

AN  
**APOLOGY**  
FOR  
**THE BAPTISTS.**  
IN WHICH THEY ARE  
VINDICATED FROM THE IMPUTATION  
OF LAYING  
AN UNWARRANTABLE STRESS  
ON THE  
*ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM;*  
AND AGAINST THE  
CHARGE OF BIGOTRY  
IN  
REFUSING COMMUNION AT THE LORD'S TABLE  
TO  
**PÆDOBAPTISTS.**

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THERE IS ONE BAPTISM. *PAUL.*

THEY WHO ARE NOT RIGHTLY BAPTIZED, ARE, DOUBTLESS, NOT BAPTIZED AT ALL.

*TERTULLIAN.*

NO UNBAPTIZED PERSON COMMUNICATES AT THE LORD'S TABLE. *THEOPHYLACT.*

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## PREFACE.

**I**T was not a fondness of controversy, but a desire to vindicate the honour of Christ, as lawgiver in his own kingdom; to assert the scriptural importance of a positive institution in the house of God; and to exculpate himself, together with a great majority of his brethren from the Baptist persuasion, from charges of an odious kind, that excited the author to compose and publish the following pages. If these designs be answered, the writer obtains his end; and if not, he has the testimony of his own conscience to the uprightness of his intentions.

**A**S we are expressly commanded to *contend earnestly for the FAITH once delivered to the saints*; it can hardly be questioned, whether a sincere concern for the purity and permanence of our LORD'S APPOINTMENTS in the gospel church, be not an indispensable duty. For they are no less the expressions of his *dominion over us*, than of his love to us; no less intended as means of his *own glory*, than of our happiness. Then subject, therefore, that is here presented to the reader's notice, though not of the *greatest*, yet is far from being of *little* importance in the Christian religion.

It is entirely on the *defensive* that the author takes up his pen; for had not the principles and practice of those professors who are invidiously called, Strict Baptists, have been severely censured, by many that maintain, and by some who deny, they divine authority of Infant Baptism, these pages would have never seen the light.

That **H**E who is King in Zion may reign in the hearts and regulate the worship of all his professing people; that the Spirit of wisdom, of holiness, and of peace, may dwell in all the churches of Christ; and that the same divine Agent may direct the reader's inquiries after truth, engage his affections in the performance of duty, and enable him to *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*; is the sincere desire and fervent prayer of his willing servant in the gospel of Christ,

**A. BOOTH.**

GOODMAN'S FIELDS,  
MARCH 3, 1778.

AN  
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**SECTION I.**

*The Baptists not chargeable with laying an unwarrantable Stress on the Ordinance of Baptism.*

MANY reflections are cast on the Baptists, and various charges are laid against them; reflections and charges of such a kind, as greatly impeach the truth of their doctrinal principles, and the candour of their christian temper. They are frequently represented by their Pædobaptist brethren, as *uncharitably rigid*, as *incorrigible bigots* to a favourite opinion, as putting baptism in the place of our Lord's *atonement blood* and the *sanctifying agency* of the divine Spirit. – To give them epithets and load them with charges of this kind, the generality of their opponents agree; whether they should be members of our National Establishment, or in the number of Protestant Dissenters.

But why such an unfriendly surmises and bold accusations? What is there in our principles or conduct that lays a foundation for such hard suspicions and such severity of censure? As to making baptism a substitute for the *atonement* of Jesus Christ, and the *sanctifying agency* of the Holy Spirit, it is manifestly contrary to our avowed sentiments; so contrary, that all the world, one would have thought, must agree to acquit us of such a charge.\* For it is too notorious to admit a plea of ignorance in any of our opponents, that we consider no one as a proper subject of that institution, who does not profess repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; who does not, in other words, appear to be in a state of salvation. Nay, so far from making baptism a *saving* ordinance, we do not, we cannot consider any one as a proper subject of it, who looks upon it in that light.

Yet were an imputation of this kind as just and pertinent, as it is groundless and ungenerous; did we really ascribe a regenerating efficacy and saving effects to that sacred appointment; we should hardly forbear concluding, that these complaints and charges came with an ill grace from our brethren of the Establishment; especially from the clergy, who have solemnly declared their assent and consent to all that is contained in the book of Common Prayer. For they, immediately after baptizing an infant, address first the people, and then the omniscient God, in the following remarkable words, 'Seeing, dearly and beloved brethren, that this child IS REGENERATE and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks to the Almighty God for these benefits – We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to REGENERATE this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for THINE OWN CHILD by adoption, and to incorporate him into

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\* I speak of the Particular Baptists. How far any of these who are called *General* Baptists may have given occasion for such imputations, I neither take upon me to affirm nor deny.

thy holy church.’ – Thus the clergy most solemnly profess to believe, when they administer baptism to infants. And, when giving catechetical instructions to children, they inculcate on their tender minds the same things, as truths and facts of great importance. For thus they interrogate each young catechumen, and thus they teach him to answer. ‘Who gave you this name? My Godfathers and Godmothers in my baptism, WHEREIN I WAS MADE a member of Christ, a child of God, and in inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his church? Two only, as GENERALLY NECESSARY TO SALVATION, that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord. What is the inward and spiritual grace? [i.e. of baptism.] A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for, being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are HEREBY MADE the children of grace.’\* Thus children are taught by the parish minister; and in the firm persuasion of these things are *confirmed* by the bishop. For, immediately before he lays upon them his episcopal hand, he recognizes, in a solemn address to God, the great blessings supposed to be conferred and received by them at the time of their baptism. Thus he prays, ‘Almighty and everliving God, who hath vouchsafed to REGENERATE THESE THY SERVANTS by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them FORGIVENESS OF ALL THEIR SINS.’ – And after imposition of hands, ‘We make our humble supplications unto thee [the divine Majesty] for these thy servants; upon whom (after the example of thy holy apostles) we have now laid our hands, to *certify them* (by this sign) *of thy favour and gracious goodness towards them.*’ Once more: As the Church of England suggests a *painful doubt*, relating to the final happiness of such infants as die without baptism; so she *absolutely forbids* her Burial Service to be ready over *any* who die unbaptized; placing them, in this respect, on a level with those that die under a sentence of excommunication for the most enormous crimes, or are guilty of *felo de se*. For those she instructs her members, and thus she directs her ministers: ‘it is certain by God’s word, that children which are *baptized*, dying before they commit actual sin, are *undoubtedly saved* – Here it is to be *noted*, that the office ensuing [i.e. the burial office] is not to be used for any that die *unbaptized*, or *excommunicate*, or *have laid violent hands upon themselves.*\* Nay, so confident is our national church of these things being agreeable to the word of God, that she boldly pronounces the following sentence on all who dare to call them in question: ‘Whosoever shall hereafter affirm, that the form of God’s worship, contained in the Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the sacraments, containeth *any thing* in it that is repugnant to

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\* See Office for *Public Baptism of Infants*, and the *Catechism*. Whether the doctrine here advanced to be consistent with the sentiments of Protestant Pædobaptists in general, or calculated to instruct the ignorant and edify believers, I must leave the reader to judge. I will take the liberty, however, of subjoining a quotation from the celebrated WITSIUS, and another from the no less excellent DR. OWEN, relating to this point. The former thus expresses himself: *Communio cum Christo et corpore ipsius mystico in electis infantibus baptismum antecedere videtur; saltem iudicio charitatis. Pædobaptismo enim UTI FUNDAMENTUM substriitur. Hoc quipped argumento passim pugnatur ab orthodoxis: ad quos pertinet foedus gratiae, et communio Christi, atque ecclesiae, et quorum est regnum coelorum, eos oportet baptizari. Atqui haec omnia infantibus electis, et faederatis competunt. – BODIUS Romanae ecclesiae doctores in gravissimo errore versari autumat, quum statuunt baptizandos, priusquam hoc signaculo obsignentur; Christi membra non esse, ad ejus corpus et communionem non pertinere, sed tum demum e potestate diaboli liberari, inque Christi familiam transire. *Misvel. Sac. Tom. II. Exercit. XIX. § XXI.* – The latter thus: Nequé sane dogma pernitiosius, aut quod peccatorum animis praesentius venenum propinaret, facile excogitaret ipse mendaciorum pater. Dum enim miseri homines mortui peccatis sibi adblandiuntur quod in baptismo renati fuerint, atque in utramque aurem otiose dominant; necessitatem absolutam et indispensabilem spiritualis totius hominus renovationis sÚsque déque habentes, statum suum miserrimum agnoscere, et ad gratium Christi vivificantem confugere negligent atque ita pernitiosissima securitate sopiti, aeternÚm pereunt. *Theologoum*, 1. vi. C. c. p. 477, 478.*

\* Order for confirmation, Rubric, at the conclusion of the office for Public Baptism of Infants, and Rubric prefixed to Order for Burial of the Dead.

the scriptures, let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not restored but by the bishop of the place, or archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of such his wicked errors.\* Thus our national church teaches, and thus her clergy profess, most solemnly profess to believe. Consequently, were we really chargeable with representing baptism as a *saving* ordinance, our brethren of the Establishment could not consistently lodge a complaint against us on that account.

If we consult the writings of the most eminent preachers among the Methodists we shall find, that their sentiments harmonize with the doctrine of the National Church, and regard to the efficacy and absolute necessity of baptism. The late pious and extensively useful Mr. George Whitefield, thus expresses his views of the subject before us, ‘Does not this verse [John iii. 5.] urge the *absolute necessity* of water baptism; *Yes*, where it may be had; but how God will deal with persons unbaptized we cannot tell. What have to do to judge those that are without.\* - Our ministring brethren of the Tabernacle have sometimes taken the liberty of making reflections upon us, as if our opinion relating to baptism greatly intrenched on the offices and honour of Jesus Christ. Had they met with language and sentiments like these in any of *our* publications, especially in those of the late Dr. Gill, the would, undoubtedly, have thought themselves fully warranted in using their utmost efforts to expose the dangerous error, and to guard their hearers against us, as making a *saviour* of baptism. But while *some* of them, being Conformists, have solemnly professed their cordial consent to the various articles contained in the Book of Common Prayer and administration of the sacraments, and while they *all* unite in revering the character of the late Mr. Whitefield; they could not be either candid or consistent in condemning us were we really chargeable with representing baptism as necessary to salvation. What, then, must we think of their conduct, when there is no proof, nor the least shadow of proof, that we have ever done any such thing? – As I have a sincere and high regard for many who preach the gospel and unite in public worship at the Tabernacle, and as it is my earnest prayer that a divine blessing may attend them; so it would give me real pleasure to find, that they who fill the pulpit in that place, are more cautious in censuring the Baptists, and more consistent with their *loud professions* of candour and a catholic spirit; lest, through mistake, they be still culpable of bearing false witness against their brethren.

Mr. *John Wesley*, enumerating the benefits we receive by being baptized, speaks in the following language: ‘By baptism we *enter into covenant with God*, into that *everlasting* covenant, which he hath commanded for ever. By baptism we are admitted into the church, and consequently *made members* of Christ, its head. – By baptism, we who were by nature children of wrath, *are made the children of God*. And this regeneration is more than barely being admitted into the church. – By *water*, then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are *regenerated* or *born again*. Baptism does now save us, if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe, and obey the gospel. Supposing this, as it admits us *into the church here*, so *into glory hereafter*. – If infants are guilty of original sin, in the *ordinary* way, *they cannot be saved*, unless this be *washed away by baptism*.\* So Mr. Wesley *teaches*; so, says a learned cardinal, the church has *always*

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\* Constitutions and Canons, No. IV. – While hearing the thunder of this Canon Ecclesiastical, I am reminded of that anathematizing decree established by the Council of Trent: *Si quis dixerit baptismum liberum esse, hoc est, non necessarium ad salutem, anathema sit.* Sess. VII. Can. V. That is, if any one shall assert, that Baptism is free, or *not necessary to salvation*, let him be accursed.

\* Works, Vol. iv. p. 355, 356.

\* Preservative, p. 146-150.

*believed*;<sup>\*</sup> and the Council of Trent *confirms* the whole. In the firm persuasion of this doctrine, Mr. Wesley is also desirous of *settling* the members of his very numerous societies. For these positions are contained in a book, professedly intended to preserve the reader from *unsettled notions in religion*. Now, as I cannot suppose this author imagines, with *Dodwell*, that infants who die without baptism, are not immortal; I know not whether he chooses to lodge them in the *limbus puerorum* of the Papists<sup>†</sup>; or whether, with *Austin*, he consigns them over to eternal damnation; though the one or the other must be their case. For, that millions die without baptism, is an undoubted fact; and that God in favour of such, should be *frequently departing* from the *ordinary* method of his divine procedure, *much oftener* departing from, than acting according to it, is hard to conceive; is absolutely incredible, as it involves a contradiction. Yet, on Mr. Wesley's principles, it must be so, if the generality of those that have died, since baptism was instituted, be not excluded the kingdom of heaven. For he who considers what multitudes of Jews and Heathens have peopled the earth, ever since the Christian dispensation commenced; what an extensive spread Mahomet's imposture has had for more than eleven hundred years; and what number of infants die without baptism, even in Christian countries, cannot but conclude, even admitting Pædobaptism to have been practised by the apostles, that a vast majority of deceased infants have left the world without being baptized.\* Now who could suppose an author and a preacher, that asserts the efficacy and exalts the importance of baptism at this extravagant rate, should charge the Baptists with placing an unlawful dependence on that ordinance? Yet, that he has frequently done so, in his pulpit discourses, if not in his numerous publications, is beyond a doubt; is known to thousands. Where, then, are his consistency, his candour, his catholic spirit!

Nor are we conscious of attributing any degree of importance to Baptism, which our Pædobaptist Dissenting brethren do not allow, and for which they do not plead. Do we consider it as a divine appointment, as an institution of Christ, the administration and use of which are to continue to the end of the world? So do they. Do they consider it as an ordinance which, when once rightly administered to a proper subject, is never to be repeated? So do we. Do we look upon it as indispensably necessary to communion at the Lord's table? So do they. Do we actually refuse communion to such who we consider as unbaptized? So do they. No man, I presume, if considered by them as not baptized, would be admitted to break bread at the Lord's table, in any of their churches; however amiable his character, or how much soever they might esteem him in other respects.

Nor is this a new opinion, or a novel practice: for such has been the sentiments, and such the conduct of the Christian church in every age. *Before* the grand Romish apostacy, in the *very depth* of that apostacy, and *since* the Reformation, both at home and abroad; the general practice has been, to receive none but baptized persons to communion at the Lord's table. The following quotations from ancient and modern writers, relating to this point, may

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\* Semper Ecclesia credit, infants perire, si absque Baptismo de hac vita recedant. *Bellarmin. apud Amesium, Bell. Enervat Tom. p. 67.*

† Forbesii Instruct. Hist. Theolog. p. 498.

\* Mr. Wesley, it is well known, is a very warm defender of general redemption. He must, consequently, believe, that those infants who die without baptism, were as really redeemed by the death of Christ, as those that have the ordinance administered to them. In regard, therefore, to all that perish for want of baptism, it should seem, on his principles, as if our divine Lord were less careful to provide *an administrator* to confer the ordinance, than to *offer a propitiary sacrifice*; and more sparing of a *little water* than of his *own blood*: even though he knew the latter would be of no avail, in millions of instances, without the former. But whether such sentiments be agreeable to the scriptures, or honourable to our Lord's atonement, the reader will be at no loss to determine.

not be improper. *Justin Martyr*, for instance, when speaking of the Lord's supper, says, 'This food is called by us, the *Eucharist*; of which it is *not lawful* for any to partake, but such as believe the things that are taught by us to be true, and have been *baptized*.\* *Jerom*; 'Catechumens cannot communicate;' i.e. at the Lord's table, they being *unbaptized*.† - *Austin*, when asserting the absolute necessity of infants receiving the Lord's supper, says; 'Of which, certainly, they cannot partake, *unless they be baptized*.'‡ - *Bede* informs us, that three young princes among the eastern Saxons, seeing a bishop administer the sacred supper, desired to partake of it, as their deceased and royal father had done. To whom the bishop answered; 'If ye will be washed, or baptized, in the salutary fountain, as your father was, ye may also partake of the Lord's supper, as he did: but if you despise the former, *ye cannot in any wise* receive the latter. They replied, We will not enter into the fountain, or be baptized; nor have we any need of it; but yet we desire to be refreshed with that bread.' After which, the historian tells us, that they importunately requesting, and the bishop resolutely refusing them admission to the holy table, they were so exasperated, as to *banish them both and his out of their kingdom*.\* - *Theophylact*; 'No *unbaptized person* partakes of the Lord's supper.† - *Bonaventure*; 'Faith, indeed, is necessary to all the sacraments, but especially to the reception of baptism: because baptism is *the first* among the sacraments, and *the door* of the sacraments.‡ Quotations of this kind might, no doubt, be greatly multiplied: but that none were admitted to the sacred supper in the first ages of Christian church, before they were baptized, we are assured by various learned writers, well versed in ecclesiastical antiquity. For instance: *Frid. Spanheimius* asserts, 'That *none but baptized* persons were admitted to the Lord's table.\* Lord Chancellor *King*; 'Baptism was *always precedent* to receive the eucharist, till they were baptized. This is so obvious to every man, that it needs no proof.† - *Dr. Wall*; 'No *church* ever gave the communion *to any persons* before they were baptized – *Among all the absurdities that ever were held*, none ever maintained *that*, that any person should partake of the communion *before* he was baptized.‡ - *Dr. Doddridge*; 'it is certain that Christians in general have always been spoken of, by the most ancient fathers, as baptized persons: - and it is also certain, that as far as our knowledge of primitive antiquity reaches, *no unbaptized* person received the Lord's supper.§

That the Protestant churches in general have always agreed in the same sentiment and conduct, is equally evident. Out of many eminent writers that might be mentioned, the following quotations may suffice. *Ursinus*, for instance, asserts; 'That they who are not yet

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\* Apolog. II. p. 162. Apud Suicerum, Thes. Ecclesi. Tom. II. rol. 1135.

† Catechumeni – communicare non pussunt. In Cap. vii. Epist. II. ad. Corinth.

‡ Quod nisi baptizati non utique possunt. *Epist. ad Bonifacium*, Epist. cvi.

\* Si vultis abluī fonte illo salutary, quo pater vester, ablutus est, potestis etiam pauis sancti, [quem] participabat, esse participes. Sin autem lavacrum vitæ contemnitis, nullatenus valetis panem vitæ participare. At illi nolumus, inquit, fontem intrare, qui nec illo opus nos habere novimus, sed tamen pane illo refici volumus. Cumque diligenter ac saepè ab illo essent admoniti, nequaquam fieri posse, ut absque purgatione sacrosancta quis oblationi sacrosanctæ communicet, ad ultimum furore commoti aiebant; Si non vis assentire nobis in tam facili causa quam petimus, non poteris jam in nostra provincia demorari. Et expulerunt eum, ac de suo regno cum suis abire jusserunt. *Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. cap. v. p. 63.*

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‡ Fidem quidem esse necessariam omnibus sacramentis, sed specialiter appropriari baptismo: quoniam baptismus est primum inter sacramenta et janua sacramentorum. *Apud Forbesium, Instruct. Historic. Theolg. Lib. x. cap. iv. § 9.*

\* Subjects ad eucharistiam admissa, soli baptizati. *Hist. Christian. Col. 623.*

† Enquiry, Part ii. p. 44.

‡ Hist. Infant Bap. Part ii. chap. ix.

§ Lectures, p. 511.

baptized, *should not be admitted to the sacred supper.*\* - *Ravenellius*, when speaking of the Lord's supper, says; 'Baptism *ought to precede*; nor is the holy supper to be administered to any, *except they be baptized.*'† - *Zanchius*; 'We believe that Baptism, as a sacrament appointed by Christ, *is absolutely necessary* in the church.'‡ - *Hoornbeekius*; '*No one* is admitted to the sacred supper, *unless he is baptized.*'§ - *Turretinus*; 'It is one thing to have a right to those external ordinances of the church, which belong to a profession; and it is another to be interested in the internal blessings of faith. Unbaptized believers have actually a right to *these*, because they are already partakers of Christ and his benefits; though they have not yet a right to *those*, except in observing the appointed order by *baptism.*'|| - *Mastricht*; 'As no *uncircumcised* male was admitted to the typical supper, that is the Passover; so, under the New Testament, no *unbaptized* person is admitted to the Lord's table.'¶ - *Leydecker*; 'Baptism is necessary, not only in a way of expediency, but by virtue of a *divine precept*. They, therefore, who reject it, *reject the counsel of God against themselves.*'\* - *Benedict. Pictetus*; 'The supper of our Lord ought not to be administered to persons that are *unbaptized*: for before baptism, men are not considered as members of the visible church.'† - *Markius*; the dying, and the *unbaptized*, are not to be admitted to communion.‡ - *Dr. Manton*; '*In foro ecclesiae*, before the church, *non but baptized persons* have a right to the Lord's table.'§ - *Mr. Baxter*; 'If any should be *so impudent* as to say, it is not the meaning of Christ, that *baptizing* should *immediately, without delay*, follow *discipling*, they are confuted by the constant example of scripture. So that I dare say, that this will be out of doubt with all *rational, considerate, impartial* Christians.'|| Once more: *Dr. Doddridge*, thus expresses his view of the subject. 'The law of Christ requires that *all* who believe the gospel, should be *baptized* – For any to abstain from baptism, when he knows it is an institution of Christ, and that it is the will of Christ that he should subject himself to it, is such an act of disobedience to his authority, as *is inconsistent with true faith*. – How *excellent soever* any man's character is, he must be baptized before he can be looked upon as completely a member of the church of Christ.\*

Perfectly conformable to these testimonies, are the *Catechisms* and *Confessions of faith*, that have been published at any time, or by any denomination of Christians: for if the positive institutions of Christ be not entirely omitted, *baptism* is not only always mentioned first; but generally mentioned in such a way, as intimates that it is a *prerequisite* to the Lord's

\* Nondum baptizati, ad coenam non sunt admittendi. *Corp. Doct. Christ.* p. 566.

† Baptismus debet praecedere; coena verò non nisi baptizatis est danda. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Tom. i. p. 301.

‡ Credimus baptismum in ecclesia omninò necessarium esse tanquam sacramentum à Christo institutum. *Opera*, Tom. viii. col. 516.

§ Nemo ad coenam admittitur, nisi baptizatus. *Socin. Confut.* Tom. iii. p. 416.

|| Aliud jus habere ad sacra ecclesiae, quæ ad professionem referuntur: Aliud ad interna fidei.

Catechumeni credentes actu jus habent ad ista, quia jam participes sunt Christi et beneficiorum ejus; licet nondum habeant jus ad illa, nisi ordine servato et posito baptismo. *Institut. Theolog.* Tom. iii. Loc. xviii. Quæst. iv. § 10.

¶ Ad coenam *tupicam*, h. e. ad pascha, non admittebatur ullus – *præputiatus*, Exod. xii. 40. sicut sub N. T. non admittitur *non-baptizatus*, Act. ii. 41, 42. *Theolog.* lib. vii. cap. v. § 29.

\* Baptismus necessarius est necessitate præcepti, non solum expediendi. Quare, qui eum rejiciunt, concilium Dei adversus seipsos rejiciunt. *Idea Theolog.* p. 225.

† Non debet administrari coena – non baptizatis; nam ante baptismum non censentur homines esse in ecclesia. *Theolog. Christiana*, p. 959, 960.

‡ Ad communionem hanc admittendi sunt, non-expirantes, aut non-baptizati. *Christ. Theolog. Medulla*, p. 406.

§ Supplem. Morn. Exercis. p. 199.

|| Plain Scripture Proof, p. 126.

\* Lectures, p. 508, 512. Discourses on Regen. Postscript to Pref. p. 12, 13.



table. And so, even in our common forms of speaking, if we have occasion to mention both those solemn appointments of our Lord, baptism still has the priority. Thus *generally*, thus *universally*, is it allowed, that baptism is necessary to communion at the Lord's table. – Nay, many of our Protestant Dissenting brethren consider the ordinance in a more important light than we do. For they frequently represent it, *as a seal of the covenant of grace; as a means of bringing their infant offspring into covenant with God;* and some of them severely censure us, for leaving our children to the *uncovenanted* mercies of the Most High, merely because we do not baptize them. Expressions and sentiments these, which we neither adopt nor approve; because they *seem* to attribute more to the ordinance, than the sacred scripture, in our opinion, will warrant.

It appears, then, to be a fact, a stubborn, incontestable fact, that our judgment and conduct, relating to the necessity of baptism *in order to communion*, perfectly coincide with the sentiments and practice of our National Church, and with all Pædobaptists churches in these kingdoms. Nor have I heard of any such church now upon earth, with which we do not, in this respect, agree: for non, of whom I have any intelligence, be their sentiments or modes of worship whatever they may in regard to other things, admit any to the sacred supper, who have not, in their opinion, been baptized. – And, on the other hand, when the *importance* of baptism comes under consideration between us and them, it is manifest, that both Conformist and Nonconformist Pædobaptists in general, ascribe more to it than we, and place a greater dependence upon it. Consequently, neither candour, nor reason, nor justice will admit that we should be charged, as we have frequently been, with laying an unwarrantable stress upon it.

The point controverted between us and our Pædobaptist brethren is not, Whether *unbaptized believers* may, according to the laws of Christ, be admitted to communion; for here we have no dispute; but, *What is baptism*, and *who* are the proper subjects of it? In the discussion of these questions there is, indeed, a wide and very material difference; but in regard to the former we are entirely agreed. – Why, then, do our brethren censure us as *uncharitably rigid*, and *incorrigible bigots*? Their principal reason seems to be this: They, in general, admit, that *immersion* in the name of the triune God, on a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, is *baptism, real baptism*; while our fixed and avowed persuasions will not permit us to allow that *infant sprinkling*,\* though performed with the greatest solemnity, is worthy of the name. Consequently, though they, consistently with their own principles, may receive *us* to communion among them, yet we cannot admit *them* to fellowship with us at the Lord's table, without contradicting our professed sentiments. For it appears to us, on the most deliberate inquiry, that immersion is not a *mere circumstance*, or a *mode* of baptism, but *essential* to the ordinance: so that, in our judgment, he who is not immersed, is not baptized. This is the principle on which we proceed, in refusing communion to our Pædobaptist brethren; whom, in other respects, we highly esteem, and towards whom we think it our duty to cultivate the most cordial affections. – Nor can we suppose but they would act a similar part, were they in our situation. Were they fully persuaded, for instance, that the great Head of the church had not commanded, nor any way authorized, his ministering servants to require a profession of faith *prior* to baptism; and were they equally certain that the ordinance never was administered by the apostles to any but *infants*, nor in any other way than that of *aspersion*, or *pouring*; would they not look upon the *immersion of professing believers* as quite a different thing

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\* They reader is desired to observe, that when I make use of the phrase *infant sprinkling*, or any expression of similar import, it is merely by way of *distinction*; without annexing any secondary, or obnoxious idea to it.

from baptism? And, were this the case, would they not consider us as unbaptized, and refuse to have communion with us on that account? I am persuaded they would, notwithstanding their affection for any of us, as believers in Jesus Christ. Consequently, if we *be* any really culpable in the eyes of our brethren, it is for *denying the validity* of infant baptism; not because we *refuse communion* to Pædobaptists – for an error in our judgment, which misleads the conscience; not for perverseness of *temper*, or a want of *love* to the disciples of Christ.

Nor was the Lord's supper appointed to be a *test* of brotherly love among the people of God; though several objections that are made against us, seem to proceed on that supposition. It must, indeed, be allowed, that as it is a sacred feast and an ordinance of divine worship, mutual Christian affection, among communicants at the same table, is very becoming and highly necessary; and so it is in all other branches of social religion. But that sitting down at the holy supper should be considered the *criterion* of my love to individuals, or to any Christian community, does not appear from the word of God. No, the supper of our Lord was designed for other and greater purposes. It was intended to teach and exhibit the most interesting of all truths, and the most wonderful of all transactions. The design of the Great Instructor was, that it should be a memorial of God's *love to us*, and of *Immanuel's death for us: that*, the most astonishing favour ever displayed; *this*, the most stupendous fact that angels ever beheld. Yes, the love of God, in giving his dear, his only Son; and the death of Christ, as our divine substitute and propitiary sacrifice, are the grand objects we are called to contemplate at the Lord's table. – As to a *proof*, a *substantial proof* of our love to the children of God, it is not given at so cheap and easy a rate as that of sitting down with them, either occasionally or statedly, at the holy table. Numbers do that, who are very far from loving the disciples of Christ, for the truth's sake. To give real evidence of that heavenly affection, there must be the exercise of such tempers, and the performance of such actions, as require much self-denial; and without which, were we to commune with them ever so often, or talk ever so loudly of candour and a catholic spirit; - we should, after all, be destitute of that *charity*, without which we are *nothing*. The readers, therefore, will do well to remember, that the *true test* of his love to the disciples of Christ, is, not a submission to any particular ordinance of public worship; for that is rather an evidence of his love to God and reverence for his authority; but sympathizing with them in their afflictions; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and taking pleasure in doing them good, whatever their necessities may be. For this I have the authority of our final Judge, who will say to his people, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, for – what? ye have manifested your love to the saints and your faith in me, by holding free communion at my table with believers of all denominations? No such thing. But, I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*\*

Our opponents often insinuate, that we are more zealous to establish a favourite mode and make proselytes to our opinion and party, than to promote the honour of Jesus Christ and the happiness of immortal souls. Were this the case, we should, indeed, be much to blame, and greatly disgrace our Christian character. 'But why are the Baptists to be thus represented? Do they affirm that the kingdom of Christ is confined to them? that they only have the true religion among them? and that, unless men are of their party, they will not be saved? Do they wish success to none that are employed in the vineyard, but themselves? or say of others, engaged in the same common cause, Master forbid them, because they follow not with us? On the contrary, do they not profess a warm esteem and affection for all those

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\* Matt. xxv. 34-40. Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27.

of whatever communion, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and aim to promote his cause in the world? and do they not give proof of this, by holding a friendly correspondence with them as opportunities offer; and by cordially joining them in occasional exercises of public worship? It is not the distinguishing tenet of baptism, how much soever they wish it to prevail, that is the main band that knits them in affection to one another: it is the infinitely nobler consideration of the relation they stand in to Christ as his disciples. They hope, therefore, to be believed when they declare, that they most cordially embrace in the arms of Christian love the friends of Jesus, who differ from them in this point; and to be further believed when they add, that they hold the temper and conduct of the furious zealot for baptism, who fails in his allegiance to Christ, and in the charity he owes his fellow Christians, in sovereign contempt.\*

Nor are they who plead for infant baptism the only persons under whose censure the generality of us have the unhappiness to fall. So very peculiar is our situation, that some even of our Baptist brethren charge us with being *too strict* and *rigid*, because we do not practice Pædobaptists into communion; a practice which they have adopted, and warmly defend. Nay, some of them have boldly declared, that our conduct be refusing to do so, is *greatly prejudicial* to the honour and interest of true religion, and *not a little contributing to the cause of infidelity*.† This, it must be allowed, is a *home thrust*. We have need, consequently, to be provided with an armour of proof; with *Robur et Æs Triplex*. Especially, considering, that this charge is laid against us, by two of our brethren, under those respectable characters, *The Candid*, and *The Peaceful*. For when such amiable and venerable personages as *Candour* and *Peace*, unite in preferring a bill of indictment against a supposed offender, the grand jury can hardly forbear prejudging the cause, by finding it a *true bill*, before they have examined so much as one witness on either side. – Mr. Bunyan, also, who zealously pleaded the cause of free communion, when it was yet in its infancy, and who intituled one of his publications in defence of his favourite hypothesis, *Peaceable principles and true*; did not fail to charge his Baptist brethren, who differed from him in that particular, in a similar way. Yes, notwithstanding Mr. Bunyan's candid, catholic, peaceable principles; and though he was, at that very time, pleading for candour, catholicism, and peace, in the churches of Christ; he draws up a long list of hateful consequences, and charges them to the account of his brethren's conduct, merely because they did not admit Pædobaptists into communion with them. The design of the following pages, therefore, is to shew, That we cannot receive Pædobaptists into communion at the Lord's table, without doing violence to our professed sentiments, as Baptists; and to answer the principal objections which these our brethren have started against us. In doing of which, I shall argue with them on their *own principles*, as Protestant Dissenters and Antipædobaptists; which kind of argumentation is always esteemed both fair and forcible, when rightly applied.

My reader will not here expect a discussion of the mode and subject of baptism; for it is not that ordinance, considered in itself, or as detached from other appointments of Jesus Christ; but the *order* in which it is placed, and the *connection* in which it stands with the Lord's Supper, that are the subject of our inquiry. Nor will my Pædobaptist brethren be offended, if I assume, as truths and facts, things which are controverted between them and us; because I do not here dispute with *them*, but with such as profess themselves Baptists, yet practise free communion. And though I look upon the *former* as under a mistake, in regard to baptism; I consider them as acting, not only conscientiously, but *consistently* with their own principles, in

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\* Dr. Stennet's Answer to Mr. Addington, Part ii. p. 284, 285.

† Candidus and Pacificus, in their Modest Plea for Free Communion.

respect of that ordinance: while I view the conduct of the *latter*, not only as contrary to the order of the primitive Christian churches, but as *inconsistent* with their own avowed sentiments; which disorder and inconsistency I shall now endeavour to prove.

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## SECTION II.

*The general Grounds on which we proceed, in refusing Communion at the Lord's Table to Paedobaptist Believers – Novelty of the Sentiment and Practice of our Brethren, who plead for Free Communion: and the Inconsistency of such a Conduct with their Baptist Principles.*

THE following positions are so evidently true, and so generally admitted by Protestant Dissenters, that they will not be disputed by those of our brethren who plead for free communion.

Our divine Lord, in who are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, is perfectly well qualified to judge, what ordinances are proper to be appointed, and what measures are necessary to be pursued, in order to obtain the great design of religion among mankind – Being Head over all things to the church, he possesses the highest authority to appoint such ordinances of divine worship, and to enact such laws for the government of the house, as are agreeable to his unerring wisdom, and calculated to promote the important objects that he has in view; which appointments and laws must bind the subjects of his government in the strictest manner – Having loved the church to the most astonishing degree, even so as to give himself a ransom for her; he must be considered as having given the most salutary and perfect laws, with a view to promote her happiness, and as means of his own glory – These laws and ordinances are committed to writing, and contained in the Bible: which heavenly volume is the rule of our faith and practice, in things pertaining to religion; our complete and *only* rule, in all things relating to the instituted worship of God, and the order of his house. So that we should not receive any thing, as an article of our creed, which is not contained in it: do nothing as a part of divine worship, not commanded by it; neither omit, nor alter any thing that has the sanction of our Lord's appointment – Nor have we an reason to expect, that our divine Lawgiver and sovereign Judge will accept our solemn services, any further than we follow those directions which he has given, without addition, alteration, or diminution. – *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it;* were the injunctions of Jehovah to the ancient Israelitish nation. *Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you;* is the requisition of Jesus Christ, to all his ministering servants.\*

In the worship of God there cannot be either obedience or faith, unless we regard the divine appointments. Not *obedience*; for that supposes a precept, or what is equivalent to it. Not *faith*; for that requires a promise, or some divine declaration. If, then, we act without a command, we have reason to apprehend that God will say to us, as he did to Israel of old, *Who hath required this of your hand?* And, on the contrary, when our divine Sovereign enjoins the performance of any duty, to deliberate is disloyalty; to dispute is rebellion. 'Believers, who really attend to communion with Jesus Christ,' says a judicious author, 'do labour to keep their hearts chaste to him in his ordinances, institutions, and worship. They will receive

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\* Deut. xii. 32. Matt. xxviii. 20. – Smith's Compend. Acc. Of the Form and Order of the Church, p. 15, 16.

nothing, practise nothing, own nothing, but what is of his own appointment. They know that from the foundation of the world he never did allow, nor ever will, that in any thing the *will* of the creatures should be the *measure* of his honour, or the *principle* of his worship, either as to matter or manner. It was a witty and true sense that one *simulacrum prohibetur, sed, non facies tibi*. It is a *making to ourselves*, an inventing, a finding out ways of worship, or means of honouring God, not by him appointed, that is so severely forbidden.\* - ‘To serve God otherwise than he requireth,’ says another learned writer, ‘is not to *worship*, but to rob and *mock* him. In God’s service, it is a greater sin to do that which we are not to do, than not to do that which we are commanded. This is but a sin of omission; but a sin of sacrilege and high contempt. In this we charge the law only with difficulty; but in that with folly. In this we discover our weakness to do the will, but in that we declare our impudence and arrogance to controul the wisdom of God. In this we acknowledge our own insufficiency; in that we deny the all-sufficiency and plentitude of God’s own law – We see the absurdity and wickedness of will-worship, when the same man who is to perform the obedience, shall dare to appoint the laws; implying a peremptory purpose of no further observance than may consist with the allowance of his own judgment. Whereas true obedience must be grounded on the *majesty* of that power that commands, not on the *judgment* of the subject, or *benefit* of the precept imposed. Divine laws require obedience, not so much from the *quality* of the things commanded (though they be ever so holy and good), as from the *authority* of him that institutes them.\*

That the gospel should be preached in all nations for the obedience of faith; and that, under certain restrictions, they who receive the truth, should be formed into a church state, few can doubt: and it is equally clear, from the foregoing positions, that it belongs to the supreme, royal prerogative of Jesus Christ, to appoint the terms and conditions on which his people shall have a place in his house, and a seat at his table. For we cannot suppose, with any appearance of reason, that these conditions are *arbitrary*; or such as every distinct community may think fit to impose. No; a gospel church has no more power to fix the terms of communion, or to set aside those prescribed by Jesus Christ, than to make a rule of faith, or to settle ordinances of divine worship. This is one characteristic of *a church*, as distinguished from *a civil society*; the terms of admission into the *latter* are discretionary; provided they do not interfere with any divine law; but those of the *former* are fixed by him who is King in Zion. No congregation of religious professors, therefore, has any authority to make the door of admission into their communion either straiter, or wider, than Christ himself has made it.\* – ‘The original form of this house, [i.e. the church of Christ] was not precarious and uncertain; to be altered, and changed, and broke in upon by man, or by any set of men, at pleasure. This would reflect on the wisdom and care, as well as on the steadiness of Christ; who is in his house, as well as in the highest heavens, the steady and faithful Jesus; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and not in the least given to change; but its form is fixed, particularly in the New Testament. Had not Moses, nor any of the elders of Israel, so much power over the tabernacle as to alter or change a pin thereof? and with what face can man pretend to a power to model and alter at pleasure gospel churches? As if Christ, the true Moses, had forgot, or neglected, to leave with us the pattern of the house.’†

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\* Dr. Owen on Communion with God, p. 170.

\* Bp. Reynold’s Work, p. 163, 422.

\* Dr. Ridgley’s Body of Divinity, p. 343. Glasgow Edition.

† Mr. Bragge on Church Discipline, p. 9.

Baptism and the Lord's supper are positive appointments in the Christian church, about which we cannot know any thing relating to their mode of administration, subjects, or design, except from the revealed will of their Great Institutor. For, as a learned writer observes, "All *positive* duties, or duties made such by institutions alone, depend entirely upon the will and declaration of the person who institutes or ordains them, with respect to the real design and end of them; and, consequently to the due manner of performing them.' It behoves us, therefore, well to consider the rule which our Lord has given relating to these ordinances. 'Because we can have *no other* direction in this sort of duties; unless we will have recourse to mere invention, which makes them our *own institutions*, and not the institution of those who first appointed them.\*

That there is a connection between the two positive institutions of the New Testament, is manifest from the word of God; and that one of them must be prior to the other, in order of administration, is evident from the nature of things: for a person cannot be baptized and receive the sacred supper at the same instant. Here, then, the question is (if a doubt may be moved on a point so evident, without affronting common sense), which of them has the previous claim on a real convert's obedience? *Baptism*, or the *Lord's Supper*? If we appeal to the persuasion and practice of Christians in all nations and in every age, it will clearly appear, that the *former* was universally considered, by the churches of Christ,<sup>†</sup> as a *divinely appointed* prerequisite for fellowship in the *latter*, till about the middle of the last century, here in England; when some few of the Baptists began to call it in question, and practically do deny it. This our brethren now do, who defend and practise *free communion*. For they admit Pædobaptists to the Lord's table; though, on their *own principles*, infant sprinkling is not baptism.

This appears from hence. That only is baptism which Christ appointed as such. That, therefore, which essentially differs from what he appointed, cannot be baptism. But they believe, as well as we, that Pædobaptism, as now practised, essentially differs from the appointment of Christ, both as to mode and subject: yet a mode of administration, and a subject to whom it should be administered, are necessary to the existence of baptism, as an ordinance of Christ; for without these it is only an abstract notion. If, then, the proper subject be a *professing believer*, and the appointed mode *immersion* in water, which they maintain as well as we; it is not real baptism where these are wanting. Agreeable to that saying of an ancient writer, 'they who are not rightly baptized, are, doubtless, not baptized at all.'\* - But that our brethren do not consider infant sprinkling as having the essentials of Christian baptism in it, is put beyond a doubt by their own conduct. For they no more scruple to baptize professing believers, who have been sprinkled in their infancy, than we do: and yet, I presume, or called, *Anabaptists*; which, notwithstanding, is their proper character, if they allow that the aspersion of infants has the essentials of baptism in it.

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\* Bp. Hoadley's Plain Account, p. 3.

† That there were people of different denominations in the second and third centuries, who pretended a regard to the name of Jesus Christ, and yet rejected Baptism, is readily allowed; but then it may be observed, that many of them had as little self esteem from the Lord's Supper. Nay, as a learned writer asserts, the generality of them renounced the scriptures themselves. Nor am I ignorant that *Socinus*, in the latter end of the sixteenth century, considered baptism as an indifferent thing, except in reference to such as are converted from Judaism, Paganism, and Mahometanism; but our brethren with whom I am not concerned will hardly allow, that societies formed on the principles of those ancient corrupters of Christianity, nor yet on those of Socinus, are worthy to be called, *Churches of Christ*. Vide *Suicerum, Thesaur. Eccles.* sub voce; and *Dr. Wall's Hist. Inf. Bap.* part iii. chap. v.

This, then, is a fact, a notorious, undeniable fact, that our brethren practically deny the necessity of baptism in order to communion at the sacred supper: for they do not, they cannot believe the aspersion of infants to be christian baptism, without rendering themselves obnoxious to the charge of *Anabaptism*. A sentiment so peculiar, and a conduct so uncommon as theirs are, in regard to this institution, require to be well supported by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. For were all the christian churches now in the world asked, except those few that plead for free communion, whether they thought it lawful to admit *unbaptized* believers to fellowship at the Lord's table? there is reason to conclude they would readily unite in that declaration of Paul: *We have no such custom, neither the churches of God* that were before us. Yes, considering the novelty of their sentiment and conduct, and what a contradiction they are to the faith and order of the whole christian church; - considering that it never was disputed, so far as I can learn, prior to the sixteenth century, by orthodox and heterodox, by Papists or Protestants, whether *unbaptized* believers should be admitted to the Lord's table; they all agreeing in the contrary practice, however much they differed in matters of equal importance; it may be reasonably expected, and is by us justly demanded, that the truth of their sentiment, and the rectitude of their conduct, should be *proved, really proved*, from their records of inspiration. A man may easily shew his fondness for novelty, and the deference he pays to his own understanding, by boldly controverting his opinions, and resolutely opposing the practice, of the wisest and the best of men in every age; but, if he would avoid the imputation of arrogance, he must demonstrate, that the things he opposes are *vulgar errors*, which have nothing to recommend them but great antiquity and general custom. Our persuasion, therefore, concerning the necessity of baptism as a term of communion, having had the sanction of universal belief and universal practice for almost sixteen hundred years, it lies on our brethren to prove that it is false and unscriptural; and to shew, from the New Testament, that theirs has the stamp of divine authority.

But it is not strange, strange to astonishment, if the scriptures contain their sentiment, and vindicate their conduct, that it never was discovered by any who acknowledged the proper Deity, the eternal dominion, and the complete satisfaction of Jesus Christ, till the latter end of the last century? seeing, long before then, almost every principle of the christian faith, almost every branch of christian worship, had been the subject, either of learned or unlearned controversy, among such as thought themselves the disciples of Jesus Christ. The Quakers arose, it is well known, about the time when this new sentiment was first adopted in England; and they entirely renounced baptism, as well as the Lord's Supper. But, so far as appears, the people of that denomination never supposed, that they who thought it their duty to celebrate the sacred supper, were at liberty to do it *before* they were baptised. - Here I cannot but remark, with how little affection and reverence the positive institutions and the authority of Christ were treated, in this island, in the last century. The ingenious author of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was one of the first, in this kingdom, who dared to assert, that the want of baptism *is no bar to communion*, and acted accordingly. The Quakers arising a little before him, proceeded a step further, and entirely cashiered both baptism and the supper of our Lord; looking upon them, as *low, carnal, temporary* appointments. Much respect, I allow, is due to the character of Bunyan. He was an eminent servant of Jesus Christ, and patiently suffered in his Master's cause. Many of his writings have been greatly useful to the church of God, and some of them, it is probable, will transmit his name, with honour, to the future ages. But yet I cannot persuade myself, that either his judgment or piety appeared in this bold innovation. The disciples of George Fox, though less conformable to the word of God, acted more consistently with their own

principles, than did the justly celebrated *Dreamer* them, or our brethren who practise free communion now.

But I forget myself. The last century was the *grand era* of improvement in this nation; of prodigious improvement in light and liberty. *In light*; as well as divine, as philosophical. In *real* philosophical science, by the labours of a Bacon, a Boyle, and a Newton. In *pretended* theological knowledge, by those of a Jessey and a Bunyan. Did the former, by deep researches into the system of nature, surprise and instruct the world by discoveries, of which mankind had never before conceived? The *latter*, penetrating into the gospel system, amused mankind, by casting new light on the positive institutions of Jesus Christ, and by placing baptism among things of little importance in the Christian religion; of which no ancient theologian had ever dreamed – none, we have reason to think, that loved the Lord Redeemer. *In liberty*; not less religious than civil; in the church as well as the state. Did the struggles of real patriotism, and the abdication of a popish prince, make way for true liberty in the latter? The repealing of Christ's positive laws by Fox and Barclay, and the practical claim of a dispensing power by Jessey and Bunyan, made way for the *inglorious* liberty of treating positive institutions in the house of God just as professors please.

Some of the popish missionaries among the Indians have been charged, by respectable authorities, with concealing the doctrine of *the cross* from their hearers, lest they should be tempted to despise the great Founder of the Christian religion, because he made his exit on a gibbet; and with making it their principle aim, to persuade the poor ignorant creatures to be *baptized*; imagining that they would be sufficiently christianized, by a submission to that ordinance. As if being baptized, and conversion to Jesus Christ, were one and the same thing; What a destructive delusion this! What an impious exaltation of a positive institution, into the place of redeeming blood, and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit! – But were one of our ministering brethren, who plead for free communion, to be sent as a missionary in those parts of the world; he, I presume, would not be in the least danger of thus overrating baptism, and of depreciating its great institutor. No; he would boldly preach a *crucified* and risen Jesus, as the only foundation of hope for his hearers; and, if the energy of God attended his labours with considerable success, he would think it his duty to lay before such as believed in Christ, what he had learned from the New Testament relating to a gospel church – its nature and ordinances, its privileges, duties, and great ability. In doing of which he could hardly forbear to mention *baptism*, as an appointment of his divine Master; but though he might *mention* it, yet, on his hypothesis, he could not *require* a submission to it, as previously necessary to their incorporating as a church, and their having communion together at the Lord's table. He might, indeed, *recommend* it to his young converts, as having something agreeable in it; but if they did not see its propriety; or if, on any other account unknown to him, they did not choose to comply, and yet were desirous of being formed into a church state, and of having communion at the Lord's table; he could not refuse, though not one of them was, or would be baptized. For if it be lawful to admit *one* believer to communion, purely *as a believer*, and without baptism; it cannot be criminal to admit *all* such, if they desire it: that which is proper and right for *one*, being so to *a million*, if they be in the same circumstances. Thus he would gather a church in perfect contrast with those formed by his fellow missionaries. For, while they put baptism in the place of the Saviour, he would reject his command, and lay the ordinance entirely aside: they make it *all* and he make it *nothing*. – And were a narrative of such proceedings to fall into the hands of a Pædobaptist, who had never heard of any that practised, or pleaded for, free communion, what a singular figure it would make in his view! 'A minister of Jesus Christ, he would say, gathering a church among the Indians, and administering the sacred supper, yet all his



communicants *unbaptized*! Strange, indeed! – A christian minister, called a *Baptist*, entirely omitting that *very ordinance* from which he takes his denomination. This is stranger still! For the *Baptists*, of all men, are said to love *water*, and to be fond of *baptism*. It exceeds the bounds of credibility: but, if it be a fact, he is the oddest mortal, and the most unaccountable Baptist, that ever lived. For he does violence to his own distinguishing sentiment, and is guilty of *Felo-de-se*. Like Job's leviathan, he has not his equal on earth: an unheard-of phenomenon in the religious world, and will probably be the wonder of ages yet unborn. But the ambiguity of his character is such, that I fear the pen of ecclesiastical history will always be doubtful what to *call* him, or under what denomination of religious professors he claims a place? Such would be the surprise and such the reflections of the learned and the vulgar, who had not heard of Baptists that plead for free communion; they being the only Christians now in the world, for aught appears, that are capable of realizing such a report.

But were such a singular conduct warranted by the laws of Christ, or agreeable to the truly primitive pattern; the surprise and the censure of weak, fallible mortals, would be of little importance. For it is not the approbation of men, but the revelation of God, that is our only rule in the administration of divine institutions. To that revelation, therefore, we must appeal, and by it the sentiment and practice, now in dispute, must stand or fall.

### SECTION III.

#### *Arguments against Free Communion at the Lord's Table.*

IT must, I think, be allowed, that the *order* and *connection* of positive appointments in divine worship, depend as much on the sovereign pleasure of the great Legislator, as the appointments themselves: and if so, we are equally bound *to regard* that order and connection, in their administration, as to observe the appointments at all. Whoever, therefore, objects to that order, or deviates from it, opposes that sovereign authority by which those branches of worship were first instituted. – For instance: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, it is allowed on all hands, are *positive* ordinances: and, as such, they depend for their very existence on the sovereign will of God. Consequently, which of them should be administered *prior* to the other, (as well as to what *persons*, in what *way*, and for what *end*) must depend entirely on the will of their divine Author. His determination must *fix* their order; and his revelation must *guide* our practice.

Here, then, the question is, Has our sovereign Lord revealed his will, in regard to this matter? *To the law and the testimony – How revealest thou?* To determine the query, we may first consider the order of *time*, in which the two positive institutions of the New Testament were appointed. That baptism was an ordinance of God, that submission to it was required, and that it was administered to multitudes, before the sacred supper was heard of or had an existence, are undeniable facts. There never was a time, since the ministry of our Lord's forerunner commenced, in which it was not the duty of repenting and believing sinners to be baptized. The venerable John, the twelve Apostles, and the Son of God incarnate, all united in recommending baptism, at a time when it would have been impious to have eaten bread and drank wine as an ordinance of divine worship. Baptism, therefore, had the *priority*, in point of institution; which is a presumptive evidence that it has, and ever will have, a *prior claim* on our obedience. – So, under the ancient economy *sacrifices* and *circumcision* were appointed and practised in the patriarchal ages; in the time of Moses, the *paschal feast* and

*burning incense* in the holy place, were appointed by the God of Israel. But the two former, being prior in point of institution, always had the priority in order of administration.

Let us now consider the order of *words*, in that commission which was given to the ambassadors of Christ. He who is king in Zion, when asserting the plenitude of his legislative authority, and giving directions to his ministering servants, with great solemnity says, ‘*All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*’\* Such is the high commission, and such the express command, of Him who is *Lord of all*, when addressing those that were called to preach his word, and administer his institutions. – Here, it is manifest, the commission and command are, first of all, *to teach*; then – what? To *baptize*? or to administer the *Lord’s Supper*? I leave common sense to determine. And, being persuaded she will give her verdict in my favour, I will venture to add; A limited commission includes a *prohibition* of such things that are not contained in it; and positive laws imply their *negative*. For instance: When God commanded Abram to circumcise all his *males*, he readily concluded, that neither circumcision, nor any rite of a familiar nature, was to be administered to his *females*. And, as our brethren themselves maintain, when Christ commanded that *believers* should be baptized, without mentioning any others; he tacitly prohibited that ordinance from being administered to *infants*: so, by parity of reason, if the same sovereign Lord commanded, that believers should be baptized – baptized immediately after they have made a profession of faith; then he must intend, that the administration of baptism should be *prior* to a reception of the Lord’s Supper: and, consequently, tacitly *prohibits* every unbaptized person having communion at his table.

The order of administration in the *primitive* and *apostolic practice*, now demands our notice. That the apostles, when endued with the power from on high, understood our Lord in the sense for which we plead, and practised accordingly, is quite evident. For thus it is written; *Then they that gladly received his word were*, what? admitted to the Lord’s Table? No; but *baptized. And the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls, And they continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, in breaking bread and in prayer.*\* – Now, in regard to the members of this first Christian church, either our opponents conclude, that they were all baptized, or they do not. If the latter, whence is their conclusion drawn? Not from the sacred historian’s narrative. For thence we learn, that they whose hearts were penetrated by keen convictions, were *exhorted* to be baptized – that they who gladly received the truth were *actually* baptized – and that they who were baptized, and they only, for any thing that appears to the contrary, were *added* to the church. Either, therefore, our brethren must, in this case, infer without premises, and conclude without evidence; or they must have recourse to some divine declaration, not contained in this context. But, in what book, in what chapter, is found the verse in any declaration found, relating to this church at Jerusalem, that can warrant such a conclusion? – If, on the other hand, our brethren allow, that all the members of this truly apostolic church were baptized; then, either they consider the constitution of it, in that respect, as expressive of the mind of Christ, and as a model for succeeding churches, or they do not. If the former, either Jesus Christ discovered some defect in that plan of proceeding, and, in certain cases, countermanded his first order, or the conduct of our brethren must be wrong; they admitting persons to communion, who, on their own principles, are not baptized. But if they do not look upon this apostolic precedent, as expressive of the mind of Christ, and as a pattern for future imitation to the end of the

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\* Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

\* Acts ii. 41, 42.

world; they must consider the apostles, either as ignorant of our Lord's will, or as unfaithful in the performance of it. Consequences these, which cannot be admitted, without greatly prejudicing the honour and interest of true religion, and not a little contributing to the cause of infidelity: for which reason they will not, no doubt, be abhorred by all our brethren.

Again: It is manifest from that first and most authentic history of the primitive Christian church, contained in the Acts of the apostles; that after sinners had received the truth and believed in Jesus Christ, they were exhorted and commanded, by unerring teachers, to be baptized without delay. For thus we read; *Repent and BE BAPTIZED every one of you – When they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were BAPTIZED, both men and women – And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he BAPTIZED him – and was BAPTIZED, he and all his straightway – Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized – And how, why tarriest thou? ARISE, AND BE BAPTIZED – Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we? And he COMMANDED them to be BAPTIZED in the name of the Lord.\** – Hence, it is abundantly evident, that baptism, in those days, was far from being esteemed an indifferent thing; and equally far from being deferred, till the Christian converts had enjoyed communion at the Lord's Table for months and years. Yes, it appears with the brightest evidence, that a submission to baptism was the *first*, the very *first* public act of obedience, to which both Jews and Gentiles were called, after they believed in Jesus Christ. And it is equally clear, from the last of those passages here transcribed, that the highest evidence of a person's acceptance with God, though attended with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the bestowal of miraculous gifts, was so far, in the account of Peter, from superseding the necessity of a submission to the ordinance of baptism; that he urged the consideration of those very facts, as a reason why they who were so blessed and honoured should submit to it *immediately*. Consequently, while our brethren revere the authority by which the apostles acted, and while they believe that infant sprinkling is not baptism; they are obliged, in virtue of these ancient precedents, and by all that is amiable in a consistent conduct, to admit none to communion at the Lord's Table, whom they do not consider as really baptized according to the command of Christ – Not have we the least reason to believe that the apostles were invested with a *discretionary* power, to alter our Lord's institutions as they might think proper; either as to mode, or subject, or their order and connection with one another. No; they never pretend to any such power; they utterly disclaim it. Let us hear the declaration of one, as the language of all, and that in regard to the sacred supper. *I have RECEIVED OF THE LORD, that which also I delivered unto you.* And again, relating to his doctrine in general, when writing to the same people and in the same epistle, he says, *I delivered unto you THAT WHICH I ALSO RECEIVED.\** The apostles being only *servants* in the house of God, has no more authority to alter or dispense with an ordinance of Jesus Christ, than any other minister of the word. Their apostolic gifts and power did not at all invest them with a right of *legislation* in the kingdom of their divine *Lord*. They were still but *stewards*; *as such* they claimed regard from the churches, in which they laboured and to which they wrote: at the same time freely acknowledging, that it was their indispensable duty to *be found faithful* in the whole extent of their office; they being accountable to the great Head of the church. They acted, therefore, in the whole compass of their duty, under the

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\* Acts ii. 38. viii. 12, 37. xvi. 33. xvi. 33. xviii. 8. xxii. 16. x. 47.

\* 1 Cor. xi. 23. xv. 3.

command, and by the direction of the ascended Jesus. Nay, the more they were honoured and blessed by him, the more were they bound to obey the least intimation of his will.

Once more: if we regard *the different signification* of the two institutions it will appear, that baptism ought to precede. In submitting to baptism, we have an emblem of our union and communion with Jesus Christ, as our great representative, in his death, burial and resurrection: at the same time declaring, that we *reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God*; and that it is our desire, as well as our duty, to live devoted to him. And as, in baptism, we profess to have *received* spiritual life; so in communicating at the Lord's Table, we have the emblems of that heavenly food by which we *live*, by which we *grow*, and in virtue of which we hope to *live for ever*. And we are born of God but once, so we are *baptized* but once: but as our spiritual life is maintained by the *continued* agency of divine grace, and the comfort of it enjoyed by the *habitual* exercise of faith on the dying Redeemer, so it is our duty and privilege *frequently* to receive the holy supper. Hence theological writers have often called baptism, the sacrament of *regeneration*, or of *initiation*; and the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of *nutrition*. – Whether, therefore, we consider the order of *time*, in which these two institutions were appointed; or the order of *words*, in the great commission given by our Lord to his ministering servants; or the order of administration in the *apostolic practice*; or the *different signification* of the two solemn appointments, a submission to baptism ought ever to *precede* a reception of the Lord's Supper. Or, should any one question the validity of this inference, I would ask; Whether, in regard to the sacred supper, he might as well deny the necessity of always *blessing* the bread, before it be broken; or of *breaking* the bread, before it be received; or of receiving the *bread* before the *wine*? Or, by what *better* arguments he would prove the opposite conduct, either unlawful or improper? Nay, if these *declarations*, and *facts*, and *precedents*, be not sufficient to determine the point in our favour; it will be exceedingly hard, if not impossible, to conclude with certainty, in what order any two institutions that God ever appointed, were to be administered. For, surely, that order of proceedings which agree with the *time* in which two institutions were appointed; with the words in which the observation of them was enjoined; with the *first administration* of them by unerring teachers; and with their *different signification*, must be the order of truth, the order of *propriety*, and the order of *duty*, because it is the order of God. And our brethren will do well to remember, that when Paul commends the Corinthians for *keeping the ordinances as they were delivered to them*; it is plainly and strongly implied, that divine ordinances are given us to *keep*; that they who keep them *as they were instituted*, are to be commended; and that they who do not *keep* them at all, observe them in a *different order* or *manner* from that at first appointed, are worthy of censure. Nor is the order in which the two positive institutions of Jesus Christ should be administered, less clearly expressed in the New Testament, than the mode and subject of baptism. This however, is a notorious fact, that while the *latter* have been much and warmly disputed, the *former* does not appear to have been ever called in question by the real disciples of Christ; except in the conduct of those few that plead for free communion. They, indeed, practically deny that which appears clear as the sun, to all other Christians, by frequently admitting persons to the Lord's table, and baptizing them afterwards: for they do not refuse to baptize their Pædobaptist members, if they desire it, though they may have been in fellowship with them for ten, or twenty, or fifty years. – But have not – I appeal to the understanding and the conscience of my brethren themselves; - have not the Pædobaptists as good a warrant for their practice, as you have inverting the *plain*, the *established*, the *divinely appointed* order, in which the two positive institutions ought to be administered? They baptize and then teach; you administer the sacred supper and then baptize. They baptize thousands whom they never admit to the Lord's Table; you receive to that sacred ordinance numbers who, on your

own principles, never were, nor ever will be baptized. Do they argue in defence of their practice, and endeavour to prove their point, not by express commands, or plain facts, recorded in the New Testament; but by *inferences*, and that, sometimes, from such passages of holy writ, as have not, in our opinion, any relation at all to the subject? so do you. For it is not pretended, that there is any *express command* to receive unbaptized believers into communion; and as to a *plain precedent*, our brethren are equally silent. The *whole* of their arguing, therefore, must be either analogical or inferential. Yet the design of it is to shew, what is our duty in regard to a *positive* ordinance, which is neither commanded in a precept – a precept relating to the ordinance in question; nor exhibited in an example? What I demand, can it be, or how should it direct our conduct? If our brethren's way of arguing be just, we may turn Pædobaptists at once; for it is impossible to stand our ground in a contest with them.

It would, no doubt, have been highly offensive to God, if the priests or the people of old had inverted the order appointed by him, for the administration of his own solemn appointments. For instance; first admit to the *Passover*, afterwards *circumcise*, *burn incense* in the holy place, then offer the *propitiatory sacrifice*. This, I conceive, our brethren must allow. Have they any reason, then, to imagine, that a similar breach of order is not equally displeasing to God, under the New Testament economy? If not, it must be supposed, that the Most High has not so great a regard to the purity of his own worship, is less jealous of his honour, and does not so much insist on his eternal prerogative now, as he did under the former dispensation: suppositions these, which they who acknowledge his universal dominion and absolute immutability, will hardly admit.

It must, I think, be acknowledged, even by our brethren themselves, that we have as good a warrant for omitting an *essential branch* of an ordinance, or to reverse the order in which the *constituent parts* of an ordinance were originally administered; as we have to lay aside a divine institution, or to change the order in which two different appointments were first fixed. And if so, were a reformed and converted Catholic, still retaining the Popish tenet of communion in *one kind* only, desirous of having fellowship with our brethren at the Lord's Table; they must, if they would act consistently on their present hypothesis, admit him to partake of the *bread*, though from a principle of conscience, he absolutely refused *the wine*, in that sacred institution. – Or, supposing, which is quite the reverse, that any of those who are in actual communion with them, finding the mastication and swallowing of solid food a little difficult, should conscientiously approve the condescending indulgence of Pope *Paschat*, in the twelfth century; who order, that such persons partake only of the wine: \* - Or, if any of their people should imagine, that the wine ought always to be administered *before* the bread; and should, from an erring conscience declare, that if the ordinance were not so administered they could not partake of it; they must, according to the tenour of their arguing, comply. They could not refuse; because the persons in question are considered, as *real believers* in Jesus Christ, and *sincerely desirous* to be found in the way of their duty, to the best of their knowledge.

The sentiment which our brethren adopt, if suffered to operate in its full extent, would exclude both Baptism and the Lord's Supper from the worship of God. As to *baptism*, whether infant or adult, it ought never be made a term of communion in the house of God, on the principle espoused by our opponents. For according to them, the grand, the *only* query, that is really necessary relating to a candidate for communion is; Has *God* received him? Is he a *believer* in Jesus Christ? And, so certain are they of this being an unerring rule, that if we dare to question a believer's right of communion, because we think he is not

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\* Dr. Priestly, on giving the Lord's Supper to children, p. 25, 26.

baptized; we might almost as well deny the doctrine of transubstantiation in the face of the Council of Trent: for we immediately expose ourselves to the dreadful censure of acting in a way, '*greatly prejudicial* to the honour and interest of true religion, and *not a little contributing* to the cause of *infidelity*.\* I think myself happy, however, that the *anathema sit* of the one, is destitute of power to enforce it; as the *opprobrious charge* of the other, wants evidence to prove it.

If, then, our brethren's grand rule of proceeding be right, we are bound to receive believers, *as such*, and have communion with them at the Lord's Table, though they do not consider themselves as baptized. And here I would beg leave to ask; Whether they would receive a candidate for communion whom they esteem as a believer in Jesus Christ, who has not been baptized in infancy; nor, looking on baptism as a temporary institution, is willing to be baptized at all? The supposition of a person, in such circumstances, applying for fellowship at the Lord's Table, is far from being improvable; nay, I have known it is a real fact. What then would our brethren do in such a case? As to *Pacificus*, he has informed us plainly enough what would be *his* conduct in such an instance; he pleading expressly for admitting believers of *all* denominations to communion at the Lord's Table. Yes, the very title of his piece is; '*A modest Plea for Free Communion at the Lord's Table, between the believers of all denominations.*'

Nor is the title of the same plea, under the signature of *Candidus*, any way different in its real import, for it runs thus: '*A modest plea for Free Communion at the Lord's Table; Particularly between the Baptists and the Pædobaptists.*' For it is manifest that the emphatical word, *Particularly* if not quite impertinent, must signify, that though *Candidus chiefly* defends free communion, between Baptists and Pædobaptists; yet that he is far from denying, nay, that he *really pleads* for the same free communion, with those that are neither the one nor the other. And who can they be but *Katabaptists*, or those in the same circumstances with the person in the case here supposed? So that whether they be *Quakers* or *Catholics*; whatever their distinguishing sentiments or modes of worship may be; they consider themselves as bound to admit them to the sacred supper if they look upon them as true believers, and they request communion with them. But as all our opponents are not entirely of their mind in this respect, I shall proceed with the argument. – If, then, they receive a person, in the supposed case, they avowedly reject baptism, as unnecessary to fellowship in a church of Christ; for if it be not requisite in *every* instance it is not so in *any*. If they refuse him, it must be because he is not baptized; for according to the supposition, they consider him as a partaker of divine grace and a believer in Jesus Christ. But if they reject him purely on that ground, they ought, on their Antipædobaptist principles, reject *all* who have had no other than infant baptism; because they consider it as very different thing from the appointment of Christ. Yes, they declare to all the world, every time they administer baptism on a profession of faith, to any of their Pædobaptist friends, that they do believe infant sprinkling to be an ordinance of Christ.

It may, perhaps, be objected; '*The two cases are not parallel: because they supposed candidate for communion, is not only unbaptized, but opposes the ordinance itself.*' True:

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\* When I read the title of a certain publication a few years ago, I was ready to pay; If the title page do not promise more than the author performs, we are now in a fair way to have *infidelity ruined for ever*. But, alas! I have since found that my expectations were too sanguine. For infidelity still exists; and the principles of it lurk in every breast, that will not allow unbaptized believers to have a right of communion at the Lord's Table: of which obnoxious sentiment almost the whole of the Christian church now is and has ever been. *Pacificus*, I presume, knows the book to which I refer; and *verbum sat sapienti*.

but not admitting a small disparity, he acts on a principle of conscience: for he supposes, with the Quakers, that baptism was not intended, by Jesus Christ, as a standard ordinance in his church; though he has a very different view of the Lord's Supper. And to adopt a method of arguing used by our brethren, when pleading for free communion; What have you to do with another man's conscience, in a matter that is non-essential? To his own Master he stands or falls. He considers the Lord's Supper as a very important ordinance, and longs to partake of it. And have not you told us, repeatedly, that it was designed for *all* believers; that *all* believers are capable of improvement by it; and that they have a right of communion, entirely *independent* of our judgment? Is he to be refused *one* ordinance, in the enjoyment of which he has reason to expect the presence of Christ and the blessing of heaven; merely because a sovereign God has not been pleased to shew him his duty and privilege in regard to *another*? And though you may not pay so great a regard to the reasoning of one whom you can *a rigorous* baptist, yet you cannot be deaf to the arguing of a friend, an ally, and one of the first advocates for free communion. Here, then, I beseech you, what Mr. Bunyan says, who speaks to the following effect. None can, 'render a bigger reason than this,' for not submitting to baptism, *I have no light therein.*' Such a person has an invincible reason, 'one that all men upon earth, and all angels in heaven, are not able to remove. For it is *God* that creates light; and for him to be baptized without light, would only prove him unfaithful to his own conscience, and render him a transgressor against God.\*' What, will you keep him from celebrating the death of his Lord, in the sacred supper, only because he does not see baptism in *your* eyes! Consider, I beseech you, that he is in your judgment, a sincere, a conscientious man; that he is born of God, and fervently loves our dearest Lord. Yes, the sincerity of his heart and his disposition to obedience are such, that, could he be once persuaded of baptism being a permanent ordinance in the Christian Church, he would not hesitate a moment to be baptized. Nay, he would rejoice in an opportunity of so manifesting his cordial subjection to Jesus Christ, were he convinced, that he is under an equal obligation to be baptized, as he is to receive the Lord's Supper, and *that* prior to *this*. And must, after all, the bare want of a *little water* be an insurmountable bar to his having communion with you? Shall this one circumstance of water '*Drown* and *sweep away* all his excellencies; not counting him worthy of that reception that, with hand and heart, shall be given to a novice in religion, because he consents to *water*?' – Nay, '*no man* can reject him; he cannot be *a man* if he object against him; not a man in Christ; not a man in understanding.' – 'How unreasonable it is to suppose, that he must not use and enjoy what *he knows*, because he knows *not all*?' And it will appear yet more unreasonable when it is considered, that 'baptism gives neither being nor *well-being* to a church.\*' Is this your kindness to a Christian brother! Is this your charity, your candour, your catholic spirit! Away with such rigid and forbidding notions; with such an unreasonable attachment to an external rite, and let your communion be *free indeed! universally free*, for Quakers, for Papists, for whomsoever appears to be born of God and desires fellowship with you. For though a converted Quaker may happen to be no friend to *baptism*; and though a reformed Catholic may still be prejudiced against *wine*, at the Lord's Table; yet, as both may have communion with you, in other respects, why should you object against it? Besides, do you not hope to have communion with them in heaven? On the same principle, you might refuse communion to *Enoch*, or *Elijah*, or *Paul*, were any one of them now upon earth, if he would not submit to baptism! Were you aware how much this uncharitable and dividing spirit has a tendency to '*injure real*

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\* Bunyan's Works, Vol. I. p. 135, 136. 8vo. edit.

\* Bunyan's Works, Vol. I. p. 134, 169, 174.

*religion,*’ and how much it ‘*contributes to the cause of infidelity;*’ such is your veneration for the revelation of God, and such your affection for Jesus Christ, that, I am persuaded, you would *never say a word* about baptism, nay, you would *wish it out of the world,* rather than give such occasion of scandal and mischief, as you unwittingly do. For the author to whom I have just appealed assures us, and lays it down as a maxim, which you ought never to violate; that in such cases, baptism, though an *ordinance* of God, ‘*is to be prudently shunned.* Let the cry be never so loud, *Christ, order, the rule, the command,* or the like; *carnality* is but the bottom, and they are but *babes* that do it; their zeal is but a *puff.* What shall we say? *All things* must give place to the profit of the people of God; yea, sometimes *laws* themselves, for their outward preservation, *much more* for godly edifying.’\* - Further; Though, in the case supposed, the candidate for communion *opposes* baptism, yet there is not so greatly a difference between the two instances as may, at the first view, be imagined. For, on our brethren’s Baptist principles, infant baptism not being an appointment of Christ, they who have had no other are unbaptized. In this respect, therefore, the cases are parallel. Beside, they are equally unwilling to submit to what our opponents consider as the only true baptism; and are equally conscientious in their refusal. The genuine, the necessary consequence, therefore, is, (if our brethren would act consistently) they must either accept both, or neither; for, in the judgment they form of each, God has received the one, as well as the other. But, as before hinted, by the same rule that we receive *one* to communion, who *is* not baptized; who does not *consider* himself baptized; we may receive *all:* for as there is but one *Lawgiver,* so there is but one *law,* relating to this matter; and he who has a right to dispense with it *once,* may do so *as often* as he pleases. Consequently, the principle adopted, by those who plead for free communion, has a natural tendency to *exclude baptism* from the worship of God.

Again: Though our brethren plead, that the persons whom they receive and continue in communion with them, are in their *own judgment* baptized; yet we may venture to query, whether this will *always* be the case. The following is a well authenticated fact. Several persons, being convinced of believers baptism, and wishing for fellowship with the people of God, related their Christian experience to a church and her pastor who practiced free communion. It was agreed to receive them. But when the time appointed for their being baptized came, and the pastor was ready to administer the ordinance to them, one of them was absent; and, consequently, was not baptized with his brethren. The stated reason for celebrating the death of Jesus at his own table quickly approaching, he was, notwithstanding, received into fellowship, had communion at the Lord’s Table, and was baptized afterwards.\* – Now this person was *not* a Pædobaptist; this person was *not even* in his *own judgment,* baptized, when he took a seat at the Lord’s Table. No; by desiring to be immersed on a profession of faith, he *declared* that he was unbaptized; *as such* he approached the holy table;

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\* Bunyan’s Works, Vol. I. p. 136, 141, 144.

\* If I be not greatly deceived, the Pastor of this church has pleaded the cause of free communion, under the name of *Pacifus.* A character, no doubt, very happily chosen, to express that peculiarly peaceful temper and admirably condescending conduct which are so clearly displayed in this little anecdote. But, as a perfectly consistent character is hard, exceedingly hard to be found among mortals, my reader will not be much surprised if I observe; That *Pacifus* himself has failed, in *one* particular, to answer him name. Yes, he and his coadjutor *Candidus* have, in a very *unpeaceful, uncandid* manner, charged a vast majority of their Baptist brethren, with ‘*not a little contributing to the cause of infidelity,*’ merely because they do not practise this *Remarkably free communion.* *Peace* and *Candour* are, indeed, very excellent things, as *Pacifus* and *Candidus* are the most amiable names: yet I would take the liberty of hinting, that *peace* and *unity,* without *truth* and *righteousness,* are an illicit combination; a wicked conspiracy against both God and man. *Amicus Pacifus, amicus Candidus, sed magis amica Veritas.*



and *as such* the pastor, in the name of the church, gave him the right hand of fellowship. Hence we see, that our opponents can admit such persons to the sacred supper, as *confess* themselves to be unbaptized, if occasion require; that is, if their Christian friends do not approve of the old, established mode of proceeding. – Besides, as it is not uncommon for the Pædobaptist members of those Churches that practise free communion, to desire baptism upon a profession of faith, after they have been in fellowship for many years; so it is probable, that some such members may be convinced, that infant sprinkling is not a divine appointment, and consequently, that they themselves are not baptized; yet live in the neglect of baptism for months and years, having communion at the Lord’s Table all the while. We will, therefore, suppose an instance of this kind in that Christian community of which *Pacifus* is pastor: and that he and the church in general are acquainted with it. What, then, must be done in the case? Done? why *Pacifus* will undoubtedly remonstrate against the shameful neglect. But if remonstrances do not produce the desired effect, what then? What? why things must remain *in statu quo*. Because *Pacifus* cannot move to have him excluded, with any appearance of candour or consistency; he openly pleading for communion with all believers of all denominations. Besides, he very well knows, that his brother is as much baptized now as he was when he first received into communion; and the whole that is laid to his charge relates to baptism: and to ‘*pull him into the water*’ will never do, whatever a *witty* and *polite* opponent may have said to the contrary.\* Besides, as Mr. Bunyan observes, ‘the law is not made for a righteous man, neither to debar him from communion, nor to cast him out, if he were in.’† So very pliable, so superlatively complaisant is free communion, that it cannot bear the thought of refusing fellowship at the Lord’s Table to any believer, even though he consider himself as unbaptized: far less can it endure the thought of giving any one much disturbance, who has a place at the Lord’s Table; even though he stand convicted in the eyes of God and man, in the court of his own conscience, and before the church to which he belongs, of being baptized, and of living in the total neglect of that divine institution.

Nor would the *Sacred Supper* be long practised in the church of God, or be esteemed a branch of divine worship, were the same principle applied to it and suffered to operate without restraint. Suppose, for instance, that a weak but well meaning man is a candidate for fellowship, with a church that practises free communion; that he gives the community full satisfaction, as to his being a partaker of divine grace, and has been baptized in infancy; but, at the same time, frankly declares, ‘I see no propriety, nor any utility, in *receiving bread and wine*, under the notion of its being an appointment of Jesus Christ. I consider the Lord’s Supper as a temporary institution; intended for the Christian church in the apostolic age, as a happy mean of attaching such persons to her worship and interests, as were newly converted from the antiquated ceremonies of Judaism, or the detestable superstitions of Paganism; and that the command to observe it, ceased long since to be obligatory. Admitting, however, that I am under a mistake in this particular; yet, as I have a natural inversion to wine,\* and as the bread and wine are *mere emblems* of the body and blood of Christ, and the reception of them an *external ceremony*; I think it is quite sufficient for me, if admitted into your fellowship, to *behold* the bread as broken, and the wine as poured out: which may, perhaps, if there be any thing useful in those outward signs, assist my meditations on the sufferings and death of our

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\* Dr. Mayo, in his True Scripture Doctrine of Baptism, p. 33.

† Bunyan’s Works, Vol. I. p. 134.

\* Bellarmine gives it as one reason for withholding the cup from the laity, that *Multi abhorrent à vino*. *Apud Amesium. Bell. Enervat.* iii. p. 172.

crucified Lord. But though I cannot partake with you of bread and wine, in your monthly communion; yet I should hope for advantage, great advantage, by having fellowship with you in every other public act of devotion; in the expressions of mutual, brotherly love; and in the exercise of holy discipline, according to the laws of Christ. Nor need I inform you, that it is the devotion of the *heart*, real *affection* one for another as brethren, and a *strict regard* to the moral conduct of all the members of a religious community, that are the capital things in a Christian church. And should you, for a moment, hesitate on the propriety of granting my sincere request; I would beg leave to remind you, that as being, on your principles, unbaptized, is no bar to my having fellowship with you; so your well-known candour must plead in my favour with equal force, though, at present, I cannot conscientiously partake with you at the Lord's Table. For what is there – I appeal to that catholic spirit for which you are so remarkable – what is there essential to a church of Christ, in a *participation* of bread and wine, any more than in *immersion* in water? for upon your own principles, the holy supper may as well be celebrated without the *former*, as baptism can be administered without the *latter*. Or, what authority is needful for you to dispense with the Lord's Supper, which is not included in that warrant by which you dispense with baptism?

Now, in such a case, what must be done? Here is a person whom that very church considers as a *believer in Christ* and *received of God*. But this is her *grand criterion* of a qualification for church-fellowship. So that if she violate, deliberately and openly violate, this *capital* rule of her conduct, she contradicts herself; she, according to her wonted application of the rule, disobeys God, and leaves free communion at the mercy of every opposer. She must, therefore, give him the right hand of fellowship; she cannot put a negative on his request, without exposing herself to those very censures which our brethren so freely pass upon us; not excepting that severest of all in which we are charged, with '*not a little* contributing to the cause of *infidelity*.' But this, even the *strict* Baptists will charitably suppose, she would not do on any account; and that she would be equally careful to stand clear of that keen rebuke; - *Thou art inexcusable who judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, does the same things.* I conclude, then, though such a proceeding would be quite novel, absolutely unexampled in the churches of Christ, and would, probably, both astonish and offend her sister communities, she must receive him. But if it be lawful in one instance, it must be so in a thousand: and, therefore, a church might thus go on, till the Lord's supper were entirely rejected by all her members, and banished from the worship of God, as it is among the Quakers.

The Church of England has justly incurred the censure of all Protestant Dissenters, for her arrogant claim of 'power to *decree rites*, or *ceremonies*,' in the worship of God 'and of authority in controversies of faith;'<sup>\*</sup> because such a claim infringes on the prerogative royal of Jesus Christ. But do not our brethren tacitly assume a similar power, when they presume to set aside an ordinance of Christ, or to reverse the order of divine institutions? it being demonstrable, that as great an authority is necessary to lay aside an old established rite; or to invert the order and break the connection of several rites; as can be required to institute one that is entirely new. 'For it is a maxim in law;' and holds good in divinity, 'That it requires the same strength to *dissolve*, as to *create* an obligation.'<sup>\*</sup> - Such a practice, therefore, as that of our brethren, were it adopted by the Baptists in general, would render our separation from the Established Church very suspicious. It would seem like the fruit of obstinacy, rather than the effect of a tender conscience, like a determined opposition to the ecclesiastical hierarchy,

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<sup>\*</sup> Articles of the Church of England. No. xx.

<sup>\*</sup> Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England. Vol. i. book i. ch. 2.

more than a desire of purer worship and stricter discipline. For, while we omit a positive and plain appointments of Jesus Christ, and connive at what we ourselves consider as a human invention; we have little reason to scruple the lawfulness of subscribing the article to which I have just referred: and if we can do that, with a good conscience, we have not much reason to dissent, on account of any thing else that is required in order to ecclesiastical conformity.<sup>†</sup> For if it be lawful to dispense with an appointment of God, out of regard to our *weaker brethren*; we cannot reasonably think it unlawful to practice the appointments of our National Church, out of regard to the *ruling power*; *submission* to the latter, being no less plainly required, in scripture, than *condescension* to the former. And if we may safely connive at *one* human invention, so as to supersede and take place of a divine institution; why may not the Church of England make what appointments she pleases? A little reflection will convince us, that he whose authority is competent to the setting aside, or altering of *one* institution, has a power equal to his wishes – may ordain times, and forms, and rites of worship; may model the house of God according to his own pleasure. But can such an authority belong to any besides the Great Supreme? No: to such an ordaining, or dispensing power, neither church nor synod, neither parliament nor conclave, neither king nor pope, has the least claim. For as the exertion of Omnipotence was equally necessary to the creation of a worm, as an angel; of an atom, as a world; so the interposition of divine authority is no less necessary to set aside, or to alter, *one* branch of instituted worship; than to add a *thousand* religious rites, or essentially to alter the whole Christian system.

Nor are those writers who have appeared in vindication of our national establishment, ignorant of their advantage over such Protestant Dissenters as proceed on the principle here opposed. For thus they argue, ‘If, notwithstanding the evidence produced, that baptism by *immersion* is suitable, both to the institution of our Lord and his apostles; and was by them ordained to represent burial with Christ, and so our dying unto sin, and our conformity to his resurrection by newness of life; as the apostle doth clearly maintain the meaning of that rite: I say, if notwithstanding this, all our [Pædobaptist] Dissenters do agree to *sprinkle* the baptized infant; why may they not as well submit to the significant ceremonies imposed by our church? For since it is as lawful to *add* unto Christ’s institutions a significant ceremony, as to *diminish* a significant ceremony which he or his apostles instituted, and use another in its stead, which they never did institute; what reason can they have to do the latter, and yet refuse submission to the former? And why should not the peace and union of the church be as prevailing with them to perform the one, as is their mercy to the infant’s body to neglect the other?’ – I leave the intellectual reader to apply this reasoning to the case before us, and shall only observe, That if this learned writer had been addressing those Dissenters who practise free communion, his argument would have had superior force. Because our Dissenting Pædobaptist brethren believe that infant sprinkling is real baptism, and practise it as having the stamp of divine authority; whereas those Dissenters with whom I am now concerned, believe no such thing. They consider it as a human invention; they speak of it as a human invention; and yet receive Pædobaptists into their churches, as if they were rightly and truly baptized, according to the command of Christ. Now, as Mr. Thomas Bradbury observes, ‘There is a great difference between *mistaking* the divine rule, and totally *laying it aside*. The reason, adds he, why we do not act as some other Christians [i.e. the

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<sup>†</sup> Dissenting Gent. Lett. To Mr. White. Let. i. p. 2.

\* Dr. Whitby’s Protestatnt Reconciler, p. 289.

Baptists] do, is because we think these demands [relating to a profession of faith and immersion, as necessary to baptism] are not made in scripture.<sup>†</sup>

As the sovereign authority and universal dominion of God, over his rational creatures; as his absolute right, not only to worship, but also to be worshipped in his *own way*; are more strongly asserted and brightly displayed in his positive institutions, than in any other branches of his worship; so, it is manifest, that we cannot disobey his revealed will concerning them, without impeaching his wisdom and opposing his sovereignty. Because a special interposition of divine authority, and an express revelation of the divine will, constitute the basis, the *only* basis, on which such institutions rest, in regard to their mode and subject, their order and connection one with another. Surely, then, such of our brethren who admit, as a divine institution, what they verily believe is a human invention, cannot but act an unjustifiable part. For, on their own principles, infinite wisdom chose and absolute sovereignty ordained *professing believers* as the subjects, and *immersion* as the mode of baptism: and it appears, by their frequently baptizing persons who were sprinkled in their infancy, that they look upon such a subject and such a mode of administration, as essential to the ordinance. By their conduct, in many instances, it also appears, they are no less persuaded, that unerring wisdom and supreme authority united in appointing baptism to me administered to *prior* to the Lord's Supper: for, where the views and the inclinations of the candidates for fellowship with them do not interfere, they always baptize, before they admit to the holy table. Thus, then, stands the case with our brethren, in regard to the positive appointments of heaven. They are verily persuaded that the wisdom and sovereignty of God united in ordaining, that *immersion* should be the mode of baptism, yet they connive at *sprinkling*; that *professing believers* should be the subjects, yet they admit of *infants*; that baptism should be administered before he receives the Lord's supper, and yet they permit unbaptized persons to have communion with them in that sacred ordinance. A paradoxical conduct this, which nothing in my opinion, short of a plenary dispensing power can possibly vindicate.\*

Again: as the sovereign will of God is more concerned and manifested in positive ordinances than in any other branches of holy worship: so it is evident, from the history of the Jewish church, which is the history of Providence for near two thousand years; that the *divine jealousy* was never sooner inflamed, nor even more awfully expressed, than when God's antient people failed in their obedience to such commands, or deviated from the prescribed rule of such institutions. The destruction of Nabab and Abihu, by fire from heaven; the breach that was made upon Uzzah; the stigma fixed and the curses denounced on Jeroboam; together with the fall and ruin of all mankind, by our first father's disobedience to a positive command, are among the many authentic proofs of this assertion. - Nor need we wonder at the divine procedure, in severely punishing such offenders. For knowingly to disobey the positive laws of Jehovah, is to impeach his wisdom, or his goodness, in such institutions; and

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<sup>†</sup> Duty and Doctrine of Baptism, p. 25, 26.

\* Some my readers will be pleased, I doubt not, with the following thoughts of Orobius, a learned Jew, on the subject of positive institutions. 'Lex ritualis ex Legislatoris arbitrio duntaxat pendet, aliquando, vel in plurimum nullo fundamento in naturali ratione invento: sed non ob id inferiorem perfectionis gradum obtinet supposita Legislatoris infinita Sapientia et Bonitate: altioris quod summe bonus, et sapiens Deus vanas et ineptas Leges homini præscribere nequit; quantum nobis earum ratio magis abdita, taumus: quod nobis nec curiose, nec philosophice scrutari licet, sed obedienter ejus imperio subjici, quo nostrum amorem, et debitam reverentiam summo Creatori præstemus: omnia quæ nobis observando proponit, sua infinita sapientia digna, valde bona, et perfectissima, toto corde credentes: siva ea posit, si vellet, dispensare, ea observare quam quæ a Deo etiam imperata in ratione nostra scirent, et observare possent, ut plurimi ex gentibus nullo ad Deum habito respectu fecerunt.' Apud Stapferum, Institut. Theolog. Polem. Tom. iii. xi. § 238.

impiously to deny his legislative authority and absolute dominion over his creatures. And though the methods of Providence, under the gospel economy, are apparently much more mild and gentle, in regard to offenders in similar cases; yet our obligations to a conscientious and punctual obedience are not in the least relaxed. For that divine declaration, occasioned by the dreadful catastrophe of Aaron's disobedient sons, is an eternal truth, and binding on all generations: *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.*\* - When God speaks, we should be all attention; and when he commands, we should be all submission. The clearer light which God has afforded, and the richer grace which Christ has manifested, under the present dispensation; are so far from *lessening*, that they evidence *increase* our obligations to perform every divine command relating to christian worship. For, certainly, it must be allowed, that they on whom greater favours are bestowed, and higher honours conferred, are so much the more obliged to revere, love, and obey their divine benefactor. And, as a certain author justly observes, 'To take advantage of dark surmises, or doubtful reasoning, to elude obligations of any kind, is always looked upon as an indication of a dishonest heart.\*' Accursed, then, is the principle, and rebellious is the conduct of those professors, who think themselves warranted, by the grace of the gospel, to trifle with God's positive appointments, any more than the priests or the people were of old. For whether Jehovah lay his commands on Gabriel in glory, or on Adam in paradise; whether he enjoin the performance of any things on Patriarchs, or Jews, or Christians, they are all and equally to obey, or else his commands must stand for nothing. Neither diversity of economy, nor difference of must be absolutely independent of God, before our obligations to obey him can be dissolved. But as the former is impossible, so is the latter.†

When I consider myself as contending with Pacificus, I cannot but esteem it a happiness to find that my reasoning, in the last paragraph, is very strongly supported by the following quotation; which is taken from a little publication that received something more than a bare *imprimatur*, from Mr. John Ryland. And as Pacificus pays an uncommon regard to Mr. Ryland's judgment, in matters of this kind, I shall not be thought assuming, if I summons his attention to what the latter avows, as expressing his own opinion. The passage to which I refer, is this: 'The ordinances of the gospel are established by the authority of Christ, as king and supreme lawgiver in his church; they are particularly enforced by his own example, and his will expressly declared: and as they have no dependence on any circumstances, which are liable to vary in different countries, or distant periods of time, it necessarily follows, that the primitive model of administration *should be strictly and conscientiously adhered to*. No pretence to greater priority, nor any plea of inconveniency, can justify our *boldly opposing the authority of God by the alteration of his law*, and substituting of human ordinance instead of a divine. In a former dispensation, in which the ritual was numerous and burdensome, the great Jehovah was particularly jealous of his honour as Supreme Lawgiver and looked upon the *least innovation as a direct opposition the authority*. Moses, we are informed, was *admonished of God to make all things according to the pattern shewed him in the mount*. And those unfortunate youths who presumed to alter the form his religion, and worshipped him in a way he had not commanded, fell under the severest marks of his displeasure; which shews that he looked upon the least innovation in the *ceremonial part* of his precepts, as an *impious and daring opposition and contempt* of his authority, and as deserving of peculiar and distinguished vengeance, as a direct and open violation of the moral law. And as the great

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\* See Levit. x. 1, 2, 3.

\* Dr. Oswald's Appeal to Common Sense, p. 21.

† Witsii Miscel. Sac. Tom. i. lib. ii. Dissert. ii. § 3.

King of the universe required such strictness and punctuality, and insisted on such scrupulous exactness in the performance of the minutest rite belonging to the legal dispensation; it would be extremely difficult to assign a reason why he should be more *lax* and *careless*, and allow a *greater scope* to human discretion under the Christian [economy]. The *greater light* which shines in our religion, the *small number* and *simplicity* of its ceremonials, and the *end* and *design* of those institutions being more clearly revealed; are reasons which *strongly indicate the contrary*. And if it be further observed, that the religion of Jesus is particularly calculated to *set aside worldly wisdom, and mortify the pride of man*; it cannot, without great absurdity, be supposed, that the sublime Author of it will *dispense with the performance of his positive laws, or admit of the least variation*, to honour that wisdom, or indulge that pride which the whole scope of his gospel hath a manifest tendency to abase. Surely, then, it behoves Christians, in an affair of such consequence, to be circumspect and wary; it will certainly be well for them, if they can give a good account of their practice, and a satisfactory answer to that important question, *Who hath required this at your hand?*\* - Had Mr. Ryland only *recommended* that little piece to the public, which contains this excellent passage, he would certainly have deserved my sincerest thanks. For the quotation produced may be justly considered as a *compendious answer* to all that *Pacificus* has wrote, and to all that he can write, in defence of free communion, so long as he professes himself a Baptist. Whether he will make a reply to the animadversions of my feeble pen, I cannot pretend to say; but I think he will hardly have courage, in any future publications on the subject before us, openly to confront and attack his *dearest* and *most intimate friend* Mr. Ryland.

Though the Lord's Supper is a positive institution of Jesus Christ, and though we cannot know any thing at all about it, but what we learn from the New Testament; yet our brethren make, not the word of revelation, but the measure of light and the dispositions of a candidate for fellowship, the rule of admission to it. - This appears from heave. A person applies to one of their churches for communion in the ordinances of God's house; the pastor of which community, and a great majority of its members, are Baptists. He gives a reason of the hope that is in him, to general satisfaction. His moral conduct is good, and his character amiable. The pastor, in the name of the church, desires to know, what are his view of *baptism*. He declares himself a Pædobaptist; says he was baptized in his infancy, and is quite satisfied with it. Now, neither the pastor, nor the generality of his people, can look upon this as baptism; but consider it an invention of men, and a corruption in the worship of God. Consequently, they would be glad if his views, in that respect, were otherwise. They agree, however, to receive him into communion. And why? Because they believe that Christ commanded, or that scriptures warrant *infant sprinkling*? No such thing. Because the New Testament plainly informs them, that *unbaptized converts* were admitted to the Lord's Table in the apostolic churches? Not in the least. Because Jesus Christ has expressly granted them a *dispensing power*, in regard to baptism? They disclaim any such grant.\* What, then, is the ground on which they proceed? Why, truly, the candidate *believes*, is *fully persuaded*, that infant sprinkling is real baptism; and has been informed, that he was actually sprinkled in the first state of his life. On this foundation they admit him to the Lord's Table: and, which is very

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\* Six Views of Believ. Baptism, p. 17, 18, 19, 20.

\* The Church of Rome frankly acknowledges, by her delegates assembled in the Council of Trent, that our sovereign Lord, when he instituted the holy supper, administered in both kinds, and that it was so administered for some time; she, however, expressly claims an authority to dispense with that order. Now, though I would by no means insinuate, that our brethren are equally culpable with that mother of adominations; yet it admit of a query, whether, in this particular, she be not more *consistent with herself*; than they? *Council of Trent*. Sess. xxi. cap. i, ii, iii.

remarkable, they receive him with a cordial good will, to have him baptized afterwards, if even he discovers an inclination towards it. Their charity forbids them treating a Christian as *unbaptized*, if he do not heartily *believe* himself to be baptized. As if that could not be wrong, which a sincere disciple of Christ firmly concludes to be right! Or, if we were bound, in certain cases, practically to allow that to be right, which we are fully persuaded is really wrong! – But might not the pastor of such a church, on the same principle, and with equal countenance, from the scripture, *baptize* a person desirous of it, without a profession of faith, and without any evidence that he is a believer in Jesus Christ? For, as Pacificus and Candidus argue, in regard to baptism, Who is to be the judge of what is, or is not *faith*? Most certainly, *every man for himself*, and not one for another; else we destroy the right of private judgment, and go about to establish a popish infallibility against the liberty of the gospel. I have no business with any man’s conscience but my own, unless in endeavouring, in a proper manner, better to instruct it where it appears to be wrong. If my Pædobaptist brother is satisfied in his *own mind* that he is rightly baptized, [or truly converted] he is so to himself? – What is there in a false persuasion, relating to baptism, that merits the regard of a church: any more than in a deception about faith and conversion, to deserve the connivance of a minister? for the self-deception is supposed to be as real in the one case, as in the other: though the state of the two candidates, and the danger attending their respective mistakes, are undoubtedly different. If, notwithstanding, our sovereign Lord has not virtually forbidden us to baptize any without a profession of faith, what right have we so to limit the administration of that ordinance? And if our divine Lawgiver had tacitly prohibited unbaptized believers approaching his table, by what authority do we admit them? Now I appeal to the reader, I appeal to Christians in general, whether there be not as much evidence in the New Testament, that baptism was administered by the apostles, to such whom they did not consider *as believers* in Jesus Christ; as there is to conclude, that they received any to communion, before they considered them *as baptized* believers. It is not the measure of a believer’s knowledge, nor the evidence of his integrity; nor is it the charitable opinion we form about his acceptance with God, that is the rue of his admission to the sacred supper; but the *precepts* of Jesus Christ, and the *practice* of the apostolic churches. To depart from this only rule of conduct, through ignorance, is a culpable error; and knowingly to deviate from it, is nothing short of rebellion against the sovereign majesty of Zion’s King.

To dispense with the positive appointments of Jesus Christ, in condescension to weak believers, and with a view to the glory of God, cannot be right. For, as an eminent author observes, “They must be evasions past understanding, that can hold water against a divine order – God never gave power to any man, to change his ordinances, or to dispense with them. God is a jealous God, and careful with his sovereignty! ’Tis not for any inferior person to alter the stamp and impression the Prince commands. None can coin ordinances but Christ; and, till he call them in, they ought to be current among us.”\* – To which I may add the testimony of another learned writer, who says, when speaking of baptism, ‘As the salvation of men ought to be dear unto us; so the glory of God, which consisteth in that *his orders be kept*, ought to be *much more dear*.’† – Yet here, I humbly conceive, our brethren are faulty. For what is *dispensing* with a positive appointment, by laying it aside, or conniving at the neglect of it, on such occasions in which it was commanded to be administered? Now, on their Antipædobaptist principles, they admit unbaptized persons to the Lord’s Table; many of whom are never baptized. In regard to such, therefore, they lay entirely aside, they

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\* Charnock’s Works, Vol. ii. p. 763, 773, 774. Edit. 1.

† Cartwright, in Wall’s Hist. Inf. Bap. Part i. chap. 15.

annul the ordinance. That they *reverse the order* of two positive institutions, is equally clear; numbers of those whom they admit to the Lord's Table, having communion with them in that ordinance for many years, before they are baptized. And that this very singular conduct proceeds from a regard to the edification of sincere, but less informed believers, and in hopes that God will be glorified in it; they often assert. Dispense with a divine institution, for the edification of weak believers! Invert the order of God's appointments and break his positive laws, with a view to his glory! Theological paradoxes these, which seem to border on that hateful, Antinomian maxim, *Let us do evil that good may come*. A position which the pen of inspiration excretes; which every virtuous mind abhors. But that no pretence of doing honour to God, nor any plea of being useful to men, can possibly deserve the least regard, if the measures which must be pursued to obtain the end interfere with the divine revealed will, we learn from various facts recorded in the Bible. Uzzah, for instance, when he put forth his hand to support the tottering ark, thought, no doubt, he was doing honour to him who dwelt between the cherubim, over the mercy-seat; and, at the same time, as that sacred coffer was at the last importance to the antient sanctuary, he shewed an equal regard to the edification of his fellow worshippers, by endeavouring to preserve it from injury. But, notwithstanding this fair pretext; nay, though the man after God's own heart saw little amiss his conduct; (perhaps he thought he deserved a little praise) as the ark, with all that pertained to it, and its whole management, were of positive appointment; he, whose name is JEALOUS, was greatly offended. The sincere, well-meaning man, having no command, nor any example of what he did, fell under Jehovah's anger, and lost his life, as the reward for his officiousness. And as the Holy Ghost has recorded the fact so circumstantially,\* we have reason to consider it as a warning to all, of the danger there is in tampering with positive ordinances; and as standing evidence, that God will have his cause supported and his appointments administered, *in his own way*. – The case of Saul, and the language of Samuel to that disobedient monarch, inculcate the same truth. "The people, said Saul to the venerable prophet, took of the spoil, sheep and oxen – *to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God* in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as *in obeying the voice* of the Lord? Behold, *to obey is better* than sacrifice, and *to hearken* than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.† - Remarkable words! The king of Israel, we find, pleaded a regard to the worship and the honour of God. The cattle were spared, that Jehovah's altar might be furnished with plenty of the finest sacrifices. But Samuel soon overruled this fair pretence. He quickly informed the infatuated prince, that obedience to divine appointments, especially in such duties as depend entirely on an *express* command (as the utter destruction of Amalek did, and as communion at the Lord's Table now does) is better in the sight of God, than hecatombs of bleeding sacrifices, or clouds of smoking incense: and, consequently, better than a misapplied tenderness to any of our fellow creatures, or a misguided zeal to promote their peace and edification. At the same time the prophet assures him, that when the Most High commands, nothing can excuse a non-performance; because disobedience to a *plain, positive, known* command is justly ceased with *idolatry* and *witchcraft*.

A very sensible writer, in the conclusion of a discourse upon this passage, observes, that we may learn from this text, what we are the true characteristics of acceptable obedience. 'It must be *implicit*; founded immediately on the authority of God. We must not take upon us to judge of the moment and importance of any part of his will, further than he hath made it known himself. It is a *very dangerous thing* for us to make comparisons between

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\* 2 Sam. vi. 1-11.

† 1 Sam. xv. 21, 22, 23.



one duty and another; especially with a view of *dispensing* with any of them, or *altering their order*, and substituting one in another's place.' – Another 'character of true obedience is, that it be *self-denied* and *impartial*; that it be not directed or qualified by our own interest both points out the object, and assigns the measure of our obedience; and in that case, it does not deserve the name of obedience to God at all. When the Christian is devoted to God, ready at his call, and equally disposed to any employment assigned him in providence, he then may be said indeed to do his will. – It must 'be *universal*, without any exception. Saul and the children of Israel had complied so far with the order given them, that the greatest part both of the people and substance of Amalek was destroyed; but he stopped short, and knowingly left unfinished what had been enjoined him by the same authority.\*

When a Pædobaptist applies for communion with Baptists, he acts upon a persuasion that he has been rightly and truly baptized: for there is reason to believe, that the generality of our Pædobaptist brethren would start at the thought of partaking at the Lord's Table, while they consider themselves as unbaptized. Consequently, when our opponents admit one of them to communion, they confirm him in what they consider a false presumption, and practically approve of what, at other times, they boldly pronounce a *human invention, a tradition of men, and will-worship*; for such infant sprinkling must be, if not a divine appointment. Nor can they exculpate themselves, in this respect, unless they were *professedly* to receive him, as *unbaptized*. Because he *considers* himself as baptized; he *desires communion* as baptized; nor has he any idea of sitting down at the Lord's Table, *as unbaptized*; well knowing, that such an attempt would be contrary to the apostolic pattern, and to the sense of the Christian church in general.

That circumcision was, by divine command, an indispensable qualification, in every male, for a participation of the Jewish Passover, and communion in the sanctuary worship, is generally allowed. And though I am far from thinking that baptism came in the place of circumcision, as many of our Pædobaptist brethren suppose; yet that the former is equally to communion at the Lord's Table, under the Christian economy, as the latter was to every male, in order to partake of the paschal feast, and to unite in the tabernacle service, I am fully persuaded. Nor is my opinion singular. It has been the sense of the Christian church in every age; and, excepting those Baptists who plead for free communion, it is the voice of the Christian world in general at this day. – I do not find that the necessity of circumcision for the purposes just mentioned, was ever controverted, either by the antient or modern Jews. We will suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that it was disputed in the Jewish church; and that, amidst a great variety of interesting intelligence, which the Rabbinical writers pretend to give, concerning antient customs and antient disputes, they are found to speak as follows: 'In the days of our master, Moses, disputes arose about the nature and necessity of circumcision: that is, whether the antient rite was to be performed on the *foreskin*, or on the *finger*; and, whether it was an indispensably requisite qualification, in every male, for a seat at the paschal feast, and admission to the sanctuary worship. The generality of our fathers maintained, that no male, though a son of Abraham; that no Gentile, though he might acknowledge and serve Abraham's God; had any claim to communion in those joyful and solemn services, if he was not circumcised according to the divine command. – Others contended, with no less assurance, that circumcision being only an *outward sign* of what is internal and spiritual; every male, whether a descendant from the loins of our father Abraham, or one of the Gentile race, who knew and feared the God of Israel, had an undeniable claim to fellowship, though it were not the foreskin of his flesh, but a finger that

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\* Dr. Witherspoon's Practic. Disc.\_Vol. i. p. 335, 336.

was circumcised. The latter asserted, with great confidence, that the holy blessed God having accepted such; as plainly appeared by their having the internal and spiritual circumcision; it would be *absurd* and *uncharitable* to refuse them communion. And when disputing with their opponents, that would with an air of superior confidence demand, Will *you* reject from fellowship those whom God has received! – Absolutely reject those who have *the thing signified*, barely because, in our opinion, they want the *external sign*! – Those who possess the *substance*, perhaps, to a much great degree than yourselves, merely because they want the *shadow*! What, will you refuse communion to a brother Israelite, or a pious Gentile, in the *tabernacle* here below, with whom you hope to enjoy everlasting fellowship in the *temple* above! Strange attachment to the manner of performing an external rite! – Besides, great allowances must be made for the prejudices of education. These our brethren whom you reject, as if they were Heathens, as if they were absolutely unclean; have been educated in the strongest prejudices against what we think the true circumcision. They have been taught from their earliest infancy, that though our fathers, for a few centuries after the rite was established, generally circumcised the foreskin; yet that the part on which the ceremony was first performed, is by no means *essential* to the ordinance. And, therefore, as various inconveniences were found to attend the mode of administration then generally practiced; instead of cutting off the *praputium*, many began to circumcise the *finger*; which has been the custom in some of our tribes ever since, and which, they strenuously plead, is not forbidden by an divine revelation. This, we readily acknowledge, is a mistake; nor dare we, on any account, imitate their proceedings in that respect; because with us, there is no doubt, that the God of our fathers ordained it otherwise. But yet, as all have not the same opportunities of information, nor an equal measure of light; and as our brethren are verily persuaded that they have been circumcised according to the divine command; (for if they were not, they would readily comply with our mode of proceedings) it is our indispensable duty to receive them in love, and not harass their minds with ‘doubtful disputations’ about a matter that is not essential. For we all worship the *same God*; and, so far as his *moral* worship is concerned, in the *same way*; though we happen to differ about an external rite, that is by no means essential, either to spiritual worship here, or to the salvation of souls hereafter. – Besides, though it be admitted that the divinely appointed mode of administering the sacred rite is of *some* importance; yet it must be admitted, that the edification of such as truly fear God is of *indefinitely greater importance*. But, if you exclude them from the solemn sanctuary worship, you debar them from a capital mean of their spiritual benefit. You should also consider, who is to be the judge of what is, or is not, the true circumcision. Every man, most certainly, must judge for himself, and not one for another; else you destroy the right of private judgment; you invade the sacred prerogative of conscience; and tacitly advance a claim to infallibility. If your brethren, who circumcise a finger instead of the part appointed, be satisfied in their *own minds*, they are circumcised *to themselves*; and while the answer of a good conscience attends it, God will and does own them in it, to all the ends designed by it; so that while they consider it as laying them under the same obligation to holiness of heart and life, as we consider our circumcision to do us, why should you not have fellowship with them? – Nor are you sufficiently aware, how *much you injure* the cause of real religion, and *promote* the baneful interests of infidelity, by being so strict and rigid. Were you to be more candid and charitable, in regard to this matter, it might be expected that numbers of our brethren, who, it must be allowed, administer this rite in a very improper manner; would cordially unite with us, and, in time, utterly renounce their mistake. We should also have reason to hope, that many of our Gentile neighbours, who *detest circumcision*, as performed by us, might become proselytes to the Jewish religion, and worship the most high God in fellowship with us. But

so long as you insist, not only on the rite itself, (for that we ourselves are not willing to give up entirely) but on that *mode* of administration which is so obnoxious to them, as indispensably necessary to communion with you; it will be, not only a *wall of partition* between us and them, but a *bone of contention* among the chosen tribe themselves. Consequently it must impede, greatly impede, the exercise of that love to God, and that affection for man, which are of much greater importance than the most accurate performance of a merely external rite.'

Now supposing our brethren in the course of their reading to meet with such an account, what would they think of it? What would they say? They would, undoubtedly, suspect the truth of the whole. They would consider it as a Rabbinical fable. But how would their indignation rise, were the fabulous narrator to proceed and assert; 'That Moses and Joshua, warmly espousing this latter opinion, added much to its credit!' This they would say, is absolutely incredible, and a vile aspersion on the characters of those illustrious saints. Had Nahab and Abidu been mentioned as the abettors of this unscriptural practice, there would have been less reason to deny the truth of the whole relation; because they were guilty of innovating in the worship of God, and were awfully punished for it. But this to represent the most pious, exemplary, and excellent men in all of the Israelitish camp, is beyond all bounds, not only of credibility, but also of decency. Reflections of this kind, I am persuaded, they would readily make, were they to find such a narration in the Talmud, or in any Rabbinical author. – And now give me leave again to remind them; That, according to the judgment of the Christian world in general, circumcision was not more necessary for all the males, who desired communion at the paschal supper and in the solemn services of the tabernacle, than baptism is to fellowship in the Christian Church, and a seat at the Lord's Table. That there is, on their own principles, a wider and a more material difference between baptism, as now administered to infants, and baptism as appointed by Jesus Christ; than there would have been, between cutting of the foreskin, and circumcising a finger: because the latter would have been *circumcision*, and the circumcision of a *proper subject* also, though not of the part required; but *sprinkling*, whether infants or adults, is not more *baptism*, in their account, than it is *immersion* – And that, had any members of the ancient synagogue introduced, or admitted, such an alteration as that supposed; they might have defended it on the same general grounds, and with much greater plausibility, in several respects at least, than our brethren can the practice of free communion. For I appeal to my reader, whether the Pentateuch of Moses and the scriptures of the prophets do not say as much of the one, as evangelical history and the writings of the apostles do of the other?

Paul, when meeting with certain disciples at Ephesus, desired to know, whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed. To whom they answered, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*. On which the apostle put the following question: *Unto what then were ye baptized?* And they said, *Unto John's baptism*. From which it plainly appears, that as these persons professed to be disciples of Jesus Christ, Paul *took it for granted* they had been baptized. For his query is not, *Have you been baptized?* But *'Unto, or into, what then were ye baptized?'* He inferred their baptism from their profession: and he had reason so to do. For he well knew, that the first administrator of the ordinance required a submission to it, of all that brought 'forth fruits meet for repentance;' that the apostolic ministry demanded the same act of obedience, from all that believed in Jesus Christ; and that the administration of baptism is a part of the ministerial office, being strictly connected with teaching the disciples of Christ, *to observe all things which he has commanded*. And, as an author before quoted, justly remarks: 'We find that the preachers of the gospel always did it, and the people who gladly received the word, desired it. How indifferent soever it appears to some

in our days, yet the grace of God *never failed* to stir up an early regard to it in times of old.\* - But though the great apostle, when meeting with those disciples at Ephesus, made *no doubt* of their having been baptized, even before they informed him of it; yet our brethren's conduct forbids us forming the same conclusion, with equal case and certainty, concerning all that are in communion with them. Nay, *Pacificus* himself, for instance, does not consider *all* that beings to his community as *baptized* persons. So that were the apostle's query addressed to him, with a little alteration; Into what were the Pædobaptist members of your church baptized? His answer as a Baptist, must be; *Into – nothing*; for I do not consider them as baptized at all. – Paul, as before observed, when correcting some irregularities in the church at Corinth, says: *We have no such custom, neither the churches of God*. From which we may safely conclude, that whatever is now practised in the worship of God, which has not a precedent in the conduct of the apostles and the primitive churches, is unwarrantable. And as our opponents believe that Paul knew of no such customs as infant sprinkling; as it also appears from his language to the disciples at Ephesus, that he knew of no such custom, among believers, as deferring a submission to baptism for months and years; so we have reason to infer, that he was equally ignorant of any such custom, as admitting unbaptized believers to the Lord's Table. Nay, our brethren do not pretend that he knew of any such thing. But, however, it was in the apostolic age, which is now hoary with great antiquity, that bold perverted of the gospel truth, *Socinus*, introduced the custom of receiving unbaptized persons to communion; many of his pupils adopted it; and our brethren continue it: which reminds us of the old saying, *The times are changed, and we are changed in them*.

Once more: Either Jesus Christ has informed us in the New Testament what baptism *is*, and what is *requisite to communion* at his table, or he has not. If the *former*, we cannot admit to any thing *as* baptism, which we believe is not so; nor receive any to communion, but those whom we consider as qualified according to his directions, without violating our allegiance to him as the King Messiah, and rebelling against his government. If the *latter*, there is no judge in Israel, and every one may do that which his right in his own eyes, in regard to these institutions. Yes, if our Lord instituted baptism, and left it undetermined *how* and to *whom* it should be administered; if he appointed the sacred supper, without *characterizing* those who are to partake of it; his ministering servants have a discretionary power to administer them how and to whom they please. And if so, our brethren may sprinkle or immerse, infants or adults, just as their own conveniency and the dispositions of their people require. Nay, they may proceed a step further, and admit the infant offspring of their Pædobaptist friends to the Lord's Table; which was the general custom for several ages, in the apostate state of the Christian church, and, as a learned author informs us, is yet the practice of 'very near *half* the Christians in the world.\* Then their communion would be *free indeed*, entirely free from the shackles of divine commands, and from the untoward influence of apostolic precedent.

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\* Mr. Bradbury's Duty and Doct. Bap. p. 50. – In a preceding page of the same Treatise, he says; 'I hear there are several who suppose that baptism is only the work of those that are grown up, and yet neglect it themselves. My brethren, whoever is in the right in *doctrine*, you are quite wrong in *practice*. Do not despise the advice of one who has more value for your happiness, than he has for his own opinion. I will give you it in the words of Ananias: *Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, washing away thy sins, and calling on the name of the Lord.*' See as above, p. 16.

\* Dr. Wall's Hist. Infant Bap. Part ii. Chap. ix.

## SECTION IV.

*Several Passages of Scripture considered, which our Brethren produce in favour of their Sentiments.*

THE cause which our brethren undertake to defend, is denominated by them, *Free Communion*. That communion, then, for which they plead, is *free*. But here I beg leave to ask, From *what?* the restraints of *men?* that is a laudable freedom. From the laws of *Heaven?* that were a licentious liberty. Absurd, in theory; impossible, in fact. It never was, it never can be the case, that God should institute a positive ordinance of divine worship, as the Lord's Supper undoubtedly is; and leave it entirely to the discretion of men, to whom it should be administered. Free – for *whom?* For all who imagine themselves believers and qualified for it? This they dare not assert. For, notwithstanding all their candour and all their Catholicism, they do not consider every one that thinks himself a believer and desires communion, as fit for it. Hence it is, they ask a reason of the candidate's hope, and take liberty of judging for themselves, what his hope and the ground of it are. They think it their duty to inquire, in what light he views himself, and what he believes concerning the Son of God. And if, in their judgment, he be not converted to Jesus Christ, they put a negative on his request; even though they feel an affecting for him, as a moral, a sincere, a well-meaning man. Here, then, is another and a great limitation; a boundary which it would not be lawful to set, if a positive institution were not concerned, and if such limitation were not fixed by the divine Institutor. By parity of reason, therefore, if our Lord has given any other direction, relating to the same ordinance, it should be regarded with equal reverence and equal punctuality.

What, then, is the *freedom* for which they plead? Why, that Baptist churches should admit Pædobaptists into communion with them. In other words, That they should admit believers to the Lord's Table, whom they consider as unbaptized. A very extraordinary position this! Such, however, is *free communion*; in defence of which, several pamphlets have, of late, been published. And who can tell, but some of our brethren may so improve on the doctrine of liberty, in regard to divine institutions of a positive nature, as to favour us, ere long; with a *Plea for free Baptism?* – With a dissertation, intended to prove the lawfulness, and, in some cases, the necessity, of administering baptism to such whom we consider as unbelievers? especially, if the candidates for that ordinance be firmly persuaded in their own minds, that they are believers in Jesus Christ. At the same time declaring, that it will be at the peril of great dishonouring real religion, '*and not a little contributing to the cause of infidelity,*' if we refuse. But let us now briefly consider what they say, in defence of their hypothesis. They argue, from *several passages* of scripture; from the *temper* required of real Christians, in their behaviour toward one another; and object against us our *own conduct*, in another respect.

The principal passages adduced from holy writ, and here to be considered, are the following: - *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations – for God hath received him – Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God – God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us: and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith – I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* \* - On which passages we may be, except our opponents make it appear, that they contain the grant of a *dispensing power* to gospel ministers and churches; that is, unless these divine declarations authorize the ministers and churches of Christ, to set aside an ordinance of his, or to invert the order of its administration, as they may think proper; they

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\* Rom. xiv. 1, 3. and xv. 7. Acts xv. 8,9. 1 Cor. ix. 19-23.

are far from answering exigencies of their cause, or serving the purpose for which they are cited.

Again: the texts produced do not so much as *mention* communion at the Lord's Table, nor appear to have the least reference to it. No; the Holy Ghost has other objects in view, in each of the contexts. And as these are the principal passages to which our brethren appeal in proof of their point, we may take it for granted, that better are not to be found; and, consequently, as a tacit acknowledgment, that positive proof is wanting. But if it be allowed, that there is no *positive* evidence in favour of their practice, it amounts to a concession that there is *no proof* at all. Because nothing of a positive and ritual nature can be proved a duty, or agreeable to the will of God, merely by our own reasonings; nor by arguments formed on moral precepts and general rules of conduct. For if once we admit any thing in the worship of God, as a duty, that is grounded, either on far-fetched inferences from particular declarations of scripture, in which the holy penmen do not appear to have had the least thought of the matter in question; or on our own ideas of expediency and usefulness, we shall not know where to stop. On this principle, a great number of ceremonies were brought into the church of Rome, and might be introduced by us, though not one of them could stand that divine query. *Who hath required this at your hand?* As it cannot be proved, by the deductions of reason, that it is the holy duty of any man to eat bread and to drink wine, as a branch of divine worship, but only from the testimony of God, so what he has revealed in regard to that matter, is our only rule in all that relates to the Lord's Supper.\* Consequently, as these passages say nothing at all about baptism, nor about communion at the Lord's Table, either *strict*, or *free*; they have little pertinency of application, or force of argument in them.

Our brethren maintain, when disputing with Pædobaptists, that the New Testament knows no more of infant *baptism*, than it does of infant *communion*: and that many of the arguments adduced in defence of the former, will equally apply to the latter.\* Here they seem quite confident that they have truth and fact on their side. But might not Dr. Priestly, for instance, who maintains both, retort; 'That sacred code of Christian worship to which you appeal, knows as much of our sentiments and practice as it does yours? Produce your warrant from those heavenly institutes contained in the New Testament, for admitting a believer to the Lord's Table, in a church of Christ, while that very church considers him as unbaptized; and you shall not wait long for equally authentic evidence, that infant baptism and infant communion have the sanction of divine authority. You frequently assert, that our arguments formed on the covenant made with Abraham; on the rite of circumcision; on the holiness attributed, by Paul, to the children of believers; and on several other passages of scripture, in defence of an infant's right to baptism, are inconclusive; not only because that sacred institution is not expressly mentioned in any of those places; but also because, in your opinion, nothing short of an express command, or a plain, apostolic example, can suffice to direct our practice, in the administration of ordinances that are of a positive kind. Yet, when pleading for free communion, you adopt this very method of arguing, and think it quite conclusive: otherwise you never would appeal with such confidence as many of you do, to

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\* Plain Account of Bap. in a Course of Lett. to Bp. Hoadly, p. 127, 128.

\* Dr. Priestly is also of the same opinion. For he says, 'No objection can be made to this custom, [i.e. of giving the Lord's Supper to infants] but what may, with *equal force*, be made to the custom of baptizing infants.' And he informs us, that infant communion is to this day the practice of the Greek churches, of the Russians, the Armenians, the Maronites, the Copts, the Assyrians, and probably all other oriental churches.' *Address to Protest. Dissent. on giving the Lord's Sup. to Children*, p. 28, 31.

the passages now produced.\* - But let us take a more particular view of the passages now before us.

The converted Romans were commanded by Paul, to *receive them that were weak in faith, as God and Christ had received them*. And we are plainly informed, that the persons intended were such, as had not a clear discernment of their Christian liberty, in regard to *the eating of meats* forbidden by the ceremonial law, and *the observation of days*, that was of old required by it. But what has this to do with *free communion*? Is there no way of *receiving him that is weak in faith*, but by admitting him to the Lord's Table? Must the exhortation to receive a Christian brother, be confined to that single instance of true benevolence? Or, is our so doing the capital idea and the primary sense of the precept, in any of Paul's writings? He says, in this very epistle, *I commend unto you Phœbe our sister – that YE RECEIVE HER in the Lord*. Was her admission to the Holy Table the principal thing that he desired of the believing Romans, on her account? No, he evidently had something else in view; something that would manifest their love to a disciple of Christ, much more than barely permitting her to have communion with them in the Sacred Supper. For he immediately adds; *And that YE ASSIST HER in whatsoever business she hath need of you*.\* Or, did he solicit admission to the Lord's Table, for himself and his fellow ministers, among the Corinthians, when he said; *RECEIVE US; we have wronged no man; we have corrupted no man; we have defrauded no man*?† Or, for Epaphroditus, when he thus expressed himself to the Philippians; *RECEIVE HIM, therefore, in the Lord, with all gladness, and hold such in reputation*?‡ Or, for Onesimus, when he said to Philemon; *RECEIVE HIM that is mine own bowels – receive him as myself*?§ Or, was communion at the Lord's Table the principal thing which the apostle John had in his eye, when he said; *We therefore ought to RECEIVE SUCH, that we might be fellow helpers of the truth*?|| It is, I will venture to affirm, a much greater thing to receive either a weak or a strong believer, in the sense of these exhortations; that merely to grant him a place at the Lord's Table. Why, then, should our brethren plead it as they do, as if it were the *grand criterion* of our acknowledging Pædobaptists to real converts, and of our love of them, as such?

Besides the faith of a sincere believer may be as weak, and require as much forbearance, in regard to the Holy Supper, as in respect of baptism. A reformed and wholly converted Catholic may desire fellowship with us, who still retains the Popish error of communion in one kind only: but are we obliged by this apostolic precept, to mutilate the sacred ordinance in condescension to his weakness? To embrace the weak, as well as the strong believer, in the arms of christian affection, is as capital duty of the moral law. To bear with a brother's infirmities, and to *forbear one another in love*, are certainly required by that command which says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; and would have been our duty, if neither baptism nor the Lord's supper had ever existed. But are we to regulate our conduct in the admission of persons to a positive institution; - to one which depends entirely on the sovereign pleasure of God, by inferences drawn from the general and natural duties of the

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\* 'In things of external appointment,' says Dr. Samuel Clarke, and *mere positive* institution, where we cannot, as in matters of *natural* and *moral* duty, argue concerning the natural reason and ground of the obligation, and the original necessity of the thing itself; we have nothing to do but to obey the positive command. God is infinitely better able than we to judge of the *propriety* and *usefulness* of the things he institutes; and it becomes us to *obey* with humility and reverence.' *Expos. Of Church Catech.* p. 305, 306. Edit. 2.

\* Rom. xvi. 1,2.

† 2 Cor. vii. 2

‡ Philip. ii. 29.

§ Philem. 12, 17.

|| 3 John 8.

moral law? – Were the precepts of that eternal law ever considered by the priests or the people of old, as the rule of administering positive institutions? Had they not another system of precepts, express precepts, intended for that purpose? and was not such a ritual absolutely necessary?

Supposing, however, that there were no way of receiving one that is weak in the faith, but by admitting him to the Lord's Table, this text would be far from proving what our opponents desire; unless they could make it appear, that the persons of whom the apostle immediately speaks, were *not members* of the church of Rome, when he gave the advice. There being disputes among the believing Romans, about the eating of meats and the observation of days, affords no proof, nor any shadow of proof, that they had not communion together at the Lord's Table. – But admitting to that to be a fact, of which there is not the least evidence, the conclusion drawn from the passage would not be just, except it were also proved, that the *weak in faith* were *unbaptized*; or, at least, so considered by their stronger brethren; for that is the point in dispute between us. But that Paul considered the believing Romans to whom he wrote, as baptized Christians, is allowed by all, so far as I have observed, who have no hypothesis to serve, by admitting a contrary supposition.\* For, as Dr. Goodwin observes, 'He argues from the known and generally received profession and practice of *all* Christians. *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized.* – That is, that whoever of us that profess baptism into Christ, profess baptism into his death, as the thing intended by it. The *us*, there, is the generality of Christians, distinguished usually by that word from Heathens: as, Rom. xiv. 7. 1 Cor. viii. 6. *To Us there is but one God, &c.* That is, we Christians profess all, and generally so. And his scope being to shew, how sanctification flows from being in Christ; his argument is drawn from a general principle of the *us* of Christians – So that this expression, *as many of us*, imports not, as if some were, and some not, baptized; for then is argument of sanctification had not been binding to the generality of Christians, which, it is evident, it was in his intention: but it imports the contrary, that as many as were Christians, *were all baptized*, and were taught this to be the meaning of that great point and principle of religion, that as they were baptized into Christ thereby, so also into his death.\*

'But God receives the weak in faith; and we are expressly commanded to receive one another, not to doubtful disputations, but as Christ hath received us to the glory of God.' Granted: yet permit me to ask, Is the divine conduct, is the favour of God, or the kindness of Christ, in receiving sinners, the rule of our proceeding in the administration of positive institutions? Whom does God, whom does Christ receive? None but those that believe and profess faith in the Lord Messiah? Our brethren will not affirm it. For if divine compassion did not extend to the dead in sin; if the kindness of Christ did not relieve our enemies of God; none of our fallen race would ever be saved. But does it hence follow, that we must admit the unbelieving and the unconverted, either to baptism, or the Holy Table? Our gracious Lord freely accepts all that desire it and all that come; but are we bound, by his

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\* The Socinians, the Quakers, and Mr. Bunyan agree, in referring us to Rom. vi. 3. 1 Cor. i. 14, 15, 16. and Gal. iii. 27. with a view to serve their several hypotheses, which all unite in greatly depreciating the ordinance of baptism. The words of Mr. Bunyan, when speaking of the apostolic times, and mentioning these three passages, are as follows: 'that all that were received into fellowship were even then baptized *first*, would strain a weak man's wit to prove it, if arguments were closely made upon these three texts of holy scriptures.' – And, a few pages after, when arguing from the *second* of these apostolic testimonies, he says, 'By this negligent relating who were baptized by him [Paul] he sheweth, that he made *no such* matter of baptism, as some in these days do; nay, that he made *no matter at all* thereof, with respect to church communion.' *Works*, vol. i. p. 135, 144.

\* *Works*, vol. iv. On the Government of the Churches of Christ, p. 30. Vide Hoornbeek. Socin. Confession, Tom. iii. p. 431, 432.



example, to receive every one that solicits communion with us? Our opponents dare not assert it. For though the Great Supreme is entirely at liberty to do what he pleases, to reject or accept whom he will; yet it is not so with his ministering servants and professing people, in regard to the Sacred Supper. No; it is their indispensable duty and their everlasting honour, to regard his revealed will and obey his righteous commands. The divine precepts contained in the Bible, not the divine conduct in the administration of a sovereign Providence, are the only rule of our obedience in all things relating to positive institutions.

Besides, gospel churches are sometimes obliged, by the laws of Christ, to exclude from their communion those whom he has received; as appears from the case of the incestuous person in the church at Corinth. And have those churches that practise free communion never excluded any for scandalous backslidings; whom, notwithstanding, they could not but consider as received of Christ? What, do they never exclude any from fellowship with them, but such of whom they have no hope! I cannot suppose, nor will they affirm any such thing. But if there may be a just cause of *excluding* such from communion whom God has received, though at present in a state of backsliding; why may there not be a sufficient reason of refusing communion to some, whom we look upon as the objects of God's peculiar favour? Is there not as great a degree of disapprobation discovered in the *former* case, as there is in the *latter*? and is not the word of God our only rule in both cases? It is not every one, therefore, that is received of Jesus Christ who is entitled to communion at his table; but such, and only such, as revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, and obey the laws of his house.

And are our opponents verily persuaded that *baptism* is a matter of *doubtful disputation*? Why, then, do they not both sprinkle and immerse infants and adults, that they may be sure, in some instances at least, of doing that which is right? Why so *positive*, on certain occasions, when they preach, or publish upon the subject? That it has been, and is disputed, must be allowed: and so has almost every article of the Christian faith; especially such articles as appear to us the clearest and of the greatest importance. Witness those doctrines relating to the Trinity and the Deity of Christ; his vicarious atonement and original sin. These have been much oftener disputed, in ancient and modern times, than the mode and subject of baptism. – And has not almost every branch of Christian worship been disputed? The Supper of our Lord has been much more frequently controverted, between Papists and Protestants, between Lutherans and Calvinists, than ever baptism was among any professor of Christianity. Yet who, among our brethren, will dare to assert, that no Catholic, who ever disputed for withholding the cup from the people, was received by Jesus Christ? For that matter is not *so clear*, but real Christians *may possibly* differ in their judgment and practice concerning it. Nay, such doubts and difficulties are there attending the holy supper, that Bellarmine assures us, we cannot certainly determine from the express words of scripture only, *what there was* in the cup, before our Lord blessed it; whether a little *wine*, or wine mixed *with water*, or *strong drink*, or *water only*.<sup>\*</sup> And will Pacifus, or Candidus, dare to assert, that the zealous Cardinal was absolutely rejected of God? No; they cannot do it, without violating the amiable import of their several names. – The Quakers also have disputed the whole ordinance, and every pretence to it, as well as baptism, out of their assemblies. But it is lawful hence to conclude, that they are all rejected of Jesus Christ? So true are those words of Pacifus and Candidus, his colleague: “The points in baptism [Papists and Lutheran's, Quakers, Pædobaptists, and Antipædobaptists] differ; are not so clearly stated in the Bible

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<sup>\*</sup> Quid in calice fuerit ante consecrationem, an *vinum* parum, an *vinum aqua mixtum*, an *sicera*, an *aqua sola*, exsola Scriptura expresse non habetur. Apud Voss. *Theses Theolog.* p. 485.

(however clear to us) but that even sincere Christians may mistake them.' We may, therefore, henceforth consider baptism and the Lord's supper the only positive institutions in the christian church, as justly reckoned among those things that are of *doubtful disputation*: but whether they are to have *first* place among Paul's GREEK, I leave our brethren to determine. For to them the honour of classing a positive institution of Christ among things *ambiguous*, is undoubtedly due; since all besides themselves look upon it as *evident*, either, that baptism is an *indifferent* thing, as Socinus, and some of his followers;\* or, that it is a *term of communion*, which as ever been the opinion and practice of the Christian church in general. One step further, and it will be matter of doubtful disputation, whether both the positive appointments of our divine Lord should not be quite discarded. For, that baptism ought to be administered prior to the sacred supper, is as clearly revealed, as that either of them was intended for the use of believers in all succeeding ages.

Our honest friend, Barclay, when taking notice of those disputes which have been about the Sacred Supper, says; 'The ground and matter of their contest lies in things extrinsic from, and unnecessary to, the main matter. And this has been often the policy of Satan, to busy people and amuse them with *outward signs, shadows, and forms*; making them contend about it [them;] while, in the mean time, the *substance* is neglected – For there have been more animosities and heats about this *one particular*, and more bloodshed and contention, then about *any other*. And, surely, they are little acquainted with the state of Protestant affairs, who know not, that their contentions about this have been more hurtful to the Reformation, than all the opposition they have met with from their common adversaries.\* He advises, therefore, to give up the ordinance for the sake of peace, and as the only effectual way of securing tranquility in the church of God. – So the Socinians maintain, that we may either administer or dispense with baptism, as occasion requires. For, says Volkelius, 'As all other indifferent things may either be used or omitted, as charity shall direct; even so *baptism*, if the honour of God and the love of our neighbor demand it, seems as sometimes absolutely necessary to be administered, in order to avoid giving offence.† - And as the Socinian pleads for the administration of baptism, on some occasions; so Mr. Bunyan strongly asserts the necessity of its omission, on others. These are his words: 'If water baptism, as the circumstances with which the churches were pestered of old, trouble the peace, wound the consciences of the godly, dismembered and break their fellowships, it is, although an *ordinance*, for the present, to be *prudently shunned*.\* - How slight the barrier, how thin the partition, between free communion and Katabaptism! Thus baptism is treated, not as *a branch of divine worship*, but as *a tool of human convenience*; but as *a happy expedient* in the hands of men, to secure the applause of their fellow mortals; - that applause which is considered as due to persons of a condescending, candid, catholic spirit. If the omission of it would give offence, let it by all means be administered: and if the use of it would be attended with the same inconvenience, lay it aside and say not a word about it. Such is the advice of Volkelius and Bunyan.

The reader, I take it for granted, can hardly forbear observing, what an admirable method is here proposed by this triumvirate, Volkelius, Barclay, and Bunyan, in order to

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\* Baptismum aquæ rem indifferentem esse statuimus. *Theoph. Nicholaid. De Eccles.* p. 22. Apud. *Heornbeck Socin. Conf.* Tom. iii. p. 250.

\* Barclay's Apology, p. 455, 456.

† Ut omnia alia adiaphora, - pro eo ac charitas præscribit, jam usurpari, jam omitti possunt: ita et baptismus iste, divinæ glorificatione, et proximi amore postulante, ut nimirum scandalum vitetur, adhibendus interdum plane videtur. *Apud Hoorub. Ubi supra*, p. 266.

\* Works, Vol. I. p. 136.

promote and secure peace among Christian brethren. A method, it must be confessed, that is at once very comprehensive, quite expeditious, and extremely easy. *So comprehensive*, that it will apply to every case: *so expeditious*, that any controversy may, by the happy expedient, be finished in a trice: and *so easy*, that every one may have the benefit of it. Were it universally known and universally pursued, there would be no disputes at all, either about truth or duty. For the whole process consists in this: If divulging a truth believed, or practicing a duty required, should at any time give offence, or be likely so to do; keep the former to yourself, let the latter alone, and all shall be well. But how much more agreeable to scripture, is the following maxim of a celebrated author; ‘The appointment of God, is the *highest law*, the *Supreme necessity*; which we ought rather to obey than indulge popular ignorance and weakness.’\* - From the manner of reasoning sometimes used by our opponents, and by those three authors to whom I have just referred; one would imagine, that Socinians, Quakers, and those Baptists who plead for free communion, were almost the only persons in the Christian world, that exercise a proper degree of candour towards professors of other denominations, or have a due regard among the people of God: but whether this be a fact the reader will judge.

But it is possible for our opponents to imagine, that Paul intended to place *baptism* on the same footing with certain *meats* and *days*; the former of which were forbidden, the latter enjoined, by the God of Israel, under the Jewish economy? What, baptism become an article of *doubtful disputation* in so early a day! If, on the other hand, that inspired writer had *no thought* of baptism when he mentioned *doubtful disputations*; if what he there says about matters then in dispute, regard things that belonged to an *antiquated ritual*; what authority have our brethren to put baptism on a level with them? or where is the force of their argument from this passage?

*Receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us.* These words have been understood in a larger sense than that for which our brethren plead. For some Pædobaptists have concluded from hence, that it is the indisputable duty of a particular church to allow communion to *all* that desire it: taking it for granted, no doubt, that none would request the privilege but those who were baptized. This, the reader will certainly think is *free* communion. And, indeed, if this text warrant our brethren’s practice, I see but little objection against its being understood in such a latitude of signification. But, in opposition to such a sense of the passage, a Pædobaptist writer observes; ‘This inference is glaringly forced and wide, discovering their ignorance of the true meaning and design of the text who make it. The apostle is not here speaking of *admission* to *church-membership* at all; - nor does he consider those to whom he writes in the precise light of members of the church universal; but as members of a *particular* church, or body; among whom there was some difference of opinion about meats, &c. which was like to break their communion together, as is plain from the preceding chapter. The apostle sets himself to prevent this, and to accomplish a reconciliation. And, after a number of healing things, he concluded with these words: ‘*Receive one another.* That is, ye who are saints at Rome, who have agreed to walk together in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord Jesus; ye who are professedly united in church-communion, receive ye one another in love, as becometh spirits, united in one body for mutual benefit. Bear ye one another’s burdens: watch over and admonish one another in love, notwithstanding of some difference in sentiment among you: as to the eating certain meats and regarding certain days, let not that difference make any breach in your

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\* Dei ordinatio nobis summa lex, suprema necessitas, cui potius parendum, quam populari ignorantiae et infirmitati indulgendum. *Turretini Inst.* Tom. iii. Loc. xix. Quaest. xiv. § 14.

communion together as a church of Christ. But let the strong bear with those that are weak, and the weak not be offended with the liberty of the strong. – Judge not one another uncharitably, but let brotherly love continue. – This is precisely the apostle’s meaning; as will appear to those who look impartially into the connection of his argument; and by no means serves the purpose for which the objectors bring it.\*

And supposing our brethren to argue from this passage only by way of *analogy*, their inference is equally weak, and their conclusion palpably forced: there being a great, essential difference, between eating or not eating of certain meats in the apostolic times; and our being baptized or not baptized, prior to communion at the Lord’s Table. For though, while the ceremonial law was in force, the Jews were obliged to abstain from prohibited meats; yet our opponents will not affirm, that their observance of a negatived precept was intended by the Eternal Sovereign, to answer similar purposes with the ordinances of baptism, as appointed by Jesus Christ. The *latter* is a solemn institution of divine worship: but can this be asserted of the *former*? Baptism was instituted prior to the Sacred Supper; was commanded to be administered to professing believers, before they approached the Holy Table; and, in the apostolic age, for aught appears to the contrary, was constantly administered to believers previous to their having communion in the Christian church. But can similar things be affirmed concerning that abstinence from certain meats were forbidden under the Jewish economy?

To conclude my remarks on the text before us, and to illustrate the passage. Candidus, we will suppose, is the pastor of a baptist church, and that a dispute arises among his people, about the lawfulness of *eating blood*, or any thing *strangled*. The controversy rises high, and is carried on with too much heat of temper. Each party is blamed by the other; the one, as judaizing; the other, as violating a plain, apostolic precept. – a report of this comes to Irenæus. Concerned and grieved at such contentions and such a breach of brotherly love, in a once flourishing and happy church, he writes them a friendly letter; in which he bewails their hurtful contests, gives them his best advice, and, among other things, he says: *Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not: and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.* – In a while after this healing epistle is published, and read by many. In the perusal of which, some suspect, and other conclude that the persons exhorted to mutual forbearance, had *not communion* with one another, under the pastoral care of Candidus, and that they who are styled, *weak in faith*, had never been *baptized*. Nay, some assert, that the mere *want of baptism*, in the opinion of Irenæus, ought never to be objected against any that are candidates for communion at the Lord’s Table; nor ever be made a bar to fellowship in a church of Christ. Yet Irenæus was never known, in any instance, to give the least cause for such a suspicion. The application is easy: I shall, therefore, only ask, Whether, in the supposed case, such inferences would be genuine and just, or forced and unnatural? and, whether they who drew them might not be suspected of being, either fanciful and weak, or as acting under the power of some prejudice? The reader will pardon my prolixity on this passage, when he considers that our opponents lay a very great stress upon it.

By the text produced from the acts of the apostles we learn, that *God is no respecter of persons*; that he, as an absolute sovereign, bestows his favour on Jews and Gentiles without any difference. But will our brethren infer from hence, that they whose honour and

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\* Smith’s Compend. Account of the Form and Order of the Church, p. 109, 110.

happiness it is to be his obedient servants, are entirely at liberty to receive to communion at the Lord's Table all that believe, without any difference? Can they justly conclude, that because *Jehovah* dispenses his blessing as *he* pleases, they may administer, or omit, his positive institutions as *they* please?

Once more: They produce, as much in their favour, the declarations of Paul to the church at Corinth,\* relating to his own conduct. And what do we learn in general from this passage, but that we do learn in general from this passage, but that he, out of his great concern for the good of mankind, and his abundant zeal for the glory of God, was willing to do, or forbear, any thing that was lawful, in order to gain an impartial hearing from both Jews and Gentiles wherever he came? I said, any thing that *was lawful*; the rule of which is the divine precept, or some example warranted by divine authority. Nor can we view these words in a more extensive sense, without explicitly charging the great apostle with *temporizing*, and highly impeaching his exalted character. – But what has this text, any more than the former, to do with the administration, or laying aside, of positive institutions? It was the duty of Aaron, as well as of Paul, and of us, to seek the happiness of all his fellow creatures and the honour of God, to the utmost of his ability. But was this general obligation the rule of his performing the solemn sanctuary services on the great day of atonement? Could he conclude from hence, that if the dispositions of the people required it, he was at liberty to *omit* any of the sacred rites, or to *transpose* the order in which *Jehovah* commanded they should be performed? If, however, any of our opponents can make it appear, that this passage has a relation to the positive appointments of Christ; it must be considered as the *Magna Carta* of a dispensing, priestly power, in regard to those institutions. And, consequently, if our brethren can make out their claim to the honour, free communion will be established with a witness. In such a case it might be expected, that the next advocate for it, when citing the passage, would comment upon it, and address us in the following manner: ‘This text is full to my purpose. It contains all I could wish, when contending with my stricter brethren. For hence it is plain, that I am at liberty, perfectly at liberty, to omit, or administer, the ordinance of baptism, just as the dispositions and choice of my hearers may render it convenient. Yet, ye *strict Baptists*! this admirable text authorizes me, in condescension to the weakness of my sincere hearers, not only to receive Pædobaptists into communion; for that is a mere trifle, with such a patent of church power in my hand; but also Semi-Quakers, who reject baptism; and converted Catholics, who mutilate the Sacred Supper; yea to baptize, the infant offspring of any who shall desire it. By doing of which, I hope to obtain the favour of many respectable Pædobaptists, who have been extremely offended by that rigid and forbidding conduct, for which you are so notorious. Yes, and by dispensing with baptism, in some instances, I doubt not but I shall convince many of the utility and necessity of it; which you know, would be an admirable method of producing conviction, and bring great honour to my cause. This text – what shall I say? this wonderfully comprehensive passage, gives me a discretionary power to do *just as I please* in the house of God, in regard to baptism and communion.’

## SECTION V.

*The Temper required of Christians towards one another, not contrary to our Practice – Our Conduct freed from the Charge of Inconsistency – No Reason to exalt the Lord's Supper, in point of Importance, as greatly superior to the Ordinance of Baptism.*

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\* 1 Cor. ix. 19-23.

NOTHING is more common with our opponents, when pleading for free communion, than to display the excellence of Christian charity; and to urge the propriety, the utility, the necessity of bearing with one another's mistakes, in matters that are *non-essential*; in which number they class the ordinance of baptism. From considerations of this kind, they infer the lawfulness of admitting Pædobaptists to communion with them. – *Not fundamental - Not-essential*. These negative epithets they frequently apply to *baptism*. And might they not be applied, with equal propriety, to the *Lord's Supper*? But in what respect is a submission to baptism non-essential? To our justifying righteousness, our acceptance with God, or an interest in the divine favour? So is the Lord's Supper; and so is every branch of our obedience. For they will readily allow, that an interest in the divine favour, is not *obtained* by the miserable sinner, but *granted* by the Eternal Sovereign. That a justifying righteousness is not the *result* of human endeavours, but the *work* of our heavenly Substitute, and a *gift* of boundless grace. And that acceptance with the high and holy God, is not on conditions performed *by us* but in consideration of the *vicarious obedience and propitiatory sufferings* of the great Immanuel. Nay, since our first father's apostacy, there never was an ordinance appointed of God, there never was a command given to man, that was intended to answer any such end.

Baptism is *not fundamental*; is *not essential*. True; if limited to the foregoing cases. But are we hence to infer, that it is not necessary on *other accounts* and in *other views*? If so, we may alter, or lay it aside, just as we please; and, on the same principle, we may dismiss, as *non-essential*, all order and every ordinance in the church of God.

Is not the institution of baptism a branch of divine worship? And is not the administration of it, prior to the Lord's Supper, essential to that order in which Christ commanded his positive appointments to be regarded? Nay, *Pacificus* himself tacitly allows, that the practice of free communion is a breach of order in gospel churches. For, in answer to an objection of this kind, he says; 'Though it be admitted that the order of churches is of *great* importance, yet it must be admitted that the edification of Christians, and their obedience to the acknowledged command of Christ to all his disciples, *Do this in remembrance of me*, are points of *infinitely greater* importance; the least, therefore, ought to give way to the greatest.' – The order of churches, then, is of *great* importance, *Pacificus* himself being judge; and *Candidus*, his colleague, acknowledges, that it 'is of *some* importance.' Nor could they deny it, without impeaching the wisdom, or the goodness of Christ, as Lord over his own house; and opposing that injunction of the Holy Ghost, *Let all things be done decently and in order*. And as the Divine Spirit requires the observation of order in the church of God, so Paul commends the Corinthians for *keeping the ordinances AS HE DELIVERED THEM*; and express a holy joy, on *beholding the order* of that Christian church which was at Colosse. But that order which the great Lord of all appointed, and in the practice of which the good apostle sincerely rejoiced, our brethren, it seems, consider as *a mere trifle* – as comparatively *nothing*. For what is any thing that has only a *finite* importance attending it, when compared with that which is of *infinite* importance? On such a comparison, it sinks into littleness; it is lost in obscurity. Yet thus our opponents venture to state the comparative worth of church order, and the edification of individuals. – But give me leave here to inquire, Whether the primitive order of gospel churches can be detached from the legislative authority of Jesus Christ? And, whether the exercise of that authority can be considered as having no connection with his honour? To answer these questions in the negative, free communion itself can hardly demur. Consequently, a breach of that order which Christ appointed, as king in Zion, must be considered as opposition to his crown and dignity; and *his honour* is of much greater importance than the edification of believers. For our Jesus and our Lawgiver is

*Jehovah*; between whose *honour* and the *happiness* of sinful worms, there is, there can be no comparison. For the latter is only *a mean*, whereas the former is the *grand end*, not only of a church state, but of the whole economy of providence and grace. I may, therefore, venture to retort the argument; Though it be admitted, that the edification of Christians is of *great* importance; yet it must be allowed, that the honour of our divine Sovereign is of *infinitely greater* importance; and, consequently, the primitive order of gospel churches should be observed.

Again: Are not my readers a little surprised at the reasoning of our opponents which I have just produced? Are they not ready to say, with some of old, *May we know what this new doctrine is?* What, reverse the order of churches, appointed by God himself, with a view of edification! Dispense with a positive ordinance of heaven, and break a divine command, under the fair pretence of promoting obedience to Christ! Our brethren, in pleading for free communion, bring *certain strange things to our ears; we would know, therefore, what these things mean*, and how they may be supported. For if we are obliged, in some cases, to set aside an ordinance of divine worship, and to break a *positive command*, in order that certain individuals may perform another *positive* injunction of the great Legislator; the laws of Christ are not half so consistent as Paul's preaching; *which was not yea and nay*, as those would e, if the argument here opposed were valid. – Nor have we, that I remember, any thing like a parallel case, either in the Old or the New Testament. We find, indeed, an instance, or two, of positive and typical rites giving way to natural necessities and moral obligations, when the performance of both was impracticable; as, when David ate of the shew-bread, without incurring a divine censure: but we have no example of a positive ordinance being set aside, in favour of any one's *ignorance* or *prejudice* against it, that he might be edified by submitting to *another positive* institution, of which he desired to partake. That maxim of our Lord, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*; is, therefore, totally inapplicable in the present case.

Mr. Bunyan, I know, strenuously pleads the neglect of circumcision by the Israelites in the wilderness, while they attended on other positive appointments of God, as arguing strongly for free communion; but he seems to have forgotten that the omission of which he speaks, is keenly censured by the Holy Ghost. The uncircumcised state of the people, whatever might be the occasion of it, is called a *reproach, the reproach of Egypt*; which odium was rolled from them on the borders of Canaan, and the place in which they were circumcised was called by a new name, to perpetuate the memory of that event.\* Now, as that neglect of the Israelites was a *breach* of the divine command, *a reproach* to their character as the sons of Abraham, and stands *condemned* by the Spirit of God; it cannot be pleaded in defence of a similar omission, with the least appearance of reason. And if so, I leave our brethren to judge whether it can be imitated 'without injuring the honour of true religion, and promoting the cause of infidelity.' – Nor is that other instance, which the same author produces, relating to the feast of Passover, in the reign of Hezekiah, any more to his purpose. For though many of the people were not *cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary*; though they did *eat the Passover otherwise than it was written*, and were accepted of God; yet Hezekiah was so conscious of those irregularities, that he deprecated the divine anger, saying, *the good Lord PARDON every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and HEALED the people.*\* With what shadow of reason, then, or of reverence for God's commands, can any one plead this instance in favour of free communion? What, shall

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\* Josh. v. 9.

\* 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19, 20.

a *deviation* from the divine rule, in the performance of sacred rites- a deviation that is acknowledged as *criminal* before the Lord, and for which *pardon* is requested, be adduced, as a precedent for the conduct of Christians! What would our brethren, what would Mr. Bunyan himself have thought of Hezekiah and his people, had they taken the liberty of repeating the disorderly conduct, whenever they celebrated the paschal anniversary? – Taken the liberty of transgressing the divine rule, because Jehovah had *once* graciously pardoned their irregularities, and accepted their services, on a similar occasion? Would they not have been chargeable with bold presumption, and with doing evil that good might come? – But I return to our *candid* and *peaceful* opponents.

Disturb and break the order of churches, an order established by Jesus Christ, with a view to edification? The reader will here observe, the *order* intended is that of administering baptism to believers, *before* they are admitted to the Lord's Table. That infraction, of order, therefore, for which they plead, is no other than *setting aside* an ordinance, allowed to be divine; and this to promote the edification of those concerned. Very extraordinary, I must confess! For professors in every age, have been more disposed to *increase* the number of religious rites, than to *lessen* it, with a view to edification. So the Jews of old frequently acted, and as frequently offended God. So the church of Rome has appointed many forms and rites of worship, with a view to the edification of her deluded votaries. The church of England, also, has retained the sign of the cross in baptism, and claims a power to decree rites and ceremonies in divine worship whenever she pleases; and all, no doubt, with a view to *edification*. Yet I never heard that either of those establishments, arrogant as the former is, ever talked of *altering* the primitive order of the Christian church, or of *omitting* an ordinance, allowed to be divine, with a view to edification. Our brethren, however, plead for this; and, which is equally wonderful, they plead for it under the specious pretext, that a *command* of Christ may be performed. But is not baptism a *command*, an *acknowledged* command of Christ? And was it not graciously intended, as well as the Holy Supper, for the *edification* of Christians? Or, do our opponents imagine, that we may slight, with impunity, one command, provided we be but careful to observe one another; even though the command neglected has a prior claim to our obedience? – In opposition to their novel way of proceeding, and their unprecedented manner of talking, I will present my reader with the sage maxim of a smart writer. 'He [Christ] has not published his laws as men do theirs, with those imperfections, that they must be explained and mended.\*' To which I may add the following declarations of a learned pen: 'We must serve God, not as we think fit, but as he hath appointed. God must be judge of his own honour – Nothing, then, is small, whereupon depends the sanctity of God's commandments and our obedience.†' There is, however, little need of the maxims, or the declarations of men, while we have the decision of *Him* who purchased the church with his own blood; of – *Him* who is to be our final judge. Now the language of that sublime Being is; *In ALL THINGS that I have said unto you, BE CIRCUMSPECT – Teaching them to OBSERVE ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you.* And it is worthy of being remarked, that it stands recorded, to the honour of Moses, seven or eight times in one chapter, that *he did as the Lord commanded him.‡*

The question is not, whatever our opponents may think, Whether baptism is essential to *our salvation*. But, Whether God has not *commanded* it? Whether it is not a believer's *duty* to be found in it? And, Whether the pastor and members of a gospel church

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\* Mr. Bradbury's Duty and Doct. Bap. p. 24.

† Pemble's Introd. to Worthy Receiv. the Lord's Supper, p. 21, 31.

‡ See Exod. xl.



can justify themselves, in admitting persons to communion that have *never been baptized*? On the principle assumed by our opposers, a professor that has no inclination to obey the divine command, in any particular instance, may vindicate his refusal by saying; 'The performance of it is not essential to my happiness; for a sinner may be saved without it.' A mode of arguing this, that is big with rebellion against the dominion of God: A vile antinomian principle, which, pursued in its consequences, is pregnant with ruin to immortal souls. What shall we avoid nothing that God has forbidden, except we consider it as inconsistent with a state of salvation! shall we do nothing that God has commanded, unless we look upon it as essentially necessary to our future felicity! Is this the way to manifest our faith in Jesus and to love God! – How much better is the reasoning of Mr. Charnock, when he says; '*Dues voluit*, is a sufficient motive; and we cannot free ourselves from the censure of disobedience, if we observe not his commands in the *same manner* that he enjoins them; in their *circumstances*, as well as their substance – Who can, upon a better account, challenge an exemption from positive institutions than our Saviour, who had no need of them? Yet how observant was he of them, because they were established by divine authority! So that he \*\*\* his submitting to be baptized of John, a *fulfilling of righteousness* – Is it not a great ingratitude to God, to despise what he commands as a privilege? Were not the apostles men of an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, because of their extraordinary employments? And did they not exercise themselves in the institutions of Christ? How have many [meaning the Quakers] proceeded from the slighting of Christ's institutions, to the denying the authority of his word! A slighting Christ himself, crucified at Jerusalem, to set up an imaginary Christ within them!\*

'But must we not exercise Christian charity, and bear with one another's infirmities? Should we not seek peace, and endeavour to promote harmony among the people of God? Undoubtedly: yet give me leave to ask, Is there no way to exercise love and forbearance, without practicing free communion? Cannot we promote peace and harmony without practically approving of infant sprinkling as if it were a divine ordinance; while we are firmly persuaded that God never appointed it? Or, are we bound to admit as a fact, what we verily believe is a falsehood? The distinction between a Christian who holds what I consider as a practical error in the worship of God, and the mistake maintained, is wide and obvious. It is not an erroneous principle, or an irregular practice, that is the object of genuine charity. No; it is the *person* who maintains an error, not the *mistake* defended, that calls for my candour. The *former*, I am bound by the highest authority, to love as myself; the latter, I should ever consider as inimical to the honour of God, as unfriendly to my neighbour's happiness, and therefore discourage it, in the exercise of Christian tempers, through the whole of my conduct. – It is freely allowed, that a mistake which relates merely to the mode and subject of baptism, is comparatively small; but still, while I consider the aspersion of infants as a human invention in the solemn service of God, I am bound to enter my protest against it; and by a uniform practice to shew, that I am a *Baptist* – the same when a Pædobaptist opponents will have no shadow of reason to impeach my integrity; - no pretence for surmising, that when I give the right hand of fellowship to such as have been immersed on a profession of faith, I act on *principle of conscience*; but when admitting such to communion, who have only been sprinkled in their infancy, on *motives of conscience*. For it is allowed by all the world, that consistency is the best evidence of sincerity.

I would also take the liberty here to observe, that some of those churches in which free communion has been practised, have not been the most remarkable for brotherly love, or christian peace and harmony. Has the pastor of a church so constituted, being a Baptist,

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\* Works, Vol. II. p. 766, 737, 775.

never found, that his that is Pædobaptist brethren have been a little offended, when he has ventured freely to speak his mind on the mode and subject of baptism? When Pædobaptist candidates for communion have been proposed to such a church, have those members who espoused the same sentiment never discovered a degree of pleasure, in the thought of having their number and influence increased in the community, that has excited the jealousy of their Baptist brethren? When, on the contrary, there has been a considerable addition to the number of Baptist members, has not an equal degree of pleasure in them, raised similar suspicions in the minds of their Pædobaptist brethren? Are not suspicions and jealousies of this kind, the natural effects of such a constitution? Must not a Baptist, as such, desire his own sentiment and practice to increase and prevail, while he considers them as agreeable to the will and command of his Lord? And must not a Pædobaptist, as such, sincerely wish that his opinion and practice may spread and prevail, so long as he considers infant sprinkling in the light of a divine appointment? To suppose a member of such a church, whether he be Baptist or Pædobaptist, to love God, and firmly believe his own sentiment concerning baptism to be a divine truth; and yet be indifferent whether that or its opposite prevail, involves a contradiction. For he who is indifferent to the performance of what he considers as a command of God, treats God himself with an equal degree of indifference; there being no possible way of expression our affection for God, but by regarding his revealed will. *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* Now, as our opponents must allow, that their communities are liable to all those other imperfections which are common to the real churches of Christ; so, I presume, the reader will hardly forbear concluding, that free communion exposes them to some addition disadvantages, which are peculiar to themselves.

Besides, though many of our Pædobaptist friends annex those pleading epithets, *candid* and *catholic*, to the names of our opposers; I would not have them be too much elated with such ascriptions of honour. For, is it not a fact, that others who plead for infant baptism, and those not less wise and discerning, consider their conduct in a very different point of light? Do they not look upon it as savouring more of a carnal policy, than of christian charity; and as being much better calculated to express their desire of popularity, in adding to the number of their communicants, by opening a back door for the members of Pædobaptist churches to enter, than to promote the edification of saints, or maintain the purity of divine worship, considering their avowed sentiments in regard to baptism?— A Pædobaptist, when remonstrating against the conduct of some independent churches, that received Baptists into communion with them, says, ‘Let men pretend what they can for such a *botch-potch* communion in their churches, I stedfastly believe the event and issue of such practices will, sooner or later, convince all gainsayers, that it neither pleaseth Christ, nor is any way promotive of true peace or gospel holiness in the churches of God’s people – I shall never be reconciled to that *charity*, which, in pretence of *peace and moderation*, opens the church’s door to church-disjoining principles.’ And he entitles his performance, ‘The sin and danger of admitting Anabaptists to continue in the Congregational churches, and *the inconsistency of such a practice with the principles of both.*’\* Thus, while our opponents gain the applause of some Pædobaptists, they incur the censure of others, who consider their conduct as inconsistent with Antipædobaptist principles. Just as those Dissenters who have occasionally conformed to the National Establishment, with a view to secular honours or temporal emoluments; and who, by doing so, have converted the sacred supper into a mere tool of ambition, or of avarice; while they have pleased some Conformists, have offended others. For though such Dissenters have pretended a concern for the public good, as the

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\* In Crosby’s Hist. Bap. vol. iii. p. 45, 46, 47.

ruling motive, and have shewn that they were far from being *bigots* to the principles of Nonconformity; yet members of the national church have not been wanting, who despised their *duplicity* of conduct; who have censured it as a *criminal neutrality* in religion, and as *balting between two opinions*, to the great dishonour of both; who have repeatedly sounded that startling query in their ears, For God, or for Baal? and have pronounced them *amphibious Christians*.\*

Here one can hardly avoid observing, the very peculiar treatment with which the Baptists in general meet from their Pædobaptist brethren. Do we strictly abide by our own principles, admitting none to communion with us, but those whom we consider as baptized believers? We are censured by many of them, as uncharitably rigid, and are called, by one gentleman, *watery bigots*. Do any of our denominations, under a plea of Catholicism, depart from their avowed sentiments, and connive at infant sprinkling? They are suspected, by others of the Pædobaptists, as a set of *temporizers*. So that, like those unhappy persons who fell into the hands of Procrustes, some of us are too short, and we must be *stretched*; others are too long, and they must be *lopped*. – But I return to my argument.

It should be observed, that forbearance and love, not less than resolutions and zeal, must be directed in the whole extent of their exercise, by the word of God; else we may greatly offend, and become partakers of other men's sins, by conniving when we ought to reprove. If the divine precepts, relating to love and forbearance, will apply to the case in hand; or so as to justify our connivance at an alteration, a corruption, or an omission of baptism; they will do the same in regard to the Lord's supper. – And then we are bound to bear with sincere Papists, in their mutilation of the latter; and to exculpate our upright friends the Quakers, in opposition to both. For it cannot be proved that baptism is less fundamental than the sacred supper. – ‘There is a false, ungodly charity, says a sensible Pædobaptist writer, a strange fire that proceeds not from the Lord; a charity that gives up the honour of religion, merely because we will not be at the pains to defend it – Vile principles can easily cover themselves with the names of temper, charity, moderation, and forbearance; but those glorious things are not to be confounded with lukewarmness, self-seeking, laziness or ignorance – As there is a cloke of covetness, so there is a cloke of fear and cowardice – You are never to make peace with men at the expence of any truth that is revealed to you by the great God; because that is offering up his glory in sacrifice to your own – Do not dismember the Christian religion, but take it all together: charity was never designed to be the tool of unbelief. See how the Spirit has connected both our principles and duties. Follow *peace* with all men, and *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord.\* – ‘I know not that man in England, says Dr. Owen, who is willing to go farther in forbearance, love, and communion with all that fear God, and hold the foundation, than I am: but this is *never to be done* by a condescension from the exactness of the least *apex* of gospel truth.’\*

Another Pædobaptist author, when treating on charity and forbearance, expresses himself in the following language. ‘A considerable succedaneum for the Christian unity, is the *catholic charity*; which is like the charity commended by Paul, in only this one circumstance, that it *groweth exceedingly*. – Among the stricter sort, it goes chiefly under the name of *forbearance*. We shall be much mistaken if we think that, by this soft and agreeable word, is chiefly meant the tenderness and compassion inculcated by the precepts of Jesus Christ and his apostles. It strictly means, an agreement to differ quietly about the doctrines

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\* See Mr. Stubb's Sermon, intituled, For God or for Baal?, Published, 1709.

\* Mr. Bradbury's Duty and Doct. of Baptism, p. 201, 213, 214.

\* In Mr. Bradbury, as before, p. 198.

and commandments of the gospel, without interruption of visible fellowship. They distinguish carefully between *fundamentals*, or things necessary to be believed and practised; and *circumstantials*, or things that are indifferent. Now whatever foundation there may be for such a distinction in *human* systems of religion; it certainly looks very ill becoming in the churches of Christ, to *question how far He is to be believed and obeyed*. Our modern churches – have nearly agreed to hold all those things *indifferent*, which would be inconvenient and disreputable; and to have communion together, in observing somewhat like the customs of their forefathers.

‘Many of the plainest sayings of Jesus Christ and the apostles are treated with high contempt, by the advocates of this forbearance. – The common people are persuaded to believe, that all the ancient institutions of Christianity were merely *local* and *temporary*; excepting such as the learned have agreed to be suitable to these times; or, which have been customarily observed by their predecessors. But it would well become the doctors in divinity to shew, by what authority any injunction of God can be revoked, besides *his own*; or, how any man’s conscience can be lawfully released, by custom, for example, or human authority, from observing such things as were instituted by the apostles of Christ, in his name. – This corrupt forbearance had no allowed place in the primitive churches. The apostle, in the epistle to the Ephesians, required of them, to adorn their *vocation with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love*. But had they dispensed with the laws of Christ, for convenience and ease, it had been forbearing one another in *hatred*. For those laws were expressions of his love; the most fervent love that was ever shewn among men, directed by infallible wisdom. Whosoever, therefore, would obliterate them, or any how attempt to change them, must either suppose himself *wiser* than Jesus Christ, or a *greater friend* to mankind. He must be moved, either by an enormous *self-conceit*; or by the spirit of *malevolence*.-

‘The more thinking part of religious men, observing what great mischiefs have arisen from contentions about truth, - have found it most desirable to let truth alone; and to concern themselves chiefly about loving profitably in civil society. To be of some religion is but decent; and the interests of human life require that it be popular and compliant. If men have different notions of Jesus Christ, his divinity, his sacrifice, his kingdom, and the customs of his religion, even from what the apostles seemed to have; charity [with many] demands that we think well of their religious characters, notwithstanding this. It is unbecoming the modesty of wise men to be confident on any side; and *contending earnestly* for opinions, injures the peace of the Christian church. Thus kind and humble is modern charity. – Instead of rejoicing in, or with the truth, it rejoiceth in contemplating the admirable piety that may be produced from so many different, yea, opposite principles. – It is very true, that the power of godliness has often suffered in a zealous contention about rites and ceremonies; but the contention has been chiefly about forms of human device. The Christians of old time were taught, not to *dispute* about the institutions of their Lord, but to *observe* them thankfully; and hereby they expressed their affection of him and to each other. If that affections be granted to be more important than the tokens of it, it would be unjust to infer that the latter have no obligation; which would imply, that Christ and the apostles *meant nothing* by their precepts. The Methodists have not, indeed, gone so far as their spiritual brethren [the Quakers] have done, in rejecting all external ceremonies; but they are taught to believe, that all concern about the ancient order and customs of the Christians is mere party-spirit, and injurious to the devout exercises of the heart. Thus the modern charity vaunts itself, in answering better purposes than could be accomplished by keeping the words of Christ. It produces a *more extensive* and *general communion*; and animates the devotion of men, without perplexing them by uncertain doctrines, or rigorous self-denial. Although it

supposes some revelation from God, and some honour due to Jesus Christ; it claims a right to *dispense* with both; to choose what, in his doctrine and religion, is fit to be believed and observed.\* - So, that illegitimate charity and false moderation, which incline professors to treat divine institutions as articles of small importance; led that great man, Melancthon, to place the *doctrine of justification* by faith alone, the *number* of positive institutions in the christian church, the *jurisdiction* claimed by the Pope, and several *superstitious rites* of the Romish religion, among things *indifferent*, when an imperial edict required compliance.† But, ‘as we must take heed that we do not add the fancies of men to our divine religion; so we should take equal care that we do not *curtail* the appointments of Christ‡,’ out of any pretence to candour, or peace, or the edification of our fellow Christians. – The charity for which many professors plead, is of so lax a nature, and so far beside the rule, both in regard to doctrine and worship; as gives too much occasion to ask, with Joshua, *Are you for US, or for our ADVERSARIES?*

Once more: Remarkably strong, and not foreign to my purpose, are the words of Mr. John Wesley, which are quoted with approbation by Mr. Rowland Hill. ‘A catholic spirit is not speculative latitudinarianism. It is not an indifference to all opinions. This is the spawn of hell; not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being driven to and fro, and tossed about with every wind of doctrine, is a great curse, not a blessing; an irreconcilable enemy, not a true catholicism. – A man of a true catholic spirit – does not halt between two opinions; nor vainly endeavour to blend them into one. Observe this, you that know not what spirit you are of; who call yourselves of a catholic spirit, only because you are of a muddy understanding; because your mind is all in a mist; because you of no settled, consistent principles, but are for jumbling opinions together. Be convinced that you have quite missed your way. You know not where you are. You think you are got into the very Spirit of Christ; when, in truth, you are nearer the spirit of Anti-christ.’\*

Our brethren with an air of superior confidence often demand, ‘What have you to do with *another’s baptism?*’ This interrogatory I would answer by proposing another: What have I to do with another’s *faith, experience, or practice?* In one view, nothing at all, if he do not injure my person, character, or property; for to his own master he stands or falls. In another, much; that is, if he desires communion with me at the Lord’s Table. In such a case, I may lawfully address him in the following manner: What think you of Christ? What know you of yourself? Of yourself, as a sinner; of Christ, as a Saviour? Of Christ, as King in Zion; of yourself, as a subject of his benign government? Are you desirous to be found in his righteousness, and sincerely willing to obey his commands? Are you ready to bear his cross, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes? – Receiving satisfaction to these most important queries, we will suppose the conversation thus to proceed: ‘What are the divine commands?’ After believing, baptism is the *first*, the *very first* that requires a public act of obedience. – ‘But I have been baptized.’ Perhaps not. Make it appear, however, and I shall say no more on that subject. – ‘I am really persuaded of it in my own mind. Were it otherwise, I should think it my duty, I should not hesitate a moment, to be immersed on a profession of faith.’ I commend your integrity: abide by the dictates of conscience. Yet care should be taken, that her language be an echo to the voice of divine revelation; else you may neglect your duty and slight your privileges, offend God and injure your soul, even while you obey her commands.

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\* Strictures upon Modern Simony, p. 48-55.

† Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 37, 38.

‡ Dr. Watt’s Humble Attempt, p. 62.

\* In Mr. Rowland Hill’s Full Answer to Mr. J. Wesley’s Remarks, p. 40, 41.

– ‘But I am persuaded Christ has accepted me, and that it is my duty to receive you, I have a pleasing persuasion; and so I conclude, in a judgment of charity, concerning all whom I baptize: but that it is the *immediate* duty of any unbaptized believer to approach the Lord’s Table, may admit a query; nay, the general practice of the Christian church in every age, has been quite in the negative. For a learned writer assures us, that ‘among *all the absurdities* that ever were held, none ever maintained *that*, that the person should partake of the communion before he was baptized.’ Was it, think you, the duty of an ancient Israelite to worship at the sanctuary, or to partake of the paschal feast, before he was circumcised? Or, was it the duty of the Jewish priest to burn incense in the holy place, before they offered the morning or the evening sacrifice? The appointments of God must be administered in his own way, and in that order which he has fixed. For, to borrow an illustration from a well known author; ‘Suppose a master commands his servant to sow his ground; does this give a right to him to go *immediately* and cast in the seed, before that ever he break the ground with the plough, and make it fit for the receiving the seed? Should he go thus to work, he were a disobedient servant. Neither could it excuse, that he had his master’s immediate command to sow his ground. Even so in the present case.’\* – Christ commands believers to remember him at his own Table. But were those believers to whom he first gave the command *unbaptized*? Or, can we infer, because it is the duty of all baptized believers to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, that it is the *immediate* duty of one that is not baptized, to do so? – ‘Could you produce an instance from the records of the New Testament, of any believer being refused communion, merely because he scrupled the propriety of being immersed on a profession of faith, it would warrant your present denial. But, whenever you shall make it appear, that a truly converted person, and one who was considered as such, desired fellowship with a church of Christ in the apostolic age: I will engage to prove that he was received, whatever might be his views relating to the mode and subject of baptism.’ And when you shall adduce an instance of any real convert, in those primitive times, conscientiously scrupling the use of the wine at the Lord’s Table; I will enter under the same obligations to prove, that the Sacred Supper was administered to him in his own way. – ‘Will you, then, dare to reject those whom Christ accepts!’ Reject, from what? My esteem and affection? Far be it! Under a persuasion that Christ has received you, I love and honour you as a Christian brother. His image appearing in your temper and conduct commands my regard. – ‘With what consistency, then, can you refuse me communion? If Christ has accepted me, if Christ himself has communion with me, why may not you?’ Communion with you in the knowledge and comfort of the truth I have; and this would be both my honour and happiness, were you a converted Jew. Communion with you I also have in affection; but fellowship at the Lord’s Table is a distinct act, a very different thing; and is to be regulated entirely by the revealed will of Him who appointed it. Communion at the Holy Supper would never have been either the duty or privilege of any man, if Christ has not commanded it, any more than it is now my duty to celebrate the ancient passover. But that eternal law which requires me *to love my neighbour as myself*, would have obliged me to love you, both as a man and a Christian, if baptism and the Lord’s Supper had never been ordained. – ‘After all, your professions of affection for me as a believer in Jesus Christ, and your refusing to have communion with me at the holy table, carry the appearance of a strong inconsistency.’ Admitting they do, the inconsistency is not peculiar to me, nor to those of my persuasion, because I act on a principle received in communion by the whole Christian church. There is no denomination of Christians, except those who plead for free communion, that would admit you to the Lord’s Table, if they did

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\* Mr. Thomas Boston’s Work, p. 386.

not think you had been baptized. This, therefore, is the principle one which I refuse to have communion with you: I consider you as unbaptized. Suppose a Jew, a Turk, or a Pagan, to be enlightened by divine grace, to have received the truth as it is in Jesus, to love God and desire communion with his people before he is baptized; would you think it right, could your own conscience admit of it, as consistent with the revealed will of Christ and the practice of his apostles, that such a request should be granted by any gospel church? In a case of this kind, I presume, and there have been millions of Jews and Heathens converted, since the Christians æra commenced, - in such a case you would easily discern a consistency, between loving him as a believer, and refusing to have communion with him till he was baptized. Nay, I cannot help but thinking, but you would be startled at the report of any religious community admitting such an one to the Lord's Table; because it would strike you as a notorious departure from the divine rule of proceeding; from the laws and statutes of Heaven, in that case made and provided. Besides, you have already acknowledged, that if you did not consider yourself as baptized; if you thought immersion on a profession of faith essential to baptism, which you very well know is *my* sentiment; you should think it your duty to submit, you would not hesitate a moment. So that, were I to encourage your immediate approach to the Sacred Supper, I should stand condemned on your own principles. This, therefore, is the only question between us, *What is baptism?* For your dare not assert, your cannot suppose, that an unbaptized believer, descended from Christian parents, has any pre-eminence, in point of claim to communion, above a truly converted Jew: and you must allow that I have an equal right with you, or any other man, to judge for myself what is essential to baptism. You verily believe that you have been baptized; I am equally confident, from your own account of the matter, that you have not. Your conscience opposes the thought of being immersed on a profession of faith, because, in your opinion, it would be rebaptization; mine cannot encourage your approach to the Lord's Table, because I consider infant baptism as invalid. - 'I perceive, then, that you look upon me as an unbaptized Heathen: for you cannot imagine that I am, or ever was, a Turk or a Jew.' Quite a mistake. I consider you has a real convert, and love you as a Christian brother. Were you persuaded that a son of Abraham after the flesh, or a dupe to Mahomet's imposture, or an uncultivated Hottentot, had received the truth and was converted to the Lord Redeemer; would you still call him, without limitation, a *Jew*, a *Turk*, or a *Heathen*? No, candour and common sense would forbid the thought. You would rather say, He is a believer in God's Messiah, and a lover of Jesus Christ; he feels the power of gospel truth on his heart, and his moral conduct is comely; but, as yet, he is unbaptized. I should rejoice to see him convinced of the importance of that institution, of the connection it has with other appointments of Christ, and behold him submit to it. Then, were I in communion, I should freely give him the right hand of fellowship, and break bread with him at the Lord's Table. Till then, however, though I think it the duty of every Christian to love him for the truth's sake, I consider it as no breach of charity, in any community, not to admit him to the Lord's Table. - Now I appeal to the reader, I appeal to our brethren themselves, Whether, on our Antipædobaptist principles, we are not obliged to consider a truly converted but unbaptized Mussulman, and a converted Englishman, who has had no other than Pædobaptism, as on a level, in point of claim to communion with us? For God is no respecter of persons. It is no matter where a man was born, or how he was educated; whether he drew his first breath at Constantinople or Pekin, or London; whether his parents taught him to revere the Koran of Mahomet, the Institutes of Confucious, or the well-attested Revelation of God; if he really be born of the Spirit, he has an equal claim to all the privileges of a gospel church, with a true convert descended from Christian ancestors. And if so, while our brethren abide by their present hypothesis,

they could not refuse the Sacred Supper to the one, any more than the other, without admitting the *former* to that divine appointment, they would surprise and offend all that heard of it.

Our opponents further suggest, nay, they seem finite confident, ‘That the Christian Jews in the primitive church, might, on our principles, have refused communion to the believing Gentiles, because they were not circumcised; and that the converted Gentiles might have denied fellowship to the believing Jews, for the opposite reason.’ But here our brethren take for granted, what we cannot be any means allow. For this way of talking supposes, that a submission to baptism is no more demanded of believers now, than circumcision was of Gentile converts in the apostolic age; and that we who plead for baptism, as a term of communion, have no more authority to do so, than Judaizing Christians then had for maintaining the necessity of circumcision. Now such extraordinary positions as these should not have been assumed *gratis*, but *proved, soundly proved*; which, had our opposers well and truly performed, would have made me and many of their stricter brethren, thorough proselytes to free communion. Nay, we should, probably, before now, have been in a hopeful way of getting *entirely rid* of that ordinance, about the order and importance of which we now contend. For neither Pacificus, nor Candidus, will dare to assert, that our ascended Lord requires *any* of his disciples to be circumcised, either before or after their admission to the Holy Table; consequently, if their arguing from circumcision to baptism be conclusive, we may absolutely omit the latter, as converts of old did the former, without fear of the least offence, or of any divine resentment.

And must we, indeed, consider the administration and the neglect of baptism, as on a perfect level with being circumcised, or uncircumcised in the apostolic times! Must an ordinance of the New Testament, submission to which our Lord required of all his disciples, be placed on the same footing with obsolete rite of the Jewish church! How kind it is of our brethren who possess this knowledge, and are so well acquainted with Christian liberty, relating to baptism, that they are willing to inform us of its true extent! For, as Socinus long ago observed, ‘Ignorance of it is the cause of *many evils*.’\* I may, however, venture an appeal to the intelligent reader. Whether this way of arguing does not much better become the pen of Socinus, of Volkelius, or of a Quaker; than that of Pacificus, of Candidus, or of any Baptist? Because, as Hoornbeek remarks, in answer to the Socinians; ‘It is very absurd to explain the design, the command, and the obligation of baptism, by the abrogation and abuse of circumcision.’† As our brethren detest the Socinian system in general, I cannot but wonder that they should so often use weapons, in defence of their novel sentiment, that were forged by Socinus, or some of his pupils, for a similar purpose. I could wish, therefore, that some such person as Mr. Ryland, who is well known to have an utter aversion to the capital tenets of that pretended reformer of the Reformed church in Poland, would seriously take Pacificus to task, for paying so much honour to a depraver of divine truth, and a mutilator of God’s worship. For who knows but it might have a happy effect, and cause him to retract his Modest Plea? – Before I proceed to another objection, it may not be amiss to observe, What a *variety* of laudable and kindred purposes this argument is adapted to serve,

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\* Qui scientiam habet, ut inquit Paulus, apud se habeat, coram Deo; non quin eam scientiam alios etiam docere possit, ut ipse Paulus faciebat, præsertim ubi ignorantia multorum malorum est causa; ut certe hoc tempore est ignoratio Christianæ libertatis, in aquæ baptismo suscipiendo. SOCINUS *de Baptismo*, Cap. xvii. apud HOORNBE. *Socin. Conf.* Tom. iii. p. 435, 436.

† After giving various pertinent reasons against this old Socinian argument for free Communion, he adds; Ut ex illis omnibus satis sit manifestum, absurdissime rationem, præceptum, auctoritatemque baptismi explicari, ex circumcisionis obrogatione et abusu. Ubi supra, p. 256.



according to its various application by different persons. In the hands of our *opponents*, it effectually proves the necessity of admitting infant sprinkling, in some cases, as a proper *succedaneum* for what they consider as real baptism. From the pen of Socinus, it evinces, beyond a doubt, that baptism is an *indifferent thing*. And in the mouth of Barclay, it will equally well demonstrate, that baptism should be *entirely laid aside*. Well, then, might our Candid and Peaceful opposers congratulate themselves on the safety of their cause, it being defended by such a *three-edged sword* as this! And well might they unite, as one man, in saying, 'If, therefore, this were the *only* thing that could be urged in favour of the latitude of communion I plead for, I should think it would be sufficient; at least sufficient to excuse our conduct, and stop the mouth of censure.'

But, notwithstanding all I have said, we stand charged by our brethren with a *notorious inconsistency* in our own conduct; because we occasionally admit, with pleasure, Pædobaptist ministers into our pulpits, to whom we should refuse communion at the Lord's table. This objection has been much insisted upon of late, and is sometimes urged against us by way of query, to the following effect: 'Is not as much required in order to an *office* in the church, as to *private membership*? Is it not as inconsistent to receive a Pædobaptist, as a *minister*, and admit him into the *pulpit*, as to admit him into the *church* and to the *Lord's table*? Where have you either precept, or example, for receiving them as *ministers*, any more than for receiving them as members?' – These queries being considered, by many of our opponents, as quite unanswerable, I shall take the more notice of them.

The first thing, then, that demands regard, is the state of the question which is now before us. For it is not, as these queries suggest, Whether as much be not required in order to an *office* in the church, as to *private communion*? This we readily allow; this we never denied. For what congregation of strict Baptists would think they acted consistently in making choice of a Pædobaptist for their pastor, or to officiate as a deacon? Besides, will not our brethren acknowledge, that in every orderly society, and more especially in a church of Christ, a person must be a member before he can be an officer in it? This is the point in dispute, at least it is this about which I contend; Whether baptism be equally necessary to the occasional exercise of ministerial gifts, as it is to communion at the Lord's table? and, Whether the Scripture favour the one as much as the other?

Such being the true state of the question, I now beg leave to ask, Supposing our brethren to prove the affirmation beyond a doubt, what is the consequence, and how are we affected by it? Is it, that we are found guilty of a direct violation of some divine command, that requires us to receive Pædobaptists into our communion? No such thing is pretended. Is it, that we oppose some plain apostolic precedent? neither is this laid to our charge. For they do not believe that there were any Pædobaptists in the apostolic times; and, consequently, they cannot suppose that the New Testament contains an example of such being received into communion. What, then, is the conclusion they would infer? It must, surely, be something formidable to every strict Baptist; otherwise it is hardly supposable that so much weight should be laid upon this objection. The consequence, however, is only this, The premises proved, 'the strict Baptists have no reason to censure their brethren of a looser cast, because they themselves are equally culpable, though in a different respect.' Or, in other words, 'The strict Baptists, like some other folks, are not quite infallible; do actually err; and, by reason of a mistake, impertinently blame the conduct of their more free, and open, and generous brethren, when they ought rather to examine and reform their own.' But this inference can be of little service to the cause of free communion, except it be good logic and sound divinity, to attempt a justification of my own faults, by proving that he who accuses me is equally guilty: or to congratulate myself as an innocent man, because my neighbour

cannot with a good grace reprove me. Our opponents, I persuade myself, will not be greatly offended with us, if this argument, herculean as it seems to them, should not make us complete converts to free communion. So soon, however, as our brethren shall make it appear, that they have as good a warrant for receiving Pædobaptist believers into stated communion, as I have to admit a Pædobaptist minister occasionally into my pulpit, I will either encourage the former, or entirely refuse the latter.

But if these queries prove any thing, they prove too much; more, at least, than the querists intend. For, according to the argument contained in them, it is equally unwarrantable for us to here a Pædobaptist minister preach, or to unite with him in public prayer, as it is for them to receive him into communion. For instance: do they demand, 'Where have you either precept, or example, for admitting Pædobaptist ministers into your pulpits, any more than for receiving them as members?' I retort, on their Baptist principles; Where have you either precept or example, in the New Testament, for hearing Pædobaptist ministers preach; or for uniting with them in public prayer, any more than for receiving them as members? And, to shew the futility of this argument, I again demand, If, in hearing such ministers preach, or by uniting with them in public prayer, (which are undoubtedly branches of the moral worship of God, nor peculiar to any dispensation of religion) we act without any express command or plain example in the New Testament; with what propriety can we blame our brethren for admitting Pædobaptists to the Lord's Supper (which is a positive institution; a part of divine worship that depends entirely on a revelation of the sovereign will of God) though they have neither precept nor precedent for so doing? Queries of this kind might be multiplied, but these may suffice.

But is there no difference between the two cases? No difference between occasionally admitting Pædobaptist ministers in our pulpits, and receiving them or others of the same persuasion, into our communion? I can scarcely imagine that our brethren themselves will here answer in the negative; but that this difference may plainly appear, let the following things be observed, - Public preaching is not confined to a person in a church state, nor ever was; but the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, nor ought ever to be administered but to a particular church, and of a positive ordinance peculiar to it, concerning which is all our dispute. - There is not that strict mutual relation between bare hearers of the word and their preachers, as there is between the members of a church and her pastor, or between the members themselves. And as, according to the appointment of God, persons must believe the gospel before they have any thing to do with positive institutions; so, in the ordinary course of providence, they must hear the gospel in order to their believing. The Corinthians heard before they believed; they believed before they were baptized; and no doubt, they were baptized before they received the sacred supper.\* When our opponents received Pædobaptists into their fellowship, they practically allow what they themselves consider as a human invention, to supersede a positive, divine institution; and that with a view to their attending on another positive appointment of Jesus Christ. Not so, when we admit ministers of that persuasion into our pulpits. In this case there is no divine institution superseded; no human invention, in the worship of God, encouraged: nor is it done with a view to introduce them to any positive appointment of our sovereign Lord. - Again: when we admit Pædobaptist ministers into our pulpits, it is in expectation that they will preach the gospel; that very gospel which we believe and love, and about which there is no difference between them and us. But when they receive Pædobaptists into communion, they openly connive at what they consider as an error; an error both in judgment and practice; an error

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\* Acts xviii. 8.

of that kind which the scripture calls, *will-worship, and the traditions of men*. There is undoubtedly, a material difference between hearing a minister who, in our judgment, is ignorant of the only true baptism, discourse on those doctrines he experimentally knows, and countenancing an invention of men. In the former case we shew an esteem for his personal talents, we honour his ministerial gifts, and manifest our love to the truth; in the latter, we set aside a divine appointed prerequisite for communion at the Lord's table.

It has already been observed, as a fact, that persons have been called by grace, who were not baptized in their infancy; and considering baptism as a temporary institution, have conscientiously refused a submission to that ordinance when converted, who yet desired communion in the holy supper. We will now suppose a community of such; and that they call to the ministry one of their number, who is allowed by all competent judges, to possess great ministerial gifts, and to be a very useful preacher: - Or we may suppose a reformed Catholic, equally the subject of divine grace, and endued with equal abilities for public service: yet conscientiously retaining the popish error of communion in one kind only. Now, on either of those suppositions, I demand of our brethren, whether they would receive such an one into communion with the same readiness that they would admit him into their pulpits? If they answer in the negative, then, by their own confession, there is not so close a connection between admitting a person to preach amongst us, and receiving him into communion, as they pretend. And we may venture to retort upon them, Shall an excellent, laborious, and useful minister of Christ work for you, and shall he not be allowed to eat with you! What shall he break the bread of life to you, and must he not be suffered to break bread at the Lord's table with you! - Again: We will suppose a good man and a useful preacher to be fully persuaded, with the Hydroparastates in the second century, that water should always be used at the Lord's table instead of wine;\* and that, on a principle of conscience, he absolutely refuses the latter: Or, that it is more significant and more agreeable to dip the bread in the wine, and receive them both at once; as practised by some in the fourth century, and more frequently afterwards:† Or, that he conscientiously approves the custom of the Greeks, who mix boiling water with the wine, and crumble the bread into it, and taking it out with a spoon, receive the elements both together.‡ Now though, I confess, they could not refuse him a place at the Lord's table, to partake of the holy supper in his own way, without violating that grand rule of their conduct, *God has received him*; and though Pacificus and Candidus could not reject him, without contradicting the titles of their plea for free communion; yet, I presume, the generality of our opponents would hardly allow of such a peculiar mode of proceeding, in any of their churches. No; they would be ready to say of such a candidate for fellowship, He ought to regard the example of Christ, who used wine: Or, he ought to obey the divine command, which requires that we should drink the wine. Yet they might not think it proper to refuse him the occasional use of a pulpit, and might hear him preach the truth, received in common, with pleasure.

Though, as Antipædobaptists, it cannot be expected, that we should produce instances out of the New Testament of Pædobaptist ministers being encouraged in a similar

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\* *VQssii Thes. Theolog.* p. 487. Edit. Oxon. 1613. *Suiceri Thesaur. Eccles.* sub voce \*GREEK\*. *Mosheim's Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 180, 8vo. edit.

† *Vossius, ubi supra*, p. 522-525. *Suicerus*, Id. ib. Euseb. *Eccles. Hist.* l. vi. c. 44.

‡ *Witsii Econom. Fæd.* l. iv. c. xvii. § 10, 25. To what lengths of superstition and absurdity may persons professing the Christian religion run, when they leave the divine rule of proceeding! No branches of Jehovah's worship require a more punctual regard to the sacred rule, than those which are of a *positive* kind; yet none have been so mutilated, metamorphosed, and abused, as they have been, by the perverse inventions and bold impieties of men.

way; because we are firmly persuaded there were none such, till after the sacred canon was completed: yet we find, in that inspired volume, a sufficient warrant for uniting with those that believe, in affection and walk, so far as agreed; notwithstanding their ignorance of some part of the counsel of God, to which a conscientious obedience is indispensably required, from all those by whom it is known.\* Yes, the New Testament not only permits, as lawful, but enjoins, as an indispensable duty, that we should love them that love the Lord; and that we should manifest the holy affection in every way, that is not inconsistent with a revelation of the divine will in some other respect. So it was under the ancient Jewish œconomy, and so it is now. To admit, therefore, a minister to preach among us, with whom we should have objection to commune, could we allow the validity of infant baptism; as it is a token of our affection for a servant of Christ, of our love to the truth he preaches, and is not contrary to any part of divine revelation, must be lawful: or if not, it lies upon our brethren to prove it; because they cannot deny that the word of God requires us to love him, and to manifest our affection for him. But as to communion at the holy table, Christians in general have had no more doubt, whether baptism should *precede* it, according to a special revelation of the divine will, than whether baptism itself be a part of the counsel of God. – When we ask a Pædobaptist minister to preach in any of our churches, we act on the same general principle, as when we request him to pray with any of us in a private family. And as no one considers this as an act of church communion, but a testimony of our affection for him, so we consider that; and it is view by the public, as a branch of that general intercourse which it is not only lawful, but commendable and profitable to have, with all that preach the gospel.

I take it for granted, that circumcision was absolutely necessary for every male, in order to communion at the paschal supper, and in the solemn worship of the sanctuary. And if so, had the most renowned antediluvians that ever lived, or the most illustrious Gentiles that ever appeared in this world, been cotemporary with Moses, and sojourners in the same wilderness, they could not have been admitted to communion in the Israelitish church, without submitting to circumcision. Enoch, though as a saint he walked with God; though as a prophet he foretold the coming of Christ to judgment – Noah, though an heir of the righteousness of faith, a preacher of that righteousness, and one of Ezekiel’s worthies\* – Melchisedeck, though a king, and a priest of the most high God; superior to Abraham, and the greatest personal type of the Lord Messiah that ever was among men – And Job, though for piety there was none like him upon earth, Jehovah himself being Judge, and one of the prophet’s illustrious triumvirate† - These, I say, notwithstanding all their shining excellencies, exalted characters, and useful services; could not, as uncircumcised, have been admitted to communion with the chosen tribes at the tabernacle of the God of Israel, without a violation of the divine command. This, I persuade myself, our opponents must allow: this, I think, they dare not deny. Yet if Enoch, for instance, had been in the camp of Israel when Korah and his company mutinied, and had been disposed to give the rebels a lecture on the second coming of Christ; I cannot suppose that his offered service would have been rejected by Moses or Joshua, merely because he was not circumcised. Or, if Noah had been present at the erection of the tabernacle, and inclined to give the people a sermon on the future incarnation of the Son of God, and the righteousness of faith; to which most important objects that sacred structure, with its costly utensils and solemn services, had a typical regard; I cannot but think they would have given him a hearing. Nay, I appeal to our opponents

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\* Philip. iii. 15, 16.

\* Chap. xiv. 14, 16, 18, 20.

† Ezek. as before.

themselves, whether they do not think so as well as I. Yet that favoured people could not have admitted them to communion in some other branches of divine worship, without transgressing the laws of Jehovah.\* If this be allowed, the consequences is plain, and the argument, though analogical, is irrefragable. For the paschal feast and the sanctuary services were not more of a positive nature than the Lord's supper;† nor were the former more peculiar to that dispensation than the latter is to this; but preaching and hearing the word are not peculiar to any dispensation of grace, as are baptism and the sacred supper.

Our Lord, though he warned his hearers against the pride and hypocrisy, the unbelief and covetousness, of the ancient Pharisees and Scribes, and Jewish teachers; yet exhorted the people to regard the truths they delivered.\* Our opponents, notwithstanding, cannot imagine that Christ would have admitted those ecclesiastics to baptism, had they desired it; nor will they assert that any, who are not proper subjects of that ordinance, should be received into communion. – When the beloved disciple said, *Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us*, Jesus answered, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.† From which it appears, that we are under obligation to encourage those that fight against the common enemy, and propagate the common truth; though they and we may have no communion together, in the special ordinances of God's house; which is the very case when we admit our Pædobaptist brethren to preach among us. – We are also informed, that the first Gentiles who were converted by the apostolic ministry, were endued with miraculous gifts immediately upon their believing, and before they were baptized; for they spake with tongues and glorified God.‡ - Nor is it improbable but some of them then received gifts for the ministry; and if so, in the fulness of their hearts and the transport of their joy, they also gave the first specimen of their future ministrations, to the pleasing astonishment of Peter and those that were with him. But can our brethren suppose, that the great apostle would have taken equal pleasure in hearing them request a place at the Lord's table, before they were baptized? No; his own conduct opposes the thought. For, having beheld with astonishment the gifts they received, and hearing with rapture the truths they delivered, *he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*; to be baptized immediately in the name of that Lord, who requires a submission to the ordinance from all that believe.

Once more: A very competent judge of all that pertains to the ministerial character, and of all that belongs to a christian profession, has left his opinion on record concerning the ministry of certain persons, whom he considered as quite unworthy of his intimate friendship. Yes, Paul, that most excellent man, when acting as amanuensis to the Spirit of wisdom, and when speaking of some who preached the gospel, informs us, that *envy and strife* were the principles on which they acted, and the *increase of his afflictions* the end which they had in view. How carnal and base the principles! How detestable the end at which they aimed! – But was the apostle offended or grieved, so as to wish they were silenced? Or, did he charge his beloved Philippians, and all the sincere followers of Christ, never to hear them? Let his own declaration answer the queries. *What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*\* When a corrupted gospel is preached, he asserts his apostolic authority, and thunders out anathemas

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\* Exod. xii. 44, 48. Ezek. xlv. 7.

† Ad cœnan *typicam*, h. e. ad Pascha, non admittebatur ullus *peregrinus*, Exod. xii. 43. *aut præputiatus*, ver. 40. sicut sub. N.T. non admittitur non-baptizatus. Acts ii. 41, 42. *Mastricht, Theol.* Tom. 11. p. 843.

\* Matt. xxiii, 1, 2, 3.

† Luke ix. 49, 50.

‡ Acts. x. 44.

\* Philip. i. 15-18.

against the propagators of it.<sup>†</sup> Because, as God will not set the seal of his blessing to a falsehood, or sanctify a lie, it can do no good; it is pregnant with mischief. But when the pure gospel is preached, though on perverse principles, as it is *the truth*, God frequently owns and renders it useful, whoever may publish it. Hence the apostle's joy in the text before us. – Now, as we are far from impeaching the sincerity of our Pædobaptist brethren, when preaching the gospel of our ascended Lord; and as Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached, though by persons who acted on the basest principles; we cannot imagine that he would have taken less pleasure in the thought of Pædobaptist ministers publishing the glorious gospel of the blessed God, had there been any such in those days, even though he might have considered them as under a great mistake, in regard to baptism; for our opponents do not believe any more than we, that Paul knew any thing of infant sprinkling. And if so, we may safely conclude, that there is nothing inconsistent with our hypothesis, in occasionally admitting Pædobaptist ministers into our pulpits, and hearing them with pleasure. – But will our opponents assert, or can they suppose, that the great apostle of the Gentiles would have encouraged with equal delight such persons as those of whom he speaks, to approach the holy table, and have communion with him in all the ordinances of God's house? Persons, who made the glorious gospel of the blessed God, the vehicle of their own pride, and envy, and malice; and in whose conduct those infernal tempers reigned, and had for their immediate object one of the most excellent and useful men that ever lived? Certainly, if on any occasion, we may here adopt the old proverb, *Credat Jedæus apella*.

*Christ is preached, and therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.* Disinterested, noble saying! Worthy of a first-rate minister in the Messiah's kingdom; worthy of Paul; who cared not who opposed him, nor what he suffered, if Christ were but glorified in the conversion of sinners. But though that man of God thus expresses himself, in reference to gospel preaching; I cannot imagine, nor will our brethren affirm, that he would with the same pleasure have admitted any of the Jewish converts to communion, because they supposed themselves to have been baptized, merely on the account of their having been washed, according to the traditions of the elders. To a request of this kind, his mildest answer, we have reason to think, would have been, *We have no such custom, nor the churches of God.* Yet, as Baptists, our opponents consider infant sprinkling, as having nothing more to recommend it, than *human authority* and *general practice*; which were the grand recommendations of those Jewish washings, and the very basis on which they stood. – Suppose our brethren, in the course of their reading, were to find it asserted by some ancient author, 'That Paul frequently admitted persons to communion, on such a pretence to baptism;' what would they say? They would, I presume, consider the assertion as a libel on his character. They would execrate the pen which transmitted such a falsehood to posterity; and look on the writer, either as a weak and credulous man, or as a forger of lies. And, except a predilection for free communion biased their judgment, their opinion and censure would be much the same, were they to find it recorded, 'He frequently admitted believers to the Lord's table, *before* they were baptized.' The utter silence of the New Testament, relating to a conduct of this kind; the many passages, in that infallible code of divine worship, inconsistent with such a practice; and their veneration or the character of the great apostle, would oblige them to do so. Yet, amazing to think! for such a procedure they plead; such a conduct they adopt; and look upon us as greatly injuring the honour and interests of real religion, and not a little contributing to the cause of infidelity; merely because we cannot consider them as the followers of Paul in this particular, nor become their humble imitators!

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<sup>†</sup> Gal. i. 6-9.

But why should our brethren so earnestly plead for believers receiving the Lord's Supper, while they treat baptism as if it were a mere trifle; an appointment of Christ that might very well have been spared? What is there of obligation, of solemnity, of importance, in the former, that is not in the latter? Have they not the same divine Institutor, and the same general end? Were they not intended for the same persons, and are they not equally permanent in the church of God? And as to baptism, was not the administration of it by John one of the first characteristics of the Messiah's appearance, and of the gospel dispensation commencing? Did not the King Messiah submit to it, as an example of obedience to all his followers; and most strongly recommend it to their judgment and conscience, their affections and practice, when he said, *Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness?* Which, by the way, is more than can be asserted concerning the sacred supper;\* for though he instituted it with great solemnity, yet we do not read that he partook of it. Was not the administration of baptism so honoured at the river Jordan, when the great Immanuel submitted to it; when the eternal Father, by an audible voice, declared his approbation of it; and when the Divine Spirit descended on the head of Jesus, just emerged from the water, as no other institution ever was? And does not the divinely prescribed form of words that is used in its administration shew, that there is a peculiar solemnity, an excellence, an importance in it? while, at the same time, it suggests arguments of unanswerable force against those Antitrinitarian errors which now so much abound. For no man who has been baptized at his own request, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, can deny that fundamental doctrine of the Trinity, without giving the lie to his baptism.

Nor is it unlikely that this consideration may have inclined some to oppose the ordinance. I believe one reason (says Dr. Wall) why Socinus had such a mind to abolish all use of baptism among his followers, was, because persons baptized *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*, would be always apt to think those name to express the Diety in which they were to believe; which he did not mean they should do. And some of his followers have been so disgusted with that form of baptism, that they have given profane insinuations that those words were not originally in the Scripture; but were taken from the usual doxology into the form of baptism, and then inserted into the texts of Matt. xxviii. 19.\* - The same suspicions, relating to this matter, were entertained by Mr. Thomas Bradbury, as appears by the following words: 'My friends, I ought to warn you, that the main debate in a little time will be, not *how much water* should be used, but whether *any at all*. They who deny the doctrine the doctrine of the Trinity are so uneasy at the form of words, that our Saviour has made essential to baptism, that they have a great mind to lay aside the ordinance, as Socinus did in Poland. They write and argue that it is not *necessary*; by which, if they mean any thing that is worth our heeding, it must be, that it is not *commanded*. For though we dare not say that it is necessary to God's *grace*; yet the question is, whether he has not made it so to our *duty*? And when they ask you, whether a man may not be *saved* without it? Do you ask them, whether he is obedient without it? whether he stands complete in all the will of God? whether he fulfils all righteousness? or whether he neglects to do, what the scriptures told him he ought to do?'

It is with peculiar pleasure, on this occasion, that I introduce the following pertinent passage from a little publication written by Mr. John Ryland. His words are these: 'Dr. Daniel Waterland justly observes, that the true doctrine of the Trinity and the atonement of

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\* Wolfus in Luc. xxii. 18.

\* Hist. Inf. Bap. Part ii. chap. vii.

\* Duty and Doctrine, p. 52.

Christ, have been kept up in the Christian church, by the institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper, more than by any other means whatsoever; and, humanly speaking, these glorious truths, which are essential to salvation, would have been lost long ago, if the two positive institutions had been totally neglected and disused amongst professors of Christianity. In this point of view, baptism and the Lord's supper appear to be of *unspeakable importance to the glory of God, and the very being of the true church of Christ on earth.*\* - Again: in another little piece, to which I have already referred, and of which the same worthy minister of Jesus Christ has expressed his approbation in the more ways than one, though it does not bear his name I find the following strong assertions relating to the importance and utility of baptism. 'It is highly incumbent on all that love the Lords Jesus Christ in sincerity, and are glad to behold their Saviour in every view in which he is pleased to reveal himself, to consider the dignity and glory of his holy institutions. These last legacies of a dying Saviour, these pledges of his eternal and immutable love, ought to be received with the greatest reverence and the warmest gratitude. And as they directly relate to the death of the great Redeemer, which is an event the most interesting; an action the most grand and noble that ever appeared in the world; thou ought to be held in the highest esteem, and performed with the utmost solemnity. Of these institutions, *baptism* calls for our *first* regard, *as it is appointed to be first profound: and however lightly the inconsiderate part of mankind may affect to treat this ordinance, it ought to be remembered,* [I hope Candidus, and especially Pacificus, will never forget it] *that Christ himself considered it and submitted to it, as an important part of that righteousness which it became even the Son of God to fulfil.* As this ordinance is to be once performed, and not repeated, every Christian ought to be *particularly careful* that it is done in a right manner; or the benefit arising to the soul from this institution is *lost*, and lost *forever*. We ought with the utmost deliberation and care to consider – its own *native dignity*, as an action of the positive, or ritual kind, the *most great and noble in itself, and well-pleasing to God, that it is possible for us to perform on this side heaven.* – In this action, Christians, you behold the counsel of God: it is the result of his wise and eternal purpose: it is clearly commanded in his word: it is enforced by his own example; and honoured in the most distinguished and wonderful manner, by every Person in the adorable Trinity. This ordinance is no trivial affair; it is no mean thing; and whoever is so unhappy as to despise it, wants eyes to see its beauty and excellency. – Our great Redeemer seems to have designed this ordinance as *a test* of our sincerity, and *to distinguish his followers* from the rest of mankind. As a captain who, to try a new soldier, employs him at first in some arduous and important service; so our Saviour, to try his own work, and to make the reality of his powerful grace in the hearts of his people manifest first to a great and singular action, and requires their submission to an institution that is disgusting to their nation and mortifying to their pride.' And the title of the pamphlet, from which these extracts are made, speaks of baptism, 'As an act of *sublime worship* to the adorable Persons in the Godhead – As a representation of the *sufferings of Christ*, his death, burial, and resurrection – As *the answer* of a good conscience towards God – As an emblem of *regeneration* and *sanctification* – As a *powerful obligation* to newness of life – And as a lively figure of *the natural death* of every Christian.'<sup>\*</sup>

Mr. Daniel Turner has also borne his testimony to the usefulness and importance of baptism. For, speaking of that ordinance, he says, 'Christ himself submitted to this rite, as administered by John; not indeed with the same views, or to the same ends, with others; but as pointing out by his example, *the duty of Christians in general.* He also gave his ministers a

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\* Beauty of Social Religion, p. 10.

\* Six Views of Believers Baptism. p. 1, 2, 3, 15.



commission and order, to baptize all the nations they taught. It appears that being baptized, was the *common token* of subjection to Christ, *and necessary to a regular entrance into his visible church.*’ And when describing the qualifications of those that are to be received into communion, he says ‘They should be acquainted with the chief design of the rites and positive institutions of Christianity, and reverently use them; viz. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.’ Once more: Speaking of that respect which the two positive appointments have to visible fellowship among believers, he says, ‘Baptism, indeed, by which we are first formally incorporated into the visible church, or body of Christ, is the *beginning* and *foundation* of this external communion: but the Lord’s supper is best adapted for the constant support and continual manifestation of it.’<sup>†</sup> Nay, he mentions, ‘the *reverent use* of the two sacraments,’ among those things which are ‘*essential* to the constitution of a particular visible church.’<sup>‡</sup>

After such considerations as these, relating to the vast utility and grand importance of baptism, one cannot but wonder at Pacificus, Candidus, and others of our opponents that were never suspected of Antitrinitarian error, calling that ordinance, a *non-essential*, an *external rite*, an *indifferent thing*, a *shadow*, a *mere outward form*; comparing it with *the antiquated rite of circumcision*, in the apostolic age. How different this way of talking from the quotations I have just produced; especially those I have taken from pieces that were either published, or composed and recommended, by my worthy friend, Mr. Ryland! For he looks upon baptism, in connection with the Lord’s supper, as of *unspeakable importance* to the glory of God, and the very being of a truth church upon earth. He insists upon it, that baptism demands the believers’ regard, *prior* to the holy supper, and it was appointed to be first administered: and he severely censures those *inconsiderate mortals*, who treat the ordinance lightly. – Mr. Turner also, as we have seen, maintains that baptism is the *common token* of our subjection to Christ; that it is *necessary to a regular entrance* into the visible church; and that it is the *foundation* of external communion in the house of God. Surely, then, these authors cannot but be greatly greatly grieved, if not offended, with those diluting terms and that degrading comparison, which are used by Messieurs Pacificus and Candidus, when speaking of the ordinance! Nay, they will be ready to retort upon them that heavy charge, which those *Peaceful* and *Candid* Gentlemen leveled at us; and to remind them that, by treating baptism in such a manner, they greatly injure ‘the honour and interest of true religion, and not a little contribute to the cause of infidelity.’ For they have united in repeatedly calling baptism a *non-essential*; and in comparing it with that obsolete appointment *circumcision*, of which judaizing Christians of old were so fond. This being the case, I am heartily glad that these worthy authors have *reprobated* their conduct, and so *publicly condemned* their way of thing, in regard to baptism. It may serve, perhaps, as an antidote against the hurtful influence of their *Modest Plea*; nor may it be entirely useless to Pacificus and Candidus themselves. But yet, methinks, I could sincerely wish, as Mr. Ryland and Mr. Turner are pretty well acquainted with those writers, that they would seriously examine and converse with them *in private*, on the subject about which they *so widely differ*. – And I may just hint, that as they are the fittest persons in the world to perform the friendly office, they need not fear provoking their choler. For as their names are *Candid* and *Peaceful*, so is their temper; and it might have a beneficial effect, by making them more careful what they write and publish in future, in regard to free communion. – But I return from this digression.

Mr. Bunyan, when speaking of baptism, calls in an *outward circumstantial* thing – A *shadow*, an *outward circumstance* – *Water – water – water – water – water*; five times over, in so

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<sup>†</sup> Compend. Social Relig. p. 27. (Note), and p. 63, 120. (Note).

<sup>‡</sup> See p. 5. Note.

many lines. And a submission to baptism he describes in equally degrading language. For he represents it, as an *outward conformity to an outward circumstance* – As an *outward and bodily conformity to outward and shadowish circumstances* – And calls it *obedience to water*.<sup>\*</sup> What deprecating terms! What irreverent language! Is not the reader tempted to think, that I have made a mistake in my author; and that I have been referring to Socinus, or Barclay, instead of him who penned that immortal work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*? But let me not wrong those authors, by insinuating that they make use of similar language on the same subject. For though the former, when speaking of the ordinance under consideration, frequently calls it, 'The external baptism of water,' for which his opponents reproves him;<sup>†</sup> and though the latter denominates both the positive institutions of our Lord, 'Shadows, and outside things;' yet, so far as I have observed, neither of them ever used such degrading and indecent language concerning baptism, as that produced from Mr. Bunyan. Nay, I do not remember to have met with any thing of the kind that is equal to it, except what is reported of some ancient heretics, called *Archontici*.<sup>‡</sup> Yet had Socinus, or Barclay, so expressed himself, we should not have been much surprised; because the one maintains, that Christ never required his apostles to baptize in water, but only *permitted* them to do so; and the other expressly says, 'That he commanded his disciples to baptize with water, I could never yet read.'<sup>§</sup> Our brethren, therefore, who plead for free communion, are the only persons professing firmly to believe, that Christ *commanded*, really and solemnly *commanded* his ministering servants to baptize in water, and *continue the practice* to the end of the world; and dispense with it just as occasion requires. Consequently, they have the complete monopoly of that honour which arises from the union of *such a creed* and *such a conduct*.

The Lord's Supper, however, is considered and treated by them in a different manner; for they speak of it as a *delightful* and *edifying*, an *important* institution. But what authority have they for thus distinguishing between two appointments of the *same* Lord, intended for the *same persons*, of *equal continuance* in the Christian church, and *alike required* of proper subjects? They have, indeed, the *example* of some Socinians, and the *venerable sanction* of the whole Council of Trent. For the title of one chapter in the records of that Council is; 'Concerning the excellence of the most holy Eucharist, *above the rest* of the sacraments.'<sup>\*</sup> But as a good old Protestant writer observes, 'that the one sacrament should be so much extolled above the other, namely, the Lord's Supper to be preferred before Baptism, as the more worthy and excellent sacrament, we find no such thing in the word of God; but that both of them are of like dignity in themselves, and to be had equally and indifferently in most high account.'<sup>†</sup> Nay, Mr. Ryland assures us, of which I would have Pacificus take particular notice: 'That baptism ought to be considered as glorious an act of worship, *as ever was instituted by God*.'<sup>\*</sup> - Might not the Jews of old have distinguished, with equal propriety, between circumcision and the paschal supper? Does it become us to form comparisons between the positive appointments of our Eternal Sovereign, in regard to their importance; and that with a view to dispense with either of them, while the very same authority enjoins the one as well as the other? Can such a conduct be pious, humble, or rational? Is it not something like

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<sup>\*</sup> Works, Vol. I. p. 133, 137, 168, 169, 134, 138, 194.

<sup>†</sup> Baptismum aquae externum. Apud. Hoornb. *Socin. Conf.* Tom. iii. p. 301.

<sup>‡</sup> Who impiously, as Theodoret asserts, *Lavacrum execorantur, et mysteriorum participationem, ut que fiat in nomine Sabaoth.* Apud *Suicerum, Thes. Eccles.* sub voce \*GREEK\*.

<sup>§</sup> Hoornb. Ubi supra, p. 249, 250, 251, 301. *Barclay's Apolog.* P. 424.

<sup>\*</sup> Concil. Trident. Sess. xviii. Cap. iii.

<sup>†</sup> Willet's Synops. Papismi, p. 556, 447.

<sup>\*</sup> Beauty of Social Relig. p. 9.

being ‘partial in God’s law,’ for which the ancient priests were severely censured? Or, shall we say of our obedience to God, as he says to the mighty ocean; *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further?*

But supposing it evident, that baptism is *much inferior* to the Sacred Supper, in point of importance; yet, while it is an ordinance of God, it has an equal claim on our obedience. For it is not the manifest excellence, or the great utility of any divine appointment, that is the true reason of our submission to it; but the *authority* of Him that commands. ‘It hath been ever God’s wont, (says Bishop Hall) by small precepts to prove men’s dispositions. Obedience is as well tried in a trifle, as in the most important charge: ye, so much more, as the thing requires is less: for oftentimes those who would be careful in the main affairs, think they may neglect the smallest. What command soever we receive from God, or our superior, we must not scan the *weight* of the thing, but the *authority* of the commander. Either difficulty, or slightness, are vain pretences for disobedience.\*’ Nay, even Dr. Priestly, though remarkable for his liberal sentiments and rational way of thinking, and far from ascribing too much to God’s dominion over the subjects of his moral government; yet strongly asserts Jehovah’s prerogative in this respect. These are his words: ‘Every divine command ought certainly to be *implicitly complied with*, even though we should not be able to discern the reason of it.†’ And has not He who is *God over all blessed for ever*, said; *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven?* As in the great concerns of religious worship, nothing should be done that is not required by Jehovah; and as the lawfulness of all positive rites depends entirely on their divine Author and his institution; so he who complies with some, and neglects others that are equally commanded and equally known, may please himself, but he does not obey the Lord.‡

Further: These depreciating expressions, *non-essential, external rite, a shadow, and a mere outward form*, may be applied to the Sacred Supper with as much propriety as they are to Baptism. – Another quotation from Barclay will not be displeasing to our opponents; especially when they observe, how nearly his language, in regard to baptism, coincides with theirs. ‘We, says the plain dealing apologist, we always prefer the power to the form, the substance to the shadow; and where the substance and the power is, we doubt not to denominate the person accordingly, though the form be wanting. And, therefore, we always seek first and plead for the substance and power, as knowing that to be indispensably necessary; though the *form sometimes may be dispensed with*.\* – *Dispense with the form*, in regard to such persons *as possess the power*: why that is the *very thing* for which our brethren plead. How happily friend Robert and they are agreed, in this respect! And what *an honour* it reflects upon them, as *Baptists*, to have such an associate! They, however, will do well to remember that the principle on which the Quaker proceeds, extends its influence to the Holy Supper, no less than to baptism; and that he who has a right to *dispense* with a law, may *entirely repeal it*, and enact another whenever he pleases. – Baptism is an *external rite, a mere outward form*. But whatever Socinus, or Bunyan, or any of our brethren, may say in defence of their conduct on this ground, will apply with equal force against a punctual observance of the Lord’s Supper. This Barclay intended. For are not *bread* and *wine* external things, as well as *water*? And has

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\* Contemplations, Vol. III. p. 274. Edinb. Edit.

† On giving the Lord’s Supper to Children, p. 6.

‡ Qui in aliquibus tantum morem Deo gerere instituit, aliquis vero eximit, quæ suo sibi arbitrato agat, is non Deo paret, sed sibi placet. Veræ obedientiæ fundamentum est præcipientis auctoritas: quæquum in omnibus præceptis eadem sit, cuncta etiam ex æquo obligare censendum est. WITSII *Miscel. Sac.* Tom. ii. Exercit. xv. sect. 11.

\* Apology, p. 419.

not the act of *baptizing* as much *spirituality* in it, as the acts of *eating* and *drinking*? Besides, an apostle has assured us, that *the kingdom of God is not MEAT and DRINK*, though the latter were the richest of cordials, any more than it is immersion in water.\*

Once more: When I consider how much *more frequently* baptism is mentioned in the New Testament, than the Sacred Supper;† how often repenting and believing sinners are *exhorted*, by the apostles to be baptized; how *soon* that ordinance was administered to Christian converts after they believed; what *exhortations* are given to professing Christians, on the ground of their being baptized; and when I reflect, that the Holy Spirit *commends* them that were baptized by John, as *justifying God*; while he *severely censures* others as *rejecting the counsel of God against themselves*, because they slighted the solemn appointment; I cannot but wonder at the language and conduct of our opponents. – Their very singular conduct appears to me still more extraordinary, and yet more unwarrantable when I reflect; that baptism is a divine institution to which a believer submits but *once*, and a branch of divine worship that he is required to perform but *once*; in which respect it greatly differs from every other appointment in the worship of God, under the Christian economy. For, this being the case, one should have imagined, if notorious and stubborn facts had not forbidden the thought; that *every minister* of Jesus Christ, and *every church* of the living God, would *insist* on a submission to what they consider as *real* baptism, in all whom they admit to the Lord's Table. And, whatever Pacificus may have said to the contrary, or however unimportant *he* may suppose the ordinance to be; I have the pleasure to find, that Mr. Ryland, as before observed, seems to consider it in the same light with myself; if one may venture to form a judgment of his views relating to this institution, from what he has published under his own name. These are his words, and I would warmly recommend them to the consideration of Pacificus: 'Baptism ought to be considered *as glorious an act of worship as ever was instituted by God*. It is to be performed but *once* in the life of a Christian – but *once* to eternity; and therefore *it ought to be done* with the utmost veneration and love.\* - Here, then, we have an ordinance appointed by Supreme authority, which requires to be celebrated but *once*; a command given by the Lord Redeemer, that is perfectly satisfied with *one*, yes, with *only one* act of obedience in the whole course of a Christian's life: yet, strange to imagine, but certain in fact, though the authority enjoining is *absolute*, and acknowledged so to be; though the obedience required consists in a *single* instance; and though the duty commanded is generally *easy, very easy* to be performed, where there is a disposition for it; our brethren not only connive at a neglect of it, but severely censure us because we do not adopt their conduct! but whether we, or they, deserve censure, considering the principles we hold in common, I leave the impartial reader, I leave all but themselves, to judge; they not believing any more than we, the divine authority, or the validity of infant sprinkling; for if they did, they would stand convicted before all the world of *Anabaptism*. My reader will pardon the frequent repetition of this thought, it being of great importance in every dispute of this kind; nor can we suffer our opponents long to forget it.

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\* Vid. Hoornbeek, ubi supra. p. 362.

† Hoornbeek, ut supra. p. 409, 416.

\* Beauty of Social Relig. p. 9.

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## SECTION VI.

*Reflections on the distinguishing Character, Strict Baptists, which our brethren apply to us.*

OUR opponents, I observe, repeatedly call us, *Strict Baptists*; but whether for doing so, they merit commendation, or deserve censure, may, perhaps, be a question with some. If, by the epithet *strict*, they mean *exact, accurate, conscientiously nice*; their candour deserves commendation. In that sense of the term we are not ashamed to be called *Strict Baptists*; we cheerfully adopt the character.

It may, however, admit a query, whether we be so fully entitled to possess this honour without a rival, as our brethren seem to insinuate. Is it because we are stricter than the *apostles*, in regard to communion at the Lord's Table? That remains to be proved. It is because we consider baptism as equally the duty of *all* believers? This indeed, we maintain: and the reason is, those arguments which prove it the duty of one, will apply to all,\* Or, is it because we consider baptism as a *term* of communion? We, it is true, avow the sentiment; but it is far from being peculiar to us. For it appears from the foregoing pages, that we act on a principle received in common by Christians of almost every name, in every age, and in every nation. When, therefore, we are compared with professing Christians in general, we have no peculiar claim to the epithet *strict*; whatever right we may have to the denomination of *Baptists*, or whatever may be our distinguishing character, when opposed to our brethren with whom we now contend. – Nor can we be otherwise than *strict*, without violating our own principles, and contradicting our own practice. For we believe that all who have received the truth, should profess their faith in Jesus Christ and be baptized. And have we not the happiness, in this respect, of agreeing with our brethren? When we made a public declaration of our dependence on Christ, and gave a reason of the hope that is in us, we believed it was *our* duty to be baptized, before we received the Lord's Supper. Did not our opponents do the same? or had it no place at all in their creed? In consequence of such a conviction, *we* were actually immersed in the name of the Lord, before we approached the Holy Table. And were not they also? But how came it to be either *our* duty, or *theirs*, thus to proceed? Was it because they or we *believed* that it was required of us? Or, did a full persuasion of this kind constitute that a *duty*, which would not otherwise have been obligatory? If so, a Catholic may lawfully adore the host, a Musselman revere Mahomet, and a Jew blaspheme the Messiah. No; that which made it our duty to be baptized, and then to receive the Lord's Supper, was *the command of God*; which lies on every person so qualified, by the renewing agency of the divine Spirit, as we humbly conceived ourselves to be. Now, can it be supposed that this command extends to none but those among real converts, who feels its force on their own consciences? Or, may we safely conclude, that a believer is no further obliged by any divine precept, or prohibition, than he *sees* and *acknowledges* the obligation, in regard to himself? If so, a believer, who has been baptized, may lie all his days in the neglect of communion at the Lord's Table, and stand acquitted of blame; and covetousness is no crime, in thousands who bow down at the shrine of Mammon; for there are comparatively

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\* Si baptismi significationem et yeram rationem respicimus, nulla plane dari potest ratio, cur non omnibus sine discrimine Christianis administrari debeat, sed potius contrarium patet. *Staefferi Institut. Theolog.* Tom. iii. p. 578.

few lovers of money, who acknowledge their guilt in that respect. Nay, on this principle it will follow, that the more ignorant any believer is, and the less tender his conscience, he is under so much the less obligation to obey the divine commands. But the reader will do well to remember, that the *Great Supreme* does not lie at our courtesy for his claim of obedience upon us, in any instance that can be named. No; it is not our *conviction* of the propriety, the utility, or the necessity of any command which he has given, that entitles him to the performance of it; but, in all things of a mortal nature, our being *rational creatures* is the ground of his claim; and in those of a positive kind, our *being qualified* according to his direction, whether we be so wise and so sincere as to acknowledge the obligation, or no. Thus it appears that the epithet *strict*, if taken in the sense already explained, is no dishonour to us.

But if, on the contrary, our brethren mean by the epithet, that we are *bigoted, unnecessarily exact, unscripturally confined*; their forwardness to give us a name calls for our censure. In the former sense, I will venture to affirm, every Baptist *ought* to be a *strict* one, or else to renounce the name. In the latter use of the term, we reject the distinguishing epithet, and require our opponents to prove – I say to *prove*, not to surmise, that it justly belongs to us. And that they use the word in this *obnoxious* meaning appears to me, by the tenor of their arguing; by the superadding that harsher epithet *rigorous*; and by that home charge, of greatly injuring ‘the honour and interest of true religion, and *not a little contributing to the cause of infidelity.*’

But we be *Strict Baptists*, what are they? Our brethren will not be offended, if I ask again, *What are they*; and by *what name* shall we call them? That they are not *strict* Baptists, is out of all dispute; because from such they expressly distinguish themselves, and have abundant reason, if the charge just mentioned be true, to be *ashamed* of them. I am obliged, therefore, if it be lawful for me to imitate their officiousness, and to give them a name (for as yet they are *half* anonymous), to search for some significant and descriptive adjective, that will set them at a *wide distance* from the strict Baptists. But what it must be? *Inaccurate*, or *loose*, or *latitudinarian*? I would not designedly be guilty of misnomer; but as all these terms are very different in their meaning from that obnoxious word *strict*, it hardly can be supposed that I am far from the truth. As they profess themselves *Baptists*, there we agree; but as they hold the ordinance of baptism with a *loose hand*, there we differ; and hence the necessity of such oppositely significant epithets, to mark our different conduct. For names, you know, are so much more the perfect, by how much the more they express the nature and properties of persons and things. Yes, the practice of our opponents makes it evident to all the world, that the term *Baptists*, when applied to them, is to be understood in such a latitude of signification, as will comport with receiving persons to communion, who, in their judgment, are *unbaptized*. That is, they are *Baptists*, when the ideas expressed by that name suit the dispositions of their hearers; and they entirely omit the ordinance, from which they take their denomination, when candidates for communion with them do not approve of it. And, which makes their conduct, in this respect, appear exceedingly strange, they do not, Like his Holiness of Rome, expressly claim a dispensing power; nor, in the madness of enthusiasm, pretend to any new revelation; nor yet, with the disciples of George Fox, consider baptism as a temporary institution.

Our character then is fixed. Their own pens have engrossed it. And be it known to all men, we are *Strict Baptists*. To this character, as before explained, we subscribe with hand and heart; in the last words of the celebrated Father Paul, *Esto perpetua*. Theirs I have attempted to draw, in contrast with ours, and will now venture to call them, *Latitudinarian Baptists*. Whether they will allow the name to be just, and esteem it as we do ours, I am not

certain. But of this I make no doubt, that the religious world in general, were they to see and compare it with the opinion and practice of our brethren; would pronounce it descriptive of the persons to whom it is given. *Strict Baptists* – they will permit our character to stand first, as it has confessedly the right of primogeniture – *Strict Baptists! Latitudinarian Baptists!* These characters, in contrast sound very oddly, I must confess; and they are but of a novel date. For they do not appear to have had an existence till about the middle of the last century. What a pity it is but something of a similar kind could have been found, in the ancient monuments of the Jewish church, relating to circumcision, as a prerequisite for communion in it. Had it appeared, in any authentic records, that the sons of Abraham, in times of yore, were divided in their judgment about that obsolete rite; and that some of them were called *Strict Circumcisionists*, and others *Latitudinarian Circumcisionists*; it would have given, at least, an *air* of antiquity to our brethren’s hypothesis, practice, and character. But – we must take things as we find them.

I just no recollect, what many of my readers must know to be fact, that our Pædobaptist brethren, when they had a mind to shew their wit and be a little merry at our expence, represent the Baptists, without distinction, as *exceedingly fond* of water; as professors that cannot *live* in a church state, without *a great deal of water*. Nay, one of them has very politely called us ‘*watery bigots*;’ and then immediately adds, ‘May ignorant sprinkled Christians are often to their hurt, *pulled by them into the water*.’\* According to this gentleman, then, we are *watery bigots*. Well, it does not greatly distress *me* to be thus represented by a sneering antagonist; because I really believe that much water is necessary to baptism, and am no less confident that baptism is necessary to communion at the Lord’s table. But since I have maturely considered the singular character and peculiar situation of our latitudinarian brethren, I can by no means think it either candid or equitable that they should be thus represented. Because it is evident, evident even to demonstration, that their profession and practice taken together will not admit of it. They, it must be acknowledged, will sometimes declaim aloud on the necessity of a profession of faith, and of immersion in the name of the triune God to constitute that baptism which is from heaven. So, when they write on the subject, and publish their thoughts to the world at large, they assert these things with the greatest confidence. They will also, with the venerable John, go down into Jordan, and their administer the significant ordinance: so that one would be tempted to think they were strict Baptists, real Baptists, and that Baptism has no faster friends upon earth. But when they plead for free communion, they talk a different language; they speak of it as an indifferent thing and a mere trifle, that is not worth contending about. And, when they admit communicants, they often act in a different way; for in receiving a Pædobaptist, what they consider as real baptism is entirely set aside. They might, consequently, with equal consistency, admit believers to their communion, who have neither been immersed nor sprinkled; and so, like the Quakers, have nothing at all to do with water in the worship of God. Whether, therefore, a person has been immersed in a river, be the waters ever so many; or sprinkled with that element from the palm of the hand, be the drops ever so few; or has had no concern with water at all, it makes no material difference with them, in point of communion. So, then, as they can receive members into their communities, subsist in a church state, and enjoy fellowship at the Lord’s table, with either much water, or little water,

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\* Dr. Mayo’s True Scripture Doctrine of Baptism, p. 33. Poor creatures! How much these ‘sprinkled Christians’ are to be pitied, when treated so rudely by *watery bigots*! Is there no remedy against such an invasion of personal liberty, by appealing to Cesar? If there be, a *Doctor of Laws* would not spend his time ill in pointing it out, for the benefit of such ‘*ignorant* sprinkled Christians,’ and to prevent any of them being *hurt*, in future.

or none at all; I humbly conceive, that if our bantering opponent would do them justice, while he displays his own wit, he should give them a *different name*. For though they seem, at sometimes, to be as fond of water as we are; insisting upon it, that whether there is no immersion there is no baptism; yet, at others, they warmly contend, that believers of *all* denominations, (i.e. Baptists with *much* water; Pædobaptists, with *little* water; and Katabaptists without *any water* at all) have a right of communion with them in the sacred supper. It behoves the Doctor, therefore, if ever he favour us with another address, to search for a new distinguishing epithet, to connect with the term *bigots*, that shall include and express these various ideas. But whether our own language be able to furnish an adjective comprehensive enough, on such an occasion, I dare not assert: very probably, however, among those numerous compounds contained in the language of ancient Greece, he may find one that is fit for the purpose. And as it is not every one, no, nor every Doctor, who could have thought of that elegant phrase, '*water bigots*;' I doubt not but the fertility of his invention, and the well known accuracy of his pen, when handling the Baptists, will enable him to give our brethren a descriptive character, that shall be equally polite and perfectly suitable.

Though I am far from suspecting that our brethren want sincerity, or from thinking that they violate the dictates of conscience, in maintaining their very singular hypothesis; yet their conduct, in regard to baptism, has such an *ambiguous* appearance, and looks so much like holding *both sides* of a contradiction, that I should no wonder if one or another of our Pædobaptist opponents were to apply to them with a little alteration, the spirited remonstrance of Bishop Hall to Archbishop Laud. The latter being strongly suspected of a predilection for Popery, and the former intending to deal roundly with him on that subject, addressed him in the following language. 'I would I knew where to find you – To-day you are in the tents of the Romanists; to-morrow in ours; the next day between both, against both. Our adversaries think you ours; we theirs – This of yours is the worst of all tempers. Heat and cold have their uses; lukewarmness is good for nothing but to trouble the stomach – How long will you halt in this indifferency? Resolve one way, and know, at last, what you do hold; what you should. Cast off either your wings or your teeth; and, loathing this bat-like form, be either a bird or a beast. If you must begin, why not now? – God crieth with Jehu, *Who is one my side, who?* – Take you *peace*; let me have *truth*, if I cannot have both.\*' Thus the acute and the good Bishop Hall, to one who halted between two opinions; who was neither an uniform Papist, nor a consistent Protestant.

And now, before I conclude, our brethren will suffer me also to remonstrate; and the reader may rest assured, that I do it without the least impeachment of their integrity; If infant sprinkling be a human invention, disown it, renounce it, entirely reject it, and no longer let it hold the place of a divine institution in any of your churches. But if it be from heaven, embrace it, profess it, practise it in the face of the sun, and lay the other absolutely aside, as destitute of a divine warrant. For as there is but *one God*, and *one faith*, so there is but *one baptism*. Divine truth is consistent; divine ordinance are consistent, for they are not yea and nay; and all the Christian world are consistent with themselves, relating to baptism; by ye, therefore, consistent in this, as you are in other respects. That is, be either consistent *Baptists*, or *Pædobaptists*; for, according to your present practice, all thinking and impartial men must pronounce you an *heterogeneous mixture* of both.

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\* Bp. Hall's Epistles, Decad, iii. Epist. 5.