

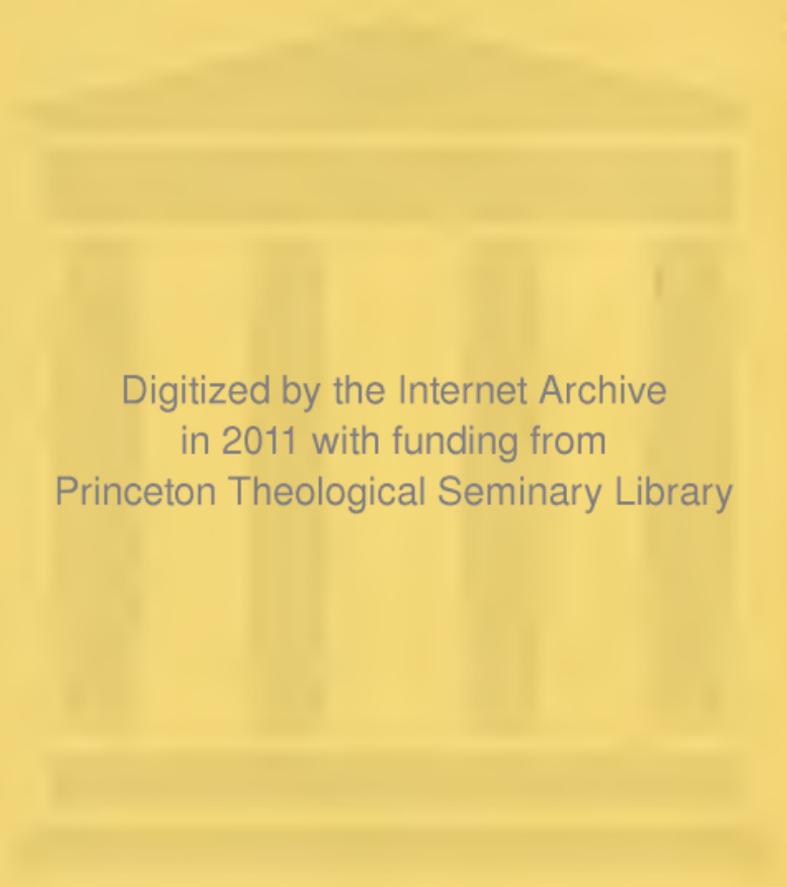
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Open Communion;

OR,

THE PRINCIPLES OF RESTRICTED COMMUNION

EXAMINED AND PROVED TO BE

UNSCRIPTURAL AND FALSE,

In a Series of Letters to a Friend.

BY S. W. WHITNEY, A.M.,

Late Pastor of the Baptist Church, Westport, N. Y.

“This DO in remembrance of me.”

“Drink ye ALL of it.”

NEW YORK:

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Preface.

THE design of this little volume is to bring to the test of Scripture and reason both the principles upon which the close communion of the Baptist denomination in this country professes to proceed, and those upon which it actually does proceed. The writer is a Baptist; and his object has been to take a candid view, as a Baptist, of the real force of the arguments urged by his brethren in defence of their practice. His letters are neither more nor less than the argument of a Baptist with a Baptist. He has taken nothing as conceded which restricted communionists do not concede, or for which he has not been able to refer to their writings to sustain him. At the same time, he has avoided urging any plea in his defence which might be likely not to weigh with a Baptist mind as such. Hence he has left untouched, besides other arguments, that deduced from the scriptural injunction of brotherly love, so ably set forth by Hall, Mason, Noel, and others; for to a Baptist mind the argument has no force whatever. It is not on this ground that he has placed the question at all. He is perfectly willing the practice should stand or fall upon the truth or falsity of the ground on which its advocates place it; and his inquiry has been—Is this ground true or false? Believing, as he does, that it is demonstrably false, he feels it to be a duty that he owes

to his God, his brethren, and to the church at large, to prove it, and to give his proof to the public. This he now does. From some who differ from him he knows what to expect. But he is happy to know, on the other hand, that there are many, and Baptists too, who will welcome his humble effort as a token of the dawn of a coming brighter day.

That the volume, as it now goes forth to the public, may be accompanied with the Divine blessing, and aid in doing away with one of the most uncalled for and unscriptural bars to the full intercommunion of Christians in things emblematic of their union to Christ and to one another as members of his family, is the sincere prayer of the author.

S. W. WHITNEY.

Flushing, L. I., May 1, 1853.

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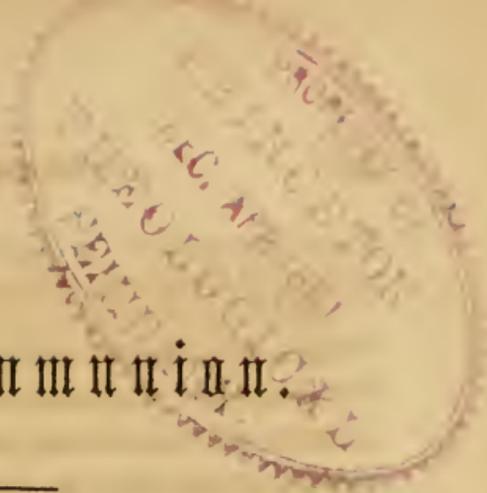
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Open Communion.

LETTER I.

ON THE WORD CHURCH.

Introduction—The Baptist position respecting the word—Its true meaning, a collection of Christians—Those in any city—In any family—Not organizations—The Baptist definition of a church not descriptive of apostolic churches—Pedobaptist churches as truly N. T. churches as any other—The church, a designation for the body of Christ's disciples in the world—Equivalent to "the household of faith"—Examples—Baptist concessions—The nature of this body—How entered—Who are its members—Baptizing into the fellowship of particular churches, not a scriptural act—Conclusion.

MY DEAR FRIEND :—You have now laid before me, one by one, your reasons for adhering to the practice of restricted communion. Your position is, that you have no right to commune at the Lord's table with any but believers who have made an immersional profession of Christianity.

Your argument is, that none others are in the church as Christ constituted it; that the Lord's supper is for these alone; and that, inasmuch as we are called upon to preserve the constitution of the church in its original form, and to keep the ordinances as they have been delivered to us, you are not at liberty to commune with unbaptized churches, or even with those who, though baptized, practise intercommunion with such churches. Your reasons for holding these views I have carefully weighed; and yet, however much I agree with you as a Baptist, I cannot see the force of your arguments as a close communionist. To my mind your reasoning is palpably more or less unfounded and illogical, and altogether inconclusive. And if you will bear with me I will endeavor to show you wherein your argument is inconsistent with truth and with several of your own concessions.

It is important, then, that we determine, in the first place, whether Pedobaptist assemblies are scriptural churches or not, that is, churches in a scriptural sense of the word; and whether church does or does not, in the language of the Holy Ghost, sometimes denote the body of professing Christians among men. You say, in common with the denomination, that "a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized [immersed]

believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel ;”* which, if true, would leave Christ without any churches in the world but Baptist churches. Again, you say that you agree with Dr. Fuller that the word church has, in the Bible, but two meanings ; that it denotes either “a visible church of Christ,” or the *spiritual* body of all who are converted ; that it is never applied to the body of professing Christians in the world, but that this use of the word “is a *tertium quid* unknown to the Bible.”† On both these points, however, I am compelled to differ with you.

I admit that the word is often used, as in Eph. i. 22, to denote the body of the redeemed, the spiritual church as it is sometimes called. But that this is the only meaning, except one, which the word has when applied to a religious body, is a conclusion to which you must have come without due examination ; for no impartial student of the New Testament can admit that the only other sense in which the word is used, is, to denote an organized society of Christians, or indeed that the

* See Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge, Art. Baptism ; and Articles of Faith of Baptist churches generally.

† See R. Fuller on Bap. and Com. ; Curtis on Com., &c.

idea of organization has anything to do with it. This idea does not enter into the word ἐκκλησία at all. The word, in its ordinary acceptation among the Greeks, signified merely an assembly, a body of people called together by some circumstance or other. And when used in a religious sense in the New Testament, it denotes simply a collection of Christians—any collection. That is to say, a Christian church, or church of God, according to the New Testament idea of a church, is neither more nor less than an assembly or body of Christians, without any reference to organization, size, or manner of assembly. Sometimes the word denotes what we denominate *a meeting*: that is, it refers to Christians in the capacity of an assembled congregation engaged in worship or met together for worship. Almost the only passages, however, in which it has this meaning, are 1 Cor. xiv. 19, 28, 33, 34, 35.* In other places it is applied to the body of Christians residing or sojourning together in the same city or town. This use of the word is very common. The idea of *an assembly* is still preserved in it; but it is with reference to individuals congregated

* In Acts xix. 32, 39, 41, where it is translated "assembly," it has this meaning, though not with reference to a body of Christians.

and dwelling or sojourning together within the precincts of the same city or village. Thus, we read of "the church which was at Jerusalem,"* "the church of the Laodiceans,"† "the church of Ephesus;"‡ these several expressions denoting the company of Christians at Jerusalem, at Laodicea, at Ephesus, embracing every visible saint in the city. If the word were similarly used by us, it would denote, when we spoke of the church of God in New York or in any other place, the entire body of the acknowledged people of God in that place. This, however, is a use of the word which is entirely ignored at the present day. We never hear of the church of God in any particular place as a term denoting all the professing Christians who reside or sojourn there, unless they happen to belong to one organized congregation, and have their names entered upon the same church roll. Nor is it to be wondered at that such is the case, when we consider how the existence of denominations keeps Christians, even in small villages, at a distance one from another, and breaks up that apostolic unity which was originally felt among all Christians who resided in the same immediate neighborhood.

It is also used with reference to smaller com-

* Acts viii. 1.

† Col. iv. 16.

‡ Rev. ii. 1.

panies or bands of Christians. Thus, while we find the Christian community at Ephesus spoken of as the church of Ephesus, we read, in distinction from this, of the church at the house of Aquila and Priscilla,* who then resided at Ephesus, and the church at whose house formed but a part of the Ephesian church, or body of Christians in that city. Again, the Christian band at Colosse was the church of the Colossians. And yet, within this church, we read of the church at the house of Nymphas,† and again, of the church at the house of Philemon.‡ These churches may have been the Christian members of these several families—the body of disciples who dwelt together and composed the same household; or they may have been the Christian circles that met at these different houses, from time to time, for religious purposes; for these houses appear to have been the dwellings of such as were ordained to watch over the spiritual interests of the Christians in their midst, of which there were probably a number in every city where there were Christians, like Paul's own hired house in Rome; for we read of a plurality of elders or bishops being ordained “in every

* 1 Cor. xvi. 19. † Col. iv. 15.

‡ Comp. Philem. ii. 10, 12, with Col. iv. 8, 9.

city,"* or "in every church," as it is elsewhere expressed,† church here denoting the Christian body in the cities spoken of in the context.

Thus we perceive what apostolic churches were. They were not, like modern churches, organizations which, on the one hand, include no one whose name is not on their rolls, however exemplary may be his walk as a professing Christian or constant his attendance upon divine services with them; or, on the other hand, embrace every individual whose name is on their records, whether he resides in Maine, or California, or the Celestial Empire, or nobody knows where, while the church to which he belongs, may be in the heart of the American Union. They were not organizations of any sort. That is to say, while they had their elders or bishops and their deacons, as cities now have their mayors and aldermen, they were not covenanted together in church relations, their names enrolled upon a piece of parchment, and each church consisting only of the individuals thus associated together. They were companies of Christians, in a sense more or less general, of which every individual Christian among them was a member, and those

* Tit. i. 5, 7.

† Acts xiv. 23. Comp. Acts xx. 17, 28. 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, v. 17.

who were miles away from them and rarely or never appeared among them, were not members.

This will suffice to show not only that the common idea of a church, as *an organization*, is not a scriptural one, but that the supposition that visible churches are divinely organized societies, receives no support either from the meaning of the word *ἐκκλησία*, or from the acts and circumstances of the apostles and first Christians. It shows, too, that your definition, or rather I should say, the Baptist definition of a visible church, is radically defective. In the first place, it denies to Pedobaptist congregations, which are as truly churches of Christ as any other, their right to this appellation; since their members are generally unimmersed. So far as they are organizations, it is true they possess an element unknown to the *ἐκκλησίαι* of the New Testament; but as bands of Christians they are what are denominated in Scripture churches of God. They are, therefore, quite as much scriptural churches as any other among us, though in certain points they may be less conformed than others to the doctrines and practice of primitive Christians. Again, if churches of Christ are limited to "*congregations* covenanted together for purposes of worship," as your definition certainly implies, then the body of Christians in New York, or Philadelphia, or any other

city, cannot be a church of Christ; a position at variance with what is, perhaps, the most frequent New Testament use of the word. Your definition, too, virtually declares that Peter, James, and John were not members of the church at Jerusalem;* for, as I shall show in a future letter, they were not "believers who *by baptism*, that is to say, by immersion, had professed themselves disciples of the Saviour."† In short, it makes it out that there were no such things as "churches of Christ" in the apostles' days,‡ not even one at Jerusalem; the members of the churches of the New Testament not having been associated and bound together "by covenant." I do not say that they were not associated "in faith and fellowship," as well as in communities, and labors, and sufferings, and forms of worship, and other things. But that they were associated *by covenant* in any of these things, is an idea not only totally foreign from the true meaning of the Greek word ἐκκλησία, but contrary to the genius and history of apostolic Christianity. Your definition of a church of God, therefore, I cannot but consider as altogether gratuitous, unsupported by a correct view of the churches of the New Testament, and, as a scrip-

* Gal. ii. 9.

† Christian Review, vol. i. p. 525.

‡ See Rom. xvi. 16.

tural definition, contradictory to the testimony of inspiration.

Let us now inquire whether the expression, "the church," is ever used in the New Testament to denote the visible body of Christians among men.

It is evident that when used unqualifiedly, as in Eph. iii. 21, "Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages," it cannot denote a particular church. An individual band of Christians is never called the church, unless there are some qualifying words connected with the expression,—as in the phrases, "the church of the *Thessalonians*," "the church *which was at Antioch*," and so on,—or unless there is something in the context showing that a particular church is referred to, or something requiring the word to be understood as having such a reference, as in Acts xx. 17, "From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus, and called for the elders of the church," that is, of the church of Ephesus, "the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers," as it is said a few verses after. But when the word is found without any qualifications whatever, either expressed or implied, its only other scriptural use is not, as you say, to denote the body of true believers in the world, the church invisible. But, as the church at the house of

Aquila denoted the body of Christians at his house, and as the church of Ephesus denoted the body of Christians at Ephesus, including both the members of the church at the house of Aquila and all other Christians in that city, so, by a still more extended application of the term, the unqualified expression, "the church," denotes, not unfrequently, the body of professing Christians throughout the world embracing all acknowledged visible disciples of Christ.

The phrase, "the household of faith," is evidently used in this sense. "As we have opportunity," says Paul, "let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."* His especial reference is not to true believers as believers, but to such as are *of the household* of believers, the Christian church. And so church is repeatedly used. For example:

Acts ii. 47. "The Lord added to *the church* daily such as should be saved;" that is, to the Christian body, by bringing men to repentance and faith; these inward acts being immediately followed by the outward one of confessing him and professing discipleship to him. The addition here spoken of was unquestionably *made* in Jerusalem. But this does not necessarily imply

* Gal. vi. 10.

that it was the increase of the band of Christians in Jerusalem as such, that is here designed to be noticed. On the contrary, the tenor of the record forbids such an interpretation. The thing spoken of is the increase of the Christian community, the enlargement and strengthening of the cause of Christ, some of whose adherents were collected at Jerusalem, while the rest were scattered about in different parts of the country, as appears from the fact that the Saviour, after his resurrection, "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once," while on the day of Pentecost the number of the names assembled together at Jerusalem, was only "about a hundred and twenty."* In this view I am far from being alone. To say nothing of others, Prof. Ripley, who like yourself defends restricted communion, in his Notes on the Acts, speaks of the addition of the three thousand, mentioned a verse or two previous, as "an accession to the Christian company," of which he had, just before this, taken occasion to show, only a portion were at Jerusalem.

Again, 1 Cor. xii. 28. "God hath set some in *the church*, first apostles, secondarily prophets," &c.; that is, in the Christian body, distinguished as a community from the world. But you say,

* 1 Cor. xv. 6. Acts i. 15.

“No: church is here a generic word, comprehending all the visible churches as churches.” True, it is a generic word; but it is always used to denote a number of *individuals*, more or less. It is never, either here or elsewhere, used to denote several *churches* collectively, any more than the word flock is ever used to signify a number of flocks taken together. Such a use of the word is, as Neander very justly observes, “quite contrary to the phraseology of the apostolic age.”* It denotes here, obviously, as in the preceding instance, the body of professing Christians in the world. And so says Prof. J. T. Smith. In his “New Testament and Historical Arguments for Infant Baptism Examined,” he remarks, in commenting on the meaning of the “one body” in 1 Cor. xii. 13, that “the ‘one body’ is *the visible church*; and that the visible church is referred to by the phrase, is evident from the whole connexion. ‘Now are ye the body of Christ and members in particular. And God hath set some in *the church*, first apostles, &c.’” Now whatever is apparent from this comment, nothing is more so than that by “the church” in this verse, Prof. S. understands the apostle, as I do, to mean “the visible church,” the body of Christ’s disciples.

* Planting and Training, &c., Ryland’s Trans. p. 92.

Once more. 1 Cor. xv. 9. "I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted *the church* of God." Gal. i. 13. "Beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it." Phil. iii. 6. "If any other man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more . . . concerning zeal, persecuting the church." Not the church invisible certainly. The persecuting Saul little cared whether the objects of his malice were anything more than "disciples of the Lord," like Ananias and Sapphira, in profession and appearance only. Nor was it members of the church at Jerusalem as such that he persecuted, but any and all who were identified with Christ by a profession of his name, wherever he found them. And so Prof. Ripley regards it; for in his Review of Dr. Griffin's Letter on Communion, he designates Saul of Tarsus as a "persecutor of *the church*," without qualifying the expression at all, as he would have done had his idea been that it was some particular church of which he was a persecutor. It was against the sect of the Nazarenes as such, that the young man breathed out threatenings and slaughter. His own confession afterwards before the Roman tribune, Claudius Lysias, was, "I persecuted *this way* unto the death;"* that is, I persecuted to death those of this

* Acts xxii. 4.

persuasion—the professors of this religion. And his language before Lysias is the same in meaning as when he says to the Corinthians and Galatians, “I persecuted the church.” That the object of his persecution was not the church in Jerusalem as such, is farther evident from the fact of which he himself informs us, that among *other* churches in Judea it could be said, and was said, upon their hearing of his conversion, “He that persecuted *us* in times past, now preacheth *the faith* he once destroyed.”*

Even Mr. Curtis, who professes to take the same view that you do, admits that the word may sometimes be used thus in the Scriptures. And I presume the denomination agree with him in this, since his work is published by the American Baptist Publication Society, and has been endorsed by the Christian Review and Baptist journals generally, as sound and scriptural. His language is this: “There may be a figurative use of the word church in two or three passages of the New Testament, without all the ideas of a regular organization being involved. In some points of view, unquestionably, those who make a credible profession of the Christian faith, must be regarded as a whole. They are a body distinct from the world, but operating upon it with a certain degree

* Gal. i. 22, 23.

of uniformity and power. This body *is distinct from the invisible church* universal, in that all who are professors of religion, and some, therefore, who are only professors, are mixed up with true Christians in the present world. It is distinct from any particular visible church, since it embraces members of all truly Christian churches throughout the world. Such a body as this, however, he concludes, "cannot, in any other than a merely figurative sense, be called a church."* But whether it can be called thus without a figure or not, is nothing to the purpose, nor does it affect the question under consideration in the least. With as much propriety might it be said that the phrase, "the body of Christ," cannot denote the church except figuratively. And yet the apostle uses it in this sense repeatedly. The simple question is, figurative or not, is the word ever used *at all* in the Scriptures as a designation for "all credible professors of Christianity?" Prof. Curtis admits it is, and that, as such, "it embraces members of all truly Christian churches throughout the world." If you cannot agree with him, to say nothing of others, you have the most intelligent of our denomination opposed to you. And if you can, then you admit all that I am contending for. This, however, is not a figurative use of the word any more than in the expression

* On Communion, p. 284.

“the church which was at Jerusalem.” In supposing that “all the ideas of a regular organization are involved” in a literal use of the word, Prof. Curtis has in his mind’s eye the common idea of a church, not the literal import of the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* which, as you cannot but see, denotes neither directly nor indirectly an organization, but simply a collection of individuals. The place within which they are collected may be a house, a city, or a world.

But I need not dwell longer on this point. The word is understood and continually used thus by all classes of Christians, and by Baptists no less than by others, as a reference to their writings will easily show. And I think you must yourself be prepared to agree with me that your position respecting the word is a foregone conclusion and untenable.

Now as to the nature of the body denoted by the word. It was designed to be a visible representation, so far as it should go, of the church invisible, or body of true saints among men. This is evident from its being called a household of faith, as well as from the fact that none but those who really exercise faith in Christ can be proper individuals for professing faith in him and being numbered among his disciples. So that, if the Christian church were what it was designed to be,

it would be a representation of the church invisible.

And such being the case, an entrance into it is obtained by an avowal on the part of the candidate, and an acknowledgment on the part of others, of his membership in the church invisible; or, as we commonly say, by the making of a profession of Christianity. With some, however, it is a favorite idea that *baptism* is the door of entrance into the Christian church. But this is overlooking entirely the fact that the church is designed to represent the body of believers in the world. Those whom the Scriptures recognise as its members are the professed people of God. The act which introduces them into this number is obviously the making of a profession of Christianity. Baptism may be the accompaniment of that act, and I believe, as firmly as you, that it should always be. But still it is only an accompaniment; and, if wanting, does not necessarily invalidate one's profession, or prove that he is not a member of the Christian body. When duly administered, it is at most only a token of something else; and this something else is the renunciation of the world and entering upon discipleship to Christ. If baptism, as such, were the entrance door into the Christian church, then not merely would all who have been baptized be members, if they had not

been excommunicated, but none would be members but such ; however long, or zealously, or credibly they may have served Christ and passed among men as his disciples. But if this were the case, the Christian church would not be the body of professing Christians in the world, which I have just shown it is. The real door into it, therefore, is the making of a profession of Christianity, let the form in which that profession is made be what it may. Whoever has passed through this door and maintains a consistent Christian character, I care not who he is, is in the visible church of Christ.

It follows from this, then, that every credible evangelical Pedobaptist is a member no less than his Baptist brother who, so far as conformity to apostolic forms is concerned, has doubtless the advantage over him. There is no half-way ground that we can take. If Pedobaptists are not in the church of Christ where are they ? In the world ? Among non-professors ? No part of the household of faith ? You cannot admit this. But the Scriptures recognise no midway position between the church and the world ; nor can we. We must, therefore, either unchurch them altogether, which no one worthy of the Christian name can do, or we must admit them fully and unqualifiedly to be a part of the visible church of God. If the

church were a household *of the baptized*, the case would be different. But as it is, it is a household of faith. So long as the only known form of making an honest Christian profession was by immersion, of course one could not be a member of the Christian body without immersion. But as that is not the case now, there is no shadow of a reason for regarding the visible church of Christ as embracing only the Baptist denomination. Nay, so long as it is a stubborn fact that multitudes of holy and zealous Christians differ from us in their views of the act and subjects of baptism, and on this account are unimmersed, it is most unjust and unchristian in us, by our actions, to declare that they are not in the church of God, especially when it is admitted that their only failing is in confessing Christ before men in a *manner* different, as we believe, from that the Saviour intended, while they have *the spirit* of obedience and love for him which he requires, and which would lead them to do precisely in this thing as we do, did they but believe as we do.

A word, in conclusion, about baptizing into the fellowship of a particular church. We often hear the expression, but it is an unauthorized use of words, and tends to convey, if not to establish, a wrong impression of the true object of baptism. Such bodies as we call churches did not exist in

the apostles' days ; and, of course, there was then no baptizing into the fellowship of such bodies. Besides, you will agree with me that baptism is a symbol of union professed to the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, to be received upon an individual's entering upon a life of union to him and his people. As, therefore, upon receiving this ordinance, a person is baptized into Christ ; he is also baptized into the fellowship of them that are Christ's, that is, the Christian body, not into the fellowship of any one particular church more than another. As Andrew Fuller very justly observes, "The nature and design of baptism, as given in the New Testament, shows it to have been the initiatory ordinance of *Christianity*. It was not an initiation into a particular church, seeing it was administered, in some cases, as that of the Ethiopian eunuch, in which there was no opportunity of joining any ; but it was an initiation into the body of professing Christians."* There is no such thing recognised in the New Testament as baptizing into the fellowship of a particular church. When an individual received the ordinance in those days, he was thereby received into the fellowship of the visible church of God ; and, without any farther ceremony, he was a member not

* Works, vol. iii. p. 512.

merely of the band of Christians where he was baptized, if there was any such band there, but of any other among whom his lot might be cast. Wherever he met, as an acknowledged disciple of Christ, with other disciples, his meeting with them thus made him a member of their church or Christian circle. The employment, therefore, of this ordinance as a symbol of admittance into particular churches is unjustifiable; and to speak, as many do, of baptizing into the fellowship of such bodies, is, of course, incorrect.

Thus much have I thought it necessary to say respecting your position on the word church, in order that we might clearly see what weight there is in your reasoning about "the church as Christ constituted it," and about "preserving its constitution in its original form." From the foregoing considerations, it is evident these expressions are unmeaning, so far as they relate to churches as organizations, and to the church as a body of baptized ones, instead of a body of professing Christians. We preserve the constitution of the church in its original form, by regarding, as was done in the apostles' days, all acknowledged professing Christians, and only such, as its members. And we "keep the ordinances as they have been delivered to us," by administering them to scriptural subjects, in a scriptural manner, and for scriptural

purposes—baptism, to those entering upon visible discipleship to Christ, to denote their profession of union, and pledge of allegiance, to him their crucified, buried, and risen Lord; and the supper, to such as are his visible disciples, reprofessing their union, and repledging their allegiance, to him. On the former of these points, we are agreed; on the latter, we differ. The object of my future letters will be to show that our difference here is uncalled for.

Yours in all sincerity, &c.

LETTER II.

THE POINT OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OPEN AND CLOSE COMMUNIONISTS.

Not respecting the terms of membership in Baptist churches—Not respecting the propriety of communing with non-professors—Not respecting the order of administering the ordinances to new converts—Not whether Baptists are as free as others or not—But whether it is proper for them to commune at the Lord's table with unimmersed members of the Christian church.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—In my former letter I took occasion to animadvert upon your views of the word church. Before proceeding any farther, let us understand precisely what the point of difference between us on this communion question is.

It is not respecting the terms of membership in particular churches, that we differ. I agree with you fully in your quotations from Mr. Curtis, that “the true and proper way is for Christians to form themselves into churches with those with whom they agree in practice and opinion. Let those who hold to believers' baptism join churches which practise thus, and those who conscientiously

believe in infant baptism, and are prepared to practise it, join churches composed of those whose views are similar." The question of individual-church membership is one of expediency entirely. And I see no necessity, under ordinary circumstances, for commingling Baptists and Pedobaptists together in the membership of the same church.

But do you say, that it would be preposterous to commune with a man, and then not permit him to vote in ordinary matters relative to the order and instruction of the congregation? Do you ask whether this would not be admitting him to the greater privilege and denying him the less? Your objecting proceeds upon the idea that the Lord's supper is an individual-church privilege, or a privilege that we may extend to, or withhold from, whom we please, which is not the case. The privilege of membership in churches with us, however, is of this character. That is to say, our churches are not divinely organized societies; nor, for entering them as organizations, are there any divinely prescribed terms or forms. So that, so far as admission to membership in them is concerned, we are, of course, left to act in such a way as shall be most obviously for the welfare of individual churches in particular, and the Redeemer's kingdom in general.

You perceive, therefore, that the question respecting the terms of membership in churches with us, is not only one of expediency, but wholly foreign from that respecting the terms of sacramental communion as such. Consequently, all reasoning about the organization of visible churches and the terms of membership therein, when employed in defence of restricted communion, is to no purpose. There is no such thing as the *unlawfulness* of mixed membership. But respecting its undesirableness, we are agreed. This is not the point of difference between us.

Nor is it, whether we may commune with *any* who are unimmersed, irrespective of the consideration whether they are professors of Christianity or not. With non-professors, even though they may be believers, the communion question has nothing to do. It relates only to the propriety of communing with acknowledged professing Christians who are unimmersed, that is, with Pedobaptists. That they *are* professing Christians and a part of the household of faith, you admit. And so do Baptists universally, in whose behalf Prof. Curtis employs these words: "It has frequently been urged that, by our course, we at least unchurch all other denominations. But this is a complete error. We do not unchurch them. We will not deny the claims of any body of evange-

lical Christians, organized for maintaining social worship, to be considered a Christian church."* Indeed, the charge of placing the members of other denominations outside the pale of the Christian church is one which pious Baptists, you know, have always repelled. Restricted communion is not pleaded for on the ground that they are non-professors, and a part of the world for whom the supper was not designed. Nor are open communionists charged with desiring to make the table of the Lord free to the world, as well as the church. Such a charge would be crushed under the weight of its own truthlessness; for we agree with you that the non-professing world have no right to the Lord's supper. The point of difference between us is not respecting the admission to the Lord's table of non-professors, whether unimmersed or immersed.

Nor is it about the order of administering the ordinances to them. You greatly mistake when you suppose the whole difference between us lies in the question whether the several duties commanded in the apostolic commission are to be observed in the order in which they are enjoined by Christ, or whether they are left to be regulated by the convenience or inclination of his disciples. So far from

* On Com. pp. 144, 190, 264, 280. See also *Christian Review*, vol. xiv., pp. 224, 225, which sustains Mr. C. in these declarations.

this being the whole inquiry, there is no difference between us here. Open communion Baptists do not defend the latter of these conclusions, as you say they do;—a statement which, I confess, I am surprised at your making, for Robert Hall, whose writings on this subject you profess to have read with care, says, very plainly: “When the advocates of strict communion remind us of the order in which the two positive institutions of Christianity are enjoined, they assume it for granted that we are desirous of inverting that order, and that we are contending for a celebration of the eucharist previous to baptism in the case of a clear comprehension of the nature and obligation of each. *We plead for nothing of the kind.* Suppose a convert to Christianity convinced of the ordinance of baptism in the light in which we contemplate it, we should urge his obligation to comply with it previous to his reception of the sacrament, with as little hesitation as the most rigid of our opponents; nor should we be more disposed than themselves to countenance a neglect of known duty or a wanton inversion of the order of Christian appointments. Whether, in such circumstances, the attention of a subject for Christian communion should first be directed to baptism, is not the question at issue.”*

* Works, vol. i. pp. 305, 306.

far as non-professors are concerned, the order to be observed by us in administering the ordinances is, baptism before the supper; not, however, as a prerequisite to communion, but as the appointed form of making a profession of Christianity, which profession is necessary to one's being a visible disciple or in the visible church, which one must needs be, in order to come to a table spread only for those who are visibly Christ's. All the reasoning, therefore, that is expended in proving this to be the designed order, is wholly uncalled for. No one questions it; at least open communionists do not. And to advance reasons in support of this order, as though it were arguing in defence of restricted communion, is an evasion of the whole question. It betrays, too, an oversight of the end for which, and the individuals for whom, the ordinances were intended. What would be thought of one who should have been heard, in the apostles' days, contending for the order of administering the ordinances to those who were acknowledged to be in the Christian church, but who, like the eleven and others, had not entered by immersion? Would he not be set down as a person who did not understand what he was talking about? one who was either ignorant of, or who had entirely lost sight of, the object of, at least, one of the ordinances, or for whom it was

intended? Most assuredly. This, however, is just the position in which you place yourself by admitting Pedobaptists to be in the household of faith, or, which is the same thing, saying that you do not unchurch them, while at the same time you talk of the order of administering the ordinances to them. A member of the visible church of Christ is not a scriptural subject for baptism. And as to the order of administering the sacraments to non-professors, there is no difference between us. This is not the question before us.

Nor is it, whether we are as free or not in our communion as others are. Some, indeed, like Mr. Remington, seem to think this is the whole question. Instead of justifying the practice of restriction by the principles of the Word of God and the practice of the primitive disciples, they seek to defend it on the ground that "Pedobaptists are not open communionists." Even if it were true that Baptists were more free and liberal in their administrations of the Lord's supper than other denominations—which, however, is about as capable of being proved as that a barred and bolted house is easier of access than one with open doors whose inmates stand to welcome you in—what would this have to do with justifying the practice of close communion? The question is not, Are we as free as others? but, Are we as free as God's

Word and the genius of the ennobling religion of Christ require us to be?—a religion which, instead of possessing one retaliative or exclusive feature, seeketh not her own, but hopeth all things, and draws together and binds together in Christ crucified, at all times and under all circumstances, the membership of the common household of faith. Will the errors and malpractices of others, imaginary or real, justify us in pursuing a course that is opposed to the Scriptures, to apostolic precedent, to the dignity of the religion of the Son of God, and to the principles of that liberty wherewith Christ makes free? But, alas! the best of men are but men, and more or less prone to follow men instead of Christ! It is truly lamentable to see men of piety and usefulness, men who are lights in the world, ornaments in the church of God, and as Christians admired of all, so far losing sight of the principles on which alone truth can be defended as to seek to justify themselves by appealing, in support of their views, to the unhallowed feelings of depraved humanity. It is a weak cause indeed that is sustained by such a course, and a bad one alone that needs it. And yet this is the mode, as you very well know, in which hundreds are made confirmed restricted communionists. When all other arguments fail, this, in nine cases out of ten, is sure to be plied,

if not to effect the end desired. The question of truth and duty is lost sight of, while the differences and disaffections existing from time to time among the members of other denominations and their want of fellowship for restricted communionists, are pointed to, and from these an argument is drawn, appealing, unconsciously it may be, but none the less strongly, to the selfish feelings, and awakening, in the bosoms of such as are influenced thereby, anything but the spirit of Christ.

I shall not, however, attempt to defend the claims of free communion by any such mode of warfare as this. With those who profess to take their fellow men as their standard of duty, and to make their actions the rule of Christian conduct, I have nothing to do. It is by the Word of God alone that I would have the propriety of restricted communion tested. If it is right, it can be sustained by scriptural arguments, without recourse to self-justifications founded on the mal-practices of others. And not only so, but it is absolutely impolitic to urge in its defence the errors of others, whether real or imaginary. This is a course calculated at once to awaken suspicion, and to lead a mind imbued with the spirit of Christ strongly to question the propriety of the practice, even if it were lawful.

But to return, and to conclude. The only

question between us is, What are the terms upon which alone the Lord's table can be approached? Are they really, as you say, repentance, faith, and a profession of discipleship to Christ by immersion? Is the want of an immersional profession, on the part of a disciple whose acknowledged visible discipleship of five, twenty-five, or fifty years, more or less, was entered upon without it, but under circumstances which argue nothing whatever against his Christian character, a divinely recognised disqualification for his uniting with us in commemorating his master's death? Is not the injunction, "This do in remembrance of me," given to any but Baptists? Can the Lord's supper be lawfully observed by none but them? Are we forbidden from communing with persons out of our own denomination? Or in one word, have we no right to commune with unimmersed members of the Christian church? This you will perceive is the whole inquiry, for the point of difference between us is, respecting the propriety of our communing with members of other churches on the score of their not being qualified for commemorating the death of Christ. Obvious as the answer to these questions may seem, let us, nevertheless, to the law and to the testimony, and abide by their decisions. As Mr. Taylor says, "In a question of so much im-

portance, no considerations of policy should influence us without the clearest evidence of scriptural precedent. Whatever may become of denominational preferences, let the dictation of the King of Zion and the example of the apostolic churches, be cheerfully followed."*

Yours in all sincerity, &c.

* Defence of Restricted Com.

LETTER III.

BAPTISM NOT A TERM OF COMMUNION:—BAPTIST CONCESSIONS—THE ARGUMENT FROM JOHN'S BAPTISM.

Introduction—Baptists themselves deny baptism to be a *sine quâ non* for communion—The want of baptism not a disqualification in the apostles' days—The communicants at the first supper were without Christian baptism—Proofs that John's baptism was not Christian baptism—(1.) Their object and import distinct—(2.) A distinction carefully preserved between them by the N. T. writers—(3.) John's disciples after the resurrection rebaptized—(4.) Christian baptism not instituted till after the resurrection—(5.) Christian baptism an ordinance of Christ's; John's was not—Others besides the eleven disciples communed steadfastly without baptism—Conclusion.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—We are now to examine the ground upon which you profess to base your practice of restricting the Lord's supper from members of other denominations; namely, the position that Christian baptism, or, as we always mean by this, an immersional profession of Christianity, is a divinely prescribed term of communion. If this were so, then your practice, so far

at least as restricting the supper from the unimmersed is concerned, would not merely be right and justifiable; it could not lawfully be otherwise. But as it is, I regard it as the paltriest of assumptions which, if stripped of all its sophistry and of the authority and influence of a few great names, would shrink in shame from publicity.

Perhaps I ought to have remarked before, that I concur with you fully in the persuasion that the Scriptures, correctly interpreted and properly understood, require every individual, on making a profession of Christianity, to do it by being immersed in the name of Christ or of the Trinity; and that if any had refused to do this in the apostles' days, when there was no difference of opinion about what baptism was, or who its subjects were, he would not have been a lawful subject for communion. And I would add that if there could be no honest professors of Christianity now except Baptists, I should have no hesitation in concluding with you that we have no right to commune with any others. But as it is, not only do I hesitate to come to such a conclusion, but my feelings of Christian duty, charity, and propriety, all revolt from it. Setting aside this fact, however, and saying nothing, for the present at least, about the apparent inconsistency of restricted communion with the spirit of Christ,

let us see if the want of an immersional profession of discipleship to the Savior is really, in itself, a divinely recognised disqualification for observing the Lord's supper.

And first, let me call your attention to the fact that, if baptism be a term of communion, we must of necessity regard unimmersed Christians as unqualified for communing even among themselves. This is inevitable. If Christian baptism be a divinely constituted *sine quâ non* for communion, obviously no one has a right to the Lord's supper without it. So that if we really consider it an indispensable term of communion, we must regard the unimmersed as doing what they have no right to do at all, and as violating their Master's will whenever they partake of the sacramental loaf and cup in remembrance of him. But what say those who stand forth most conspicuously as the defenders of restricted communion? Just what you say; just what might be expected of those who take false positions, the consistent carrying out of which is always sure to prove their falsity. In one breath they deny what in another they affirm. This moment, like yourself, they contend that Christian baptism is an indispensable term of communion. The very next, perhaps, they unite with you in assuring the world that Pedobaptists are entitled to the Lord's

supper. Says one, "The New Testament does not forbid the unbaptized from receiving the Lord's supper." * Says another, "Does a Pedobaptist honestly believe, after an impartial examination of the best evidences to which he can gain access on the subject, that he has received Christian baptism, and that he has truly entered the congregation of Christ in the way of divine appointment? Let him prosecute the course he has adopted. All the Lord's children have an undoubted right to his table, because whatever is his is theirs." † Says a third, "Undoubtedly all Christians," and Pedobaptists among them, "are entitled, *in the strictest sense of the term*, not only to the Lord's supper, but to all the privileges of the Christian church. Sincerely believing they have entered the visible church in the way of divine appointment, their title to its peculiar privileges inevitably follows, since every Christian is under a sacred obligation to recognise what he sincerely believes to be the divine will. *They do right* in partaking of the Lord's supper, though in our opinion unbaptized." ‡ And another, more recent still, says, "There is no reason why we should breathe a murmur against them because

* Kinghorn, as quoted by Hall.

† Howell, on Com., pp. 99, 107.

‡ J. G. Fuller, on Com. Conversation, iii.

they take the Lord's supper in their own churches." * Now with what sincerity can you allow that persons whom you regard as destitute of Christian baptism, are entitled to the Lord's supper, and may lawfully commune among themselves, while you contend that Christian baptism is a *divinely prescribed* qualification for communion? What regard for God's requirements or jealousy for his will is there in such a course as this? It seems to me neither more nor less than a downright tampering with the mind of God, to believe baptism to be a divinely required preliminary to communion, and yet allow that persons do right to commune without it, and that there is no reason why we should breathe a murmur against them for so doing. If Christian baptism is a divinely prescribed term of communion, and, as we hold, nothing is Christian baptism but a professing of faith in Christ by immersion, then Pedobaptists are not entitled to a place at the sacramental table, and do not do right in communing. But if, as you say, they are *undoubtedly* entitled to it, and even do right in partaking of it, then you admit, in their case at least, that Christian baptism is not a necessary qualification, and, of course, not in itself a divinely

* Curtis, on Com., p. 190.

constituted qualification. And this is all that I am contending for. I have it, therefore, in my favor, at the outset, that you agree with me, that the want of Christian baptism is not a necessary barrier to lawful communion. And here I might leave the question as conceded; but I desire to show that I stand on a firmer basis than your concessions.

Let us turn, then, to the consideration of a second fact. It is this, that the want of Christian baptism was not a disqualification in the apostles' days.

And first, I think it susceptible of the clearest demonstration that the participators of the Lord's supper at its institution were without it. I know you hold that they were not; and that, because such was the case, Christian baptism is essential to communion. But is not this a begging of the whole question? Is it not assuming (1) that John's baptism was identical with Christian baptism, (2) that the twelve had all received it, and (3) that because they had received it, therefore the want of it would have disqualified them for the supper? Even if it were a fact that the twelve were baptized, it is impossible to conceive how you can conclude from this that baptism is a *sine quâ non* for communion. Had it been recorded that they were not allowed to commune for want

of baptism, or until they had been baptized, then your conclusion would be natural and just. But the mere fact, supposing it to be a fact, that they were baptized as they sat around the Lord's table, affords not the least shadow of evidence that it was necessary for them to be baptized before they took their places there. If, however, it can be shown that this is not a fact, but that they communed without having received Christian baptism, your position that this ordinance is indispensable to communion, is at once and for ever overthrown. And such, I promise to show you, was the case.

In saying this, I do not say that the Savior's disciples had not received the baptism of John, any more than that they had not received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, whatever the truth in these cases may be; but merely that they had not received the baptism which, by the apostolic commission, we are authorized to administer. I simply affirm that their case is similar to that of our Pedobaptist brethren, that their discipleship to Christ was not entered upon by an immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I will not deny that in a certain sense they may all have been baptized. Nor will I deny that in a certain sense the members of the Greek church are baptized, that is to say, they are immersed. But being immersed in infancy, neither

you nor I can admit that they have received the ordinance of Christian baptism, since this is not merely an immersion, but an immersion in token of a profession of faith in our crucified and risen Lord. Just so—without placing the ordinance administered by John upon the same level with the infant-immersion of the Greek church, or, in the least, questioning its divine origin—allowing that the Savior's disciples had been baptized by John, I hold that they were without Christian baptism, unless, after having received John's baptism, they were immersed again and upon a profession of faith in Christ, which no one supposes; or unless the institution of the forerunner and the ordinance of Christian baptism are one and the same. That they are not identical, but are essentially different, if not a self-evident proposition, is certainly susceptible of the clearest demonstration.

The first circumstance I would refer to as evidence of the want of identity between these two institutes, is the obvious difference between the object and import of each. I admit that the outward act was the same in both cases—an immersion. So is it in Christian baptism, and the infant-baptism of the Greek church. But this is no proof that the two are one ordinance. I admit, too, that they were both sanctioned by the authority of Christ. So was the Jewish passover,

as well as the Lord's supper. This, however, is no evidence that the two ordinances are identical. In order to make out an identity of acts, it must be shown that their meaning and the end for which they were sanctioned are the same. And here lies the great difference between these two baptisms. Their meaning and the end for which they were instituted, are widely different.

John was *Christ's forerunner*. As such, the great end for which he was commissioned was "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," to bring the Jews into a state of expectation for the immediate appearance of the long promised Messiah, and of readiness for receiving him as such, whenever it was evident who he was. In the accomplishment of this end, the baptism he administered served a two-fold purpose. In the first place, it was to be instrumental, like the Savior's own miracles, in affording to the Jews evidence as to who the true Messiah was. Consequently, immediately after the baptism of Jesus, we find the heavens were opened, and a voice descended saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Up to this moment, even John himself knew not Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, however well acquainted he had been with him before as the Son of Mary and a person of remarkable sanctity of life. His own testimony

is, in order that the Messiah should be made manifest unto Israel, *therefore* am I come baptizing in water.* This was one important object to be accomplished by means of the rite administered by the son of Zechariah, an object for which Christian baptism was never intended. But it was also designed to mark such as professed to receive the message he proclaimed. As the great end of his ministry was not to make disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, but to make ready a people prepared for the Messiah's coming, so he administered baptism, not upon a profession of Christianity, but in token of repentance and an avowed readiness to receive as the Messiah him who was soon to be manifested to them as such. "His language was precise and appropriate. It was not a demand of *present* faith in any known individual, but was limited to a *future* faith on a certain personage who was about to evince his title to the character he assumed by his personal appearance and miracles." He administered "the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they *should* believe on him who was to come."† Christian baptism, however, demands a present faith. It is administered, not in token

* John i. 31.

† Acts xix. 4.

that such as receive it *will* believe, but that they *do* believe—not on a Messiah about to come, but on one already come. If this ordinance were identical with John's baptism, it would be an overturning of the whole gospel, a rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, a looking for a Messiah yet to come; an object utterly inconsistent with its design.

The import also of these institutions, as well as their object, is totally distinct. Christian baptism is a baptism unto Christ. It is significant of union professed to the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and in Him of union to the Holy Ghost as a renewed person, and to the Father as a son. "Ye are all children (or sons) of God," says an apostle, "by faith in Christ Jesus," who is preëminently *the* Son of God; "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ;"* that is, have professedly, and really, if your profession is true (which the apostle assumes it is), become united to Christ, and by your union to him who is THE SON of God, ye are, in him, sons of God too, transformed through the renewing of the Holy Ghost into the image of Him who is the first-born among many brethren. But the baptism of John was not a baptism unto Christ.

* Gal. iii. 26, 27.

If it had been, instead of seeing multitudes flock to him to be baptized, he would scarcely have seen one, so inconsistent was the lowly character of Christ with the Jewish idea of what their Messiah was to be. Besides, the idea of their having been baptized *unto* Christ, is incompatible with the fact that their baptism was in token of their being *prepared for his coming*. Nor was the ordinance they received administered *in the name* of Christ, or of the Trinity. This is allowed on all hands. And it is evident, too, from the reply of those disciples of John to Paul at Ephesus, who said, they had not so much as heard of a Holy Ghost; and from Paul's asking them, "Unto what, then, were ye baptized?" that is, "unto what if not unto the name of Christ?" This, I say, aside from other evidence, is sufficient to show that John's baptism was not administered in the name of the Trinity, or upon a profession of Christianity. His language was not like Peter's—"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost," but "I baptize you unto, or in token of, repentance; bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance, and believe on him who shall soon come." His baptism was not, therefore, a symbolic putting on of Christ, or a profession of union and discipleship to him. It was simply an

expression of preparedness to embrace as the Messiah him who was about to appear in that character, together, of course, with that repentance and purification of life implied in being prepared for his coming.

We see, therefore, that the object and meaning of these two institutions are essentially distinct. The consequence must be that the baptisms themselves are distinct, and not to be regarded as one and the same.

The same conclusion forces itself upon us when we consider the distinction always preserved between these two ordinances by the New Testament writers. If the two were identical, why should *those who practised Christian baptism* ever speak of a "John's baptism," as though it were something different from that which they themselves administered? That any persons previous to the instituting of Christian baptism, or who had never heard of Christian baptism, should have called the rite administered by the forerunner and his disciples "John's baptism," in distinction from the divers other baptisms then employed, is to be expected. To expect anything else would be to look for something contrary to nature. But if Christian baptism is a mere continuation of John's, if the two institutions are identical one with the other, if they are not essentially distinct, it is a

little singular that *those who practised the former* should thus carefully avoid confounding it with the latter. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for example, who wrote several years after the death of Christ, never call the forerunner's act baptism simply; but they invariably designate it "the baptism of John," "the baptism of repentance," "the baptism of water," and so on, as carefully as they do the baptism of the Holy Ghost by its appropriate epithets. Peter, too, speaks of "the baptism which John preached,"* as though it were something different from that he himself preached. Paul, too, calls it "the baptism of repentance,"† in distinction from the ordinance of Christian baptism. Now the question is, If the two ordinances are identical, why is one of them thus carefully and invariably designated by those who administered the other, while they never designate the ordinance they themselves administered by any other name than baptism? Can anything account for this distinction, carefully preserved between them, but the fact that the two ordinances were essentially distinct, and felt to be so? The ordinance they themselves administered, they called, by way of preëminence, baptism merely; that of the forerunner, by way of distinction, the baptism

* Acts x. 37.

† Acts xiii. 24; xix. 4.

of repentance, and so on. They invariably leave off the distinguishing terms that are employed in connexion with the baptism John administered, and thus make a distinction between their own institution and his. To me this fact seems of no little weight in deciding the question.

Another circumstance, and one that affords indubitable evidence that these institutions are distinct, is the fact that those of John's disciples who became converts to Christianity after the Savior's resurrection, on becoming such, were rebaptized; that is, were baptized unto Christ. An instance of this we have in the baptism of twelve of the forerunner's disciples at Ephesus, the account of which is given in Acts xix. The apostle Paul, having come to Ephesus and found these disciples there, asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they first believed. Their reply was, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Whether it was because, in those days, the reception of the Holy Ghost was a usual accompaniment of Christian baptism, or because this ordinance was administered in the name of the Holy Ghost, in connexion with that of the Father and of the Son; yet so it was, that their saying they had not so much as *heard* of a Holy Ghost, disclosed the fact that they had not received Christian baptism. This led Paul to inquire

of them, "Unto what, then, were ye baptized," *i. e.* if not unto the name of Christ? And they said, "Unto John's baptism," in token of repentance and an expectation of a Messiah to come. Then said Paul, "John verily baptized [administered] the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who should come after him," explaining this by adding, "that is, on Christ Jesus." And when they heard this, we are told they were baptized in or unto* the name of the Lord Jesus. They made a profession of faith in Christ, and were no longer disciples of John, or expecters of a coming Messiah.

I can hardly suppose you will contend that there was no rebaptism in this case. It is impossible to believe that the sentence, "and when they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus," refers to all who came *to John*, and not to these twelve individuals at Ephesus; in which case, the record contained here would be, not that these persons received baptism when they had heard Paul's explanation, but that all who heard the forerunner were immediately baptized by him in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is contrary to fact, and a view which no intelligent and candid reader of the passage can take, as the warmest

* In the Greek the preposition is the same here as in verse 3, where it is translated "unto."

friends and ablest defenders of your restricted views confess. Prof. Ripley, for example, in his note on the passage says, "Some writers have contended that these men did not receive baptism after Paul met with them. But as to the simple inquiry whether they were baptized anew, an affirmative answer seems unavoidable if we follow the most obvious and natural meaning of the passage as conveyed both in our translation and in the original Greek." Prof. Curtis expresses his view of the passage thus: "The former baptism of these persons was not an avowal of their personal faith in the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine—it was not a credible profession to the world of faith in Jesus or the Holy Ghost. Paul, THEREFORE, pronounced it invalid *in toto*. They were rebaptized."* And Prof. Hackett, a very accurate interpreter of New Testament Greek, in his Commentary on the Acts, places at the beginning of the nineteenth chapter, the heading, "Paul comes to Ephesus and rebaptizes certain disciples of John;" and under the fifth verse he has this note, "Some of the older writers maintained that Luke records these words ('Now they having heard were baptized'), as a continuation of Paul's remarks. The object" of this interpretation, he adds,

* Christian Review, vol. xi. pp. 199, 200.

“ was to rescue the passage from those who appealed to it in order to justify rebaptism. This, however, misstates the fact in regard to John’s baptism. He did not administer it in the name of Jesus. No one, at present, contends for that interpretation.”

Taking it for granted, then, that you admit the rebaptism of these persons, for there can be no doubt about it, the only inquiry to be settled is, Was their first baptism John’s? Nor is there any room for doubt here. We have their own words for it that they “ were baptized unto John’s baptism.” And Paul, so far from intimating to them that the baptism they had received could not have been a genuine John’s baptism, but must have been some spurious or defective administration of it, and that they ought, on this account, to be baptized anew, conceded that it was genuine, by saying, “ John indeed baptized the baptism of repentance.” As much as if he had said, “ You may indeed have received John’s baptism; but this is not a baptism unto Christ.” Upon hearing which, it was very natural they should be, as we read they were, “ baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus.” A most conclusive proof that the baptism of John and the Christian ordinance are two things essentially distinct.

In addition to the fact recorded in these verses, our knowledge of the popularity of John and of

the multitudes who flocked to his baptism, forces us to believe that there were many others in the same situation with these twelve disciples. Look at the terms in which the effects of John's ministry are described : "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Such language is nowhere used to represent the success of the apostles. As Robert Hall remarks, "their converts are *numerically* stated ; and at some distance from our Lord's ascension they appear to have amounted to about five thousand, while a great majority of the nation continued impenitent and incredulous. We read of no party formed against the son of Zechariah, no persecution raised against his followers ; and such was the reverence in which he continued to be held after his death, that the Pharisees, those determined enemies of the gospel, dared not avow their disbelief of his mission, because all the people considered him as a prophet. From these considerations it is very evident, if we suppose the converts made by the apostles to have been universally baptized on their admission into the church (a fact not doubted by our opponents), that multitudes of them must have been in the same situation with the disciples at Ephesus. Among the converts on the day of Pentecost, and at subsequent periods, there must

have been no inconsiderable number who had for a time been sufficiently awakened by the ministry of John to comply with this ordinance; yet it is evident from the narrative, as well as admitted by our opponents, that Peter enjoined on them all, without exception, the duty of being immersed in the name of Christ."* And we are told that all who gladly received the word *were* baptized. No exceptions are recorded as having been made among all those three thousand converts in favor of such of them as may have received baptism at the hands of John. You say, however, that none of these could have been disciples of John, inasmuch as they were all pricked in their hearts and exhorted to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins; an exhortation which John's disciples had already received. But this is making out, that the Christian church was coëxtensive with the forerunner's baptism, since it proceeds upon the idea, that his disciples, as such, were professing Christians; and not only so, but that Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were Christians, and needed not to be pricked in their hearts and exhorted to repent, which every one knows is contrary to fact. Can you believe, then, that of these three thousand

* Works, vol. i. pp. 300, 301.

every individual must have been of those who had not received John's baptism? "When," to use the language of Hall, "the number of his converts was so prodigious, when the submission to his institute was almost national, when, of so small a number as twelve, two at least of the apostles were of his disciples, who can doubt, for a moment, that some, at least, of the multitudes who were converted on or after the day of Pentecost, consisted of such as had previously submitted to the baptism of John? Is it possible that the ministry of the forerunner and of the apostles of our Lord should both have been productive of such great effects among the same people, at the distance of a few years, without operating, in a single instance, in the same direction and upon the same people? No. But if such as professed their faith in Christ, under the ministry of the apostles, were baptized upon that profession, without any consideration of their having been previously immersed by John or not, what stronger proofs can be desired that the institutes in question are totally distinct? Were we satisfied," continues Hall, "with an *argumentum ad hominem*, with the sort of proof sufficient to silence our opponents, here the matter might safely rest. But independent of their concession, it is manifest from the whole tenor of the Acts, that

the baptismal rite was universally administered to the converts to Christianity, subsequent to the day of Pentecost.”*

But what completely settles the question is the fact that Christian baptism was not instituted till after the resurrection of Christ, when the object of John's baptism was at an end. It was now no longer necessary “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” When Christ arose from the dead, and the seal was thereby set to his Messiahship, inasmuch as by his resurrection he “was declared to be the Son of God with power,” it was fully revealed who the Messiah was. The object of the ministry of one who came, as a forerunner, to prepare a way for the Lord, was then, if not before, necessarily at an end, and, together with it, ceased the object of his baptism. There was no longer any propriety in preaching faith in a Messiah yet to come. A new era had commenced. Those who had not hitherto acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and should henceforth believe on him, now that he was crucified and risen, were to make an acknowledgment and profession of this faith by an outward, self-denying act, emblematic of union to him as the crucified, buried, and risen One.

* Works, vol. i. pp. 301, 302.

This act is the submission to Christian baptism. And the words of the institution of this ordinance are contained in Matt. xxviii. 19; words not given till after the Savior's resurrection: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Here is the first of our hearing anything of baptizing in (into) the name of Christ. This is not only our authority, but, as the younger Fuller expresses it, our primary authority, for the administration of Christian baptism. For, had not the Savior, after his resurrection, instituted this ordinance and enjoined it upon his followers, we should have been left without any ordinance of the kind to administer; baptism would be no more binding than the passover, the institute administered by John being obviously obsolete after the death and resurrection of Christ. As we date the Lord's supper from its first celebration, on the night before the crucifixion, so are we to date the ordinance of baptism from the giving of the commission. Each is to be looked for from the time of its institution. No one would go back into the Jewish passover for the former; nor, with any more propriety, can the latter be sought in the rite administered by John. This is rendered doubly clear when we consider what Christian baptism is. "Know ye not," says Paul, "that so many of us as were baptized into

Christ, were baptized into his death?"* As much as if he had said (as is evident from a reference to the context and the apostle's argument there), Know ye not that all of us who have received Christian baptism, have entered upon a profession of union to Christ as *crucified*? Such a profession was not made upon receiving the baptism of John. It could not have been made. The idea of their Messiah's being a crucified one was utterly repugnant to the minds of the Jews; and had the forerunner's rite been a baptism unto Christ's death, he would not have seen Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, coming to him to be baptized. And yet such is the ordinance of Christian baptism—a profession of union to a crucified Savior. If, then, the ordinance we are commanded to administer, could not have been in use previous to the Savior's death, of course the baptism of John is not Christian baptism.†

* Rom. vi. 3.

† It may be asked, What were the baptisms administered by the Savior's disciples under his personal ministry? From the nature of the case, they could not have been administrations of the ordinance of Christian baptism. They were not professions of discipleship to Christ, or of faith in him as the Messiah; but, like the baptism administered by John, were in token of repentance and an

But I will suppose you are still unsatisfied that these two institutes are totally distinct. I will suppose it possible for you yet, after all the evidence I have adduced, to believe that they were both administered for the same purpose; that there is not a distinction preserved between them by the sacred writers; that John's disciples were in no case rebaptized after the resurrection; and

expectation of the speedy ushering in of the kingdom of God. "They differed in no respect from John's, either in the action itself or in the import, but were a joint execution of the same work; agreeably to which we find a perfect identity in the language which our Savior enjoined his disciples to use, and in the preaching of John: 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand.'"

—*Hall*. If the Savior's sanctioning John's baptism with his own authority and directing his disciples to administer it, is any proof, as some suppose it is, that the baptism they gave, during his personal ministry, was the same as the ordinance we are commanded to administer, then the same mode of reasoning will prove that the passover feasts they prepared and received at his bidding were identical with the ordinance of the Lord's supper; for John's baptism issued from the personal authority of Christ in no other sense than the passover did. Whenever, by reasoning of this sort, it can be shown that John's baptism and Christian baptism are essentially the same, it must follow, by parity of reasoning, that the Lord's supper is one with the passover. So that this kind of arguing, if it proves anything, proves too much.

that our authority for administering baptism does date farther back than the giving of the commission: I say, I will suppose this possible, though I cannot think it at all probable; still, there is one consideration more which must satisfy every candid mind of the utter impossibility of these institutions being identical. That Christian baptism was instituted by the Savior, whether before his death or not, and derives its authority from him, you, of course, will not question. To suppose anything else would be to suppose that it is not an ordinance of Christ's. To say that he instituted it before he entered upon his personal ministry would be a contradiction in terms. But John had been administering the baptism of repentance some time before Christ began his public career. During this time he had baptized at least two, if not all, of those who afterwards constituted the twelve disciples. These two, upon the Savior's being pointed out to them immediately after his baptism, forthwith became his disciples.* But they were not baptized anew when they did this. The circumstances, as they are narrated, preclude all ground for supposing that they then made a baptismal profession of their faith in him. Now the question arises, were they ever baptized

* See John i. 35-40.

during the period that elapsed between that moment and the time of the Savior's death? We have no record of any such transaction; no one believes such a thing ever occurred. It is a moral certainty it did not. To what conclusion, then, are we driven? Either that Christian baptism originated before the ministry of Christ; that is to say, was an institution of his before he enjoined it; or that these two disciples were without Christian baptism at the institution of the supper. But the former is absurd. It follows, therefore, that at least Andrew and his fellow disciple were unbaptized, that is, they were, like our Pedobaptist brethren, without an immersional profession of Christianity, when they communed with the Savior around that first-spread sacramental board. And if the remaining twelve disciples had received John's baptism, they were all in the same condition. If they had not, then they were in no sense baptized; for the narrative of their call, their leaving all and following Christ, renders it certain that they made no baptismal profession of discipleship to him on so doing. And it is very evident that they did not do it at any subsequent period previous to their Master's death. The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that they were all without Christian baptism at the time of the institution and first celebration of the Lord's

supper. How, then, can you maintain that "baptism is a divinely required term of communion?" or that the want of it is a divinely recognised disqualification for commemorating our Lord's death? If the Savior himself did not make the want of it a bar to communion, how dare we? When he teaches us that this ordinance, as such, is not an essential preliminary to communion, who are we that we should be contending that it is?

But let us also see what the Savior's immediate followers thought of the supposed indispensableness of baptism to a place at the sacramental table. Besides the few who were present at the first supper, there were, in the apostles' days, numbers who communed steadfastly without ever having made a baptismal profession of Christianity. They were those who had embraced Christ previous to the day of Pentecost, all who were reckoned as members of the Christian church when the apostolic commission was issued. They consisted of "above five hundred brethren," at least.* These, of course, had not received Christian baptism before the Savior's resurrection, the ordinance not then being instituted. And "from the total silence of Scripture, and from

* See 1 Cor. xv. 6.

other circumstances that might be adduced, it is difficult to suppose that they submitted to that rite after his resurrection. It is almost certain that some, probably most, of them had been baptized by John; but, for reasons which have been already assigned, this will not account for their not submitting to the Christian ordinance. The true account seems to be, that the precept of baptism had no *retrospective* bearing, and that, consequently, its obligation extended only to such as were converted to Christianity subsequently to the time of its promulgation. Such as had professed their faith in Christ, from the period of his first manifestation, could not, without palpable incongruity, recommence that profession, which would have been to cancel and annul their former religious pretensions. With what propriety could the apostles of the Lord, who had continued with him in his temptations, place themselves on a level with that multitude which, however penitent at present, had recently demanded his blood with such clamorous importunity? They were not converted to the Christian religion subsequently to their Lord's resurrection, nor did their avowal of attachment to him commence from that period, and therefore they were not comprehended under the baptismal law which was propounded for the re-

gulation of the conduct of persons in essentially different circumstances.”*

If this account be correct,—and can you show that it is not?—then this entire number of Christians continued without ever being, in the Christian sense of the word, baptized. And yet, in obedience to the Savior’s command, they broke bread in remembrance of him. Abstaining from even the appearance of having a greater regard for their Divine Master’s ordinances than he himself had, they made nothing a term of communion which he did not. They neither considered themselves, though without baptism, unqualified for commemorating his death, and communing with him and his at the sacramental table, nor did they regard others, in like circumstances, disqualified for uniting with them. What, then, are we that we should decline communion with such? Who hath required it at our hands?

Yours in all sincerity, &c.

* Hall’s Works, vol. i. pp. 303, 304.

LETTER IV.

BAPTISM NOT A TERM OF COMMUNION:—THE ARGUMENT FROM THE SUPPER'S BEING AN ORDINANCE FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH—AN EXAMINATION OF THE REASONS FOR REGARDING BAPTISM A TERM OF COMMUNION.

The Lord's Supper, an ordinance for the Saviour's disciples—Baptist concessions—The assertion that open communionists, in denying baptism to be a term of communion, differ from all Christendom, untrue—No proof from the commission that baptism is indispensable to communion—None from the practice of the apostles; an absurd and suicidal appeal—None from the signification of the ordinances; proof for the contrary—None from the terms of eating the Jewish passover—Conclusion.

MY DEAR FRIEND: My last letter, you will recollect, was devoted to showing that an immersional profession of Christianity is not a *sine quâ non* for communion. The two considerations that I urged were your concession to the truth of this position, and the fact that the Saviour and his first disciples did not deem the want of baptism a disqualification for communion. I have another argument which I will now offer, and then pro-

ceed to examine your reasons for holding the contrary opinion. That argument lies in the fact that the Lord's supper is an ordinance for the Christian church, and, as such, cannot be withheld from any who are its members. To enter into any lengthened argument to prove this, is altogether unnecessary. It would be too much like attempting to prove a self-evident proposition. The circumstances under which the supper was instituted, the analogy between it and the Jewish passover as a national ordinance, its symbolical character, all plainly pronounce it to be an institution for the observance of the Christian church. "This do *ye* in remembrance of me;" not the immersed only, but all disciples. "Drink *ye all* of it;" not merely the baptized, but all the members of the household of faith who may be present, for it is *the Lord's* table, designed for any who are members of his body. In accordance with which the apostle says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."*

* 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. The expression "that one bread" here denotes the same as "this bread" and "this bread

Or in other words, "the drinking of the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not, to all appearances, a partaking in common of the blood of Christ? The eating of the loaf which we break, is it not, to all appearances, a partaking in common of the body of Christ, the sacrifice offered for sin? For since the loaf is one, we who are many are, to all appearances, one; for we all partake of the one loaf emblematic of the body of Christ crucified." Sacramental communion is a symbol of communion not only with Christ, but with one another as individuals communing with him; that is, with one another as Christians. For since the supper is one and the same in meaning and object wherever among Christians it may be received, they who partake of it, though many, are thereby declared to be of the same community, the community who professedly live by faith upon Christ crucified. Its observance represents a fellowshiping together of persons, not as baptized ones, but as Christians; just as the drinking of the cup of demons represents a fellowshiping together of persons, not as unbaptized ones, but as demon-worshippers. It is consequently an ordinance for the church of

of the Lord" in the 26th and 27th verses of the next chapter; that is, the bread used by Christians on sacramental occasions as emblematic of the Lord's body.

Christ. And so you allow, notwithstanding all your efforts to prove baptism to be a term of communion, which, if it were true, would prove the supper to be, not for the Christian body, but for baptized believers only; or, if you please, for believers as persons who have made an immersional profession of Christianity. You agree with me that "the communion is enjoined upon *the church* till the second coming of Christ;"* that it is "a positive appointment in *the Christian church*—a positive institution of *Christianity*;"† that it is "a spiritual repast, not to be spread in the world or for the world, it being plainly an institution in the church and *for the church*."‡

But if the Lord's supper is an ordinance for the Christian church, and enjoined upon its members without qualifications or restrictions, except that they examine themselves, and see to it that they eat and drink believingly, we are not at liberty to recognise anything as a term of communion which shall either exclude ourselves from communing with any such, or preclude them from communing with us when present together where it is administered. The only question, then, that can be

* Judd's Remains, p. 339. Howell on Com. pp. 24, 37.

† Booth's Vindication.

‡ R. Fuller, Bapt. and Com. pp. 185, 186.

raised, is, "Is the Christian Church confined to the immersed?" If nothing can be called the church of Christ but the Baptist denomination, then restricted communion is right, and no others should be suffered to come to the Lord's table, because, not being in the church, they are not entitled to commune. But the Church of Christ, as I have already shown, is the body of his professing disciples, and includes them all. As in the apostles' days it embraced those whose profession of Christianity had not been made by immersion, as well as those whose had, so now. And such being the case, the want of immersion, in itself considered, can be no barrier to communion. As the younger Fuller says, "our brethren are entitled to the Lord's supper, inasmuch as all Christians are entitled to all the privileges of the Christian church."* If this were not the Lord's table, but ours, the case would be different. But as it is, we are not at liberty to adopt any terms of communion not established by the Lord himself. We are not at liberty, therefore, to sanction a restriction of the ordinance from any who are credible members of the great Christian brotherhood. The apostles and primitive Christians practised no such restrictions; nor can we.

I come now to an examination of the reasons

* J. G. Fuller on Com. iii. Conv.

you adduce to prove that baptism is a term of communion.

And first, you say that I differ from all Christendom, and that if you err in holding baptism to be a term of communion, you are, at all events, in company with all Christians of all ages. This, however, I can regard in no other light than merely as an attempt to overawe with the weight of authority. And to be frank, I must say I consider it an attempt altogether unworthy of an ingenuous and truth-loving mind. For, to say nothing of apostolic principles and practice; to say nothing of the views of some of the noblest spirits and brightest lights the Baptist denomination has ever had, such as John Bunyan, Roger Williams, Robert Hall, John Foster, the two Haldanes, Alexander Carson, Baptist W. Noel, and so on; it is not true that "baptism has been held," as you say it has, "in all ages and by all denominations to be a divinely prescribed term of communion."* Others may, perhaps, say this with truth; but neither you, nor I, nor any other *Baptist* can. When you say that baptism has been held by all denominations to be a term of communion, either you are no Baptist, or your assertion is not true; either you admit affusion and aspersion to be bap-

* Howell on Com. p. 51.

tism as well as immersion, and so falsify your own principles, or there is no truth in your statement; for a professing of Christ by immersion—the thing that you are contending for, and the only thing that you are willing to admit to be baptism—has not been held by all denominations to be necessary to communion. If you say that what has been considered baptism by them has been regarded in this light, I have only to say that this is a sophistical use of a word unworthy of a cause professing to be based upon the truth. In contending that baptism is a term of communion, you never mean that a person must have received either immersion, aspersion, or affusion, before he can come to the Lord's table, but that he must be an immersed believer. What truth is there, then, in the declaration that "baptism is regarded by all denominations as a term of communion?" coming, I say, from *you* who admit nothing to be baptism where there is no immersion. None whatever; and your appeal to the voice of the Christian church is a suicidal one. In no age and by no denomination, except the close-communion Baptists of modern times, has the want of an immersional profession of Christianity been considered a barrier to the Lord's table. And, as I showed in the beginning of my last letter, even you yourself, in common with the

denomination, hold that in certain cases baptism is not necessary to communion: for you say that Pedobaptists are entitled to the Lord's supper and qualified for communing, provided they do it among themselves,—a remark, however, which you cannot make respecting individuals who make no professions to Christianity. This appeal of yours, my dear sir, proves not only that the voice and practice of other denominations, but that your own concessions are against you. It shows, not that I, but that you, and those who agree with you, are the ones who, in this matter, stand alone.

Nor is your reference to the apostolic commission to much better purpose. "The commission," you say, "clearly indicates that baptism preceded the Lord's supper, and is prerequisite to it."* But here again you beg the entire question, assuming that if young converts are to be baptized before they come to the table of the Lord, therefore unimmersed professing Christians must be. You argue that because the commission enjoins the duty of baptizing such as are brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, and then of going on with them and teaching them to observe all Christ's requirements, therefore before they can teach their fellow disciples whose discipleship may

* Taylor, Bapt. a Term of Com.

not have been entered upon by immersion, to observe the Lord's supper, they must see to it that those disciples are not without Christian baptism. But a more illogical conclusion it would be difficult to draw. If the commission requires us to see that believers are invariably immersed before they observe the supper, it requires us also to see that they are immersed before they observe any other of the "all things" that Christ has commanded. But, as you yourself admit, it does not limit us to the immersed as the individuals whom we are to instruct in the observance of other commands. How, then, either directly or indirectly, can it limit us to such persons as the only ones whom we are to teach to observe the command "This do in remembrance of me," when this is bound up in the same bundle with all other commands enjoined upon Christians? The commission contains not the remotest allusion to the idea that we are not to sanction or encourage unbaptized persons in observing the supper, if there should happen to be any such among us who really regarded themselves baptized, and whose want of baptism argued nothing whatever against their piety, zeal, or faithfulness to their Master. It affords no evidence whatever that the supper is never to be eaten but by believers as baptized persons—a view which it must teach in order to sustain the idea that bap-

tism is a divinely required qualification for communion. It simply requires the commissioned servants of Christ, after having baptized such as they have disciplined, to instruct them fully in the mind and will of their Master, and to teach them to observe all his injunctions. As to professing Christians who may be without Christian baptism, as these very disciples were to whom the commission was originally given, it is necessarily silent, for it relates to those whom we disciple and introduce into the Christian church, and not to those whom we find already in it. This appeal, therefore, to the commission in support of your views, is wholly irrelevant. And it is as absurd as it is irrelevant; for it assumes that an injunction to instruct, in the observance of whatever Christ has enjoined, those whom we have disciplined and baptized, is tantamount to an injunction *not* to sanction an observance of the Lord's supper by such as may be without Christian baptism, even though they are Christ's acknowledged disciples and fully recognised as such under all other circumstances.

Another of your reasons for regarding baptism a *sine quâ non* for communion, you find in the practice of the apostles on the day of Pentecost and after. "The apostles," you say, "first preached; secondly, the people believed; thirdly, they that believed were baptized; fourthly, they

that gladly received the word and were baptized continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. When the people of Samaria believed Philip preaching the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, they were not received immediately to the communion, but were first baptized. And when the Holy Ghost fell on the Gentile converts at Cæsarea, evincing to the apostles that God had accepted them, Peter commanded them to be baptized. In no instance, until they had submitted to baptism, were the disciples ever permitted to approach the holy table."* And therefore you conclude that baptism is indispensable to breaking bread ; or that the want of it is a divinely prescribed barrier to free communion.

But to say nothing of the fact which I have already proved, that the primitive disciples, and even the Lord himself, did commune with such as had never received Christian baptism, what does all this display of yours amount to ? It assumes that the question in debate is, whether or not young converts shall be admitted to the Lord's table previous to their making an acknowledged profession of Christianity ; which is not the question at all. So far as the real point at issue is concerned,

* Howell on Com. pp. 44, 45.

it proves nothing. It simply shows that the apostles, as free communionists do, after having received their converts into the visible Christian body, communed with them. Farther than this, all this show of argument amounts to nothing.

Or, if it proves anything in favor of your position, it proves too much. If it demonstrates that baptism is indispensable to Christians' approaching the Lord's table aright, it demonstrates also that it is necessary to their constancy in attending upon the teachings of Christ, the prophets, and the apostles; to continuance in Christian fellowship and engagement in prayers one with another. It proves that it is an indispensable condition to rejoicing in believing, to eating an ordinary meal, and to acts of hospitality. For we read that they that gladly received the word and were baptized, continued steadfast *upon the teachings of the apostles, and in fellowship, and in prayers*, as well as in breaking bread;* that the Ethiopian eunuch, after his baptism, went on his way *rejoicing*;† that the Philippian jailor and his family, after hearing the word, were first baptized; then, when he had brought Paul and Silas back again into his house, *he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God*;‡ that Paul, on being restored

* Acts ii. 42.

† Acts viii. 39.

‡ Acts xvi. 34.

from his blindness after his conversion, arose and was baptized, then *received meat and was strengthened* ;* that Peter commanded those who had received the Holy Ghost under his preaching at Cæsarea to be baptized ; after which *they prayed him to tarry certain days* ;† that Lydia attended to the things spoken by Paul ; and when she was baptized, *she besought him and his companions to make her house their home.*‡ In no instance do we read of the converts to Christianity, under the apostles, ever continuing steadfast in their attendance upon the teaching of their instructors, in Christian fellowship (or the having of things in common, or the making of joint contributions for the gospel's sake, as the case may have been), and in prayers ; or of their rejoicing, eating an ordinary meal, or performing the rites of hospitality, till after they had been baptized. If this sort of argument proves that baptism is indispensable to communion, it proves that it is indispensable, too, to engaging in these other duties and exercises aright. If, therefore, your position and practice are called for by apostolic precedent, consistency requires you to maintain likewise that no Christian has any right to continue steadfast in reading the Word of God, in attending the sanctuary in fel-

* Acts ix. 18, 19. † Acts x. 48. ‡ Acts xiv. 14, 15.

lowshipping with Christians, in contributing to benevolent objects, and in prayer, or to rejoice in God, to entertain his brethren, or to eat another meal, till he is immersed! There is no possible half-way ground between the two. Nor is there any more absurdity or Puseyism in the latter conclusion than the former.

Again you say that the signification of the two ordinances proves baptism to be prerequisite to the supper; that baptism is emblematic of a new birth and the supper of the constant nourishment which the new life demands; that "the metaphorical representation, therefore, requires that baptism should always be received as a condition of communion;"* and that, "it is preposterous to place the new life and its nourishment before the new birth in which that new life began."† But I confess I am unable to see the relevancy of this reasoning. It assumes, what you are continually assuming, but what is not true, that open communionists teach that the supper may be eaten by young converts as the first act of visible discipleship. Moreover it makes baptism regenerative; otherwise how are "the new life and its nourishment placed before the new birth" by the com-

* Howell on Com., p. 47.

† R. Fuller on Bapt. and Com., p. 189.

munion of unbaptized persons? Is baptism necessary in order to that birth? Is it necessary in order to indicate such a birth? If not, where is the force of your reasoning? Is it true that the life, represented in communion as possessed by the communicant, is not possessed by him unless he has been previously baptized? If not, where is the necessity of baptism previous to an act which is not a profession of baptism, but of discipleship and faith and love? I say, communion is not a profession of baptism. In other words, it is not a symbol of an *immersional* profession of discipleship. It was not in the case of the eleven at the institution of the supper. It was not with primitive disciples on subsequent occasions. Nor is it now. If communion were a profession of baptism, as baptism is of faith, of course it would require baptism to precede it, or its symbolical character would be falsified. But as such is not the case, your appeal to the emblematic import of the ordinances amounts to nothing.

The last reason you give is, that circumcision was a prerequisite to the passover, and the analogy requires that baptism should be to the Lord's supper. You say, with Mr. Booth, "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. If this be allowed, the consequence is plain and the argument, though analogical, is irrefragable; for the paschal feast and 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.*

To this it is sufficient to say, that, while sound analogical arguments are irrefragable, in this case the analogies are very far from holding good. Circumcision was made a prerequisite to the passover by an express law. "No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof."† But no such connexion is established between baptism and the supper. There is no law, as you acknowledge, prohibiting unbaptized persons from communing. It is of no avail for you, while you make this admission, to undertake to show *why* unbaptized persons are not prohibited. Turn it and twist it as you will, it is still true that such persons did commune in the Savior's time, and that there never was issued any command for them not to commune, unless, forsooth, it is found in the injunction, "This do in remembrance of me."

But there is also another, and a no less important point in which the analogy is wanting. You make baptism, in this argument, analogous to cir-

* Vindication, sect. v.

† Exod. xii. 48.

cumcision. But Paul teaches that the circumcision of the Abrahamic covenant symbolizes, not baptism, but "the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh," that circumcision which, to every child of God, is the token of his being within the covenant made by the Father to Christ, the antitype of Abraham. For as a man carried the token of his being a member of God's ancient covenant people by being circumcised in the flesh; so an individual is marked as a spiritual Jew or a believer by a spiritual circumcision.* The analogy requires, therefore, not baptism, but sanctification, as the prerequisite corresponding to circumcision as a prerequisite to the passover. And your argument should run thus: As none but Jews, or members of the passed-over nation, could truly partake of the passover in commemoration of the deliverance wrought under Moses in Egypt, so none but believers can feed by faith on Christ crucified in commemoration of the deliverance from sin and death wrought for man in the death of Christ, the antitype of the paschal lamb of the Israelites. And inasmuch as, in accordance with their obvious scriptural design, the visible church and its ordinances of baptism and the supper are but a visible representation of the invisible church and

* Col. ii. 11; Rom. ii. 28, 29.

its members' acts of dying to sin and rising in Christ to a life of holiness, and of living by faith upon his death as the spiritual food of their souls; this argument teaches, not that those who would partake worthily of the supper be baptized, but that, as members of the visible church, they be spiritually circumcised—identified in heart with “the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.” If consistently carried out, then, the analogy would require the law of the Lord's supper to be this, “Let no unbeliever partake of it.” So far from its affording an evidence of the indispensable prerequisites of baptism to communion, it has no bearing upon the question at all.

Such are the reasons you and others assign for regarding baptism a divinely prescribed *sine quâ non* for communion. But a man of your good sense must see, that really none of them support the idea, whilst several of them testify directly against it. The position that the want of baptism is a divinely recognised barrier to communion, as though the Lord's table belonged to none among us but the immersed, is one that cannot be sustained. The best attempts to defend it only show to what weaknesses Christian men are liable. For, in view of the utter irrelevancy and the suicidal character of these attempts, how ridiculously dog-

matic and painfully destitute of truth are such asseverations as these: "Christian baptism is one of the divinely ordained and unchangeable terms of communion."* "In the apostles' days it was constantly required as a preparation for the communion."† "God's regulations forbid the unbaptized [*i. e.* Pedobaptists] to partake of the supper."‡ "He orders that the baptized only shall communicate; who will dare to abrogate this order?"§ That is, God orders that Pedobaptists, that all professing Christians who have not made their profession by immersion, shall not commemorate their Lord's death! If this is not teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, I know not what is. As to any express "order" to restrict the Lord's supper to "the baptized only," I challenge all Christendom to produce it. It cannot be produced. As Mr. Kinghorn says, "the New Testament does not prohibit the unbaptized from receiving the Lord's supper." And what is more than this, neither does the voice of the Christian church, nor the commission, nor the practice of the apostles, nor the meaning of the ordinances, nor the supposed analogy between the

* Howell on Com. p. 50.

† Ibid. p. 45.

‡ R. Fuller on Bapt. and Com., p. 195.

§ Ibid. p. 198.

terms of admission to the passover and the terms of communion, afford the least shadow of a reason for inferring that such a restriction is consonant with the mind of Christ, but the contrary. The apostles and primitive Christians were obviously strangers to the idea that the supper is for persons as baptized believers. They practised on the principle that it is *the Lord's* table and for his disciples as such, commemorating his love and death. If there were any with whom they could not commune, evidently it was not their unbaptized fellow-disciples like Peter, James, and John, but such as they could not fellowship as Christians. And those with whom they would not commune, if there were any such, could not but regard their refusal to do so as equivalent to a refusal to acknowledge their Christian character. Acting on apostolic principles, not only are we not at liberty to refrain, but we cannot have the wish to refrain, from communing with any who stand before the world, and whom we acknowledge as credible professing Christians. If we decline communing with any, it must be because we cannot regard them as members of the common Christian brotherhood; a light in which we cannot view pious Pedobaptists. In the erecting of anything as a term of communion which causes a restriction of the Lord's supper from them, we are guilty of a gross mal-

administration of the ordinance. If we are satisfied that an individual is a disciple of Christ, the question as to *how* he has professed Christ is one we have nothing to do with when we gather around the emblems of our Savior's body to commemorate his death. So long as it is a stubborn fact that there are multitudes of holy and zealous Christians who differ from us in their views respecting the act and subjects of baptism, and, of course, are unbaptized as we believe, it is enough to know that those with whom we engage in the solemn ordinance of commemorating the Savior's death, are members together with us of the common household of faith. Nay more; I consider it unworthy of any enlightened mind, and beneath the dignity of the religion of Christ, to descend at any time, much more at such a time, to the inquiry how a disciple, eminent it may be for his piety and usefulness, has made his profession of Christianity. Such a course ill becomes a follower of CHRIST.

Yours, as ever, in all sincerity, &c.

LETTER V.

THE WANT OF BAPTISM NOT THE TRUE GROUND UPON WHICH RESTRICTED COMMUNION PROCEEDS.

Close communicants require something more than repentance, faith, and baptism—The supper made a denominational ordinance—The insincerity of Baptists—Their reasons for making it a denominational ordinance, no reasons—Their practice inconsistent with their professions—The folly of contending for baptism as a term of communion.

MY DEAR FRIEND :—I have addressed you in my former letters as though you really acted upon the principle that repentance, faith, and baptism were the qualifications for communion, which whoever had, might come to the Lord's table. But you do not act upon this principle; and all you say about the necessity of baptism to communion, I confess, I regard as nothing better than dust and smoke. It might be spared, the whole of it; for it has nothing whatever to do with regulating your administrations of the Lord's supper. The want of baptism is not the true ground upon which the restriction you practise, proceeds; for an individual's being an immersed and consistent Christian

is no evidence whatever that he may be allowed a place at the Lord's table with you. So far from considering the Lord's supper an ordinance for believers as baptized persons, as you profess to consider it, you make it a denominational affair altogether. In this, however, you act only in conformity with the principles and practice of the denomination; for the rules of close-communication churches, the United States over, require of all communicants something more than repentance, faith, baptism, and a godly walk and conversation; and that is, that they be members of some church of like faith and order. You know very well that the immersed members of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and other evangelical denominations, immersed it may be by Baptist ministers, are never allowed to commune in close-communication churches; or if allowed, it is only in violation of their rules. It was simply because I questioned the propriety of this course, that the council which met in the autumn of 1851 to recognise me as pastor of the church at Westport, refused to do it. They had examined me on all the various points on which it is customary to examine on such occasions—experimental religion, call to the ministry, doctrinal views, church polity and baptism. Apparently only one question more remained to be asked. It was this: "In adminis-

tering the Lord's supper, would you invite to it any credible Christians who are baptized, or would you restrict your invitations to such as are members of Baptist churches?" My reply was, "I would invite any who are baptized and leading consistent Christian lives." But for this reply, and because I was unable, after all that was said, to see the impropriety of it, the council refused to install me. In the Congregational and Methodist churches in the place, there were several immersed members; and if I had been allowed to extend a general invitation to all baptized persons, these, of course, when present, would have been included. But this, alas! would have been contrary to the traditions of the elders! The course pursued by these brethren of the Essex and Champlain Association, is the very course that Mr. Remington defends and pleads for. In proof of this, take the following from his Defence of Restricted Communion :* Rev. Mr. R., a Methodist, he tells us, happened to be present on a certain communion occasion where Mr. C., a Baptist minister, officiated. As the church were about to proceed to the administration of the supper, said *Mr. R.*, "I should like, if agreeable, to commemorate the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ with you."

* P. 14, 15.

Mr. C. "But, my brother, you must be baptized before you come with us to the Lord's table; and you know our principles, that we consider no baptism valid but immersion." *Mr. R.* "True; but I have been immersed." *Mr. C.* "Let me inquire then, my brother, do you, both by precept and example, sanction immersion as the only gospel baptism?" *Mr. R.* "O, no sir! I believe that sprinkling and pouring are either valid gospel baptism." *Mr. C.* "I thought so; and you certainly know that *with such views and practice* we should make ourselves very inconsistent to admit you to the communion with us." Here is an individual who is refused a seat at the Lord's table, not because of a want of repentance, faith, or baptism, but because he differed somewhat from his Baptist brother in belief respecting baptism, and, of course, in practice and denominational locality. This Mr. Remington gives as an illustration of what may happen, and under the circumstances ought to happen, in any close-communion body; a doctrine which the American Baptist Publication Society endorse, and the denomination from Maine to California act upon. Even the members of Freewill Baptist churches, you know, are never invited, and never would be communed with, if it could be avoided. But it is not for want of repentance, faith, and baptism; for the moment a Free-

will Baptist joins a close-communication church, he is no longer unqualified. Nor are members of Calvinistic open Baptist churches, persons like Alexander Carson, Baptist W. Noel, and a large share of the Baptists in England and Canada, regarded by "regular" Baptists, like yourself, as proper fellow communicants. You say, "We cannot with propriety extend an invitation to those Baptists who practise open communion. We must limit it to those of our order." And so say all hearty restricted communionists, who never, if possible, allow a free-communication Baptist to partake of the Lord's supper with them.* Even Prof. Curtis, with all his laboring to support the idea that the celebration of the Lord's supper is intended to signify, and does signify, that the communicants are all members of the same visible church, and that the eucharist is therefore a particular-church ordinance, shows most clearly that to his own mind it is no such thing, but neither more nor less than a denominational ordinance. This is apparent throughout the whole volume. For your satisfaction, however, I will specify two or three of those passages in which this is most obvious. On page 108 he says, "We take our stand upon this, that if the Lord's supper is a church ordinance,

* See Judd's Remains, p. 351.

if it is the appointed symbol of church relations, it should only be celebrated together with those with whom we can consistently sustain those relations." "This," adds a friendly pen, "is one of the *strong positions* maintained through much of the *able argumentation* of Mr. Curtis in his book;"* a sentence which, if it were not known to be put forth in all seriousness, and by a friend, might be regarded as thrown out in irony. "Able argumentation" or not, however, it is a fair specimen of the logic and the conclusiveness of the reasoning that runs through the whole volume. It requires no very great penetration of mind to perceive that a symbol of what *is*, is not a symbol of what *may* or *can* be. Mr. C., therefore, on the supposition that the eucharist is "the appointed symbol of church relations," ought not to argue that it should be celebrated only with those with whom we *can* sustain, but with those with whom we *do* sustain, those relations. This, however, is a closer communion than he advocates, or is willing to advocate. His idea is that the communion is a symbol of denominational relations existing between the communicants. And if this idea were just, the conclusion that the supper should only be celebrated together by those who can consistently

* Christian Review, vol. xvi. p. 222.

unite in particular-church relations, would be correct. Such a conclusion however, you perceive, cannot be arrived at from his premises. Again he says, "If the Lord's supper is a church ordinance, and indicates a church fellowship among all those who partake together, it is a violation of truth in symbols to invite to occasional communion those *whom our constitutional principles would forbid to be* members of our churches."* As this sentence stands there is no logic in it. But if, in place of the italicised words "*whom our constitutional principles would forbid to be,*" we read "who are not," the conclusion *then* arrived at—that it would be unlawful to commune with those *who are not* members of our particular church—will naturally and necessarily follow from Mr. C.'s premises. But this is not the conclusion to which he would come. The conclusion to which he himself comes—that we may invite to occasional communion those whom our constitutional principles would not forbid to be members of our church—is just the one to which he wishes to come. This shows that his premises are at fault. And they can be rectified only by substituting "denominational ordinance," and "denominational fellowship" in place of the expressions "church ordinance" and "church fellowship." For example: "If the

* P. 141.

Lord's supper is a *denominational* ordinance and indicates a *denominational* fellowship among all those who partake together, it is a violation of truth in symbols to invite to occasional communion those whom our constitutional principles forbid to be members of our church ;" that is, such as are not in our denomination. As this conclusion is the one to which Prof. C. would come, but one that cannot be drawn from his premises or from any other than the position that the supper is a symbol of denominational relations, it shows that his idea is, in fact, that it is a denominational ordinance. This is more palpable, perhaps, in the following sentences: "All that our course, in declining to celebrate with members of other *denominations*, exhibits, is that such persons do not belong to *churches of our order* ;" that is, to our denomination.* "We do not own them as Baptists."† And in referring to the Methodists and their love-feast, he says, "We do not feel their regulation as to this feast the least infringement upon Christian charity or fellowship, because *the love-feast is intended only for the members of their own churches*. We only do not see why they cannot at least allow us to take *the same view* of the supper."‡ The whole volume shows, that, while

* P. 117.

† P. 237.

‡ P. 110.

he theorizes about a particular-church ordinance, his conclusions, like his practical administrations of the institution and his invitations to it, make it, in reality, a denominational affair. And so it is with the denomination from one end of the country to the other. Their invitations are always restricted to members of "sister churches," which, in the mouth of a close communionist, you know, always means members of close Baptist churches. It matters not what or how many other baptized Christians may be present, none but close communionists are included in the invitation. The administration of the supper is designed to be restricted from all others, and any departure from this rule is regarded an irregularity worthy of censure, and, if unrepented of or persisted in, worthy of discipline even to excommunication.

And yet, when asked whether this is not *the Lord's table*, you say, "O yes! and this is the very reason why we dare not admit those who have not the prerequisites which the Lord requires; were it *our table*, we would give vent to our feelings and joyfully invite our brethren." This is the language of every apologist for restricted communion.* But how much sincerity is

* See Cone's "Terms of Com." R. Fuller on Bapt. and Com., p. 197. Howell on Com., p. 107.

there in it? If repentance, faith, and baptism are "the prerequisites which the Lord requires," why make any distinction among such as have these prerequisites? Why invite to the Lord's table close communionists only? Why decline communion with Freewill and other open-communion Baptists and with baptized members of other churches? The answer is not found in the reply that they have never repented from dead works, believed on Christ, or been baptized. But it lies in the fact that though they may not be destitute of "the scriptural prerequisites," they have not the prerequisites we require; that is, they are not close communionists: though they may be members of the church of Christ, they belong not to our denomination: though they may be entitled to a place at *his* table, they cannot come to *ours*.

I know you attempt to justify this course by saying that communion with baptized Christians not members of what you are pleased to call *regular* Baptist churches, is an irregularity not consistent with gospel order. But, pray, where's your proof for this? Do you think that Philip and the apostles would not have admitted the Ethiopian eunuch—a member of no close-communion church, as you yourself admit*—to

* See A. Fuller, Works, vol. iii. p. 512. R. Fuller on Bapt. and Com., pp. 146, 147.

the Lord's table? What is there in close-communication churches that renders them alone, above all others, deserving of the appellation "churches in gospel order?" So far as they are organizations they are *not* in gospel order, or rather they are not gospel or New Testament churches; and so far as they are close communionists and party communionists, they are still farther removed from anything that is sanctioned in the Word of God. According to your views, the whole apostolic church, which consisted of no organizations, much less of close-communication organizations, must have been a community of disorderly walkers from whom all good Christians—all *regular* Baptists—were commanded to withdraw! A very sad state of things indeed!

But you ask, "Does not the apostle write to the Colossians of his joying and beholding their *order* and the steadfastness of their faith? Does he not praise the Corinthians for *keeping the ordinances* as they had been delivered to them? Does he not *command* us to withdraw from all that walk disorderly?" But what has this to do with justifying your mode of administering the Lord's supper? His reference in the first of these passages* is not to order in the sense in which

* Col. ii. 5.

you use the word when you speak of churches of our order, but to well-ordered Christian lives. Any professing Christians who are leading such lives, whether in Baptist churches or not, are in the church in gospel order; that is to say, they are members of the Christian church and walking orderly in the gospel sense of the word. Upon your own ground, therefore—the ground that the Lord's supper is for the church in gospel order—you must either be a free communionist, or give to the language of Scripture an unwarranted signification.

As to 1 Cor. xi. 2; you are continually ringing the changes upon it; but it is not for the correct administration of baptism or the proper observance of the supper, that the apostle here praises the Corinthians. Of this a bare glance at the original will satisfy you. Or take Dr. Kendrick's translation which gives the apostle's idea very well. "I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things and *hold fast the precepts* which I delivered to you." Respecting the manner in which they professed to keep the Lord's supper, the apostle says in the 17th verse of this very chapter, "I praise you *not*." This ordinance they obviously did not keep as it should be kept. Look at the 20th and 21st verses. "When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper,"

though ye profess such to be your object; "for in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper;" he anticipates his brethren and becomes drunken, instead of tarrying for them, while they are left without anything to eat or drink, when they come. Was this "keeping the ordinance" of the eucharist as the apostle may be supposed to have delivered it to them? No. Hence his censure, "I praise you not." But respecting the *instructions* which he had previously given them, he could praise them for adhering to them. The passage has not the remotest reference to the order and manner of observing the Christian ordinances, but simply to their remembering the apostle in all things and desiring to carry out his instructions, as was manifest by their writing to him for advice. There is, therefore, no truth in your conclusion that the churches are here commended for keeping the ordinances of baptism and the supper as they were delivered, and censured for deviating from the example and teaching of the apostles. Even if this were the scope of the verse, it could not bear against open communionists as such; for it is not they, but you, who deviate from the example of the apostles, not merely in withholding the supper from those of their fellow disciples whose profession has not been made by immersion, but in restricting it

from many whose profession has been made thus.

Then as to the disorderly walking of which the apostle speaks in 2 Thess. iii. 6, you assume that it is a want of membership in some "regular" Baptist church. But how absurd! Even supposing Paul had known anything of close-communication organizations, who can believe that he would ever have swerved so far from himself, as to pronounce all who were not members of such bodies, disorderly walkers? The entire context teaches plainly enough that he refers to the leading of an idle and dissolute life, a life opposed to that alluded to in Col. ii. 5, just noticed. "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition (or instructions) which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us; for we *behaved* not ourselves *disorderly* among you. . . . For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that *if any would not work*, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which *walk* among you *disorderly, working not at all*, but are *busy-bodies*," &c. The "disorderly" here are the same as the "unruly" in 1 Thess. v. 14,—"*warn them that are unruly*"—and denotes such as are refractory, contumacious, dis-

solite, disorderly in life and conduct. Where any are thus disorderly, we are commanded to withdraw from them, not only in sacramental communion, but in everything else, expressive of fellowship, as members of the household of faith. The injunction, of course, *reaches to all* professing Christians, wherever we are brought into contact with them; but it was originally addressed to a *particular* body of Christians, the church of the Thessalonians, respecting their conduct *one toward another*, and not toward members of other churches. "We hear that there are some which walk *among you* disorderly. . . . Note them and have no company with them." Disorderly walkers in *your own* church, then, are the persons you are here more especially commanded to withdraw from; not pious members of other churches and denominations. The passage has nothing to do with any Christians of irreproachable walk and conversation. And when urged, as you urge it, in support of restricting the administration of the Lord's supper to members of close Baptist churches, it is most sadly out of place.

But, if the Lord's supper be really a denominational ordinance, as you would have it, why all the ado that you make about baptism as being a term of communion? Where is the force of it, when a believer's qualifiedness turns not on the

question, "Has he been baptized?" but on the question, "Is he a member of some sister church of like faith and order?" The practice that restricts the Lord's supper from any baptized believer of irreproachable life, is an open abandonment of the ground on which you and all restricted communionists profess to act. Dr. Howell, for example, the great American champion of the system, lays it down, in language that admits of no ambiguity, that "repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and baptism in the name of the holy Trinity, are incontrovertibly THE terms of communion, appointed and established by the King in Zion, and FROM WHICH WE ARE FORBIDDEN, by the most sacred obligations, AT ANY TIME, FOR ANY PURPOSE, OR UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, TO DEPART. 'What thing soever I command you,' saith the Lord Jehovah, 'observe to do it. THOU SHALT NOT ADD THERETO, nor diminish from it?'" Again, "Repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are indispensable terms of approach to the Lord's table, and TO WHICH THOSE WHO HAVE OBSERVED THESE PRELIMINARIES CANNOT AFTERWARDS BE DEBARRED OF ACCESS, BUT IN CONSEQUENCE OF A FORFEITURE OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, BY IMMO-

RALITY OR HERESY.”* This is language which strikes a death blow at the restriction you practise. And remember that it is not merely the language of Dr. Howell, but of the American Baptist Publication Society, by whom the work is endorsed and issued. And yet, neither is Dr. Howell, nor are the members of the Publication Society, nor are our brethren generally, regulated in their practice by this rule, any more than you yourself are. *The restricted communion of Baptist churches, the United States over, makes neither more nor less than membership in churches of like faith and order, the qualification for communion with them.* Apologize for it, and seek to vindicate it as much as you may, still the fact remains the same, and it cannot be denied that this is what is really made the one and all-embracing prerequisite for a seat at the Lord’s table, by the “regular” Baptists in this country. Such being the case, to what purpose, I say, is all this verbiage about “repentance, faith, and baptism being *the* divinely ordained and *unchangeable* terms of communion,” as Dr. Howell expresses it? Why not at once deny the sacramental table to be *the Lord’s*, and honestly and avowedly contend for its being a denominational table? If it be true, as the practice of restricted

* On Com., pp. 102, 266.

communion from one end of the land to the other says, that the qualification for communion is not repentance, faith, and baptism merely, but simply a place in the Baptist denomination, then let us hear no more about not communing with others, on the ground of their not being baptized. For the truth's sake, let us have consistency and honesty. Let it be frankly and fearlessly asserted that the communion table is not the Lord's, nor for his people, but a denominational table for those only who are of our denomination. If the system is justifiable, there is nothing to gain by urging false pleas in its behalf and cloaking its deformities under falsehoods, nor anything to be feared by placing it on its true basis and attempting to defend it as it is. Should it fall when placed there, and left to stand without the fictitious props which now support it, let it fall. It is unworthy to stand; and the sooner it falls the better, as well for those who practise it as for the church at large, and for the general advancement, among men, of the pure and ennobling principles of the gospel of the Son of God.

Yours, as ever, in all sincerity, &c.

LETTER VI.

COMMUNION NOT A SYMBOL OF INDIVIDUAL CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

A third ground of defence—A strange position—A false one—No proof to sustain it—Proof against it—An example of a particular-church ordinance—If this ground of defence is good, useless to talk of baptism as a term of communion, or of other Baptists as disorderly walkers—The position falsified by the universal practice of restricted communionists—What is necessary to a right reception of the ordinance—The presence of a minister not necessary—Andrew Fuller's opinion—Examples of apostolic communion; at Tezpoor; at the sessions of the Evangelical Alliance, London, 1851—Conclusion.

MY DEAR FRIEND :—I come now to notice your third position. First, you said you restricted the Lord's supper from others on the score of their not being baptized; but seeing that this is not the true ground on which you proceed, you endeavored to justify yourself by saying that those who are not members of close-communion churches are disorderly walkers, from whom we are commanded to withdraw; but finding that you are not sustained in this, you now say that sacramental com-

munion is a token of individual-church fellowship, to which members of other churches have no right, and ought not to feel hurt if not invited. This is the ground Prof. Curtis takes, with a view, as he informs us, to satisfy those individuals of the propriety of restriction, who can neither see how the want of baptism in itself can be a barrier to communion, nor believe that the supper was ever intended to be a denominational ordinance. This position is certainly a very singular one, to say nothing else of it. And so Mr. Curtis acknowledges; for he concedes that "all parties in this country appear satisfied so far as church membership is concerned,"* whilst, at the same time, he admits the existence of a general dissatisfaction among Christians respecting the mode in which Baptists administer the supper, which could not be the case if they considered the breaking of bread "a token, divinely appointed to symbolize, among other things, the relation which each member of any particular church bears to every other member;"† a virtual admission, on Mr. C.'s part, that the view he attempts to defend is a novel and repugnant one. The younger Fuller goes even farther than this, and denies to the supper the character of a particular-church ordinance.

* On Com., p. 107.

† Ibid. pp. 116, 117.

When he says, "We admit that our (Pedobaptist) brethren are entitled to the Lord's supper, inasmuch as all Christians are entitled to all the privileges of the Christian church,"* he cannot consider it a particular-church privilege, for he calls it expressly one of the privileges of the Christian church. Nor indeed does Mr. Curtis really consider it such, as I have already shown. The truth is, the position is not only a singular one, but a false one. There is nothing in history, revelation, reason, or facts to sustain it. That the Lord's supper is a social ordinance is plain enough. But that it belongs to individual churches and is to be observed by them as churches in the common acceptation of the word, instead of belonging to the disciples of Christ to be observed by them as disciples, whether they are members of our private family circle, or of a band of our Christian friends and relatives meeting with us, or of our particular church, or of a dozen churches, of an association, a presbytery, or any other body of Christians, assembled for worship or where worship would be appropriate, whether in our dwelling houses or our sanctuaries, whether with or without an ordained minister, is a proposition yet to be demonstrated. Mr. Booth lays it down, that "the Lord's supper

* On Com. Conv. 3.

is a church ordinance, nor ought ever to be administered but to a particular church as such ;” but does not prove it. Dr. Fuller does the same. He affirms that “the Lord’s supper belongs to visible churches, and is to be observed by these churches as churches.” But he does not prove it. The most he does do is to show that it is a social ordinance for Christians, and not for the world ; a point which nobody questions. Even Prof. Curtis not only begs the question altogether, but denies it again and again, and proves anything but the proposition he lays down to be established. His book, indeed, as a specimen of logic, is a perfect curiosity. As evidence of the correctness of the view he advances, he points to 1 Cor. xi. 21, 33. “ ‘ When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other,’ &c. ‘ Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.’ ” From the coming together of the Corinthians to eat the supper and from their being exhorted to tarry one for another, he concludes not that we are thereby taught *when we do* come together for the purpose of breaking bread that we should do it decently and appropriately, but “ that the Lord’s supper is committed to

the guardianship of visible churches !” He refers, too, in illustration and support of his position, to the Jewish passover ; and because it was eaten in families and by families, he is pleased to call it a family ordinance ; a mode of reasoning that would prove our national fasts to be church fasts, and our state thanksgivings, family thanksgivings, since they are observed by churches and by families. Every body knows, however, that the passover was not to commemorate some family deliverance, or mark some family relations less comprehensive than the family of Israel—the Hebrew nation. It was not expressive of relations subsisting between individuals as dwellers together under the same roof, or partakers of daily food at the same table, as you and he argue when you would have it thought that the Lord’s supper was instituted and enjoined for a purpose somewhat similar. Such an idea is unworthy of any reader of the Scriptures, much more of the senior Professor of a Theological Seminary. Mr. C. assumes, too, that the twelve disciples were a church, according to the common idea of a church as an organization ; and in addition to this, that because the Savior instituted the supper in their presence, without calling in his mother, or Martha, or her sister, or the seventy, or any others, it was as a particular-church ordinance that he instituted it ! This is a sample

of "the able argumentation" that runs through his whole book. With equal conclusiveness might I assume that the twelve were an association, or a presbytery, and infer that because the Savior instituted the supper in their presence alone, therefore it must be an associational or presbyterial ordinance, to be celebrated only by the clergy when convened in an association or a presbytery. Or granting that the eleven were "a church," I might with equal propriety argue that Christian baptism is a particular-church ordinance to be administered only to churches as churches, because it was instituted in the presence of these disciples alone, and its administration given in charge to them, and not to Mary, or Martha, or any other of the disciples.*

So instinctively unscriptural is this position of yours, that it would be an altogether uncalled for expenditure of words, to enter into any argument to show its falsity. Suffice it simply to refer to two facts. First, as there were in the apostles' days no such bodies as those now called churches, so there could not have been any symbol of fellowship between individuals as members of such churches—a fellowship, as Mr. Curtis tells us, over and above that fellowship which Christ-

* See Matt. xxviii. 16-19.

ians have with Christians, as members of the body of Christ. In the second place, we read, in Acts ii., that the disciples, after the day of Pentecost, continued with one accord upon the apostles' instructions *in the temple*, but that they broke bread *from house to house*, or at home. Instead of considering the celebration of the supper an act for churches as churches, they observed it as an institution for Christians as Christians, commemorating their Lord's death in the way and place to them most natural, meet, and convenient, while, at the same time, agreeable to the object of the ordinance. And thus it was regarded and observed not only in the apostolic age, but for ages after. As Neander remarks: "As to the celebration of the holy supper, *it continued* to be connected with the common meal, in which all, as members of one family, joined, *agreeably to its first institution.*" *

If you ask for an example of a particular-church ordinance, I would instance a church meeting, where one is entitled to act on ordinary matters relating to the church of which he is a member, cast his vote, &c.; a right to which no one who is not a member of that church, is entitled or feels entitled in consequence of his being a church

* Planting and Training, &c., p. 103.

member elsewhere. It is not an institution of Christ's, like baptism or the Lord's supper. Members of other churches can lay no claim to it, for the simple reason that they are not members of the body for whom it was instituted and designed. Not so the Lord's supper. This is an ordinance common to the professed members of his body. It is non-professors and professors that are walking disorderly in the scriptural sense of the phrase, who alone can be debarred from it on the ground that they are not members of the body for whom it was instituted: a remark which cannot be made respecting the business meetings of individual churches.

But if this position of yours be correct, it is all folly to talk about baptism as a term of communion, or of members of other churches as disorderly walkers. Restricted communion, on this ground, is not only an abandonment of the position taken by Dr. Howell, that repentance, faith, and baptism are the terms of approach to the Lord's table, "to which those who have observed these preliminaries cannot afterwards be debarred of access, but in consequence of a forfeiture of Christian character by immorality or heresy;" but it is also a professed abandonment of the position exposed in my last letter, that the supper is a denominational ordinance, and, as

such, cannot be celebrated with any out of the denomination. It first makes every celebration of the Lord's supper, not observed by a church as a church, an illegal act ; then makes membership in the particular church in which it is observed, the only and the necessary qualification for communion. So that if this is the rule that is to direct us in our administrations of the supper, the less that is said about anything else as a reason for practising restricted communion the better. I sometimes wonder how many more turns you will take in defence of your practice, before you will allow that it is a thing you adopted before you were aware of its true character, and in the magnanimity of Christian consistency abandon it, instead of trying to defend it with arguments so perfectly puerile and unworthy of yourself.

I have all along been supposing that you, and Mr. Curtis, and others, who contend that the supper is divinely appointed as a symbol of individual-church fellowship, do really regard and administer it thus. But the truth is, you do not. Your constant practice speaks another language. It says that you would have the communion to indicate that those who break bread together, are not necessarily members of the same church, but of the same denomination. If the Lord's supper

be indeed divinely instituted as a token that all who commune together upon any given occasion are members of the same visible church, it cannot, either truthfully or lawfully, be celebrated together by any who are not members of the same church. A minister cannot even break bread with a church over which he is not pastor and to which he does not belong. The members of an association cannot commune with the church with whom they meet to transact their business. In short, all communion must be done away except between members of the same visible church. This, however, is drawing the cords of restriction much tighter than you or others have ever done it, or, I trust, will ever be willing to do it. I rejoice that your practice does not exhibit quite so gross an abuse of this sacred ordinance. You hold that we have a right to invite members of other churches to commune with us, provided they be of the same faith and order. But in so doing, you practically deny the Lord's supper to be a token of individual-church fellowship.

Why, then, all this meaningless talk about the Lord's supper's being a *divinely appointed* symbol of such fellowship? It is but another cloak only half thrown over a deformed figure to screen from observation deformities which will not suffer themselves to be screened, and which are too prominent

to be hidden. It is a position opposed not only to your own sentiments and practice, but to truth and Scripture.

All that is necessary to a scriptural and proper reception of the memorials of the love and death of our Lord, is that we receive them from time to time, as his professed disciples, in faith, in remembrance of him, and in a manner becoming an act so sacred. As to the time, it may be the Sabbath or a week day; and as to the occasion, it may be the assembling together of a church, or the meeting of an association, or of a few Christian friends at a private house, or of any Christians worshipping together in any place, either with or without an ordained minister.

It would be well if Christians acted more on this apostolic plan, especially if churches, when without pastors, would continue steadfast in their observance of the Lord's supper. Not merely is there nothing in the injunction, "This do in remembrance of me," or in the Scriptures, or early history of the church, that tends in the least to favor the idea that the supper is for churches as churches; but there is nothing in them tending even to show the necessity of the presence of an ordained minister to preside and administer the emblems. In this I am happy to have the concurrence of so distinguished a restricted commu-

nionist as Andrew Fuller. "I see nothing objectionable," he says, "if, when a church is destitute of a pastor, the Lord's supper were administered by a deacon or aged brother. I know of no scriptural authority for confining it to ministers. Nay, I do not recollect any mention in the Scriptures of a minister being employed in it, unless we reckon our Lord one." Again, in giving the substance of a reply he made to a Baptist church in Edinburgh in 1805, respecting administering the Lord's supper without an ordained elder, he says, "I told them that I had long been of opinion that there was no scriptural authority for confining the administration of the Lord's supper to a minister. I had no doubt but that the primitive pastors did preside at the Lord's table, as well as in the reception and exclusion of members, and in short in all the proceedings of the church; and that where there was a pastor, it was proper that he should continue to do so. But that, when a pastor died or was removed, the church was not obliged to desist from commemorating the Lord's death, any more than from receiving or excluding members; and that it was as lawful for them to appoint a deacon or any senior member to preside in the one case as in the other. Finally, I told them that it was not the practice of our English churches; that they, many of them, would send for the pastors of other

churches to perform this office; and that I, for one, had often complied with such requests. *I could wish, however, that it were otherwise, and that every church, when destitute of a pastor, would attend to the Lord's supper among themselves.*"*

Before closing this letter, let me adduce, in illustration of my views, a couple of examples, from modern times, of what I consider apostolic communion; the one affording an instance of communing at home; the other, of communing after the Pauline manner when the disciples assembled together for the purpose.

The first you will find in the *Missionary Magazine* for February, 1852, page 114. Mr. Danforth of our Mission in Assam, writing from his station, Gowahatti, under date of November 26, 1851, after speaking of his attending the general meeting of the Mission at Sibsagor, says, "On our return we called on Mr. Bruce of Tezpoor, where we spent one day. In the evening some of the friends of the station *called upon us*, after which we had a short religious service and administered the Lord's supper. The communion was a refreshing season, and reminded us of the primitive Christians who frequently broke bread in the middle of the night;" and, he might have added, at their homes and among their Christian friends.

* Works, vol. iii. pp. 494, 496.

The other example occurred a short time before, at the close of the sessions of the Evangelical Alliance in London, August, 1851. "It had been proposed that the foreign brethren should invite the members of the Conference, as well as those who had been present at its sessions, to join them in partaking of the sacred elements, the pledges of the union of all true Christians in their divine Head. Accordingly they assembled, more than four hundred persons, of all nations, speaking different languages, and attached to distinct denominational connexions; but all united in their profession of a common Christianity, all engaged in the same labors for disseminating it, all serving under one celestial King, and all hoping for an admission into one heavenly world. . . . The scene reminded one strongly of the time when all kindreds shall unite with one voice in a common hymn of praise to their Savior, and when, instead of many tongues, there shall be one immortal language. After the conclusion of the ceremony addresses were made in their native languages by Mr. Fisch of Lyons, Dr. Kuntze of Berlin, and Baptist W. Noel of London; and when hymns had been again sung, the exercises were concluded by Dr. Baird. I have never witnessed a scene," says the writer of this account, "which showed more evidently the union of Christians, notwithstanding

their own peculiar tenets, and a more convincing answer to the calumnious accusations of adversaries who seek to find in these peculiarities evidences of dissension."*

Whenever Christians are assembled together thus, and can unite, as was done on either of these occasions, in commemorating their Lord's death, nothing can be plainer, it would seem, than that it is both lawful and meet for them to do so, whatever their particular-church connexions may be. To me there is something exceedingly Romish in the idea that the supper should be received at the hands of a church as a particular-church act. It bespeaks subjection to an enactment that is perishable after the manner of all human impositions. It robs the emblematic supper of that gospel simplicity and freedom from yokes peculiar to the New Testament dispensation, with which it was invested by the Savior at its institution.

But I have already dwelt too long on this point. Restricted communion, even if it were practised on this ground, could not be defended on it for a moment. As an ordinance for the household of faith, its participation can be a symbol of no fellowship less embracing than fellowship among

* N. Y. Journal of Commerce, Sept. 24, 1851.

individuals as members of that household; and so long as this consists of more than one congregation of Christians, or includes more than one denomination, it cannot be a symbol of either denominational or particular-church fellowship. Your plea for restriction, therefore, on the ground that communion is a symbol of individual-church fellowship, is as unfounded as that which proceeds upon the assumption that it is only "for the church in gospel order;" and both are equally contrary to truth and apostolic precedent.

In all sincerity, I am, as ever,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS.

Restricted communion an uncandid system—Places others in a false light, unchurching them and placing them on a level with unbelieving Jews, &c.—The true position of Pedobaptists illustrated—The fact not to be overlooked that all were agreed in the apostles' days as to what baptism was, not so now—Close communion clashes with the spirit of Christ—The sad shifts often made in consequence.—The practice schismatic—As a policy, false—Dr. Carson's testimony—A desecration of the Lord's supper—A modern innovation—Conclusion.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—I have now finished my examination of the several reasons you urge in defence of restricted communion. But, in addition to what I have already advanced, there are several facts which, in deciding upon the merits of this question, I deem worthy of no little consideration. These I will now lay before you, then conclude all I have to say for the present respecting your practice.

1. One of the first things that strikes an individual in looking at the system of restricted com-

munion, is its glaring want of candor and consistency. It is not what it professes to be. It restricts the supper from others professedly on the ground of their not being baptized. It asserts its readiness to admit to the Lord's table any who have been baptized and are leading irreproachable Christian lives. Yet it excludes many such, and betrays an utter insincerity of profession. When met with this fact, it changes its ground, takes another stand, and yet another, and says, communion is a symbol of particular-church fellowship, and therefore it is that others are excluded. But in so doing, it takes a stand equally false, the supper being never administered as a particular-church ordinance, but as a denominational observance. There is a want of candor on the part of its advocates, in not presenting their reasons for it in their true light and on their true bases, while they endeavor to shield themselves under subterfuges which have only the appearance of truth. A system that needs such a mode of defence is not of God. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all. And if we would walk in the light as he is in the light, we should not be close communionists.

2. It places others in a false position. There is no system of restricted communion that can be adopted without doing this. But it is emphati-

cally true of the system you pursue. It practically unchurches other denominations, and throws them among the unbelieving, non-professing world. You withhold the supper, then say, "Were unbaptized persons admitted in the apostles' days?" Supposing, for argument's sake, that they were not; what then? "Why," you say, "Pedobaptists ought not therefore to be admitted now." Is not this placing them on the same footing with the infidel Jews and idolatrous heathen of old? Unbaptized persons, if not allowed to come to the Lord's table then, were excluded not because they had not received the ordinance of baptism, but because they could not be regarded as fellow-disciples. If we proceed on apostolic principles, we must make use of apostolic reasons for the course we pursue. You profess to proceed on such principles; you profess, therefore, virtually to decline communion with others because you cannot regard them in any other light than as non-professors, or at least as faithless and disobedient professors.

And this you do, not by implication merely, but in the most unequivocal terms possible, calling them disobedient, disorderly, rebellious, disregards of the divine will, &c.; language appropriate only to such as are of the synagogue of Satan. Just look, for a moment, at the language of those whom you

point to as the defenders of your practice, with whom, you hesitate not to say, you agree perfectly in these assertions. "All Pedobaptists," says one, "are, however ignorantly, *openly disobedient* to a command of Christ."* Says another, "They *refuse subjection* to Christ and violate the laws of his house."† And another, "*The essential preliminaries being disregarded*, they cannot approach the table of the Lord."‡ "Their reception by us would, on our part, amount to a conspiracy with them in their *DESIGN to overthrow the law of God*, and render us, not Christian communicants, but *partners in their rebellion against the authority of the supreme Legislator!*"§ Evangelical and pious Pedobaptists disobedient and rebellious! Holy men like Owen and Baxter, Doddridge and Scott, Chalmers and McCheyne, Edwards and Davies, Whitefield and Tennent, Brainerd and Payson openly disobedient! rebels against the authority of God! refusing subjection to Christ, and designing to overthrow his laws! Would to God we had more such! or that all who make these modest charges, and consider themselves obedient above others, would only supply their place! But where does such language place "all Pedobap-

* Curtis on Com., p. 243. † Kinghorn, Terms of Com.

‡ Howell on Com., p. 178.

§ Ibid., p. 87.

tists?" Out of "the church which is *subject unto Christ*," among the godless whose sentence, as written out by the pen of inspiration, is, "Unto them that are contentious and *obey not* the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." It not only throws them out of the visible church, but out of the invisible. Can you be surprised to hear close communionists denounced as illiberal and bigoted when they make use of such language, and practise a course which, if consistently interpreted, necessarily leads to the unchurching and condemnation of every body but themselves?

I would ask, in all kindness and for truth's sake, if it would not be more just and in accordance with facts if, instead of calling our brethren rebels, and disregards of the divine will, you would be content with pronouncing them either mistaken or ignorant of that will, as they themselves regard us on account of our views of baptism. We would do well to have, at least, charity enough to suppose that they are Pedobaptists, not through disobedience and rebelliousness, but through the influence of education, and early formed impressions, and, it may be, other circumstances perfectly compatible with "the answer of a good conscience," a conscience quite as sensitive to the claims of truth and duty generally as ours. Pedobaptists are such,

just as we are Baptists—from education and principle. As such, they only do what in their love for their Master they honestly and sacredly believe to be in accordance with his will. There is no forcing their consciences any more than the consciences of Baptists. And to charge men that walk with God with open disobedience and a design to overthrow the law of God, instead of allowing, as truth and candor require, that they walk according to the light that is in them, is to place them in a grossly false position; and to refuse to commune with them because they will not sin against their souls, is to act more in accordance with the genius of Hildebrand than the spirit of Christ.

To set the matter in its true light, take an illustration. A father, residing in a distant country, sends home to his son a communication containing certain directions which he desires that son to comply with. The son loves his father and desires to carry out his will. But for some reason or other, not arguing a rebellious spirit at all, nor a design to overthrow his father's injunctions, nor even a want of love, he mistakes his father's mind, and fails of complying with the exact letter of his communication. The spirit of the requirement, however, is carried out. Can any one say, that son is disobedient? Has he not rendered obedi-

ence to the best of his knowledge? Or, is it true, that however much he may have been desirous of carrying out his father's will, he was still disobedient? Does obedience lie in the letter and not in the spirit? Every one sees that a charge of disobedience against such a son would be a most foul calumny. But his case is precisely similar to that of our brethren against whom these charges of disobedience, rebellion, and insubordination are preferred.

Overlooking entirely the influence of education and of contact with men and things around us in shaping our views, you argue as though you felt that before persons enter the church they must be perfect apostles, having sifted from error all the creeds of those with whom they have been brought up, so as to be, in every particular, upon scriptural ground. Else if they chance to enter the church as Pedobaptists, or indeed with any erroneous views, they are disobedient and rebellious. At this rate, the entire church would be a company of rebels and contemners of the divine will. But the great mass of Pedobaptists are such from education and contact with Pedobaptist principles; just as the great mass of Baptists are such from a corresponding cause. The latter are no more obedient than the former; nor are the former any more entitled to the name of rebels than the latter.

Had the former been educated as Baptists, the probability is, they would have been Baptists. Had the latter been educated as Pedobaptists, the probability is, they would have been Pedobaptists. If immersion upon a profession of faith were the only thing now known as baptism, we should all be Baptists; there is no question of it. But if, on the other hand, the only baptism known consisted in an aspersion, we should none of us be Baptists; but, alas! we should all be "disobedient," "refusing subjection to Christ," and consequently without a place in his kingdom! The fact is not to be overlooked, as you yourself admit, that in the apostles' days all were agreed as to what baptism was. The whole church knew of but one form and recognised but one. A refusal, therefore, to be immersed then would have been a plain case of disobedience. But now Christians are not agreed upon this point; and equally pious men may be found on both sides. Under existing circumstances what propriety, then, or truth of illustration is there in saying, "Suppose that in the days of the apostles any one had refused to be immersed, can we doubt what would have been his treatment? Who believes that such a candidate would have been admitted to the Lord's table?"* I ask you to say candidly whether pious

* See R. Fuller on Bapt. and Com., p. 196.

Pedobaptists are not, by such reasoning, placed upon the same footing with contumacious unbelievers? You see they are. Away, then, with these false charges of disobedience, rebellion, and disregard of the divine law! Away with them for ever! It makes me blush for Christianity to hear such charges uttered by Christians against their brethren in the Lord.

3. It is mortifying to Christian feelings. It is true, as you say, that a refusal to unite, even with those we most love, in an infraction of the law of God, is a most appropriate exercise of our best propensities. But no law of God is broken by communing with any consistent professing Christian. We have none of these feelings of mortification in declining to commune with non-professors, however much we may love them, or however earnestly we may desire to see them warrantably communing with us; because we are satisfied the Lord's supper is not for them. Nor is there anything repulsive or apparently uncharitable in declining to invite members of other churches and denominations to a place in our church meetings, and giving them the right of suffrage there. But why is this? Plainly because the one is an institution of the Lord's, for the Lord's church; while the other is ours, for our church. Feeling that "all the Lord's children

have an undoubted right to his table," as Dr. Howell expresses it, and that those whom we decline communing with as members of other denominations, are his children following, in their love for Christ, their honest convictions of duty as we do ours, is it strange that it is a mortification to us to decline communion with them? And does not this mortification of feeling evidently arise from a consciousness of the questionable and unchristlike course we are pursuing?

I might give a number of instances of the awkward situation in which restricted communionists sometimes feel themselves to be placed by this system, and of the puerile, wretched, and unbecoming shifts made in order to avoid the pain of declining to commune with Pedobaptists. But a single case must suffice. The Baptist church in a beautiful village in Northern New York a few summers since, was without a pastor. During that time a ministering Baptist brother came to the place and spent a few weeks on a visit. On the first Sabbath of one of those summer months, the Lord's supper was to be administered according to the usual practice of the church when not without a pastor. Arrangements were made accordingly, and the visiting brother who, by the way, at this very moment holds one of the most influential positions in the denomination, was to

officiate. In the mean time, however, a distinguished Congregational minister arrived with the view of spending a few days in the place with some of his friends who were members of the Baptist church. Courtesy in part, and in part a desire to hear the truth from his lips, induced our Baptist brother to request him to preach the Lord's day he was there. This happened to be the first Sabbath in the month. But what was to be done? Could they invite him to preach for them, and then attend to the administration of the supper after giving him time to leave the house? O no! this would be too mortifying! Besides, what necessity for it? He was to be there but this one Sabbath, and as it was an extraordinary case, the church being without a pastor, and it mattering very little whether or not the supper was celebrated at its regular time, to avoid all unpleasantness the communion, it was said, might as well as not be deferred till the next Lord's day. Accordingly the Lord's supper was, on this account, deferred till the ensuing Sabbath, when our Congregational brother would not be present either to break to them the bread of life, or, in return, be prevented by them from eating so much as a crumb from his Master's table. Instances like this, you know, are continually occurring among our churches in one form or another.

Now the question arises, If it is right, if it is in accordance with the spirit of Christ to refuse a Pedobaptist brother a place at the Lord's table, why such shifts as this to avoid the appearance of unwillingness to commune with one from whose lips the truth can be received with delight; a kind of shift at once degrading to the church that makes it and condemnatory of the system under which any one feels necessitated to do it? If the practice is right, there certainly is nothing to be ashamed of in an honest, straightforward, fearless, and consistent carrying of it out. But does not this feeling of mortification in being compelled to decline to commune with men eminent in the church, and distinguished for their piety and usefulness, instinctively tell us there is something wrong somewhere? The very fact that close communion is antagonistic to the spirit of Christ and the promptings of brotherly love, and shrinks from being brought into contact with them, is, in itself, an incontrovertible proof of its unhallowed nature; for the requirements of Christ are only an embodiment of his spirit, and a proper carrying out of those can never conflict with this.

4. The practice is also schismatic in its influence. It recognises a wall of separation between the members of the family of God where, of all places, such a separation is most inconsistent with the one-

ness of the Christian brotherhood. As the supper is designed for all acknowledged fellow-disciples, the non-communicating with any such indicates, if there is anything in the symbolic import of the ordinance, that between the communicants and those from whom the supper is restricted, there is a want of fellowship as members of the body of Christ. It is true, this may not be the intention of any who practise restricted communion; but so long as the supper is considered, as it was intended to be, an ordinance for Christ's disciples irrespective of their denominational or particular-church connexions, it is impossible for such an impression not to be made upon those who know nothing of the false views which may be taken of the ordinance by such as administer it as a denominational institution. The consequence is, this apparent non-fellowship and exclusiveness creates distance of feeling, repugnance, and disgust. Nor ought any one to expect it to be otherwise; for no one has a right to expect the correct views of others to be accommodated to his own unscriptural and false ideas of things. In its practical tendency, therefore, restricted communion is obviously schismatic, which is one of the surest evidences of its not being in accordance with the mind of Christ. Free communion, on the contrary, leads Christians to a deeper conscious-

ness of the fact that, however much they may differ in name, they are still members of one common family. While the one system repels, the other tends to soften down denominational prejudices, to unite Christians in closer bonds, and to prepare them for seeing each other and the truth through a medium that does not distort or impart a false coloring.

5. And as it is schismatic, so, as a policy, it is false. There can be no question that the growth and influence of the Baptist denomination, great as they are, would be vastly increased were it not for this practice. There are multitudes of intelligent, influential, and devoted Christians, the land over, who are really Baptists, but who have no sympathy for restricted communion, and on this account will not connect themselves with Baptist churches. I do not blame them. Far from it; for I believe it better to seek a home among those who may differ from us on the subject of baptism but who exercise a Christian largeness of soul and a gospel charity toward others, than among those who may agree with us upon this subject while in their administrations of the Lord's supper they trample upon the unmistakable teachings of Scripture, and the hallowed promptings of the spirit of Christ. It is perfectly ridiculous to see any one attempting to show that "a Pedobaptist church is

no home for a Baptist," when a close-communication church, *as such*, ought to be a home for no CHRISTIAN, and when, as the only alternative (where there are no open-communication churches), Baptists must seek homes among churches of other denominations. But what I wanted to call your attention to, is the fact, that in consequence of the exclusive and belittling character of this system, a large amount of piety, influence, and means which properly belongs to the denomination, is turned off into other channels. So that if the Baptist denomination is less numerous than it might be, if its influence, both at home and abroad, is not what it should be, Baptists have nothing to blame for this more than their own dwarfing, antichristian, and odious system of denominational communion—a system that decapitates all non-conformists, as unwarranted as the papal restrictions of the use of God's Word, and as intolerant as the spirit that drove Roger Williams, as a dangerous man, from his home. It goes to work to advance the truth in the very way best calculated to blind men to it, and to keep them from examining it. It runs directly counter to the voice of reason and the genius of Christianity, which teach that if we would win from error, we are not to expect to succeed by the use of harsh, coercive, and repulsive means, but by those that are mild, conciliatory,

and attractive. As the late Dr. Carson, and a Baptist of no mean name, remarks, "Ignorance of any divine institution is an evil, and must be felt as such by a church as far as it exists in any of its body. But the question is, What is *God's* way of getting rid of the evil? We believe," he says, "that it is by forbearance, affectionate instruction, and prayer. Many on the contrary have thought that the most effectual way to make a disciple receive an ordinance of Jesus, is to refuse him fellowship till he has complied. Notwithstanding all we have heard in favor of this plan, we still deem it the wisdom of man. Accordingly we have found that God has made foolish this wisdom. Long has it been tried without success; and of late, in some parts of Ireland it has been carried so far that *some individuals can scarcely find a second to unite with them in constant fellowship*. By permitting Satan to work them up to this frenzy, it appears to us that God has fixed his seal of disapprobation on the sentiment in its lowest degree, and would lead sober-minded Christians, who have been led away by its plausibility, to examine more attentively the ground of their opinion."*

What candid and reflecting mind does not feel

* Moore's Life of Carson, pp. 86, 87.

that there is a truthfulness in these words which speaks for itself and cannot be gainsayed? The gospel, by its loveliness and attractiveness, *draws* men into obedience; but this system would *drive* them into it. Overlooking the great principles in which the power of the gospel lies, and going contrary to them, it vainly seeks to bring men to a knowledge of the truth by setting it in a repulsive and odious light. Such a system, be it from what source it may, cannot be of God.

6. But one of the greatest objections I have to the practice, is that it desecrates the Lord's supper, using it as it does for purposes altogether unlawful. The immediate object of the ordinance is to bring before our minds, by sensible tokens, the sufferings and death of our crucified Lord; for as often as we partake of the sacramental loaf and cup we make an exhibition of him as crucified and dying; or, as the apostle concisely expresses it, we show his death. A correct administration of the ordinance will, therefore, always awaken penitence, humility, and love for him who bore our sins in his body on the tree, as well as unite us more closely to those with whom we commune as fellow-disciples engaged with us in the same solemn and melting memorial act. The practice of restricted communion, however, awakes, not unfrequently, feelings of mortification and shame

that need to be repented of, and makes those who are truly united to Christ feel as though there was little or no oneness of heart between them. The administering of the supper in such a way as necessarily to awaken feelings so little akin to those designed to be awakened is truly humiliating. It deprives it of those lovely and exalting features which it possesses as an ordinance of Christ, and makes it an instrument for evil. In its design the supper is for believers as members of the Christian body, not as members of a particular denomination. Even if, under circumstances that are perfectly compatible with love for Christ, there should be found any who are without baptism, but who, notwithstanding this, are acknowledged as members of Christian churches, there can be no question that the supper is for them as truly as for any other disciples. To confine it, under these circumstances, even to the baptized is a course unjustified by all the teachings of Christianity. But when its restriction is carried further than this, and the communion is made a denominational thing, as it really is, its administration is more than unjustifiable; it calls for reprehension from every Christian as a course that degrades the ordinance and dishonors him who instituted it. We are at liberty to adopt no terms of communion not established by the Savior. This you

admit. And yet, contrary to the precedent left us by the Savior himself, you not only insist upon an immersional profession of discipleship where discipleship has already been honestly and fully entered upon under other circumstances, but you demand of the communicant a place in some restricted-communion church before he and you can commemorate together the death of your ascended Lord. If this is not the offspring of party spirit it would be hard to say what is. It is a desecration of the Lord's supper, which finds no parallel in the history of Christian churches; a tampering with a divine institution of which the world itself is not guilty.

7. Besides all this, restricted communion is a modern innovation, something altogether unknown till within the last three centuries. I am aware it is sometimes said, that good John Bunyan was the father of the opposite practice. But they who say this only point us to the time when restricted communion was first introduced, and, as it extended, met with opposition from those who were imbued with the spirit of Christ. For it was in Bunyan's time that Baptists first refused to commune with others; and then the practice originated in a spirit of retaliation and party exclusiveness. It evidently did not exist in the apostles' days. There were no restrictions of the supper

then practised toward any known and acknowledged Christian brother, as is daily done now. And during the whole of the first two centuries of the Christian era such a thing was utterly unknown. If we come down to a later day and suppose infant-baptism to have been introduced toward the end of the second or the beginning of the third century, which corresponds to the time at which it is first distinctly noticed; as Robert Hall very justly remarks, we cannot suppose a shorter space than two centuries was requisite to procure it that complete establishment which it possessed in the time of St. Austin. During that long interval there must have been Baptists and Pedobaptists contemporary with each other. What became of that portion of the ancient church which refused to adopt the baptism of infants? Did they separate from their brethren in order to form distinct and exclusive societies? Of this not the faintest trace or vestige is to be found in ecclesiastical history; and the supposition is completely confuted by the concurrent testimony of ancient writers to the universal incorporation of orthodox Christians into one grand community. Not the shadow of evidence can be produced to prove the existence, during that long tract of time, of a single society of which adult baptism was the distinguishing characteristic.

Tertullian, it is acknowledged, is the first who distinctly and unequivocally adverts to the baptism of infants; and as he expresses his disapprobation of it at the same time, without the remotest intimation of the propriety of making it the ground of separation, he must be allowed to form one instance of the practice of mixed communion; and unless we are disposed to assert that infant-baptism at once supplanted the original ordinance, multitudes must have been in precisely the same situation. Among the Waldenses, for instance, at a later day, we find that there were many who adhered to Baptist principles, and were stigmatized and reproached by their Romish persecutors as Anabaptists; while it appears also, on the other hand, that there were not wanting some among them who practised the baptism of infants. No indication, however, is discoverable of any rupture in external communion among them on this account. Indeed, we read of the separate existence of no Baptist churches anywhere upon the continent during the whole period of the middle ages, and until the time of the Reformation. The necessary inference, therefore, is, either that there were during that interval no Baptists there, or rather that they were incorporated in societies together with Pedobaptists.*

* See R. Hall, Works, vol. i., pp. 481-483.

And if we pass from the continent to England, and suppose the existence of Baptist sentiments there to date no farther back than the days of Wickliffe, we find that, for at least two centuries and a half, close communion was unknown there. But if, as some suppose, Baptists existed in England as far back as the beginning of the seventh or even of the twelfth century; then so much longer was mixed communion practised before the modern innovation began; for during the period prior to Wickliffe, if there were any Baptists in England they were not known as such by distinct organizations. But whatever may be the truth respecting the existence of Baptist sentiments in England before A. D. 1370, it is certain that their prevalence can be distinctly dated from that time; and yet they found no embodiment in Baptist churches as such, till several years after the beginning of the seventeenth century. As on the continent, so here, Baptists were scattered throughout the country maintaining their discriminating sentiments, yet mingling with their Pedobaptist brethren in both church and sacramental communion. It was not till the reign of Charles I. that they began to form a distinct body or denomination contending for the divine authority of baptism and the necessity of it as a term of communion. Crosby, in his history of the English

Baptists, says that they began to form themselves into separate societies in 1633, five years after the birth of John Bunyan, and hardly three years before the banishment of Roger Williams in this country. Up to that time they had been intermixed in churches with other nonconformists, though during nearly the whole of the preceding reign they had contended more or less strenuously for their principles as Baptists. Eleven years after this, the whole number of Baptist churches in England was fifty four, seven of which were in London; and when John Bunyan became pastor of the church at Bedford the number was still greater. Most of these churches, in consequence of the opposition which they received from others, refused to commune with them altogether. To some however, among whom were John Humphrey and John Bunyan, this course appeared uncalled for and unchristian, and they contended for the continuance of that free intercourse at the Lord's table which had been steadily maintained between Baptists and Christians of other persuasions from the first. Restricted communion, therefore, appears evidently as a modern innovation. It was a thing only of recent date when Humphrey, in 1653, wrote his "Free Admission to the Sacrament," and Bunyan, some ten years after, his "Differences about Water Baptism no

Bar to Communion." And now it has scarcely the sanction of two hundred years, and that from only a portion of the denomination at any time.

Why then, since it is a thing that was unknown to the apostles and unheard of in the Christian church for sixteen hundred years, should we now seek to uphold it with all its inconsistencies and improprieties? The answer can be found only in the fact that we do not recognise, as we should, the oneness which exists between us and those of other denominations as members of the great Christian brotherhood. This oneness is not a felt reality. I make no question that this is the real difficulty at the bottom of this whole system. Do away with this, and we shall have little if any fellow-feeling for a course that repels them from us as disobedient and rebellious. It is gratifying, however, to know, as I do know, that there are multitudes belonging to our churches who would gladly see the practice abolished, and would readily abjure it, but for the want of ministerial co-operation and sanction, the fear of being considered fickle-minded, and the dread of excommunication and unkind treatment, in some cases, from those they love. We all know what influence these things have upon minds which have not, by encountering them, learned to despise them and to rise above them. But we have every reason to

believe that the day is at hand when the system of restricted communion must be abolished, if not entirely, at least to a very great extent. Present indications show that the strong tide of feeling which for years past has been increasing against it, cannot much longer be successfully kept back. Its inconsistencies and glaring antichristian character, are becoming daily more and more felt. And when the mind of the denomination is fairly enlightened to *see* them, it must come to the conclusion that the system is not only uncalled for, but unscriptural and unworthy of a follower of Christ. This is all we need. When this is the case the enlightened mind of the masses can no longer submit to the dictation of the few in favor of error. The absurdity of the practice and its inconsistency with itself and with the mind of Christ will be too apparent to leave any honest and enlightened mind willing to be identified with it.

And now, my friend, I must conclude. I cannot doubt that you have hitherto followed the system with a conscience void of offence toward both God and man, not having seen its inconsistencies and unwarrantable character. But can you any longer? In view of the arguments which I have advanced, to say nothing of others, do you not feel that your position is a weak one? Would you not be ashamed to have your character as a rea-

soner judged of by your pleadings in favor of restricted communion, and your character as a Christian of catholic views by your practice in this matter? I know you would. You would blush to find your arguments in defence of other questions as weak and irrelevant as those you offer in support of this practice. Why not, then, abandon it? "If the system be not warranted by the will of Christ, it *should be* at once and forever abandoned."* If our object is the attainment of truth and of a firm and peaceful foothold thereon, we must be ready to admit our errors and renounce them when we see them. As Noah and his family, by committing themselves in the ark to the waters, were lifted above the ruins and corruptions of the old world and safely landed on Ararat; so we, by committing ourselves upon the waters of God's truth, shall be borne upward and away from error, and safely conveyed to a position of firmness and peace. It is no evidence of consistency to continue in error. To be in error is the common lot of mankind. To acknowledge and abandon it is but the part of wisdom, honesty, and true magnanimity. It may be humiliating to our pride; but to be enslaved by pride and kept from breathing the free and bracing atmosphere of

* Taylor's Defence of Restricted Com.

truth, this—this is most degrading to the soul. They alone are the truly free and happy, who, disdaining the influences of this debasing despot, and enamored with the truth, follow cheerfully wherever she leads the way, knowing that let her lead where and whither she may, it will always be away from error and toward God.

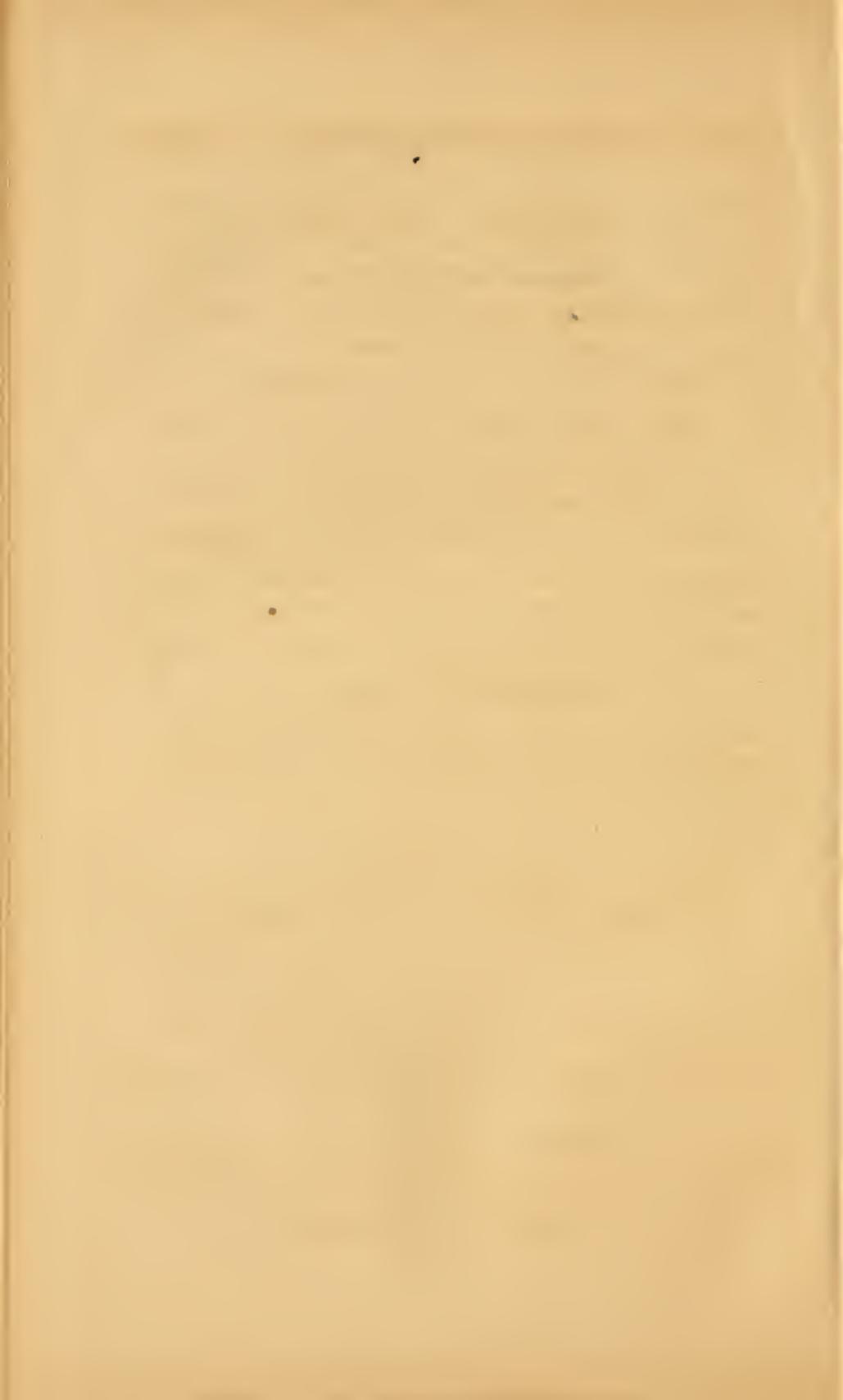
It is a most fearful responsibility that any one assumes who imposes false and unscriptural terms of communion and practically forbids from observing the ordinance those to whom Christ himself says, "This do, in remembrance of me." In view of what I have presented, and as much more perhaps which I might have presented, I cannot, I dare not so administer the supper as virtually to exclude any who are visibly his disciples and who may be present with us at the time of commemorating his death. It matters not to me how they have made their profession of Christianity if I am satisfied of their Christian character. Common sense teaches me that if, as in the apostles' days, there were but one way of administering baptism known among us, they would be as much Baptists as you or I; and that therefore it is perfectly ridiculous to decline communing with them if they should happen not to be immersed. Nor do I care where they hold their church relations. Let them be creditable members of the Christian

fraternity, and neither you nor I have any right to require of them other terms of approach to the Lord's table. If this is false ground, I ask you, for the truth's sake and for our Master's sake, to prove it. I ask not for sophistry, equivocations, puerilities, unscriptural appeals, and party representations, but for argument that will carry weight with it to the mind of a thinking, common-sense Christian man desirous of seeing the truth and abiding by it. Until this is afforded me, I must not only claim the liberty of practising free communion myself, but insist upon it as the duty of others, for a rejection of which, however, I judge no man, but simply point to him whose revealed will seems to say so plainly concerning restricted communion, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

As ever, in all sincerity,

Yours, &c.

THE END.



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