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A
REPLY,

TO THE

REV. JOSEPH KINGHORN:

BEING

A FURTHER VINDICATION OF THE PRACTICE

OF

FREE COMMUNION.

By ROBERT HALL, M. A.

“Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God.”—*Acts xi. 17.*

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PREFACE.

AFTER announcing an intention of replying to Mr. Kinghorn, the Public seem entitled to some account of the causes which have delayed its execution so long. Various conjectures have probably arisen on the subject. By many, no doubt, it has been suspected that the delay was occasioned by a perception of the difficulty of constructing an answer which would be deemed satisfactory, and that the engagement to reply was made, without anticipating so formidable an opposition. That the Author was, to a certain extent, deterred by a feeling of difficulty, it is impossible to deny; but the reader is probably not aware in what the difficulty lay. It had no relation to the argumen-

tative force of Mr. Kinghorn's production, in whatever degree it may be supposed to possess that attribute; but solely to the manner in which he has chosen to conduct the debate. The perpetual recurrence of the same matter, the paucity of distinct and intelligible topics of argument, together with an obvious want of coherence, and of dependance of one part on another, give to the whole the air of a series of skirmishing and desultory attacks, rather than of regular combat, rendering it difficult to impart that order and continuity to a reply, in the absence of which, argumentative discussions are insufferably tedious. With the eagerness of a professed pleader, he has availed himself of every topic which could afford the slightest colour of support to his cause, with little scrupulosity apparently, respecting the soundness of the principles from which he argues. In a word, he has conducted his share of the warfare in a manner, which renders him more formidable from the irregularity and quickness of his movements, than from the steady pressure of his columns.

Though he has advanced some new, and as they appear to me, paradoxical positions, the space which they occupy is so small, compared to that which he has allotted to arguments and objections distinctly noticed and replied to in my former treatise, that it seemed almost impracticable to answer the greater part of the work, without a frequent recurrence to what had been already advanced. But a writer is never more certain of disgusting, than when he is the echo of himself.

On these accounts, had my private conviction dictated the course which it seemed proper to pursue, the following work, instead of swelling to its present bulk, would have been limited to some short strictures on those parts of his reply in which my respectable opponent has quitted the track of his predecessors. But to this there were serious objections. In the estimation of multitudes, little qualified to appreciate the weight of an argument, to be brief and to be superficial are one and the same thing; no publication is admitted to be

solidly answered, except the reply bears a certain proportion to it in size and extent; and whatever is not distinctly noticed and discussed, however irrelevant, or however trivial, is instantly proclaimed unanswerable. These considerations determined me rather to hazard the imputation of tediousness, than to attempt a very concise reply, which however cogent, would be construed by many into a tacit acknowledgment of my incapacity to combat the reasoning of my opponent. Having, therefore, only a choice of evils, and necessitated either to make a large demand on the patience of the reader, or to incur the suspicion of evading what could not be successfully encountered, I preferred the former; endeavouring at the same time to shun, as much as possible, a tiresome repetition of the same topics; with what success, the Public will determine.

The preceding remarks will explain one cause of delay; to which may be added, a strong disinclination to controversy, the want of a

habit of composition, repeated attacks of illness at one period, and various avocations and engagements at another, too unimportant to be obtruded on the attention of the reader.

It may also be remarked, in extenuation of the charge of procrastination, that the subject is just as interesting and important as when the controversy commenced. The evil in which it originates is not local, nor of an ephemeral or transitory nature: it will continue to subsist, there is reason to fear, after the present generation is consigned to the dust; and even the delay may not be altogether without its advantages. Both parties will have had leisure to reflect, the reasoning on each side of the question time to settle, and to find its level in the public mind, undisturbed by that disposition extravagantly to depreciate and to extol respectively, the performances it has given rise to, which almost invariably distinguishes the outset of a controversy. Whatever appears in the present stage, it is but justice to consider as the result of more matured obser-

vation and inquiry, compensating in pertinence and solidity, what it may want in vivacity and ardor.

It is remarkable that without any previous knowledge or concert, a discussion on the subject of communion commenced nearly at the same time on both sides the Atlantic; and the celebrated Dr. Mason, of New York, justly regarded as one of the brightest ornaments of the Western hemisphere, was exerting the energies of his most powerful mind, in establishing the fundamental position of the treatise *On Terms of Communion*, almost at the very moment that treatise appeared. A coincidence so rare, a movement so simultaneous, yet so unpremeditated, we cannot but look upon as a token for good, as an indication of the approach of that period, so ardently desired by every enlightened Christian, when genuine believers will again be of "one heart and of one mind." Let us hope that America, the land of freedom, where our pious ancestors found an asylum from the oppression of into-

lerance, will exert, under the auspices of such men as Dr. Mason, a powerful reaction on the parent state, and aid her emancipation from the relics of that pestilential evil, still cherished and retained in too many British churches.

Independent of other considerations, that invaluable person possesses one obvious advantage over the Author of the following performance. Disengaged from the spurious refinements and perplexing subtleties which arise from the subject of baptism, by which our opponents attempt to evade the application of his general principle, his movements are in consequence more free and unfettered, and his force operates in a more simple direction than is compatible with the state of the question as it respects the views of the Baptist denomination. He fearlessly spreads his sails to the winds, and triumphs on the elements which is congenial to the amplitude and grandeur of his mind. Mine is a coasting voyage, in which the Author feels himself necessitated to creep along the shore, and to

comply with all its irregularities, in the midst of flats and shoals, and exposed to perpetual annoyance from the innumerable small craft which infest these shallow waters. The effect of the different situations in which we are placed, is to give a luminous simplicity to his mode of conducting the argument, which forms a striking contrast not only to the tedious logomachies which I have been compelled to encounter,^a but the manner in which I have attempted to confute them. It belongs to a Pascal, and perhaps to a few others of the same order of genius, to invest the severest logics with the charms of the most beautiful composition, and to render the most profound argumentation as entertaining as a romance. The Author makes no such pretension: having confined his endeavours to an attempt to establish his assertions by sufficient proof, and to expose the sophistry

^a Though Dr. Mason was not led by the course of his argument to treat of the question of *mixed communion* in the usual import of that phrase, his general principle not only necessarily infers it, but I have the satisfaction of learning from his own lips his entire approbation of the doctrine advanced in *Terms of Communion*.

of his opponent, he must be allowed to remind his readers that no quality will be found more necessary than patience. Truth, as far as he knows himself, is his sole object; and if they are actuated by the same disposition, though they will find little to amuse, it is possible they may meet with something to instruct them.

It is surprising how little attention an enquiry into the principles which ought to regulate our intercourse with other denominations, (a question of considerable moment in whatever light it be viewed,) has excited. Though it has given birth to a few publications at very distant intervals, none, as far as my information extends, have produced any deep impression, or any extensive and permanent effects. On this subject a spirit of slumber seems to have oppressed our faculties, from which we have hardly ever completely awoken. From the appearance of Mr. Bunyan's treatise, entitled *Water Baptism no Bar to Communion*, to the publication of

the celebrated Mr. Robinson, a whole century elapsed, with few or no efforts to check the progress of the prevailing system, which had gained so firm a footing previous to Mr. Booth's writing, that he felt no scruple in entitling his defence of that practice, *An Apology for the Baptists*. The majority appear to have carried it with so high a hand, that the few churches who ventured to depart from the established usage were very equivocally acknowledged to belong to the general body, and seem to have been content to purchase peace, at the price of silence and submission. The most virulent reproaches were cast upon the admirable Bunyan, during his own time, for presuming to break the yoke; and whoever impartially examines the spirit of Mr. Booth's Apology, will perceive that its venerable Author regards him, together with his coadjutors and successors, much in the light of rebels and insurgents, or to use the mildest terms, as contumacious despisers of legitimate authority. Mr. Kinghorn in the same spirit, evinces an eagerness, at every turn, to dis-

pute our title to be considered as complete Baptists. In short, whether it is to be ascribed to intimidation, or to some other cause, the fact is notorious, that the zeal evinced on the side of free communion, has hitherto borne no proportion to that which impels the advocates of the opposite system, whose treatment of their opponents, in most instances, bears no very remote resemblance to that which moderate Churchmen are accustomed to receive at the hands of their High Church brethren.

Another cause has probably co-operated towards the production of the same result. Some whose character commands the deepest respect, are known to deprecate the agitation of the present controversy from an apprehension of the injury the denomination may sustain, by the exposure of its intestine dissensions. For my own part, I am at a loss to conceive the grounds on which such a policy can be justified. Could the fact that we are at variance among ourselves on the subject under discussion, be concealed, something might be urged in favor

of the prudence of such a measure, nothing certainly for its magnanimity. But since that is impossible, and whoever is acquainted with the state of the denomination, is aware of the diversity which subsists in the constitution of our churches in this particular, the true state of the question is, whether that article of the Apostles Creed which asserts *the communion of saints*, is to be merged in an exclusive zeal for baptism, and its systematic violation, in our judgment at least, to remain unnoticed and unchecked, in deference to party feelings and interests. We are at a loss to conceive how the association of truth with error, is capable of benefiting the former; or how it can be eventually injured by an attempt (conducted in a christian spirit) to dissolve an alliance, which resembles the junction of the living with the dead. While the preservation of peace is dear to us, the interests of truth are still more so; and we would fix our eyes on the order in which the attributes of that celestial wisdom are enumerated, which is "*first pure, then peaceable.*"

Before closing this preface, I must be allowed to advert to a circumstance intimately connected with the eventual success of the cause in which I am embarked. It is the general practice of our churches, whatever may be the sentiments of the majority, to continue the practice of strict communion, in almost every instance, where the opposite system is incapable of being introduced with a perfect unanimity; in consequence of which, it frequently happens that the constitution of the church continues to sanction strict communion, while the sentiments of a vast majority of its members are decidedly in favor of a contrary system; and in opposition to the usage which obtains on other occasions, the private sentiments of the few, are made to regulate and control the conduct of the many. Where, it may be asked, is the propriety, where the justice of such a mode of proceeding? Whatever respect may be due to the conscientious though erroneous scruples of an upright mind, it is not easy to perceive why these should be permitted to prescribe to the better judg-

ment of those whom *we* must necessarily consider as more enlightened.

As the majority, convinced as they are supposed to be, of the right of all genuine Christians to communion, must necessarily regard the dissentients as being in error, it deserves to be considered in what manner error ought to be treated. Ought it to be the object of toleration, or should it be invested with dominion? Surely all it can reasonably claim, is the former; but when in deference to it, the far greater part of a society refrain from acting agreeably to their avowed principles, and consent to withhold from another class of their fellow Christians, what they consider as their undoubted right, they cannot be said merely to tolerate the error in question: no, they in reality place it on the throne—they prostrate themselves before it. Yet, strange as it may appear, such is at present the conduct of Baptist societies. While there remains the smallest scantling of members averse to open communion, the doors, in compliance with their

scruples, continue shut, and Pædobaptist candidates, however excellent, or however numerous, are excluded.

Thus the intolerance of one class of Christians is not only indulged, but pampered and caressed, while the religious profession of another is treated as a nullity. The incongruity of this mode of proceeding is also extremely obvious in another view. The admission of members in our societies, it is well known, is determined by a majority of suffrages, where the minority is expected, and that most reasonably, quietly to acquiesce in the decision of the majority. But in the case under present consideration, where strict communion is practised in a church, the majority of whose members are of a contrary persuasion, the eligibility, not of an individual, but of a whole class of individuals, to an indefinite extent, is virtually determined by the judgment of the smaller, in opposition to the larger party.

The injustice of such an arrangement will

perhaps be admitted; but how, it will be asked, can it be remedied? Would it be proper to exclude such as feel it impossible, with a good conscience, to commune with Pædobaptists, in order to make room for the latter? Nothing is more remote from our intention. Without inflicting the slightest wound on those amiable and exemplary persons who scruple the lawfulness of that measure, the remedy appears equally simple and obvious.

Whenever there is a decided majority in a church, whose views are in unison with those which we are attempting to recommend, let them throw down the barriers, and admit pious Pædobaptists without hesitation; and let those whose principles deter them from joining in such a communion, receive the Lord's Supper apart, retaining at the same time, all their rights and privileges unimpaired. By this simple expedient, the views of all the parties will be met: the majority will exert their prerogative, and act consistently with their avowed principles: the Pædobaptists will ob-

tain their rights; and the abettors of strict communion will enjoy that state of separation and seclusion which they covet. By this means a silent revolution may be effected in our churches, unstained by a particle of violence, or of injustice. But while the present plan is pursued, while we are waiting for the last sands of intolerance to run out, the domination of error and injustice may be prolonged to an interminable period, since of all creatures, bigotry is the most tenacious of life.

Sudden and violent reformations are not only seldom lasting, but the mischief which results, and the disgust they excite, often produce a reaction, which confirms and perpetuates the evil, they attempt to eradicate. For this reason, great prudence and moderation are requisite in every effort to meliorate the state of public bodies. He who aspires to remove their prejudices, must treat them with tenderness and respect, urging them to no step, for which they are not fully prepared, by a mature and widely extended conviction of its propriety :

for no innovations, however desirable in themselves, will be permanently beneficial, the stability and perpetuity of which is not guaranteed by the previous illumination of those by whom they are adopted.

Having devoted more time and attention to the present controversy already, than many are disposed to think it entitled to, it is by no means my intention to renew it, conceiving it a contemptible ambition to determine to have the last word, which is nothing less than to aspire at a pre-eminence in pertinacity. Resting with perfect confidence on the truth, and consequently on the ultimate triumph of the principles, which I have attempted to defend, the detection of incidental mistakes, and the exposure of minor errors, will not disturb my repose, however justly they may awaken a feeling of regret, that the powers of the advocate were not more commensurate with the merits of the cause.

If the author has been, on any occasion,

betrayed, in the ardor of debate, into language which the reader may deem disrespectful to his opponent, it will give him real concern. He knows none whose character entitles him to higher esteem; nor is he insensible to the value of those expressions of personal regard with which Mr. Kinghorn has honored him, nor of that general mildness and urbanity, which is at once the character of his mind, and of his performance. Aware of the tendency of controversy to alienate the parties from each other, who engage in it, it is matter of regret on that account, and on that only, that it was my lot to meet with an antagonist in Mr. Kinghorn. In every other respect, it is a fortunate circumstance for the cause of truth: for while his temper affords a security from that virulence, and those personalities, which are the opprobrium of theological debate, his talents ensure his doing justice to his cause, perhaps beyond any other person of the same persuasion. A very different performance in many respects was anticipated, it is true; nor could the extraordinary assertions, not to say adventurous

paradoxes he has hazarded, fail to excite surprise ; although his character exempts him from the suspicion of that arrogance and conceit, in which they usually originate. They are rather to be ascribed to a dissatisfaction (which he dares not pretend to conceal) with former Apologists ; and a determination, if possible, to compass the same object by a different route. The intelligent reader will probably be of opinion, that he has attempted to give an air of originality to what was not susceptible of it ; and that aiming to enrich and support a most meagre and barren thesis, by new arguments, he is reduced to the same necessity as the Israelites, of “ making bricks without straw.”

Having already made the porch too large for the building, one additional remark only is submitted to the attention of the reader, previous to his entrance on the following discussion. The little success which has attended our exhibition of the doctrine of baptism, continued now for many generations, deserves the serious consideration of every

intelligent Baptist. With all our efforts, with all the advantage of overwhelming evidence (as appears to me) in favor of our sentiments, the prospect of their reception, (to say nothing of established churches, where there are peculiar impediments to be encountered), the prospect of their reception by dissenting communities, is as distant as ever: and it may be doubted whether, since the recent revival of religion, our progress is in a fair proportion to that of other denominations. It may be possible to assign the second causes of this remarkable event; but as second causes are always subservient to the intentions of the first, it deserves our serious consideration, whether we are not laboring under the sensible frown of the great Head of the Church; and "is there not a cause?" A visible inferiority to other Christians in zeal and piety will scarcely be imputed; nor have we been left destitute of that competent measure of learning and talent, requisite to the support of our doctrines. The cause of our failure then is not to be looked for in that quarter.

But though we have not “drank with the drunken,” if we have unwittingly “beaten our fellow servants,” by assuming a dominion over their conscience; if we have severed ourselves from the members of Christ, and under pretence of preserving the purity of Christian ordinances, violated the Christian spirit; if we have betrayed a lamentable want of that “love which is the fulfilling of the law,” by denying a place in our churches to those who belong to the “church of the first-born,” and straitening their avenue, till it has become narrower than the way to Heaven; we may easily account for all that has followed, and have more occasion to be surprised at the compassionate Redeemer’s bearing with our infirmities, than at his not bestowing a signal blessing on our labors.



PART I.

The Fundamental Position; or, the supposed necessary Connection between the two positive Institutes of Christianity examined.

CHAP. I.

REMARKS ON MR. KINGHORN'S STATEMENT OF THE CONTROVERSY.

PERFECTLY concurring in opinion with Mr. Kinghorn that it is of importance that the point in debate be fairly stated, a few remarks designed to shew in what respects his statement is inaccurate, or defective, will not be deemed irrelevant. He justly observes that the question, and the only question, is whether those who are *acknowledged to be unbaptised ought to come to the Lord's table*. After stating the sentiments of the Pædobaptists, he proceeds to

observe that the "Baptists act on a different plan; they think that baptism ought to be administered to those only who profess repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that it should be administered to them on such profession by immersion. And then, and not before, they consider such persons properly qualified, according to the New Testament, for the reception of the Lord's supper." The last position Mr. Kinghorn is aware is not maintained by the Baptists as such, but by part of them only: it may be doubted whether it be the sentiment of the majority. Why then identify the advocates of strict communion with the body, as though the abettors of a contrary practice were too inconsiderable to be mentioned, or were not entitled to be considered as Baptists?

It is but just however to remark, that this disposition to enlarge the number of his partizans, is not peculiar to this Writer. Mr. Booth when engaged in defending a thesis, about which the Baptists had long been divided, chose, in the same spirit, to denominate his performance "An Apology for the Baptists."^a

^a Who would expect to find that a book entitled "An Apology for the Baptists," chiefly consists of a severe reprehension of the principles and practices of a respectable part of that body?

Our Author proceeds to observe, “Here arises a controversy between the two parties, not only respecting baptism, but also respecting their conduct to each other on the subject of communion.” Where, let me ask, are the traces to be found of this imaginary controversy betwixt Baptists and Pædobaptists on that subject? That they have been often engaged in acrimonious disputes with each other on the point of baptism, is certain; but of the history of this strange debate about terms of communion, the public are totally ignorant. What are the names of the parties engaged, and to what publications did it give birth? This Author had informed us at the distance of a few lines that the Pædobaptists in general believe that none ought to come to the Lord’s table who are not baptized. If this is correct, we may indeed easily conceive of their being offended with us for deeming them unbaptised; but how our refusal to admit them to communion should become the subject of debate is utterly mysterious. Did they, in contradiction to the fundamental laws of reasoning, attempt to persuade us to act in contradiction to the principles agreed upon by both parties? The supposition is impossible. The truth is—nor could the Writer be ignorant of it—that the dispute re-

specting communion existed in our own denomination, and in that only.

An attempt is made to represent the advocates of mixed communion as divided among themselves, and as resting the vindication of their conduct on opposite grounds. In stating their views, Mr. Kinghorn observes “that as their Pædobaptist brethren think themselves baptised, they are willing to admit them on that ground, since they do not object to baptism itself, but only differ from others in the circumstances of the ordinance.”

“Some,” he adds, “lay down a still wider principle, that baptism has no connexion with church communion; and that in forming a Christian church, the question ought not to be, are these Christians who wish to unite in church-fellowship *baptised*, whatever that term is considered as meaning—but are they, as far as we can judge, real Christians.”^b

Of this diversity in the mode of defending our practice the Writer of these pages confesses himself totally ignorant: and whatever prejudices our cause may sustain, it has not

^b “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 11, 12.

yet been injured by that which results from intestine dissention. Different modes of expression may have been adopted by different writers, but a perfect accordance of principle, a coincidence in the reasons alleged for our practice, has pervaded our apologies. We have not, like our opponents, professed to take new ground:° we have not constructed defences so totally dissimilar as the publications of a Booth and a Kinghorn, where the argument which is placed in the very front by the former, is by the latter abandoned as untenable. It is easy to perceive that the alleged disagreement in our principles is a mere phantom. While we universally maintain the nullity of infant baptism, the persuasion which our Pædobaptist brethren entertain of their being baptised, can never be mistaken for baptism, and they, consequently, cannot be received in the character of baptised persons. Our constant practice of administering immersion to such, on a change of sentiment, would on that supposition convict us at once of being Anabaptists. It is not then under any idea that they have really partaken

° “The reader who is acquainted with the ‘*Apology for the Baptists*,’ written by the late venerable Abraham Booth, will find that in the following pages I have taken ground somewhat different from his. I have adopted rather a different mode of defence.”—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 8.

of that ordinance, more than the people called Quakers, that we admit them to our communion; but in the character of sincere though mistaken Christians, who have evinced even with respect to the particular in which we deem them erroneous, no disposition to treat a Christian rite with levity or neglect; and if there are those who would refuse to commune with such as reject the ordinance altogether, it is because they suspect them of such a disposition. As there can be no degrees in nothing, they are not so weak as to suppose that one class is in reality more *baptised* than the other; but one is supposed to mistake the nature of an institute, which the other avowedly neglects. In this case he who is prepared to believe that the omission of Christian baptism from a notion of its not being designed for perpetuity, may consist with that deference to divine authority which is essential to a Christian, will receive both without hesitation: he who is incapable of extending his candour so far, will make a distinction: he will admit the Pædo-baptist, while he rejects the person who purposely omits the ceremony altogether. Which-ever measure we adopt, we act on the same principle, and merely apply it with more or less extent according to the comprehension of our charity. If we supposed there were a

necessary unalterable connexion between the two positive Christian institutes, so that none were qualified for communion who had not been previously baptised, we could not hesitate for a moment respecting the refusal of Pædobaptists, without renouncing the principles of our denomination. On the other hand, if among such as are supposed to be equally unbaptised, we admit some and reject others, this difference must be derived, not from the consideration of baptism, but of personal character; in other words from our supposing ourselves to possess that evidence of the piety of the party accepted, which is deficient in the other. Hence it is manifest that nothing can be more simple and intelligible than the principles on which we proceed, which are of such a nature as to preclude every other diversity of opinion, except what regards their application in particular instances.

He who mistakes the nature of a positive institute, is in a different predicament of error from him who avowedly rejects it altogether: the imperfection which claims toleration in our Pædobaptist brethren, is different in its nature from that which attaches to such as are disposed to set the ordinance aside. It is very possible therefore that some may be willing to

extend their indulgence to what appears to them the *least* of two errors, while they refuse toleration to the greater, and on this ground admit a Pædobaptist, while they scruple to receive him who does not even profess to be baptized. But in making such a distinction, no intelligent Baptist would be moved by the consideration of one of these parties being baptized, and the other not, (for this would be admitting the validity of infant baptism,) but solely by the different estimate he made of the magnitude of the respective errors. Some would probably consider each of them consistent with a credible profession of Christianity; others might form a less favorable judgment. In this case the parties would act differently, while they maintained the same principle, and adjusted their practice by the same rule.^d

^d The above remarks may enable the reader to judge of the justice with which Mr. Kinghorn asserts or insinuates our total disagreement respecting the fundamental principle on which we justify our practice. "Among the Baptists," he says, "who plead for mixed communion, I apprehend few will be found who would fairly take Mr. Hall's principle in all its consequences. In general they palliate, and plead that many good men think themselves baptised, and they are willing to accept them on that footing, leaving it to their own consciences to decide whether they had received such baptism as the word of God required; and they will hardly admit the possibility of any case occurring which should require their acting on a wider principle. And here also, as far as my knowledge and observation have extended, I believe the cases are *very few* in which the position would be fairly and boldly adopted, that Christian communion ought to be

It is somewhat extraordinary that after stating the principle on which my Treatise on Communion was founded, Mr. Kinghorn makes his first appeal to the Pædobaptists, and asks whether they are prepared to acknowledge that baptism and the Lord's supper have no connexion. To what purpose is a question referred to a class of persons, who as far as concerns the interior regulation of their churches, have no interest in the inquiry; on whose practice it can have no influence, and who are supposed by both the parties concerned, to be in an error respecting the institution itself, which has given occasion to the discussion. The confidence with which he anticipates their favorable suffrage, appears however to be ill founded;

held with those who deny altogether the obligation to attend to Christian baptism."—p. 15. My opportunities of knowing the sentiments of the liberal part of the Baptists must be supposed to be at least equal to Mr. Kinghorn's; yet I have not heard a single objection from them against the general principle. Exceptions have been made (as might be expected) to particular parts, but none whatever to the fundamental position of the treatise. The reason he assigns for supposing that many would not adopt the general principle in its full extent, is inconclusive. To refuse the communion of such as denied the obligation of baptism altogether, providing that error was deemed of such magnitude as to induce a suspicion of the piety of the party, would not be to contradict the principle in the smallest degree; and I am persuaded that amongst the advocates of mixed communion the refusal would proceed on no other ground. It is one thing to reject a general principle, and another to differ about the application of it to particular cases.

and if the Evangelical Magazine for 1803 is supposed to have insinuated sentiments congenial with his own, the Author of the review of the present controversy in the same publication, distinctly and explicitly expressed his approbation of the treatise "On Terms of Communion." I have no doubt the result of an accurate and extensive inquiry into the prevailing sentiments of such as adhere to infant baptism would be found opposed to his doctrine; and that such of them as might object to the admission of a member avowedly unbaptised, would be actuated by the consideration of the *magnitude of the error*, and not by the conviction of a specific and essential connexion betwixt the two ordinances in question. In other words, they would decide on the case upon principles common to the advocates of mixed communion.

His pretence for calling in such a host of disputants is that he may "clear the field," which in my humble opinion will be best accomplished by confining the debate within its proper limits; regarding it agreeably to its true nature, as a controversy which concerns our own denomination alone, without attempting to extort a verdict from persons who have not been placed in a situation to invite their

attention to the subject. Fortunately for them, they are under no temptation to treat their fellow-christians with indignity: whether they would have maintained the stern inflexibility which is prepared to sacrifice the communion of saints, to an unfounded hypothesis, must be left to conjecture. We indulge a hope that they would have hesitated long ere they admitted a doctrine which draws after it such consequences, that they would have judged of the tree by its fruits, and have discovered some better mode of signalizing their allegiance to Christ, than by the excision of his members. The tenet to which we are opposed, produces an effect so contrary to what the genius of the gospel teaches us to anticipate, and so repugnant to the noblest feelings of the heart, as to form a presumption against it which nothing can surmount, but the utmost force and splendour of evidence. How far it is from possessing such support, or even that preponderation in the scale of argument which would produce conviction on the most trivial subject, it is the business of the following sheets to inquire.

In deciding the question whether persons whom we deem unbaptised are entitled to approach the Lord's table, we must examine the

connexion subsisting betwixt the two positive ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper.

Our opponents contend that there is *such a connexion* betwixt these as renders them inseparable ; so that he who is deemed unbaptized, is *ipso facto*, apart from any consideration whatever of the cause of that omission, disqualified for approaching the sacred elements. *We* contend that the absence of baptism may disqualify, and that it does disqualify, wherever it appears to proceed from a criminal motive ; that is, wherever its neglect is accompanied with a conviction of its divine authority. In this case we consider the piety of such a person at least as doubtful ; but when the omission proceeds from involuntary prejudice, or mistake, when the party evinces his conscientious adherence to known duty, by the general tenour of his conduct ; we do not consider the mere absence of baptism as a sufficient bar to communion. On this ground we cheerfully receive pious Pædobaptists, not from the supposition that the ceremony which they underwent in their infancy, possesses the smallest validity, but as sincere followers of Christ : and for my own part, I should feel as little hesitation in admitting such as deny the perpetuity of bap-

tism, whenever the evidence of their piety is equally clear and decisive.

It is apparent that the whole controversy turns on the *connexion* betwixt the two positive institutes; and that in order to justify the conduct of our opponents, it is not sufficient to evince the authority or perpetuity of each, and the consequent obligation of attending to both: it is necessary to shew the dependance of one upon the other; not merely that they are both clearly and unequivocally enjoined, but that the one is prescribed with a *view to the other*.

There are two methods by which we may suppose this to be effected; either by shewing their inherent and intrinsic dependance, or by making it appear that they are connected by *positive law*. Betwixt ritual observances, it is seldom, if ever, possible to discover an inherent connexion; in the present case it will probably not be attempted. If the advocates of exclusive communion succeed, it must be in the last of these methods; it must be by proving from express declarations of scripture, that baptism is an invariable and essential prerequisite to communion. A Jew would have

found no difficulty in establishing this fact respecting circumcision and the passover: he would have immediately pointed to the book of Exodus, where we find an express prohibition of an uncircumcised person from partaking of the paschal lamb. Let some similar evidence be adduced on the present subject—let some declaration from scripture be exhibited which distinctly prohibits the celebration of the Lord's supper by any person who from a misconception of its nature has omitted the baptismal ceremony, and the controversy will be at rest. The reader can scarcely be too often reminded that this is the very hinge of the present debate, which (as appears from the title of his pamphlet) Mr. Fuller clearly perceived, however unsuccessful he may have been in establishing that fundamental position. Much that Mr. Kinghorn has advanced will be found to be totally irrelevant to the inquiry in hand; and in more instances than one, the intelligent reader will perceive him to have made concessions which are destructive of his cause. But let us proceed to a careful investigation of the arguments by which he attempts to establish the aforesaid *connection*.

CHAP. II.

HIS ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH THE CONNECTION CONTENDED FOR, FROM THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION AND PRIMITIVE PRECEDENT.

My respectable opponent commences this branch of the argument by quoting the apostolic commission, justly remarking that whatever may be thought of John's baptism, the ceremony enjoined in that commission must belong, in the strictest sense, to the Christian dispensation. The commission is as follows:—"Go, therefore, and teach all nations; baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." *Matt.* xxviii. 19, 20. Or as it is recorded in *Luke*—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved."—"This," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "is the *law*;

the Acts of the Apostles are a commentary on that law; not leaving us to collect from mere precedents what ought to be done, but shewing us how the law was practically explained by those who perfectly understood it." He reminds us "that in every instance where the history descends to particulars, we find they constantly adhered to this rule; and that when they *taught* and men believed, the Apostles *baptised* them, and then farther instructed them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

We are as ready to allow as Mr. Kinghorn, that baptism was enjoined by the apostolic commission; we are perfectly agreed with him respecting the *law* of baptism, and are accustomed to explain its nature, and enforce its authority, by the same arguments as he himself would employ. We have no controversy with him, or with his party, on the subject of baptism, considered apart from the Lord's supper; and were he disputing with such as deny its original appointment, or its perpetuity, the passages he quotes would be fully to his purpose. But where the inquiry turns, not on the nature or obligation of baptism, but on the *necessary dependance* of another institution upon it, we are at a loss to perceive in what manner the quotation applies to the question before us.

To us it is inconceivable how any thing more is deducible from the *law* of baptism, than its present and perpetual obligation. The existence of a law establishes the obligation of a correspondent duty, and nothing more. The utmost efforts of ingenuity can extort no other inference from it, than that a portion of blame attaches to such as have neglected to comply with it, variable in its degree by an infinity of circumstances, too subtle to be ascertained, and too numerous to be recited. We feel no hesitation in avowing our belief that Pædobaptists of all denominations have failed in a certain part of their duty; for this is a legitimate inference from the perpetuity of the baptismal ordinance, joined with our persuasion that we have interpreted it correctly. But if we are immediately to conclude from thence that they are disqualified for Christian communion, we must seek a church which consists of members who have failed in no branch of obedience; and must consequently despair of finding fit communicants apart from the spirits of just men made perfect. Examine the idea of *law* with the utmost rigour, turn it on all sides, and it will present nothing beyond the obligation to a certain species of conduct, so that if Pædobaptists are really disqualified for the Lord's supper, it must be for some other reason than their non-com-

pliance with a *law*, or otherwise we must insist upon the refusal of every individual who has not discharged all his obligations. To expatiate on the distinctness and solemnity with which the baptismal ceremony was enjoined, is little less than trifling, in a debate with persons who fully accede to every part of the statement, and who wish to be informed, not whether our Pædo-baptist brethren are in an error, but whether its moral amount, its specific nature, is such as to annul their claims to Christian communion. On this point, the passages adduced maintain a profound silence.

If the practice of strict communion derives no support from the *law* of baptism, it is impossible it should derive it from apostolical precedent; since the Apostles, as this Author observes, adhered constantly to the rule. They did neither more nor less than its letter enjoined: consequently we must be mistaken if we imagine we can infer any thing from their practice, beyond what a just and fair interpretation of its terms would suggest. If the Acts of the Apostles are, as Mr. Kinghorn asserts, "a commentary on the law, shewing us how it was practically explained," it is impossible it should contain a tittle more than is found in the text. Let us see how the Apostles

acted. “When they *taught* and men believed,” says our Author, “the Apostles *baptised* them.” Whom did they baptise? Undoubtedly such, and such only, as were convinced, not merely of the truth of Christianity, but of the obligation of the particular rite to which they attended. This is precisely what we do. When we have reason to believe that any part of our hearers have received the truth in the love of it, we proceed to explain the nature, and to enforce the duty, of baptism: and upon their expressing their conviction of its divine authority we baptise them. Such a previous conviction is necessary to render it a reasonable service. We administer that rite to every description of persons whom our opponents themselves deem qualified, and withhold it under no circumstances in which the Apostles would have practised it. Wherein then, as far as that institution is concerned, does our practice differ from that of the Apostles? Our opponents will reply, that though in the administration of that rite, our conduct corresponds with the primitive pattern, yet it differs in this, that we receive the *unbaptised* to our communion, which was not done in the apostolic age. To this we reply, that at that period no good men entertained a doubt respecting its nature—that it was impossible they should, while it was

exemplified before their eyes in the practice of the Apostles and the Evangelists—that he who refused to abide by the decision of inspired men, would necessarily have forfeited his claim to be considered as a Christian—that a new state of things has arisen, in which, from a variety of causes, the doctrine of baptism has been involved in obscurity—that some of the best of men put a different interpretation on the language of scripture on this subject from ourselves—and that it is great presumption to claim the same deference with the Apostles, and to treat those who differ from us on the sense of scripture, as though they avowedly opposed themselves to apostolic authority. To misinterpret is surely not the same thing as wilfully to contradict: and however confident we may be of the correctness of our own interpretation, to place such as are incapable of receiving it, on the same level with those who withstood the Apostles, differs little, if at all, from the claim of infallibility.

We reason, as we conceive conclusively, in favor of adult, in opposition to infant baptism: our Pædobaptist brethren avow their inability to discern the justice of our conclusion: and are they on that account to be viewed in the same light as though they intentionally rejected the

decision of inspired men? What is this but to set up a claim to inspiration, or to least to such an infallible guidance in the explanation of scripture, as is equally exempt from the danger of error or mistake? If we examine it accurately, it amounts to more than a claim to infallibility: it implies in the Pædo-baptists a knowledge of this extraordinary fact. The Apostles were not only inspired, and consequently infallible teachers, but were known and acknowledged to be such by the primitive Christians: and before we presume to demand an implicit acquiescence in our conclusions, and to consider ourselves entitled to treat dissentients as we suppose the opponents of the Apostles would have been treated, it behoves us to evince our possession of infallibility by similar evidence. As I have not heard of our opponents making such an attempt, I cannot sufficiently express my surprise at the loftiness of their pretensions, and the arrogance of their language. In their dialect all Christians besides themselves are “*opposed* to a divine command,”^e “refuse subjection to Christ, and violate the laws of his house.”^f

The justice of their proceeding, founded on

^e Booth.

^f Kinghorn.

the pretension of apostolical precedent, is perfectly congenial with its modesty. Upon the supposition that a professor of Christianity, in the times of the Apostles, had scrupled the admission of adult baptism, could he, we would ask, in the circumstances then existing, have been considered as a good man, or a genuine convert? The reply will unquestionably be, no. "He," said St. John, "who is of God heareth us: he who heareth not us, is not of God: hereby ye know the spirit of truth, and spirit of error."

In this case then, it is admitted that the simple fact of rejecting adult baptism would have been sufficient to set aside a pretension to the Christian character. Is it sufficient now? Are the Pædobaptists to be universally considered as bad men, or at least as persons whose Christianity is doubtful? Nothing more distant from the avowed sentiments of our opponents. Where then is the justice of classing together men of the most opposite descriptions; or of inferring, that because the Apostles would have refused communion to an unbaptised person, at a time when it is acknowledged that none but false professors could remain in that state, it is our duty to refuse it to some of the most excellent of the earth,

merely on account of the absence of that ceremony? As it is admitted on all hands that baptism was then so circumstanced that the omission of it was inconsistent with a credible profession of piety, nothing more is necessary to account for the precedent which includes it; it was the necessary result of the then state of things, and the Apostles, it is acknowledged, could not have extended their communion beyond the limits of that rite, without incorporating insincere professors. But if this reason is sufficient to account for it, it is unphilosophical and unreasonable to seek for another. The supposed inherent and inseparable connection betwixt the two positive institutes, is another, and a totally different one, which is sufficiently excluded by the preceding reasoning.

We presume it will not be doubted that scripture precedent is founded on wisdom, that it is not arbitrary and capricious. It would betray great irreverence to suppose that men acting under divine inspiration, were not in every branch of their official conduct, especially in whatever related to the regulation and government of the church, moved by the strongest reasons. Hence the inquiry why they acted as they did is essential to a rational investigation into the force and authority of

scripture precedent. Their proceedings were regulated by their judgment, or rather by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit which enlightened their minds, and directed their movements. If the *reason* for rejecting unbaptised persons in the primitive age applies to the case of Pædo-baptists, the argument for strict communion derived from the practice of the Apostles, is unanswerable. But if the cases are totally dissimilar—if our opponents can assign no *such reason* for excluding their Christian brethren, as might justly have been urged against the admission of the unbaptised in the times of the Apostles, the argument is totally inconclusive.

It is decided by the express declaration of our Lord, that he who refuses obedience to any part of his will is not a Christian. “Then,” saith he, “are ye my disciples if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you.” But while there was no diversity of opinion on the subject, the voluntary omission of the baptismal ceremony could arise from nothing but a contumacious contempt of a divine precept, of which no sincere Christian could be guilty. Here then we discover a sufficient reason for the matter of fact urged by our opponents, without supposing an intrinsic or invariable connection betwixt the two ordinances. The principle of open com-

munion would have compelled us to act precisely in the same manner as the Apostles did, had we been placed in their circumstances. How vain then the attempt to overthrow that principle, by appealing to a precedent which is its legitimate and necessary consequence; and how unreasonable the demand which urges us to treat two cases as exactly similar, of which our opponents, equally with ourselves, are compelled to form the most opposite judgment. Let the advocates of restricted communion express the same opinion of the state and character of those whom they now regard as unbaptised, which we are certain they would feel no scruple in avowing with respect to such as had refused submission to that ordinance in primitive times, and we shall deplore their blindness and bigotry, but shall acknowledge they reason consistently from their own premises. But we will never submit to identify two cases which agree in nothing; but the omission of an external rite, while that omission arises from causes the most dissimilar, and is combined with characters the most contrary. We will not conclude because the Apostles could not bear with those that were evil, they would have refused to tolerate the good; or that they would have comprehended under the same censure, the contumacious opposer of their

doctrines, and the myriads of holy men, whose only crime consists in mistaking their meaning in one particular.

The remarks we have already made will be deemed, we trust, a sufficient answer to the triumphant question of Mr. Kinghorn. "How is it," he asks, "that with the same rule for the guidance of the church, the ancient Christians could not receive a person to communion without baptism, if the modern both can, and ought to receive him?"⁵ The answer is obvious. If the ancient Christians had received a person without baptism, they would have received a false professor: but when we at present receive one whom we judge to be in a similar predicament, we receive a sincere, though mistaken, brother; we receive him who is of that description of Christians whom we are commanded to receive.

If it still be contended that the two cases are so parallel that the proceedings of the Apostles in this particular is binding as a law, we would once more ask such as adopt this plea, whether they themselves form the same judgment of the present Pædobaptists as the

⁵ "Baptism a Term of Communion." p. 29.

Apostles would have entertained of such as continued unbaptised in their day. If they reply in the affirmative, they must consider them as insincere hypocritical professors. If they answer in the negative, since by their own confession they look upon the persons whom they exclude in a different light from that in which the party excluded by the Apostles was considered, what becomes of the identity of the two cases: and what greater right have they to *think differently* of the state of the unbaptised from what the Apostles thought, than we have for treating them differently. They are clamorous in their charge against us of wilful deviation from apostolic precedents. But there are precedents of thinking as well as of acting, and it is as much our duty to conform to the *sentiments* of inspired men as to their actions. The chief use indeed which inspired precedents are of, is to assist us to ascertain the dictates of inspiration. The conduct of enlightened, much more of inspired men, is founded on sound speculative principles. If the advocates of strict communion urge us with the inquiry—By what authority do you presume to receive a class of persons whom you acknowledge the Apostles would not have received? we reply—By what authority do you presume to deviate from the opinion of the

Apostles respecting that same class? Many whom you exclude from your communion, as unbaptised, you acknowledge as Christians, and without hesitation express your confidence of meeting them in glory. Did the Apostles entertain the same judgment respecting such in their day? Were they prepared to recognize them as brethren, and to congratulate them on their eternal prospects, while they repelled them from communion? Would they not without hesitation, have applied to them the language which our Saviour uses, respecting such as refused to be baptised by John, whom he affirms to have "rejected the counsel of God against themselves?"

These questions admit but of one answer. Here then is a palpable disagreement between the sentiments of our opponents and those of the Apostles, on the subject of the unbaptised; the Apostles would have both rejected and condemned them: *they* reject them as members, and embrace them as brethren. Were they called upon to defend themselves from the charge of contradicting the Apostles, they would begin to *distinguish* betwixt the two cases, and urge the different circumstances which accompany the omission of the same ceremony

now, from what must be supposed to have accompanied it in the times of the Apostles; in other words, they would attempt to shew that a new case has arisen, which necessitates them to form a correspondent judgment.— They assume the same liberty with ourselves of *thinking differently* of the state of the many who continue unbaptised in the present day, from what they are persuaded the Apostles would have thought of such as had remained in that situation in theirs; and yet with strange inconsistency accuse us of a deviation from a divine precedent in not treating them both in the same manner, forgetting that if the cases are parallel, they themselves are guilty of an avowed and palpable contradiction to the sentiments of the Apostles.

When men differ in their views of one and the same object, it will not be denied that they contradict each other. We offer them the alternative, either to deny, or to affirm, that to be unbaptised at present is in a moral view a very *distinct thing*, and involves very different consequences, from being in that predicament in the times of the Apostles. If they deny it, they stand self-convicted of contradicting the sentiments of inspiration, by speaking of that class of persons as genuine Christians, whom

they cannot but acknowledge the Apostles would have condemned. If they adopt the affirmative, our practice by their own confession is not opposed to apostolic precedent, because that precedent respects a *different thing*.

They not only depart from the precedent of the Apostles, in the judgment they form of the unbaptised, but in every other branch of their conduct, with the exception of the act of communion. On all other occasions they treat as brethren, and frequently, and that much to their honour, cultivate an intimate friendship with persons whom they deem to be destitute of that rite, the omission of which in the apostolic age, would have incurred the sentence of wilful impiety and disobedience. What, we ask, is more opposite to primitive precedent, than the practice of including the same persons within the obligations of Christian love and friendship, whom they prohibit from communion; of inviting them into the pulpit, and repelling them from the table; uniting with them in the most retired and elevated exercises of devotion, and excluding them from the church? It is scarcely in the power of imagination to feign a species of conduct more diametrically opposite to all the examples of scripture; and when they have reconciled these,

and many similar usages, with the practice of the primitive age, they will have supplied us with a sufficient apology for our pretended deviation from the same standard.

It will probably be thought enough has been already said to demonstrate the futility of the argument founded on original precedent: but as this is considered by our opponents in general, as well as by Mr. Kinghorn in particular, as the main prop of their cause, we must be permitted to detain the reader a little longer, while we enter on a closer examination of his reasoning.

In order to shew that baptism is a necessary term of communion, he labours hard to prove that it is a term of *profession*. "It is obvious," he says, "that their baptism (that of believers) was the term of professing their faith, by the special appointment of the Lord himself." To the same purpose, he afterwards adds, "the fact still exists that it pleased the Lord to make a visible and ritual observance, the appointed evidence of our believing on him. If obedience to a rite be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes) yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation: and a

Christian profession is not made in *Christ's own way without it.*" Recurring to the same topic,^h he observes, "Whatever may be the conditions of salvation, a plain question here occurs, which is—*Ought the terms of Christian communion to be different from those of Christian profession?* The only answer which one would think could be given to this question would be, no: Christian communion must require *whatever the Lord required as a mark of Christian profession.*"

It is hoped the reader will excuse my accumulating quotations to the same purport, which would have been avoided, were it not evident that the Writer considered this as his strong hold, to which he repairs with a confidence which bespeaks his conviction of its being impregnable. We will venture, however, to come close to these frowning battlements; we will make trial of their strength, that it may be seen whether their power of resistance is equal to their formidable aspect. We freely acknowledge that if the *principle* can be established that baptism is *invariably* essential to a Christian profession, the cause we are pleading must be abandoned, being con-

^h page 20.

fidant that a true profession of the Christian religion is inseparable from church communion.

Previous to entering on this discussion, it will be necessary to premise that the words *profession* and *confession*, together with their correlates, are usually denoted by one and the same word in the original, and that they are evidently used by the authors of the received translation as synonymous.¹ Hence whatever is affirmed in the New Testament respecting the *confession* of Christ, or of his sayings, may without hesitation be considered as predicated of a *profession*; since whatever difference may subsist in the popular meaning of the words, whenever they occur in scripture, they are merely different renderings of the same term.^k

¹ The word in the original is *ομολογια*, derived from *ομολογεω*, a verb of the same import.

^k See Matthew x. 32. Luke xii. 8. Matthew vii. 23. John ix. 22. John xii. 42. Acts xxiii. 8. Acts xxiv. 14. Romans x. 9, 10. 1 John iv. 15. 2 John vii. Rev. iii. 5. 1 Timothy vi. 13. *την καλην ομολογιαν*, a good profession, English Translation.—Heb. iii. 1. *της ομολογιας ημων*, of our profession, E. T.—Heb. iv. 14. *της ομολογιας ημων*, our profession, E. T.—Heb. x. 23. *την ομολογιαν της ελπιδος ακλινη*, the profession of our faith without wavering.—Matthew vii. 23. *τοτε ομολογησω αυτοις*, then will I profess unto them.—In each of the preceding passages the same word, under different inflections, is employed, and they contain all the passages which relate to the absolute necessity of a religious profession.

Now that the profession of Christ is an indispensable term of salvation, is so undeniably evident from the New Testament, that to attempt to prove it, seems like an insult on the understanding of the reader. I must crave his indulgence, however, for recalling to his recollection a very few passages which will set the matter beyond dispute. "Whoever," said our Lord, "shall confess (or *profess*) my name before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in Heaven: and whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven."—*Mat.* viii. 32. The same language occurs, with little variation, in the gospel of St. Luke, xii. 8. In these words we find an awful denunciation of the rejection of every one, without exception, who shall be found to have denied Christ; and as this denial is immediately opposed to *confessing* him, it must necessarily attach to all such as have not made a confession. If a medium could be supposed betwixt the denial and the open assertion of the doctrine of Christ, it is precluded by the following sentence:—"Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and of the Father, and of his holy angels."—*Luke* ix. 26. Thence we may with certainty conclude that

from whatever motives a profession of Christianity is omitted or declined, eternal perdition is the consequence. Nor is this the doctrine of the Evangelists only: it is repeatedly asserted, and uniformly implied, in the writings of the Apostles. “If thou shalt confess (or *profess*) with the mouth,” saith St. Paul, “the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession (or *profession*) is made to salvation.” *Romans* x. 9. We find the same Writer on another occasion exhorting Christians to hold fast the *profession* of their faith without wavering, when the previous possession of that is necessarily supposed, a firm adherence to which is inculcated as essential to salvation. “Let us hold fast the *profession* of our faith without wavering.”—*Hebrews* x. 23. It is to the faithful, considered as such, without distinction of sects and parties, that St. Paul addresses the following exhortation: “Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our *profession* Christ Jesus.”—*Hebrews* iii. 1. In the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, the phrase *our profession* occurs three times, and in each instance in such

a connection as demonstrates it to be an attribute common to all Christians.¹

It would be trifling with the readers' patience to multiply proofs of a position so evident from scripture, as the inseparable connection betwixt a genuine profession of Christ, and future salvation. But if this be admitted, what becomes of the principal argument urged by Mr. Kinghorn for strict communion, which turns on the principle that "baptism is the term of Christian profession?" Who can fail to perceive that if this proposition is true, the Pædobaptists are on our principles cut off from the hope of eternal life, and salvation is confined to ourselves? The language of our Saviour and his Apostles is decisive respecting the necessity of a *profession* in order to eternal life: this Writer affirms that baptism, as we practise it, is an essential term of profession. By comparing these propositions together, a child will perceive that the necessary inference is the restriction of the hope of future happiness to members of our own denomination. This in truth is the conclusion to which all his reasoning tends; it meets the intelligent reader at every turn;

¹ Hebrews iii. 1. iv. 14. x. 13,

but when he expects the Writer to advance forward and press the fearful consequence, he turns aside, and is afraid to push his argument to its proper issue. He travels in birth, but dares not bring forth; he shrinks from the sight of his own progeny. Sometimes he seems at the very point of disclosing the full tendency of his speculations, and more than once suggests hints in the form of questions which possess no meaning, but on the supposition of that dismal conclusion to which his hypothesis conducts him. Let the reader pause, and meditate on the following extraordinary passage:—"If baptism," he says, "was once necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which was *not* essential to salvation, *was* necessary to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be essential now?"^m Again he asks, "what is the meaning of the term condition? In whatever sense the term can apply to the commission of our Lord, or to the declarations of the Apostles *respecting repentance, faith, and baptism*; is not baptism a condition either of communion, or of salvation, or of both? Do the conditions either of salvation, or of communion, change by time? Are they annulled by being misunderstood?"ⁿ

^m "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 19. ⁿ p. 20.

Whatever of argument these passages may be supposed to contain, will be examined hereafter; the design of producing them at present, is to shew the tendency of the principle: and the reader is requested to consider whether they are susceptible of any other sense, than that the terms of salvation and of communion are commensurate with each other; that whatever was once essential to salvation, is so still; and that baptism is as much a condition of salvation, as faith and repentance. But if these are his real sentiments, why not speak plainly, instead of "uttering parables;" and why mingle in the same publication, representations totally repugnant, in which he speaks of such as dissent from him on the subject of baptism, as persons of the most distinguished character—persons whom God will undoubtedly bring to his kingdom and glory.^o The only solution this problem admits, is to suppose (what my knowledge of his character confirms) that to the first part of these statements he was impelled by the current of his arguments; to the latter by the dictates of his heart. But however that heart may rebel, he must learn either to subdue its contumacy, or consent to relinquish the principal points of his defence. He has stated

^o "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 21. 36.

that the limits of communion must be the same with those of profession ; that the Pædobaptists have none, or at least none that is valid ; and that on *this* account, and for *this* reason, they are precluded from a title to christian fellowship. But the word of God, as we have seen, repeatedly insists on men's professing Christ, as an indispensable requisite to salvation. How is it possible then, if Mr. Kinghorn's position is just, to evade the consequence, that those whom he would exclude from communion, are excluded from salvation ?

“ If obedience to a *rite*,” he observes, “ be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes) yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation : and a christian profession is not made in *Christ's own way without it*.^p If the open acknowledgment of Christ by the Pædobaptists is not to be esteemed a *real* and *valid* profession, the inevitable consequence is, for reasons sufficiently explained, that they cannot be saved ; but if it is *valid*, (however imperfect in one particular) it is so far made in *Christ's own way*. The expres-

^p “ Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 18.

sion which he employs to depreciate it, has either no meaning, or none that is relative to the object of the Writer. The scope of his argument obliged him to prove that adult baptism is essential to a christian *profession*: he now contents himself with saying, that without that ordinance, it is not made in the right way, which may with equal propriety be affirmed of every deviation from the doctrine and precepts of the gospel. Just as far as we suppose a person to depart from these, we must judge his profession not to be made in *Christ's own way*: nor will any thing short of a *perfect* profession, or in other words, a perfect comprehension, and exhibition of the will of Christ, exempt him from such an imputation: so that in this sense, which is the only one applicable to the case before us, to make a profession of the christian religion in *Christ's own way*, is not the lot of a mortal. But though this is the only interpretation consistent with truth, we cannot for a moment suppose that such was the meaning of the Writer. He must have intended to assert that the parties to whom they are applied, fail to make what *Christ himself* would deem a profession. This supposition is forced upon us by the scope of his reasoning, which went to prove that baptism is necessary to communion, *because*

it is necessary to a profession. This supposed necessity must consequently relate, not to its *completeness*, or *perfection*, but to its *essence*: he must be understood to affirm, that they have not exhibited, what Christ will consider as a profession. But as *he* has solemnly affirmed his determination to reject such as are destitute of it, we ask again how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile this with the salvability of Pædobaptists?

Whatever it seems good to infinite wisdom to prescribe as an indispensable condition of future happiness, we must suppose that it exactly corresponds to its name: it is true and genuine in its kind, and wants nothing which constitutes the essence. If an open acknowledgment of Christ is the prerequisite demanded under the title of a profession, it would seem strange to assert that something less than what is correctly denoted by that expression, is after all sufficient to satisfy the condition. This however is what Mr. Kinghorn must assert, to be consistent with himself: for he will not deny that the advocates of infant sprinkling have exhibited something *like a profession*; but as they have not made it in *Christ's own way*, it is not, strictly speaking, entitled to that appellation, and consequently cannot claim the privileges it secures. But if the case is as he

states it, he must either confine the hope of salvation to his own party, or admit that in the solemn denunciations before recited, it is not *really* a profession of Christ which is required, but merely something which resembles it. Whether the use of language so replete with ambiguity, or collusion, is consistent with the character of the "true and faithful witness," we leave to the decision of the reader. According to Mr. Kinghorn, while there are two modes of avowing our Christianity, one so essentially defective as not to deserve the name of a *profession*, the other sound and valid; when the Supreme Legislator thought fit to enjoin the profession of his name, under the sanction of eternal death, he intended to insist on the first, in distinction from the last of these methods. Let him who is able, digest these absurdities; from which, whoever would escape, must either abandon the ground which Mr. Kinghorn has taken, or consign the Pædo-baptists to destruction.

It is time however to recur to the questions with which he has urged his opponents, and which he supposes it impossible to solve on my principles. "If baptism," he observes, "was *once* necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which

was *not* essential to salvation was necessary to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be *essential* now? If it be argued that it was not essential to salvation *then*, it must either be proved that communion was held without it, or Mr. Hall's position must fall."^a

Of the preceding dilemma, I embrace without hesitation, the affirmative side, and assert that in the apostolic age, baptism *was* necessary to salvation. To the query which follows, how then can it be proved "that it is not essential now, I reply that it is unnecessary to attempt it, because it is admitted by Mr. Kinghorn himself; and it is preposterous to attempt the proof of what is acknowledged by both parties. It is very astonishing, after he had so clearly avowed his conviction of the exalted character, and unquestionable piety of many Pædobaptists, he should ask the question: but he was probably so dazzled with the seeming subtlety and acumen of these pointed interrogatories, as not to perceive their total irrelevance. If he feels any hesitation in affirming that baptism was essential to salvation in primitive times, he entertains a lower idea of its

^a "Baptism a Term of Communion." p. 19.

importance than his opponents ; but on the contrary supposition, unless he totally retracts his liberal concessions, he must acknowledge that which was *once* necessary to salvation is not so now. The difficulty attending the supposition of a change in the terms of salvation, is urged with little propriety by one to whose hypothesis they apply in their full force ; nor are they, when fairly examined, at all formidable. Owing to the incurable ambiguity of language, many truths founded on the clearest evidence, assume an appearance of paradox ; and of this nature is the proposition which affirms that the terms of salvation are not unalterable : which may with equal propriety be affirmed or denied, in different senses. Since the *fundamental laws* of the kingdom of God are of equal and invariable obligation, a cordial compliance with which is essential to eternal felicity—since faith and repentance are at all times, and in all places, indispensable prerequisites to a justified state ; in popular language there would be no impropriety in asserting that the conditions of salvation, under the gospel, remain the same from age to age.

But if this proposition is taken in its utmost rigour, and applied to every particular, connected with the faith and practice of Christians,

it is manifestly false. There are certain parts of Christianity, which as they exhibit the basis, and propound the conditions of the new covenant, belong to its essence; certain doctrines which are revealed because they are necessary; and others which are necessary only because they are revealed: the absence of which impairs its beauty, without destroying its being. Of this nature are its few and simple ceremonies. But while this distinction is admitted, it will not be denied that the wilful perversion of the least of Christ's precepts, or the deliberate and voluntary rejection of his instructions in the smallest instance, would betray an insincerity utterly inconsistent with the christian character. "He who shall break the least of these my commandments, and teach men so, he shall be of no account in the kingdom of Heaven."[†] The truth or precept in question may be of such an order, that a simple ignorance of it may not be fatal, yet to resist it, *knowing* it to be of divine authority, would be pregnant with the highest danger. The great Head of the Church will not permit us to set voluntary limits to our obedience: we must consent to receive all his sayings, or none. But it must be manifest on reflection, that on its first pub-

[†] Campbell's Translation.

lication, the visible *appendages* of Christianity were exhibited with a lustre of evidence, which no honest mind could withstand; and that no pretence for their neglect could subsist among such as possessed religious integrity. Such was eminently the case with the two institutions which have occasioned the present controversy. The constant practice of the Apostles appealing to the senses of men, and illustrating the import of their oral instruction, made the point of duty so plain, that its omission in such circumstances could be ascribed only to voluntary corruption.

Nor is this the only example which might be adduced. By orthodox Christians the explicit belief of the doctrine of the atonement is now considered as indispensibly necessary to salvation: but that the immediate followers of Christ were during his personal ministry so far from embracing this truth, that they could not endure the mention of his death, without expressing the utmost impatience, and knew not what was intended by his resurrection, is an undeniable fact. The full development of the gospel scheme, made at a subsequent period, has in this instance rendered that essential to salvation, which could previously subsist without it.

It may also be observed, that a diversity of sentiment has arisen among Christians, from different modes of interpreting the word of God, which has given birth to various sects and parties, unknown in primitive times. On many of these points, it is impossible to suppose but that the sentiments of the inspired writers were expressed with sufficient perspicuity to be perfectly understood by the parties, to whom they were originally communicated; and who having repeatedly attended their ministry, had heard those particulars more fully illustrated and confirmed, which are briefly touched upon in their writings. Who can doubt that the true idea of election, whether it intends, as the Arminians assert, the distinction conferred on some, above others, in the collation of external benefits, or the pre-ordination of individuals to eternal life, was clearly ascertained by the primitive Christians, so as to exclude the possibility of controversy and debate. The Arminian will contend that the first Christians entertained his notion of election and grace; the Calvinist, with equal confidence, will maintain that the true and primitive interpretation of scripture is in favour of his hypothesis: and neither of them can consistently admit that the members of the primitive church adopted a different system, from that which they re-

spectively embrace. One of the parties will contend that the apostolic church consisted entirely of Arminians; the other that it included none but Calvinists.

Were it allowed that *some* variety of opinion on this mysterious topic, might subsist even amongst the earliest converts, it is impossible to suppose there were none at that period who understood the doctrine of St. Paul: it would be most injurious to the reputation of that great writer, to suppose he expressed himself with an obscurity, which uniformly baffled the power of comprehension. Let his meaning, for argument's sake, be supposed to agree with the arminian system, the adoption of that hypothesis was on this supposition essential to the salvation of him who was acquainted with that circumstance. For such a person to have embraced the calvinistic sentiments, would have been to pour contempt on the apostolic doctrine, and to oppose his private judgment to the dictates of inspiration. If we invert the supposition, the result is a similar conclusion, in favor of the Calvinist. Were these parties to exclude each other from communion under pretence that the primitive Christians were all Calvinists, or all Arminians; were the Calvinist to assert that he dares not sanction so

serious a departure from truth, as the denial of election, and that to receive such as were erroneous in this point would be to admit a class of persons who had no existence in the primitive church, he would argue precisely in the same manner as Mr. Kinghorn. How would our Author repel this reasoning, or justify a more liberal conduct? He certainly would not allege the original *obscurity* of the apostolic injunctions, and the possibility of primitive converts mistaking their meaning: he would unquestionably insist on the different degrees of importance attached to revealed truths, and the palpable difference betwixt mistaking the meaning, and avowedly opposing the sentiments of inspired writers. But this is precisely our mode of defence.

When a dispute arose on the obligation of extending the rite of circumcision to the Gentiles, a counsel consisting of the Apostles and Elders was assembled to determine the question. Their decision was, that the Gentiles should no longer be troubled on that head, but that they should be strictly enjoined among other things, carefully to abstain from things strangled, and from blood. It is universally acknowledged that it was the design of this injunction to prohibit the use of blood in food. This pre-

cept was enjoined expressly on the Gentiles, without the slightest intimation of its being of temporary duration; nor did it commence with the Jewish dispensation, but was in force from the period of the deluge. I have not the smallest doubt that it is of perpetual force, however little it may be regarded in modern practice; and were the observation of it proposed as a term of communion, I am not aware of a single argument adduced by our opponents for their narrow exclusive system, which might not with superior advantage be alleged in favour of such a regulation. If it be urged that there never was a period when it was not the duty of believers in Christ to be baptised, it may be asserted with equal confidence that the precept of abstaining from blood was invariably observed by the faithful from the time of Noah. If it be urged that the primitive church consisted exclusively of such as were baptised, it is equally certain that it consisted only of such as abstained from blood. That it was "once a term of communion" none will deny: "how then comes it to cease to be such?" In this case there is no room to allege a misapprehension of the meaning of the precept: it is susceptible but of one interpretation; and if the terms of communion are not "annulled

by being misunderstood,"^a much less when there is no such pretence. The only perceptible difference in the two cases, is that the precept respecting blood was not promulgated by the Saviour himself; but it resulted from the solemn and unanimous decision of his Apostles, and is of more ancient origin than any other christian institute. If our opponents attempt to depreciate its importance by asserting that it is merely ritual and ceremonial, so is baptism; and as they were both enjoined by the same authority, both universally maintained in the primitive church, if the absence of one of these observances constitutes a church of *different materials*, so must the neglect of the other.

Such as violate the abstinence in question will not pretend that they observe the prohibition: they satisfy themselves with asserting their conviction, (a conviction not sustained by a syllable of scripture) that it is only of temporary obligation; and as Pædobaptists profess their conscientious adherence to the baptismal precept, which they merely demand the right of interpreting for themselves; upon what principle is it that a mistake in the

^a "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 20.

meaning of a positive injunction, is deemed more criminal than its avowed neglect; or why should an error of judgment which equally effects the practice in both cases, be tolerated in one, and made the ground of exclusion in the other? This reasoning, it is acknowledged, bears with the greatest weight on such as conceive the prohibition of blood to be still in force; who if they adopt the principle of Mr. Kinghorn ought to be consistent, immediately to separate themselves from such as are of a contrary judgment. The same argument equally applies to laying on of hands after ordination and baptism. It is acknowledged that this rite was universally practised in the primitive times, that it claims the sanction of apostolic example, and it is enumerated by St. Paul amongst the *first principles* of christian doctrine. Wherever that practice is laid aside, it may with equal truth be affirmed, that the church consists of *different materials* from those admitted by the Apostles; and it may be asked with an air of triumph, in the words of this Writer, by what authority we presume “to make a scriptural rite of less consequence in the church of Christ than it was once.”^r

^r “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 92.

Thus much may suffice for the vindication of our pretended departure from ancient usage and apostolic precedent. But as this topic is supposed to include the very pith and marrow of my opponent's cause, the reader must excuse my replying to some other parts of his reasoning. Confident of the soundness of our principles, it is my anxious wish that nothing may pass unnoticed that wears the shadow of argument; and that no suspicion be afforded of a desire to shrink from any part of the contest.

“If an obedience to a rite,” says our Author, “be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes) yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an *evidence* of subjection to the Author of salvation.”^s He repeatedly asserts that it was prescribed as an *evidence* of faith in him. In another place he styles it “the appointed *evidence* of our putting on Jesus Christ,” and affirms that “the church of Christ acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognise *any person* as his disciple who is not baptised in his name.”^t

Let us first ascertain the precise meaning

^s “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 18. ^t p. 140.

of these remarkable passages. He cannot be supposed to assert that baptism is *of itself* a sufficient evidence of saving faith: Simon Magus was baptised, who had no part or lot in the matter. His meaning must be, that the ordinance in question forms a necessary *part* of the evidence of faith, insomuch that in the absence of it, our Lord intended no other should be deemed valid. That this was the case in the primitive age, we feel no hesitation in affirming; we have also shewn at large the reason on which that conclusion is founded. But in no part of scripture is there the slightest intimation that it was more *specifically* intended as the test of faith, than compliance with any other part of the mind of Christ; or that it was *in any other sense* an evidence of the existence of that attainment, than as it was necessary to evince the possession of christian sincerity. Thus much we are most willing to concede, but are at a loss to know what is gained by it, unless our opponent could demonstrate that it occupies the same place at present, and that it is still necessary to constitute a valid evidence of faith in the Redeemer. If this is what he means to assert, (and nothing beside has the least relation to his argument) how will he reconcile it with the confidence he so often expresses of the piety of the Pædobaptists? His

objection to their communion, he elsewhere informs us, “does not arise from suspicions attaching to their christian character,”^v to which he trusts he is always willing to render ample justice. He has no suspicion of the piety of those who are destitute of that which Jesus Christ prescribed as *the evidence* of faith, and whom he affirms “it is impossible for the church, acting on the rule which he has laid down, to recognise as his disciples.” I am at a loss to conceive of a more palpable contradiction.

If there be any meaning in terms, the word evidence means that by which the truth of a fact or a proposition, is made manifest, and the absence of which induces either hesitation or denial. Its place in the intellectual world corresponds to light in the natural; and it is just as conceivable how an object can be beheld without light, as how a fact can be ascertained without evidence. Mr. Kinghorn it seems however has contrived to solve the problem; for while he affirms that the patrons of infant baptism are destitute of that which infinite wisdom has prescribed as the evidence of faith, and by which we are to recognise

^v “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 67.

his disciples, he expresses as firm a conviction of their piety as though they possessed it in the utmost perfection. Let me ask on what is his conviction founded—will he say upon evidence? But he assigns as a reason for refusing their fellowship, that they are destitute of that which Christ prescribed for that purpose. Will he distinguish betwixt that private evidence which satisfies his own mind, and the sort of evidence which Christ has demanded and enjoined? But what unheard-of presumption to oppose his private judgment to the dictates of Heaven; and while the Head of the Church has appointed the performance of a certain ceremony to be the invariable criterion of discipleship, to pretend in its absence, to ascertain it by another medium! To attempt to prove that every thing really is what God has appointed it, and that infinite wisdom where figurative language is excluded, calls things by their proper names, would be to insult the understanding of the reader. If compliance with adult baptism is in every age the appointed *evidence* of faith in Christ, it undoubtedly *is* what it pretends to be; and to ascribe faith to such as are destitute of it, is a sort of impiety.

“No church,” he assures us, “acting agree-

ably to the rules of Christ, can recognize them as his disciples." * What strange magic lies concealed in the word church! This writer in a multitude of places makes no scruple of avowing his attachment to the members of other denominations; he even anxiously guards against the supposition of his indulging a thought to the prejudice of their piety; and the sentiments which he entertains himself, he must be supposed to recommend to the adoption of his brethren. In his individual character, he feels no objection to *recognise* them to the full as Christians; nay, he expresses the sentiments of recognition in a studied variety of phrase; but the moment he conceives himself in a church, his tone is altered, and he feels himself compelled to treat them as strangers and foreigners. Why this contradiction betwixt the language of the individual, and the language of the church? If they *are* Christians, why should the knowledge of the fact be suppressed there? We are taught by St. Paul to consider the church as the pillar and ground of the truth; where she is supposed to exhibit as in a focus, the light and love which actuate her respective members; and instead of

* "Baptism a Term of Communion." p. 140.

dissonance betwixt her public principles, and the private sentiments of her members, we naturally look for a perfect harmony, or rather for a more illustrious exhibition of what every one thinks and feels apart—for a great and combined movement of charity, corresponding to her more silent and secret inspirations. But we are doomed to anticipate it in vain: for while the advocates of strict communion are shocked at the idea of suspecting the piety of their Pædobaptist brethren, they contend it would be criminal to recognise it in the church. What mysterious place is this, in which we are forbidden to acknowledge a truth proclaimed without scruple every where else; which possesses the property of darkening every object inclosed within its limits, and of rendering Christians invisible and impalpable to each other! In the broad day light of the world, notwithstanding their minor differences, they are recognised with facility; but the moment we enter the sombrous gloom of a baptist church, we are lost from each others view; and like those who visited the cave of Triphonius, return pale, dejected, and bewildered. Of such societies we might be almost tempted to exclaim—“ My soul, come not thou into their secret, and to their assembly be

not thou united!" Shocked as we are at such illiberality, we suppress the emotions which naturally arise on the occasion, remembering (strange as it may seem) how often it is associated with talents the most respectable, and piety the most fervent.

CHAP III.

THE SUPPOSED NECESSARY CONNECTION BETWIXT THE TWO POSITIVE INSTITUTES FARTHER DISCUSSED, WHEREIN OTHER ARGUMENTS ARE EXAMINED.

THE reader can scarcely be too often reminded that the present controversy turns *entirely* on the supposed necessary connection betwixt the two positive christian institutes; the recollection of which will at once convince him of the total *irrelevancy* of much which it has been customary to urge on the subject. Our opponents frequently reason in such a manner as would lead the reader to suppose we were aiming to set aside adult baptism. Thus they insist on the clearness with which it is enjoined and exemplified in the sacred volume, contend for its perpetuity, and represent us as depreciating its value, and dispensing with its obligation; topics which might be introduced with propriety in a dispute

with the people called Quakers, or with the followers of Mr. Emlyn ; but are perfectly irrelevant to the present inquiry. It surely requires but little attention to perceive that it is one thing to *tolerate*, and another to sanction ; that to affirm that each of the positive rites of religion ought to be attended to ; and that they are so *related*, that a mistake respecting one, instantly disqualifies for another, are not the same propositions. An attention to that distinction would have incredibly shortened the present debate ; and shewn the futility of much unmeaning declamation, and even of much unanswerable argument. We wish if possible to put an end to this *σκιωμαχια*, this fighting with shadows and beating the air ; and to confine the discussion to the *real question*, which is, whether the two positive ordinances of the New Testament are so *related to each other*, either in the nature of things, or by express command, that he whom we deem not baptised, is, *ipso facto*, or from that circumstance alone, disqualified for an attendance at the Lord's table. This, and this only, is the question in which we are concerned.

That there is not a necessary *connection* in the nature of things betwixt the two rites, appears from the slightest attention to their

nature. It will not be pretended that the Lord's supper is *founded* on baptism, or that it recognises a single circumstance belonging to it; nor will it be asserted to be a less reasonable service, or less capable of answering the design of its appointment, when attended to by a Pædobaptist, than by persons of our own persuasion. The event which it "shews forth" is one in which all denominations are equally interested; the sacrifice which it exhibits, is an oblation, of whose benefits they equally partake; and so little affinity does it bear to baptism, considered as a ceremony, that the most profound consideration of it will not suggest the idea of that rite. As far as reason is capable of investigating the matter, they appear *separate* ceremonies, no otherwise related, than as they emanate from the same source, and are prescribed to the same description of persons. In a word, judging from the reason of the case, we should not for a moment suspect that the obligation of commemorating the Saviour's death depended upon baptism: we should ascribe it at once to the injunction—"Do this in remembrance of me." Since positive duties arise (to human apprehension at least) from the mere will of the legislator, and not from immutable relations, their nature forbids the attempt to establish their inherent and essential connection.

In the present case it is sufficient for us to know, that whatever God has thought fit to enjoin, must be matter of duty; and it little becomes weak and finite mortals to limit its sphere, or explain away its obligation, by refined and subtle distinctions.

It remains to be considered whether the *necessary connection* we are seeking, can be found in positive prescription. We, again and again, call upon our opponents to shew us the passage of scripture which asserts that dependance of the Lord's supper on baptism, which their theory supposes; and here when we ask for bread, they give us a stone. They quote Christ's commission to his Apostles, where there is not a word upon the subject, and which is so remote from establishing the essential *connection* of the two ceremonies, that the mention of one of them only is included. They urge the conduct of the Apostles, though it is not only sufficiently accounted for on our principles, but is such as those *very principles* would, in their circumstances, have absolutely compelled us to adopt; and surely that must be a very cogent proof that the Apostles were of their sentiments, which is derived from a matter of fact, which would undeniably have been just what it is, on the contrary sup-

position. They baptised, because they were commanded to do so; they administered the Lord's supper, because our Saviour enjoined it on his disciples; and both these duties were prescribed to the societies they formed, because the nature and obligation of each were equally and perfectly understood. What is there in this, we ask, which our hypothesis forbids us to imitate, or which had we been in their place, our views would not have obliged us to adopt?

The late excellent Mr. Fuller, whose memory commands profound veneration, attempts in his posthumous tract on this subject, to establish the connection betwixt the two rites, by the joint allusion made to them in the Epistles of St. Paul. From their being *connected together* in his mind, on those occasions, he infers an inherent and essential connection. With this view, he adduces the tenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, which asserts that the ancient Israelites had a figurative baptism "in the cloud, and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that rock which followed them and that rock was Christ." "If the Apostle," he remarks, "had not connected baptism and the Lord's supper together in his

mind, how came he so pointedly to allude to them both in this passage?" He brings forward also another text to the same purpose, where St. Paul affirms we are all "baptised into one body, and are all made to drink into the same spirit." It is freely admitted that these, and perhaps other texts which might be adduced, afford examples of an allusion to the two ordinances at the same time, whence we may be certain that they were present together in the mind of the writer. But whoever considers the laws of association, must be aware how trivial a circumstance is sufficient to unite together in the mind, ideas of objects among which no essential relation subsists. The mere coincidence of time and place is abundantly sufficient for that purpose. In addressing a class of persons distinguished by the possession of peculiar privileges, what more natural than to combine them in a joint allusion, without intending to assert their relation or dependance; just as in addressing a British audience on a political occasion, the speaker may easily be supposed to remind them at the same time of their popular representation, of the liberty of the press, and the trial by jury, without meaning to affirm that they are incapable of being possessed apart. In fact the warmest advocates of *our* practice would

feel no sort of difficulty in adopting the same style, in an epistle to a church which consisted only of baptists: consequently nothing more can be inferred, than that the societies which St. Paul addressed were universally of that description: a fact we have already fully conceded. The only light in which it bears upon the subject is that which makes it perfectly coincide with the argument from primitive precedent, the futility of which has been sufficiently demonstrated.

The *unities* which the Apostle enumerates as belonging to Christians, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, are also set in opposition to us. "There is," saith he, "one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." That this text is irrelevant to the present argument, will appear from the following considerations. Since no mention is made of the Lord's supper, it cannot be intended to confirm, or illustrate, the relation which baptism bears to that ordinance, which is the only point in dispute. Next, it is very uncertain whether the Apostle refers to water baptism, or to the baptism of the spirit; but admitting that he intends the latter,

he asserts no more than we firmly believe, that there are not two, or more valid baptisms under the christian dispensation, but *one* only; a deviation from which, either with respect to the subject, or the mode, reduces it to a nullity. Lastly, since his avowed object in insisting upon these *unities*, was to persuade his reader to maintain inviolate that unity of the spirit, to which they were all subservient, it is extremely unreasonable to adduce this passage in defence of a practice which involves its subversion. "The same fountain," St. James tells us, "cannot send forth sweet waters and bitter:" but here we see an attempt to deduce discord from harmony; and to find an apology for dividing the mystical body of Christ, in the most pathetic persuasive to unity. The celebrated Whitby, a Pædobaptist and an Episcopalian, appears to have felt the full force of this admirable passage, when he deduces from it the three following propositions: 1st. "That sincere Christians only, are truly members of that church catholic, of which Christ is the Head. 2dly. That nothing can join any professor of Christianity, to this one body, but the participation of the spirit of Christ. 3dly. *That no error in judgment, or mistake in practice, which doth not tend to deprive a Christian of the spirit of Christ, can separate him from the*

church of Christ."^x Thus it is, that this learned commentator conceives himself to have discovered a demonstration of the principles we are abetting, in the very words our opponents urge for their overthrow.

Such is the substance of Mr. Fuller's argumentation on the subject; and on a basis so slight, did he attempt to rear the edifice of strict communion. In how different a light will he be viewed by posterity, as the victorious impugner of socinian and deistical impiety; and who on looking back on his achievements in that field, and comparing them with his feeble efforts in the present, but must exclaim with regret, *quantum mutatus ab illo!* Whether he felt some distrust of the ground he was treading, which for several reasons I strongly suspect; or whether it is to be ascribed to the infelicity of the subject, it is not easy to say; but his posthumous pamphlet on communion, will unquestionably be considered as the feeblest of all his productions. The worthy Editor probably calculated on great effects to arise from the dying suffrage of a man so highly esteemed; but before he ventured on a step so injurious to his fame, he should have remem-

^x Whitby in loco.

bered, that we live in an age not remarkably disposed to implicit faith, even in the greatest names.

But it is time to return to Mr. Kinghorn, with whose management of the subject we are at present more immediately concerned. As bold a polemic as Mr. Fuller was generally considered, he was pusillanimity itself compared to my present antagonist; who in the ardour of combat, has not scrupled to remove land marks which *he*, I am well persuaded, would have considered as sacred. It cannot be denied that he has infused by these means some novelty into the discussion, and that many of his arguments bear an original stamp; but whether that novelty is combined with truth, or that originality is such as will ultimately secure many imitators, or admirers, is another question.

Having already shewn that no *inherent* connection subsists betwixt the two *rites* under discussion, it remains to be considered, as we have already remarked, whether they are connected by *positive* law. Is there a single word in the New Testament which, fairly interpreted, can be regarded as a *prohibition* of the admission of unbaptised persons to the Lord's supper?

Let Mr. Kinghorn answer this question for

us: "*The New Testament*," he tells us, "*does not prohibit the unbaptised from receiving the Lord's supper, because no circumstance arose which rendered such prohibition necessary.*"³ Whether a prohibition was necessary, or not, involves a distinct inquiry; we request the readers attention to the important concession, that *it does not exist*. The reason he assigns, however, for its not being necessary is, that "it is acknowledged the law of baptism was clearly understood, and that the unbaptised could not be received into the church." "There was *therefore*," he adds, "no reason why a prohibitory declaration should exist." We fully agree with him, that at the period of which he is speaking, the law of baptism was fully understood; and *on that account*, we say, such as refused to obey it, could not be received into the church. We also admit that while there was this clear understanding, no such prohibition, as we demand, was requisite. But if it was rendered *unnecessary* because of this clear understanding, as this writer informs us, must it not by his own allowance become necessary, when that understanding ceases? If the presence of one thing *makes* another *unnecessary*, must not the ab-

³ "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 32.

sence of the same thing, restore the necessity?

In the present instance the *only* reason he assigns for an express prohibition *not* being then necessary, is, that the ordinance of baptism was *perfectly understood*; surely if this be the *only* reason, the necessity must return when that reason ceases; in other words, there will be a necessity for an express prohibition of the unbaptised, whenever the precept respecting baptism, ceases to be understood. Has it, or has it not, ceased (in our apprehension) to be understood by modern Pædobaptists? If it be admitted that it has, then, on his own principle, an express prohibition of the unbaptised to receive the Lord's supper has become necessary. But he acknowledges none exists; whence the only conclusion to be deduced, is, either that the word of God has omitted what is necessary in itself, or (which is rather more probable) what is necessary to support *his hypothesis*. The word of God, it should be remembered, makes adequate provision for the direction of the faithful in every age, being written under the guidance of that Spirit, to whom the remotest futurity was present; and though it was by no means requisite to specify the errors, which were foreseen to arise, it is not a sufficient rule, unless

it enables us to discover which of these are, and which are not, to be tolerated in the church. The doctrine which asserts that baptism is an indispensable requisite to communion, this Writer expressly informs us was not promulgated to the primitive Christians, because they did not need it: their clear understanding of the nature of the ceremony, was sufficient of itself to secure an attention to it, in the *absence* of that doctrine. This is equivalent to an acknowledgment, if there be any meaning in terms, that if they had not had the clear comprehension of the ordinance which he ascribes to them, they would have needed that truth to be propounded, which in their situation was safely suppressed. But if the primitive Christians would have found such information necessary, how is it that the modern Pædobaptists, who are, according to our principles, precisely in the situation here supposed, can dispense with it? What should prevent them from turning upon Mr. Kinghorn, and saying—We judge ourselves baptised; but supposing we are not, you assert that there is no scriptural prohibition of the unbaptised approaching the Lord's table, which you yet acknowledge would have been necessary to justify the repelling of primitive Christians from that privilege, had it not been for their perfect

knowledge of the nature of baptism. But a you will not assert that *we* possess that knowledge, how will you defend yourself in treating us in a manner which, by your own concession, the Apostles would not have been justified in treating their immediate converts.

It was generally supposed that the abettors of strict communion imagined some *peculiar* connection betwixt baptism and the Lord's supper beyond what subsists betwixt that ceremony, and other parts of Christianity. Our present opponent disclaims that notion. "If the above evidence," he says, "be justly stated, there is a real instituted connection between baptism and the whole of the succeeding christian profession. So that there is no reason why the connection between baptism and the Lord's supper should be more distinctly marked, than between baptism and any other duty or privilege."^z But if this be the case, why do they confine their restriction to the mere act of communion at the Lord's table? In every other respect they feel no scruple in acknowledging the members of other denominations as Christians: they join with them in the most sacred duties; they interchange devo-

^z "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 30.

tional services; they profess to value, and not unfrequently condescend to intreat, an interest in their prayers. In a word, no one who had not witnessed their commemoration of the Lord's supper, would suspect they made any distinction. There are a thousand acts which they perform towards such as practise infant sprinkling, which would be criminal and absurd on any other supposition, than that of their being members of Christ, and coheirs of eternal life. By the mouth of our Author, whom they are proud of considering as their organ, they inform us that every other duty and privilege is as much dependant on baptism, as the celebration of the Eucharist; yet it is *this* duty and *this* privilege alone, in which they refuse to participate with Christians of other persuasions. How will they reconcile their practice and their theory; or rather, how escape the ridicule attached to such a glaring contradiction? The Sandemanian Baptists have taken care to shelter themselves from such animadversions, by a stern and consistent process of intolerance; but the English Baptists appear to resemble Ephraim, who mixed himself with the nations, and was a cake half turned. Is there no duty, is there no privilege, characteristic of a Christian, but what is included in receiving the sacrament? How is it that they

have presumed to break down the sacred fence, to throw all open, and make all things common, with the exception of one narrow inclosure? What in the mean time becomes of apostolic practice, and ancient precedent? How admirably are these illustrated by their judicious selection of the Lord's table, as the spot over which to suspend the ensigns of party.

When we read of Priscilla and Aquila taking Apollos home, and instructing him in the way of the Lord more perfectly, we give full credit to the narrative; but had we been informed that these excellent persons, after hearing him with great delight, refused his admission to the supper of the Lord, on account of some diversity of opinion, or of practice; the consent of all the manuscripts and versions in the world, would have been insufficient to overcome the incredulity arising from an instantaneous conviction of its total repugnance to the maxims and principles of primitive Christianity. Yet this would have been nothing more than an anticipation of the practice of our opponents.

They attempt to justify themselves in this particular, on two grounds; first, that they "do nothing more than their opponents;" and "where their conduct is deemed the most exceptionable,

they only copy the example which the Pædobaptists set before them, and support by pre-eminent talents.”^a *They do nothing more than their opponents.* What then? *we* hold no principle inconsistent with our practice; *we* have not confined the profession of Christianity to ourselves; much less are we accustomed to make a practical distinction betwixt the participation of the Eucharist, and other duties and privileges, after stating in so many words, that the scripture authorises no such distinction. The plea derived from the disposition of Pædobaptists to cultivate a religious intercourse, we leave to be answered by himself, who has told us that “we meet on unequal terms.” “The latter (Pædobaptists) surrender no principle, they do not unite with those whom they deem unbaptised.”^b

Their other pretence is, that “prayer and praise are not *exclusive* ordinances of the church; that they were in being before it was formed, and have been parts of true religion under every dispensation.”^c But is it not the peculiar prerogative of the faithful to offer *acceptable* devotion? Is not *prayer in the name of Jesus* a peculiarity of the new dispen-

^a “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 173. ^b p. 64. ^c p. 175.

sation, and is not the requesting a Pædobaptist to present it on our behalf, as clear an acknowledgment of his Christianity, as admitting him to communion; and consequently as incompatible with his own maxim: that the “church of Christ acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognize *any* person as his disciple, who is not baptised in his name.”

Mr. Kinghorn is bound by his own declaration in his treatment of other denominations, to abstain from every action which will imply an explicit acknowledgment of their being Christians; so that as far as he is concerned, it is of no consequence whatever, whether prayer or praise belong to natural, or revealed religion, or whether they are, or are not, exclusive ordinances of the church: the only question is whether the reciprocation of such services with other denominations, be not a recognition of their Christianity. If it be, he is by his acknowledgment as much obliged to abandon it, as the practice of strict communion, and exactly for the same reason; since he informs us that his objections to that practice are not founded on any *peculiar* connection betwixt communion and baptism, but on the common relation which the latter bears to “all the duties of Christianity.”

The preceding remarks are more than sufficient to evince his inconsistency with himself; which, however glaring, is not more so than his deviation from ancient precedent. That the first Christians did not interchange religious services, with those, with whom they refused to *communicate*; that they did not countenance in the exercise of their ministry, men whom they refused to acknowledge as members of the church, it would be ridiculous to attempt to prove; the fact will be instantly admitted. Let it be also remembered, that this deviation is of far greater magnitude, than that with which we are accused. Who that remembers that the Kingdom of God is not meats or drinks, that its nature is spiritual, not ritual, can doubt that the moral duties of religion, the love of the brethren, with its diversified fruits and effects, taken in their whole extent, form a more important object than the single observation of the Eucharist.

Mr. Kinghorn himself deprecates the very suspicion of placing even baptism, in point of importance, on a level with the least of the moral precepts of Christ. But with respect to the whole of these, they allow themselves to depart as far from scriptural precedent, in its literal interpretation, as ourselves. In the

affair of communion, they boast of adhering to "that plain rule of conduct (to adopt my opponent's words) *so did the Apostles, and therefore so do we.*"^d But here their conformity stops: in every other branch of social religion, in whatever respects the interior of the kingdom, they claim the liberty of treating the unbaptised in precisely the same manner with members of their own denomination; wherein they pronounce their own condemnation; for what should prevent us from retorting, "*so did not the Apostles, but so do ye?*"

The distress and embarrassment which the consciousness of this glaring inconsistency occasioned the venerable Booth, are sufficiently depicted in his Apology. The sturdy saint perfectly reels and staggers under its insupportable weight; which, to use the language of Archbishop Tillotson, is a millstone round the neck of strict communion, which will inevitably sink it into perdition; an incongruity which the most obtuse understanding perceives, and no degree of acumen can defend; and which so totally annuls the plea of original precedent, which is their sheet anchor, as to leave it doubtful whether its advocates are most

^d "Baptism a Term of Communion." p. 93

at variance with the Apostles, or with themselves. The venerable apologist has recourse to the same distinctions with the present Writer; but with so little success, and apparently with so little satisfaction to himself, that if the spirit of controversy did not blunt our sensibility, we should sincerely sympathise with his distress. It is humiliating to see the manly and majestic mind of a Booth stooping to such miserable logomachies.

The advocates of the restrictive system must change their ground; they *must* either go forwards, or backwards. They have already conceded so much to the members of other denominations, that if they would preserve the least show of consistency, they must either concede more, or withdraw what they have granted. They have most unreasonably and capriciously stopped, and fixed their encampment where no mortal before ever thought of staying for a moment. They have already made such near approaches to the great body of those whom we deem unbaptised, as places them at an unmeasurable distance from the *letter* of the apostolic precedent, though in perfect harmony with its spirit; while they preposterously cling to that letter, as the reason for refusing to go an inch farther. They remain

immoveable (to change the figure) not because they rest on any solid basis, but because they are suspended betwixt the love of the brethren, and the remains of intolerance; just as Mahomet's tomb is said to hang betwixt two magnets of equal powers, placed in opposite directions.

The Scottish Baptists (as I have been informed) act consistently. Conceiving with Mr. Kinghorn that immersion on a profession of faith, is a necessary introduction to the christian profession, they uniformly abstain from a participation in sacred offices with the members of other societies, and without pretending to judge of their final state, treat them on every occasion as men, whose religious pretensions are doubtful. Whoever considers the import of the following passage, will be surprised Mr. Kinghorn should feel any hesitation in adopting the same system. "It is granted," says our Author, "that baptism is not expressly inculcated as a preparative to the Lord's supper; neither is it inculcated as a preparative to any thing else. But the *first* act of christian obedience, is of course succeeded by the rest; and the required acknowledgment of our faith in Christ, in the nature of things, ought to

precede the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith.”^e

By the *first* act of christian obedience, he unquestionably intends the reception of baptism; and the meaning of the sentence turns entirely on the word *first*. He designs to assert, that such is the prescribed order of religious actions—that unless that ordinance is *first* attended to, every other performance is invalid; that whatever it may be in itself, not occupying its proper place, it cannot lay claim to the character of a duty. We should be extremely concerned at imposing a false construction on his words; but if this is not his meaning, we despair of discovering it. But if our interpretation is just, unless we can conceive of a religion availing for eternal life, in the total absence of duties, it is equivalent to asserting, that none besides our denomination possess true religion. He expressly tells us every other duty must *succeed*, that is, must come *after* baptism, which with respect to Pædobaptists, is impossible on our principles; whence it necessarily follows, that while they retain their sentiments, they are disqualified for

^e “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 30.

the performance of duty. The only conceivable method of evading this conclusion, is to make a distinction, and to affirm that though baptism ought, agreeably to the institution of Christ, to *precede* the other branches of religion, yet that when it is omitted from a misconception or mistake, the omission is not of such magnitude as to prevent their being accepted. But should our Author explain himself in this manner, he will not only coincide with us, but his argument for strict communion is relinquished. Having acknowledged that “the connection between baptism and the Lord’s supper is *not more distinctly* marked in scripture, than between that ordinance and any other duty,^f were he now to make a distinction in favor of the sacrament, and confine their disqualification to that particular, he would be guilty of an express contradiction. Nor are his words susceptible of such an interpretation. The assertion he makes is in the form of a general proposition; which is that *all* the duties of Christianity must succeed baptism, in contradiction to going before it; and the disqualification for the Lord’s supper, which he represents the Pædobaptists as lying under,

^f “Baptism a Term of Communion.” p. 30.

is inferred solely from the consideration of its constituting a part of those duties.

Thus much for the *duties*; let us next hear what he says of the *privileges* of Christianity. Baptism, which he styles "the required acknowledgment of our faith in Christ," he tells us, "ought to *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith." They *ought* to precede, but *do* they in fact? Is it *his* opinion that all other sects, as a punishment for their disobedience in one particular, are left destitute of the spiritual immunities which flow from faith? If it is not, it behoves him to reflect on the presumption of such a mode of speaking, which is little less than arraigning the wisdom of the great Head of the Church, who dispenses his favours in a manner so different from that which he ventures to prescribe. Should he reply, that Jesus Christ, as a Sovereign, is at liberty to act as he pleases, but that we are under an obligation of adhering to the settled order of his house; it is easy to perceive that this evasion is neither consistent with truth, nor sufficient to establish his consistency with himself. Are not his partizans in the daily habit of exhibiting towards the members of other societies,

tokens of their fraternal regard, of inviting them to every branch of christian fellowship, short of admission to the sacrament: will they deny that the communion of saints, even in the absence of that institution, is an important privilege?

In the next place, to represent the bestowment of spiritual blessings on the great body of the faithful, through the lapse of fifteen centuries, whose salvability, it is confessed, is capable of demonstration from scripture; to speak of this, as an extraordinary and extrajudicial procedure, is to confound the most obvious distinctions.

The terms of salvation, which are radically faith and repentance, are clearly propounded in the word of God; and surely it will not be doubted that multitudes out of the pale of our sect, have exhibited such proofs of their possessing these qualifications, that their enjoyment of the divine favour is not to be ascribed to a secret economy, similar to what has been conjectured by some to extend to virtuous Pagans. Where revelation is silent, it becomes us to copy its reserve: but in the present instance, so far is this from being the case, that few propositions are more sus-

ceptible of proof from that quarter, than that an error with respect to a positive rite is not fatal; whence the necessary inference is, that the bestowment of his favours on such as labour under that imperfection, is a known part of his conduct: that it is not only his intention so to act, but that he has taken effectual care to inform us of it; not, we presume, for the purpose of enabling us to contradict it, but as a pattern for our humble imitation.

When the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles assembled in the house of Cornelius, though he had a short time before doubted the lawfulness even of eating with them, he considered it as such a seal of the divine approbation, that he felt no hesitation in immediately admitting them to all the privileges of the church. He did not presume (with reverence be it spoken) to be stricter or more orderly than God: "Forasmuch," said he, "as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed, who was I that I should withstand God?" a question which we presume to recommend to the serious consideration of Mr. Kinghorn and his associates. The principle on which he justified his conduct is plainly this, that when it is once ascertained that an individual is the object of divine acceptance, it would be impious

to withhold from him any religious privilege. Until it be shewn that this was not the principle on which he rested his defence, or that the practice of strict communion is consistent with it, we shall feel ourselves compelled to discard with just detestation, a system of action which St. Peter contemplated with horror, as *withstanding God*: and when I consider it in this just and awful light, I feel no hesitation in avowing my conviction that it is replete with worse consequences, and is far more offensive to God, than that corruption of a christian ordinance, to which it is opposed. The latter affects the exterior only of our holy religion, the former its vitals; where it inflicts a wound on the very heart of charity, and puts the prospect of union among Christians to an interminable distance.

This new doctrine, that the tenure by which religious privileges are held, is appropriated to the members of one inconsiderable sect, must strike the serious reader with astonishment. Are we in reality the only persons who possess an interest in the common salvation? If we are not, by what title do others possess it? Certainly not in consequence of their faith, for we are expressly taught by this Writer, that baptism must *precede* the enjoyment of

the privileges which arise from faith; * in which however he expressly contradicts himself, for he assures us that none are fit subjects of baptism, who are not previously believers in Christ, and *justified in the sight of God by their faith*. He must either say then, that they lose their justification, unless they comply with that ordinance; or present us with the portentous doctrine of a justification which stands alone, a widowed and barren justification, productive of no advantage to its possessor.

Let it also be seriously considered, whether the positions we have been examining, do not coincide with the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, the opprobrium of the Romish church. But as some of my readers may not be acquainted with the meaning of those terms, it is proper to remark, that the church of Rome attributes the highest spiritual benefits to certain corporeal actions, or ceremonies, independent of the character and disposition of the performer. For example, she believes that the ceremony of baptism, secures to the unconscious infant by its intrinsic efficacy the infusion of regenerating grace, without regard to the intention, or disposition of the parties

* "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 30

concerned; and that the element of bread in the sacrament, operates in the same manner in procuring the pardon, and augmenting the grace of the communicant. Hence the members of that church, lay little stress on the exercise of faith, and the cultivation of holy dispositions, compared to the dependance they place on "bodily exercise," on masses, penances, auricular confessions, and a multitude of external observances, which form the substance of their religion. Consistent Protestants on the contrary, while they conscientiously attend to every positive institute, according to the measure of their light, look upon the few and simple ceremonies of the gospel, as incapable of affording the smallest benefit, apart from the dispositions and intentions with which they are performed; agreeably to the doctrine of our Saviour, who tells us, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." To expatiate on the incalculable mischiefs which have arisen from this doctrine, is foreign to our purpose; suffice it to remark that it is held in just detestation by all enlightened Christians.

Our business is to shew the coincidence of

Mr. Kinghorn's principles, with that most dangerous and exploded tenet. He contends that the mere absence of a ceremony, or if you please, an incorrect manner of performing it, is of *itself* sufficient, exclusive of every other consideration, to incur the forfeiture of christian privileges; of the *privileges in general* which arise from faith.^b It is not, according to him, merely the forfeiture of a title to the Eucharist which it involves; *that* he informs us is not more affected by it than *any other privilege*: it is the universal privation of christian immunities which is the immediate consequence of that omission; and as he acknowledges that many to whom it attaches, are regenerated, they must consequently be endowed with right dispositions. For what is that renovation of mind which can exist without them? But if such as are possessed of these in the most eminent degree, which he acknowledges is the case with some Pædo-baptists, are yet debarred from spiritual privileges, wherein does this differ from ascribing that efficacy to an external rite, which is supposed in the doctrine of the *opus operatum*: and if those who have faith are not entitled

^b "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 30.

to the benefits which result from it, because a certain ceremony is wanting, how is it possible to ascribe more to that ceremony?

Whatever degree of prejudice or inattention we may be disposed to impute to some of the advocates of infant baptism, it would be the highest injustice to comprehend them all, under the same censure. There are those no doubt, who, without adopting our views, have exercised as much thought, and exerted as much impartiality on the subject, as our observation authorises us to expect from the brightest specimens of human nature: nay, this Author admits that "it is possible they may be some of the most exalted characters in point of piety."¹ But it surely cannot be doubted that they who merit this encomium, are as *conscientious* in their performance of infant, as we in the administration of adult baptism; and as they are, by the very supposition, actuated by dispositions exactly the same, the pure intention of pleasing and glorifying God; if we still conceive them deprived of the privileges which we possess, the difference must be ascribed merely to a ceremony, and the *opus operatum*

¹ "Baptism a Term of Communion," p.

returns in its full force. This however is too faint a statement. It returns in a form more aggravated; for the Papist only contends for a mysterious union betwixt the outward rite and the inward grace, to which the regenerating influence is immediately ascribed, and from which it is considered as inseparable; whereas on the present hypothesis, regeneration and faith are supposed to exist in the absence of the ceremony, but to be deprived of their prerogatives. The system of the Papist exalts the ritual part of religion to an unwarrantable height, without depreciating the spiritual and internal; the system of my opponent does both.

Thus I have endeavoured to examine with the utmost care and impartiality, whatever our Author has advanced, in order to prove the *necessary connection* betwixt the two positive ordinances under consideration. My apology for extending the discussion to a length tedious, it is feared, to the reader, is that this is the point on which the whole controversy hinges. As far as its real merits are concerned, I might therefore be excused from pursuing the subject farther. If the arguments of Mr. Kinghorn, on this head, are satisfactorily refuted,

and the contradictions and absurdities into which he has fallen, laid open to the reader, he is already sufficiently answered. That he has taken different ground from his venerable predecessor, will not be disputed. He has argued from premises, and adopted principles, to which that excellent person made no approach. Mr. Booth, whatever was his success, remained on *terra firma*: our Author has attempted a flight beyond "the diurnal orb," but approaching too near the sun, his pinnions are melted; and his fall will be conspicuous, in exact proportion to the elevation to which he has aspired. He was determined to give the controversy a new and imposing aspect; and conscious that the practice which he undertook to defend, had been hitherto rested on no very distinct basis, he determined to dig deep for a foundation, and in so doing, has disturbed the most received opinions, and endangered the most momentous truths. Were I permitted to prognosticate his fate, I should say that his paradoxical mode of defence, whatever applause it may meet with at present, will, in the end, be of infinite injury to the cause; and his treatise, like the little book in the Apocalypse, be "sweet in the mouth, and bitter in the belly."

But though what has already been advanced, may be considered as comprehending all that is essential in the controversy; as he has thought fit to introduce other topics, the reader is requested to exercise his patience, while we reply to his most important observation, on each of these; after which we shall endeavour to shew the futility of the answer he has attempted, to the principal arguments adduced in favour of our practice.

PART II.

*The Collateral Topics introduced by Mr. Kinghorn,
considered.*

CHAP. IV.

THE CHARGE OF DISPENSING WITH A CHRISTIAN ORDINANCE,
CONSIDERED.

AMONG the various objections to the system we wish to see universally adopted in our churches, there is none more frequently insisted upon, than that of its implying a right to *dispense* with a command of Christ.¹ Though the treatise on terms of communion, contains a clear answer to this accusation, yet as it is again brought forward by our Author, with

¹ Here the following question deserves our serious regard. first, Have we any right to dispense with a clear command of Christ? — *Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 90.

unabated confidence, a fuller reply may be deemed requisite.

This writer supposes that the expression "dispensing power" so often used in this controversy, was first suggested by the conduct of Charles the Second, in granting indulgence to the dissenters beyond the allowance of law, a measure which was afterwards adopted for similar purposes, by James his Successor. It is surprising a person of Mr. Kinghorn's acknowledged learning, should fall into such an error; that he should not know that the doctrine of dispensation, was familiar to preceding ages, and was the subject of much subtle disquisition, and of many refined distinctions among legal writers. It is impossible but that he must have read in ecclesiastical history, of the power of dispensation assumed by the Pope, which formed a principal branch of the papal revenue, and the exertion of which, was regulated by the dictates of the most artful policy. He cannot surely have forgotten, that the refusal to exercise this prerogative, when it was demanded in order to gratify the capricious passions of Henry the Eighth, was the immediate occasion of the reformation in England.

The power of dispensation, is the power of setting aside the law in a particular instance.

It may be exerted by the legislature, or by the executive branch of government, under certain regulations, and to a certain extent, previously settled, and provided for, by the original constitution of the state. As the operation of law is general, and the actions to which it applies are susceptible of endless modifications and varieties, some such power may be occasionally requisite to adopt it more perfectly to unexpected emergencies, and by a deviation from the latter, to secure its spirit and design. There is one circumstance, however, which is invariably attached to the exercise of this prerogative, which shews the impropriety of making it the ground of accusation, in the present controversy. It always implies a *known*, and *conscious* departure from the law. He who claims a dispensing power, asserts his right to deviate from the letter of legal enactments; but whoever merely misinterprets their meaning, and on that account applies them to a case which they were not designed to comprehend, or neglects to carry them into execution within their proper sphere; (as his conduct is consistent with the utmost reverence for the law,) is at a great remove from exerting a dispensing power. He betrays his ignorance, but usurps nothing.

When the Pope granted a dispensation, enabling certain persons to marry, within the prohibited degrees, he sanctioned an acknowledged violation of the ecclesiastical canons; just as Charles the First, and James the Second, in their respective proclamations of indulgence to tender consciences, proceeded in direct opposition to existing statutes. But we are conscious of no such procedure: if we err, we err from ignorance. We contend that the law is in our favor; and challenge our opponents to prove the contrary: we ask what prohibition we violate by the practice of admitting good men to communion, though they are not supposed to be baptised? This writer acknowledges there is none, but attempts to supply the defect by general reasoning, which appears to us inconclusive. Such is precisely the state of the dispute; not whether we have a right to depart from the law, but whether there be any law, to which our practice is opposed. We acknowledge the immersion of believers in the name of Christ, is a duty of perpetual obligation; we are convinced of the same respecting the commemoration of our Saviour's passion. Both these duties we accordingly urge on the followers of Christ, by such arguments as the scriptures supply; but when we are not so happy as to produce conviction, we admit them

without scruple to the fellowship of the church, not because we conceive ourselves to possess a dispensing power, a pretension most foreign from our thoughts, but because we sincerely believe them entitled to it, by the tenor of the christian covenant, and that we should be guilty of highly offending Christ by their refusal. The law which we are supposed to violate in this instance, we affirm is a mere human invention, a mere fiction of the brain, entirely unsupported by the word of God; which distinctly lays down two positive institutes, baptism and the Lords supper, but suggests nothing from which we can conclude that they rest upon each other, rather than that the obligation of both, is founded on the express injunction of the legislator. It is our opponents, we assert, who in the total silence of scripture have presumed to promulgate a law, to which they claim the submission, due only to the voice of God. Hence the charge of usurping a dispensing power is most preposterous, since it is incapable of being sustained for a moment, until it is demonstrated that the law is in their favor; and when this is accomplished, we pledge ourselves to relinquish our practice immediately; but till it is, to assume it as a medium of proof, is a palpable *petitio principii*, it is begging the question in debate.

We repeat again, what was observed in the former treatise, that this charge owes its plausibility entirely to the equivocal use of terms. As we do not insist upon baptism as a term of communion, we may be said *quoad hoc*, or so far, to dispense with it; just as our opponents may be said to dispense with that particular opinion, the doctrine of election for example, which, while they firmly adhere to it themselves, they refrain from attempting to force on the consciences of others; on which occasion a rigid Calvinist might with the same propriety exclaim that they are guilty of dispensing with the truth of God.

So remote is our practice from implying the claim of superiority to law, that it is in our view the necessary result of obedience to that comprehensive precept—"Receive ye one another, even as Christ has received you to the glory of the Father." If the practice of toleration is admitted at all, it must have for its object some supposed deviation from truth, or failure of duty; and as there is no transgression where there is no law, and every such deviation must be opposed to a rule of action, if the forbearance exercised towards it, is assuming a dispensing power, the accusation equally lies against all parties, except such as

insist upon an absolute uniformity. In every instance, he who declines insisting on an absolute rectitude of opinion or practice, as the term of union, is liable to the same charge as is adduced against the indulgence for which we are pleading. If the precise view which each individual entertains of the rule of faith and practice, is to be enforced on every member as the condition of fellowship, the duty of "forbearing with each other" is annihilated: but if something short of this is insisted on, what is wanting to come up to the perfection of the rule, is in the sense of our opponents, dispensed with. Behold then the *dispensing power* rises in all its terrors; nor will it be possible to form a conception of an act of toleration where it is not included. Such is the inevitable consequence, if the charge is attached simply to our not insisting upon what we esteem a revealed duty; but if it is sustained on the ground of the necessary dependance of one christian rite upon another, it is plainly preposterous, since this is the very position we deny; it forms the very gist of the dispute; the proof which will at once consign it to oblivion. The objection, in this form, is nothing more than an enunciation, in other terms, of our actual practice.

In every controversy, the medium by which a disputed point is attempted to be disproved, should contain something distinct from the position itself, or no progress is made. There may be a shew of reasoning, but nothing more. It is also necessary, that the medium of proof, or confutation, should contain some proposition, about which both parties are agreed. But what is the case here? Our opponents object that we exercise a dispensing power. How does this appear? Because while we acknowledge baptism to be a duty, we do not invariably demand it as a preliminary to church fellowship. Now let me ask, is this statement any thing more than a mere definition, or description of the practice, which is the subject of debate; so that if an enquiry were made, what we mean by open communion, in what other terms, could the answer be couched? The intelligent reader will instantly perceive, that the medium of proof involves, neither more or less, than the proposition to be refuted. Perhaps they will reply no: you are guilty of dispensing with the law, not merely because baptism is a duty, but because the Head of the Church has made it an indispensable prerequisite to christian fellowship. Here the medium is indeed sufficiently distinct from the proposition which it is intended to confute, but it is

so far from being agreed upon between the parties, that it forms the very subject of debate. In other words, they take for granted the very position on which the controversy turns, and then convert their arbitrary assumption, into an argument. Thus in whatever light it is viewed, the odious imputation with which they attempt to load us, falls to the ground; and merely shews with what facility they can *dispense* with the rules of logic.

Near akin to this, is the charge of "sanctioning" a corruption of a christian ordinance. But how the mere act of communion with a christian brother, whose practice we judge to be erroneous in a certain particular, can be justly considered as conferring a sanction on his error, is not a little mysterious. If this is a fair construction, it must proceed upon the general principle, that communion sanctions all the imperfections, speculative and practical, of the members whom it includes; and thus our opponents must be understood to approve all the perverse tempers, and erroneous views, of the individuals whom they receive into fellowship. Will they abide by this consequence? But how is it possible to escape it, if to tolerate and to sanction, to forbear and to approve, are the same thing? Will they assert that

St. Paul was prepared to exclude the members of the church at Corinth, against whose irregularities he so warmly protested; or affirm that by declining such a step, he sanctioned the schisms and tumults, the backbitings, whisperings, and swellings, which he reproved with so much severity. The idea is too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment, but not more than the present allegation.

Were an impartial spectator to witness the celebration of the sacrament by persons of different denominations, what would he infer? That they considered each other as beings "without fault before God," with nothing in their sentiments liable to correction, or in their characters susceptible of improvement? No: The only conclusion which he could consistently draw would be, that they looked upon each other as pardoned sinners, washed in the same fountain, sanctified, though imperfectly, by the same Spirit, and fellow-travellers to the same celestial city.

We must either seek a church such as is not to be found upon earth, or be content to associate with men compassed with infirmities; prepared to exercise towards others the forbearance and indulgence which we need, and

to exhibit on every occasion the humility becoming those who are conscious that in "many things we all offend."

Besides as our author acknowledges that baptism is not to be "compared in importance with the least of Christ's moral precepts," against which men of unquestionable piety are perpetually offending, to a greater or less extent; where is the consistency of being more solicitous to avoid the appearance of sanctioning ceremonial, than moral disobedience?

The following sentiment, marked in italics, and delivered with the solemnity of an oracle, is characterised by the same spirit of extravagance. "*The supposition itself,*" our author says, "that toleration and forbearance will justify us in allowing an omission of any law of Christ in his church, operates as a repeal of that law, and would generally be deemed unreasonable."^k As all duty bears respect to a law, it is impossible to conceive of its omission, without supposing an equal omission of the law.

He illustrates his assertion by referring to the legal qualification, in landed property, re-

^k "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 53.

quired in a candidate for a seat in parliament; where it is evident that to render the cases parallel, it must be assumed, that baptism is by the appointment of the Head of the Church, the necessary qualification for the rights of fellowship, which is the very point in debate; so that we have here another instance of that habit of begging the question, with which he is so familiar. On what occasion has he found us concede what is taken for granted in this illustration; or who would be so absurd, after such a concession, as to pursue the argument any further?

The proposition itself is as untenable, as its illustration is irrelevant. If every rule of action is repealed, the moment its omission, whether partial or total, whether occasional or habitual, whether intentional or unintentional, is the object of forbearance, a repeal is the necessary concomitant of every conceivable instance of toleration. For say, on supposition, the will of Christ were perfectly complied with, in doctrine and in practice, what possible room would there be for mutual forbearance? What, to speak of forbearance, when all is right! Is perfection then the object of toleration? But just in proportion as imperfection exists, some law, some rule

of conduct, must be neglected, "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." Will it be affirmed, that when St. Paul censured with so much severity, the swellings, the tumults, the whisperings and the back-bitings, which prevailed in the church of Corinth, who were ready to devour each other; when he found it necessary to remind them, that the unjust should not inherit the Kingdom of God, did he after all perceive in them no omission of a law of Christ? This surely none will affirm; and as he still continued to exercise forbearance, without the slightest intimation of an intention to exclude them, he was guilty, on Mr. Kinghorn's principles, of repealing the commands of God. As the evils tolerated were of a moral nature, and he tells us, that he is far from "equalising baptism with the least of Christ's moral precepts;" if in spite of his own concession, he now assigns it a superiority, what is this but a palpable contradiction? But to say that a mistake respecting the nature of a christian ordinance, is not to be borne with in religious society, while evils of a moral kind are, and must be tolerated, is to mark its pre-eminence, in a manner the most unequivocal.

The mistakes into which he has fallen in this short passage, are so gross and so many,

that they deserve a distinct enumeration. First, By affirming that to endure, under any circumstances, the omission of a rule of action, is to repeal it, he has reduced the very conception of toleration to an impossibility. Secondly, As there can be no moral imperfection, but what involves, at least, an occasional omission of a moral precept, the least of which he affirms, is of greater moment than baptism; he must either contend for the propriety of setting aside forbearance altogether, or must be understood to select for its object the greater, in preference to the least of two evils. Thirdly, In assuming it for granted, that there is a law in existence, which universally prohibits the unbaptised from communion, he assumes the whole question in debate; and if no such rule is admitted, how is it possible we should be guilty of repealing it. Fourthly, In stigmatising the practice of not invariably insisting on a compliance with primitive baptism, in order to fellowship, as a virtual repeal of the precept which enjoins it, while we inculcate it as a divine command, and testify our disapprobation of its neglect, is a strange abuse of terms, founded on the following principle; that whatever is not absolutely and invariably required as a term of communion, is virtually repealed; whence it ne-

cessarily follows, that the whole of that duty in which the church of Corinth was defective, that whole portion of the mind of Christ, which they failed to exemplify, was considered by St. Paul as no longer binding, since however it might excite his concern, and draw forth his rebuke, the *want* of it, it is evident, did not prevent his forbearance. Will he abide by this inference? If he declines it, let him shew, if he is able, why it is less applicable, to the conduct of St. Paul, than to ours?

That we do not repeal the ordinance, by which our denomination is distinguished, considered as a *duty*, is a fact, of which we give ocular demonstration, as often as it is celebrated. True, say our opponents, but you repeal it, as a necessary preliminary to the Lord's supper. To which the answer is obvious: first prove that it is so, and then should we continue obstinate, load us as much as you please, with the opprobrium of abrogating a divine command. But cease to run round this miserable circle, of first assuming the existence of a law, confining communion within certain limits, then accusing us of repealing it, and lastly of finding us guilty of transgressing the prescribed bounds, on the ground of that repeal.

He who repeals a rule of action, reduces the system of duty to exactly the same state, as though it had never existed. Whenever we are convicted of doing this, whenever we teach the nullity of baptism, or inculcate a habit of indifference, respecting either the mode, or the subject of that ordinance, we will bow to the justice of the charge; but till then, we feel justified in treating it with the neglect due to an attempt to convince without logic, and to criminate without guilt.

The *πρωτον ψευδος*, the radical fallacy of the whole proceeding, consists in confounding an interpretation of the law, however just, with the law itself; in affirming of the first, whatever is true of the last; and of subverting, under that pretext, the right of private judgment. The interpretation of a rule is, to him who adopts it, equally binding with the rule itself, because every one must act on his own responsibility; but he has no authority whatever to bind it on the conscience of his brother, and to treat him who receives it not, as though he were at direct issue with the legislator. It is this presumptuous claim of infallibility, this assumption of the prerogative of Christ, this disposition to identify ourselves with him, and to place our conclusions on a footing with his man-

dates, that is the secret spring of all that intolerance which has so long bewitched the world with her sorceries, from the elevation of papal Rome, where she thunders and lightens from the Vatican, down to baptist societies, where "she whispers feebly from the dust."

This Writer has, with the best intentions I doubt not, dragged from its obscurity a principle whose thorough application and development would doom not our societies alone, but every church in the universe, to a confusion of minds and of tongues, a state of discord and anarchy, the healing of which would soon find him other employ than that of attempting to defend the petty and repulsive peculiarity to which he has devoted his labours.

Before I close this chapter, it is proper to observe, in order to obviate misconception, that nothing is more remote from my intention than to plead for a *wilful* omission of any part of the will of Christ. His honour, I trust, is as dear, his prerogative as sacred, in the eyes of the advocates of *christian*, as it is in those of *sectarian* communion. Let each in the regulation of his own conduct, pay the most scrupulous attention to his orders; and wherever he distinctly perceives that a professor of religion indulges

himself in a known and habitual violation of them, let him after reasonable and repeated admonition, "withdraw from the brother that walketh disorderly." But let him not presume to control the sentiments and conduct of others by his standard, and treat as an enemy or an alien, that humble follower of Christ, who is as sincerely devoted to his will as himself; and who, however he may mistake it in some particulars, would shudder at the thought of setting voluntary bounds to obedience. If to tolerate such, must subject us to the reproach of repealing the law of Christ, let us remember we are not the first who were condemned for undervaluing the ritual part of religion, and for preferring mercy to sacrifice. As we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, we await with much composure and confidence, his decision; without indulging the smallest apprehension that we shall meet with less compassion for having shewn it; or that we shall incur his displeasure for refusing to "beat our fellow servants."

CHAP. V.

AN INQUIRY HOW FAR THE PRACTICE OF MIXED COMMUNION
AFFECTS THE GROUNDS OF DISSENT FROM THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND, AND FROM THE CHURCH OF ROME.

MR. Kinghorn expresses his surprise that the champions of the Hierarchy have neglected in their controversy with dissenters, *to avail themselves of the practice of strict communion*. For my part, I am only surprised at his surprise. For supposing (what is most contrary to fact) that it had furnished them with some advantage against a part of the Baptists, what mighty triumph would it be to have proved, that a branch only of a denomination, by no means considerable in their eyes, had been betrayed into an inconsistency. The abettors of a splendid Hierarchy, were little likely to descend to a petty altercation with the members of one division of dissent, respecting a point which could merely supply an *argumentum ad hominem*, and about which their opponents are far from being agreed.

To us however it is of importance to consider whether the doctrine we have attempted to establish, is justly chargeable with infringing on the legitimate principles of dissent. With this view, we shall briefly examine the substance of our Author's arguments on this subject.

We are accused of inconsistency in arraigning the Church of England "for introducing rites and ceremonies which have indeed no scriptural authority, but which are pleaded for, merely as decent and venerable customs; while we ourselves tolerate in the church, the neglect of an institution which we are convinced was universally obeyed in the apostolic times, and which was appointed by the highest authority."¹ To this we reply, that the cases are not parallel; that they differ in the most essential particulars.

It is one thing to tolerate, and another to practise. The law of God invariably and absolutely forbids the latter; that is, it uniformly prohibits the performance of a single action which we esteem contrary to his will, but to say it in all cases forbids the former,

¹ "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 123.

is, to insist on an absolute agreement respecting every branch of practice. The objection is brought against *us* who neither practice nor sanction infant baptism, that we are chargeable with the same criminality which is supposed to attach to the introducers of human rites and ceremonies in religion, ceremonies which they unquestionably both practice and approve. The argument of the Writer reduced to the form of a syllogism is as follows :

To practise human rites and ceremonies in the worship of God is sinful ;

But the advocates of mixed communion suffer to remain in the church, persons who practice a certain ceremony of human invention ;

Therefore their conduct is sinful.

Who does not perceive that the second proposition, has no necessary connection with the first, and that the argument is consequently invalid. In order to establish his conclusion, it behoved the Author to prove that we practise and approve infant baptism, which he knows to be impossible. If Pædobaptists required our concurrence in what we esteem an erroneous practice, nay if they refused us the liberty of protesting against it, there would be an analogy betwixt the two cases ; as it is, there is none.

We are bound by an express law to tolerate in the church those whom Christ has received; and he has by the acknowledgment even of our opponents received the Pædobaptists. The first of these positions we feel ourselves justified in affirming till it be disproved; which this Writer is so far from having done, that no attempt, we shall plainly make appear, was ever more unsuccessful. But whether it be true, or not, that we are commanded to act thus, such is our opinion; and with this persuasion, we are not at liberty to act in a different manner. But will such as prescribe human rites and ceremonies, pretend to act under a similar conviction, a conviction that they are bound by the law of Christ, to use the cross in baptism, to bow to the East, to kneel at the sacrament, and to exact as a term of communion, a compliance with these and other ceremonies, judged by themselves indifferent, and by us sinful. The most zealous champions of the Hierarchy make no such pretension, and we may therefore very consistently censure them for enforcing under such a penalty, the observation of rites for which no divine precept is urged, while we tolerate Pædobaptists in obedience to a divine injunction; unless it be the same thing to practise in the worship of God, what it is allowed he has not commanded, and

to comply with an express prescription. If the members of the establishment inquire on what ground do you receive a Pædobaptist, we reply, because we are expressly commanded to receive him. But if we inquire in our turn, why do you kneel at the sacrament, and exact that posture of all your communicants, is it affirmed that they will reply in the same manner? It is not true, then, that mixed communion stands upon the same ground with the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England; consequently, whatever be its merits or demerits in other respects, it may be maintained, in perfect consistence with the principle of dissent.

To the objection that it was as much unknown in the apostolic age as the ceremonies in question, we have already replied, that at that period it was impossible there should be any controversy on the subject of baptism, which was so recently instituted and so fully exemplified in the conduct of the Apostles; but that now, when a question has arisen, what is baptism, a new case occurs, in the determination of which we must be guided by the precepts respecting mutual forbearance. To this the Author replies in behalf of the Churchman, "very well, and when the Emperors and

Kings of former days were converted to the christian faith, and were desirous of sanctioning the gospel by their character, their property and their influence, another *new case* occurred of which Apostolic times knew nothing. When nations became generally christian, other *new cases* arose out of the new events of the time.”^m To this I answer, it is very possible, undoubtedly, for a churchman to utter the same words, and say a *new case* has arisen; but unless he can say it with the same truth, it will be nothing to the purpose. There is no reason why we should not assert what is true, merely because a false assertion respecting another subject, may be couched in the same words. Is it true, or is it not, that a refusal to comply with a precept, knowing it to be a command of Christ, is a very different thing from a mere misconception of the nature and import of that command: if it be, will it be asserted that such as had refused to make a profession of his religion, in the way which they were conscious he had appointed, would have been just as excusable as the most candid and impartial of modern Pædobaptists? Unless he will assert this, the Author must acknowledge that here is a new case, and that the

^m “Baptism a Term of Communion”, p. 124.

question how we should treat the wilful contemner of legitimate authority, and the erroneous interpreter of scripture, involves separate inquiries. From a multitude of passages it is manifest, that he himself forms a very different opinion of the present Pædobaptists, from what he would entertain of such as knowingly and deliberately resisted a positive command. He professes to give them entire credit for their sincerity, and to entertain a firm persuasion of their ready admission into the kingdom of Heaven; which would be absurd on the latter supposition. In maintaining a different conduct towards two descriptions of persons, between which there is acknowledged to be a total diversity of character, we are perfectly consistent; unless it be asserted that judgment ought to have no influence on conduct, nor action be controlled by principle.

Let the impartial reader judge for himself whether it is possible, by any fair mode of argument, to infer from these premises the lawfulness of making the conversion of Kings to Christianity, a pretext for placing them at the head of the church, or of acknowledging their right to model the worship of God at their pleasure. Yet this is asserted, and these portentous consequences are said necessarily to

flow from our principles. It is a matter of some curiosity, what kind of syllogism will fairly connect the two following propositions. It is lawful to admit a pious Pædobaptist to communion, because we are commanded to receive such as Christ has received. Therefore it is lawful to acknowledge a pious Prince as Head of the Church, and to allow him to model its worship as he pleases. We quoted a scriptural precept for the former; will Mr. Kinghorn favour us with something equivalent for the latter; or will he remind us of the passages which assert Christ to be the Head over all things to the church, or those which command us to call no man master upon earth? His reasoning in this, as in the former instance, is clogged with a two-fold absurdity: first he confounds toleration with concurrence; for they who contend for the right of a King to be Head, I presume *acknowledge* him as such: secondly, because we may innocently do what is commanded, or rather are not permitted to do the contrary, he with great simplicity infers we may lawfully venture on what is *forbidden*.

The same reasoning applies to the introduction of ceremonies, and completely invalidates his conclusion, that because we tolerate infant baptism, which we consider as a human

invention, we cannot consistently depart from the Established Church on account of the introduction of rites, which we deem superstitious. He represents a Churchman as addressing us in the following manner. "Is not forbearance to be granted to *us* also in what we deem right and expedient. Suppose that we are weak brethren, as weak as you choose to represent us; why should you not, even in pity to our weakness, tolerate us in adding a few things to the original institutions of the Lord, rather than leave us, and by schism rend the seamless garment of Christ."^a In reply to this let me ask, is the toleration of objectionable ceremonies, sufficient to constitute a churchman; or are we invited to be mere spectators of these observances, without *joining* in them? But do the Pædobaptists when *they* propose to commune with us, expect us to join with them in their practice of infant baptism? How futile then is it, to conclude, that because we are not to do evil, that good may come, we must on no occasion bear with the imperfections we cannot remedy.

He largely insists on the superiority of his system to ours, on account of its being

^a "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 125.

at a greater remove from the principles of the Established Church. "The strict Baptist," he observes, "can set the Churchman at defiance, while he tells him respectfully, but plainly, that his church is wrong in its very constitution; that it is formed of materials different from those used by the Saviour, and that these materials are united together in a way totally diverse from that of his institution."^o

Had he succeeded in shewing that his practice is alone consistent with the principles of dissent, his argument would have been to the purpose. But to found a claim to preference, merely on a wider deviation from the Established Church, is to take for granted, what is palpably false, that the Established Church, like the kingdom of darkness, is a mere mass of corruption and error, from which the farther we recede, we necessarily approach nearer to rectitude. That it comprehends many abuses, we sufficiently attest our conviction by our dissent; but as it contains a mixture of good and evil, if we suffer ourselves to look with a more favourable eye upon a doctrine, merely because its admission will remove us farther from the Establishment, we may

^o "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 127.

fall, ere we are aware, into the gulph of perdition. Upon this principle, we may embrace Socinianism; for Socinians are unquestionably farther removed from the Church, than orthodox Dissenters. We may embrace Popery, since all good Catholics consider the Church of England as being in a damnable state. We always supposed it was the agreement of a doctrine with the scriptures, not its disagreement with any human system, which forms its true recommendation; and that to consult our antipathies in the choice of a religion, was equally unchristian, and unsafe.

Besides, the objection which he makes to the constitution of the Established Church, is as consistent with our principles, as with his. Where a society embraces a whole nation, and recognises as her members, all who are born within certain geographical limits, many who are openly wicked must necessarily be included; and the materials of which it is composed, essentially different from those which formed the primitive church, which consisted of such as were "called, and chosen, and faithful." Of such an assemblage, it is not too much to say, in the words of this Writer, "that the whole body, taken in the aggregate, are of a *different character* from that which is in the

New Testament called a church of Christ:"^p and as this reason for dissent, deduced from the indiscriminate mixture of good and bad, is not weakened, or impaired, by the practice of open communion, we are as much entitled as he is, to all the advantage it affords.

But when we are accused of using different materials in the erection, from those which were originally admitted into the fabric, because we admit some, who in our judgment are not baptised, we deny the charge, and acknowledge ourselves at a loss to conceive how living stones, built on the only true foundation, can essentially differ from each other, on account of a transient ceremony; unless it is affirmed, that sanctifying grace is a less powerful principle of attraction and assimilation than an external circumstance, and that Simon Magus bore more resemblance to the primitive Christians, than Richard Baxter. We are at an equal loss to discover how a ceremony can impress a character. That immersion leaves no permanent corporeal mark, our senses assure us: is this character then impressed on the understanding, on the heart, or imagination; for the idea of a character which modifies and

^p "Baptism a Term of Communion", p. 127.

changes nothing, is as unintelligible to me as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

What the Writer means by appropriating to himself and his brethren the exclusive right of setting a Churchman at defiance, is equally mysterious, especially as clogged with this condition, "as long as he can establish his propositions by sufficient proof. A wonderful prerogative indeed! By setting him at defiance, he intends that he is secure of confuting his arguments, which it seems he is able to effect so long as he can establish the opposite propositions, by sufficient proof. What is this more than affirming, that he is certain of being able to prove, what he can prove; and as the Churchman can certainly do the same, they may each enjoy, upon this principle, the pleasure of mutual defiance and mutual triumph.

He either insults the understanding of his readers by the enunciation of a truism, or he means to assert that the practice he has undertaken to defend, is so identified with the principles of dissent, that it is incapable of being maintained without it. The falsehood of this assumption has been sufficiently evinced already; in addition to which, the reader is requested to reflect on the extreme imprudence

of attempting to rest a controversy of such magnitude, on so precarious a basis; and to divide and distract a common cause, by encumbering it with the debate on baptism, and the verbal subtleties of strict communion. To such a mode of defence, the Churchman might justly reply—Physician, heal thyself: convince your own denomination of the correctness of your reasoning, before you presume to trouble us with the mysteries of your cabala.

Mr. Kinghorn, in his zeal for baptism, intimates his conviction that the admission of infants to that ordinance, will at once legitimate the constitution of the Established Church, and render a secession from it indispensable. He quotes with apparent approbation a long passage from Bishop Hall, intended to shew that if the baptism of the Church is valid, its constitution must be so also, which he prefaces by applauding that Prelate's discernment, in seeing clearly their intimate connection. "All your Rabbins," says the Bishop, "cannot answer the charge of your rebaptised brother. If we be a true church you must return; if we be not (as a false church is no church of God,) you must rebaptise: if our baptism be good, then is our

constitution good.”⁴ Nothing can be more futile than this mode of arguing, which merely proves that the good Bishop, with all his brilliance of genius, was but an indifferent reasoner. He thought himself justified in dissenting from the church of Rome, notwithstanding her baptism was ever esteemed valid. By the ancient church, through all successive ages from the Council of Nice, the rebaptization even of Heretics was condemned; though Heretics were certainly not esteemed a part of the church. The very society of which the Bishop was a member, has always professed to consider baptism, administered by every class of dissenters, in the name of the Trinity, as valid; so that if the reasoning extolled by Mr. Kinghorn is just, he was guilty of schism, in refusing to unite it at one and the same time, with Heretics, Roman Catholics, and Dissenters.

Not satisfied with asserting that our principles militate against the lawfulness of dissent, he maintains that they are inconsistent with Protestantism, and that by necessary consequence they convict Luther and his associates of schism and rebellion. In the treatise on Terms of

⁴ “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 122.

Communion, it had been urged, that if we believe our Pædobaptist brethren to be in a state of salvation, we must acknowledge them as a part of the true church, and that to refuse them communion, is to create a schism in the body. Applying this reasoning to the case of the Roman Catholics, he attempts to repel it, by remarking that if “ we have no right to refuse their communion with us, till they conform to what we are convinced is the will of Christ, we had no right to leave them because they deviated from his will. The ground is in both cases *the same*. Once take away the obligation of conforming to the will of Christ, and the reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection in which all Protestants are involved as aiding and abetting a needless, and schismatical project.”^r

To this I reply, that to suppose us to take away the obligation of conforming *in our own persons* to the will of Christ, is to suppose us no longer Christians. For to deny the obligation of obedience, is at once to deny his authority, which is equivalent to a formal renunciation of Christianity. But if he means that we are obliged to demand in others a

^r “ Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 55.

perfect compliance with his will, as a term of communion, he takes away the possibility of toleration; for we can be said to tolerate nothing but what we disapprove, and we can assign no other reason for our disapprobation, besides its apparent repugnance to the mind of Christ. His argument, therefore, is entirely nugatory. It is acknowledged that the lawfulness of admitting a Roman Catholic to *our* communion, supposing him to be a real Christian, is a necessary inference from our principles; but to conclude from thence that we are obliged to adhere to *his*, is demonstrably false and sophistical; nor is there the least pretence for asserting that the "ground in both cases is the same." Of two actions which involve consequences infinitely different, it is impossible the ground should be the same. To receive a pious Roman Catholic to our communion, implies nothing more than an acknowledgment of his being a member of Christ, which is true by the supposition: to commune with him in the rites peculiar to the Romish Church, is to be guilty of gross idolatry and superstition, which however pardonable it may be in him, whose conscience is uninformed, in me who have no such plea, would be damnable. Luther was necessitated to depart from the external communion of the

Church of Rome, if he would not partake in her corruptions, because her communion formed a principal part of those corruptions. Besides, since that church maintains the infallibility of all her decisions, and whoever ventures to promulgate a doubt respecting a tittle of her doctrine, is *ipso facto*, excommunicated till he recants, when the light of truth revealed to Luther her enormities, it was not left to his option to continue in her society, or not, unless he would involve himself in the guilt of most horrid prevarication. He never pretended to depart from the Romish Church absolutely, and in every thing, but in those particulars only, in which she had corrupted the doctrine of the gospel, and adulterated the worship of God; and however highly he might estimate the advantages of unity, he could not purchase them at the expense of a good conscience, nor dare by assenting to error, or concurring in superstition and idolatry, "to do evil that good might come." But if a Catholic, of whose piety he entertained no doubt, had offered himself for communion with him, without recanting Popery on the one hand, or proposing to innovate in the worship of God, on the other, on such a supposition, if Luther had refused to receive him, his conduct might have been justly censured. Now, I would put it

to the conscience of any impartial person, to determine whether Luther would have had precisely the *same reasons* for declining this act of toleration, as for refusing his approbation of indulgences, or his adoration of the mass. In exercising the forbearance in question, he would have merely attested the piety of the communicant; in the other case, he would have directly countenanced and supported what he esteemed impiety and idolatry. With him who is prepared to assert, that each of these methods of proceeding are equally criminal, it is in vain to dispute; but if they are not, the assertion that the *ground* in both cases is the same, is undeniably false.

Having detected the palpable sophistry, by which my opponent would evince the inconsistency of our principles with the cause of protestantism and of dissent, it remains only for me to remind him of the facility with which the argument may be retorted, and of the striking resemblance between the system of strict communion, and that which is maintained by the Churches of England, and of Rome.

1. The Romish Church, it is well known, pretends to an absolute infallibility; not, however, in such a sense as implies an authority

to introduce new doctrine, but merely in the proposal of apostolic traditions, and in the interpretation of scripture. While she admits the scripture to be the original rule of faith, she requires, under pain of excommunication, that the sense she puts on its words, should be received with the same submission with the inspired volume. In what respects, let me ask, is the conduct of the *strict* Baptists different? A controversy arises on the extent of a positive rite, whether it should be confined to adults, or be communicated to infants. Both parties appeal to the scripture, which the Baptist interprets (in my humble opinion) correctly, in such a manner as to restrict it to believers; the Paedobaptist, with equal sincerity, supposes it to include infants. While the former in his own practice confines it to the description of persons to whom he judges it to belong, he acts with unexceptionable propriety; but when not satisfied with this, he insists upon forcing his interpretation on the conscience of his brother, and treats him precisely in the same manner, as though he avowedly contradicted Christ and his Apostles, what is this but an assumption of infallibility? All that infallibility which the Church of Rome pretends to, is the right of placing her interpretation of scripture, on a level with the word of God:

she professes to promulgate no new revelation, but solely to render her sense of it imperative and binding: and if we presume to treat our fellow Christians, merely because they differ from us in their construction of a positive precept, as unworthy of being *recognised* as Christ's disciples, (the very words of this Writer) and disqualified for the communion of saints; if we allow them "faith," while we deny them "obedience," and affirm them not to "revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, or obey the laws of his house," we defy all the powers of discrimination to ascertain the difference of the two cases, or to assign a reason why we must ascribe the claim of infallibility to one, and not to the other.

On another occasion Mr. Kinghorn observes,* that the strict Baptists shew they understand the distinction between *judging for others*, and acting on their own responsibility. But in imposing their own sense of scripture on their brethren, and affirming that on account of their differing from them, they do not "revere the authority of Christ," is either *judging for others*, in every possible sense of the words, or the Writer has made an impossible supposition. He adds, they allow that the Pædobaptists, *on*

* "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 67.

their own principles, do right in forming themselves into churches, and in commemorating the death of their Lord. And must they not do equally right, *on their own principles*, in baptising infants, unless he will assert that the propriety of baptising infants is not their principle. If judging for others is supposed to involve a claim of infallibility, and on that account, and that alone, to be shunned, to attempt to vindicate the practice of our opponents from that imputation, will baffle the acutest intellect.

2. We have already observed the coincidence of our opponent's system with the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, or the intrinsic and mechanical efficacy of religious rites, independent of the intention and disposition of the worshipper. The Roman Catholic attaches such importance to the rite of baptism, as to believe that when duly administered, it is *necessarily* accompanied with the pardon of sin, and regenerating grace. The strict Baptist maintains that its absence, where all other religious qualifications are possessed in the highest perfection, which human nature admits, deprives the party of "the privileges of faith,"¹ and renders him an alien from the christian church.

¹ "Baptism a Term of Communion", p. 30.

Both the Church of Rome, and the Church of England, have *devised terms of communion of their own*, and rendered it necessary for the members to comply with innumerable things, besides those which Christ has enjoined as requisite to salvation. The lawfulness and propriety of doing so, is the *palmarium argumentum*, the main pillar and support of strict communion. Let this principle once be abandoned, and the present controversy is at an end, unless our opponents chuse to assume new ground, by affirming the necessary connection between baptism, as they administer it, and the attainment of eternal life; and that they should not perceive the absolute necessity of proceeding so far, in order to be consistent, seems to approach to a judicial infatuation.

3. The adherents to the Papal power claim to themselves the exclusive appellation of the *church*: the arrogance of which pretension, is faithfully copied by the advocates of strict communion. The former however, by confining salvation within her own pale, avoid the absurdity into which the latter fall, who while they affirm the great body of the faithful are not entitled to that appellation, are obliged to distinguish between the mystical body of Christ and his church, which the scriptures expressly affirm to be one and the same.

CHAP. V.

THE PROPRIETY OF APPEALING IN THIS CONTROVERSY TO THE PECULIAR PRINCIPLES OF THE PÆDOBAPTISTS, BRIEFLY EXAMINED AND DISCUSSED.

IT is due, in my apprehension, to the majesty of truth, that she should be defended only by truth, and that we should on all occasions abstain from attempting to increase her partizans, by corrupt suffrages. Such are the suffrages she may accidentally gain, by the influence of error. As she scorns to employ the aid of violence, which is foreign to her nature, so much less will she condescend to owe any portion of her ascendancy to falsehood, which it is her eternal prerogative, to confound and to destroy. He who wishes to enlighten the human mind, will disdain to appeal to its prejudices, and will rather hazard the rejection of his opinion, than press them as a necessary corollary from misconceptions and mistakes. If the decision of controverted ques-

tions is to be subjected to vote, and a superiority of numbers is to pronounce a verdict, the means by which they are procured is a matter of indifference: he who is most successful in enlisting popular humours and prejudices on his side, will infallibly secure the victory. To all legitimate argument, however, it is essential for the parties concerned to reason on principles admitted by both; to take their stand upon common ground, and to adopt no medium of proof, of the truth of which, he who suggests it is not satisfied.

How far Mr. Kinghorn's management of the controversy corresponds with these just requisitions, the impartial reader will be at no loss to determine. In his zeal to increase the number of his partizans, he makes frequent and urgent appeals to the Pædobaptists, with whom the point at issue can rarely, if ever, become a practical question, and who are therefore little interested in its decision. As they admit, without hesitation, the validity of our baptism, the question whether the right administration of that ordinance, be an essential requisite to communion, has no immediate relation to the economy of their churches: it interests them only in the case of those individuals who may be desirous of com-

muning with Baptist societies. As far as it concerns the necessity of that particular rite by which we are characterised, it is a controversy in which we are the only parties; and however much we venerate the judgment of the religious public, we cannot forget that their motives to a rigorous examination of the question, bear no proportion to ours. To them it is a theoretical enquiry, to us a practical one of the most serious moment. If in appealing to them, however, he had constructed his reasoning on principles common to Baptists and Pædobaptists, there had been no room for complaint. But instead of this, he enumerates and marshals with such anxiety, all the appendages of infant baptism, all it assumes, and all it infers, as so many irrefragable arguments for his hypothesis, that were we to judge of his sentiments from these passages alone, we should suppose him as tremblingly alive to the consistency of Pædobaptists, as Eli to the preservation of the Ark. He adjures them by every thing which they deem sacred in their system, not to forsake him in the conflict, reminding them that if they do so, they must abandon a multitude of positions, which they have been accustomed to maintain against the Baptists, (that is, against himself) and be compelled to relinquish the field. He there-

fore exhorts them to be faithful unto death, in the defence of error, and to take care that no arts, blandishments, or artifices, seduce them to concessions, which would embarrass them in their warfare, and render the cause of infant baptism, less tenable. Thus he reminds them that by admitting the principle for which we contend, they must relinquish their plea for baptising infants, on the ground of its "giving the seed of believers a partial membership, which is recognised and completed when they profess their faith in maturer years. Thus one leading popular representation of its utility is given up." This infant membership, however, he elsewhere exclaims against, as the very precursor of Antichrist, the inlet to almost every abomination; and this popular representation, he considers as a most dangerous fiction.^u He tells them that were he a Pædobaptist, and disposed to adopt my theory, he should be afraid of being pressed with the question, of what use is infant baptism?^v It is unnecessary to remind the reader, that in the opinion of Mr. Kinghorn it is of none whatever, but a most pernicious abuse of a christian ordinance. But, what is more lamentable still, he warns them that if "they enter into the spirit of our

^u "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 17. ^v p. 22.

representation, they will be in danger of neglecting it altogether, and consequently either abandon the whole institution, or be induced by the examination of scripture, to become Baptists," that they will be "guilty of a complete deviation from the principles of their predecessors; that they must find new arguments for their infant baptism; and that without attempting to divine what they may be, their cause will be materially injured by the acknowledgment of the necessity of adopting new modes of defence." All this appears very strange from the pen of a zealous Baptist, who contemplates every one of the doctrines which he appeals to, with unqualified abhorrence; and who must be aware that just in proportion to the degree of their repugnance to the practice of mixed communion, is the presumptive evidence in its favor. To attempt the recommendation of his theory, by insisting on the impossibility of reconciling it, with what is in his opinion a system of delusion, indicates something nearly resembling the unrestrained impetuosity of a mind so intent upon the end, as to be indifferent about the means, and savours more of the art and sophistry of a pleader, than of the simplicity which characterises a sober inquirer after truth. My knowledge of the Author forbids the slightest sus-

pcion of any deliberate intention to mislead, but in my humble apprehension he has been betrayed by the warmth of debate, and the intemperate sallies of his zeal, into the use, to adopt the mildest expression, of unhallowed weapons; and by courting an alliance with error, degraded his cause.

It is probable he will attempt to justify his proceeding, by saying he has merely availed himself of an *argumentum ad hominem*. But he has greatly exceeded the limits assigned to that species of argument; which may be very properly employed to repel a particular objection of an opponent, by shewing that it recoils upon himself, but should never be laid at the basis of a process of reasoning, because the utmost it can effect, is to evince the inconsistency of two opinions, without determining which, or whether either of them, is true.

But it is not merely to acknowledged errors that the Author appeals, with a view to discourage our Pædobaptist brethren from uniting with us; he also endeavours to rouse into action a feeling, which, whatever name he may think fit to give it, is in my apprehension, neither more nor less than pride. He remarks,

that in joining with us, they must either “consider themselves as unbaptised, or satisfied with their own baptism, whatever we may think of it, or as agreeing with the maxim that baptism in any form is of no consequence to communion.” The first of these suppositions, he very properly puts aside as impossible. The second, he reminds them, is “*degrading*, because they permit themselves to be considered as persons who have not fulfilled the will of the Lord, in the very point in which they believe they have fulfilled it. They consequently unite with us on terms of inferiority, and he who refuses to commune with us, because in so doing he tacitly allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple of Jesus as he thinks he is, acts a part which is justifiable and dignified.”^w The amount of this reasoning is, that whenever a Christian perceives that his brother entertains a less favourable opinion of his conduct in any particular than he himself does, he is bound to renounce his communion; because in every such instance, he must be considered as not so complete a disciple as *he* thinks he is, and to allow himself to be so considered, is a meanness. And from hence another consequence infallibly results, that no

^w “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 115, 116.

two Christians ought to continue in communion, between whom there subsists the smallest diversity of judgment, respecting any point of practical religion ; for since each of them, supposing them sincere, must believe his own practice more agreeable to the will of Christ than his brother's, that brother must be aware that he is considered as not so complete a disciple as he judges himself to be, to which, it seems it is degrading to submit. The Author may be fairly challenged to produce a single example of a disagreement amongst Christians, to which this reasoning will not apply ; and therefore admitting it to be just, he has established a canon which prohibits communion, wherever there is not a perfect unanimity in interpreting the precepts of Christ ; which he who reflects on the incurable diversity of human opinions, will acknowledge, is equivalent to rendering communion impossible.

Although the instance under immediate consideration, respects a point of practice, the conclusion will hold equally strong, in relation to doctrinal subjects. For not to remind the reader that different opinions on practical points, are in effect different doctrines, and that the whole disagreement with our Pædobaptist brethren originates in these, it is undoubtedly true

of points of simple belief, as well as of christian duties, that whoever adopts a sentiment different from that of his fellow christians, must by the latter, be regarded as in an error; and since revelation claims faith, as well as obedience, "not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is," to which, if it is degrading for him to submit, his only remedy is to depart, and quit the communion. A fine engine truly, for dissolving every christian society into atoms, and for rendering the church of Christ, the most proud, turbulent, and contentious of all human associations.

If it be alleged that Mr. Kinghorn's reasoning was not designed to apply to the smaller differences which may arise, but only to grave and weighty matters, such as the nature of a christian ordinance, the obvious answer is, that it is of no consequence to us, for what it was designed; but whether it be sound and valid; in other words, whether it be a sufficient reason for a Pædobaptist's refusing to join with us, that in "so doing he allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is." If it be, the consequences we have deduced, will inevitably follow.

Not satisfied, however, with denouncing the

union of Pædobaptists with us as “undignified,” and as placing themselves on terms of “inferiority,” he begs them to consider whether it is not a “surrender of their principles in a manner altogether inconsistent with their views of the law of Christ.” This surrender, he proceeds to inform us, consists in their “agreeing to be considered as unbaptised, which is contrary to the opinion which they entertain of themselves.” We certainly make no scruple of informing a Pædobaptist candidate, that we consider him as unbaptised, and disdain all concealment upon the subject; but how his consent to join us on these terms, involves an unworthy surrender of his principles, is very mysterious. His principle is, that infant baptism is a part of the will of Christ; which we believe to be a human invention. Now how his allowing *us* to believe this, without breaking with us on that account, amounts to a dereliction of it, is a riddle, which it would require an Edipus to solve. May he not retain his sentiments, and believe us in an error; and is not his continuing unbaptised, a demonstrative proof that he does so? And while this is the case, and manifests his opinion, both by words and actions, is he still guilty of this fearful surrender?

Besides, what will it avail him to leave our

communion; since our opinion still pursues him, and though he should retire to the ends of the earth, we shall still continue to think "he has not fulfilled the law of Christ in the very point, in which he believes himself to have fulfilled it." There is no conceivable remedy; he must digest the affront as he can; but why he should feel it so insupportable, only in the case of our proposing to "receive" him, is passing strange, except the Author supposes him to be of so canine a temper, as to be the most dangerous, when most caressed.

It is amusing to see the happy versatility of the Author, and with what dexterity he can adapt his viands to the taste and palate of every guest. When it was his object to load with all possible odium the conduct of the Baptists, in admitting the members of other denominations, he professes to discern an essential disparity betwixt their conduct and ours. We, he tells us, are "more to blame than the Pædobaptists that join with us: they surrender no principle; they do not unite with those whom *they* deem unbaptised."^x He was then all intent on reproaching us: when he has to deal with the Pædobaptists, he feels no scruple

^x "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 68.

in awarding them the same measure. The inquiry, he says, will irresistibly arise, if they really and heartily believe that infant baptism is an institution of Christ, why do they wish to unite with people by whom one of his institutions is in their view so manifestly opposed. How can they, in justice to their families, unite with Baptists? Let them, he says on another occasion, consider whether they act wisely, or *consistently*, if they join with Baptists, who receive them on these grounds. If on their part it is connected with a *sacrifice of principle*, they will confess that it is indefensible.^y By these grounds, he means, on the supposition that baptism is not an essential prerequisite to communion, which he is aware is the principle on which we rest our vindication, and which is certainly perfectly consistent with their conviction of *our* being baptised; the very circumstance he urged before as a proof that they *sacrificed no principle*.

From a Writer who so palpably contradicts himself, it were vain to expect any information on this branch of the subject; since it is impossible to conjecture whether the union of our Pædobaptist brethren does, or does not,

^y "Baptism a Term of Communion", p. 114.

involve a surrender of principle, in the judgment of him who affirms both. On impartial inquiry, it will probably be found that though no principle is violated on either side, as much candour is evinced on the part of Pædobaptists, in consenting to a union, as on ours. If we join with those whom we are obliged to consider as unbaptised, they unite with persons who in their judgment repeat an ordinance which ought to be performed but once; nullify a christian institute, and deprive their children of the benefit of a salutary rite. And since the subjects of baptism are far more numerous on their system than on ours, why should they be less offended at our neglect of these, than we at their extending the ordinance too far? Whoever attaches importance to the covenant into which God is supposed to enter with the seed of believers, must highly disapprove the conduct of the parent who withholds from his offspring its instituted seed; nor is it possible for him to cherish the esteem due to him as a Christian, but by imputing his conduct to involuntary error. The supposed cruelty also of refusing to insert an innocent babe into the Abrahamic stock; the impiety of profaning a christian sacrament by rebaptising, might be made the subject of tragic declamation, with as much propriety as *their* want of “reve-

rence to the authority of Christ, and disobedience to the laws of his house." If we must tolerate none who are guilty of omitting a divine law, (which is the doctrine of Mr. Kinghorn) how is it possible for a Pædobaptist to bear with us, who live in the perpetual neglect of what his principles compel him to consider in that light.

In the judgment of all other denominations, while we neglect to dedicate our offspring to God in the solemnization of a federal rite, however conscientious we may be, we can but very imperfectly imitate the example of Abraham, of whom the Omniscient testified that he "would command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord;" or that of Zechariah and Elizabeth, "who walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless." On a fair comparison, it is difficult to determine which party is most entitled to the praise of candour; where both evince a noble oblivion of minor partialities and attachments, made to yield to the force of christian charity, and disappear before the grandeur of the common salvation.

PART III.

In which the Insufficiency of the Reply Mr. Kinghorn has made to the Principal Arguments urged for Mixed Communion, is exposed.

CHAP. VII.

HIS REPLY TO THE ARGUMENT DEDUCED FROM THE SCRIPTURAL INJUNCTION OF MUTUAL FORBEARANCE AND BROTHERLY LOVE, CONSIDERED.

RELUCTANT as the Author is to prolong the present controversy to a tedious length, he can neither do justice to his cause, or to himself, unless he notices the attempt which his opponent has made to enervate the force of his arguments: and here he will be under the necessity of recurring to the principal topics insisted upon in a former treatise.

That dissensions in the christian church were not unknown in the earliest period of

Christianity, is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul, who employed himself much in attempting to compose them; and the principal method he adopted, was to enjoin mutual forbearance, to inculcate the duty of putting the most favourable construction on each other's sentiments, and not suffer these differences to alienate their affections from each other, "whom Christ had received," who were his accepted servants, and would be permitted to share in his glory.² From these premises we argue thus: Since St. Paul assigned as a reason for the mutual forbearance of Christians, that they were equally accepted of Christ, it was undoubtedly a *sufficient* one, and admitting it to be such, it must extend to all who are in the same predicament, (who are in the same state of acceptance), and as it is allowed on both sides, that Pædobaptists are in a state of salvation, and consequently accepted of Christ, the same reason which dictated the measure of toleration at that period, must apply with equal force to the debate which at present subsists, between us and other denominations. In this argument the conclusion seems so nearly identified with the premises, that we

² Romans xiv. 1—6.

might suppose the most artful sophistry would despair of confuting it, and that the only objection it were liable to, would be its attempting to prove, what is self-evident.

Let us now turn to Mr. Kinghorn, It was observed in my former treatise, that the question is not what were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate, but what is the *ground* on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the Pædobaptists. After quoting this passage, he subjoins, "*this is the question at issue*, and the decision of this will determine whether the spirit of the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedents, especially when such precedents arose from obedience to a divine command."^a He then proceeds to investigate the precise nature of the dissensions which prevailed in the primitive churches; from whence infers that the disparity betwixt them, and our controversy with the Pædobaptists is such, that the principle on which the Apostles enforced toleration, is not "applicable." The expression he here employs, is somewhat equivocal. It may either mean, that the phrase "God

^a "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 40.

hath received him," does not apply to the Pædobaptists, or that supposing it does, it is not sufficient to sustain the inference we deduce, which is their right to fellowship. To interpret his meaning in the latter sense, however, would be to suppose him guilty of impeaching the validity of St. Paul's argument, who rests the obligation of forbearance with the party whose cause he advocates, precisely on that ground. *For* God hath received him. It is also inconsistent with his own statement, as given in the following passage, where he paraphrases the words just quoted in the following manner:—"There is nothing in the gospel, but what the Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and therefore since God does not reject them, but receives them into christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then, he adds, he receives them on their *believing and obeying the gospel*; and it is neither stated nor supposed, that he receives them, notwithstanding they disobey it. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."^a We have here an explicit avowal that he considers none besides the Baptists as received of Christ,

^a "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 45.

in the sense the Apostle intends, accompanied with a concession that to prove they were, would furnish an irrefragable argument for our practice.

It was certainly not without reason that he apologised for taking different ground from Mr. Booth; for here he is directly at issue with the venerable Apologist. He frankly acknowledges the fact which Mr. Kinghorn challenges us to prove; but attempts to evade the conclusion by remarking, "that it is not every one is received of Jesus Christ, who is entitled to communion at his table, but such, and such only, as revere his authority,"^b &c. Amidst the contradictory statements of such formidable champions, who can only agree in their censures of us, while they are at variance among themselves respecting the most fundamental points; where one tells us we are not to commune with other denominations, though they *are* received by Christ, and the other because they are *not* received, what course must he who looks up with profound veneration to these great authorities, take? Where both propose to conduct him to the same place, but one directs him to the East, the other to the West, my

^b "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 62.

humble advice is, to believe neither, but to exercise that liberty of thinking for himself, to which he is strongly invited by the perplexity and confusion of his guides.

Our present concern, however, is with Mr. Kinghorn, who denies that Pædobaptists are received by Christ, in the sense which St. Paul intended in the passage under consideration ; while he agrees with us, that it is upon that principle that primitive toleration rested.

Let it be remembered, that while Mr. Booth interprets the word *received*, as signifying received into the divine favour, Mr. Kinghorn contends for its meaning admitted into the church. But since many things must of necessity precede the act of external communion, and every believer must be supposed, in some important sense, to be previously received of Christ, he qualifies, or explains his former language, by adding, “ he receives them into the christian dispensation.”^c

^c For the satisfaction of the reader who may not possess Mr. Kinghorn's book, it may be proper to give the whole passage, to which my reply is directed.

“ Besides the expression God hath received him, ver. 8. deserves consideration. It clearly applies, as it is stated by the Apostle, to the reception of the Gentiles ; and is an argument with the Jewish

Let me crave the indulgence of the reader, while we endeavour to sift this matter to the bottom.

I. Whatever disparity may be contended for between the ancient dissensions, and the modern dispute with the Pædobaptists, it can by no means amount to a proof that the latter are *not* comprehended under the clause in question (God hath received him.) To reason thus, there were certain errors among the primitive professors which did not bar their admission into the church, but the error of the Pædobaptist is of a very different kind, and therefore it must have that effect, would be to reason most inconclusively, since all that can be justly inferred is, that it possibly *may* have that effect, though the former had not. The utmost point to which

Christians, not to reject those brethren who eat all things. And suppose it be granted that the expression applies to both parties, (which appears intended in chap. xv. 7.) the sense then is evidently this, God receives not Gentiles *only*, but *also* Jews into the christian church, though they are encumbered with their Jewish prejudices. There is nothing in the gospel, but what Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and therefore since God does not reject them, but receives them into the christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then he receives them *on their believing and obeying the gospel*, and it is neither stated or supposed that he receives them *notwithstanding they disobey it*. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 45.

the argument, from the dissimilarity of the two cases, is capable of being carried, is, that the latter may possibly not be comprehended under the same rule; but whether our Author has not disqualified himself from urging it, will be the subject of future inquiry.

2. The medium by which he attempts to establish his conclusion is manifestly untenable, unless he chooses to retract a large portion of his treatise. His argument is this, that God receives "such, and only such, as believe and obey the gospel;" but *other denominations* disobey it, and are therefore not entitled to that privilege. Here, however, he is at issue with a greater than Booth—with the Apostles themselves, one of whom declares that Christ "will appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that *obey not the gospel*;" and another, classes such as *obey it not*, among the "ungodly and sinners," whom he solemnly warns of their fearful end. Either then, the Apostles were wrong, in denouncing destruction on such as *do not obey* the gospel; or Mr. Kinghorn in loading the Pædobaptists with that charge, while he expresses a confidence of their salvation. Nor will it avail him in the least, to say they do not obey it perfectly; for we should feel no hesitation in retorting the

charge, and affirming that had he done so, he would not have penned this passage.

3. As he must on his system distinguish betwixt being in a state of salvation, and "*being received into the christian dispensation,*" there are a few questions, to which we should be glad to receive an explicit answer. He will acknowledge, we presume, that every believer is first united to Christ, and received by him, before he is entitled to the external communion of his church; that his right to the latter is founded on the credible evidence he gives of his interest in the first of these privileges. If this be admitted, it must hold equally true respecting the jewish and gentile converts, whose mutual toleration is enjoined in the passage under dispute. Now I ask, *according to what dispensation* were these primitive believers united to Christ, and accepted of him, *previous* to their external communion: was it according to the Christian dispensation, or some other? If the reply is, the Christian; I ask again, are our Pædobaptist brethren in possession of the same privileges, as were enjoyed by the primitive converts, before their external communion with the church? If they are not, they are not entitled to the appellation of Christians in any sense, and consequently could not be admitted to com-

munions, even though they were baptised. If on the other hand, it is acknowledged that they are possessed of the same privileges, the question returns, *by what dispensation* are they held? If he denies it to be by the christian, I ask once more, how he acquired this persuasion of their possessing the privileges in question? He surely will not pretend to have obtained it in any other way, than by an attentive perusal of the New Testament, by comparing the character of pious Pædobaptists, with that of the primitive christians, as well as with the marks and criterions, by which it has directed us to judge of a state of salvation; so that the favorable opinion he professes to entertain, must rest on the evidence, which the principles of the christian dispensation supply. But to say that the maxims of that dispensation oblige him to believe that a class of persons are interested in its promises, whom that very dispensation does not comprehend, although they live under it, is a contradiction in terms. It is equivalent to asserting, that the gospel economy passes opposite sentences on the same persons, and affords evidence for their seclusion and admission, at one and the same moment. It seems evident to a demonstration then, that agreeable to his own concessions, *other denominations*, as well as our

own, are received into the christian dispensation, that by virtue of its essential principles they are entitled to its immunities and privileges, and have consequently a right to the external communion of saints, on a double account, first, because such communion is one of its distinguishing benefits, and next, because as they are included amongst the persons whom the Head of the Church has received, which our Author interprets, by being admitted into the christian dispensation.

For the same reason, all that he has said elsewhere, of our not being authorised by the New Testament to recognise them as the disciples of Christ, necessarily falls to the ground; for since he can have no pretence for believing them in a state of salvation, except on the information derived from the New Testament, which certainly promises salvation to none but Christ's disciples; we are not only allowed, but impelled by that highest authority, to recognise them under that character. His attempt to nullify their profession, is also rendered completely abortive: for not to repeat what was before urged, since they profess neither more, nor less, than to adhere to the christian dispensation, it will not be denied, that if they are actually received into it, that profession is valid.

Let it be remembered, that in deducing these consequences, we have allowed him to interpret the disputed phrase in his own way, without contending for the sense which is most agreeable to the context, as well as most favourable to our hypothesis; and without attempting to impugn the accuracy of his representation, of the dissensions and disputes, which occasioned the injunction, and gave scope to the exercise of primitive forbearance.

3. Though that inquiry might be well spared, without injury to our argument, yet his account of these ancient controversies is so egregiously partial, so palpably designed to serve an hypothesis, that truth forbids me to suffer it to pass without animadversion. In a long and perplexed dissertation, he endeavours to establish a distinction between indulging a needless scrupulosity in doing what is not commanded, and disobeying an express precept; contending that the errors which St. Paul tolerated were of the former sort, and that as they merely respected certain observances and customs neither forbidden nor enjoined, they were to be considered as *αδιαφορα*, things indifferent, about which the christian religion is silent. He compares them to disputes about the planetary system, where it is free for every person to

form his own judgment, and either to believe with the vulgar, that the sun literally moves round the earth every four and twenty hours, or the earth round the sun, agreeable to the principles of modern astronomy.^d

In order to elucidate the question before us, it will be proper briefly to state the different modes of proceeding adopted by the jewish converts respecting the mosaic ceremonies, at the earliest period of Christianity. That they were universally practised by believers of jewish extraction, is manifest from various parts of

^d “The case is very similar,” he says, “to the following: At no great distance of time back, the popular opinion was, that the earth was a fixed body, and that the sun and stars made not an apparent, but an actual revolution round the earth. The contrary appeared so unlikely, so contrary to daily observation, that numbers knew not how to admit it. Some reasoned; others took a shorter way, and laughed at what they thought was absurd; another party appealed to the Bible, as settling the point, by asserting that the sun *did* rise, and *did* set, and one distinguished day was commanded to stand still. Good men were to be found on both sides of the question. Suppose now that some serious characters in a christian church, tenacious believers that the *earth stood still*, and that it was the *sun that moved*, had occasioned a little unpleasant controversy, with some of their brethren that were better informed; and the latter, provoked at their remarks, were for excommunicating them, for want of sense, if not for want of religion, how fitly would the Apostle’s reasoning apply. It might be said exactly on these principles, these good men are not chargeable with breaking *any divine law*: their whole crime is, that they are bad astronomers, and talk nonsense; but ‘God hath received them;’ do you therefore receive them in the spirit of meekness and love.”—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 49, 50.

scripture; and with respect to the church at Jerusalem, is expressly affirmed by St. James. "Thou seest brother," said he, addressing Paul, "how many thousand Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous for the law." The Apostle of the Gentiles, with all his zeal in the assertion of their liberties, conformed to them himself; partly from respect to the Jewish people, whom he was most anxious, by every lawful compliance, to conciliate, and partly from a tender consideration of the infirmities of his weaker brethren, not yet sufficiently confirmed in the freedom of the gospel. "To the Jews, he became a Jew, that he might win the Jews." But while he displayed this amiable and condescending spirit, he never disguised his conviction that the obligation attached to the mosaic rites was dissolved, and that the gospel was alone, a perfect rule of faith and practice.

Thus far an attention to the law was justifiable, and founded on the most enlightened principles. Many however, probably the great majority, proceeded a step further, and observed the legal ceremonies, not as the dictate of prudence, or for the purpose of conciliation, but as matter of conscience, conceiving them to be still in force. These composed that class

of believers who are denominated *weak*, whose infirmities the *strong*, Christians of a more enlightened order, were commanded to bear with. The error which these persons maintained was of serious magnitude; for in the very face of an inspired Apostle, who affirmed the law of Moses to be abrogated and annulled, by the advent of Christ, they still pertinaciously adhered to it, as a matter of personal and indispensable obligation; and though they attempted to revive and perpetuate an antiquated system, an economy which the gospel had completely superseded, and which went by no circuitous route, to impeach the sufficiency and perfection of the latter; their complete toleration was solemnly and repeatedly enjoined on their more enlightened brethren.

This error is compared by Mr. Kinghorn to an erroneous system of astronomy, and is consequently considered as totally indifferent. But how he could possibly believe this himself, or hope to obtrude it on the credulity of his readers, is astonishing. To attach the sanction of religion to a system which the Supreme Legislator had repealed—to scruple various kinds of meat, at the very moment that St. Paul was testifying the Lord Jesus had shewn him, that nothing was unclean of itself; and after Peter

had proclaimed the vision by which he was instructed, that the distinction of clean and unclean, was abolished, betrayed a degree of superstitious weakness and pertinacity, most foreign from a mistake on a merely scientific subject. Were a converted Jew at present to determine to adhere to the mosaic ritual, I would ask Mr. Kinghorn whether he would consider his conduct as entitled to the same indulgence, as though he scrupled to adopt the Newtonian system of the universe?

Still he will reply, that his error is of a different kind from that of the Pædobaptists: he is guilty of no omission of a revealed duty; while they set aside a positive institute of Christianity. It is by this distinction, and by this alone, that he attempts to evade the conclusion to which this example conducts us. There is nothing, however, in reason or in scripture, from which we can infer, that to omit a branch of duty, not understood, is less an object of forbearance, than to maintain the obligation of abrogated rites. Let him assign, if he is able, a single reason why it is less criminal to add to, than to take away from the law of Christ, to receive an obsolete economy, than to mistake the meaning of a New Testament institute. How will he demonstrate

will-worship to be less offensive to God, than the involuntary neglect of a revealed precept? It is so much more difficult to prove, than to assert, that we commend his discretion in choosing the easier task.

The above distinction is not only unfounded in the nature of things; it is at direct variance with the reasoning of Paul on the subject. He enjoins the practice of forbearance, on the ground of the *conscientiousness* of the parties concerned, on the assumption not only of their general sincerity, but of their being equally actuated in the very particulars in which they differed, by an unfeigned respect to the authority of Christ; and as he urges the same consideration as the ground on which the toleration of both parties rested, it must have included a *something* which was binding on the conscience of each, whatever was his private judgment of the points in debate. The Jew was as much bound to tolerate the Gentile, as the Gentile the Jew. "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. He that observeth a day, observeth it to the Lord: he that observeth not a day, observeth it not to the

Lord. He that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not; he that eateth, eateth to the Lord." Now in the judgment of the Jew, still attached to the mosaic rites, he who made no distinction of meats, or of days, must have been considered as violating, or neglecting a precept still in force, or the injunction to refrain from judging him, would have been devoid of meaning. He must have consequently been regarded by him, in precisely the same light in which our Pædobaptist brethren are considered, that is, as violating, though not intentionally, a positive institute. Still St. Paul absolutely insists on the duty of forbearance; and arguing with him on his own principles, he tells him, he has no authority whatever to "*judge*," or deem him unworthy of his fellowship, since he was accepted of Christ, and acted with perfect good conscience in the particular which gave offence. I will leave the impartial reader to determine whether this is not a fair representation of Paul's reasoning, and whether, admitting this, it does not completely annihilate the distinction Mr. Kinghorn attempts to establish, and decide the present controversy as satisfactorily as if it had been penned for the purpose. It is scarcely possible to suppose he will stoop to avail himself of his only remaining subterfuge, by reminding

us that in the instance before us, the ordinance supposed to be violated was not a *Christian* one; since it is obvious, that the commands of God, supposing them still in force, are equally binding, at whatever period they are promulgated, or to whatever economy they belong.

It is not, be it remembered, by a peremptory decision of the controversy, or by assigning the victory to one in preference to the other, that the Apostle attempts to effect a reconciliation. He endeavours to bring it about, while each retains his peculiar sentiments; from which it is manifest that there was nothing in the views of either party, which in his judgment, formed a legitimate barrier to union. The attachment of the Jew to the observation of the legal ceremonies, was not in his opinion a sufficient reason for refusing to unite with him, by whom they were disregarded. But in this case, the forbearance which he enjoins was exercised towards a class of persons exactly in the same situation, as far as its principle is concerned, with the modern Pædobaptists, that is, towards persons who violated a precept which was still supposed to be in force; and this consequence equally results, whatever statement may be made of the precise object of jewish toleration, whether it involved disputed

practices among the Jews themselves or the neglect of the mosaic ritual by the Gentiles. Hence in whatever possible view the controversy may be considered, the Apostle's treatment of it goes to the complete annihilation of the distinction, betwixt the observation of what *is not*, and the neglect of what *is* commanded; since the *mutual* toleration which was prescribed, embraced both.

There was a third description of Jews who attempted to impose the yoke of ceremonies on Gentiles, "assuring them that unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved." It was this which occasioned the convention of the Apostles and Elders with the Church at Jerusalem, where it was solemnly decided that Gentile converts should enjoy a perfect immunity from legal observances. This formal determination, however, was far from putting an end to the controversy: the efforts of jewish zealots were probably repressed for a time, but they soon recovered their resolution, and artfully propagated their doctrines with great success in various quarters, and especially among the churches planted in Galatia. On this occasion Paul expressed himself with great vehemence, telling the Galatians that he "could wish that

those who troubled them were cut off." By inculcating the law as an indispensable prerequisite to salvation, they annulled the grace of God, subverted the truth of the gospel, and impeached the sufficiency and validity of the great propitiation. The attempt to place the rites of an economy, which while it continued was merely the shadow of good things to come, upon a footing with the living eternal verities of the gospel, was in effect, to obscure its lustre, and debase its character. That no indulgence was shewn towards the inventors and propagators of this pernicious heresy, is admitted; but it is equally evident that he made a wide distinction between the deceivers and the deceived, between the authors, and the victims of delusion. With the last of these, he reasons, he expostulates; he warns them of the tendency of their errors, and expresses his apprehensions lest he had "bestowed upon them labour in vain." He indignantly asks who had bewitched them, that they should not obey the truth; that after beginning in the Spirit, they should end in the flesh; and when they had been replenished with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, "return again to the weak and beggarly elements." But in the midst of these pointed reproofs, as they were not fully aware of the consequences of

their defection, as they were not in a confirmed state of heresy, he continued to treat them with the tenderness of a Father, without uttering a breath that might seem like a threat of excommunication.

4. We shall not content ourselves with this answer. We accept Mr. Kinghorn's challenge, and engage to produce an instance of men's being tolerated in the primitive church, who neglected an express command of Christ, and that of the highest moment. We must only be allowed to assume it for granted, that the Apostles were entitled by the highest right to be considered as members of the Church which they planted, and of which they are affirmed to be the foundation. These very Apostles, however, continued for a considerable time, to neglect the express command of their Master, relating to a subject of the utmost importance. It will not be denied, that he expressly directed them to go forth immediately after the descent of the Spirit and to preach the gospel to every creature. Did they immediately attempt to execute this commission? From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that they did not; that for a considerable period, they made no effort to publish the gospel except to the Jews, and that it required a new

revelation to determine Peter to execute this order in its full extent, by opening the door of faith to the Gentiles. But for the vision presented at Joppa, from all that appears, the preaching of the word would have been limited in perpetuity, to one nation ; and when Peter, moved by an immediate voice from Heaven, began to impart it to Cornelius and his family, he was vehemently opposed by the Church at Jerusalem. So far indeed were the primitive Christians from entering into the views of their divine Master, that when a "number of them were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, they went as far as Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the gospel to the Jews only." That highly favored people, elated with the idea of its religious preeminence, looked down with contempt on other nations ; while it appropriated the Kingdom of God to itself, as its exclusive patrimony, without suspecting, for a moment, that it was the design of the Almighty, to admit a different race of men, to an equal participation of the same privileges. Under the influence of these prejudices, the first heralds of the gospel, slowly and reluctantly imbibed its liberal and comprehensive spirit.

Nor is this the only instance in which Mr.

Kinghorn himself will be found to approve of the toleration of such as have habitually neglected a positive command. The great majority of our own denomination, influenced principally by the writings of Gill and Brine, admirers of Crisp, held to a very recent period, that it was improper to urge sinners to repentance, or to enjoin upon them the duty of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.^e Their practice, it is needless to add, corresponded with their theory, and they anxiously guarded against the inculcation of any spiritual duties whatever on the unconverted. My respectable opponent is, I am aware, at a great remove from these sentiments; and that the reason he would assign for rejecting them, is that our Saviour commenced his ministry by calling men to repent, and that "he commanded his Apostles to testify every where repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But if these be his reasons, he must acknowledge that the eminent persons before mentioned, in declining to perform what our Lord commanded his Apostles, neglected, or broke a divine precept. But is he prepared

^e It is but justice to the memory of the great and excellent Fuller, to observe, that it is to his writings chiefly our denomination is indebted for its emancipation from these miserable shackles and restraints.

to affirm that they were not members of the church? Will this sturdy champion of the strict Baptists be ungracious enough to pass a sentence of excommunication on the great majority of his precursors in this controversy? Unless he is prepared for this, he must acknowledge that the right of toleration extends to such as neglect, or violate a revealed precept. It is unnecessary to remind the reader of the magnitude of the error in question, which would at once have annihilated the apostolic commission, by rendering it impossible to preach the gospel to *any creature*, since there were in the gentile world, none to whom it could, on this principle be addressed. The whole ceremony of baptism sinks into insignificance in the comparison.

In answer to his challenge we have produced two cases, in which toleration has been extended to such as neglect, or violate a divine precept; the first taken from the holy Apostles, the second from our fathers and predecessors in our own denomination.

The reader is requested to advert to the interminable discord and dissention with which this principle is replete. The principle is, that whenever one Christian deems another to live

in the neglect and violation of a positive command, however conscientious and sincere, he must renounce the communion of the party which he supposes erroneous. Who does not perceive that the application of such a principle, will furnish a pretext for endless dispute and contention; that not only a different interpretation of the law of baptism, will be a sufficient occasion of division, but that whoever supposes that any branch of the primitive discipline has fallen into disuse, will feel himself justified, nay compelled to kindle the torch of discord, and to separate chief friends. If no latitude is to be allowed in interpreting the will of Christ, no indulgence shewn to such of the faithful, who from a deficiency of light, neglect and overlook some part of his precepts, how is it possible the practice of reciprocal exclusion should stop within the limits which this Author has assigned it? Are there two thinking men to be found, who are fully agreed respecting all the minuter details of christian discipline and worship? Are they fully agreed, on the question of what *was* the primitive discipline, much less how far a conformity to it, is either proper, or practicable? Who that is competent to speak on these subjects, is not aware, that there are no questions involved in greater obscurity

than these, none on which the evidence is less satisfactory, and which more elude the researches of the learned, or administer more aliment of dispute to the contentious. One class of Christians believes that a plurality of elders is essential to the organization of a church, because the scripture always speaks of them in the plural number: and confident that such is the will of Christ, he dares not recognise as a church, in which that circumstance is wanting. Another attaches importance to weekly communion, which he justly contends was the uniform practice of the Apostles, and of the primitive age: a conformity to which, in this particular, is with him an indispensable condition to communion. A third turns his eyes towards lay exhortations, the disuse of which he considers as practically superseding some of the plainest passages of scripture, quenching the spirit, and abridging the means of religious improvement: he consequently scruples the communion of those, by whom this ordinance is neglected. A fourth, adverts to the solemnity, with which our Lord exemplified and enjoined the washing of feet, and the frequency with which the Apostles inculcated the kiss of charity: and having no doubt that these injunctions are of perpetual obligation, feels himself ne-

cessitated to withdraw from such as by neglecting them "walk disorderly." A fifth contends for the total independence of churches, conceiving that the cognizance of ecclesiastical causes is by divine right vested in the people, who are to determine every thing by a majority of votes, in opposition to those who contend for a church representative; and believing such an arrangement to be an important branch of the will of Christ, he conscientiously refuses the communion of those societies which decline to adopt it.

These different systems are, no doubt, distinguished by different degrees of approximation to truth; but what is of importance to remark, however they may differ in other respects, they agree in this, that upon the principle we are attempting to expose, they furnish to such as adopt them, just as reasonable a pretext for separate communion, as the disagreement respecting baptism; nor is it possible, if that principle be admitted, to reconcile the independent exercise of intellect, with christian unity. The instances already adduced are a mere scantling of the innumerable questions which would give occasion to a diversity of judgment, respecting the mind of Christ, and consequently necessitate the withdrawalment of

Christians from each other. The few societies who have attempted to carry this theory into practice, have already exhibited such a series of feuds and quarrels, as are amply sufficient to ensure its reprobation; and merely because they have acted more *consistently*, they have acted much worse, than the greater part of the churches who practise strict communion. Let this principle be once established, and fairly acted upon, and there is no question but that divisions will succeed to divisions, and separations to separations, until two persons possessed of freedom of thought will scarcely be found capable of walking together in fellowship; and an image of the infinite divisibility of matter will be exhibited, in the breaking down of churches into smaller and smaller portions. An admirable expedient truly for keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! That there is no hyperbole in this representation will be obvious, if we do but consider the difficulty of procuring an entire unanimity in the interpretation of those parts of scripture, which are supposed to relate to the will of Christ, in the organization and constitution of his church.

5. There is one important consideration to which the reader is requested to attend, before

we dismiss this branch of the subject. My opponent affirms, that none besides our own denomination are comprehended within the clause, in which the Apostle affirms the reception of erring Christians. He acknowledges, that if it can be proved that they are included under that description, the precept of toleration extends to their case, and that the only question at issue is, whether they *are* so or not, which he, in opposition to Mr. Booth, denies.^e The reader is intreated seriously to consider the necessary result of this position, whether it does not amount to a repeal of the scriptures, considered as the rule of faith and manners. It will not be denied that the promises and precepts of the New Testament are uniformly addressed to the same description of persons, with those particular injunctions under present discussion, and that under the terms *strong* and *weak*, by which are designated the two respective classes, who are commanded mutually to bear with each other. Nor can we

^e The Author of *Terms of Communion* observes, "that the question at issue is not what were the individual errors, we are commanded to tolerate, but what is the ground on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive, to include the Pædobaptists." In reply to which Mr. Kinghorn sets out with remarking. "I admit *that is the question*, and the decision of this question will determine, whether the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedent," &c.

hesitate whether the disputed phrase, *God hath received him*, ought to be interpreted in the same extent. As the inscriptions prefixed to the inspired Epistles determine to whom they were addressed, so that which was written to the Romans is inscribed to "all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;" and not a syllable is found in the precepts respecting mutual forbearance, comprised in the 14th and 15th chapters, which limits them to any particular part of that church, in distinction from the whole. They were intended for the universal regulation of the conduct of the members of that community towards each other.

The Epistles of the rest of the Apostles also, though directed to the inhabitants of different places from that to the Romans, are uniformly ascribed to the same description of persons, as will be manifest on their inspection; or in other words, the supposed genuine followers of Christ in that age, are the persons to whom the epistolary parts of the New Testament are directed; and consequently, universal precepts enjoined on any one society, must have been considered as equally binding on all the faithful. On any other supposition, each church would have possessed a distinct code, instead

of the inspired writings at large, being regarded as the universal rule of faith and practice. Hence it follows that the seven churches of Asia, as well as those who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia, supposing them acquainted with the Epistle to the Romans, would have been under the same obligation of observing its injunctions, with the Christians at Rome. But among the various precepts, intended to regulate the conduct of Christians, comprised in the code of inspiration, such as enjoin mutual forbearance, with each other's imperfections and infirmities, hold a conspicuous place, and the rule propounded on that occasion, we perceive to have been universally obligatory on believers of that generation.

When we propose to extend the same method of proceeding to our Pædobaptist brethren, in the present day, we are repelled; and my opponent reminds us that we are not authorised to assign, in the present case, the reason for forbearance which was urged by St. Paul, because *they are not received*, in the sense which he intended. The reason itself, he acknowledges, would be a sufficient justification, could the fact on which it proceeds be established, but he denies the fact.

Their error, it is asserted, is of such a nature, that it places them totally out of the question, and whatever is said on the subject of mutual forbearance in the New Testament is, in the present state of things, to be considered as applicable merely to the conduct of baptists toward each other; from which it necessarily follows, that no part of the precepts or promises of scripture, can be proved to apply to the great body of believers, at present, not even to such as appear preeminent in piety; for all these precepts and promises were originally addressed precisely to the same description of persons, with the injunctions in question, and as it is contended that *these*, belong at present only to Baptists, by parity of reason, the former must be restricted to the same limits. On this principle, there is not a syllable in the New Testament, from which a Pædobaptist can derive either consolation, or direction, as a Christian; not a single promise which he can claim, nor a single duty resulting from the christian calling, with which he is concerned; for the class of persons to whom these were originally addressed, was one and the same with those on whom the duty of mutual forbearance was inculcated.

The inscription of the Epistle to the Romans

is of the same extent with the injunctions contained in the 14th and 15th chapters, and no greater; the same description of persons are evidently addressed throughout: it was the *saints*, the *beloved of God*, mentioned in the beginning of the letter, who on account of their common relation to the Lord, were commanded to bear with each others infirmities. Now if it be asserted that infant baptism is an error so different from those which were contemplated by the Author, in that injunction; that its abettors stand excluded from its benefit, how will it be possible to prove that they are *saints*, that they are *beloved of God*, or that any of the attributes ascribed to christians in that epistle, belongs to *them*. Mr. Kinghorn may affirm, if he pleases, that the characteristic descriptions, are applicable while the injunctions under discussion, are not. He may affirm, but how will he prove it, since both are addressed to the same persons, and the injunction of forbearance, enjoined alike on them all.

From a letter, consisting partly of affectionate congratulations, and partly of serious advice, both intended for the comfort and direction of the same persons, to infer that the congratulations apply to Christians of all

denominations, and the advice to one only, is capricious and unreasonable. The same conclusion holds good, respecting the whole of the New Testament. Whatever is affirmed in any part of it, respecting the privilege of primitive believers, was asserted primarily of such only as were baptised, because there were no others originally in the church: all the reciprocal duties of Christians were in the first instance enjoined on these; among which we find precepts enforcing without a shadow of limitation, the duty of cultivating christian fellowship. But the last, our opponents contend, are to be restricted to Baptists; whence it necessarily follows, unless we had some independent evidence on the subject, that the former must be restricted in the same manner; and that consequently all other denominations, however excellent in other respects, are left without any scriptural proof of their interest in the divine favour, or any directions for that part of their conduct which concerns their christian obligations. Were there indeed any other medium of proof, besides the writings of the Apostles, of equal authority, by which it were possible to supply their deficiency, the case would be different: from this independent source, we might possibly learn the fact, that *other denominations* also, were in-

cluded within the promise of eternal life; but while our knowledge on the subject is derived from one book, whose precepts for the regulation of the conduct of believers towards each other universally, are affirmed not to extend to our intercourse with Pædobaptists, it is impossible to establish that conclusion; for to attempt to limit the application of scripture in one part and to make it universal in another, where both were originally intended to be taken in the same extent, is plainly unreasonable.

CHAP. VIII.

ON THE ARGUMENT FOR MIXED COMMUNION, FOUNDED ON
THE PÆDOBAPTISTS BEING A PART OF THE TRUE CHURCH.

THE Author of "Terms of Communion" founded an argument for the admission of sincere Christians of every denomination, to the Lord's table, on their being a part of the true church. He remarked that whenever that term occurs in scripture, in relation to spiritual matters, it constantly denotes, either members of a particular community, accustomed to meet in one place; or the whole body of real believers, dispersed throughout the world, but considered as united to one head; that this body, is expressly affirmed to be the body of Christ, of which every genuine believer is a member; that we are seriously warned against whatever tends to promote a schism in it; and that these admonitions are directly repugnant to the practice, under any

pretext whatever, of repelling a sincere Christian from communion. If we allow the identity of the church of Christ with his body, which St. Paul expressly affirms, and which he assumes as the basis of his whole train of reasoning, the conclusion we have drawn, results from it so immediately, that the attempt to place it in a clearer light, seems a waste of words. If the alienation of affection which prevailed in the church at Corinth, was sufficient to constitute a schism, much more a rupture of communion. But a schism or division in the body, the Apostle deprecates as one of the greatest evils, as tending immediately to its destruction, as well as most repugnant to the scope and genius of Christianity. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?"^f "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." Here the unity of the church is most clearly affirmed; and whatever tends to divide it, is stigmatised under the notion of an attempt to divide Christ himself.

The reader will probably feel some curiosity

^f 1 Corinthians i. 12, 13.

to know, how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile his hypothesis, with these statements; whether he is prepared, in contradiction to the Apostle, to deny the identity of the Church of Christ with his body, or whether acknowledging this, he will yet contend for the necessity of dividing it, in opposition to his solemn injunctions. He will be a little surprised at finding that he makes no reply whatever, that he is speechless, and without attempting to rebut the argument, turns aside to other subjects, on which he contents himself with repeating what he has already asserted, times without number. For what purpose he announced his intention to discuss this topic, it is not easy to conjecture; unless he flattered himself with the hope of finding some good natured readers, who would give him credit for having done, what he avowed his intention of performing. Be this as it may, not a word escapes him throughout the chapter, from which it is possible to learn, whether he considers Pædobaptists as a part of the Church, or not; the affirmation, or denial of which, is essentially involved in the discussion.

The only answer he attempts to the preceding reasoning is included in an assertion, the fallacy of which, has already been

amply exposed. "Once take away the obligation," saith he, "of conforming to the will of Christ, and the Reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection, in which all parties are involved, in aiding and abetting a needless and schismatical project. But if it be right to leave good men, because they have left Jesus Christ, it is right not to admit his terms till they come to them."¹ To which it is sufficient to reply, that to leave good men, that is, to refuse to join with them in those particulars, in which we suppose them to have deviated from the will of Christ, is the necessary dictate of allegiance; but to refuse to walk with them as far as we are agreed, to repel them from our communion, on account of errors and corruptions, in which we are under no necessity of participating, is a very different affair; it is an assumption of infallibility, and a deliberate invasion of the rights of conscience.

The logical force of Mr. Kinghorn's conclusion, is exactly on a footing with that of the following argument. If it be right to leave my friend when he repairs to the gaming table, it is right not to admit him into my house, till he has relinquished the practice of

¹ "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 55.

gaming. If I must not go with him to the theatre, I must renounce all sort of intercourse with him, until he has abandoned theatrical amusements: a conclusion to which a stern moralist may easily be supposed to arrive, but which no correct reasoner will attempt to deduce from these premises.

That the mystical body of Christ is *one* and *one* only, and that all sincere believers are members of that body, is so clearly and unequivocally asserted in the sacred scriptures, that it would be trifling with the reader to enter into a formal proof of a proposition, so obvious and so undeniable. The wildest heretical extravagance has never proceeded so far, as to ascribe two or more mystical bodies to the same Head, or to deny that Christ is in that character really and virtually united to all the faithful. It is equally certain that the term Church, when ever it is applied to denote the whole number of believers diffused over the face of the earth, is identified in scripture with the body of Christ. The Church is in more passages than one affirmed to be his body. "He is the head of the body, the Church. Who now rejoice," saith St. Paul, "in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my

flesh, *for his bodies sake, which is the Church.*⁵"

In the language of scripture, two classes of men only are recognised, believers and unbelievers, the Church and the World; nor is it possible to conceive, in consistency with the dictates of inspiration, of a third. All who are in Christ are in a state of salvation; all who belong to the world, in a state of spiritual death and condemnation. "The former are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ; the latter, the *whole world*, lieth in the wicked one." If we allow ourselves to imagine a description of persons, who though truly sanctified in Christ and united to him as their Head, are yet no parts of his Church, we adopt a Utopian theory, as unfounded and extravagant as the boldest fictions of romance. It is the Church, and that only, if we believe the inspired Writers, which "Christ so loved as to give himself for it, that he might sanctify it and cleanse it; it is that alone, which he will present to himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle."^h

It is strange that Mr. Kinghorn should not

⁵ Colos. i. 10 23. Eph. v. 23, 30, 32. 1 John iii. 19, 20.

^h Ephesians v. 27.

explicitly inform us, whether Pædobaptists are, or are not, to be considered as a part of this universal Church, This he ought certainly to have done, or have declined entering on a branch of the controversy, which he must be aware, hinges entirely on that point. If they are admitted to be a part of his Church, and he still contends for their exclusion, this is formally to plead for a schism in the body; it is to justify the forcible separation of one member from another, and to destroy the very idea of its unity. On this principle, the pathetic exhortations to perfect cooperation, and concord, drawn from the beautiful analogy betwixt the mystical and natural body, insisted upon in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, are completely superseded; and one member instead of being prohibited from saying to another, "I have no need of thee," is taught to shrink from its contact, as a contamination. Whenever we are invited to concur in practices, which we esteem erroneous, or corrupt, our refusal to comply is justified by a principle the most obvious and the most urgent, the previous obligation of obeying God, rather than man; but if we object to a transient act of communion, with a member of the body of Christ, on account of those errors, or corruptions in which we are not called to par-

ticipate, we are guilty of dividing that body. The reason of my adverting to a *transient* act, is that I am supposing the cause of separation to rest with us, and that a member of a different community proposes merely to unite in an occasional commemoration of the ineffable love of the Redeemer, without either a formal renunciation of the peculiarities of his sect, or an attempt to introduce them. In such circumstances, occasional fellowship is all that can be looked for; the adoption of different modes of worship, a predilection for different rites and ceremonies, will naturally dispose him to prefer a permanent union with professors of his own persuasion. While in the mutual intercourse of such societies, a disposition to recognise each other as Christians is cultivated, the unity of the body is preserved, notwithstanding their disagreement in particular points of doctrine, or of discipline. Owing to a diversity of judgment, respecting the proper organization of churches, obstacles, at present invincible, may prevent their incorporation; and it is left to the conscience of each individual to determine, to which he will permanently unite himself. An enlightened Christian will not hesitate for a moment, in declining to join with that society,

whatever be the piety of its individual members, in which the terms of communion involve his concurrence in religious observances, of whose lawfulness he entertains any doubt. Hence arises, in the present state of religion, an impassable barrier to the perfect intercommunity of christian societies. But it is not upon *this ground* that my opponent objects to the practice for which we are contending. He rests his refusal to commune with members of other denominations, on the principle of their not being entitled to be *recognised as Christians*. He protests against a union with them, not on account of any erroneous or superstitious observances, with which the act of fellowship is necessarily combined, but considers them as personally disqualified. His hypothesis is indeed so wild and incoherent, that it is difficult to state it with accuracy, or to preserve a steady conception of it in the mind. According to his theory, the Pædobaptists occupy a station the most anomalous and extraordinary, that ever entered the human imagination. Many of them are genuine believers, of whose exalted piety he avows the fullest conviction, yet they are not to be *recognised as Christians*, they are members of the mystical body of Christ,

or they could derive from him no saving influence or benefit, yet are excluded from all the advantages resulting from the union and cooperation of the several parts of which it consists; and though as a portion of the mystical body, it is impossible to deny them a place in the *one catholic* or *universal* church, yet it is the duty of every particular church, to disown, and exclude them. In short, the great majority of the sincere followers of the Saviour, whose names are written in the book of life, are totally disqualified for performing the duties, and enjoying the privileges, which distinguish the church from the world; betwixt which they occupy some intermediate place, some *terra incognita*, whose existence it is as difficult to ascertain, as the *limbus patrum*, or a mansion in the moon. In the present state of the christian church, that extensive portion of the New Testament, which was designed to cement the affections, and to regulate the conduct of the faithful towards each other, is superseded; its precepts are in a state of suspension and abeyance, and in the midst of Egyptian darkness, which envelopes the christian world, the Baptists alone dwell in the light of another Goshen. However strange these positions may appear, they form but a

part of the absurdities which necessarily flow from our Author's theory ; nor is there any possible way of evading them, but by denying that Pædobaptists belong to the mystical body of Christ, or demonstrating the consistency of their exclusion with the union and co-operation, which St. Paul enjoins ; or by asserting the existence of more mystical bodies than one, destined to subsist apart.

CHAP. IX.

THE INJUSTICE OF THE EXCLUSION OF OTHER DENOMINATIONS,
CONSIDERED AS A PUNISHMENT.

IN the treatise "On Terms of Communion," it was urged, that as exclusion from the communion of the church is the highest ecclesiastical censure, which it is possible to inflict, it can only be justified, on the supposition of a proportional degree of demerit in the objects of it. If the moral turpitude inherent in the practice of infant baptism, is of an order which entitles it to be compared to the habitual indulgence of vice, or the obstinate maintenance of heresy, it is but fit it should be placed on the same level, and subjected to the same treatment: but if the understanding, and the heart equally revolt at such a comparison, that method of proceeding must be allowed to be unjust. To this our Author

replies, by denying the propriety of applying the term *exclusion* to a bare refusal of admission. "Words," he informs us, "must strangely have altered their meaning, before such an application of the phrase in question can be justified." To be compelled to dispute about the meaning of terms is always humiliating, but that his assertion is unfounded, is sufficiently evident, from the authority of the most eminent critics. Our great Lexicographer, under the word *exclude*, defines it thus, "to shut out, to hinder from entrance, or admission;" *exclusion* he defines, "the act of shutting out, or denying admission." Thus much for his accuracy as a grammarian. Let us next examine his reasoning.

He denies that the act of debarring every other denomination from admission is a *punishment*—"it is not considered as such by sensible Pædobaptists."¹ But why is it not? Solely because the baptist societies are too few and too insignificant to enable them to realise the effects of their system, in its full extent. Their principle involves an absolute interdict of church privileges to the members of every other community; but being an inconsiderable

¹ "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 60.

minority, there are not wanting numerous and respectable societies, who stand ready to give a welcome reception to the outcasts, and to succour the exiles. That their rejection is not followed by its natural consequence, a total privation of the communion of saints, is not to be ascribed in the smallest degree to the liberality or forbearance of our opponents, but solely to their imbecility. The celebration of the Eucharist they consider as null and void, when attended to by a Pædobaptist; his approach to the table is absolutely prohibited within the sphere of their jurisdiction; and should their principles ever obtain a general prevalence, the commemoration of the love of a crucified Saviour would become impracticable, except to persons of their own persuasion. Instances have often occurred, where the illiberal practice, against which we are contending, has been felt to be a punishment of no ordinary severity; where eminently holy men have been so situated, that the only opportunity they possessed of celebrating the passion of the Redeemer has been withheld, and they have been compelled, most reluctantly, to forego one of the most exalted privileges of the church; nor has it ever been known, that compassion for the peculiar hardship of the case, was suffered to suspend the unrelenting severity of the sentence.

Let me ask the advocates for the exclusive system, whether they would be moved for a moment to extend their indulgence to a solitary individual, who differed from them on the subject of baptism, although he was so circumstanced as to render a union with other classes of Christians impossible?

This Writer affirms, it is not *intended* as a punishment by the Baptists, and strongly remonstrates against the confounding it with the sentence of excommunication, on account of immoral delinquency. He concurs with the Author of *Terms of Communion* in admitting that in these instances, its "accordance with the moral nature of man, may and does give it authority and weight; in such an instance as the incestuous person at Corinth, it becomes an instrument of punishment. He was *in* the church, and could be expelled *from* it. But which way the censure or punishment of excommunication and expulsion can take place in one who never was in a society, the strict Baptists," he tells us, "have yet to learn."^j

In reply to this, I shall not descend to a tedious logomachy, farther than just to remark,

^j "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 60.

that this Writer has on this occasion fallen into a similar error, respecting the meaning of words with his former. Excommunication is synonymous with exclusion; and is defined by the highest authority, "an ecclesiastical interdiction; exclusion from the fellowship of the church."^k The punishment it involves is exactly proportioned to the value of the privilege it withholds; and therefore to affirm that it is not a punishment, is equivalent to the assertion that the fellowship of the church is not a benefit. To withhold privileges and immunities from him who is legally entitled to their possession, must be supposed to be felt with a severity proportioned to the justice of his title, and the magnitude and extent of his privations.

By refusing to admit a Pædobaptist to the privilege of communion with *us*, we in fact affirm his incompetence to commune any where; we deprive him, as far as our influence extends, of all the advantages which result from the fellowship of the saints; and that he is not reduced to the situation of an outcast and an exile from the church, is in no degree to be imputed to the lenity of our decision, but to the limitation of our power. It is surely not

^k See Johnson.

necessary to multiply words to prove, that the equity of every judicial sentence must be ascertained by considering it, as it is *in itself*; by exploring its tendency; not by adverting to a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, which may possibly mitigate or extinguish the evils with which it is fraught. In the present instance, we must, in order to form an accurate judgment, make the supposition, that the sentence of excommunication actually operates in its full extent, so as to deprive the subject of it of all the consolation and benefit resulting from the union of Christians: we must suppose that no asylum is left to which he can retreat, no community remaining, where he can hide his humiliation and his shame. For that there is any, is solely to be ascribed to the prevalence of a system which our opponents are accustomed to stigmatise as erroneous, and for the existence of which, it is not to be imagined, therefore, they will assume to themselves the smallest credit. Let us imagine, what Mr. Kinghorn will probably be among the first to anticipate, that the sentiments of the Baptists triumphed to such an extent, as to be embraced by dissenting churches in general, and that the opposite views were retained only by a few individuals—let us suppose one of the latter description to possess the zeal, the hu-

mility, the devotion of a Brainerd; and that on account of his being unable to perceive the nullity of infant baptism, he were shut out from every religious society within his reach, though acknowledged to possess an elevation of character, which threw the virtues of others into the shade; would there be no hardship, no injustice in this case? Would it be sufficient to silence the murmurs of indignation to remark, that it was not *intended as a punishment*, that he had nothing to complain of; for "as he was never *in* the church, he could not be expelled *from* it?" Would such cold and trivial subtleties, were they as correct as they are erroneous, quell the instinctive cry of justice, demanding a satisfactory reason for placing the friend, and the enemy of God, the devoted servant of Christ, and the avowed despiser of the great salvation, on the same level, and comprehending them in one and the same sweeping censure? If these characters are totally opposed, not merely by the contrast exhibited between the vices of the world, and the virtues it is most prone to admire; but in consequence of the possession, by one of the parties, of supernatural and sanctifying grace; where is the equity of confounding them together by the interdict of religious privileges: and if the door is opened

at the same time for the admission into the church, of persons of a character decidedly inferior, how can impartial justice be asserted to hold the scale, and determine the merits of the respective candidates; justice, whose office it is to appreciate the rival claims of competitors, and to impart to every one his due? The iniquity of such a mode of procedure is so obvious and striking, that it is no wonder we find our opponents exert their ingenuity to the utmost, in attempting to palliate and disguise it; though the issue of their attempts is only to plunge them deeper in perplexity and contradiction.

The Author of "Terms of Communion," had remarked, "that there was no difference with respect to the present enquiry, betwixt the refusal of a candidate, and the expulsion of a member, since nothing could justify the former of these measures, which might not be equally alleged in vindication of the latter. *Both* amount to a declaration of the parties being unworthy to communicate." To this Mr. Kinghorn replies, by observing that "in one case the party is declared unworthy from *moral delinquency*; in the other, he is not declared *unworthy*, but *unqualified*." Here it is plainly conceded that Pædobaptists are not refused

on a *moral* ground; whence it necessarily follows, that even supposing they were acquitted from all blame in practising infant baptism, their exclusion would still be justifiable. They are not repelled from the sacrament, it seems, on account of any breach of duty of which they are guilty; for to assert this, would be to contradict himself, by resting their exclusion on their *moral delinquency*. They incur the forfeiture of all the privileges of the church, for no fault whatever; and whether they be perfectly free from blame or not, in the adoption of an unauthorised rite, is a consideration totally foreign to the question, and it is not to be taken into the account, in assigning the reasons for their non-admission. Let the reader seriously ponder this extraordinary concession; let him ask himself, whether he is prepared to believe that, in consistence with the genius of the gospel, the most extensive forfeiture of religious immunities can be incurred without guilt, and the heaviest ecclesiastical censure inflicted on the innocent. He will doubtless reject such a supposition with unmingled disgust: he will feel no hesitation in deciding that the error which prohibits a church from *recognising* the person to whom it is ascribed, as a *Christian*, which Mr. Kinghorn expressly applies to infant baptism, must incur a high

degree of culpability in the eyes of him who judgeth righteous judgment.

The glaring inconsistency of this whole statement, with the preceding assertions of the same Writer, is palpable and obvious. He entirely concurs with Mr. Booth, in characterising Pædobaptists as persons, "who do not revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, nor obey the laws of his house." But will he attempt to distinguish this charge from that of moral delinquency? Again, quoting the declaration of St. Paul, that "the kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" he adds, "now as far as the kingdom of God consists in *righteousness*, it must include obedience to practical precepts, both moral, and positive.¹ We have an eminent instance, of submission to John's baptism being called righteousness by our Lord." But if the Pædobaptists are justly chargeable with want of *righteousness*, and on that account, are not entitled to christian fellowship, they must certainly be excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*. If on the other hand, the deficiency of righteousness involved in the practice of infant baptism, is

¹ "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 46.

not sufficient to justify such a treatment, the reasoning in the above passage is utterly futile. By denying that they are excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*, at the same time that he imputes to them, conduct highly criminal, he has involved himself in inextricable difficulties; since supposing it could be proved to a demonstration, that they did "not revere the authority of Christ," &c. he has deprived himself of the power of urging it in vindication of his system, by protesting against the supposition of his resting its operation on moral considerations. But if no guilt is implied in these charges, why are they adduced; and if there be, how is that to be distinguished from moral delinquency? He tells us they are not *unworthy*, but only *disqualified*; whence it follows, that in his opinion, he may be worthy of communion, who "does not revere the authority of Christ;" nor would it be possible to dispute his title, were he but *qualified*.

In adopting this system, he professes to obey the directions, and to imitate the conduct of the Supreme Legislator, whom he affirms not to have received the unbaptised, into the gospel dispensation. If this profession is sincere, he surely will not deny that it is his intention to proceed on the same grounds,

and act from the same motive, with the great Head of the Church.

But when by refusing to admit them into the christian dispensation, he virtually declares them *disqualified*, which is the doctrine of this Writer, is it under the character of *innocent persons*, or of delinquents? Will he affirm that the benefits of that economy are withheld from any who have, by no act, deserved that privation? Is the sentence by which their disqualification is incurred, capricious and arbitrary, or is it merited? To say it is not, would be impious; and to affirm that it *is*, is to contradict himself by founding it after all on moral considerations, or which is perfectly equivalent, on "moral delinquency."

The distinction then which he has attempted to establish betwixt being *unworthy*, and being *disqualified*, is perfectly nugatory; and the persons to whom it is applied, though they may not be *unworthy* in other respects, must be acknowledged to be such, on account of that particular instance of disobedience, for which they are disqualified. Their disobedience places them on a footing with other classes of delinquents, by shutting them out from the communion of saints. They incur the same

forfeiture, and for the same general reason, want of practical compliance with the will of Christ. They are defective, to use this Author's own language, in the *righteousness* of the kingdom; and though they possess faith, they fail in exhibiting obedience.

The objections formerly urged against this system, consequently return in their full force. Since the exclusion of Pædobaptists must, after every possible evasion, be founded on their supposed demerits, if these are necessarily and intrinsically equal to the moral imperfections which are tolerated in baptist societies, it is just. If among the millions who have practised infant baptism, the most eminent saint whom past ages have produced, is to be considered as more criminal on that account, than the crowd of imperfect Christians whom we admit without scruple into our churches, the charge of injustice must be relinquished. Unless this can be sustained, it remains undiminished and unimpaired.

The method by which Mr. Kinghorn attempts to parry this reasoning is a recurrence to his old sophism, which consists of confounding together things totally distinct, namely, a refusal to *partake* in objectionable rites, with the

exclusion of such as embrace them, from our communion. Here he takes occasion to affirm that the same objection may be made to our secession from the Romish, as from the Established Church.ⁿ

Did we repel men of unquestionable piety on account of their avowed attachment to the peculiarities of a sect or party, there would be a propriety in identifying our practice with that of our opponents; for in that case we should both act on the same principle. But in refusing to join in a communion, accompanied by appendages which we conscientiously disapprove, we proceed on a totally *different* ground. We recede just as far as a moral

^m "The imposition of rites, says Mr. Kinghorn, which Christ has not commanded, and the combination of those sentiments, with the structure of the Church, which we think injurious to its nature, and contrary to the will of the Lord, have rendered it necessary for us to establish a *separate communion*. Here the fact is, that we feel ourselves called upon to say, that we can have no fellowship with them, in communion at the Lord's table. On this ground, it would be a very easy thing to represent the conduct of Protestants, and of Protestant Dissenters, in the same dark colouring, as Mr. Hall has applied to the strict Baptists. Let a man of talent exclaim against them for departing from the *true church*; and represented their conduct in establishing a communion of their own, as declaring in the strongest form, that they deem others unworthy of their society, and that in so doing, they pronounce the sentence of expulsion &c. and he will do no more than Mr. Hall has done, in the whole of this part of his reasoning."—" *Baptism a Term of Communion*," p. 63.

necessity dictates, and no farther. Nor is it true, as this Writer asserts, that this mode of proceeding implies as severe a censure on the societies from which we dissent, as the practice which we are opposing, inflicts on Pædobaptists. He who conceives that the posture of kneeling is an unauthorised innovation on the primitive mode of celebrating the eucharist, must necessarily dissent from the church which prescribes it: but will it be affirmed that his doing so, implies a conviction that the adherents to that rite are universally disqualified for fellowship, that they are not entitled to be acknowledged Christians, or that they are so deficient in the *righteousness* in which the kingdom of God consists, as to invalidate their profession, and exclude them from the christian dispensation? But these are the charges urged against the Pædobaptists. Let the smallest error imaginable be so incorporated with the terms of communion, that an explicit assent to it is implied in that act; and he who discerns it to be an error, must, if he is conscientious, dissent, and establish a separate communion: but are there any prepared to assert, that this is precisely the same thing as to repel the person who embraces it, from the Lord's table? I am weary and ashamed of being under the necessity of occupying the reader's attention,

with the exposure of such obvious fallacies. Suffice it to remark, once for all, that our dissent from the Establishment is founded on the necessity of departing from a communion, to which certain corruptions, in our apprehension, inseparably adhere; while we welcome the pious part of that community, to that celebration of the eucharist which we deem unexceptionable. We recede from *their* communion from necessity, but we feel no scruple in admitting them to *ours*; while our strict brethren reject them, as well as every other description of Pædobaptists, altogether. On him who has not discernment to perceive, or candour to acknowledge, the difference betwixt these methods of proceeding, all further reasoning would be wasted.

One more evasion must be noticed before we conclude this part of the subject. "The Pædobaptists are represented as chargeable with nothing more than a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute. But this, it is observed, is *not* the question before us: the present controversy relates to the *institute itself*. It is *not* whether the members of a church have fully and properly conceived the nature of the institute, to which they have submitted. If this were the case, we might be

represented as expelling the ignorant and the weak, instead of instructing and encouraging them. But it is whether an institute delivered by Christ, is to be maintained, or to be given up.”ⁿ

To this I reply—The advocates of infant baptism are either sincerely of opinion that the rite in question ought to be extended to infants, or they are guilty of prevarication. If there be any of the last description to be found, they are entirely out of the question, for supposing their character ascertained, they have never been contemplated as proper objects of toleration. With respect to the former, who sincerely believe it was the intention of our Lord to extend the rite of baptism to the infant seed of believers, is it possible for them to act otherwise than they do? With what then are they chargeable, except with a misconception of a positive institute; and if we are not to repel the ignorant and the weak, we must either affirm that they are not ignorant in this particular, and thus accuse them, contrary to the supposition, of wilful prevarication, or we must tolerate them. Though we are far from insinuating that our Pædobaptist brethren are in

ⁿ “Baptism a Term of Communion,” p. 65.

general either ignorant or weak, yet as ignorance and weakness are undoubtedly adequate to the production of any *misconception*, on the subject of religion not fundamental, they will consequently account for the error which has given birth to infant baptism; and just as far as it is capable of being ascribed to this source, its abettors are, by our Author's concession, objects of forbearance. And since there is no medium, but all Pædobaptists, however discerning in other respects, must either be supposed ignorant in this particular, or to prevaricate; forbearance must be extended to as many of them as are deemed sincere; beyond which we are as unwilling to extend it, as he is. While they entertain their present views on the subject of baptism, they must either administer it to infants, or violate the dictates of conscience; and therefore, if they are *chargeable* with any thing more than a *misconception*, the matter of that charge must be deduced from their acting like upright men; an accusation, which we hope for the honour of human nature, will proceed from none but strict Baptists.

The sum of what has been advanced on this head, is that the privation of communion is an evil, exactly proportioned to the value

of that benefit; that as far as the tendency of the exclusive system is concerned, and to the utmost power of its abettors, the evil is extended to every denomination except one; that it is either inflicted on account of *moral delinquency*, or is utterly unmerited; since if that ground be relinquished, their exclusion must be asserted to be just, even supposing them perfectly innocent; that whatever *blame* may be imputed, bears no proportion to that which incurs the forfeiture of the same privilege, in other instances; nor to the faults and imperfections which are daily tolerated without scruple; and finally, since the practice which is treated with so much severity, is the necessary result of a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute, which is only another name for ignorance or weakness in that particular, to make it the pretext of expulsion or excommunication, is repugnant to the maxims even of our opponents.

CHAP. X.

ON THE CONTRARIETY OF THE MAXIMS AND SENTIMENTS OF THE ADVOCATES OF STRICT COMMUNION, TO THOSE WHICH PREVAILED IN THE EARLY AGES; IN WHICH THE INNOVATION IMPUTED TO THEM BY THE AUTHOR, IS VINDICATED FROM THE CHARGE OF MISREPRESENTATION.

IN order to comprehend the true state of the question, as it respects the practice of christian antiquity, it may be convenient to distribute it into three periods; the first including the time during which correct sentiments on the subject of baptism universally prevailed; the second, that in which a gradual transition was made from the practice of adult, to that of infant baptism; the third, the period in which the latter obtained a general and almost undisputed ascendancy.

On the first of these periods little need be said. Where there are no dissimilar elements, there can be no mixture; and therefore to affirm

that the practice we are contending for, was unknown in the earliest ages of the christian church, is little more than an identical proposition. While no demur, or dispute subsisted respecting either the form, or the application of the baptismal rite, a punctual compliance with it was expected and enforced by the presidents of christian societies, for precisely the same reason which suggested a similar mode of proceeding to the Apostles. It was a part of the will of Christ, in the interpretation of which, no division of opinions subsisted among the faithful. The next period is that, during which an innovation was gradually introduced, by extending the ceremony in question to infants—a period which from the commencement of the third, unto the close of the fourth, probably comprehended the space of two centuries. Supposing the modern practice to have been first introduced towards the end of the second, or the beginning of the third century, which corresponds to the time at which it is distinctly noticed by Tertullian, the first writer who explicitly mentions it, we cannot suppose a shorter space was requisite to procure it that complete establishment and ascendancy, which it possessed in the time of St. Austin. During that long interval there must have been some, who still adhered to the

primitive practice, and others, who favoured and adopted the more recent innovations; there must, in other words, have been Baptists and Pædobaptists cotemporary 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. We challenge our opponents to produce the shadow of evidence in favour of 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 contrary practice: and as he expresses 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 the modern innovation in the rite of baptism, supplanted the original ordinance at once, multitudes must have been in pre-

cisely the same situation. We well know, that in the latter period of his life, he *did* secede from the orthodox catholic church; but we are equally certain, that he was moved to this measure, not by his disapprobation of infant baptism, but solely by his attachment to the Montanists.

We therefore offer our opponents the alternative, either of affirming, that the transition from the primitive, to the modern usage, was sudden and instantaneous, in opposition to all that observation suggests respecting the operations of mind; or of acknowledging, that for two centuries the predecessors of the present Baptists unanimously approved and practised a mixed communion—a communion in which Baptists and Pædobaptists united in the same societies.

Thus it appears that the system we are advocating, instead of being, as Booth and Kinghorn assert, a “modern invention,” was introduced as early as it was possible—as early as the dissimilar materials existed, of which the combination under discussion is formed. It is evident that no sooner did a difference of opinion on the subject of baptism arise, than the system of forbearance recommended itself

at once, to all who adhered to the sentiments of the modern Baptists throughout every part of the world; and that it is the opposite principle which has to contend with all the odium and suspicion attached to recent innovations.

When we descend to the third period, we are presented with a new scene. After the commencement of the fourth century, down to the era of the Reformation, the baptism of infants was firmly established, and prevailed to such an extent, that few traces of the ordinance in its primitive state, are to be discerned. Many of the Waldenses, however, are judged with great appearance of evidence, to have held opinions on that subject, coincident with those by which we, as a denomination, are distinguished. By their persecutors of the Romish community they were usually stigmatised and reproached for holding the Anabaptist heresy; while it appears, on the contrary, that there were not wanting some amongst them who practised the baptism of infants.ⁿ

ⁿ See "The History of the Baptists," by Mr. Ivimey, in which this subject is discussed with much care and impartiality. To those who wish for information respecting many curious and important circumstances, connected with the progress of the Baptist opinions, I would earnestly recommend the perusal of that valuable work; for which the public at large, and our own denomination in particular, are much indebted to the pious and laborious Author.

These opposite statements, exhibited with equal confidence, on this obscure branch of ecclesiastical history, are best reconciled and accounted for, by supposing them divided in their sentiments on that particular. No indication, however, is discoverable of a rupture in external communion having occurred on that account: and from the acknowledged difficulty of ascertaining the separate existence of Baptist societies, during the middle ages, and until the period of the Reformation, the necessary inference is, either that there were none, during that interval, who adhered to the primitive institute, or, as is far more probable, that they were mingled and incorporated with persons of another persuasion.

Hence, it is manifest that the concurrent testimonies of the Fathers of the three or four first centuries, in proof of the necessity of baptism, to church fellowship, are urged to no purpose whatever, unless it could be shewn that there was no mixed communion, no association of the advocates of adult, with the patrons of pædobaptism, known in those ages: a supposition which is at direct variance with facts. Nor is it at all difficult to assign a satisfactory reason for that combination of testimonies, which the writings of the Fathers supply in favour

of the essential connection of the two ordinances. The scanty writings which remain of the Authors of the second century, afford no decisive indication of the existence of infant baptism, in the period in which they flourished; and during the third, the few Authors whose works have descended to us, appear, with the exception of Tertullian, to have imbibed the Pædobaptist persuasion. It was natural for the first class of these Fathers, who lived at a time when no doubt or dispute had arisen on the subject, to insist on a compliance with that ordinance: nor was it possible for the second, who extended baptism to infants, and considered it as the indispensable means of regeneration, to pursue another course.

That there was a mixture of persons of different persuasions in christian societies, during the period to which we have adverted, appears to be an unquestionable fact; but in what manner those who adhered to the primitive institution reasoned on the subject, as they have left no writings behind them, or none which touch on this subject, must be left to conjecture. Whether they defended their conduct on precisely the same principles with ourselves, or whether they considered pædobaptism as not so properly nullifying, as cor-

rupting or enfeebling a christian ordinance, it is to little purpose to enquire. It is sufficient for us to know, that the practice which is stigmatised as *modern*, existed as early as a difference of opinion on the subject arose.

In my former treatise, I had remarked "that the decision of Christian Writers that baptism, in some form or other, must necessarily precede the celebration of the eucharist, supposing it ever so unanimous, affords but a feeble proof, since it assumes for its basis the impossibility of the universal prevalence of error." The truth of this assertion is almost self-evident; for if it be possible for error to prevail universally, what should prevent the possibility of its doing so, in this particular instance? "No," says our Author, "it assumes a very different principle; that the human mind in all its wanderings never took this direction before."° But what is the difference betwixt affirming that the opinion which separates the title to communion, from baptism, was unknown until it was adopted by the advocates of mixed communion, and asserting "that the human mind never took this direction before." Are they any thing more than two different

° "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 145.

modes of expressing the same proposition? To say then that the argument in question assumes for its basis "that the human mind never took this direction before," is to say that it assumes itself, a method of reasoning most repugnant to the rules of logic, however familiar with this Writer.

He feels very indignant at my affirming that the right of excluding persons of unquestionable worth and piety was never claimed by antiquity. In opposition to this, he adduces the example of Cyprian, who insisted on the rebaptization of Heretics and Schismatics, previous to their reception into the body of the faithful. If it be considered, however, in what light Heretics and Schismatics were contemplated by that celebrated Father, the objection vanishes; since no doubt can be entertained, that their preceding profession of Christianity was considered by him as a mere nullity, their faith fundamentally erroneous, the privileges they supposed themselves to possess, a vain illusion, and the entire system of their religion, an abomination in the sight of God. We find him every where exerting his utmost powers of language, which were by no means inconsiderable, in stigmatising their character, and degrading their

pretensions. Having little taste for quotation, the following passages may suffice to convince the reader, under what opprobrious colours he was accustomed to represent that description of professors. It is proper just to premise, that on their manifesting a disposition to return to the Catholic church, while Cyprian contended for the necessity of their being rebaptised before they were admitted, his opponent Stephen insisted on the sufficiency of recantation, accompanied with the imposition of hands,^p without reiterating a rite, which he concluded could not be repeated without profanation. The latter opinion, in spite of the high authority of the African Father, being confirmed by the Council of Nice, became the received doctrine of the church, and the opposite tenet was finally denounced as heresy. But to return to Cyprian—"We," said he, "affirm," referring to the Novatians, who were esteemed Schismatics, "that those who come to us are not rebaptised, but baptised. For neither do they receive any thing, where there is nothing; but they come to us, that they may receive here, where all grace and truth is."^q After stigmatising the baptism of

^p Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 210. Oxonii, anno 1682.

^q ————— p. 194.

Schismatics, as “ a filthy and profane dipping,” he complains, that certain of his colleagues “ did not consider that it was written, he who is baptised by the dead, what profit does he derive from his washing? But it is manifest that they who are not in the church, are numbered amongst the dead, and cannot possibly be quickened by him who is not alive; since there is one only church, which having obtained the grace of eternal life, both lives for ever, and quickens the people of God.”^r

Speaking of Heretics, he makes a distinction betwixt such as having been members of the Catholic church, fell into heresy for a time, but were afterwards recovered; and such as sprang originally from them. With respect to the latter, he says, “ If he who comes from the Heretics has not been before baptised in the church, but comes entirely alien and profane, he is to be baptised, that he may become a sheep, because the only holy water which can make sheep is in the church.” In another epistle, we find him reasoning in the following manner:—“ The very interrogation,” he says, “ which takes place in baptism, bears witness to the truth. Doest thou believe in

^r Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 194.

eternal life, and the remission of sins by the holy church? We mean by it that the remission of sins is given only in the church; but amongst Heretics, where the church is not, sins cannot be remitted. Let them therefore who plead for Heretics, (that is, for their admission into the church without rebaptising) either alter the interrogation, or vindicate the truth; unless they are disposed to give the appellation of the church, to those whom they assert to possess true baptism.”^s

His epistles are full of similar sentiments. What resemblance, let me ask, are they perceived to bear to the principles on which strict communion is founded; or who will be so absurd as to affirm that the example of Cyprian, in rejecting the communion of persons whom he esteemed spiritually dead, and incapacitated for receiving the remission of sins, affords the least countenance for treating in a similar manner, such as are acknowledged to possess the most eminent and exalted piety? “True,” Mr. Kinghorn replies, “but when they requested admission into the Catholic orthodox church, they had ceased to be Heretics or Schismatics, since they left the societies where heresy

^s Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 194.

was professed, acknowledged their former error, and requested to be numbered with the orthodox. Notwithstanding this, however, Cyprian insisted on their being rebaptised."† But why did he insist upon it? He tells us himself, it was because "they had received nothing, they were baptised by the dead;" they wanted "that holy water peculiar to the church, which alone can vivify;" and their pretended baptism, or to use his own words, "their profane dipping," was necessarily unaccompanied with the remission of sins. In short, however well they might be disposed, and prepared on the application of due means, for the reception of the highest benefits, they were as yet, in his estimation, in a state of unregeneracy. Hence the reader may judge of the pertinence and correctness of the subsequent remark:—"Their interest in the blessings of the christian covenant," says Mr. Kinghorn, "was not doubted, yet their right to the Lord's supper was doubted, because the validity of their baptism was questioned."‡ "Their interest in the blessings of the covenant was not doubted," although Cyprian declares his conviction "that they had received nothing, that their baptism was a nullity, that they wanted the only water

† "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 152. ‡ p. 151.

which could quicken, and that instead of it they had received only a "sordid and profane dipping, which could not possibly be accompanied with the remission of sins."

The reader will be at no loss to determine which of us is justly chargeable with "taking the present state of opinion, and of applying it to former ages;" when he perceives that my opponent is so possessed with these ideas as to be utterly incapable of contemplating the sentiments of Cyprian, through the right medium. He entirely forgets the importance he attached to baptism as a regenerating ordinance; and his denial that the persons of whom he was treating, had received it; which combined together, must necessarily have placed them, in his estimation, at the utmost remove from the situation in which pious Pædobaptists are at present considered.

His opponent Stephen, contended for the propriety of receiving them without a repetition of that rite, because he already conceived it had been truly and solidly performed: this Cyprian denied, and the only question in debate, respected the validity of a ceremony, which both equally esteemed to be the necessary means of regeneration. Upon the

principles common to both, the African Father reasoned with most consistency: for how could Heretics and Schismatics who were acknowledged to be spiritually dead, communicate life by the performance of a ceremony; and how totally incongruous to suppose every part of their religious service devoid of vitality and force, except their baptism, by which, as Cyprian continually urges, they were supposed to confer that renovating spirit, which in every other instance they were denied to possess. But whatever judgment may be formed of the merits of this controversy, nothing can be more impertinent to the question at issue betwixt my opponent and myself, which is simply, whether the refusal to admit persons of unquestioned piety into the church, was the doctrine of the Ancient Fathers. In proof of this, he alleges the example of Cyprian, who contended for the necessity of rebaptising such as had been already reclaimed from heresy and schism. Now if Cyprian's ideas on the subject of baptism had been the same, or in any degree similar to those which are at present entertained, the objection would have been forcible; but when we learn from his own mouth, that his demand was founded on their not having been "quicken'd," on their wanting "the water of life," on their not having

approached the fountain of renovation and pardon; in a word, on their still remaining unregenerate; what can be conceived more futile than to adduce his authority for refusing a class of persons to whom, it is acknowledged, none of these objections apply? Let us first insist on the admission of those, whom we believe to be destitute of regeneration and pardon, and we must dispose of the authority of Cyprian, as we can; but till that is the case, however we differ from him in its application, we act on one and the same principle.

Mr. Kinghorn is very anxious to prevent his readers from being led to suppose, from certain passages I had quoted, that he was a friend to mixed communion. If he means by this, that he was not disposed to admit into the church, such as were on all hands acknowledged to be unbaptised, his opinion is undoubtedly correct: nothing was more remote from my intention, than to insinuate the contrary. But if it is his intention to affirm, that Cyprian was averse to the mixture of Baptists and Pædobaptists at the Lord's table, he must be supposed to assert, that there were none in his communion, who adhered to what we conceive, the primitive institute; and considering the extensive influence which he

derived from his station as Metropolitan of Africa and the celebrity of his character, this is equivalent to an admission, that it had totally disappeared from that province as early as the middle of the third century; a dangerous concession, as well as a most improbable supposition. It is to suppose that a corruption (as we must necessarily deem it) of a christian ordinance, the explicit mention of which, first occurs but fifty years before, had already spread with such rapidity through Africa, as to efface every trace and relick of the primitive practice. It is unnecessary to observe, the important advantage which such a concession would yield in the controversy with Pædobaptists. The truth is, that unless we are disposed to admit that the baptism of infants, had already totally supplanted the original ordinance, throughout the Catholic church; Cyprian must be allowed to have patronised mixed communion in precisely the same sense, in which it is countenanced at present by our Pædobaptist brethren.

This may suffice to rescue me from the charge of misrepresenting the sentiments of Cyprian; an accusation which excited so much surprise that I determined to re-peruse the epistles of that celebrated writer; but

after carefully reading every line, I must solemnly declare, that I feel at a loss to discover a shadow of ground for this imputation.

It is not however the sentiments of Cyprian only that I am charged with misrepresenting; the Donatists it is affirmed, proceeded on the same views, when they insisted on the necessity of rebaptising the members of the Catholic church. "They acted," he says, "exactly on the same principles which Mr. Hall reprobates." That principle, it is unnecessary to repeat, is the propriety, not of baptising such as have been induced through misconception to neglect the valid performance of that right, which is our uniform practice; but the exclusion of those, against whom nothing is alleged, besides the invalidity of their baptism. But nothing can be more remote from the ground on which the Donatists proceeded. They conceived the whole Christian world contaminated by their communion with the African traitors;† that they had fallen into a state of deep and deadly corruption, and so far were they from founding the separation on the insufficiency of their baptism, that they inferred its invalidity solely from the mortal contagion

† Those who delivered up the sacred writings.

they were deemed to have contracted, and from the abominations they were supposed to tolerate.^v They considered the church of Christ, as far as the Catholic societies were concerned, as extinct; and on that account were vehemently urged by St. Austin to reconcile their hypothesis with the promise made to Abraham, “that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed.” But will any Pædobaptist be found so absurd, as to press the advocates of strict communion with a similar argument? And will it after this be contended, that the conduct of the Donatists, in refusing to admit the baptism of men, whom they viewed as plunged in a state of hopeless degeneracy, bears any resemblance to the conduct of those, who repel such as they affect to regard as the most excellent of the earth?

This Writer is highly offended with my presuming to express a conviction that the advocates of strict communion have violated more maxims of antiquity, than any other sect upon record. The extent to which they have carried their deviation in one particular is already

^v Dicit enim Parmenianus, hinc probari consceleratum fuisse orbem terrarum criminibus traditionis, et aliorum sacrilegiorum: quia cum multa alia fuerint tempore persecutionis admissa, nulla propterea facta est in ipsis provinciis separatio populorum.—*Contra Epistolam Parmeniani, Augustini, Lib. 1.*

sufficiently obvious. Mr. Kinghorn was challenged to produce an instance of an ancient Father who contended for the right of repelling a genuine Christian from the eucharist. He adduced the example of Cyprian, and of the Donatists; and by this time we presume the intelligent reader is at no loss to perceive, how completely these instances have failed.

A Writer of his undisputed learning, would doubtless select the strongest case; we may therefore, until he fortifies his positions better, venture without hesitation to enumerate among other deviations, the pretended right of excluding such as are acknowledged to be genuine Christians. In ancient times, the limits of communion were supposed to be co-extensive with those of visible Christianity, and none excluded from the Catholic church, but those whom that church deemed Heretics or Schismatics. Our opponents proceed on an opposite principle: they exclude myriads whom they would not dare to stigmatise with either appellation. In ancient times, the necessity of baptism, as a qualification for communion, was avowedly and uniformly founded on its supposed essential connection with salvation; our opponents have totally relinquished that ground, yet still assert with equal vehemence the same

necessity, and absurdly urge the shadow, or rather the skeleton of ancient precedent, after they had disembowelled it, and divested it of its very soul and spirit. In ancient times, the whole mass of human population was distributed into two classes, the church and the world: all who were deemed incapable of admission to the first, were considered as belonging to the last of these.

The advocates of strict communion have invented a new classification, a division of mankind into the world, the church, by which they mean themselves, and an immense body of pious Pædobaptists, who are comprised in neither of the preceding classes, their charity forbidding them to place them with the former, and their peculiar principles with the latter. Were they to assign them to the world, they would at once declare them out of the pale of salvation; were they to acknowledge them a part of the church, they would convict themselves of the crime of schism, in repelling them from communion. In attempting to designate this class of Christians, compared to which *their* numbers dwindle into impalpable insignificance, they are reduced to the utmost perplexity. On the one hand they contend that they are not entitled to be considered as disciples; on the

other, they loudly proclaim the confidence they entertain of their ready admission into Heaven. They are acknowledged to possess faith in an eminent degree, yet it is denied that they have afforded any legitimate evidence of it; and though *out of the church*, it is confessed it would be the height of bigotry to pretend to invalidate their religious-pretensions; to recognise their validity *in it*, would be an equal impropriety. It is unnecessary to say how far these maxims deviate from christian antiquity; nor is it easy to conceive the astonishment, their avowal would have excited in the breast of the Cyprians, and the Austins—I might add, of the Apostles and Evangelists of a former age. Guided by the simple dictates of inspiration, accustomed to contemplate the world under two divisions only, that of believers and of unbelievers, they would doubtless have felt themselves at an utter loss to comprehend the possibility of the existence of an equivocal race, who are to be treated as heathens *in* the church, and as Christians *out* of it; and while they possess whatever is necessary for an instant translation to glory, are disqualified for the possession of the most ordinary privileges of the Christian church

As it is the province of poetry to give to “airy

nothings, a local habitation and a name," if we cannot eulogise the reason of our opponents, we willingly allow them all the praise of a creative fancy, due to the invention of so bold a fiction.

The unity of the church is not merely a tenet of antiquity, but a doctrine of scripture, to which great importance is attached by the inspired Writers. Wherever the word occurs, without being applied to a particular society, the idea of *unity* is strictly preserved, by the invariable use of the singular number: the great community denoted by it, is styled the *body of Christ*, of which every believer is declared to be a particular member: " and the perfect *oneness* of the whole, is solemnly and repeatedly attested. "The bread which we break," says St. Paul, "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."* "Now ye," says he in the same Epistle, "are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

This grand, and elevating conception of the unity which characterises the christian church, was ever present to the minds of the

* 1 Eph. xxii. 23. Col. i. 24. x 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

Fathers, and never do they rise to a higher strain of manly and impressive eloquence than when they are expatiating on this theme. Thus we find Irenæus celebrating that "church which was disseminated throughout the whole world, to the very ends of the earth, which carefully preserved the preaching and the faith she had once received, as though she resided in one house; and proclaimed, and taught, and delivered the same doctrine, as though she possessed but one soul, one heart, and one mouth."^y "Every kind," says Tertullian, "must be referred to its origin. So many and so great churches as now subsist, are that one church, founded by the Apostles, from which they all derive. Thus all are first, and apostolical, while they retain the relation of peace, the appellation of fraternity, and the symbol of hospitality; which rights are regulated by no other principle, than the tradition of the same creed."^z Cyprian comparing the church to the sun, affirms, that while she extends her rays through the whole world, it is yet one light, which is every where diffused; nor is the unity of the body

^y Irenæus, Lib. i. c. 2, 3.

^z Tertullian *De Præscriptione Hereticorum*, p. 309.—Lutetie Parisiorum, 1675

separated: her exuberant fertility stretches her branches to the whole earth, she expands her streams most widely, yet the head and origin is one, and it is one mother that is so prolific. Who, says he, is so wicked and perfidious, who so maddened by the fury of discord, as to suppose it possible to divide, or attempt to divide the unity of God, the vestment of Christ, the church of God? He elsewhere expresses his conviction that he who does not hold the unity of the church, does not hold the faith.^a

During the first centuries, the unity of the church was not a splendid visionary theory—it was practically exemplified in the habits of reciprocal communion, cultivated and maintained among orthodox societies, through every part of the globe.^b

So repugnant, however, is the narrow exclusive system which we are opposing, to that

^a De Unit. Ecc. p. 110, 111.

^b See upon this branch of the subject, the admirable work of Dr. Mason, who by a copious induction of ancient authorities, has indisputably established the fact, that every portion of the orthodox church formed one communion; and most ably illustrated the mode of proceeding by which their union was maintained. The depth and accuracy with which he has discussed the subject, must be my apology for not entering into it more fully.

considered as characteristic of the church, that its advocates profess themselves at a loss to comprehend its meaning, except in the arrogant and offensive sense, in which it is sometimes employed to vindicate the pretension of Roman Catholics and High Churchmen. "Is the unity of the church," Mr. Kinghorn asks, "destroyed by nothing but strict communion."^c And suppose it be, what then? Will it follow that strict communion does *not* destroy it? Whether it has this effect or not, is the only enquiry; not whether something else may produce the same effect, in an equal degree. He adds, "is there any sense in which the church of God is, or can be considered as one, in this imperfect state, except in that which will include all those good men, who from conscientious differences cannot unite together on earth." For the conduct of those good men who refuse to unite with us, unless we consent to the performance of rites which in our estimation are unscriptural and superstitious, they alone are responsible, but where nothing of this nature is prepared, as is the case in the present instance, to deem them *personally* disqualified for communion, and on that ground to refuse it, is totally repugnant to every conception of unity.

^c "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 101.

In the above passage, the Author breaks his mysterious silence, and for the first time acknowledges that all good men are component parts of the church of God, and are consequently members of Christ's mystical body. But he who concedes this, unless he suppose the scriptures repealed, must confess his obligation to regulate his treatment of those members, by the rules and maxims the New Testament enjoins; which prohibit the least degree of alienation, and assert the equal claim to regard, which each individual, as a part of the body possesses; insomuch, that no language, except that which the Holy Ghost has employed, is sufficient, adequately to represent that oneness of spirit, that perfect co-operation, that conjunction, or identity rather of interests and affections, which ought to penetrate and pervade the whole. All other unions of a moral nature, are in reality, lax, feeble, and evanescent, compared with that which joins the members of Christ to each other, and to their Head. But will it be asserted that the practice of strict communion corresponds with these ideas? or that the treatment of the persons whom it excludes, is a practical exemplification of the conduct which the Christians at Corinth were commanded reciprocally to maintain? It will not be pretended; and since these passages,

which imperatively enjoin such a behaviour on the members of Christ, and expressly and repeatedly assure us that his body is the church, are still in force, the above concession must either be retracted, or a practice so directly subversive of it, be relinquished. If a society, of whatever description it may be, has by mutual consent selected a ceremony as the symbol of their union, those individuals, who for the express purpose of marking their separation, refuse to perform the ceremony, have most unequivocally renounced that society; and by parity of reason, since the joint celebration of the Lord's supper is established in the church as the discriminating token by which its members are to recognise each other, to refuse to join in it, is equivalent to an express declaration that the persons from whom we withdraw as *personally* disqualified, are not considered as parts of the church. It is acknowledged, however, in the foregoing passage, that all good men belong to it. But if so, they are also members of the body of Christ, and consequently entitled to exactly the same treatment as was enjoined on the Corinthians towards each other. But supposing, in consequence of minor differences of opinion, the latter had proceeded to an open rupture of communion, and refused to unite in the celebration of the

eucharist, will it be asserted that the pathetic and solemn injunctions of their inspired Teacher would not have been violated by such a measure? The answer to this question is obvious, and its application to the point under discussion irresistible. The advocates of the exclusive system, on whatever side they turn, are surrounded and pressed with difficulties from which it is utterly impossible for them to escape. To affirm that paedobaptism is of so malignant a tendency as to sever its patrons from the mystical body of Christ, is at once to impugn their hopes of salvation; since the supposition of a vital efficacy imparted from Christ as the Head, which fails to constitute the subject of it a member, is equally unintelligible and unscriptural. The language adopted on this subject is confessedly figurative, but not on that account obscure. Its foundation is evidently laid in that derivation of spiritual life to the souls of the faithful, for which they are indebted to their union with the Saviour; for which reason, it would be the height of absurdity to refuse the application of the figure on an occasion which comprehends its whole import and meaning. We may therefore with confidence affirm, that all genuine believers are alike members of Christ's body. But if this be admitted, they are as much entitled to the benefit, not merely

of admission into the church, but of all those benevolent sympathies and attentions prescribed in the preceding passages, as though they had been mentioned by name; since the only ground on which they are enforced, is the relation the objects of them are supposed to sustain to that body.

Thus we perceive in the principles and practice of our opponents, another glaring instance of gross violation, as well of the dictates of inspiration, as of the maxims of Christian antiquity; both which concur in inculcating the doctrine of the absolute unity of the church, of its constituting Christ's mystical body, and of the horrible incongruity, I might almost say impiety, of attempting to establish a system, which represents a great majority of its members as *personally* disqualified for communion.

Once more, what foundation will they find in ancient precedents, for the peculiar distinction allotted to one particular ceremony, above every other, in consequence of which, they allow the cultivation of the most intimate religious intercourse, of the most perfect intercommunity in every branch of

worship, with members of other denominations, providing they do not so far forget themselves, as to lose sight of their disputes at the Lord's table. The Holy Ghost informs us, that the end of Christ's death was to "gather into one the children of God, who were scattered abroad." It seems strange that one of the principal purposes of its celebration, should be to scatter abroad those children of God, who are gathered together every where else. Be this as it may, we challenge these zealous champions of precedent, to produce the faintest vestige of such a practice in the ages of antiquity; or to direct us to a single nation, or sect, or individual, for an example of that capricious and arbitrary distinction attached to the eucharist, by which it is refused to an immense multitude, who are considered as entitled to every other mark of Christian fraternity.

These observations, we trust, will be amply sufficient to justify the assertion, that our opponents have violated, with respect to ecclesiastical economy, more maxims of antiquity, than any other sect upon record; nor will the intelligent reader be at a loss to per-

ceive, that the weight of this censure is little, if at all impaired, by their conformity in one particular, by their insisting upon baptism as a term of communion; when it is recollected that the principles on which they found it, have no relation whatever to those on which it was maintained by the ancient Fathers. For the length to which this part of the discussion is extended, a natural and laudable anxiety to repel the charge of misrepresentation, will probably be deemed a sufficient apology.

CHAP. XI.

CONCLUSION.

BEFORE I put a final period to my part in this controversy, the attention of the reader is requested to a few miscellaneous remarks, which naturally arise out of the contemplation of the whole subject.

It is just matter of surprise, that the topic in debate should be regarded by any serious and intelligent Christian, as of small importance. Such a conclusion can only be ascribed to extreme inattention, or to the force of an inveterate, though perhaps latent prejudice, producing an unmerited predilection in favour of certain systems of ecclesiastical polity, which are incapable of sustaining the ordeal of inquiry. That those should shrink from the investigation of such topics, who by receiving their religion from the hands of their superiors in a mass, have already relinquished the liberty of thinking,

for themselves is no more than might well be expected. But to minds free and unfettered, accustomed to spurn at the shackles of authority; and above all, to Protestant Dissenters, whose peculiar boast, is the privilege of following in the organization of their churches, no other guide but the scriptures—that such subjects should appear of little moment, is truly astonishing. The inquiry first in importance undoubtedly is, what is Christianity? What, supposing the truth of scripture, is to be believed, and to be done, with a view to eternal life? Happily for the Christian world, there probably never was a time, when, in the solution of this question, so much unanimity was witnessed among the professors of serious piety, as at the present. Systems of religion, fundamentally erroneous, are falling fast into decay; while the subordinate points of difference, which do not affect the primary verities of Christianity, nor the ground of hope, are either consigned to oblivion, or are the subjects of temperate and amicable controversy; and in consequence of their subsiding to their proper level, the former appear in their just and natural magnitude.

Hence, in the present state of the church, externally considered, the evil most to be deplored is, the unnatural distance at which

Christians stand from each other; the spirit of sects, the disposition to found their union on the "wood, hay, and stubble" of human inventions, or of disputable tenets, instead of building on the eternal rock, the "faith once delivered to the saints." They all profess to look forward to a period when these divisions will cease, and there will be one fold under one Shepherd. But while every denomination flatters itself with the persuasion of that fold being its own, the principal use to which the annunciations of prophecy are directed, is to supply a motive for redoubled exertions in the defence and extension of their respective peculiarities; and instead of hailing the dawn of a brighter day, as an event in which all are equally interested, it is too often considered, there is reason to fear, as destined to complete the triumph of a party.

If we consult the scriptures, we shall be at no loss to perceive, that the unity of the church is not merely a doctrine most clearly revealed, but that its practical exemplification is one of the principal designs of the Christian dispensation. We are expressly told that our Saviour purposed by his death to "gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad;" and for the accomplishment of this

design, he interceded during his last moments, in language which instructs us to consider it as the grand means of the conversion of the world. His prophetic anticipations were not disappointed; for while a visible unanimity prevailed amongst his followers, his cause every where triumphed: the concentrated zeal, the ardent co-operation of a comparative few, impelled by one spirit, and directed to one object, were more than a match for hostile myriads. No sooner was the bond of unity broken, by the prevalence of intestine quarrels and dissensions, than the interests of truth languished; until Mahometanism in the East, and Popery in the West, completed the work of deterioration, which the loss of primitive simplicity and love, combined with the spirit of intolerance, first commenced.

If the religion of Christ ever resumes her ancient lustre, and we are assured by the highest authority she will, it must be by retracing our steps, by reverting to the original principles on which, considered as a social institution, it was founded. We must go back to the simplicity of the first ages—we must learn to quit a subtle and disputatious theology, for a religion of love, emanating from a few divinely energetic principles, which pervade almost

every page of inspiration, and demand nothing for their cordial reception and belief, besides a humble and contrite heart. Reserving to ourselves the utmost freedom of thought, in the interpretation of the sacred oracles, and pushing our inquiries, as far as our opportunities admit, into every department of revealed truth, we shall not dream of obtruding precarious conclusions on others, as articles of faith; but shall receive with open arms all who appear to "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and find a sufficient bond of union—a sufficient scope for all our sympathies, in the doctrine of the cross. If the Saviour appears to be loved, obeyed, and adored—if his blood is sprinkled on the conscience, and his spirit resides in the heart, why should we be dissatisfied? *we*, who profess to be actuated by no other motive, to live to no other purpose, than the promotion of his interest.

If the kingdom of Christ, like the kingdoms of this world, admitted of local and discordant interests, and the possession of exclusive privileges—if it were a system of compromise between the selfish passions of individuals, and the promotion of the general good, the policy of conferring on one class of its subjects, certain

advantages and immunities withheld from another, might be easily comprehended. But in this, as well as many other features, it essentially differs. Founded on the basis of a divine equality, its privileges are as free as air; and there is not a single blessing which it proposes to bestow, but is held by the same tenure, and is capable of being possessed to the same extent, by every believer. The freedom which it confers, is of so high a character, and the dignity to which it elevates its subjects, as the sons of God, so transcendent, that whether they are "Barbarians or Scythians, bond or free, male or female, they are from henceforth one in Christ Jesus." In asserting the equal right which the Gentiles possessed, in common with the Jews, to all the privileges attached to the Christian profession, Peter founds his argument on this very principle. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as unto us, and *put no difference between us and them*, purifying their hearts by faith. In his apprehension, it was God, the Searcher of Hearts, who by the collation of his Spirit, in his marvellous and sanctifying gifts, having made no distinction betwixt the Gentiles and themselves, decided the controversy. If that great Apostle reasoned correctly on the subject, we have

only to change the term Gentiles for Pædo-baptists, or for any other denomination of sincere Christians, and the inference remains in its full force.

Among the other attempts to deter us from pursuing a system established by such high authority, it is extraordinary that we should be reminded of the fearful responsibility we incur. To this topic Mr. Kinghorn has devoted a whole chapter. When it is recollected that we plead for the reception of none whom Christ has not received, for none whose hearts are not purified by faith, and who are not possessed of the same spirit, the communication of which was considered by St. Peter as a decisive proof that *no difference was put between them and others* by God himself, it is easy to determine where the danger lies. Were we to suffer ourselves to lose sight of these principles, and by discountenancing and repelling those whom he accepts, to dispute the validity of his seal, and subject to our miserable scrutiny, pretensions which have passed the ordeal, and received the sanction of him "who understandeth the hearts," we should have just reason to tremble for the consequences; and with all our esteem for the piety of many of our opponents, we conceive it no

injury or insult, to put up the prayer of our Lord for them—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He who alters the terms of communion, changes the fundamental laws of Christ's kingdom. He assumes a legislative power, and ought, in order to justify that conduct, to exhibit his credentials, with a force and splendour of evidence, equal at least to those which attested the divine legation of Moses and the Prophets.

It has been frequently observed on this occasion, that every voluntary society possesses the power of determining on the qualifications of its members; and that for the same reason, every church is authorised to enact such terms of admission as it shall see fit. This conclusion, however, is illogical and unfounded. There is little or no analogy betwixt the two cases. Human societies originate solely in the private views and inclinations of those who compose them; and as they are not founded on divine institution, so neither are they restricted with respect to the objects they are destined to pursue. The church is a society instituted by Heaven; it is the visible seat of that "kingdom which God has set up;" the laws by which it is governed are of his prescribing,

and the purposes which it is designed to accomplish, are limited and ascertained by infinite wisdom. When, therefore, from its analogy to other societies, it is inferred that it has an equal right to organise itself at its pleasure, nothing can be more fallacious; unless it be meant merely to assert its exemption from the operation of physical force, which is a view of the subject, with which we are not at present concerned. In every step of its proceedings, it is amenable to a higher than human tribunal; and on account of its freedom from external control, its obligation in *foro conscientie*, exactly to conform to the mandates of revelation, is the more sacred and the more indispensable; being loosened from every earthly tie, on purpose that it may be at liberty to “follow the Lord whithersoever he goeth.”

• That these maxims, plain and obvious as they must appear, have been too often totally lost sight of, he who has the slightest acquaintance with ecclesiastical history must be aware; and to their complete abandonment, we are indebted for the introduction of strict communion.

“The Baptists,” Mr. Kinghorn informs us, “consider themselves as holding to notice *one*

neglected truth."^d Whether they have adopted a mode of proceeding the most likely to accomplish their object, may be justly doubted. Independently, however, of any such consideration, it is the *principle*, thus distinctly avowed, to which we object—the *principle* of organizing a church with a specific view to the propagation of some particular truth; which is a perversion of the original end and design of Christian societies. Nothing, it is certain, was more remote from the views of their first founders, who aimed at nothing less than to render them the general depositaries of the "faith once delivered to the saints;" and for this purpose carefully inculcated the whole "truth as it is in Jesus," along with the duty of preserving it incorrupt and entire; without the most distant intimation that it was their province to watch over one department, with more vigilance than another: least of all was it their design to recommend, as the object of preference, an external ceremony, the nature of which was destined to become a subject of debate among Christians.

Let each denomination pursue this plan—let each fix upon the promotion of some one

^d "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 69

truth, as the specific object of its exertions, and the effect will soon appear, not only in extending the spirit of disunion, but in the injury which the interests of truth itself will sustain. Every denomination will exhibit some portion of it, in a distorted and mutilated form; none will be in possession of the whole, and the result will be something like the confusion of Babel, where every man spoke in a separate dialect. As the beauty of truth consists chiefly in the harmony and proportion of its several parts, it is as impossible to display it to advantage in fragments, as to give a just idea of a noble and majestic structure, by exhibiting a single brick.

What is the consequence which must be expected from teaching an illiterate assembly that the principal design of their union is to extend the practice of a particular ceremony, but to invest it with an undue importance in their eyes, and by tempting them to look upon themselves as Christians of a higher order, to foster an overweening self conceit, to generate selfish passions, and encourage ambitious projects. Accustomed to give themselves a decided preference above others, to treat with practical contempt the religious pretensions of the best and wisest of men,

and to live in an element of separation and exclusion, it would be astonishing indeed, if their humility were not impaired, and the more delicate sympathies of christian affection almost extinguished. In the situation in which they have placed themselves, they are reduced to a necessity of performing continually those operations, which other denominations reserve for the last extremity: they are familiarised to the infliction of the most formidable sentence, that the church is empowered to pass, and to that excision of the members of Christ from the body, to which others proceed with fear and trembling.

It is freely admitted that there are seasons, when it is the duty of a christian society, to bend its particular attention to the exhibition and defence of a neglected branch of truth, in order to supply an antidote to the errors by which it may be attempted to be corrupted. There is no fundamental doctrine, which we may not be called upon in an especial manner to maintain, and fortify in its turn. But to make this the specific object of the constitution of a church, is totally different: it is to contract its views, and limit its efforts, in a manner utterly inconsistent with the design of its institution,

which is to exhibit both the theory and practice of christianity, in all its plenitude and extent.

An exception however must be made, where the truth which is said to be neglected, is fundamental. The assertion and vindication of such a truth, is equivalent to the maintenance of Christianity itself, which in common with every other system, is incapable of surviving the destruction of its vital parts. Hence the Reformers were justified in laying the doctrine of justification by faith, as the basis of the reformed religion, because the formal denial of that truth, is incompatible with the existence of a Church. But where religious communities have been founded on refined speculations, or on some particular mode of explaining and interpreting disputable tenets, the most mischievous consequences have resulted. The people, usually denominated Quakers, set out with the professed design of exhibiting the doctrine of the Spirit, which they chose to consider as a *neglected* truth, and the consequence has been such a distortion of that momentous doctrine, as has probably contributed not a little to subject it to contempt. The Sandemanians profess to constitute their societies with an express view to the revival

of certain *neglected* truths; and the effect, as far as their efforts have succeeded, has been the extinction of vital piety. The High Calvinists, or to speak more properly, the Antinomians, are loud and clamorous in professing their solicitude to revive a certain class of *neglected* truths, and the result of their labor, has been to corrupt the few truths they possess, and to consign others of equal importance, to contempt and oblivion. In each of these instances, by detaching particular portions from the system to which it belongs, the continuity of truth has been broken, and that vital communication between its respective parts on which its life and vigor depend, interrupted.

It was reserved for our opponents to pursue the same system under a new form, by selecting the ceremony of baptism as their distinguishing symbol, and to degrade the Christian profession, in our apprehension, by placing it in the due administration of the element of water.

Where, it is natural to ask, (though it is an inferior consideration) where is the *policy* of such a proceeding? What tendency has it to recommend and to propagate the rite, about

which such zeal is exerted, and such solicitude expressed. Will the insisting on it as a term of communion, give it any additional evidence, or invest it with supernumerary charms? Will it be better relished and received, for its approaching in the form of an exaction, than if it was intrusted to the force of argument and persuasion? Were it permitted to have recourse to intimidation, in the concerns of religion, where are our means and resources: where shall we look for that splendour of reputation, that command of emolument and power, which shall render a state of separation from Baptist societies, an intolerable grievance? Let us learn to think soberly of ourselves, and not endeavour to enforce the justest principles by means foreign to their nature; nor by substituting an impotent menace instead of argument, subject them to reprobation and ridicule.

Mr. Kinghorn gives it as his decided opinion that for a Pædobaptist stately to attend the ministry of a Baptist, is a dereliction of principle. A great gulph, ought in his apprehension, to be fixed between the two denominations. But how is it possible, on this system, to indulge the hope of effecting a revolution in the public mind, when all the

usual channels of communication are cut off, and the means of rational conviction laid under an interdict? If the hearers of both denominations, are bound to confine their attendance to teachers, who will esteem it their duty to confirm them in their respective persuasions, the transition to an opposite system, may be deemed almost a miracle. It were more natural to suppose, that in this instance, as well as others of greater moment, faith cometh by hearing, than that a crop should spring up, where no seed, or none but what is of an opposite kind, has been sown.

It is not a little curious to find it objected to the principles we are attempting to defend, that they are adapted to an imperfect, rather than a perfect state of things; when the utility of the entire system of christianity, results entirely from such an adaptation, and is nothing more than a sublime and mysterious condescension to human weakness and imperfection. What is the gospel but a proposed alliance, in which infinite purity, comes into contact with pollution; infinite justice, with human demerits; and ineffable riches, with hopeless penury? "Mixed communion," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "displays another genuine

feature of error. It is only to be found (even on the concession of its warmest supporters) in that mingled state of things, which takes place between the first purity of the church, and the ultimate display of gospel light. In the times of the Apostles it had no place; nor do we expect it will be found, when 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God.'¹⁰ Specious as this proposition may appear, it is in reality nothing but a truism. We both suppose infant baptism to be an innovation unknown in primitive times. But mixed communion means nothing else, than the union of Baptists and Pædobaptists in the same religious society. To say therefore that no such practice was known in the times of the Apostles, is to say that the two denominations were not united, while there was only one: a profound discovery, the merit of which we will not dispute with this author. But when he proceeds to remark, that it will be equally unknown in the period usually styled the latter day glory, we must be permitted to remind him of a state incomparably superior, and to ask him whether he supposes his exclusive system will extend there; whether the Pædobaptist, dying in the

¹⁰ "Baptism a Term of Communion," p. 77.

possession of his supposed error, is disqualified to join "the spirits of just men made perfect; to mingle with the general assembly of the church of the first born." If this is not affirmed, let him reflect on the enormous impropriety of demanding a greater uniformity amongst the candidates for admission into the church militant, than is requisite for a union with the church triumphant, of claiming from the faithful, while encompassed with darkness and imperfection, more harmony and correctness of sentiment, than is necessary to qualify them to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God—of pretending to render a christian society, an enclosure more sacred, and more difficult of access, than the abode of the divine Majesty—and of investing every little Baptist teacher with the prerogative of repelling from his communion, a Howe, a Leighton, or a Brainerd, whom the Lord of glory will welcome to his presence. Transubstantiation presents nothing more revolting to the dictates of common sense.

The blessedness of a future world is ever represented in scripture as the final end and scope of the Christian profession: the doctrines which it embraces, the duties which it enjoins,

are represented as terminating in that, as its ultimate object. Religion itself, in its most general nature, is necessary only in consequence of the relation which the subjects of it bear to a future state: "patient continuance in well doing" is requisite, because it is the only safe and legitimate way of aspiring "to glory, honour, and immortality;" and the utmost that can be said to enforce any particular branch of practice, is, that it tends to prepare us for the eternal felicity. The Church of Christ is unquestionably ordained merely as one of the instruments of qualifying its members for the possession of eternal life: but for this, it would have had no existence; and beyond this we can conceive no end or purpose it was intended to accomplish. In a system of means, many things may be useful on account of their tendency to facilitate the accomplishment of their object, which are not absolutely necessary. They may accelerate its attainment, or attain it with greater certainty than it could be effected in their absence. But since the necessity of means arises solely from their relation to the end, *that*, whatever it be, without which the end may certainly be secured, can never be affirmed to be *necessary*, without an absolute contradiction. Is the organization of the church then a means of obtaining eternal life? Is it

ordained solely with a view of preparing man for a future state of felicity, or in order to secure some temporary and secular object? If it be allowed that it is the former alone which it is designed to obtain, to assert that baptism is necessary to qualify for communion, when communion itself is only necessary as a means of preparing us for Heaven, which it is allowed may with certainty be obtained without baptism, is a flat contradiction. It is to affirm that what is not essential to the attainment of a certain end, is yet a necessary part of the order of means, which is palpably absurd.

Let it be remembered that we are far from intending to insinuate that baptism is of little moment; or that a wanton inattention to this part of the will of Christ is consistent with a well-founded assurance of salvation: our sole intention is to expose the inconsistency of supposing an involuntary mistake on this subject a sufficient bar to communion, while it is acknowledged to be none to the participation of future blessedness.

Our opponents will probably remind us of the perfect unanimity which will prevail on this subject (in our apprehension) in the heavenly world. But when will this unanimity take

place; will it be previous to an admission to the society of the blessed, or subsequent to that event? If it be subsequent, in receiving believers on the ground of their vital union with Christ, we follow the order of Heaven, which our opponents invert: while we indulge the hope, that in consequence of coming into a closer contact with persons whose views on the subject of baptism are correct, they will be gradually induced to embrace them; firmly persuaded that whether this is the result or not, we incur no danger in following a celestial precedent. We are not surprised at our opponents making such high pretensions to purity in the discipline and economy of their churches; we only admire their modesty in not insisting on their loftiest and sublimest distinction, which consists in their societies being more select than Heaven, and in its being more difficult to become a member of a Baptist church, than to be saved.

The reader is requested to remember the extraordinary positions which Mr. Kinghorn has been compelled to advance, in defence of his restrictive system. He will recollect, we hope, that he has found it necessary to affirm that the most eminent saints, not excepting the illustrious army of martyrs, made no true

profession of that religion for which they labored, and for which, with a divine prodigality they shed their blood; that though worthy of "walking with Christ in white," and of joining in the cry, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth," they gave no scriptural evidence of their faith, and were consequently not entitled to its privileges, and that their claim to Christian communion was defeated, *not in consequence of any specific or peculiar connection betwixt the two ordinances in question*, but solely on account of its being one of those privileges. He has found it necessary to assert that the terms of communion and of salvation are both immutable; that if baptism was ever necessary to salvation, it is so still; and consequently that an involuntary mistake respecting a branch of revelation, is equally criminal and dangerous with its wilful rejection. He has found it necessary to affirm that Pædo-baptists are not received into the Christian dispensation, although he expresses his confident expectation of their being interested in its blessings, and justified by faith in its promises. These are but a scanty specimen of the wild and eccentric paradoxes into which this Writer has been betrayed, while, in quest of new discoveries, and resolved to project an

original defence of strict communion, he has quitted the sober path of his predecessors.

In some of the leading points of the argument, he has totally abandoned what Mr. Booth considered as forming his strong hold. Thus though he evinces an extreme reluctance to appear to coincide with the Writer of these sheets in any thing, he in fact concedes all that he contended for, respecting the essential difference betwixt the baptism of John, and that of Christ, and entertains no doubt that the twelve disciples at Ephesus were rebaptised. Thus the *palmarium argumentum* of his venerable predecessor is relinquished. Mr. Booth contended that though the Pædobaptists are *received* in the sense the Apostle intended in that expression, their right to the Lord's supper cannot be inferred; Mr. Kinghorn denies that they *are*; and thus the two champions are at variance *toto caelo*, on the interpretation of the passages chiefly concerned in this controversy. As these passages^f form a principal part of the gist of the debate, the intelligent reader is requested carefully to examine Mr. Kinghorn's mode of interpretation, and should it appear to be loaded with insu-

^f Romans xiv. 1. xv. 7.

perable difficulties, it may with confidence be inferred, that the cause of strict communion, were it liable to no other objection, is untenable. He had too much acumen to reject Mr. Booth's solution of the difficulty, could it have been plausibly supported. Conscious it could not, he has attempted to substitute another, which is accompanied with still greater, though perhaps not quite such obvious inconveniences.

Dextrum Sylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
Obsidet

The Writer is far from anticipating a speedy or sudden revolution in the sentiments of his brethren, as the consequence of his efforts in this controversy. He is contented to await the slow operation of time, in extinguishing the prejudices which time alone has produced; conscious that bodies of men are peculiarly tenacious of their habits of thinking, and that it is wisely ordained that the conquest achieved by just and enlightened principles, should be firm and durable, in proportion to the tardiness of their progress. Another generation must probably rise up, before the rust of prejudice is sufficiently worn off, to leave room for the operation of reason, and the exercise of free enquiry on this subject. Our opponents, aware

that a current has already set in, which threatens, at no very distant period, to sweep away their narrow and contracted system, are exerting every effort to stop it, but in vain,

Labitur et labetur, in omne volubilis ævum.

Mr. Kinghorn, while he acknowledges with extreme regret that the younger part of our Ministers are generally unfavorably disposed to the cause he has attempted to advocate, expresses his conviction that further reflection and enquiry will correct the aberrations of their youth, and recal them to the ancient path. But when was it ever known that an extension of knowledge produced a contraction of feeling, or that the effect of a more extended survey of the vast sphere of philosophical and religious speculation, was to magnify the importance of sectarian peculiarities. He anticipates this effect chiefly from the perusal of ecclesiastical history; a profound acquaintance with which, is to put them in possession of the marvellous secret, that mixed communion was unknown in the ages which succeeded the universal prevalence of infant baptism. The general agreement to consider that rite as an indispensable prerequisite to communion, during those ages, is to be received, it seems, as an oracle; while

the baptism which they practised is discarded as a nullity, the sole ground on which it was supposed to be necessary, deemed a most dangerous error, and innumerable other opinions and usages of equal notoriety and extent, consigned to the moles and to the bats. He must have a wonderful faculty of sanguine anticipation who supposes that an unfettered mind will reject the authority of antiquity in every particular, except that which suits his own humour; and after considering whatever distinguishes the ecclesiastical economy of these ages, from that of dissenting societies, as a striking instance of human weakness, stop short in the career of reprobation just at the point he is pleased to prescribe. Such a procedure would be, (as Cicero observes on another occasion) not to argue, but to divine; and it would be just as reasonable, after making a collection of all the peculiar opinions and practices of Christian antiquity, to determine by lot which of them should be received.

Far from indulging the apprehension of a retrograde motion from enlarged and liberal, to narrow and contracted principles, we have every reason to conclude, that the polar ice once broken, they will circulate to a much wider extent; and the revolution which has al-

ready commenced amongst those who are destined to guide the public mind, shortly produce a powerful effect on the people, who never fail, sooner or later, to follow the impulse of their public teachers. As it is this which gave rise to the present practice, so it is still by a sort of incantation, by mustering the shades of the mighty dead, of a Booth and a Fuller especially, who are supposed to cast a dark and frowning aspect on the petulance of modern innovation, that it is chiefly supported; and with all due respect to the talents of Mr. Kinghorn, it may be confidently affirmed, that but for the authority of these worthies, his weapons would produce as little execution as the dart of Priam.

Deference to great names is a sentiment which it would be base to attempt to eradicate, and impossible were it attempted. But like other offsprings of the mind, it is at first rude and ill-shapen. It makes no selection, no discrimination—it retains the impress of its original entire, just as it was made: it is a vague undistinguishing admiration, which consecrates in a mass all the errors and deformities, along with the real excellencies of its object. Time only, the justest of all critics, gives it correctness and proportion, and converts what is at

first merely the action of a great upon an inferior mind, into an enlightened and impartial estimate of distinguished worth. The effect produced by coming into an intimate contact with a commanding intellect, is of a mixed nature; it subdues and enslaves the very persons whom it enlightens, and almost invariably leaves a portion of its sediment, where it deposits its wealth. It must be placed at a certain distance before we derive from it all the pure defecated good it is capable of imparting: and with all my admiration of the inestimable men already mentioned, and my conviction of the value of their services, I am persuaded many years must elapse, before we entirely surmount the effects of a long-continued dictatorship.

When the views of baptism, by which we are distinguished as a denomination, are once exonerated from the odium arising from the practice we have been opposing, and the prejudices which it has necessarily occasioned, have subsided, we may justly presume that the former will be examined with more impartiality; nor is it possible to assign a reason for their having made so limited a progress, besides the extreme disgust inspired by this most unchristian and unnatural alliance. It is too

much to expect an enlightened Public will be eager to enroll themselves amongst the members of a sect, which displays much of the intolerance of Popery, without any portion of its splendor, and prescribes as the pledge of conversion, the renunciation of the whole Christian world. While the vestibule is planted with the most repulsive forms, while, *sedent in limine Diræ*, few will be intrepid enough to enter.

On Mr. Kinghorn's system which reprobates the attendance of the members of Baptists and Pædobaptists on the ministry of each other, as a dereliction of principle, to calculate the ages which must in all probability elapse, ere our principles obtain a general prevalence, would form an amusing problem. The Hindoo chronology which assigns to its fabulous dynasties millions and millions of years, might furnish a specimen of the scale on which such a calculation should proceed; and unless some such passion is expected to seize the members of other communities, as impelled the Queen of Sheba to come from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, the projected revolution must be pronounced, in the absence of miracles, impossible. What can be the motive of the advocates of strict communion for stu-

diously presenting every possible obstacle to the exclusive diffusion of our principles? We might be almost tempted to conjecture that they were afraid of losing their title to the appellation of a little flock; or that they consider the Baptist denomination, as an order of nobility or of knighthood, whose dignity is impaired, in proportion as it is diffused. Be this as it may, the spirit of the age, distinguished by the superior expansion of its views, and the extensive co-operation of all sects and parties in the promotion of objects of public utility, the little success which has accompanied the narrow and restrictive system, the dictates of scripture, and the movements of that divine charity which those dictates have impressed, all invite us to "consider our ways," to retrace our steps, and endeavour to draw our fellow Christians "by the cords of love, and the bands of a man." When we have learned to "make no difference," where the searcher of hearts makes none, when we shew an alacrity in embracing all who love Jesus Christ, as members of the same mystical body, when in conformity to the genius of Christianity, there is with us neither Jew nor Greek, neither Baptist nor Pædobaptist, but Christ is all in all, the reasons on which our peculiar practice is founded, will in all probability meet

with a very different reception from what has hitherto attended them, accompanied as they have been with a system of impotent oppression, and unmerited contumely. But whether these expectations to their full extent are realised or not, we shall at least improve ourselves, wipe off the reproach of bigotry and intolerance, and rise in the esteem of a religious and enlightened public, by convincing them that our zeal for a ceremonial institution has not betrayed us into a forgetfulness that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Thus have I endeavoured to reply to the reasoning of my opponent on this subject: whether my answer will be deemed by a discerning public, conclusive, or otherwise, I trust they will be convinced that no attempt has been made to evade the force of his arguments, nor any thing passed over in silence to which he can be supposed to attach the least degree of importance. My anxiety to leave nothing untouched which bears any relation to the merits of the controversy, has extended this reply beyond my wishes and my expectation; conceiving it better to incur the charge of tediousness, than that of discussing a polemical point of high importance, in a slight and

superficial manner. The mode of establishing a doctrine, in opposition to prevailing opinions and prejudices, is necessarily much more circuitous than the strict laws of reasoning require, in exhibiting its evidence to the understanding at a subsequent period. In the militant state of a doctrine, it is generally found necessary to incur frequent repetitions, to represent the same idea in a variety of lights, and to encounter a multitude of petty cavils and verbal sophisms, which, in its farther progress, sink into oblivion. When, in consequence of a series of discussions, a doctrine is firmly rooted in the public mind, the proof by which it is sustained may be presented, without impairing its force, in a more compact and elegant form; and the time, I am persuaded, is not very remote, when it will be matter of surprise that it should have been thought necessary to employ so many words in evincing a truth, so nearly self-evident as that which it is the object of the Writer of these pages to establish. The flimsy sophistry by which it is attempted to be obscured, and the tedious process of reasoning opposed to these attempts, will be alike forgotten, and the very existence of the controversy remembered only among other melancholy monuments of human imperfection.

Some acceleration of that period, the Author certainly anticipates from his present and his former productions; though he is fully aware that the chief obstacles which impede its approach are such as it is not in the power of argument alone to subdue. Reasoning supplies an effectual antidote to mere speculative error; but opposes a feeble barrier to inveterate prejudice, and to that contraction of feeling, which is the fruitful parent of innumerable mistakes and misconceptions in religion. There is no room, however, for despondency. For as the dictates of Christian charity will always be found to coincide with the justest principles of reason, the first effect of enquiry will be to enlighten the mind, the second to expand and enlarge the heart; and when the Spirit is poured down from on high, he will effectually teach us that God is *Love*, and that we never please him more than when we embrace with open arms, without distinction of sect or party, all who bear his image.

THE END.







