

DIFFERENCES IN JUDGMENT ABOUT WATER BAPTISM, NO BAR TO COMMUNION:

OR,

TO COMMUNICATE WITH SAINTS, AS SAINTS, PROVED LAWFUL.

IN ANSWER TO A BOOK WRITTEN BY THE BAPTISTS, AND PUBLISHED BY MR. T. PAUL AND MR. W. KIFFIN,
ENTITLED, 'SOME SERIOUS REFLECTIONS ON THAT PART OF MR BUNYAN'S CONFESSION OF FAITH,
TOUCHING CHURCH COMMUNION WITH UNBAPTIZED BELIEVERS.'

WHEREIN THEIR OBJECTIONS AND ARGUMENTS ARE ANSWERED, AND THE DOCTRINE OF COMMUNION
STILL ASSERTED AND VINDICATED. HERE IS ALSO MR. HENRY JESSE'S JUDGMENT IN THE CASE, FULLY
DECLARING THE DOCTRINE I HAVE ASSERTED.

BY JOHN BUNYAN.

*'Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? should thy
lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee an answer
[unashamed?]'--Job 11:2, 3*

London: Printed for John Wilkins, and are to be sold at his shop in Exchange Alley, next door to
the Exchange Coffee House, over against the Royal Exchange, 1673.

Courteous Reader,

Be intreated to believe me, I had not set pen to paper about this controversy, had we been let alone at quiet in our Christian communion. But being assaulted for more than sixteen years, wherein the brethren of the baptized way, as they had their opportunity, have sought to break us in pieces, merely because we are not, in their way, all baptized first: I could not, I durst not, forbear to do a little, if it might be, to settle the brethren, and to arm them against the attempts, which also of late they begin to revive upon us. That I deny the ordinance of baptism, or that I have placed one piece of an argument against it, though they feign it, is quite without colour of truth. All I say is, That the church of Christ hath not warrant to keep out of their communion the Christian that is discovered to be a visible saint by the word, the Christian that walketh according to his light with God. I will not make reflections upon those unhandsome brands that my brethren have laid upon me for this, as that I am a machivilian, a man devilish,

proud, insolent, presumptuous, and the like, neither will I say as they, The Lord rebuke thee; Words fitter to be spoken to the devil than a brother. But reader, read and compare; lay aside prejudice and judge. What Mr. Kiffin hath done in the matter I forgive, and love him never the worse, but must stand by my principles because they are peaceable, godly, profitable, and such as tend to the edification of my brother, and as I believe will be justified in the day of judgment.

I have also here presented thee with the opinion of Mr. Henry Jesse, in the case, which providentially I met with as I was coming to London to put my papers to the press; and that it was his judgment is asserted to me, known many years since to some of the Baptists, to whom it was sent, but never yet answered; and will yet be attested if need shall require. Farewell.

Thine in all Christian service, according to my light and power,

JOHN BUNYAN.

DIFFERENCES IN JUDGMENT ABOUT WATER BAPTISM, NO BAR TO COMMUNION.

Sir,

Your seemingly serious reflections upon that part of my plain-hearted confession of faith, which rendereth a reason of my freedom to communicate with those of the saints and faithful who differ from me about water baptism; I have read and considered, and have weighed them so well as my rank and abilities will admit me to do. But finding yours, if I mistake not, far short of a candid replication, I thought [it] convenient, not only to tell you of those impertinencies everywhere scattered up and down in your book; but also, that in my simple opinion, your rigid and church-disquieting principles are not fit for any age and state of the church.

But before I enter the body of your book, give me leave a little to discourse you about your preamble to the same, wherein are two miscarriages unworthy your pretended seriousness, because void of love and humility. The first is, In that you closely disdain my person because of my low descent among men, stigmatising me for a person of THAT rank, that need not to be heeded or attended unto.¹

¹ Who is there that reads these revilings of Bunyan for his poverty and mean descent, but must be struck with the unsearchable wisdom of the Almighty. The salvation of the church requires that 'GOD should be manifest in the flesh.' Does he appear in his glory? Does he honour riches, and power, and wisdom, by descending in one of these classes? No; the poor, the despised in this world, claim kindred with him--'Is not this the carpenter's son?' 'Have any of the rulers or pharisees believed on him?' Even with these examples before them, his Baptist ministerial brethren, who sat at his feet when he came to London, and listened to his eloquence, now, in their hot dispute, revile and taunt him with his imprisonment--his poverty--his want of book learning. Refused the communion of some eminent earthly saints, it drove him to closer communion with his God, and the prison, became a Bethel--none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven; and in a holy, happy frame of soul, he breathes forgiveness: 'What Mr. Kiffin hath done in the matter I forgive, and love him never the worse'!--Ed.

Ans. What it is that gives a man reverence with you, I know not; but for certain. He that despiseth the poor reproacheth his Maker; yet, 'a poor man is better than a liar.' To have gay clothing, or gold rings, or the persons that wear them in admiration; or to be partial in your judgment, or respects, for the sake, or upon the account of, flesh and blood, doubtless convicteth you to be of the law a transgressor, and not without partiality, &c., in the midst of your seeming sanctity.

Again, you say, 'I had not meddled with the controversy at all, had I found any of parts that would divert themselves to take notice of YOU.'

Ans. What need you, before you have shewed one syllable of a reasonable argument in opposition to what I assert, thus trample my person, my gifts, and grace, have I any, so disdainfully under your feet? What Read kind of a YOU am I?² And why is Ps. 1:1.3. MY rank so mean, that the most gracious and godly among you, may not duly and soberly consider of what I have said? Was it not the art of the false apostles of old to say thus? To bespatter a man, that his doctrine might be disregarded. 'Is not this the carpenter?' And, 'His bodily presence *is* weak and *his* speech contemptible' (1 Cor 10:10), did not use to be in the mouths of the saints; for they knew that 'the wind bloweth where it listeth' (John 3:8). Neither is it high birth, worldly breeding, or wealth; but electing love, grace, and the wisdom that comes from heaven, that those who strive for strictness of order in the things and kingdom of Christ, should have in regard and esteem (James 3:17). Need I read you a lecture? 'Hath not God chosen the foolish, - the weak, - the base, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are?' (1 Cor 1:27,28).

² How do these verses cut down all the carnal pride of man. Who is THE BLESSED? not the rich, or powerful, or worldly wise, but those that delight in the word of God.--Ed.

Why then do you despise my rank, my state, and quality in the world?

As for my confession of faith, which you also secretly despise. If it be good and godly, why may it not be accepted? If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me? If you, and the brethren of your way, did think it convenient to shew to the world what you held; if perhaps by that means you might escape the person: why might not I, after above eleven years' endurance there, give the world a view of my faith and practice; if peradventure, wrong thoughts, and false judgments of me, might by that means be abated, and removed. But you suggest; I did it, because I was so willing to be known in the world by my SINGULAR faith and practice.³ How singular my faith and practice is, may be better known to you hereafter: but that I did it for a popular applause and fame, as your words seem to bear, for they proceed from a taunting spirit, that will be known to you better in the day of God, when your evil surmises of your brother, and my designs in writing my book, will be published upon the house-tops (Luke 12:1-4).

And even now, before I go any further, I will give you a touch of the reason of my publishing that part thereof which you so hotly oppose. It was because of those continual assaults that the rigid brethren of your way, made, not only upon this congregation, to rend it; but also upon many others about us. If peradventure they might break us in pieces, and draw from us disciples after them. Assaults, I say, upon this congregation by times, for no less than these sixteen or eighteen years. Yea, myself they have sent for, and endeavoured to persuade me to break communion with my brethren; also with many others they have often tampered, if haply their seeds of division might take. Neither did they altogether fail of their purpose, for some they did rend and dismember from us; but none but those, of whom now they begin to be

³ Nearly all the Baptist churches of that day limited communion to them who had been baptized in water on a profession of their faith. It is very different now; Bunyan's principles have spread, are spreading, and must soon become universal.--Ed.

ashamed. The judgment of God so following their design, that the persons which then they prevailed upon, are now a stink, and reproach to religion. Neither were these spirits content with that discord they did sow among us, but they proceeded to seize upon others. But to pass these. The wild, and unsound positions they have urged to maintain their practice, would be too large here to insert. Now, Sir, to settle the brethren, the brethren of our community, and to prevent such disorders among others, was the cause of my publishing my papers: and considering my concern in the house of God, I could do no less than to give them warning, 'That every man might deliver his soul.'

You proceed, saying, 'It is my liberty, as well as others into whose hands it falls, to weigh what you have said in truth's balance, and if it be found too light, to reject it whether you will or no.'

Ans. Do but grant me, without mocking of me, the liberty you desire to take, and God helping me, I desire no more [than] to shift for myself among you. As to your saying, that I proudly and imperiously insult, because I say they are 'babes and carnal, that attempt to break the peace and communion of churches, though upon better pretences than water.' You must know I am still of that mind, and shall be, so long as I see the effects that follow, viz. The breach of love, taking off Christians from the more weighty things of God; and to make them quarrel and have heart-burnings one against another.

Where you are pleased to charge me with raging, for laying those eighteen particular crimes to the charge of such who exclude Christians from church communion, and debar them their heaven-born privileges, for the want of that, which yet God never made the wall of division between us. I say, when you can prove, That God hath made water baptism that wall, and that the stress of the after eighteen charges lie wholly and only in that; then you may, time enough, call my language such as wanteth charity: but I question though that was granted, whether your saying, I RAGE, will be justified in the day of judgment.

My great noise, as you call it, about an initiating ordinance, you say, you shall take no notice of.

Ans. 1. Although you do not, I must: For if baptism be not that, but another; and if visible saints may enter into fellowship by that other, and are nowhere forbidden so to do, because they have not light into water baptism: it is of weight to be considered by me; yea, and of others too who are unprejudiced. 2. How ignorant you are of such as hold it the initiating ordinance I know not: nor how long you have been of that persuasion I know not. This I know, that men of your own party, as serious, godly, and it may be, more learned than yourself, have within less than this twelve-month urged it. Mr. D. in my hearing, did from Romans 6:1, 2 in the meeting in *Lothbury* affirm it: also my much esteemed Mr. D. A.⁴ did twice in a conference with me assert it. 3. But whatever you say, whether for, or against, 'tis no matter; for while you deny it be the entering ordinance, you account it the wall, bar, bolt, and door; even that which must separate between the righteous and the righteous; nay, you make want of light therein, a ground to exclude the most godly your communion, when every novice in religion shall be received into your bosom, and be of esteem with you because he hath, and from what ground God knows, submitted to water baptism.

I am glad that you conclude with me what is the initiating ordinance: but withal, give me leave to correct, as I think, one extravagant expression of yours. You say, 'It is CONSENT on all hands and NOTHING else, that makes them members of particular churches, and not faith and baptism.' You might have stopped at, and nothing else, you need not in particular have rejected faith: your first error was bad enough: what, NOTHING else but consent? What, not so much as a respect to the matter or end? Why then are not all the communities of

all the highwaymen in the land, truly constituted churches of Christ; unless you can prove that they hold together, but not by consent? What? consent and nothing else? But why do YOU throw out FAITH? why, I throw out baptism; which because you cannot as to the case in hand fetch in again, therefore out must faith go too. Your action is much like that harlot's, that stood to be judged by Solomon, who because her own child was dead, would have her neighbour's killed also (1 Kings 3:26). Faith, Sir, both in the profession and confession of it, is of immediate and also absolute concern, even in the very act of the church's reception, of this or another member. Throw out faith, and there is no such thing as a Christian, neither visible nor invisible. You ought to receive no man, but upon a comfortable satisfaction to the church, that you are now receiving a believer. Faith, whether it be savingly there or no, is the great argument with the church in receiving any: we receive not men as men, but the man immediately under that supposition; He hath faith, *he* is a Christian. Sir, consent simply, without faith, makes no man a member of the church of God: because then would a church not cease to be a church, whoever they received among them. Yea, by this assertion you have justified the church of Rome itself, to be to this day both good, and godly, unless you can prove that they did at first, and do now receive their unbelieving members, without their own consent. The church hath no such liberty to receive men without respect to faith; yea, faith and holiness must be the essentials, or basis, upon, and for the sake of which you receive them: holiness, I say, yet not such as is circumstantial, but that which is such in the very heart of it: pray you in your next therefore word it better, lest while you slight and trample upon me, you stand before all, blame-worthy yourself.

The scriptures you speak of, I did not in my first produce to shew persons unbaptized [in water] might hold communion with the church, though I am fully convinced they may, but to shew, that knowledge of those persons, of their faith and holiness in general, ought first to be shewed to the church, before she can lawfully receive them (Acts 9:26-31; 1 Cor 16:10; 2 Cor

⁴ Mr. H. D'Anvers: 'A seventh end of baptism is, that the baptized person may orderly thereby have an entrance into the visible church. None were esteemed members, or did partake of its ordinances, before they were baptized, being so God's hedge or boundary.'--*Treatise of Baptism*, p. 20, ed. 1674.

8:23). As to my answer to a question which you have of your's corrupted, and then abused: I tell you again, That a discovery of the faith and holiness, and a declaration of the willingness of a person to subject himself to the laws and government of Christ in his church, is a ground sufficient to receive such a member.

But you descant; Is baptism one of the laws of Christ?

Ans. It is none of those laws, neither any part of them, that the church, as a church, should shew her obedience by. For albeit that baptism be given by Christ our Lord to the church, yet not for them to worship him by as a church. Shew me what church-ordinance it is; and when, or where the church, as a church, is to practise it, as one of those laws and appointments that he hath commanded his church to shew to him her obedience by. Again, That submitting to water baptism, is a sign or note, that was ever required by any of the primitive churches, of him that would hold fellowship with them; or that it infuseth such grace and holiness into those that submit thereto, as to capacitate them for such a privilege; or that they did acknowledge it a sign thereof, I find not in all the Bible.

I find not, as I told you in my first, that baptism is a sign to any, but the person that is baptized (Col 2:12; Rom 6:1-4; 1 Cor 15:29; Acts 2:38, 22:16). The church hath her satisfaction of the person, from better proof (1 Peter 3:21).

I told you also, That baptism makes thee no member of the church, neither doth it make thee a visible saint: It giveth thee therefore, neither right to, nor being of membership at all. Why, Sir, did you not answer these things? but slip them with others, as if you were unconcerned; troubling your reader with such kind of insinuations, as must needs be unsavoury to godly ears. You make the moral law none of Christ's but Moses'; not the son's but the servant's; and tell me, because I plead for faith and holiness, according to moral duties gospelized, (they are my words) whereby we ought to judge of the fitness of members; that therefore Moses is more beholden to me than Christ.

Sir, know you not yet, that a difference is to be put betwixt those rules that discover the essentials of holiness, and those that in themselves are not such; and that that of faith and the moral law is the one, and baptism, &c. the other. Is not love to God, abhorrence of idols, to forbear blaspheming, to honour our parents, to do no murder, to forbear theft, not to bear false witness, nor covet, &c. are not (I say) these the precepts of the Lord Jesus, because delivered by Moses? Or, are these such as may better be broken, than for want of light to forbear baptism with water? Or, doth a man while he liveth in the neglect of these, and in the mean time bustle about those you call gospel commands, most honour Christ, or best fit himself for fellowship with the saints? Need I tell you, That the faith of Christ, with the ten commandments, are as much now gospel commands as baptism; and ought to be in as much, and far more respect with the holy ones than that, or other the like.⁵

Yea, shall I tell you, That baptism will neither admit a man into fellowship, nor keep him there, if he be a transgressor of a moral precept; and that a man who believeth in Jesus, and fulfilleth the royal law, doth more glorify God, and honour religion in the world, than he that keepeth, if there were so many, ten thousand figurative laws. As to those commands that respect God's instituted worship in a church, as a church, I have told you that baptism is none of them, and you have been driven to confess it. The church then must first look to faith, then to good living according to the ten commandments; after that she must respect those appointments of our Lord Jesus that respects her outward order and discipline, and then she walks as becomes her, sinning if she neglecteth either; sinning if she overvalueth either. But why did you not answer those tests I produced for the strengthening of my argument (Rom 14:17,18; Deut 27:47; James 2:8-12; 1 Cor 9:21, 5:9-11; Gal 6:15,16; Phil 3; 1 Tim 1:9-11; Acts 20:28-32; Rom 13:13; James 4:11;

⁵ A modern writer, in a critique on Bunyan, says that he did as much justice to grace as his *Calvinism* would allow him!! May all the world be such Calvinists.--Ed.

1 Cor 5:12). Deal fairly; Answer those texts, with the argument made upon them; and when you have after a godly manner done that, you may the more boldly condemn.

You tell me, that I say, 'None ever received baptism without light therein.'

What if I did? (as I did not) but you grant it: and now I will ask you, and pray deal fairly in your answer. May a man be a visible saint without light therein? May he have a good conscience without light therein? And seeing that baptism is none of the worship that Christ instituted in his church for them to practice as a church, must he be kept dark about all other things concerning the worship of God in his church, until he receive light therein?

You have answered already, 'That they ought to be ashamed, and to repent of that abomination [their sprinkling] BEFORE they come to have a sight of the pattern of the house of God, the goings in and the comings out thereof' (Eze 43:10,11). But, Sir, where do you find that want of light in water baptism, or because a man hath been sprinkled, that he is to be kept dark in all other temple-institutions, till he be ashamed and repent of that? Pray produce the texts, for Ezekiel helps you nothing: he speaks only of the pattern of the house, the goings out, and comings in thereof. As for the coming in, you have already confessed, That baptism is not the entering ordinance. And as for the worship that Christ hath instituted in his church, as a church, I say, (and you also have said it) baptism is none of the forms thereof, none of the ordinances thereof, none of the laws thereof; for baptism is, as to the practice of it, that which is without the church, without the house of God.⁶ Then by your own text, if a man do repent him of his christening in his childhood, he may be received into fellowship without submitting to baptism: but I will not strain you too far.

You add, 'Is it a person's light that giveth being to a precept?'

⁶ 'Without the church,' previous to having entered into the church, a *personal* obedience to the divine command; having repented, then be baptized: neither of these are duties to be performed by the church, as such, but *individually*.--Ed.

Ans. Who said it? Yet it is his light and faith about it, that can make him to do it acceptably.

You ask again, 'Suppose men plead want of light in other commands?'

Ans. If they be not such, the forbearance of which, discapacitates him of membership, he may yet be received to fellowship.

'But what if a man want light in the supper?'

Ans. There is more to be said in that case than in the other: for that is a part of that worship which Christ hath instituted for his church, to be conversant in as a church; presenting them as such, with their communion with their Head, and with one another as members of him. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread' (1 Cor 10:16,17). Wherefore this being a duty incumbent on the church, as a church; and on every member of that body as such, they are obliged in that case more closely to deal with the members, than in that wherein they are not so concerned; and with which as such, they have nothing to do. No man baptizeth by virtue of his office in the church; no man is baptized by virtue of his membership there.

'But what if a man want light in his duty to the poor?'

Ans. If he doth, God must give it him; I mean to know his duty as a church member. Now I will add, but what if he that can give a shilling, giveth nothing? I suppose all that the church can do in that case, is but to warn, to exhort, and charge him, and to shew him his duty: and if he neglect, to shew him, that 'He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly' (2 Cor 9:6). But to cut a man off for this, as you forwardly urge, would argue that church, at least I think so, a little too bold with so high and weighty a censure. I plead not here for the churl, but seek to allay your heat: and should it be granted that such deserve as you would have it, this makes no matter to the case in hand. Now whereas you suggest, 'That moral evils are but sins against men,' you are too much unadvised: the moral evil, as you call it, whether you respect the breach of the first or

second table, is first and immediately a sin against God; and more insufferable, yea and damnable, than for a man for want of light to forbear either baptism or the Lord's Supper.

But say you, 'We have now found an advocate for sin against God, in the breach of one of HIS holy commands?'

Ans. As if none of the moral precepts were HIS. But, Sir, who have I pleaded for, in the denial of any one ordinance of God? Yea, or for their neglect of it either? What I say, is but that men must have light, that they may not do in darkness, or Papist-like, live by an implicit faith.

But I see you put no difference between an open breach of the law, and a forbearing that which to him is doubtful. But I will suppose a case: There is a man wants light in baptism, yet by his neighbour is pressed to it: he saith he seeth it not to be his duty; the other saith, he sins if he doth it not: now seeing 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin' (Rom 14:23); what should this man do? If you say, let him use the means: I say so too. But what, if when he hath used it, he still continueth dark about it; what will you advise him now? If you bid him wait, do you not encourage him to live in sin, as much as I do? Nay, and seeing you will not let him for want of light in that, obey God in other his institutions; what is it but to say, Seeing you live for want of light in the neglect of baptism, we will make you, while you continue so, live, though quite against your light, in the breach of all the rest. And WHERE you are commanded thus, you may shew the place when you find it.

Now where you urge, that you are one of them that say, 'The epistles were writ to particular churches, and so serve nothing at all for our kind of communion.' Urging further, 'That it will be difficult for me to prove, that they were also directed to particular saints.'

Ans. I wish there were nothing harder, that were good for me to do. But what should be the reason that our author, with others of his opinion, should stickle so hard to prove [that] all the epistles were wrote to particular churches? Why, because those members were, as they think, every one baptized; and so the epistles from which we fetch our arguments for the love and concord of saints, to be only

proper to themselves.⁷ But if this be true, there is virtue indeed, and more than ever I dreamed of, in partaking of water baptism: for if that shall take away the epistles, and consequently the whole Bible, from all that are not baptized; then are the other churches, and also particular saints, in a very deplorable condition. For he asketh me very devoutly, 'Whether any unbaptized persons were concerned in these epistles?' But why would they take from us the Holy Scriptures? Verily, that we might have naught to justify our practice withal: for if the Scriptures belong only to baptized believers, they then belong not to the rest; and in truth, if they could persuade us to yield them this grant, we should but sorrily justify our practice. But I would ask these men, 'If the word of God came out from them? Or if it came to them only?' (1 Cor 14:36). Or, whether Christ hath not given his whole word to every one that believeth, whether they be baptized, or in, or out of church fellowship (James 17:14). Or, whether every saint in some sort, hath not the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which are the Scriptures and their power? Would to God they had learned more modesty, than thus to take from all others, and appropriate to themselves, and that for the sake of their observing a circumstance in religion, so high, and glorious a privilege.

But we will come a little to proof: what church will this author find in Rome, that time the epistle was sent to the brethren there, besides that church that was in Aquila's house, although many more saints were then in the city? (Rom 16:5). Yea, the apostle in his salutation at the beginning, embraceth them only as brethren, without the least intimation of their being gathered into fellowship: 'To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you,' &c. (1:7). To all there, to all in that city, beloved of God, and that are converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. A church there was in Aquila's house, and that there were many more saints besides, is, and that by the

⁷ 'To themselves,' to the particular churches only to which they were written. Contrary to the word, 'All scripture is given - to be profitable to the man of God' in every church (2 Tim 3:16).--Ed.

text, as manifest. Besides, considering the rules that are given them in the 14th and 15th chapters about their receiving one another, doth yet strongly suggest to me, that they were not yet in fellowship, but as it were now about it, when Paul wrote his epistle to them.

The first epistle written to Corinth, was also wrote to all them *'that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord'* (1:2). But it will be hard work for our author to make it manifest, that none in those days did call on the name of our Lord, but those that were first baptized. The second epistle also, was not only written to the church at Corinth, but also to 'all the saints which were in all Achaia' (2 Cor 1:1). To the Galatians and Thessalonians indeed, his salutation was only to the churches there: But the three epistles before were as well to all other [saints]: As also that to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, in which the faithful and SAINTS in Christ Jesus were also every one comprehended. Besides, to what particular church was the epistle to the Hebrews wrote? Or the epistle of James? Both those of Peter, and the first of John? Nay, that of John was wrote to some at that time out of fellowship, 'that also may have fellowship with [us]' the church (1:1-4). So that these brethren must not have all the scriptures. We have then a like privilege with all saints, to use the scriptures for our godly edifying, and to defend ourselves thereby, from the assaults of those that would make spoil of us. But to pass this, and come to the next.

You object for that I said, 'If water baptism [as the circumstances with which the church was pestered of old] trouble the peace, and wound the consciences of the godly, dismember and break their fellowships; it is, although an ordinance, for the present prudently to be shunned.' At this (as I said) you object, and say, 'Did I ever find baptism a pest or plague to churches? And did ever God send an ordinance to be a pest and plague to his people?'

I answer: I said not that God did send it for any such end at all; God's ordinances are none of this in themselves: nor if used as, and for the end for which God sent them. But yet both baptism, and the supper of the Lord, have, by being wrested out of their place, been a great

affliction to the godly both in this and other ages. What say you to breaking of bread, which the devil, by abusing, made an engine in the hand of Papists, to burn, starve, hang and draw thousands? What say you to John of Leyden? What work did he make by the abuse of the ordinance of water baptism? And I wish this age had not given cause, through the church-rending spirits that some are possessed with, to make complaint of this matter; who have also had for their engine the baptism with water. Yea, yourself, Sir, so far as I can perceive, could you get but the opportunity; yourself (I say) under pretence of this innocent ordinance, as you term it, would not stick to make inroads, and outroads too, in all the churches, that suit not your fancy, in the land. For you have already been bold to affirm, 'That all those that have baptized infants, ought to be ashamed and repent, before they be showed the pattern of the house.' And what is this but to threaten, that could you have your will of them, you would quickly take from them their present church privileges, and let them see nothing thereof, till those qualifications, especially subjection to water baptism, was found to attend each of them.

As to the persons you speak of, 'Who have rent churches in pieces, by making preaching by method, doctrine, reason and use, to be anti-christian': Or, because they could not have other ministrations performed after their fancies 'the imprudence of such with yourselves, hath been heart-breaking to many a gracious soul; an high occasion of stumbling to the weak, and a reproach to the ways of the Lord.' That it may be prudently shunned, I referred you then for proof, to what should be offered after: but at this you cry out, and so pass it.

And now, reader, although this author hath thus objected against some passages in this my first argument for communion with persons unbaptized; yet the body of my argument he misseth and passeth over, as a thing not worth the answering; whether because he forgot, or because he was conscious to himself, that he knew not what to do therewith, I will not now determine. 1. I effectually prove, 'That baptism is not the initiating ordinance.' 2. I prove, 'That though it was, yet the case may so fall out, that

members might be received without it.' 3. I prove, 'That baptism makes no man a visible saint, nor giveth any right to church fellowship.' 4. I prove, 'That faith, and a life becoming the law of the ten commandments, should be the chief and most solid argument with true churches to receive saints to fellowship.'⁸ 5. I prove, 'That circumcision in the flesh, which was the entering ordinance of old, was a type of circumcision in the heart,' &c. These things, with others, our author letteth pass; although in the proof of them abideth the strength of this first argument; to which I must entreat him in his next, to cast his eye, and give fair answer; as also to the scriptures on which each are built, or he must suffer me to say, I am abused. Further, I make a question upon three scriptures, Whether all the saints, even in the primitive times, were baptized with water? to which also he answereth nothing; whereas he ought to have done it, if he will take in hand to confute. The scriptures are 1 Corinthians 1:14-16; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27. Yet were they effectually answered, my argument is nothing weakened.

You come to my second argument, drawn from Ephesians 4:4-6. Upon which a little more now to enlarge, and then to take notice of your objection. The apostle then in that fourth of the Ephesians, exhorteth the church there 'with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace' (vv 2,3). This done, he presents them with such arguments, as might fasten his exhortation to purpose upon them.

⁸ To these ten commandments must be added that new command given by the Saviour, 'That ye love one another' (John 12:34); or rather the evangelical sum of the whole law, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.' This happy state of mind can only be attained by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. How awful the thought that multitudes of professing Christians rely upon outward ceremonies, a fleshly carnal confidence in ordinances, while they are dead as to union with God and to spiritual communion with his saints. Reader, how is it with your own soul.--Ed.

1. The first is, because the body is ONE; There is 'one body'; therefore they should not divide. For if the church of Christ be a body, there ought not to be a rent or schism among them (1 Cor 12).

2. His second argument is, There is 'one spirit,' or one quickening principle by which the body is made to live; for having asserted before that Christ hath indeed a body, it was meet that he showed also, that this body hath life, and motion. Now that life, being none other, than that nourishment, or spirit of life, from which 'the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of the measure in every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love' (Eph 4:16). Now this spirit, being first, and chiefly, in the head, therefore none other but those that hold the head can have this nourishment ministered to them: besides, this is the spirit that knits the body together, and makes it increase with the increase of God (Col 2:19). This is 'the unity of the spirit' which he before exhorts them to keep.

3. The third argument is, Because their hope is also but one. 'Even as ye are called [saith he] in one hope of your calling': as who should say, My brethren, if you are called with one calling, if your hope, both as to the grace of hope, and also the object, be but one: if you hope for one heaven, and for one eternal life: then maintain that unity of the spirit, and hope, while here, in love, 'and the bond of peace' (Eph 4:3).

4. The fourth argument is, There is 'one Lord,' or husband, or prince, to whom this church belongs: therefore if we have husbands, but one, Lord and prince but one, let us not read into many parties, as if we had many husbands, lords, and princes, to govern us, as his wife, his house, and kingdom. 'Is Christ divided?' (1 Cor 1:13).

5. The fifth argument is, There is 'one faith,' by which we all stand justified by one Lord Jesus Christ; 'one faith' by which we escape the wrath of God; 'one faith' by which only they that have it are blessed; yea, seeing there is but 'one faith,' by which we are all put into one way of salvation, let us hold together as such.

6. The sixth argument is, There is ‘one baptism.’ Now we are come to the pinch, viz., Whether it be that of water, or no? which I must positively deny. (1.) Because water baptism hath nothing to do in a church, as a church; it neither bringeth us into the church, nor is any part of our worship when we come there; how then can the peace and unity of the church depend upon water baptism? Besides, he saith expressly, It is the ‘unity of the spirit,’ not water, that is here intended: and the arguments brought to enforce it, are such as wholly and immediately relate to the duty of the church, as a church. (2.) Further, That other text, that treateth of our being baptized into a body, saith expressly it is done by the spirit: ‘For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body’ (1 Cor 12:13). Here is the church presented as under the notion of ‘one body’; here is a baptism mentioned, by which they are brought, or initiated into this body: Now that this is the baptism of water, is utterly against the words of the text; ‘For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body.’ Besides, if the baptism here be of water, then is it the initiating ordinance; but the contrary I have proved, and this author stands by my doctrine. So then, the baptism here respecting the church as one body, and water, having nothing to do to enter men into the church, nor to command them to practise it as a church, in order to their peace or communion, or respecting the worship of God as such: and (I say again) the baptism in the sixth argument, being urged precisely for no other purpose, but with respect to the church’s peace as a body; it must needs be THAT baptism, by virtue of which, they were initiated, and joined together in one; and that baptism being only that which the Spirit executeth; this therefore is that one baptism.

7. The other argument is also effectual; there is ‘One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all’ (Eph 4:6). If we are ‘one body’; if to it there be but ‘one spirit’; if we have but ‘one hope, one faith,’ and be all baptized by ‘one spirit’ into that ‘one’ body; and if we have but ‘one Lord, one God,’ and he in every one of us; let us be also ‘one’: and let them that are thus qualified, both join together, and hold in one.

But our author against this, objecteth, That, ‘now I employ my pen against every man; and give the lie to all expositors, for they hold this

one baptism, to be none other than that of water.’⁹

Ans. What if I should also send you to answer those expositors that expound certain scriptures for infant baptism, and that by them brand us for anabaptists; must this drive you from your belief of the truth? EXPOSITORS I reverence, but must live by mine own faith (Habb 2:4). God hath no where bound himself to them more than to others, with respect to the revelation of his mind in his word. But it becomes not you to run thus to expositors, who are, as to your notions in many things, but of yesterday: ‘to the law, and to the testimony’ (Isa 8:20): for ‘Out of the mouth of babes’ the Lord hath ‘ordained strength’ (Psa 8:2).

But you bid me tell you, ‘What I mean by spirit baptism?’

Ans. Sir, you mistake me, I treat not here of our being baptized with the Spirit, with respect to its coming from heaven into us; but of that act of the spirit, when come, which baptizeth us into a body or church. It is one thing to be baptized with the Spirit in the first sense; and another to be baptized by it in the sense I treat of: for the Spirit to come upon me, is one thing; and for that when come, to implant, embody, or baptize me into the body of Christ, is another. Your question therefore is grounded on a mistake, both of my judgment, and the words of the apostle. Wherefore thus I soon put an end to your objections. For the Spirit to

⁹ Bunyan’s adversaries were wrong in stating that *all* the expositors agreed in referring this ‘one baptism’ to be that in or with water. John Caime, 1662, refers to 1 Corinthians 12:13, as an illustration of Ephesians 4:5, ‘One baptism,’ ‘by one SPIRIT are we all baptized.’ The Assembly’s Annotations, 1657, infers that ‘one’ means ‘once,’ and refers to the Nicene creed, which says, ‘one baptism for the remission of sins’; this surely cannot mean that the application of water remits sins. Diodati, 1648, is silent on this subject. Dr. Hammond, 1653, says, ‘the *same* vow to be administered to all.’ Very similar to this is the Dutch annotations of Theodore Haak.—Ed.

come down upon me, is one thing; and for the Spirit to baptize, or implant me into the church, is another: for to be possessed with the spirit, is one thing; and to be led by that spirit, is another. I conclude then; seeing the argument taken from that one baptism, respecteth church fellowship properly; and seeing water baptism meddleth not with it as such; it is the other, even that in 1 Corinthians 12:16 that is here intended, and no other.

But you add, 'If nothing but extraordinary gifts are called the baptism of the Spirit in a strict sense; then that baptism (1 Cor 12) must be water baptism, as well as that in the Ephesians.'

Hold: you make your conclusions before you have cause; first, prove that in the Ephesians to be meant of water baptism, and that the baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:16 is the baptism you would have it; and then conclude my argument void. That it is the baptism of the Holy Ghost according to the common notion, I say not; for you to assert it is the baptism of water, gives the lie to the text: but that it is an act of the Holy Ghost, baptizing the saints into a body, or church, you will hardly be able to make the contrary appear to be truth. 'But behold, while here you would have this to be baptism with water, how you contradict and condemn your own notion: you say water baptism is not the entering ordinance; yet the baptism here is such as baptizeth us into a body: wherefore before you say next time that this in 1 Corinthians 12:16 is meant of water baptism; affirm that water baptism is the initiating or entering ordinance, that your opinion and doctrine may hang better together.'

We come to my third argument; which is to prove, that it is lawful to hold church communion with the godly sincere believer, though he hath not be baptized with water, because he hath the DOCTRINE of baptisms (Heb 6:2). Which doctrine I distinguish from the practice of it; the doctrine being that which by the outward sign is presented to us; or which by the outward circumstance of the act is preached to the believer, viz., the death of Christ, my death with Christ; also his resurrection from the dead, and mine with him to newness of life. 'This our author calleth one

of the strangest paradoxes that he hath LIGHTLY observed.'

Ans. How light he is in his observation of things, I know not; this I am sure, the apostle makes mention of the doctrine of baptisms; now that the doctrine of a man, or ordinance, is the signification of what is preached, is apparent to very sense. What is Christ's doctrine, Paul's doctrine, scripture doctrine, but the truth couched under the words that are spoken? so the doctrine of baptism, yea and the doctrine of the Lord's supper, are those truths or mysteries that such ordinances preach unto us. And that the doctrine of baptism, in this sense, is the great end for which that, and the Lord's supper, was instituted, is apparent from all the scriptures: it is that which the apostle seeketh for in that eminent sixth of the Romans, 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*' (3-5). What is here discoursed, but the doctrine of or that which baptism teacheth; with an intimation; that that was the chief, for the sake of which that shadow was instituted; as also that they that have the doctrine, or that which is signified thereby, they only must reign with Christ.

Again, This is that which he seeketh for among the Corinthians; 'If the dead rise not at all,' [saith he], 'why then were you baptized for the dead?' (1 Cor 15:29). Why then were you baptized? What did baptism teach you? What doctrine did it preach to you? further, 'Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead' (Col 2:12). What is here in chief asserted, but the doctrine only which water baptism preacheth? with an intimation, that they, and they only, are the saved of the Lord, that have heard, received, and that live in this doctrine.

The same may be said of the Lord's supper, it also hath its doctrine. But against this our

author objecteth, saying, 'That this is called the doctrine of baptism, I am yet to learn.'

Ans. Your ignorance of the truth makes it not an error: but I pray you, what is the doctrine of baptism, if not that which baptism teacheth, even that which is signified thereby? As that is the doctrine of Christ, and the scriptures; which he and they teach as the mind of God.

But you say, 'I took the doctrine of baptism to be the command that a believer should be baptized, for such ends as the gospel expresseth.'

Ans. To assert that a figurative ordinance is of God, is one thing; but the doctrinal signification of that ordinance is another. A man may preach the command, yet none of the doctrine which baptism preacheth. The doctrine lieth not in the command, but the mystery discovered to faith, by the act.

You object, 'If the resurrection be the doctrine of baptism, why doth the apostle make that, and the doctrine of baptism, things distinct, in Hebrews 6.'

Ans. The resurrection simply considered, is not the doctrine of baptism, but Christ's, and mine by him. Besides, there is more in it than the mystery of this resurrection; there is my death first, and then my rising with him.

But you add, 'Under the law, all the sacrifices of that dispensation, with their sabbaths, were types of that Christ, who was the substance of all those ceremonies. If any of them then that professed faith in the Messias to come, should upon scruples, or want of pretended light, neglect the whole, or part of that typical worship; why may not a man say of them, as this advocate of the practice under debate, they had the richer and better sacrifice.'

Ans. First, that the brethren which refuse to be baptized, as you and I would have them, refuse it for want of pretended light, becomes you not to imagine, unless your boldness will lead you to judge, that all men want sincerity, that come not up to our judgment. Their conscience may be better than either yours or mine; yet God, for purposes best known to himself, may forbear to give them conviction of their duty in this particular. But what, because they are not baptized, have they not Jesus

Christ? Or, must we now be afraid to say that Christ is better than water baptism?¹⁰ Yea, God himself for the sake of this better thing, hath suffered in his church a suspension of some of his ordinances, yet owned them for his truly constituted congregation. What say you to the church in the wilderness? I touched you with it in my first, but perceive you listed not to meddle therewith. That church received members, the way which was not prescribed by, but directly against the revealed mind of God; yet stood a true church, their members true members; also that church in that state, was such before whom, among whom, and to whom God continually made known himself to be their God, and owned them for his peculiar treasure.

And now I am fallen upon it, let me a little enlarge: this church, according to the then instituted worship of God, had circumcision for their entering ordinance (Gen 17:13,14), without which it was unlawful to receive any into fellowship with them: yea, he that without it was received, was to be cut off, and cast out again. Further, as to the passover, the uncircumcised were utterly forbidden to eat it (Exo 12:48). Now if our brethren had as express prohibition to justify their groundless opinion, as here is to exclude the uncircumcised from the communion of the church and the passover: I say, if they could find it written, 'No unbaptized person shall enter, no unbaptized person shall eat of the supper'; what a noise would they make about it? But yet let the reader observe, that although circumcision was the entering ordinance, and our author saith baptism is not; yea, though this church was expressly forbidden to receive the uncircumcised, and we have not a syllable now to forbid the unbaptized, yet this church received members without, and otherwise than by this entering ordinance. They also admitted

¹⁰ Heaven forbid that we should be afraid or ashamed of saying that Christ is better than water baptism. Christ is the heavenly manna, the sweet, pleasant, nourishing food of the soul. Baptism is only once for life, but Christ is our essential food all through the wilderness--every hour of life until we enter the gates of the celestial and eternal city.--Ed.

them to the passover; yea, entertained, retained, and held communion with them so long as forty years without it. I say again, That the number of this sort of communicants was not so few as six hundred thousand. Moreover, to these uncircumcised was the land of Canaan given, yea, a possession of part thereof before they were circumcised; but the old circumcised ones might not enter therein. I am the larger in this, because our author hath overlooked my first mention thereof. And now I ask, What was the reason that God continued his presence with this church notwithstanding this transgression? Was it not because they had that richer and better thing, 'the Lord Jesus Christ?' For they did all eat of that spiritual bread, and drink of that 'spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ' (1 Cor 10:3,4). I confess I find them under rebukes and judgments in the wilderness, and that they were many times threatened to be destroyed; but yet I find not so much as one check for their receiving of members uncircumcised. Further, in the New Testament, where we have a catalogue of their sins, and also of their punishment for them; we find not a word about circumcision, nor the smallest intimation of the least rebuke for neglecting the entering ordinance (1 Cor 10:5-10). I will therefore say of them, as I have also said of my brethren, 'They had the richer and better thing.'

But you object, 'That this putteth the whole of God's instituted worship both under the law and gospel, to the highest uncertainties.'

Ans. This putteth our opposers out of their road, and quencheth the flame of their unwarrantable zeal. For if the entering ordinance, if the ordinance without which no man might be added to the church, was laid aside for forty years; yea, if more than six hundred thousand did communicate with them without it: I say again, If they did it, and held communion with God, that notwithstanding; yea, and had not, that we read of, all that time one small check for so doing; why may not we now enter communion, hold communion, maintain communion, church communion, without being judged, and condemned by you? because we cannot for want of light be all baptized before; especially considering baptism

makes no man a saint, is not the entering ordinance, is no part of the worship of God enjoined the church as a church. To conclude, although we receive members unbaptized [in after], we leave not God's instituted worship at uncertainties, especially what he hath commanded us as his church; we only profess our want of light in some things; but see no word to warrant the forbearance of our duty in all, for want of persuasion in one.

You object, 'I call baptism a circumstance, an outward-shew I NICKNAME it.'

Ans. Deep reproof! but why did you not shew me my evil in thus calling it, when opposed to the substance, and the thing signified? Is it the substance, is it the thing signified? And why may not I give it the name of a shew; when you call it a symbol, and compare it to a gentleman's livery?

But you say, I call it *an outward shew*.

Ans. Is it an inward one? What is it?

'It is a command.'

Ans. But doth that install it in that place and dignity, that was never intended for it?

You object further, 'They cannot have the doctrine of baptism that understand not our way of administering it.'

This is your mistake, both of the doctrine and thing itself. But if you will not SCORN to take notice of me, I advise you again to consider, That a man may find baptism to be commanded, may be informed who ought to administer it; may also know the proper subject; and that the manner of baptizing is dipping; and may desire to practise it because it is commanded, and yet know nothing of what water baptism preacheth; or of the mystery baptism sheweth to faith. But that the doctrine of baptism is not the practice of it, not the outward act, but the thing signified; and that every believer hath that, must argue you more than too bold to deny it.

But say you, 'Who taught you to divide betwixt Christ and his precepts, that you word it at such a rate? That he that hath the one,' &c.

Ans. To say nothing of faith, and the word; verily reason itself teacheth it. For if Christ be my righteousness, and not water; if Christ be my advocate, and not water; if there be that

good and blessedness in Christ, that is not in water; then is Jesus Christ better than water; and also in these to be eternally divided from water; unless we will make them co-saviours, co-advocates, and such as are equally good and profitable to men.

But say you, 'I thought that he that hath Christ, had an orderly right to all Christ's promises and precepts; and that the precepts of Christ, are part of the riches that a believer hath in and by Christ.'

Ans. A believer hath more in Christ than either promise or precept; but all believers know not all things, that of God are given to them by Christ. But must not they use, and enjoy what they know, because they know not all. Or must they neglect the weightier matters, because they want mint, and anise, and cummin? Your pretended orderly right is your fancy; there is not a syllable in the whole bible, that bids a Christian to forbear his duty in other things, because he wanteth, as you term it, the symbol, or water baptism.

But say you, 'He that despiseth his birthright of ordinances, our church privileges, will be found to be a profane person, as Esau in God's account.'

Baptism is not the privilege of a church as such. But what? are they all Esau's indeed? Must we go to hell, and be damned, for want of faith in water baptism? And take notice, I do not plead for a despising of baptism, but a bearing with our brother, that cannot do it for want of light. The best of baptism he hath, viz. the signification thereof: he wanteth only the outward shew, which if he had, would not prove him a truly visible saint; it would not tell me he had the grace of God in his heart; it is no characteristical note to another of my Sonship with God. But why did you not answer these parts of my argument? Why did you only cavil at words? which if they had been left out, the argument yet stands good. 'He that is not baptized [in water], if yet a true believer, hath the DOCTRINE of baptism; yea, he ought to have it before he be convicted, it is his duty to be baptized, or else he playeth the hypocrite. There is therefore no difference between that believer that is, and he that is not yet baptized with water; but only his going down into the

water, there to perform an outward ceremony, the substance of which he hath already; which yet he is not commanded to do with respect to membership with the church; but to obtain by that, further understanding of his privilege by Christ, which before he made profession of, and that as a visible believer.'¹¹

But to come to my fourth argument, which you so tenderly touch as if it burnt your fingers: 'I am bold [say I] to have communion with visible saints as before, because God hath communion with them, whose example in the case we are strictly commanded to follow.' 'Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God' (Rom 15:7). Yea, though they be saints, in opinion contrary to you, or I. 'We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves' (Rom 15:1). Infirmities that are sinful: for they that are natural are incident to all. Infirmities therefore they are, that for want of light, cause a man to err in circumstantial: and the reason upon which Paul groundeth this admonition is; 'For even Christ pleased not himself, but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me' (Rom 15:3).

You say to this, 'That it is Paul's direction to the church at Rome how to receive their brethren church members.'

I answer, 1. What? are not the poor saints now in this city? are not they concerned in these instructions? or is not the church by these words at all directed how to carry it to those that were not yet in fellowship? A bold assertion! but grounded upon nothing, but that you would have it so. 2. But how will you prove that there was a church, a rightly constituted church, at Rome, besides that in

¹¹ While we acknowledge the importance of water baptism, to which Christ submitted, yet we do well to consider that it was not intended as a means of purifying his infinite purity; no more does it purify the believer who follows his Redeemer in this ordinance. He was as much a believer before as he is after the ceremony. He submits to it as an act of obedience to the divine command, in the humble hope that his faith may be strengthened and his soul refreshed.--Ed.

Aquila's house? (chap. 16). Neither doth this epistle, nor any other in the whole book of God affirm it. Besides, since Paul in this last chapter saluteth the church, as in this man's house, but the other, only as particular saints, it giveth further ground of conviction to you, that those others were not as yet imbodyed in such a fellowship. 3. But suppose there was another church besides; it doth not therefore follow, that the apostle exhorteth them only to receive persons already in fellowship; but 'Him,' even every 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations' (14:1). 4. Suppose again, the receiving here exhorted to, be such as you would have it, yet the rule by which they are directed to do it, is that by which we perceive that Christ hath received them. But Christ did not receive them by [water] baptism, but as given to him by the Father. Him, therefore, concerning whom we are convinced, that he by the Father is given to Christ, 'Him should we receive.' 5. But what need I grant you, that which cannot be proved? yet if you could prove it, it availeth nothing at all; because you may not, cannot, ought not to dare to limit the exhortation to receiving of one another into each other's affections only; and not also receiving saints into communion.

But you object: 'To make God's receiving the rule of our receiving, in all cases will not hold.'

Ans. Keep to the thing, man: if it hold in the case in hand, it is enough, the which you have not denied. And that it holds thus, is plain, because commanded. But let the reader know, that your putting in that way of his receiving which is invisible to us; is but an unhandsome straddling over my argument, which treateth only of a visible receiving; such as is manifest to the church. This you knew, but sought by evading to turn the reader from considering the strength of this my argument. 'The receiving then [said I] because it is set as an example to the church, is such as must needs be visible unto them; and is best discovered by that word that describeth the visible saint. Whoso then you can judge a visible saint, one that walketh with God, you may, nay ought to judge by the same word, that God hath received him. Now him that God receiveth, him should you receive.' But will any object; they cannot believe that

God receiveth the unbaptized saints; I will not suppose you so much stupefied, and therefore shall make no answer.

But you seem to be much offended, because I said, 'Vain man! Think not by the straightness of thine order in outward, and bodily conformity to outward and shadowish circumstances, that thy peace is maintained with God?' But why so much offended at this? [It is say you] 'Because you intend by this the brethren of the baptized way.'

Ans. If they be vain men, and set up their OWN order, how straight soever they make it, they are worthy to be reprov'd; if 'they have rejected the word of the Lord; what wisdom *is* in them?' (Jer 8:9). And as you suggest the first, I affirm the second. But if you would be justified in excluding those, with whom yet you see God hath communion, because they yet see not a shadow with you; produce the scripture for such order, that we may believe it is the order of God. But deal fairly, lest we shew your nakedness, and others see your shame. You tell me of the order of the Colossians (2:5). But if you can prove that that church refused to hold communion with that saint whom they knew to be received by Christ, and held communion with him [Christ], or that none but those that are baptized [in water] are received by and hold communion with him, then you justify your order. In the mean while the whole of mine argument stands firm against you; 'You must have communion with visible saints, because God hath communion with them, whose example in the case we are strictly commanded to follow.'

But you ask me, 'If outward and bodily conformity be become a crime?'

Ans. I nowhere said it; but know that to glorify God with our bodies, respecteth chiefly far higher and more weighty things, than that of water baptism; 'Whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin' (Rom 14:23); and to set up an ordinance, though an ordinance of God, that by it the church may be pulled in pieces, or the truly visible saints excluded communion with their brethren; I say again, to make water baptism a bar and division between saint and saint, every whit otherwise gracious and holy alike: This is like fasting 'for strife and debate, and to smite

with the fist of wickedness' (Isa 58:4); and is not to be found within the whole bible, but is wholly an order of your own devising. As to the peace you make an objection about you have granted me what I intended; and now I add further, that for church peace to be founded in water baptism, or any other external rite, not having to do with the church, as a church, is poor peace indeed: Church peace is founded in blood; and love to each other for Jesus' sake (Phil 2:1-4). Bearing with, and forbearing one another, in all things circumstantial, that concern not church worship as such (Eph 4:31,32). And in my other [treatise] I have proved that baptism is not such, and therefore ought not to be urged to make rents and divisions among brethren.

But you ask, 'Is my peace maintained in a way of disobedience? and conclude if it be, you fear it is false.'

Ans. If the first were true; you need not to doubt of the second; but it may be thought he hath little to say in the controversy, who is forced to stuff out his papers, with such needless prattles as these.

My fifth argument is, 'That a failure in such a circumstance as water baptism, doth not unchristian us'; this you are compelled to grant. And I conclude with your words, persons ought to be Christians before visible Christians; such as any congregation in the land may receive to communion with themselves, because God hath shewed us that he has received them. 'Receive him to the glory of God.' To the glory of God, is put in on purpose, to shew what dishonour they bring to him, who despise to have communion with such, whom they know do maintain communion with God. I say again, How doth this man, or that church, glorify God, or count the wisdom and holiness of heaven beyond them, when they refuse communion with them, concerning whom yet they are convinced, that they have communion with God? But my argument you have not denied; nor meddled with the conclusion at all; which is, 'That therefore, even because a failure here, doth not unchristian us, doth not make us insincere'; and I add, doth not lay us open to any revealed judgment or displeasure of God (if it doth, shew where) therefore it should not, it

ought not to make us obnoxious to the displeasure of the church of God.

But you say, 'I rank gospel precepts, with Old Testament abrogated ceremonies.'

Ans. You should have given your reader my words, that he might have judged from my own mouth: I said then, speaking before of Christianity itself, 'that thousands of thousands that could not consent to water, as we, are now with the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.' What was said of eating, or the contrary, may as to this be said of water baptism: neither if I be baptized, am I the better? neither if I be not, am I the worse? not the better before God, not the worse before men: still meaning as Paul, provided I walk according to my light with God; otherwise it is false. For if a man that seeth it to be his duty, shall despisingly neglect it; or if he that hath not faith about it, shall foolishly take it up: both these are for this the worse; I mean, as to their own sense, being convicted in themselves, as transgressors. He therefore that doth it according to his light, doth well; and he that doth it not, for want of light, doth not ill; for he approveth his heart to be sincere with God, even by that his forbearance. And I tell you again, It is nowhere recorded, that this man is under any revealed threatening of God, for his not being baptized with water, he not having light therein, but is admitted through his grace to as many promises as you. If therefore he be not a partaker of that circumstance, yet he is of that liberty, and mercy, by which you stand with God.

But that I practise instituted worship, upon the same account as Paul did circumcision, and shaving, is too bold for you to presume to imagine. What? because I will not suffer water to carry away the epistles from the Christians; and because I will not let water baptism be the rule, the door, the bolt, the bar, the wall of division between the righteous, and the righteous; must I therefore be judged to be a man without conscience to the worship of Jesus Christ? The Lord deliver me from superstitious and idolatrous thoughts about any of the ordinances of Christ and of God. But my fifth argument standeth against you untouched; you

have not denied, much less confuted the least syllable thereof.

You tell me my sixth argument is, Edification.

Ans. If it be, why is it not embraced? But my own words are these: 'I am for holding communion thus. Because the edification of souls in the faith and holiness of the gospel, is of greater concern than an agreement in outward things; I say, it is of greater concern with us, and of far more profit to our brother, than our agreeing in, or contesting for, water baptism' (John 16:13; 1 Cor 14:12; 2 Cor 10:8, 12:19; Eph 4:12; 1 Cor 13:1,2; 8:1). Now why did you not take this argument in pieces, and answer those scriptures, on which the strength thereof depends; but if to contest, and fall out about water baptism, be better than to edify the house of God, produce the texts, that we may be informed.

You say, 'Edification is the end of all communion, but all things must be done in order, orderly.'

Ans. When you have proved that there is no such thing as an orderly edifying of the church, without water baptism precede, then it will be time enough to think you have said something.

You add, 'Edification as to church fellowship being a building up, doth suppose the being of a church; but pray you shew us a church without baptism.'

Ans. See here the spirit of these men, who for the want of water baptism, have at once unchurched all such congregations of God in the world; but against this I have, and do urge, That water baptism giveth neither being, nor well-being to a church, neither is any part of that instituted worship of God, that the church, as such, should be found in the practice of. Therefore her edification as a church may, yea and ought to be attained unto without it.

But you say, 'Shew us a New Testament church without baptism.'

Ans. What say you to the church all along the Revelation quite through the reign of Antichrist? Was that a New Testament church, or no? Again, If baptism be without the church, as a church, if it hath nothing to do in the constituting of a church; if it be not the door of entrance into the church, if it be no part of

church-worship as such; then, although all the members of that church were baptized, yet the church is a church without water baptism. But all the churches in the New Testament were such: therefore, &c. Again, If baptism respect believers, as particular persons only; if it respects their own conscience only; if it make a man no visible believer to me, then it hath nothing to do with church-membership. Because, that which respects my own person only, my own conscience only: that which is no character of my visible saintship to the church, cannot be an argument unto them to receive me into fellowship with themselves. But this is true. Therefore, &c.

You proceed, 'If by edification, be meant the private increase of grace, in one another, in the use of private means, as private Christians in meeting together; how doth the principle you oppose hinder that? Endeavour to make men as holy as you can, that they may be fitted for church-fellowship, when God shall shew them the orderly way to it.'

Ans. What a many private things have we now brought out to public view? Private Christians, private means, and a private increase of grace. But, Sir, Are none but those of your way the public Christians? Or, ought none but them that are baptized to have the public means of grace? Or, must their graces be increased by none but private means? Was you awake now? Or, are you become so high in your own phantasies, that none have, or are to have but private means of grace? And, are there no public Christians, or public christian meetings, but them of your way? I did not think that all but baptists, should only abide in holes.

But you find fault because I said, 'Edification is greater than contesting about water baptism.'

Ans. If it be not, confute me; if it be, forbear to cavil: water baptism, and all God's ordinances, are to be used to edification; not to beget heats and contentions among the godly, wherefore edification is best.

Object. 'I had thought that the preaching, and opening baptism, might have been reckoned a part of our edification.'

Ans. The act of water baptism hath not place in church worship, neither in whole nor in part;

wherefore pressing it upon the church is to no purpose at all.

Object. 'Why may you not as well say, that edification is greater than breaking of bread.'

Ans. So it is, else that should never have been instituted to edify withal; that which serveth, is not greater than he that is served thereby. Baptism and the Lord's supper both, were made for us, not we for them; wherefore both were made for our edification, but no one for our destruction. But again, The Lord's supper, not baptism, is for the church, as a church; therefore as we will maintain the church's edifying, that must be maintained in it; yea, sued oft, to shew the Lord's death till he come (1 Cor 11:22-26). Besides, because it is a great part of church worship, as such, therefore it is pronounced blessed, the Lord did openly bless it before he gave it; yea and we ought to bless it also; 'The cup of blessing which we bless,' not to say more. Therefore your reasoning from the one to the other will not hold.

Object. 'How comes contesting for water baptism to be so much against you?'

Ans. First, Because weak brethren cannot bear it; whom yet we are commanded to receive, but not to doubtful disputation; doubtful to them, therefore for their sakes, I must forbear it (Rom 14:1). Secondly, Because I have not seen any good effect, but the contrary, wherever such hot spirits have gone before me: 'For where envying and strife is, there is confusion,' or tumults, 'and every evil work' (James 3:16).¹² Thirdly, Because by the example of the Lord, and Paul, we must consider the present state of the church, and not trouble them with what they cannot bear (John 16:13; 1 Cor 3:1-3). I conclude then, edification in the church is to be preferred above what the church, as a church, hath nothing to do withal. 'All things, dearly beloved, are for our edifying' (1 Cor 14:5, 12:26; 2 Cor 12:19; Eph 4:16; Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 14:3; 2 Cor 10:8, 13:10; Rom 14:19). Before I wind up this argument, I

¹² 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God' (James 1:20). The angry passions of man work evil. Such fiery zeal is contrary to the spirit of Christ. The ignorant must be won by meekness to embrace the truth.--Ed.

present you with several instances, shewing that the breach of [some of] God's precepts have been borne with, when they come in competition with edification. As first, That of Aaron, who let the offering for sin be burnt, that should have indeed been eaten (Lev 10:16-20). Yet because he could not do it to his edification, Moses was content. But the law was thereby transgressed, 'The priest that offereth it for sin, shall eat it' (6:26).

To this you reply, 'That was not a constant, continued forbearing of God's worship, but a suspending of it for a season.'

Ans. We also suspend it but for a season; when persons can be baptized to their edification, they have the liberty. But, This was not a bare suspension, but a flat transgression of the law. 'Ye should indeed have eaten it.' Yet Moses was content (Lev 10:16-20).

But say you, 'Perhaps it was suspended upon just and legal grounds, though not expressed.'

Ans. The express rule was against it; 'Ye should indeed [said Moses] have eaten it in the holy place: as I commanded' (v 18). But good Sir, are you now for unwritten verities? for legal grounds, though not expressed? I will not drive you further, here is Rome enough. As for Eldad and Medad, it cannot be denied, but that their edifying of the people, was preferred before their conforming to every circumstance (Num 11:16-26).

You add, 'That Paul for a seeming low thing did withstand Peter.'

Sir, If you make but a seeming low thing of dissembling, and teaching others so to do, especially where the doctrine of justification is endangered, I cannot expect much good conscience from you (Gal 2:11-13).

As for your answer to the case of Hezekiah, it is faulty in two respects: 1. For that you make the passover a type of the Lord's supper, when it was only a type of the body and blood of the Lord: 'For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us' (1 Cor 5:7). 2. In that you make it an example to you to admit persons unprepared to the Lord's supper.

Ans. May you indeed receive persons into the church unprepared for the Lord's supper; yea, unprepared for that, with other solemn appointments? For so you word it. O what an

engine have you made of water baptism. Thus, gentle reader, while this author teareth us in pieces for not making [water] baptism the orderly rule for receiving the godly and conscientious into communion; he can receive persons if baptized, though unprepared for the supper, and other solemn appointments? I would have thee consult the place, and see if it countenanceth such an act. That a man who pleadeth for a water baptism above the peace and edification of the church, ought to be received, although unprepared, into the church to the Lord's supper, and other solemn appointments; especially considering the nature of right church constitution, and the severity of God towards those that came unprepared to his table of old (1 Cor 11:28-30). A riddle indeed, That the Lord should, without a word, so severely command, that all which want light in baptism, be excluded church privileges; and yet against his word, admit of persons unprepared, to the Lord's table, and other solemn appointments.

But good Sir, why so short-winded? why could not you make the same work with the other scriptures, as you did with these? I must leave them upon you unanswered; and standing by my argument conclude, That if laws and ordinances of old have been broken, and the breach of them born with, when yet the observation of outward things was more strictly commanded than now, if the profit and edification of the church come in competition; how much more, may not we have communion, church communion, when no law of God is transgressed thereby. And note, That all this while I plead not, as you, for persons unprepared, but godly, and such as walk with God.

We come now to my seventh argument, for communion with the godly, though unbaptized persons; which you say is LOVE. My argument is this; 'Therefore I am for communion thus; because love, which above all things we are commanded to put on, is of much more worth than to break about baptism.' And let the reader note, That of this argument you deny not so much as one syllable, but run to another story; but I will follow you. I add further, That love is more discovered when we receive for the

sake of Christ, than when we refuse his children for want of water: And tell you again, That this exhortation to love is grounded not upon [water] baptism, but the putting on of the new creature, which hath swallowed up all distinctions (Col 3:9-14). Yea, there are ten arguments in this one, which you have not so much as touched; but thus object,

'That man that makes affection the rule of his walking, rather than judgment, it is no wonder if he go out of the way.'

Ans. Love to them, we are persuaded that God hath received, is love that is guided by judgment; and to receive them that are such, because God hath bidden us (Rom 14), is judgment guided by rule. My argument therefore hath forestalled all your noise, and standeth still on its legs against you. As to the duties of piety and charity, you boast of, sound not a trumpet, tell not your left hand of it; we are talking now of communion of saints, church communion, and I plead, that to love, and hold together as such, is better than to break in pieces for want of water baptism. My reason is, because we are exhorted in all things to put on love; the love of church communion: contrariwise you oppose, Above all things put on water. For the best saint under heaven that hath not that, with him you refuse communion. Thus you make baptism, though no church ordinance, a bar to shut out the godly, and a trap-door to let the unprepared into churches, to the Lord's supper, and other solemn appointments.

But you object, 'Must our love to the unbaptized indulge them in an act of disobedience? Cannot we love their persons, parts, graces, but we must love their sins?'

Ans. We plead not for indulging, '*But are there not* with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?' (2 Chron 28:10). But why can you indulge the baptists in many acts of disobedience? For to come unprepared into the church, is an act of disobedience: To come unprepared to the supper is an act of disobedience; and to come so also to other solemn appointments, are acts of disobedience.

'But for these things,' you say, 'you do not cast, nor keep any out of the church.'

Ans. But what acts of disobedience do we indulge them in?

‘In the sin of infant baptism.’

Ans. We indulge them not; but being commanded to bear with the infirmities of each other, suffer it; it being indeed in our eyes such; but in theirs they say a duty, till God shall otherwise persuade them. If you be without infirmity, do you first throw a stone at them: They keep their faith in that to themselves, and trouble not their brethren therewith: we believe that God hath received them; they do not want to us a proof of their sonship with God; neither hath he made water a wall of division between us, and therefore we do receive them.

Object. ‘I take it to be the highest act of friendship to be faithful to these professors, and to tell them they want this one thing in gospel order, which ought not to be left undone.’

Ans. If it be the highest piece of friendship, to preach water baptism to unbaptized believers, the lowest act thereof must needs be very low. But contrariwise, I count it so far off from being any act of friendship, to press baptism in our notion on those that cannot bear it; that it is a great abuse of the peace of my brother, the law of love, the law of Christ, or the society of the faithful. Love suffereth long, and is kind, is not easily provoked: let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another: let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good to edification: Bear you one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ (1 Cor 13; Rom 14:19, 15:2; Gal 6:2).

But say you, ‘I doubt when this comes to be weighed in God’s balance, it will be found no less than flattery, for which you will be reproved.’

Ans. It seems you do but doubt it, wherefore the principles from which you doubt it, of that methinks you should not be certain; but this is of little weight to me; for he that will presume to appropriate the epistles to himself and fellows, for the sake of baptism, and that will condemn all the churches of Christ in the land for want of baptism, and that will account his brother as profane Esau and rejected, as idolatrous Ephraim because he wanteth his way of water baptism; he acts out of his wonted

way, of rigidness, when he doth but doubt, and not affirm his brother to be a flatterer. I leave therefore this your doubt to be resolved at the day of judgment, and in the mean time trample upon your harsh and unchristian surmises. As to our love to Christians in other cases, I hope we shall also endeavour to follow the law of the Lord; but because it respects not the matter in hand, it concerns us not now to treat thereof.

My argument treateth of church communion; in the prosecution of which I prove. 1. That love is grounded upon the new creature (Col 3:10-15). 2. Upon our fellowship with the Father and Son (1 John 1:2,3). 3. That with respect to this, it is the fulfilling of the royal law (James 4:11; Rom 14:21). 4. That it shews itself in acts of forbearing, rather than in publishing some truths: communicating only what is profitable, forbearing to publish what cannot be born (1 Cor 3:1,2; Acts 20:18-20; John 3:16,17). 5. I shew further, That to have fellowship for, to make that the ground of, or to receive one another chiefly upon the account of an outward circumstance; to make baptism the including and excluding charter: the bounds, bar, and rule of communion, when by the word of the everlasting testament, there is no word for it, to speak charitably, if it be not for want of love, it is for want of light in the mysteries of the kingdom of Christ. Strange! Take two Christians equal in all points but this; nay, let one go beyond the other in grace and goodness, as far as a man is beyond a babe, yet water shall turn the scale, shall open the door of communion to the less; and command the other to stand back: yet is no proof to the church of this babe’s faith and hope, hath nothing to do with his entering into fellowship, is no part of the worship of the church.¹³ These

¹³ It becomes all prayerfully to follow divine commands in ALL THINGS. Nothing is indifferent or non-essential that God hath ordained for the believer. But if disciples differ about days, or meats, or water, ought such differences to prevent their communion and fellowship more than differences in personal stature, or beauty, or in mental powers. Uniformity in anything but love to God and to each other is a fool’s paradise, contrary to the experience of the apostolic and all ages, and opposed to every law of nature.--Ed.

things should have been answered, seeing you will take upon you so roundly to condemn our practice.

You come now to my eighth argument; which you do not only render falsely, but by so doing abuse your reader. I said not that the church at Corinth did shut each other out of communion; but, for God's people to divide into parties, or to shut each other from church communion, though for greater points, and upon higher pretences, than that of water baptism, hath heretofore been counted carnal, and the actors therein babyish Christians: and then bring in the factions, that was in the church at Corinth. But what! May not the evil of denying church communion now, if proved naught by a less crime in the church at Corinth, be counted carnal and babyish; but the breach of communion must be charged upon them at Corinth also?

That my argument is good you grant, saying, 'The divisions of the church at Corinth were about the highest fundamental principles, for which they are often called carnal'; yet you cavil at it. But if they were to be blamed for dividing, though for the highest points; are not you much more for condemning your brethren to perpetual banishment from church communion, though sound in all the great points of the gospel, and right in all church ordinances also, because for want of light they fail only in the point of baptism?

As to your quibble about Paul and Apollos, whether they, or others, were the persons, though I am satisfied you are out, yet it weakeneth not my argument; for if they were blame worthy for dividing, though about the highest fundamental principles, as you say, how ought you to blush for carrying it as you do to persons, perhaps, more godly than ourselves, because they jump not with you in a circumstance? That the divisions at Corinth were helped on by the abuse of baptism, to me is evident, from Paul's so oft suggesting it: 'Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, - lest any should say, I had baptized in mine own name' (1:13-15).

I do not say, that they who baptized them designed this, or that baptism in itself effected

it; nor yet, though our author feigns it, 'that they were most of them baptized by their factious leaders.' But that they had their factious leaders, is evident; and that these leaders made use of the names of Paul, Apollos, and Christ, is as evident; for by these names they were beguiled by the help of ABUSED baptism.

But say you, 'Wherein lies the force of this man's argument against baptism as to its place, worth, and continuance?'

I answer: I have no argument against its place, worth or continuance, although thus you seek to scandalize me. But this kind of sincerity of yours, will never make me one of your disciples. Have not I told you even in this argument, 'That I speak not as I do, to persuade or teach men to break the least of God's commandments; but that my brethren of the baptized way may not hold too much thereupon, may not make it an essential of the gospel, nor yet of the communion of saints.' Yet he feigns that I urge two arguments against it. But reader, thou mayest know I have no such reason in my book. Besides, I should be a fool indeed, were I against it, should I make use of such weak arguments. My words then are these: 'I thank God,' said Paul, 'that I baptized none of you but Crispus,' &c. 'Not but that then it was an ordinance, but they abused it in making parties thereby, as they abused also Paul, and Cephas. Besides, said he, I know not whether I baptized any other. By this negligent relating who were baptized by him, he sheweth that he made no such matter thereof, as some in these days do. Nay, that he made no matter at all thereof with respect to a church communion. For if he did not heed who himself had baptized, much less did he heed who were baptized by others? But if baptism had been the initiating ordinance, and I now add, essential to church communion; then no doubt he had made more conscience of it, than thus lightly to pass it by.'

I add further, where he saith, He 'was not sent to baptize'; that he spake with an holy indignation against those that had abused that ordinance. 'Baptism is an holy ordinance, but when Satan abuseth it, and wrencheth it out of its place, making that which is ordained of

God, for the edification of believers, the only weapon to break in pieces the love, unity, and concord of the saints; than as Paul said of himself and fellows (1 Cor 3:5-7). What is baptism? Neither is baptism any thing? This is no new doctrine, for God by the mouth of the prophet of old, cried out against his own appointments, when abused by his own people (Isa 1:11-15); because they used them “for strife, and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness” (58:4). But to forbear, to take notice thus of these things, my argument stands firm against you: ‘For if they at Corinth were blame worthy for dividing, though their divisions were, if you say true, about the highest fundamentals, you ought to be ashamed, thus to banish your brethren from the privileges of church communion for ever, for the want of so low a thing as water baptism.’ I call it not low, with respect to God’s appointment, though so, it is far from the highest place, but in comparison of those fundamentals, about which you say, ‘the Corinthians made their divisions.’

You come next to my ninth argument, and serve it as Hanun served David’s servants (2 Sam 10:4), you have cut off one half of its beard, and its garments to its buttocks, thinking to send it home with shame. You state it thus: ‘That by denying communion with unbaptized believers, you take from them their privileges to which they are born.’

Ans. Have I such an argument, in all my little book? Are not my words verbatim these? ‘If we shall reject visible saints by calling, saints that have communion with God; that have received the law at the hand of Christ; that are of an holy conversation among men, they desiring to have communion with us; as much as in us lieth, we take from them their very privileges, and the blessings to which they were born of God.’ This is mine argument: now confute it.

Paul saith, not only to the gathered church at Corinth, but to all scattered saints, that in every place call upon the name of the Lord (1 Cor 1:2). That if Jesus Christ is theirs; that Paul and Apollos, and Cephas, and the world, and all things else was theirs (3:22).

But you answer, ‘We take from them nothing, but we keep them from a disorderly practice of gospel ordinances, we offer them their privileges, in the way of gospel order.’

Ans. Where have you one word of God, that forbiddeth a person, so qualified, as is signified in mine argument, the best communion of saints for want of water? There is not a syllable for this in all the book of God. So then, you in this your plausible defence, do make your scriptureless light, which in very deed is darkness (Isa 8:20), the rule of your brother’s faith; and how well you will come off for this in the day of God, you might, were you not wedded to your wordless opinion, soon begin to conceive.

I know your reply, ‘New Testament saints are all baptized first.’

Ans. Suppose it granted: Were they baptized, that thereby they might be qualified for their right to communion of saints, so that, without their submitting to water, they were to be denied the other? Further, suppose I should grant this groundless notion, Were not the Jews in Old Testament times to enter the church by circumcision? (Gen 17; Exo 12). For that, though water is not, was the very entering ordinance. Besides, as I said before, there was a full forbidding of all that were not circumcised from entering into fellowship, with a threatening to cut them off from the church if they entered in without it: yet more than six hundred thousand entered that church without it. But how now, if such an one as you had then stood up and objected, Sir Moses, What is the reason that you transgress the order of God, to receive members without circumcision? Is not that the very entering ordinance? Are not you commanded to keep out of the church all that are not circumcised? Yea, and for all those that you thus received, are you not commanded to cast them out again, to cut them off from among this people (Gen 17:13,14; Exo 12:44-46). I say, Would not this man have had a far better argument to have resisted Moses, than you, in your wordless notion, have to shut out men from the church, more holy than many of ourselves? But do you think that Moses and Joshua, and all the elders of Israel, would have thanked this fellow, or have concluded that he

spake on God's behalf? Or, that they should then, for the sake of a better than what you call order, have set to the work that you would be doing, even to break the church in pieces for this?

But say you, 'If any will find or force another way into the sheep fold than by the footsteps of the flock, we have no such custom nor the churches of God.'

Ans. What was done of old I have shewed you, that Christ, not baptism, is the way to the sheep fold, is apparent: and that the person [who thus enters], in mine argument, is entitled to all these, to wit, Christ, grace, and all the things of the kingdom of Christ in the church, is, upon the scriptures urged, as evident.

But you add, 'That according to mine old confidence, I affirm, That drink ye all of this is entailed to faith, not baptism: a thing,' say you, 'soon said, but yet never proved.'

Ans. 1. That it is entailed to faith, must be confessed of all hands. 2. That it is the privilege of him that discerneth the Lord's body, and that no man is to deny him it, is also by the text as evident, 'and so let him eat,' because he is worthy. Wherefore he, and he only, that discerneth the Lord's body, he is the worthy receiver, the worthy receiver in God's estimation; but that none discern the Lord's body but the baptized [in water], is both fond and ridiculous once to surmise.

Wherefore to exclude Christians, and to debar them their heaven-born privileges, for want of that which yet God never made the wall of division betwixt us: This looks too like a spirit of persecution (Job 19:28), and carrieth in it those eighteen absurdities which you have so hotly cried out against. And I do still add, 'Is it not that which greatly prevailed with God to bring down those judgments which at present we [the people of God] groan under, I will dare

*And so it was in my first copy, but for 'A,' the printer put in 'THE.'

to say it was,¹⁴ *A cause thereof.'

Yea, I will yet proceed; I fear, I strongly fear, that the rod of God is not yet to be taken from us; for what [is a] more provoking sin

among Christians than to deny one another their rights and privileges, to which they are born of God? And then to father these their doings upon God, when yet he hath not commanded it, neither in the New Testament nor the Old.

But I may not lightly pass this by, for because I have gathered eighteen absurdities from this abuse of God's ordinances, or from the sin of binding the brethren to observe order, not founded on the command of God; and I am sure you have none to shut out men as good, as holy, and as sound in faith as ourselves, from communion. Therefore you call my conclusion devilish, top-full of ignorance and prejudice, and me, one of Machiavel's scholars, also proud, presumptuous, impeaching the judgment of God.

Ans. But what is there in my proposition, that men, considerate, can be offended at? These are my words: 'But to exclude Christians from church communion, and to debar them their heaven-born privileges, for the want of that which yet God never made a wall of division between us: this looks too like a spirit of persecution: this respecteth more the form than the spirit and power of godliness, &c. Shall I add, Is it not that which greatly prevailed to bring down those judgments which at present we feel and groan under? I will dare to say, it was a cause thereof.' A was in my copy, instead whereof the printer put in *the*; for this, although I speak only the truth, I will not beg of you belief; besides, the bookseller desired me, because of the printer's haste, to leave the last sheet to be overlooked by him, which was the cause it was not among the erratas. But I say, wherein is the proposition offensive? Is it not a wicked thing to make bars to communion, where God hath made none? Is it not a wickedness to make that a wall of division betwixt us which God never commanded to be so? If it be not, justify your practice; if it be, take shame. Besides, the proposition is universal, why then should you be the chief intended? But you have in this done like to the lawyers of old, who, when Christ reproved the pharisees of wickedness before them, said, 'Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also' (Luke 11:45).

¹⁴ This typographical error in 'The Reasons of my Practice' is corrected in this edition for the first time.--Ed.

But you feign, and would also that the world should believe, that the eighteen absurdities which naturally flow from the proposition I make, to be the effects of baptism, saying to me, 'None but yourself could find an innocent truth big with so many monstrous absurdities.'

I answer: This is but speaking wickedly for God, or rather to justify your wordless practice. I say not that baptism hath any absurdity in it, though your abusing it, hath them all, and many more, while you make it, without warrant from the word, as the flaming sword, to keep the brotherhood out of communion, because they, after your manner, cannot consent thereto. And let no man be offended, for that I suggest that baptism may be abused to the breeding such monstrous absurdities, for greater truths than that have been as much abused. What say you to, 'This is my body?' To instance no more, although I could instance many, are not they the words of our Lord? Are not they part of the scriptures of truth? and yet behold, even with those words, the devil, by abusing them, made an engine to let out the heart-blood of thousands.¹⁵ Baptism also may be abused, and is, when more is laid upon it by us than is commanded by God. And that you do so, is manifest by what I have said already, and shall yet say to your fourteen arguments.

My last argument, you say, is this: 'The world may wonder at your carriage to these unbaptized persons, in keeping them out of communion?'

Ans. You will set up your own words, and then fight against them; but my words are these: 'What greater contempt can be thrown upon the saints, than for their brethren to cut them off from, or to debar them church communion.' And now I add, Is not this to deliver them to the devil (1 Cor 5), or to put them to shame before all that see your acts? There is but one thing can hinder this, and that is, by-standers see that these, your brethren, that you thus abuse, are as holy men as

¹⁵ The doctrine of the real presence, called transubstantiation, was the test of adherence to the Romish church, which unless all persons pretended to believe they were sacrificed with brutal ferocity.--Ed.

ourselves. Do you more to the openly prophane, yea, to all wizards and witches in the land?¹⁶ For all you can do to them, I speak now as to church acts, is no other than to debar them the communion of saints.

And now I say again, the world may well wonder, when they see you deny holy men of God that liberty of the communion of saints which you monopolise to yourselves: and though they do not understand the grounds of profession, or communion, yet they can both see and say, these holy men of God, in all visible acts of holiness, are not one inch behind you. Yea, I will put it to yourselves, If those many, yea, very many, who thus severely, but with how little ground, is seen by men of God, you deny communion with; are not of as good, as holy, as unblameable in life, and as sound, if not sounder in the faith than many among ourselves: Here only they make the stop, they cannot, without light, be driven into water baptism, I mean after our notion of it: but what if they were, it would be little sign to me, that they were sincere with God.

To conclude this; when you have proved that water baptism, which you yourself have said is not a church ordinance, is essential to church communion, and that the church may, by the word of God, bolt, bar, and for ever shut out those, far better than ourselves, that have not, according to our notion, been baptized with water; then it will be time enough to talk of ground for so doing. In the mean time I must take leave to tell you, 'There is not in all the Bible one syllable for such a practice, wherefore your great cry about your order is wordless, and therefore faithless, and is a mere human invention.'

¹⁶ In Bunyan's days, both the laws of the land, the judges, and the commonalty, gave credence to the wicked gambols of wizards and witches. Many a poor iniquitous old woman, from some mysterious hints of her power to tell fortunes, or to gratify the revengeful feelings of her neighbours, was put to a cruel death. More enlightened times have dissipated this illusion, and driven these imaginary imps of darkness into benighted countries.--Ed.

I COME NOW TO YOUR FOURTEEN ARGUMENTS, AND SHALL IMPARTIALLY CONSIDER THEM.

Your first argument to prove it lawful to reject the unbaptized saint, is, 'Because the great commission of Christ (Matt 28), from which all persons have their authority for their ministry, if any authority at all, doth clearly direct the contrary. By that commission ministers are first to disciple, and then to baptize them so made disciples, and afterwards to teach them to observe all that Christ commanded them, as to other ordinances of worship. If ministers have no other authority to teach them other parts of gospel worship, before they believe and are baptized, it may be strongly supposed they are not to admit them to other ordinances before they have passed this first enjoined in the commission.'

Ans. 1. That the ministers are to disciple and baptize, is granted. But that they are prohibited, by the commission (Matt 28), to teach the disciples other parts of gospel worship that have not light in baptism, remains for you to prove. Shall I add, this position is so absurd and void of truth, that none that have ever read the love of Christ, the nature of faith, the end of the gospel, or of the reason of instituted worship (which is edification) with understanding, should so much as once imagine.

But where are they here forbidden to teach them other truths before they be baptized? This text as fairly denieth to the unbaptized believer heaven and glory. Nay, our author, in the midst of all his flutter about this 28th of Matthew, dare venture to gather no more therefrom, but that it may be strongly supposed. Behold therefore, gentle reader, the ground on which these brethren lay the stress of their separation from their fellows, is nothing else but a supposition, without warrant, screwed out of this blessed word of God. Strongly supposed! but may it not be as strongly supposed that the presence and blessing of the Lord Jesus, with his ministers, is laid upon the same ground also? for thus he concludes the text, 'And lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.' But would, I say, any man from these words conclude, that Christ Jesus hath here

promised his presence only to them that, after discipling, baptize those that are so made; and that they that do not baptize shall neither have his presence nor his blessing? I say again, should any so conclude hence, would not all experience prove him void of truth? The words therefore must be left, by you, as you found them, they favour not at all your groundless supposition.

To conclude, these words have not laid baptism in the way to debar the saint from fellowship of his brethren, no more than to hinder his inheritance in life and glory. Mark reads it thus: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned' (Mark 16:16). Letting baptism, which he mentioned in the promise, fall, when he came at the threatening. God also doth thus with respect to his worship in the church, he commands all and every whit of his will to be done, but beareth with our coming short in this, and that, and another duty. But let's go on.

Your second argument is, 'That the order of Christ's commission, as well as the matter therein contained to be observed, may easily be concluded, from God's severity towards them that sought him not according to due order (1 Chron 15:13). Was God so exact with his people then, that all things to a pin must be according to the pattern in the mount (Heb 8:5, 9:11), whose worship then comparatively, to the gospel, was but after the law of a carnal commandment; and can it be supposed he should be so indifferent now to leave men to their own liberty, to time and place his appointments, contrary to what he had given an express rule for in his word as before? (Eze 44:7,9,10). It was the priest's sin, formerly to bring the uncircumcised in heart and flesh into his house.'

Ans. That there is no such order in that commission as you feign, I have proved. As for your far-fetch'd instance (1 Chron 15), it is quite beside your purpose. The express word was, That the priest, not a cart, should bear the ark of God. Also they were not to touch it, and yet Uzza did (Exo 25:14; 1 Chron 15:12-16; Num 4:15; 1 Chron 13). Now, if you can make that 28th of Matthew say, Receive none that are not baptized first; or that Christ would have

them of his, that are not yet baptized, kept ignorant of all other truths that respect church communion; then you say something, else you do but raise a mist before the simple reader: but whoso listeth may hang on your sleeve. As for the pins and tacks of the tabernacle, they were expressly commanded; and when you have proved by the word of God, That you ought to shut saints out of your communion for want of baptism, then you may begin more justly to make your parallel. How fitly you have urged (Eze 44) to insinuate that unbaptized believers are like the uncircumcised in heart and flesh, I leave it to all gospel-novices to consider.

Your third argument is, 'The practice of the first gospel-ministers, with them that first trusted in Christ, discovers the truth of what I assert. Certainly they that lived at the spring-head, or fountain of truth, and had the law from Christ's own mouth, knew the meaning of his commission better than we: but their constant practice in conformity to that commission, all along the Acts of the Apostles, discovers that they never arrived to such a latitude as men plead for now-a-days. They that gladly received the word were baptized, and they, yea they only, were received into the church.'

Ans. How well you have proved what you have asserted, is manifest by my answer to the two former arguments. I add, That the ministers and servants of Jesus Christ in the first churches, for that you are to prove, were commanded to forbear to preach other truths to the unbaptized believers; or that they were to keep them out of the church; or that the apostles, and first fathers, have given you to understand by their example, that you ought to keep as good out of churches as yourselves, hath not yet been shewed by the authority of the word. The second of the Acts proveth not, That the three thousand were necessitated to be baptized in order to their fellowship with the church, neither doth it say THEY, yea they only, were received into the church. But suppose all this, as much was done at the first institution of circumcision, &c., yet afterwards thousands were received without it.

Your fourth argument is, 'None of the scripture saints ever attempted this church

privilege without baptism, if they did, let it be shewn. The eunuch first desired baptism before anything else; Paul was first baptized before he did essay to join with the church. Our Lord Christ, the great example of the New Testament, entered not upon his public ministry, much less any other gospel ordinance of worship, till he was baptized.'

Ans. That none of the scripture saints, if there be any unscripture ones, so much as attempted this church-privilege first, remains for you to prove. But suppose they were all baptized, because they had light therein, what then? Doth this prove that baptism is essential to church communion? Or, that Christ commanded in the 28th of Matthew, or gave his ministers by that, authority, not to make known to believers other parts of gospel-worship, if they shall want light in baptism? The eunuch, Paul, and our blessed Lord Jesus, did none of them, by their baptism, set themselves to us examples how to enter into church communion; what church was the eunuch baptized into, or made a member of; but where is it said, that the unbaptized believer, how excellent soever in faith and holiness, must, for want of water baptism, be shut out from the communion of saints, or be debarred the privilege of his Father's house? This you are to prove.

Your fifth argument is, 'If Christ himself was made manifest to be the SENT of God by baptism, as appears (Mark 1:9,10), then why may not baptism, as the first fruits of faith, and the first step of gospel-obedience, as to instituted worship, be a manifesting discovering ordinance upon others who thus follow Christ's steps.'

Ans. That Jesus Christ was manifested as the SENT of God by baptism, or that baptism is the first fruit of faith and the first step to gospel-obedience, as to instituted worship, is both without proof and truth; the text saith not, he was manifest to be the 'sent' of God by baptism; nay it saith not, that by that he was manifest to others to be anything thereby: you have therefore but wronged the text to prove your wordless practice by. Yea, John himself, though he knew him before he was baptized, to be a man of God, for, saith he, 'I have need to

be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me' (Matt 3:14), and knew him after to be the 'sent' of God; yet not in, or by, but after he was baptized, to wit, by the descending of the Holy Ghost, after he was come out of the water, as he was in prayer, for the heavens were opened to John (John 1:30-34), and he saw, and bare record, because he saw the Spirit descend from heaven, and abide upon Jesus, after his baptism, as he was in prayer (Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21,22). Thus we find him made known before and after, but not at all by baptism, to be the 'sent' of God.

And that baptism is the fruit of faith, or that faith ought to be tied to take its first step in water baptism, in the instituted worship of God; this you must prove, it is not found expressed within the whole Bible. Faith acts according to its strength and as it sees, it is not tied or bound to any outward circumstance; one believeth he may, and another believeth he may not, either do this or that.

Your sixth argument is, 'If baptism be in any sense any part of the foundation of a church, as to order (Heb 6:1,2), it must have place here or no where: why are those things called first principles, if not first to be believed and practised? Why are they rendered by the learned the A, B, C, of a Christian, and the beginning of Christianity, milk for babes, if it be no matter whether baptism be practised or no? If it be said water baptism is not there intended, let them shew me how many baptisms there are besides water baptism? Can you build and leave out a stone in the foundation? I intend not baptism a foundation any other ways but in respect of order, and it is either intended for that or nothing.'

Ans. Baptism is in no sense the foundation of a church. I find no foundation of a church but Jesus Christ himself (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11). Yea, the foundation mentioned (Heb 6:1,2) is nothing else but this very Christ. For he is the foundation, not only of the church, but of all that good that at any time is found in her. He is the foundation OF our repentance, and OF our faith towards God (vv 1,2). Further, baptisms are not here mentioned with respect to the act in water, but of the doctrine; that is, the signification thereof. 'The doctrine of baptisms.'

And observe, neither faith, nor repentance, nor baptisms, are called here foundations: Another thing, for a foundation, is here by the Holy Ghost intended, even a foundation for them all: a foundation of faith, of repentance, of the doctrine of baptisms, of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this foundation is Jesus Christ himself, and these are the first principles, the milk, the A, B, C, and the beginning of Christian religion in the world. I dare not say, No matter whether water baptism be practised or no. But it is not a stone in the foundation of a church, no not respecting order; it is not, to another, a sign of my sonship with God; it is not the door into fellowship with the saints, it is no church ordinance, as you, yourself, have testified. So then as to church work, it hath no place at all therein.

Your seventh argument is, 'If Paul knew the Galatians only upon the account of charity, No other ways to be the sons of God by faith; but by this part of their obedience, as he seems to import, then the same way we judge of the truth of men's profession of faith, when it shows itself by this selfsame obedience. Baptism being an obligation to all following duties' (Gal 3:26,27).

Ans. This your argument, being builded upon no more than a SEEMING import, and having been above ten times overthrown already; I might leave still with you, till your seeming import is come to a real one, and both to a greater persuasion upon your own conscience. But verily Sir, you grossly abuse your reader; must imports, yea, must seeming imports now stand for arguments, thereby to maintain your confident separation from your brethren? Yea, must such things as these, be the basis on which you build those heavy censures and condemnations you raise against your brethren, that cannot comply with you, because you want the word? A seeming import. But are these words of faith? or do the scriptures only help you to seeming imports, and *me-hap-soes*¹⁷ for your practice? No, nor yet to them neither, for I dare boldly affirm it, and demand, if you

¹⁷ 'Me-hap-soes,' a contraction of 'it may so happen.'--Ed.

can, to prove, that there is so much as a seeming import in all the word of God, that countenanceth your shutting men, better than ourselves, from the things and privileges of our Father's house. That to the Galatians, saith not, that Paul knew them to be the sons of God by faith, no other way, but by THIS part of their obedience; but puts them upon concluding themselves the sons of God, if they were baptized into the Lord Jesus, which could not, ordinarily, be known but unto themselves alone; because, being thus baptized, respecteth a special act of faith, which only God and him that hath, and acteth it, can be privy to. It is one thing for him that administereth, to baptize in the name of Jesus, and another thing for him that is the subject, by that to be baptize INTO Jesus Christ: Baptizing into Christ, is rather the act of the faith of him that is baptized, than his going into water and coming out again. But that Paul knew this to be the state of the Galatians no other way, but by their external act of being baptized with water, is both wild and unsound, and a miserable IMPORT indeed.

Your eighth argument is, 'If being baptized into Christ, be a putting on of Christ, as Paul expressed, then they have not put on Christ, in that sense he means, that are not baptized; if this putting on of Christ, doth not respect the visibility of Christianity; assign something else as its signification; great men's servants are known by their master's liveries, so are gospel believers by this livery of water baptism, that all that first trusted in Christ submitted unto; which is in itself as much an obligation to all gospel obedience, as circumcision was to keep the whole law.'

Ans. For a reply to the first part of this argument, go back to the answer to the seventh. Now that none have put on Christ in Paul's sense; yea, in a saving, in the best sense; but them that have, as you would have them, gone into water, will be hard for you to prove, yea, is ungodly for you to assert. Your comparing water baptism to a gentleman's livery, by which his name is known to be his, is fantastical. Go you but ten doors from where men have knowledge of you, and see how many of the world, or Christians, will know you by this goodly livery, to be one that hath put on Christ.

What! known by water baptism to be one that hath put on Christ, as a gentleman's man is known to be his master's servant, by the gay garment his master gave him. Away fond man, you do quite forget the text. 'By THIS shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have *love one to another*' (John 13:35). That baptism is in itself obliging, to speak properly, it is false, for set it by itself, and it stands without the stamp of heaven upon it, and without its signification also: and how, as such, it should be obliging, I see not. Where you insinuate, it comes in the room of, and obligeth as circumcision: you say, you know not what (Acts 15:1,2). Circumcision was the initiating ordinance, but this you have denied to baptism. Further, circumcision *then* bound men to the whole obedience of the law, when urged by the false apostles, and received by an erroneous conscience (Gal 5:1-4). Would you thus urge water baptism! would you have men to receive it with such consciences? Circumcision in the flesh, was a type of circumcision in the heart, and not of water baptism (Rom 2:28,29; Phil 3:3).

Your ninth argument is, 'If it were commendable in the Thessalonians, that they followed the footsteps of the church of Judea (1 Thess 2:14), who it appears followed this order of adding baptized believers unto the church; then they that have found out another way of making church members, are not by that rule praiseworthy, but rather to be blamed; it was not what was since in corrupted times, but that which was from the beginning: the first churches were the purest pattern.'

Ans. That the text saith there was a church of Judea, I find not in 1 Thessalonians 2:14. And that the Thessalonians are commended for refusing to have communion with the unbaptized believers, for that is our question, prove it by the word, and then you do something. Again, that the commendations (1 Thess 2:14) do chiefly, or at all, respect their being baptized: or, because they followed the churches of God, which in Judea were in Christ Jesus, in the example of water baptism is quite beside the word. The verse runs thus: 'For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye

also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews.' This text then commends them, not for that they were baptized with water, but, for that they stood their ground, although baptized with suffering, like them in Judea, for the name of the Lord Jesus. For suffering like things of their own countrymen, as they did of the Jews. Will you not yet leave off to abuse the word of God, and forbear turning it out of its place, to maintain your unchristian practice of rejecting the people of God, and excluding them their blessed privileges. The unbaptized believer, instead of taking shame for entering into fellowship without it, will be ready, I doubt, to put you to shame for bringing scriptures so much beside the purpose, and for stretching them so miserably to uphold you in your fancies.

Your tenth argument is, 'If so be, that any of the members at Corinth, Galatia, Colosse, Rome, or them that Peter wrote to, were not baptized, then Paul's arguments for the resurrection to them, or to press them to holiness from the ground (Rom 6; Col 2; 1 Cor 15) was out of doors, and altogether needless, yea, it bespeaks his ignorance, and throweth contempt upon the Spirit's wisdom (Heb 6; 1 Peter 3:21) by which he wrote; if that must be asserted as a ground to provoke them to such an end, which had no being: and if all the members of all those churches were baptized, why should any plead for an exemption from baptism, for any church member now?'

Ans. Suppose all, if all these churches were baptized, what then? that answereth not our question. We ask where you find it written, that those that are baptized, should keep men as holy, and as much beloved of the Lord Jesus as themselves, out of church communion, for want of light in water baptism. Why we plead for their admission, though ye see not yet, that this is their duty, is because we are not forbidden, but commanded to receive them, because God and Christ hath done it (Rom 14, 15).

Your eleventh argument is, 'If unbaptized persons must be received into churches, only because they are believers, though they deny baptism; then why may not others plead for the like privilege, that are negligent in any other

gospel ordinance of worship, from the same ground of want of light, let it be what it will. So then as the consequence of this principle, churches may be made up of visible sinners, instead of visible saints.'

Ans. 1. I plead not for believers simply because they are believers, but for such believers of whom we are persuaded by the word, that God hath received them. 2. There are some of the ordinances, that be they neglected, the being of a church, as to her visible gospel constitution, is taken quite away; but baptism is none of them, it being no church ordinance as such, nor any part of faith, nor of that holiness of heart, or life, that sheweth me to the church to be indeed a visible saint. The saint is a saint before, and may walk with God, and be faithful with the saints, and to his own light also though he never be baptized. Therefore to plead for his admission, makes no way at all for the admission of the open prophane, or to receive, as you profess you do, persons unprepared to the Lord's table, and other solemn appointments.

Your twelfth argument is, 'Why should professors have more light in breaking of bread, than baptism? That this must be so urged for their excuse: Hath God been more sparing in making out his mind in the one, rather than the other? Is there more precepts or precedents for the supper, than baptism? Hath God been so bountiful in making out himself about the supper, that few or none that own ordinances scruple it? And must baptism be such a rock of offence to professors, that very few will enquire after it, or submit to it? Hath not man's wisdom interposed to darken this part of God's counsel? By which professors seem willingly led, though against so many plain commands and examples, written as with a sun beam, that he that runs may read? And must an advocate be entertained to plead for so gross a piece of ignorance, that the meanest babes of the first gospel times were never guilty of?'

Ans. Many words to little purpose. 1. Must God be called to an account by you, why he giveth more light about the supper than baptism? May he not shew to, or conceal from this, or another of his servants, which of his truths he pleaseth. Some of the members of the

church at Jerusalem had a greater truth than this kept from them, for ought I know, as long as they lived (Acts 11:19), yet God was not called in question about it. 2. Breaking of bread, not baptism, being a church ordinance, and that such also as must be often reiterated; yea, it being an ordinance so full of blessedness, as lively to present union and communion with Christ to all the members that worthily eat thereof: I say, the Lord's supper being such, that while the members sit at that feast, they shew to each other the death and blood of the Lord, as they ought to do, till he comes (1 Cor 10:15-17, 11:25,26). The church as a church, is much more concerned in that, than in water baptism, both as to her faith and comfort; both as to her union and communion. 3. Your supposition, that very few professors will seriously inquire after water baptism, is too rude. What, must all the children of God, that are not baptized for want of light, be still stigmatised with want of serious inquiry after God's mind in it. 4. That I am an advocate, entertained to plead for so gross a piece of ignorance, as want of light in baptism, is but like the rest of your jumbling. I plead for communion with men, godly and faithful, I plead that they may be received, that God hath shewed us he hath received, and commanded we should receive them.

Your thirteenth argument is, 'If obedience must discover the truth of a man's faith to others, why must baptism be shut out, as if it was no part of gospel obedience? Is there no precept for this practice, that it must be thus despised, as a matter of little use? Or shall one of Christ's precious commands be blotted out of a Christian's obedience, to make way for a church fellowship of man's devising.'

Ans. 1. This is but round, round, the same thing over and over. That my obedience to water, is not a discovery of my faith to others, is evident, from the body of the Bible, we find nothing that affirms it. And I will now add, That if a man cannot shew himself a Christian without water baptism; he shall never shew either saint or sinner, that he is a Christian by it. 2. Who [soever] they are that despise it, I know not but that church membership may be without it, (seeing even you yourself have

concluded it is no church ordinance, nor the entering ordinance) standeth both with scripture and reason, as mine arguments make manifest. So that all your arguments prove no more but this, 'That you are so wedded to your wordless notions, that charity can have no place with you.' Have you all this while so much as given me one small piece of a text to prove it unlawful for the church, to receive those whom she, by the word, perceiveth the Lord God and her Christ hath received? No: and therefore you have said so much as amounts to nothing.

Your last argument is, 'If the baptism of John was so far honoured and dignified, that they that did submit to it, are said to justify God; and those that did it not, are said to reject his counsel against themselves: so that their receiving, or rejecting the whole doctrine of God, hath its denomination from this single practice. And is there not as much to be said of the baptism of Christ, unless you will say it is inferior to John's in worth and use.'

Ans. 1. That our denomination of believers, and of our receiving the doctrine of the Lord Jesus, is not to be reckoned from our baptism, is evident; because according to our notion of it, they only that have before received the doctrine of the gospel, and so shew it us by their confession of faith, they only ought to be baptized. This might serve for an answer for all: but, 2. The Baptism of John was 'the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins' (Mark 1:4; Matt 3:6; Luke 3:3), of which water was but an outward signification. Now what is the baptism of repentance, but an unfeigned acknowledgment that they were sinners, and so stood in need of a Saviour, Jesus Christ. This baptism, or baptism under this notion, the Pharisees would not receive (Luke 7:29,30). For they 'trusted in themselves that they were righteous,' that they were 'not as other men,' that they had need of no repentance (Luke 18:9, 10:29, 15:7). Not but that they would have been baptized with water, might that have been without an acknowledgment that they were sinners (Matt 3:7); wherefore seeing the counsel of God respected rather the remission of sins by Jesus Christ, than the outward act of water baptism, ye ought not, as you do, by this your reasoning, to make it rather, at least in the

revelation of it, to terminate in the outward act of being baptized, but in unfeigned and sound repentance, and the receiving of Jesus Christ by faith (Eph 1:7,8,11).

Further, A desire to submit to John's water baptism, or of being baptized by him in water, did not demonstrate by that single act, the receiving of the whole doctrine of God as you suggest. 'Why did John reject the Pharisees that would have been baptized (Matt 3:7), and Paul examine them that were?' (Acts 19:2,3). If your doctrine be true, why did they not rather say, Oh! seeing you desire to be baptized, seeing you have been baptized, you need not to be questioned any further; your submitting to John's water, to us is a sufficient testimony, even that single act, that you have received the whole doctrine of God. But I say, why did John call them vipers? And Paul asked them, Whether they had yet 'received the Holy Ghost?' Yea, it is evident, that a man may be desirous of water, that a man may be baptized, and neither own the doctrine of repentance, nor know on whom he should believe; evident, I say, and that by the same texts (Matt 3:7; Acts 19:2-4).

You have grounded therefore this your last argument, as also the rest, upon an utter mistake of things.

I COME NOW TO YOUR *Questions*; WHICH
ALTHOUGH THEY BE MIXED WITH GALL,
I WILL WITH PATIENCE SEE IF I CAN
TURN THEM INTO FOOD.

[*Quest. 1.*] Your first question is, 'I ask your own heart, whether popularity and applause of variety of professors, be not in the bottom of what you have said; that hath been your snare to pervert the right ways of the Lord, and to lead others into a path wherein we can find none of the footsteps of the flock in the first ages?'

Ans. Setting aside a retaliation, like your question, I say, and God knows I speak the truth, I have been tempted to do what I have done, by a provocation of sixteen years long; tempted, I say, by the brethren of your way: who, whenever they saw their opportunity, have made it their business to seek to rend us in

pieces; mine ownself they have endeavoured to persuade to forsake the church; some they have rent quite off from us, others they have attempted and attempted to divide and break off from us, but by the mercy of God, have been hitherto prevented. A more large account you may have in my next, if you think good to demand it; but I thank God that I have written what I have written.

Quest. 2. 'Have you dealt brotherly, or like a Christian, to throw so much dirt upon your brethren, in print, in the face of the world, when you had an opportunity to converse with them of reputation amongst us, before printing, being allowed the liberty by them, at the same time for you to speak among them?'

Ans. I have thrown no dirt upon them, nor laid any thing to their charge, if their practice be warrantable by the word; but you have not been offended at the dirt yourselves have thrown at all the godly in the land that are not of our persuasion, in counting them unfit to be communicated with, or to be accompanied with in the house of God. This dirt you never complained of, nor would, I doubt, to this day, might you be still let alone to throw it. As to my book, it was printed before I spake with any of you, or knew whether I might be accepted of you. As to them of reputation among you, I know others not one tittle inferior to them, and have my liberty to consult with who I like best.

Quest. 3. 'Doth your carriage answer the law of love or civility, when the brethren used means to send for you for a conference, and their letter was received by you, that you should go out again from the city after knowledge of their desires, and not vouchsafe a meeting with them, when the glory of God, and the vindication of so many churches is concerned.'

Ans. The reason why I came not amongst you, was partly because I consulted mine own weakness, and counted not myself, being a dull headed man, able to engage so many of the chief of you, as I was then informed intended to meet me. I also feared, in personal disputes, heats and bitter contentions might arise, a thing my spirit hath not pleasure in: I feared also, that both myself and words would be misrepresented; and that not without cause, for if they that answer a book will alter, and screw

arguments out of their place, and make my sentences stand in their own words, not mine, when I say my words are in a book to be seen, what would you have done, had I in the least, either in matter or manner, though but seemingly miscarried among you. As for the many churches which you say are concerned, as also the glory of God, I doubt not to say they are only your wordless opinions that are concerned; the glory of God is vindicated: We receive him that God hath received, and that 'to the glory of God' (Rom 15:7).

Quest. 4. 'Is it not the spirit of Diotrephes of old, in you, who loved to have the pre-eminence, that you are so bold to keep out all the brethren, that are not of your mind in this matter, from having any entertainment in the churches or meetings to which you belong, though you yourself have not been denied the like liberty, among them that are contrary minded to you? Is this the way of your retaliation? Or are you afraid lest the truth should invade your quarters?'

Ans. I can say, I would not have the spirit you talk of; what I have of it, God take it from me. But what was the spirit of Diotrephes? Why, not to receive the brethren into the church, and to forbid them that would (3 John 9,10). This do not I; I am for communion with saints, because they are saints: I shut none of the brethren out of the churches, nor forbid them that would receive them. I say again, shew me the man that is a visible believer, and that walketh with God; and though he differ with me about baptism, the doors of the church stand open for him, and all our heaven-born privileges he shall be admitted to them. But how came Diotrephes so lately into our parts? Where was he in those days that our brethren of the baptized way, would neither receive into the church, nor pray with men as good as themselves, because they were not baptized; but would either, like Quakers, stand with their hats on their heads, or else withdraw till we had done.

As to our not suffering those you plead for to preach in our assemblies, the reason is, because we cannot yet prevail with them, to repent of their church-rending principles. As to the retaliation, mind the hand of God, and

remember Adonibezek (Judg 1:7). Let the truth come into our quarters and welcome, but sowers of discord, because the Lord hates it (Prov 6:19), we also ourselves will AVOID them (Rom 16:17,18).

Quest. 5. 'Is there no contempt cast upon the brethren, who desired your satisfaction, that at the same time, when you have opportunity to speak to them, instead of that, you committed the letters to others, by way of reflection upon them?'

Ans. It is no contempt at all to consult men more wise and judicious than him that wrote, or myself either. But why not consult with others. Is wisdom to die with you? Or do you count all that yourselves have no hand in, done to your disparagement?

Quest. 6. 'Did not your presumption prompt you to provoke them to printing, in your letter to them, when they desired to be found in no such practice, lest the enemies of truth should take advantage by it?'

Ans. What provoked you to print, will be best known at the day of judgment, whether your fear of losing your wordless opinion, or my plain answer to your letter: The words in my letter are, 'As for my book never defer its answer till you speak with me, for I strive not for mastery but truth.' Though you did not desire to write, yet with us there was continual labour to rend us to pieces, and to prevent that, was my first book written. And let who will take advantage, so the truth of God, and the edification of my brother be promoted.

Quest. 7. 'Whether your principle and practice is not equally against others as well as us, viz. Episcopal, Presbyterians, and Independents, who are also of our side, for our practice, though they differ with us about the subject of baptism. Do you delight to have your hand against every man?'

Ans. I own water baptism to be God's ordinance, but I make no idol of it. Where you call now the Episcopal to side with you, and also the Presbyterian, &c. you will not find them easily persuaded to conclude with you against me. They are against your manner of dipping, as well as the subject of water baptism; neither do you, for all you flatter them, agree together in all but the subject. Do you allow

their sprinkling? Do you allow their signing with the cross? Why then have you so stoutly, an hundred times over, condemned these things as antichristian. I am not against every man, though by your abusive language you would set every one against me; but am for union, concord, and communion with saints, as saints, and for that cause I wrote my book.

To conclude,--1. In all I have said, I put a difference between my brethren of the baptized way; I know some are more moderate than some. 2. When I plead for the unbaptized, I chiefly intend those that are not so baptized as my brethren judge right, according to the first pattern. 3. If any shall count my papers worth the scribbling against, let him deal with my arguments, and things immediately depending upon them, and not conclude that he hath confuted a book, when he hath only quarrelled at words. 4. I have done when I have told you, that I strive not for mastery, nor to shew myself singular; but, if it might be, for union and communion among the godly. And count me not as an enemy, because I tell you the truth. 5. And now, dissenting brethren, I commend you to God, who can pardon your sin, and give you more grace, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.

HERE FOLLOWETH MR. HENRY JESSEY'S
JUDGMENT UPON THE SAME
ARGUMENT.

'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye,' &c.--
Romans 14:1

Whereas some suppose the receiving there mentioned, was but receiving into brotherly affection, such as were in church fellowship; but not a receiving of such as were weak into the church. For answer unto which consider,

That in the texts are two things to be inquired into. *First*, What weakness of faith this is, that must not hinder receiving. *Secondly*, by whom, and to what, he that is weak in the faith is to be received?

First, To the first, What *weakness* of faith this is that must not hinder receiving, whether

was it weakness in the graces of faith, or in the doctrine of faith? It is conceived that the first is included, but the second principally intended.

1. That some of the Lord's people are weak in the graces of faith, will be confessed by all (Mark 9:24; Luke 24:25) and that the Lord would have his lambs fed as well as his sheep, and his children as well as grown men, and that he hath given the right to gospel privileges, not to degrees of grace, but to the truth; '*him that is weak in the faith receive ye*': or unto you, as some GOOD translations read it (Rom 14:1).¹⁸

2. It is supposed, that this command of receiving him that is weak in the faith, doth principally intend, that is weak in the doctrine of faith, and that not so much in the doctrine of justification, as in gospel institutions, as doth appear by the second and sixth verses: which shew, that it was in matters of practice, wherein some were weak, and at which others were offended; notwithstanding the glorious Lord who bears all his Israel upon his heart receives them (v 3) and commandeth, '*him that is weak in the faith receive ye,*' or unto you.

Second, Therefore, here we are to inquire of the receiving in the text, By whom, and to what he that is weak in the faith, should be received. In which inquiry there are two parts. 1. By whom. 2. To what.

1. To the first. The text makes answer, '*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye,*' or unto you; which must be the church at Rome, to whom the epistle was writ; as also to all '*beloved of God, called to be saints*' (Rom 1:7). And as to them, so unto all churches and saints, Beloved and called throughout the world.

Note, That epistles are as well to direct how churches are to carry things towards saints without, as to saints within; and also toward all men so as to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, nor to the church of God (1 Cor 10:32).


2. The second part of the inquiry is, to what he that is weak in the faith is to be received?

¹⁸ Tyndale, and all the early English translations, rend it 'unto you,' until the Elisabethan State Bible, called the Bishop's, in 1568. Do not the words mean that Christians are to receive such as are weak in the faith into their hearts by love, without troubling their heads with perplexing disputes?--Ed.

whether only unto mutual affection, as some affirm, as if he were in church fellowship before, that were weak in the faith? Or whether the text doth as well, if not rather intend, the receiving such as were, and are weak in the faith, Not only unto mutual affection if in the church, but unto church fellowship also, if they were out. For clearing of which consider, to whom the epistle was written (Rom 1:7). Not only to the church there, but unto all that were beloved of God, and called to be saints in all ages. And as at Rome it is like there then were, and in other places now are, saints weak in the faith, both in and out of church fellowship; and it is probable there then were, and elsewhere now are, those that will cast such out of their mutual affection. And if they will cast such out of their mutual affection that are within, no doubt they will keep out of their church fellowship those that are without.

Arg. 1. Whereas the Lord's care extends to all his, and if it were a good argument in the third verse, for them to receive those within, because God hath received them, it would be as good an argument to receive in those without, for God hath received them also: unless it could be proved, that all that were and are weak in the faith, were and are in church fellowship, which is not likely: for if they would cast such out of their affection that are within, they would upon the same account keep them out of church fellowship that were without: therefore as it is a duty to receive those within unto mutual affection, so it is no less a duty, by the text, to receive such weak ones as are without, into church fellowship.

Arg. 2. Is urged from the words themselves, which are, 'Receive him that is weak in the faith'; wherein the Lord puts NO limitation in this text or in any other; and who is he then that can restrain it, unless he will limit the Holy One of Israel? And how would such an interpretation foolishly charge the Lord, as if he took care ONLY of those within, but not like care of those without; whereas he commandeth them to receive them, and useth this motive, he had received them, and he receiveth those that are weak in the faith, if without, as well as those within.

From the example, to wit, That God had received them; whereas had he been of the church, they would have been persuaded of that before the motive was urged: for no true church of Christ's would take in, or keep in any, whom they judged the Lord had not received; but those weak ones were such as they questioned whether the Lord had received them, else the text had not been an answer sufficient for their receiving them: There might have been objected, they hold up Jewish observations of meats and days, which by the death of Christ were abolished, and so did deny some of the effects of his death; yet the Lord who was principally wronged could pass this by, and commandeth others to receive them also. And if it be a good argument to receive such as are weak in any thing, whom the Lord hath received, then there can be no good argument to reject for any thing for which the Lord will not reject them: for else the command in the first verse, and his example in the third verse were insufficient, without some other arguments unto the church, besides his  command and example.

Some object, 'Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God' (Rom 15:7). And from thence supposing they were all in church fellowship before, whereas the text saith not so: for if you consider the eighth and ninth verses, you may see he speaks unto Jews and Gentiles in general, that if the Jews had the receiving, they should receive Gentiles; and if the Gentiles had the receiving, they should receive Jews, for had they not been on both sides commanded: the Jews might have said to the Gentiles, you are commanded to receive us, but we are not commanded to receive you; and if the weak had the receiving, they should receive the strong; and if the strong had the receiving, they should not keep out the weak; and the text is reinforced with the example of the Son's receiving us unto the glory of God, that as he receiveth Jews and poor Gentiles, weak and strong, in church fellowship, or out of church fellowship; so should they to the glory of God. And as the Lord Jesus received some, though they held some things more than were commanded, and some things less than were commanded, and as

those that were weak and in church fellowship, so those that were weak and out of church fellowship; and that not only into mutual affection, but unto fellowship with himself; and so should they, not only receive such as were weak within into mutual affection, but such as were without, both to mutual affection and to church fellowship: or else such weak ones as were without, had been excluded by the text. Oh! how is the heart of God the Father and the Son set upon this, to have his children in his house, and in one another's hearts as they are in his, and are borne upon the shoulders and breasts of his Son their high priest? and as if all this will not do it, but the devil will divide them still, whose work it properly is; But 'the God of peace' will come in shortly, 'and bruise Satan under their feet,' as in Romans 16:20. And they will agree to be in one house, when they are more of one heart; in the mean time prays, as in chapter 15:5, 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.'

I shall endeavour the answering of some objections, and leave it unto consideration.

Object. Some say this bearing or receiving, were but in things indifferent.

Ans. That eating, or forbearing upon a civil account, are things indifferent, is true: but not when done upon the account of worship, as keeping of days, and establishing Jewish observations about meats, which by the death of Christ are taken away; and it is not fairly to be imagined the same church at Rome looked so upon them as indifferent; nor that the Lord doth; that it were all alike to him to hold up Jewish observations, or to keep days or no days, right days or wrong days, as indifferent things, which is a great mistake, and no less than to make God's grace little in receiving such. For if it were but in things wherein they had not sinned, it were no great matter for the Lord to receive, and it would have been as good an argument or motive to the church, to say the things were indifferent, as to say the Lord had received them. Whereas the text is to set out the riches of grace to the vessels of mercy, as Romans 9:15. That as at first he did freely choose and accept them; so when they fail and miscarry in many things, yea about his worship

also, although he be most injured thereby, yet he is first in passing it by, and persuading others to do the like. That as the good Samaritan did in the Old Testament,¹⁹ so our good Samaritan doth in the New, when priest and Levite passed by, pastor and people pass by, yet he will not, but pours in oil, and carries them to his inn, and calls for receiving, and setting it upon his account.

Object. That this bearing with, and receiving such as are weak in the faith, must be limited to meats and days, and such like things that had been old Jewish observations, but not unto the being ignorant in, or doubting of any New Testament institution.

Ans. Where the Lord puts no limitation, men should be wary how they do it, for they must have a command or example, before they can limit this command; for although the Lord took this occasion from their difference about meats and days to give this command, yet the command is not limited there, no more than Matthew 12:1-8. That when they made use of his good law rigorously in the letter, he presently published an act of grace in the 7th verse, and tells them, Had they known what this meaneth, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' they would not have condemned the guiltless; as also Matthew 9:13, 'Go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' which is not to be limited unto what was the present occasion of publishing the command, but observed as a general rule upon all occasions, wherein mercy and sacrifice comes in competition, to shew the Lord will rather have a duty omitted that is due to him, than mercy to his creatures omitted by them. So in the text, when some would not receive such as were weak in the faith, as to matters of practice, the Lord was pleased to publish this act of grace: 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.' Now unless it be proved, that no saint can be weak in the faith in any thing but meats and days, or in some Old Testament observations, and that he ought not to be judged a saint that

¹⁹ Under the Old Testament dispensation; the parable or history is recorded in Luke 10.--Ed.

is weak in the faith as it relates to gospel institutions, in matters of practice; you cannot limit the text, and you must also prove his weakness SUCH, as that the Lord will not receive him; else the command in the first verse, and the reason or motive in the third verse, will both be in force upon you; to wit, 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye,' or unto you, - 'for God hath received him.'

Object. But some may object from 1 Corinthians 12:13, 'For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles.' Some there are that affirm this to be meant of water baptism, and that particular churches are formed thereby, and all persons are to be admitted and jointed unto such churches by water baptism.

Ans. That the baptism intended in the text is the Spirit's baptism, and not water baptism; and that the body the text intends, is not principally the church of Corinth, but all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, being baptized into one mystical body, as Ephesians 4:4, '*There is one body and one Spirit,*' wherein there is set out the uniter and the united; therefore in the third verse they are exhorted to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The united are all the faithful in one

body; into whom? in the fifth verse, in one Lord Jesus Christ: by what? one faith, one baptism, which CANNOT be meant of water baptism; for water baptism doth not unite all this body, for some of them never had water baptism, and are yet of this body, and by the Spirit gathered into one Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:10), 'both which are in heaven and in earth,' Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:16), 'that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.' The instrument you have in verse 18, 'by one spirit' (Eph 3:6). 'That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body' (v 15). 'Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' And the reasons of their keeping 'the unity of the Spirit,' in Ephesians 4:3 is laid down in verses 4, 5 being 'one body,' 'one Spirit,' having 'one hope,' 'one Lord,' 'one faith,' 'one baptism,' whether they were Jews or

Gentiles, such as were in heaven or in earth, which CANNOT be meant of water baptism, for in that sense they had not all one

baptism, nor admitted and united thereby. So in 1 Corinthians 12:13, 'For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit'; which cannot be meant of water baptism, in regard all the body of Christ, Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, partook not thereof.

Object. But Ephesians 4:5 saith, there is but 'one baptism'; and by what hath been said, if granted, water baptism will be excluded, or else there is more baptisms than one.

Ans. It followeth not that because the Spirit will have no corrival, that therefore other things may not be in their places. That because the Spirit of God taketh the pre-eminence, therefore other things may not be subservient (1 John 2:27). The apostle tells them, That the anointing which they have received of him, abideth in them; and you need not, saith he, 'that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things.' By this some may think John excludes the ministry; no such matter, though the Holy Ghost had confirmed and instructed them so in the truth of the gospel, as that they were furnished against seducers in verse 26 yet you see John goes on still teaching them in many things: as also in Ephesians 4:11-13, 'He gave some, apostles; - some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' So in the Spirit's baptism, though it have the pre-eminence, and appropriateth some things, as peculiar to itself, it doth not thereby destroy the use and end of water baptism, or any other ordinance in its place: for water baptism is a means to increase grace, and in it, and by it sanctification is forwarded, and remission of sins more cleared and witnessed; yet the giving grace, and regenerating and renewing, is the Holy Spirit's peculiar. Consider (Titus 3:5), 'By the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost'; Baptism being the outward sign of the inward graces wrought by the Spirit,

a representation or figure, as in 1 Peter 3:21, 'The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us [not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,] by the resurrection of Jesus Christ'; not excluding water baptism; but shewing, That the spiritual part is chiefly to be looked at: though such as slight water baptism, as the Pharisees and lawyers did (Luke 7:30), reject the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized. And such as would set water baptism in the Spirit's place, exalt a duty against the deity and dignity of the Spirit, and to give the glory due unto him, as God blessed for ever, unto a duty.

By which mistake of setting up water baptism in the Spirit's place, and assigning it a work, which was never appointed unto it; of forming the body of Christ, either in general, as in 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:5 or as to particular churches of Christ, we may see the fruit; that instead of being the means of uniting as the Spirit doth; that it hath not only rent his seamless coat, but divided his body which he hath purchased with his own blood, and opposed that great design of Father, Son, and Spirit, in uniting poor saints, thereby pulling in pieces what the Spirit hath put together. 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, - for God hath received him'; being such as the Spirit had baptized and admitted of the body of Christ, he would have his churches receive them also:

☞ whose baptism is the ONLY baptism, and so is called the ONE baptism. Therefore consider, whether such a practice, hath a command or an example, that persons must be joined into church fellowship by water baptism; for John baptized many, yet he did not baptize some into one church, and some into another, nor all into one church, as the church of Rome doth. And into what church did Philip baptize the eunuch, or the apostle the jailor and his house? And all the rest they baptized, were they not left free to join themselves for their convenience and edification? All which I leave to consideration. I might have named some inconveniences, if not absurdities that would follow the assertion: as to father the mistakes of the baptizers on the Spirit's act, who is not mistaken in any HE baptizeth; no false brethren

creep in unawares into the mystical body by him; and also, how this manner of forming churches would suit a country, where many are converted, and willing to be baptized; but there being no church to be baptized into, how shall such a church state begin? The first must be baptized into no church, and the rest into him as the church, or the work stand still for want of a church.

Object. 'But God is a God of order, and hath ordained order in all the churches of Christ; and for to receive one that holds the baptism he had in his infancy, there is no command nor example for, and by the same rule children will be brought in to be church members.'

Ans. That God is a God of order, and hath ordained orders in all the churches of Christ is true; and that this is one of the orders to receive him that is weak in the faith, is as true. And though there be no example or command, in so many words, receive such an one that holds the baptism he had in his infancy, nor to reject such a one: but there is a command to receive him that is weak in the faith, without limitation, and it is like this might not be a doubt in those days, and so not spoken of in particular.

But the Lord provides a remedy for all times in the text, 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye'; for else receiving would not be upon the account of saintship; but upon knowing, and doing all things according to rule and order, and that must be perfectly, else for to deny any thing, or to affirm too much is disorderly, and would hinder receiving: but the Lord seals not so with his people, but accounts 'LOVE the fulfilling of the law,' though they be ignorant in many things both as to knowing and doing; and receives them into communion and fellowship with himself, and would have others do the same also. And if he would have so much bearing in the apostle's days, when they had infallible helps to expound truths unto them, much more now, the church hath been so long in the wilderness and in captivity, and not that his people should be driven away in the dark day, though they are sick and weak (Eze 34:16,21). And that it should be supposed such tenderness would bring in children in age to be church members, yea and welcome, if any body could prove them in the faith, though never so

weak; for the text is, 'Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye': It is not He, and his wife and children, unless it can be proved they are IN THE FAITH.

Object. 'By this, some ordinances may be lost or omitted, and is it to be supposed the Lord would suffer any of his ordinances to be lost or omitted in the Old or New Testament, or the right use of them, and yet own such for true churches, and what reason can there be for it.?'

Ans. The Lord hath suffered some ordinances to be omitted and lost in the Old Testament, and yet owned the church. Though circumcision were omitted in the wilderness, yet he owned them to be his church (Acts 7:38); and many of the ordinances were lost in the captivity: see Ainsworth upon Exodus 28, 30 &c. which shewed what the high-priest was to put on, and were not to be omitted upon pain of death, as the Urim and Thummim, yet being lost, and several other ordinances, the ark, with the mercy-seat and cherubims, the fire from heaven, the majesty and divine presence, &c. yet, he owns the second temple, though short of the first, and filled it with his glory, and honoured it with his Son, being a member and a minister therein (Mal 3:1), 'The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple': So in the New Testament, since their wilderness condition, and great and long captivity, there is some darkness and doubts, and want of light in the best of the Lord's people, in many of his ordinances, and that for several ages, and yet how hath the Lord owned them for his churches, wherein he is to have glory and praise 'throughout all ages' (Eph 3:21). And so should we own them, unless we will condemn the generation of the just. It must be confessed, That if exact practice be required, and clearness in gospel institutions before communion; who dare be so bold as to say his hands are clean, and that he hath done all the Lord's commands, as to institutions in his worship? and must not confess the change of times doth necessitate some variation, if not alteration, either in the matter or manner of things according to primitive practice; yet owned for true churches, and received as visible saints, though ignorant either wholly, or in great measure, in laying on

of hands, singing, washing of feet, and anointing with oil, in the gifts of the Spirit, which is the Urim and Thummim of the gospel. And it cannot be proved, that the churches were so ignorant in the primitive times, nor yet that such were received into fellowship; yet now herein it is thought meet their should be bearing, and why not in baptism, especially in such as own it for an ordinance, though in some things miss it, and do yet shew their love unto it, and unto the Lord, and unto his law therein, that they could be willing to die for it rather than to deny it; and to be baptized in their blood; which sheweth, they hold it in conscience their duty, while they have further light from above, and are willing to hear and obey as far as they know, though weak in the faith, as to clearness in gospel institutions: surely the text is on their side, or else it will exclude all the former, 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, - but not to doubtful disputations' (Rom 14:5). Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and such the Lord hath received.

As to the query, What reason is there, why the Lord should suffer any of his ordinances to be lost?

Ans. If there were no reason to be shewn, it should teach us silence, for he doth nothing without the highest reason; and there doth appear some reasons in the Old Testament, why those ordinances of Urim and Thummim, &c. were suffered to be lost in the captivity, that they might long and look for the Lord Jesus, the priest, that was to stand up with Urim and Thummim (Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65), which the Lord by this puts them upon the hoping for, and to be in the expectation of so great a mercy, which was the promise of the Old Testament, and all the churches losses in the New Testament. By all the dark night of ignorance she hath been in, and long captivity she hath been under, and in her wandering wilderness state, wherein she hath rather been fed with manna from heaven, than by men upon earth; and after all her crosses and losses, the Lord lets light break in by degrees, and deliverance by little and little; and she is 'coming out of the wilderness leaning upon her beloved'; and the Lord hath given the valley of

Achor for a door of hope, that ere long she may receive the promise of the gospel richly, by the Spirit, to be poured upon us from on high (Isa 32:15), and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field become a forest, and then the Lord will take away the covering cast over all people (Isa 25:7), and the veil that is spread over all nations (Isa 11:9); 'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (v 13). Then 'Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.' Thus will the God of peace bruise Satan under foot shortly; and one reason why the Lord may suffer all this darkness and differences that have been, and yet are, is, that we might long and look for this blessed promise of the gospel, the pourings out of the Spirit.

Object. But many authors do judge, that the weak and strong were all in church fellowship before, and that the receiving (Rom 14:1) was but into mutual affection.

Ans. It ought to be seriously weighed how any differ from so many worthy authors, is confessed; to whom the world is so much beholden for their help in many things; but it would be of dangerous consequence to take all for granted they say, and unlike the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11). Though they had some infallible teachers, yet they took not their words or doctrine upon trust; and there may be more ground to question expositors on this text, in regard their principles necessitate them to judge that the sense; for if it be in their judgments a duty to compel all to come in, and to receive all, and their children, they must needs judge by that text, they were all of the church, and in fellowship, before their scrupling meats and days, because that is an act of grown persons at years of discretion; and therefore the receiving is judged by them to be only into mutual affection, for it is impossible for them to hold their opinion, and judge otherwise of the text; for in baptism, they judge infants should be received into church fellowship; and then scrupling meats and days must needs be after joining. Their judgments might as well be taken, that it is a duty to baptize infants, as that they can judge of this text rightly, and hold their practice.

Object. But no uncircumcised person was to eat the passover (Exo 12). And doth not the Lord as well require the sign of baptism now, as of circumcision then? and is there not like reason for it?

Ans. The Lord, in the Old Testament, expressly commanded no uncircumcised person should eat the passover (Exo 12:48; Eze 44:9), that no stranger, uncircumcised in heart, or uncircumcised in flesh, should enter into his sanctuary.²⁰ And had the Lord commanded, that no unbaptized person should enter into his churches, it had been clear. And no doubt, Christ was as faithful as a son in all his house, as Moses was as a servant; and although there had been little reason, if the Lord had commanded it so to be, yet in God's worship we must not make the likeness of any thing in our reason, but the will of God, the ground of duty; for upon such a foundation some would build the baptizing of infants, because it would be like unto circumcision, and so break the second commandment, in making the likeness of things of their own contrivance, of force with institutions in the worship of God.

The most that I think can be said is, That we have no gospel example for receiving without baptism, or rejecting any for want of it. Therefore it is desired, what hath been said, may be considered; lest while we look for an example, we do not overlook a command upon a mistake, supposing that they were all in church fellowship before; whereas the text saith not so, but 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye,' or unto you.

We may see also how the Lord proceeds under the law, though he accounts those things that were done contrary to his law, sinful, though done ignorantly; yet never required the offender to offer sacrifice till he knew thereof (Lev 5:5 compared with vv 15,16). And that may be a man's own sin through his ignorance; that though it may be another's duty to

²⁰ We cannot offer to God any acceptable sacrifice until spiritually baptized. First joined to God by a living faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and then bringing forth the fruits of this internal and purifying baptism, we must give ourselves to his church in the bonds of the gospel.--Ed.

endeavour to inform him in, yet not thereupon to keep him out of his Father's house; for surely the Lord would not have any of his children kept out, without we have a word for it. And though they scruple some meats in their Father's house, yet it may be dangerous for the stronger children to deny them all the rest of the dainties therein, till the weak and sick can eat strong meat; whereas Peter had meat for

one, and milk for another; and Peter must feed the poor lambs as well as the sheep; and if others will not do it, the great shepherd will come ere long and look up what hath been driven away (Eze 34:4,11; Isa 40:11). He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs into his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.