the End of the Office, directs the Woman, to receive the Holy Communion, if there be any, which still farther argues it to be done in the Church; and the last Verse of the Psalm appointed to be read in this Office, makes the Absurdity undeniable: 'Tis this; *I will pay my Vows now*——*In the Courts of the Lords house*; How can this be said in any Private Chamber? Was ever any Place beside the Church, called the Lords house? Or can any other Place be so called, without a manifest and daring Absurdity? An Absurdity too gross to be offer'd to the great God in return for a Mercy, which deserves not only a Private Acknowledgment, but a most solemn Thanksgiving, in the Public Assembly of Christians; which is both a greater Honour, and more acceptable to God, than any Private returns can be.

See Ep. 5th
row and 1st
Comber on
Office.

And

And now a modest man would think, that after all this, there should be no possible *Objections*, against so *undeniable* a truth; *Dr. Sherlock* tells us (*Rel. Assemb. p. 290.*) ‘*That he could never hear any thing that deserved a serious Answer*: But lest the Pretences should be thought unanswerable, let us hear what they are.

And the first grand Pretence is *Custom*; 'Tis objected to us, that 'tis generally practised in most parts of the Kingdom; and by many great and eminent *Divines* of the City of *London* too, and therefore why may it not be continued? This Objection, tho' it make a great deal of Noise, yet it signifies just nothing, as will be evident to any one, that considers these things.

First, That however prevailing this *Custom* now is, yet 'tis but of very late date, even in this Church; *Dr. Sherlock* tells us (*Rel. Assemb. p. 290*) That this unhappy *Custom*, was begun by as unhappy a Cause; Namely by our late *Civil Wars*, and a tyrannical Usurpation; When our Laws were all subverted, and our Religion ruined; When the Orthodox Clergy were all turned a begging, and their Churches usurped by their Enemies, then 'twas that the Loyal Party, being first banished from the Church, were forced and compelled to Baptize their Children in their own Houses; There was a *Necessity* then of doing it *privately*, or not at all; But this *Necessity* is now removed, our Churches now (thanks be to Almighty God) are at Liberty; And therefore this can be no Argument to excuse us; But it becomes us rather to abhor a Custom brought into the Church by such *Ungodly* means, and to remember that our Forefathers would have been glad, and thankful too, to have enjoyed that Liberty and Privilege of bringing their Children to the Church, which we now despise.

And yet 'tis very observable, that even in those times, when the Common-Prayer Book was abolished, and the Presbyterian *Directory* established in its room, by what was then called an *Ordinance of Parliament*, Anno 1644. Even that very *Directory* expressly decrees, ‘*That Baptism is not to be administred in Private places, or privately, but in the place of Public Worship, and in the Face of the Congregation, as may be seen (p. 19)* And this is the more remarkable because the Compilers of this *Directory* do in their Preface declare, that they composed and agreed upon it, *after earnest and frequent calling upon the Name of God, and after much consultation, not with Flesh and Blood, but with Gods holy word.*

'Tis well known that our Brethren of this Perswasion were always great Enemies to all *Needless* and *Superstitious Ceremonies* in the Worship of God; from whence I infer, that even in *their Opinion*, The Administration of Baptism in the Public place of Gods Worship, is not a *Needless Ceremony*, but a *Necessary Circumstance* to the due and decent Performance of that divine *Sacrament*; What their *Practice now* is, it concerns not me to inquire, 'tis plain *This* is their *Rule*, and *This* their *Judgment*.

Secondly, Tho many eminent Divines, and particularly of *London*, do comply with this *Custom*, yet some others no less eminent refuse to do it. Dr *Sherlock*, and Mr *Arwaker* have both writ expressly against it; And all those who have writ any thing in Defence of the Churches Power to make *Laws* in things indifferent, have in effect done the same; for if the Church has Power to *command, with Submission*, it must be our duty to *obey*.

Thirdly, Tho this had been a *Custom of longer date*, and caused by *better means*, yet what signifies a *bad Custom* against a *known Rule*, and the express *Laws* of the Church? What *Sins*, what *Errors* and *Offences* may not be justified, if *Custom* be allowed as an *Argument* for them? So *Swearing* is a *Custom*, and *Drunkenness* is a *Custom*, and I have known some Persons so impudent, as to urge the *Commonness* of those crying sins in their *Defence*. But is it any lessening of a *Sin*, that a great many are guilty of it? Certainly he who commanded us *not to follow a Multitude to do Evil*, thought otherwise. *Sodom* was destroyed, not the *later* but the *sooner*, for that they were *Universally* wicked. I shall always be glad to follow a *good Example* in *any Person*; but in that which is amiss, the *Greatest Man* in the *World* shall never be the *Pattern* of my imitation; I reverence the *Persons*, and *Writings* too of several *great* and *learned* men, (whose *Practice* we are upbraided with in this *Particular*) as much as any man living; but considering what ill use is made of their *Examples*, I heartily wish, that they would either joyn with us, in reforming this *bad Custom*, or else condescend so far, as to let us know how it may be justified. In short, I think the *Question* in this case, ought to be, whether the *Custom* of Baptizing Children in *Privats*, without *just Necessity*, and by the *Public Form*, be a *decent*, or *indecent*, a *Lawful*, or *Unlawful Custom*? Now that 'tis both *indecent* and *Unlawful* I have undeniably proved in the foregoing *Discourse*; And therefore all that can follow, from its being a *Custom*, is on-

ly this, that the longer it has been continued, the more has been the fault, and the sooner it ought to be amended.

We have seen how this Custom came first to be *introduced*; and 'tis no difficult matter to guess at the causes of its *Continuance*; Some perhaps have complied with it, out of an *immoderate* love to their own Ease, and an Unwillingness to be at the pains and trouble of reforming a bad Custom, tho they knew it to be *illegal*.

Others it may be, have been tempted to it by *Poverty*, which has made them forget the Dignity, and Sacredness of the Ministerial Character, by sacrificing both their Duty and Promises at once to a piece of Gold or Silver, and to be guilty of such *sordid mercenary* Compliances, as to *sell their Birth right*, I mean the Dignity of the Priesthood, for a *Mess of Pottage*. I wish this thing called *Interest*, has not too much prevailed with some, who can pretend no real want of any thing, which makes the crime so much the more unpardonable; tho after all it is to be feared, that whatever is thus *unlawfully* got, is no better than (*Aurum Tholosanum*) *Money put into a Bag with Holes*, and like the Coal which the Eagle stole from the Altar, that consumed both her Nest, and her young to Ashes.

Others perhaps have done it, purely out of an *obliging disposition*, and upon *prudential* Considerations, thinking it the best way to break a bad Custom where they have found it, not *too rashly*, but by *Degrees*; to lay it aside by that means, as decently, with as little noise and disgust, and with as *much* satisfaction to their Neighbors as possible; Hoping by this *Condescension* to win their good Opinion, and in time to bring them by those *mild Methods* to a through Conformity to the *Laws* of the Church, and their *own* Duty; which was no more than the great St. Paul did toward the *Jews*, in laying aside the old *Mosaical Rites* and *Ceremonies*.

This has been *my own* case, and I verily believe the *Case* of a great many of my Brethren; And that the continuance of this Unlawful Custom, is to be imputed, *not* to the *Justice* of the thing it self, but to some *one* or *other* of these causes. I am fully convinced from hence; because even of those Ministers, who *do*, or *have* complied with this Practice, I never could hear any *one* pretend to justify it, but frankly confess, it ought not to be done. And thus I think I have abundantly answered that clamorous Objection from *Custom*, which indeed did not deserve the

the Expence of so much Ink and Paper, as has been thrown away upon it, but some things must be answered, tho not for their *real weight*, yet because of the *Noise* they make in the World; tho at best it is but like the sound of an empty Vessel; *Sonus, & praterea nihil.*

Secondly, I am afraid, Another thing which keeps some Persons from bringing their Children to the Church to be baptized, is *Riches* and *Greatness*; Such Persons look upon it as a piece of *State*, to have their Children baptized at home, and fancy that something more ought to be done for *them*, than for *poorer People*; Now I readily grant that there is a different *civil* respect due to men according to their *various* Degrees and Qualities, and so there is to *Friends* the same, and God forbid but in all *lawful* things, they should have it to the utmost Degrees in which 'tis due; (And that I may not be condemned neither of *Inciivility* nor *Ingratitude*, which I naturally abhor, I here *publickly* profess, that I shall always look upon it, as my great *unhappiness*, that some of those whom I have been forced to deny in this matter, were of this Number). But it must be considered, that in matters of *absolute duty* (such as this is proved to be) all Persons are Equal, and in such cases there ought to be no *respect* of Persons; Rich and Great Persons are no more *above* their duty, than Poor and Mean men are *below* it; If it be a *Duty*, 'tis so to all alike; Even a Heathen *Pericles* could say, when his Friend desired him to ** testify a Lye*; *I am your Friend as far as Honesty and a good Conscience will permit*; And I must take leave to say, that he is not a Friend, that desires more. And a Pagan Poet has taught us, that *Offences* are aggravated by the *Greatness* of the *Offender*; *Riches* and *Greatness* do not *lessen*, but *increase* Mens Obligations to *Duty*; These Blessings are a mighty trust, with which men may do a great deal of good, and for which Almighty God will demand a severer account than Ordinary. And such Persons should consider that their *Examples* are *visible* and *conspicuous*, and have a great *influence* upon those whom Providence has placed *below* them, and that therefore it becomes them to help to reform a *Custom* so undeniably *unlawful* by giving a *good* Example, and by leading the way to others, without which 'twill hardly be effected, the fault of which will one day lye at *their* doors.

Thirdly, I do not well know what to call it, but another thing I have heard pretended, to put off this *Duty*, is to this Effect; All our Children hitherto have been baptized at home, we ne-

* Μασιπείν
 Ἰδοὺς.
 ἄξει βωμῆ
 οἶον ἐίμυ.
 Arch. Atticæ
 Lib. 3. cap. 3.
 Hence the Prov.
 Amicus usque
 ad Aras.
 Omne animi
 vitium, &c.
 Juven. Sat. 8.

ver had *one* baptized at Church. Let it be remembred, that I have already proved this to be a *Duty*, and then the force of this *mighty* Objection amounts to *this*; We have hitherto done amiss all our Lives, and therefore we are resolved to do so still; We have never yet done our Duty, and therefore we never will. I will not expose the Folly of this pretence, it is enough to expose it self.

My Discourse has hitherto been in *General*; But now I must apply myself more *particularly* to you of my own Charge. You see what the plain Laws of the Church are in this respect, and what strong Obligations we all lye under to *obey* them; You see upon what great Strength of *Reason* and *Antiquity* those Laws of the Church are founded; Fathers and Councils, Abundance of the most eminent *Divines*, both *Ancient* and *Modern*, giving their Testimonies to them; After all which, I cannot but hope, that you will readily comply, with what is here so plainly proved to be your *Duty*.

I am very sensible of the great Tenderneſs both of *Infants* and of *Parents*, and therefore (tho I never yet heard of one Child that was injured by being brought to the Font) yet if your Children be at any time really weak and in danger of Death, if by any accident whatever it ſo fall out, that they cannot ſafely be brought to *Church*, do not by any means ſuffer them to dye *unbaptized*; The Church in thoſe caſes of Sickneſs and extreme Neceſſity, has provided a Form of *Private Baptiſm*, and *this* you may be aſſured, I will always be ready to adminiſter, tho it were at *Midnight*. In this Office of *Private Baptiſm*, all that is *Effential* to the Sacrament is contained, and enough to ſecure the Salvation of the Child, tho it ſhould die before the other Solemnities and Circumſtances be performed in the *Church*. And therefore when Perſons pretend a tender regard to the Weakneſs of the Child, to excuſe the bringing of it to the Church, and yet will not be contented to have it baptized at home, by the Form which is compoſed for that purpoſe, and *ſufficient* for the Childs Salvation; 'Tis evident, that *ſomething elſe* is at the *Bottom*, and that 'tis not ſo much their regard to the Safety and Welfare of the *Infant*, as the *indulging* of their own Humor, that is the cauſe of this *Obſtinacy*; for as for the *Child*, that is ſecured by the *Private*, as well as by the *Public* Form. But if it live, and recover, then the *Rubrick* adviſes that as ſoon as it is fit to be carried abroad, it be brought to the *Church* (not to be Baptized again, for that is done already) but that the *Congregation* may be certified of the Truth of the Baptiſm, before *privately* uſed, and that

* See Dr. Combers Diſc. upon the whole Com. Prayer. p. 338. and the Rubrick for Private Baptiſm.

the *Covenant* may be solemnly entred into for it by the *Sureties*.

And do not think that this shall put you to any *double Charge* of Trouble; for if in case of Necessity I come to your Houses, to baptize any sick Child; I expect no manner of Company, nor the least Provision, nor any *Reward* from you; If you are Poor, I had rather you should have something from me.

My readines to serve you in all other respects, and particularly to come to the meanest of your Houses in case of Sicknes, My despising present Interest, and dealing *impartially* with all Persons alike in this affair, cannot but convince you (if any thing will) that I am acted in it by pure *Conviction*; and Principles of solid Reason; Nor should any thing else in the world have ever prevailed with me, to refuse any of your Requests in this matter; I desire you to excuse me *only* from this *Unlawful Custom*, and in any thing else, the Poorest of you may command my Attendance. If *Liberty of Conscience* (that is, a *Discharge* from complying with Laws) be thought *reasonable* for others, all I desire is a *Liberty of Obedience*, a *Liberty to observe*, and obey those Laws, to which I have *subscribed*, and which stand *unrepealed*; and 'twill be very *unreasonable* to deny me this.

Whatever the Event be, I have *now* this satisfaction, that I have done all that in me lies, to reform a *bad Custom*, which I thought to be my *Duty*; You see I have not refused it *morosely*, without giving you any *reason* for so doing; but I have ventured that which is dearest to me of any thing in the World, I mean my *Reputation*, to satisfy you, that this Practice ought to be amended. I believe I have studied this business *more* than you, and may *modestly* be allowed to understand it better; which is no more than I will readily grant to you, in your *proper Callings* and *Impliments*.

I confess I shall never look upon my self to be answered by an *angry Reflection*, or a *disdainful Smile*; Scurrilous Railing and Reviling are things, which I have both *Charity* enough to *forgive*, and *Magnanimity* enough to *despise*. But if you can procure any one in the world to make a *solid Answer* to my Reasons and Arguments, I promise you I will readily retract my mistakes, and shall be glad by that means to be put into a capacity of obliging you in *this*, as well as in *other things*; For I am so far from thinking it any *real dishonour*, that I know 'tis a *manly Generosity*, and a *Christian Vertue*, to change my opinion, upon the Evidence of better Reason; and that to persist in an *Error* out of pure *Ob-*

stinacy and Stubbornness, does neither become the *Ingenuity* of a Man, nor the *Religion* of a Christian; And therefore, if you find the Arguments of this *Discourse* are such as cannot be fairly answered, Let me beg and beseech you then, as you love your own Souls, not *wilfully* and *stubbornly* to resist the Truth. Remember that *to him that knoweth to do good*, in any instance of Duty, and yet doth it not, *to him 'tis a Sin*, in the highest Degree, *Ja. 4. 17.*

I have now done with what I have to say of *Baptism*; But before I conclude, I cannot but take *this Opportunity* of leaving with you a brief Exhortation to the constant receiving of the *Sacrament of the Lords Supper*, a duty too much neglected amongst you.

Consider then I beseech you, the Plainness, and the Positiveness of the Command, *Do this in remembrance of me*. And withal remember that the *Only way to enter into Life*, is to keep the *Commandments* in general, *this as well as the rest*; and that Christ will one day execute his *Vengeance*, on all that obey not the *Laws of his Gospel*, 2 *Thef. 1. 8.* of which this is one, and of the highest importance too.

1. Consider that is the Command of Christ your Sovereign Lord, who as your King and Supreme Governor, has an *absolute* right, and a just Claim to your *Universal Obedience*, nor can you deny it in any instance whatever, without the highest Injustice.

2. Consider further, that 'tis the dying Command of *Jesus* your Saviour and Redeemer, your *greatest Friend*, and your *best Benefactor*; who stoop'd at no *Dangers*, nor declined any *Sufferings* to do you service; who freely parted with his own dearest and invaluable blood, to ransom, and redeem your Souls; to purchase for you the pardon of your Sins, the Graces of Gods Spirit, and the immortal Joys of Heaven. Who was contented to undergo all the Malice of Men and Devils, *to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief* through the whole Scene of his Life; to endure the greatest Torments of Body, and Agonies of Mind; to sweat and groan, to bleed and die, to deliver you from Eternal Death. 'Tis *this Jesus* that commands you, to *do this in remembrance of him*.

So that here is both the highest *Authority to command*, and the greatest *Love* in the world to *invite* your Obedience. Will you then disobey a King, and a Saviour too, a Sovereign Lord, and a *Merciful Redeemer*. at once? Alas! What unpardonable *Rebellion*,

What scandalous *Ingratitude* is this? Blessed Jesu! What return can be sufficient; What thanks can be big enough for such amazing Love? And yet it is no hard or difficult, but a very easy requital, that the Son of God expects from us, 'tis only that we frequently remember his dying Love, in that *Memorial Feast*, he has appointed for that purpose; that we there thankfully commemorate his Mercy, solemnly renew and ratify our Baptismal Vows and Engagements, and enter into a sacred League of Peace, and Love and Charity with all the world. A poor return, God knows, this is, for so great a Mercy, and shall we yet refuse to pay *this*?

3. Consider that you are bound in *Interest*, as well as in duty, to pay a constant Attendance on this sacred *Ordinance*. For 'tis the most likely means in the world to make all your Prayers successful at the Throne of Grace, and to fetch down even *temporal Blessings* upon you; And 'tis the most probable means in the world to promote and advance your *everlasting well-being*; to confirm and increase your *Faith*, to heighten your *Repentance*, to raise your *Sorrow* for Sin, and your Hatred against it; To inflame your *Love*, your *Praise* and *Gratitude* to God, and your crucified Saviour, and your *Charity* to all your Fellow-creatures; 'tis the best way to advance your *Hope*, to improve all your *Graces*, to make all your Sins give up the Ghost, and yield themselves perfect Victims to a Redeemers conquering Love. In short, the blessed Sacrament, to every devout and worthy Receiver is full of divine and heavenly Blessings; 'tis not only our *greatest Duty*, but 'tis our *highest Privilege* too.

What *Reasons*, what *Pretences* then can be strong enough to keep you from so sacred and *advantageous* a Duty? You know what I have formerly said at large to remove them all; There are two faults, that you may be guilty of in this affair; Either by a careless *refusal* and *neglect* of this *blessed Sacrament*; or by an unworthy *abuse* and *profanation* of it; - by *unworthily* coming to it, or by *profanely* turning your backs upon it; Both these are Sins *equally* dangerous, and I beseech you by all the Hopes of Heaven, and Fears of Hell to avoid both. I have formerly and often told you how this may be done; But if there be any Soul amongst you that wants either farther *Instruction*, or *Satisfaction* in this matter, I once more earnestly desire and invite all such to come to me for my private help and direction; Come freely and without scruple, the Poorest, the Meanest of you; By the Blessing of God, you shall

shall not go away without the best Assistance and Incouragement I am able to give you.

And in order to the fitting your selves for the *Blessed Sacrament* I must beg and entreat you to lead pious and sober, just and Christian Lives. *Impenitence* and an obstinate going on in Sin, is the only thing, that makes men unworthy of the Sacrament; A good man, a true sincere penitent, who understands competently the Nature of the Sacrament, and is heartily resolved to forsake all his past Sins, and to lead a new Life, such a one is fit to come to the *Sacrament* at any time; And he who will not do this, is not fit to die, nor can he go to Heaven.

And to enable you to lead this pious Christian Life, let me beseech you often and daily upon your bended Knees, to petition Almighty God, for his *preventing, assisting, and supporting* Grace. Morning and Evening at least, let me desire every Soul amongst you to spend some little time in that divine and heavenly, that honorable, and advantageous duty of Prayer. You that have Families must pray with them; and teach your Children and Servants to live in the Fear of God; Instruct and *Catechize* them in the Principles of Religion as well as you are able, and send them to the *Church*, to be instructed better; As they grow up, you must warn them often of the baseness and danger of Sin in general; of *Swearing and Cursing*, of *Drunkenness*, and *profaning the Lords day*, Vices to which Youth are *extreamly* addicted. Tell them of the Excellency of a pious, sober, righteous Life, and of the glorious rewards that attend it; teach them by your *Example*, as well as by your *Instructions*; You will have the *Comfort* of it in this Life, and be *rewarded* for it in a better.

From the Prayers of the Church, I would desire you never to be *wilfully* absent; Come at the beginning, and behave your selves devoutly at them; And for your *Private Devotion*, I have here composed a short Form, which I desire all such of you, as have not better helps at hand, to say daily, *humbly* and *devoutly* upon your Knees.

O God the Father of Heaven, have mercy upon me a miserable Sinner! O thou God of Angels and men, the Creator and Preserver of all the world, I have sinned, I have sinned against Heaven and against thee, I have been a stubborn and a rebellious Child, but do not thou, O Lord cast off the bowels and compassions of a Father. I have perverted all the ends of my Creation, I have despised thy Authority, abused thy Mercy, and

provoked thy Vengeance ; But O thou, who willest not the Death of a Sinner, have Mercy upon me ! For thy Names sake pardon mine Iniquities for they are great ; for thine own Mercies sake, for thy dear Son, and my Saviours sake, have pity upon me a miserable Sinner.

O blessed Jesus, the High-Priest, the Saviour and Redeemer of Souls, have Mercy upon me ! Let thy Stripes and Wounds, thy Cross and Passion, plead and intercede for me ; By thine Agony and bloody Sweat, by all that thou didst and sufferedst for Sinners, save and deliver me, in the hour of Death, and the day of Judgment ; And suffer not, O holy Redeemer, my Soul, which is the purchase of thine own meritorious blood, to perish.

O holy Spirit of Grace, the Sanctifier of all the Elect People of God, inspire, I beseech thee, into my Soul the Principles of an Universal Piety ; Sanctify me throughout, in Body and Mind, in Heart, Will, and Affections ; I am undone if thou leave me to my self, follow me by thy motions, and awaken my Conscience by thy blessed Suggestions, or I perish for ever. Quicken and excite my languishing Vertues ; Allure my hope by the glorious rewards of Obedience ; Alarm my fear by the steadfast belief of a judgment to come ; Affect my gratitude and love, by a deep sence of the amazing mercies of my God and Saviour ; and by all let me be led to a speedy and vigorous Repentance, to such a pious and godly, sober and humble, just and charitable life, as becomes a Disciple of the most holy Jesus.

O God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God ! O holy and undivided Trinity, have mercy upon me a miserable sinner !

Glory be to thee, O God, for all the mercies I have received ; Take me into thy Protection [this day] or [this night] and all that belong to me ; Bless all my Civil, Spiritual, and Natural Parents, Relations and Governours ; Reward all my Friends and Benefactors ; Forgive and turn the hearts of my worst and greatest Enemies ; Let thy Gospel, and Truth, thy Peace and Salvation extend it self to all the World ; for the sake of Jesus my Saviour ; In whose Name and Words, I further pray. Our Father, &c.

Canon 14.

ALL Ministers shall observe the *Orders, Rites and Ceremonies* prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, — without either *diminishing*, or adding any thing in the Matter or Form thereof.

Canon 38.

If any Minister after Subscription, shall omit to use the Form of Prayer, or *any of the Orders or Ceremonies* prescribed in the Communion-Book, Let him be suspended: And if after a month he do not reform and submit himself, Let him be Excommunicated: And then if he shall not submit himself within the space of another month, Let him be deposed from the Ministry.

Canon 81.

There shall be a Font of Stone in every Church and Chapel where Baptism is to be administered. — *In which only Font* the Minister shall Baptize *Publicly*: that is, no doubt, *with the Form of Publick Baptism*.

FINIS.







