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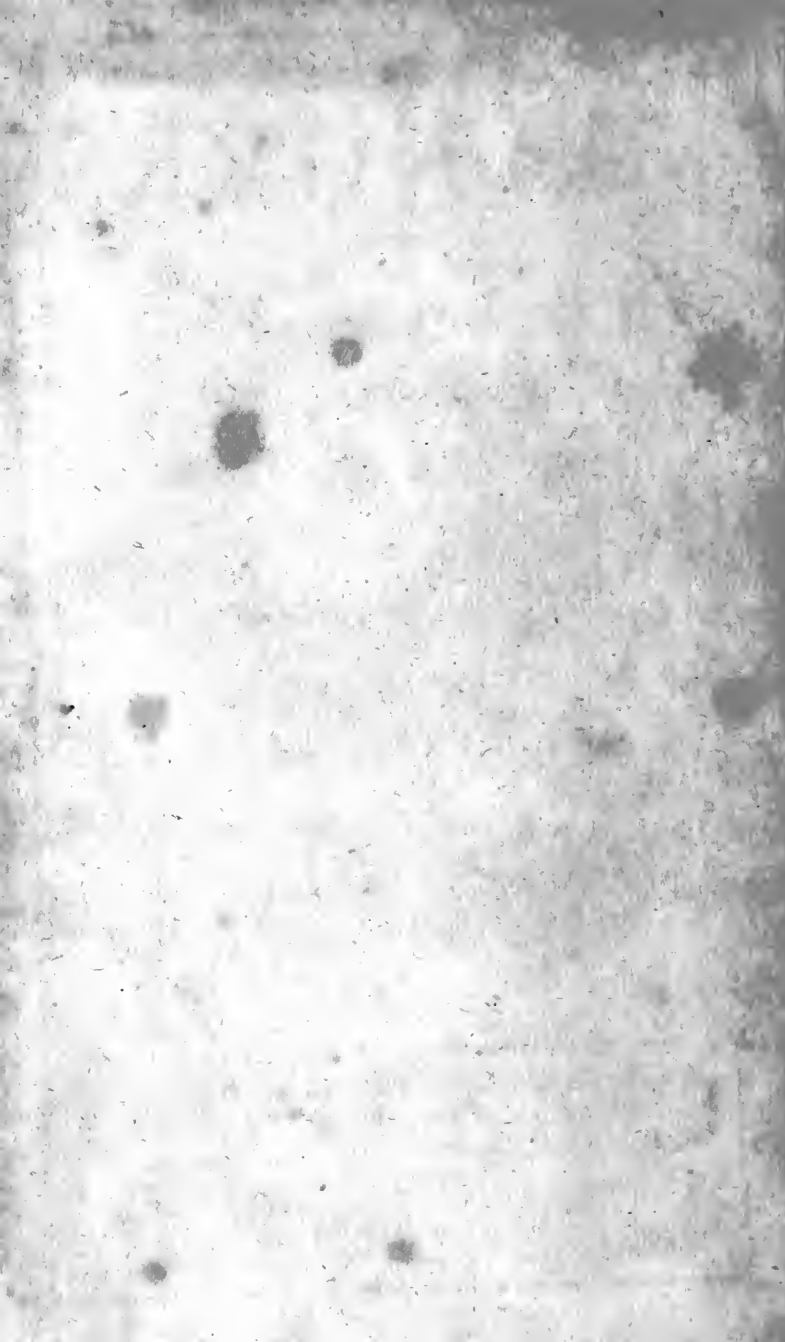
Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

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*Agnew Coll. on Baptism, No. ....*

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NEW  
DANGERS

TO THE

*Christian Priesthood :*

OR, A

SERIOUS ENQUIRY

INTO THE

Proper Administrator

OF

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

IN A

LETTER to the Author of *Lay-Baptism Invalid*; occasioned by one of his New Doctrines, in separating the *Divine Authority* of the *Christian Minister* from the Sacred Order of the *Clergy*, and *Authorizing Lay-Baptism by Commission*, without *Ordination*.

*John Turner* By *J. Turner*

By the Author of the *Defence of the Principles*,  
and *Practice of the Church of England*, &c.

LONDON: Printed for *John Morphew*, near  
*Stationers-Hall*. 1712.

ERRATA.

PAG. 4. Line 20. for *the*, read *your* ; p. 7. l. 2. for *Commissions*, r. *Commission* ; p. 9. l. 4. after *Book*, r. *I saw* ; p. 10. l. 24. for *administer valid Baptism*, r. *lawfully administer Baptism* ; ib. l. 35. r. *to the Allegations* ; p. 16. l. 34. dele *you* ; p. 23. l. 14. *Divne*, r. *Divine*.

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NEW  
DANGERS  
TO THE  
Christian Priesthood, &c.

S I R,

**S**INCE the pretended *Invalidity of Lay-baptism* has been the common Subject of Conversation about the Town, I set myself to the reading of your Books, with a desire to understand the just Merits of the Cause, and to find out the Truth. Upon my Perusal of your first Book, I found that you proposed to proceed Mathematically, and aimed at Demonstration in what you undertook to set forth. And in order to Try and Examin, fairly, the force of what you alledg'd, I thought it proper first to state fairly the main Point in Debate. A fair and right stating of the Controversy being one of the most likely means of coming to a just and right Determination of it. Whereas a Mistake in this first step, must needs occasion great Confusion.

The true State of the Question in debate, I took to be this; Whether the *Divine Authority of the Minister be essential to the Sacrament of Baptism*, and so *indispensibly Necessary* by the *Institution*

tion of it, that it loses its proper Efficacy and Validity when this is wanting?

This I look'd on as your Doctrine, which you had undertaken to make good. And I found, that to support what you had Asserted, you made use of this as your main and chief Principle. *Whatsoever in a Divine Positive Institution we are obliged constantly to observe, as long as the utmost duration of the Force, and Obligation of the Institution it self: That is an essential Part of the Divine Institution, and cannot be dispensed with. The Divine Authority of the Administrator in Baptism, is to be constantly observed, by us as long as the utmost duration of the Force and Obligation of the Divine Institution of Christian Baptism: Therefore the Divine Authority of the Administrator is an essential Part of that Sacrament, as well as the Matter and Form of Administring it; and the Want of that destroys its proper Efficacy and Validity.* This I thought was the first Fundamental Principle fairly stated and represented in its full Force and Strength. That which most easily led me into this Opinion of your main Design, was, the Title of your first Book, the only one that I had yet read; *Lay-Baptism Invalid, or the Invalidity of Lay-Baptism.* I could not but take the Design of such a Book to be, to teach the World, that none but *Ministers* or *Clergymen*; none but *Bishops, Priests and Deacons*, could administer Valid Baptism. All others, of whatever Denomination, being, as I thought, in your Sense excluded by the Divine Institution from a possibility of Validly administring that Holy Ordinance. And I supposed that the *Honour and Authority of the Christian Priesthood*, and the *Sacred Sacerdotal Powers*, were intended to be Asserted and Maintained by you.

I was

Lay-Bapt.  
Inv. pag.  
2. 4.  
Pag. 14,  
15. 37.



## Christian Priesthood.

I was confirmed in this my Opinion, by the general Method of your Reasoning upon this Subject; in which you speak often of *Ministers* as distinguished from *Laymen*; and of the *Commission* given by Christ to his *Apostles* and their *Successors*, which I took to be the Christian Clergy; and the Episcopal Clergy in a more especial manner. I observed again, That in the Proofs of your Assertion, you argued from the appointed Administrators of Divine Offices, both under the Law of *Moses*, and in the Church of Christ. In both which, God established Sacred Orders of Ministers. I found you also telling us expressly, That *by the Words* Pag. 22.  
*of the Institution it plainly appears, That as long as* Ed. II.  
*the World shall last, the Apostles and their Successors are the Persons Commissioned to Disciple Nations, Baptizing them.* And again, You speak of some Pag. 23.  
Things, which if true, you say, *Consequently the Ministers of Christ, and Baptizing and Teaching would be but Temporary.* I was rivetted still the faster in this Perswasion, when I found you to lay this down as one of your *undeniable Maxims*, That *no Ecclesiastical, or Civil Authority can dispense with any Divine Positive Institution.* Pag. 4.  
I could not but from all this conclude, That the Divine Authority of the Administrators of this Sacrament, must mean the *Divine Authority* of the *Christian Ministers*, exclusive of all *Laymen* whatsoever. I thought my self very sure that your Opinion was, That by the Institution of Christian Baptism, and the Divine Commission given by Christ to his *Apostles* and their *Successors*, which no Power on Earth can dispense with; the Divine Commission of the Minister is made so Essential a part of the Sacrament, as that no Layman, none but a Bishop, Priest or Deacon, in Holy Orders, can administer

administer Valid Baptism. And thus I began to examin the Truth of your Doctrine:

But when I come to look farther into your Performances on this Subject, I found, to my great Surprise, That you had chang'd your Stile. And what was before, *Lay Baptism Invalid*, was now delivered thus, *The Nullity of UnauthORIZED Lay-Baptism*. *Unauthorized Lay-Baptism*, said I to my self, imports, That *Lay-Baptism* may be *Authorized*. And I began then to suspect a Snake in the Grass; and grew apprehensive that you would advance some such new Principles, as instead of proving *Lay-Baptism Invalid*, would establish it by Authority. The Consequences of which, I could not but fear, would fall heavy upon the stated Ministry; and instead of Defending, would rather very much Prejudice the *Sacerdotal Powers* which you had taken upon you to Assert. And I soon saw that my Suspicions were not ill grounded.

For in the prosecution of your Argument, I found it was not a real Minister in Holy Orders, whom you indispensibly required to the Valid Administration of Baptism, by the Divine Institution of it, but that a Layman was allowed to do it Effectually enough, provided that he had but the Bishop's Commands, or the Churches Direction and Authority therein.

Thus you tell us, That *the Canon of the Council of Eliberis, which expressly directs a Layman, in such and such Cases, to Baptize; does not countenance Lay-Baptism, because it does not declare any Right that Laymen have of themselves, as private Christians, to Baptize; but only gives them a Power to Baptize, which they had not before. They acted by Authority, they were Episcopally Authorized Laymen. Episcopally Authorized Laymen!* Sir, what new Administrators are these, whom  
you

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you set up with the Divine Authority of Christ's Commissions? This Language is, I am perswaded, entirely new, and wholly unknown to the Christian Church for these 1600 Years and more.

You use the very same Evasion to get off from the Objections brought against you, from the Church of England and the Church of Rome's allowing Lay-Baptism to be Valid. *The Dissent. Bishops of the Church of England commanded Lay-Bapt. Null. men, in Cases of Necessity, to Baptize — so that P. 6, 7. whatsoever Validity such Baptisms were believed to have had, it was owing to the Baptizers acting, — by Vertue of the Churches Power and Authority committed. And the Church of Rome declares, that she gives that Power to Laymen. Now to pretend p. 48. the Divine Authority of the Administrator to be Essential to the Sacrament and its Validity, and yet to allow Validity to Lay-Baptism, because so Authorized, seems to me, I confess, very odd. 'Tis, methinks, giving up a great deal of what your first Book pretended to, and to be sure makes the Title of it very improper. Nay, it scarce favours of Integrity, to amuse the World with Expectations of proving that a Lawful Minister is an Essential part of Baptism, and that that Sacrament is Invalid when administered by Laymen, because repugnant to Christ's Institution; and yet at the same time to allow the Validity of such Baptisms, in several Ages and Places of the Christian Church, even from the Council of Eliberis, A. D. 305. to the Year 1602. when the Church of England first peremptorily required a Lawful Minister; only because these Laymen were Authorized, and had the Churches Authority for what they did: And all this from a Patriot, who, at the same time lays it down as one of his undeniable Max-*

ims, That no Ecclesiastical, or Civil Authority can dispense with any Divine Positive Institution in whole or in any Essential Parts, is very extraordinary. The Ministration of Baptism by Laymen is Invalid by the Institution of Christ, and indispensibly Invalid; and yet becomes Valid when done by the Bishops Command, or the Churches Authority. This is Mathematical Demonstration indeed; but it is, Sir, of your awkward and inconsistent way of Reasoning. Instead of demonstrating Lay-Baptism to be Invalid, you have gone farther than any other Author that I know of, to Establish its Validity.

And what could you mean or design by all this? Why, it is visible that this was at first intended only as an Artifice, whereby you might evade the Force of what was to be brought against your first Main Design, viz. That the Minister is of the Essence of the Sacrament, from the known Opinions and Determinations, and Practice of several Christian Churches thro' all Ages of Christianity. Whose Authorities, when produced, for allowing the Validity of Lay-Baptisms, you had found out this as a present Reply to 'em; that when this is done by the Churches Authority, *What Validity such Baptisms have, they owe to the Authority of the Church, by which such Baptizers acted.*

Is there not a strange Infatuation attending an over-bearing Zeal to defend Errors, and to impose Mistakes under the specious Title of *Apostolical Doctrines*; that it should drive Men into such apparent Absurdities and Contradictions? And that it should, as it were, forceably betray them into double Dealing and Collusion, even when they make the most hearty Professions of Probity and Integrity. For I would, Sir, impute all this rather to the  
badness

badness of your Cause, than to any intended Insincerity. And yet you must give me leave to take Notice, That upon looking back into your first Book, you had provided your self of of this Evasion against you wanted it, from the beginning. And that by a subtle Addition of the word *Substitute*. *Christian Baptism*, say Pag. 11<sup>r</sup> you, is appointed to be administred by the Apostles<sup>23</sup>. and their **Successors**, either themselves in Person, or by their **Substitutes**. And this word is pretty often repeated. Now, as Bishops are the Apostles Successors, so one who suspected no Guile, might be apt to thing that *Substitutes*, might refer to Priests and Deacons, who are the Bishops *Curates* or *Substitutes*, if you have a desire to call them so. But when I found the Churches Authorizing Laymen to Baptize, pleaded as the Foundation of the Validity of such Baptisms, I saw that *Substitutes* was intended for another Meaning, and another Purpose. And that it reached to all, whether Laymen or Women, whom the Bishops of the Church should Impower, or *Authorize* to administer that Sacrament. And these I take to be such as you, in another Place, call *God's Lawful Attorneys*. *Diff. Bapt.*  
*Null. p. 14.*

When I had gone thus far in reading and meditating upon your Principles and Reasonings, I could not but Pause a little, and thus Reflect. Bless me! Is this the mighty Champion of the Church of *England* and its Clergy? Instead of convincing the World, that by the Ordinances of Christ, Lay-Baptism is Invalid, and the *Ordained Minister* Essential to the due *Efficacy* of that Holy Sacrament: He has found out a new way of Baptizing by the Divine Authority of Christ's Commission, without the Clergy. And such an one, as if once adhered to, it will never hereafter be *Necessa-*

ry or *Essential* to that Sacrament, that it should be Administred by any other than Laymen.

For if *Laymen can be empowered to act by Christ's Commission as well as Priests*; that I doubt will be the Conclusion to be drawn from it. And can my Brethren, of the Sacred Order, sit unconcern'd at such Principles, and see no Danger from them? Can they so little understand the true Foundation of all *Sacerdotal Power and Authority*, as not to apprehend the Consequences of Bishops and Councils appointing for God, *Substitutes and Lawful Attorneys* for the Performance of Divine Offices, who are not of the Clergy! Did ever the Dissenters advance any thing more Mischievous to the Priestly Office, than this pretended Defender of it?

I must therefore now, Sir, beg leave to Argue and Expostulate a little with you upon this Subject; with a desire to know of you expressly and directly, Whether you will adhere to, and undertake to make good this Assertion; That an *Authorized Layman can by Christ's Commission and Institution administer Valid Baptism*? Will you, I say, adhere to this as your Principle, or will you give it up; That the *Divine Authority* of the *Administrator* of *Christian Baptism*, pleaded by you to be an *Essential Part of the Sacrament*, may include an *Authorized Layman*?

If you will give this Doctrine up, which in truth I think the fairest way, and a piece of Justice to the *Appropriating Laws* of the *Sacerdotal Powers*; you must then give up with it all that Part of your Answer to Allegations of your Adversaries; in which they plead for the *Validity of Lay-baptism* from the Canons of any Councils, or the allowed Practice of any Christian Churches; and you must be constrained

to own, that all such Authorities are against you.

Or if rather than do this, you will still abide by, and insist upon this Doctrine; you must then consider whether these Consequences will not inevitably follow from it. *Viz.*

1. That the *Ordained Lawful Minister* is not an *Essential Part* of this Sacrament; for if he were, none, but an *Ordained Minister* could *Validly* administer it, and the *Authorized Layman* could not possibly have any *Divine Authority* therein. The one of these is direct Contradiction to the other; and therefore, that I may have a right Understanding of your Doctrines and Principles, as to this Matter I beg of you to let me know which of these you will stick to, in that they cannot possibly be both true. If you will grant me that it is not the *Divine Authority* of the *Lawful Ordained Minister*, but only of the *Authorized Administrator*, who may be a *Layman*, that is an *Essential Part* of the Sacrament: I have indeed then found out the Principle, the Truth of which I am to examine. But then, Sir, here is

2. Another Difficulty arises upon you, which to me seems a very great one. *Viz.* That then it cannot be *Repugnant* to the *Essence* of this Sacrament, that it should be *administred* by a *Layman*. For if it were, no Bishop, no Council, no Church could give Authority therein, or effectual Validity thereto. This is just Reasoning upon your own Principles and *undeniable Maxim*, That what is an *Essential Part* in a *Divine Positive Institution*, no Authority, whether *Ecclesiastical* or *Civil*, can dispense with; i. e. None can *Authorize* that to be done, or make *Valid* by that Authority. For that would be to give the Validity of a Sacrament to that which is no Sacrament, And that, indeed, is not a

Sacrament which wants an Essential Part of it. Here then again, Methinks you should in Reason and Justice, give up all Pretences to making *Lay-baptism Valid*, by its being done by the *Churches Authority*.

Pray, Sir, give me a plain, direct Answer to this short Question. *Is it repugnant to the Essentials of Christian Baptism that it should be administered by a Layman or no?* Let your Answer be but Plain and Honest, and take which side of the Question you will. If you say no; Why then have you pretended to demonstrate to the World the certain *Invalidity of Lay-baptism?* If it be *repugnant to the Essentials* of that Divine Ordinance that it should be so administered, why then do you, or your Friends lay any stress on the *Lay-baptism being Authorized, or Unauthorized?* Can any Powers on Earth Authorize Men to do that, which by a *Divine Positive Institution* is made *repugnant to an Essential Part* of the Ordinance? Be ashamed to insinuate it. Remember your own *undeniable Maxim*, and desire your great *Apollo* to extricate you out of these Difficulties.

If you answer, That it is not repugnant to the Essence of this Sacrament, that it be administered by a Layman, but only, that it be not done without a *Divine Authority* in the Person, whoever he be, *committed* to him from the *Apostles Successors*: It is plain, That by this Distinction and Solution you allow, that the *Divine Authority* of the *Priesthood* may be separated from the *Function*. And this is that Doctrine which I cannot but Complain of, as absolutely destructive of all the Divine Institution of a *Perpetual stated Ministry*. And accordingly, if your *Authorized Lay Baptizers* be allow'd to act by the *Divine Authority* of Christ's Commission, a



3. Third Difficulty will be, How you will Reconcile this with the *Appropriating Laws of Christ*? How it will or can then appear, that it was the Purpose of Christ, that an Established Order of Men should by a Solemn Imposition of Hands and Ordination be set apart for these Purposes? When therefore you shew your self zealous to maintain, that by the Divine Institution of Christ, the *Divine Commission* of the Baptizer is made an *Essential Part* of this Sacrament, as well as the *Form and Matter* of it: I beg you to Consider Seriously, and to tell us Impartially, Whether you do in your Conscience believe, that it was the Intention of Jesus Christ, that the Power of the *Ministration* should be committed to Laymen? Speak out plainly, Whether the Apostles, by their Commission, were empowered to Constitute Bishops and Pastors to administer the Sacraments, and perform Divine Offices in the Christian Church by a Solemn Ordination? Or whether they had Power at large to *Authorize Lay Elders*, if they so thought fit, to the Sacred Ministration of those Offices? Consider this well, and think of the Consequences of your Assertions, before you give your Answer for the Divine Authority of Lay-Administrators. I cannot but think that the very Being of the Christian Priesthood, and of all its Divine Rights, Privileges and Authorities, depend very much upon the Determination of this Question. And be very sure that you do not run into *Rank Fanaticism*, while you pretend such a mighty Zeal against it. And in your Solution of this Difficulty, take this into your Account,

4. Whether you will allow the same, as to the other Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? I could not but ask this Question, because you  
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insinuate the same Argument against us, who do, with the Church of *England*, allow such Baptisms to be *Valid*, altho' *Irregular*. Our Answer to the Objection is this, That while we assert the *Irregularity*, rather than the *Invalidity* of the Sacrament, when administered by Laymen, we think it better to dispense with such *Irregularity*, than to run into the Error of Re-baptization; which according to the Sense of all the Primitive Church, is an Ordinance not to be repeated. But in both the Sacraments we *Condemn* the Practice of *Intruders* as altogether unlawful. But you, while you allow the *Ministration* of *Authorized Laymen*, to be with the *Authority of Christ's Commission*, can give no Reason, in my Opinion, why such Laymen may not act as *Validly* in both the Sacraments, as in one. I desire to be Satisfied in this Particular: Whether the *Authorized Laymen* may, or may not as *Effectually* as *Christ's Substitutes*, and *Lawful Attorneys* administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as that of Baptism? If you say No, I would willingly be inform'd in the Reason of the Difference. For if Laymen can be really and truly *Authorized* with the *Divine Authority of Christ*, I cannot see why it may not extend to both the Sacraments alike. If you say it is because Laymen never were *Authorized* to both: The Consequence of that Answer, methinks, will be this; That if they were so *Authorized*, they would then be vested with the *Authority of Christ's Commission* to them both. There is nothing then, according to this Reasoning, repugnant to the *Essentials* of one Sacrament more than of the other; only the Churches *Direction* and *Authority* are wanting to Empower Laymen to the one as well as to the other. And if you will allow this, which

I cannot but think the necessary Consequence of your Doctrine: We poor Parish Priests are reduced to a very precarious and desperate Condition. This brings me to the

*Fifth* and last Objection against your Doctrine, and that for which it is to be so much Dreaded and Abhor'd by all Clergymen; viz. That it destroys the *Necessity of Ordination*, and and the *Divine Institution of the Christian Priesthood*, or stated Christian Ministry. If Laymen may be vested with the Divine Authority of Christ's Commission to, or in performing the Divine Offices of the Christian Church, there will be but little left to be said in the Defence of a Sacred Order of Men, *set apart*, and *sanctified by Solemn Ordination*.

The usual Arguments, and the strongest Reasons for it, I think, are these. That as Christ sent his Apostles with a Divine Commission to the Performance of these Offices, and Promised to be *with them to the end of the World*; so that the Power given can not reasonably be confined to their Persons, which were Mortal, but must be intended for their Successors for ever: And that, as the *Perpetuity* of Divine Ministrations in the Christian Church, requires a *Perpetuity* of Ministers; so the Method which the Apostles used in setting an Order of Men apart for these Divine Offices by *Prayer* and *Imposition of Hands*, is abundantly Instructive, that the true Intention of Christ's Institution was, That such a distinct Order of Men should, throughout all Ages, be Devoted and Consecrated to those Purposes. This is such Reasoning in Defence of a Standing, Ordained Christian Ministry, as, I think, can never be overthrown, if we will keep close to these Principles. But if you rise up with new Notions, and having first affirm'd the Divine Authority of

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of the Commission to be *Essential* to the Sacrament, instead of inferring from thence the *Necessity* of an Ordained Ministry, which one would take to be the Natural Consequence of your own Argument, you go on, and allow Christ's Commission to be extended to *Episcopally Authorized Laymen*; how can you then prove the Divine Institution of an Ordained Ministry? How little will there be then to be said for it? The Consequences of such a Doctrine must, in my Opinion, be of the last Importance to all Christian Ministers. I hope we shall not be found to Argue at this wild and inconsistent rate.

You cannot, Sir, but excuse me in pressing this Argument very close. You remember how you and your Friends accuse those who plead the Validity of Lay-Baptism as *Bantering* and *Blemishing* their Priestly Office, and *total-ly destroying* their own Order, and the whole Ministry of the Christian Priesthood. And will not Intruders Argue thus, say you, *What need we attend upon others for these Ministrations, when we Laymen, have as much valid Power therein as themselves? If our Baptisms are Valid, so are our Administrations of the Lord's Supper, &c. And if Validity may be allowed to all, by whomsoever administered, then farewell all Rule and Order in the Church, and Christ's setting some therein; first Apostles, secondarily Prophets. If ever Men be perswaded that an Unauthorized Person can by means of the Opus operatum of Sacraments, convey those unspeakable Advantages which belong to them; We then, you say, in effect you assure them, that every Christian can exercise that Power, and receive as much Spiritual Benefit by Uncommission'd Teachers Ministrations of supposed Sacraments, as others do by ours. Because God concurs as much with their Sacraments as with ours. You thus speak to us again. Your charging*

*Diss. Bapt. Null. Pref. p. 2. Lay-Bapt. Inv. 50.*

charging these Intruders with Schism in adhering to Ministers who have no Divine Mission, is ridiculous and nonsensical, because, say you to us, they have all as valid a Commission as your own, which you your selves must needs grant, by allowing the validity of their supposed Sacraments. And again, You beseech us earnestly to consider these things, and how our Office, and therein Christ's Institution can be at all esteemed and observed, if validity as you call it, can without any Divine Law for it, be ascribed to the Unauthorized Acts of Laymen; What signify the appropriating Laws of Christ and his Church; if we unauthoriz'd Laymen, say you, can do as much in the Ministration of Sacraments as you can, who are the only Authorized Officers for that Purpose? If we cannot do as much as you we can do nothing at all, for there is no degree of validity in such Ministrations. If we as Lay-Christians can do as much, then you can have no Superiority over us in these Matters; and so your whole Order and the Necessity of it must cease, and become void, except We Lay-Men shall think fit to continue it, by submitting to your Ministrations; not through any Necessity of Obedience to a Divine Law, but by an Act of our own unnecessary Generosity and Arbitrary Free-Will. This is what you allege against Us, who with the Church of England, allow the Validity, and yet assert the Irregularity of Lay-Baptism. It tends, you say, to the Destruction of our whole Order, and makes the Necessity of it to cease and become void. The Charge is very Unjust, because this does not follow from our Principles, but only these are some of them, such Consequences as would be true, if we allow'd no Irregularity, no Intrusions in such Baptism. But more of this by and by. In the mean while, do but observe, Sir, how your own Language and Arguments turn upon you, and I think with a much superiour Force. Let me then,

*mutatis mutandis*, apply to you your own Words. To allow Lay-Baptism valid, only because Authoriz'd, is to separate the Authority of Christian Ministers from the Ministerial Order; and this is in Effect to destroy the whole Christian Priesthood. And will not the Enemies of it then thus argue? What need is there of a Divine Mission by Solemn Ordination, if Lay-Men without all that Solemnity may be Authorized to those Ministrations, and have as much valid Power therein as the Clergy? If such Authorized Lay-Baptisms are of Divine Authority, so may their Administrations of the Lord's Supper too, and if Divine Authority may be allow'd to all, because performed by Authoriz'd Lay-Men, then farewell all Rule and Order in the Church, and Christ's setting some therein, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets. — If ever Men be perswaded, that an Authorized Lay-Man, can be invested with the Authority of Christ's Commission for the Administration of the Sacraments, then in effect you assure them, That every Christian may be thus Authorized, and the Sacraments be continu'd, by the Ministration of such Lay-Substitutes, as well as of the Clergy; seeing God concurs by his Authority, with those Sacraments as well as with the others. To charge such Lay-Men as Intruders, or with Irregularity, is Ridiculous and Nonsensical: Because if they act by Christ's Authority, they have as Authentick a Commission as the Clergy, as you yourselves must needs grant, by allowing their Authority to be derived from Christ, without which the Sacrament, you say, could not be valid. I beseech you then earnestly to consider these things, and to shew how the Ministerial Office, and therein Christ's Institution can be at all esteemed and observed, if a Divine Power in administering Christian Sacraments, can without any Divine Law for it, be separated from the Order of the Priesthood, and Christ's Authority be ascribed to the Acts of Lay-Men.

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*What signify the appropriating Laws of Christ and his Church, if your Authoriz'd Lay-Men can do as much in the Ministration of Sacraments, as the Clergy can who are the Appointed Officers for that purpose? If such Lay-Men cannot act with as much Authority as the Clergy, they can act with none at all, for there is no degree of Authority in such Administrations according to the Tenor of God's Law.*

*If as Authoriz'd Lay-Men, they can do as much as the Clergy, then the Clergy or Ordained Ministers can have no Superiority over them in these Matters, and so the whole Order and Necessity of it must cease, and become void, except the Bishops and Councils shall think fit to continue it, by Ordaining Ministers, not through any Necessity of Obedience to the Divine Law, but by a mere Act of their own unnecessary Generosity and Arbitrary Free Will.*

Thus you see your own Reasoning, and your own Language turn'd upon you : Let us now consider which Side can make the best Defence against the Charge. As to our Side, you must confess, that we acknowledge and plead for the Divine Institution of the Christian Ministry, and insist upon it, that as such are by Christ appointed, and to be continued to the End of the World ; so that none but such Ordain'd Ministers, ought, or can Regularly Administer Christian Baptism. That it is a great Irregularity whenever any Lay Persons do take this Ministration upon them. If they do it without the Allowance or Permission of the Church, they are Intruders and Invaders of an Office, that does not belong to them. And when such a Practice is Tolerated by the Church, it is only in Cases of great Necessity ; and then they are not allow'd by us, as they are by you, to act by Christ's Authority therein, but rather a Divine Institution of Decency and Order,

gives Way to a Case of pressing Necessity : And in Truth, we come as to this, nothing short of you, saving only that you plead the *Divine Authority* in the Administration of Baptism, to be *Essential* to the Sacrament, which we do not ; and consequently we own that such Lay-Baptism may be *Valid*, altho' it is, as to the Minister of it, *Irregular* and *Unlawful*. Now how does this destroy the Priestly Office ? Must every Thing in Positive Institutions be necessarily made *Essential* ? Were *Aaron's Bells* *Essentials* in the *Sacrifices*, because always to be put on when he *Ministred before the Lord* ? Could not Christ Establish a Perpetual Priesthood for *Order* or *Regularity* sake, without making that an *Essential* of the Sacrament ? This is what we plead that he has done : And thus the allowing Lay Baptism to be *Valid*, does not Prejudice the Divine Institution of the Christian Ministry at all. This is a Consequence that follows, only from your Principles, but not from ours. We assert the Divine Rights and Priviledges of the Clergy to these Ministrations, by a Divine Law of Order and Regularity, tho' not of Essentials ; and we condemn all such Lay Performances, as Invasions of the Priestly Office, and unless *Necessity* will vindicate them Unlawful : And if at any Time Excusable, because Necessary, yet we do not pretend that they act therein by Christ's Authority : This is our Defence.

But as for you, who allow that the *Authority of Christ's Commission* may be vested in a Lay-Man, which you must do, to make Lay Baptism Valid, according to your own Principles : I know not what you can say, in defence of the Divine Institution of a standing Ordain'd Ministry : You cannot thus pretend the *Ordain'd Minister* to be *Essential* to the Sacrament any  
more



more than we : For if he were, an Unordain'd Lay-Man could have no Authority. You cannot plead that the Institution of Christ *appropriates* the Power to the Order, without giving up this whole Plea of *Authoriz'd Validity* : For, if the Divine Institution of Christ has *Appropriated* the Power and Authority to the Order of the Priesthood, no Power on Earth can Separate them, and so a Lay-Man can have no Authority.

Do not pretend that *Authorz'd Lay Baptism* is better than that which is *Unauthorized*, and done in a *Schismatical Opposition* to the Priesthood : Fortho' a *Schismatical Opposition* is a great Aggravation of the Guilt of an Evil Practice ; yet you know, that there is no *degree* of *Authority*, any more than of *Validity*, in what is *Repugnant* to the *Essentials* of Sacraments.

Above all Things, do not pretend that it is the Divine Authority of Christ's Commission, altho' *Unduly* and *Irregularly* convey'd, or *pro hac vice* ; for this difficulty will I think, inevitably arise upon it. Whether the effectual Authority of Christ's Commission can be *irregularly* convey'd, and contrary to the Original *Intention* of his *Institution* ? If it cannot, then what is *Irregular*, must also be *Invalid* and *Ineffectual* : On the other hand, he, who is affirmed to act effectually by Christ's *Divine Authority and Commission*, must, in that respect, be allow'd to act *Regularly*. And if you will carry the Matter thus far, as indeed you must, to make a Lay-Baptizer act with Divine Authority, there is then an End of all Divine Obligations to a standing Ordain'd Ministry. If Bishops and Councils can, agreeably to the Positive Laws and Institutions of Christ, Effectually and Regularly *Authorize Lay-Men* to the Performance of *Divine Offices*, and with Divine Authority, then

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to use your own Words, *farewell* all solemn Ordination in the Church of Christ, and his *Appropriating Laws*. *Why may not all Chrstians be thus Authorized?* And then *the whole Order, and the Necessity of it must cease and become void*. What need will there then be of an Establish'd Priesthood? And if the *Necessity* of our solemn Ministry be once given up, I cannot see but that all Divine Obligations to the *Perpetual Continuance* of it, must soon follow after. And this is the Danger that I think all our Holy Order have the greatest Reason to be afraid of. It reduces us all to a very precarious and uncertain Condition: Their Lordships, the Bishops, may continue us as their *Substitutes* if they please, but if the *Power* of the Priesthood may be *Separated* from the Order, it will be a mere *Act of their own unnecessary Generosity and Arbitrary Free Will so to do, but not through any Necessity of Obedience to a Divine Law*.

These, Sir, are the inevitable Consequences of your *Episcopally Authorized Lay-Men* setting up with the Divine Authority of Christ's Commission. I hope my Brethren of the Sacred Function will take these Things into their serious Thoughts, and consider well, how little you or your Friends have left them by these your Principles, to say for themselves, and for the Divine Institution of our Order, and for the Rights and peculiar Priviledges of it. If this your Doctrine should prevail, there is an end, I think, of the Priestly Office all at once. Reflect, Sir, how these Things can consist with your *Appropriating Laws*, and the *Honour of the Christian Priesthood*, and the sacred *Sacerdotal Powers*. Methinks, Sir, that your Books which have advanced this Notion, are as much as any that I have yet seen, a *Banter upon our Priestly Office*

Office, whose Sacred Powers you at the beginning took upon you to defend.

It seems to me, I own, much less offensive to the Christian Church, much less Dangerous to all the Christian Institutions, much more agreeable to the true Nature of the Christian Sacraments, and to the main Design of the Christian Religion, as well as to Truth itself; to allow *Validity* or *Efficacy* in Lay Baptism, Censuring at the same Time the *Irregularity* of it, and Condemning it, unless when Justifiable in case of pressing Necessity: Than to pretend to *Authorize* it, by letting in Lay-Men to the Divine Authority of that Commission, which you at the same time would insinuate *Appropriates* the *Sacerdotal Powers* to the *Sacerdotal Order*: How can such Contradictions meet? 'Tis to no purpose for us to alledge Scriptures; *How shall they Preach unless they be sent?* And tell the People, that *no Man taketh this Office unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*

These Texts can do the Clergy no good, if there be a new way of *Calling* and *Sending*, by the pretended Authority of *Canons* and *Commands*. If that be a valid Mission, and such Lay-Administrators be allow'd to act with *God's* Authority; Farewel *Ordination*, farewell *Priests*, and *Deacons*. A lasting Succession of *Bishops* may be necessary to give out *Commands* and *Commissions*; but the Obligation of continuing any subordinate Ministers in Holy Orders, *ceases and is wholly void*; whenever *Episcopal Commissions* are made as valid as *Episcopal Ordinations*. And this they must be, if they can give Lay-men Divine Authority, in the Ministrations of the Holy Offices of the Priesthood. What can the *Dissenters*, or the worst of any other Enemies advance, more Fatal to us, or that more naturally tends to make our Claims trifling, and our Function useless?

If you, Sir, are unwilling, and think it unjust, that you should be subject to so heavy and severe a Charge, who intend so well, and seem so Zealous for our *Sacerdotal Rights*: I must, before you can clear your self, beg a fair, direct, and honest Answer, to this Question formerly propos'd. *Whether the Divine Power of the Christian Ministers, in the Administration of the Christian Sacraments, may, agreeably to Christ's Institution, be so separated from the Order, as that Lay-Men may be vested with, and act by Divine Authority in those Sacred Ministrations?* A fair and direct Answer to this plain Question, will be kindly taken. And the less of Shifts and Evasions there shall be found in it, the more Candid and Acceptable it will be. And because it is, you see, a Question of very great Importance in the Consequences of it; you, who have made it necessary to be put, may, if you please, offer it to the *Lower House of Convocation*, to whom you have, on occasion, made your Court and your Appeal, and get, if you can, their Determination of it.

If you are even yet willing to give it up, and at the same time will give up with it, all the Use that you have made of it in Defence of the Cause, which I think you have very unreasonably espoused; I am content, and shall give you no farther trouble on that Account. But if you will still adhere to it, That a *Lay-baptizer has the Divine Authority of Christ's Commission* for that *Ministration* when *Authorized* by the Church, and thereby allow, That the Power of the Priesthood may be separated from the Order, I cannot but think, that in the natural Consequence of this your Doctrine, and according to your own Reasoning, you leave it entirely at the Discretion, or as you express it, the *unnecessary Generosity* of the Bishops, whether there shall be any other Ordained standing Ministers or no.

If you tell us that they are bound by the Laws of the Land to Ordain Priests and Deacons; I own the Truth of it, and I think it is all your new Principle has left us to plead in our own Defence. But I must beg leave to take notice, That this is placing the *Sacerdotal Powers*, of which you have taken upon you to be the avowed and profess'd Champion: Just where the *pretended Rights of the Christian Church* have left them. Depending wholly on the *Laws of the Land*, and the *Constitutions of our Country*: But not at all necessary by the *Sacred Laws of God*, or the *Divine Institutions of Jesus Christ*. And when you have brought us to this, by the Divine Authority of your *Episcopally Authorized Lay-Men*, 'tis high time for us not to be Lull'd into pleasing Dreams by empty Names, and unprofitable Pretences, but to awake out of Sleep and take the Alarm.

I beg your Pardon for the Liberty I have us'd, and am, tho' not at all satisfy'd with your Doctrine, yet Sir,

May 21. 1712.

With Sincere Affection, Yours.



