

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA,

No. LXXXIII

JULY, 1864.

ARTICLE I.

FREE COMMUNION.

BY REV. SERENO D. CLARK, SUNDERLAND, MASS.

THIS subject has long been involved in debate. The combatants in this country are mainly the Baptists and Pedobaptists, and those who hold to free and those who defend restricted communion among the former. It is variance on a vital point of Christian fellowship between those who freely acknowledge each other to be in fellowship with Christ. Its continuance inflicts a wound on the Saviour's cause. Can it not be healed? Is there no possibility of reconciling those contending in the name of the King of Peace on grounds of scriptural truth and charity? Christian unity, based on oneness of mind and feeling, so that it is at once rational and cordial, possessing the purity and loveliness of the gospel, is a beautiful thought. It will be fully realized in the better land. May there not be some approximation towards it on earth? It will doubtless be one of the prominent characteristics of the millennial church. We would fain hasten the anticipated consummation; and this our Baptist brethren desire as devoutly as ourselves. May both parties, by free and fraternal discussion of the scriptural principles on which the controversy turns, contribute their share towards the adjustment of the differences.

We have admitted into our pages the able argument of Dr. Hovey for restricted communion. Without intending a particular reply to him, we now propose to discuss the subject of free communion with all who give credible evidence of love to the Saviour.

- To start intelligently in our inquiries, we need definite views of the exact point or points in controversy. For this we need to know precisely in what we and our opponents agree, and in what we differ, relative to fellowship in the communion service.

We agree with our Baptist brethren that faith, *decided Christian experience*, full sympathy with the spirit and teachings of Christ, are essential to fellowship in the symbols of the sacramental supper. Hence, that the qualified communicant must give evidence of renewal by the Holy Ghost; have settled convictions of the fundamental truths of Christianity; especially of those which the Spirit writes on the soul of the Christian, impressing them on his deepest consciousness in bringing him to the Saviour's feet and holding him there: such as, just views of God's character and his immutable government; the utterly lost condition of man; the necessity of his being born again; the doctrine of justification through the blood of Christ alone; the absolute Godship of the Redeemer; the office and work of the Holy Spirit; the sovereignty of grace, and the duty of unconditional submission and obedience; in a word, that he must hold the Head and all that a saving faith in him implies. Hence we agree that there are errors relative to the gospel which as surely kill the soul as the sword kills the body; that even slight errors touching vital points imperil or damage the Christian life; and that, consequently, those misapprehensions of the fundamental teachings of God's word which, taking into consideration the knowledge and training of him who embraces them, forfeit our confidence in his Christian character, fully justify us in excluding him from the table of Christ, because they indicate that he has no sympathy with gospel truth, and therefore no fellowship with its holy Author.

We agree in the belief that the duty of a public profession of faith in Christ, or of entering into visible covenant with God and his people, is binding on all Christians. In the nature of things, before one can enjoy in another the confidence necessary to Christian communion the latter must give the former satisfactory evidence of piety. For the same reason, before one can enjoy communion with the church he must give the members adequate evidence of oneness with Christ and with themselves. We agree in accepting the same free scriptural form of church polity—congregationalism—a system of which evangelical love and individual rights of conscience are the centre and circumference. We agree that baptism and the Lord's supper are sacraments—outward signs of the indwelling sentiments and feelings implied in regeneration and in union to Christ—to be observed to the end of time; and that it is fitting, in all ordinary cases, that the administration of the former precede the administration of the latter. We agree in the duty of church discipline, of Christians exercising watch and care over the brethren; and of proceeding to excommunication, not less in cases of gross violation of Christ's rules of holy living than of fatal error.

We also agree, or should agree, in the charitable conviction that, as denominations, we are equally anxious to ascertain the will of God; that we study the scriptures with the same earnestness, and with equal freedom from prejudice; in a word, that we are equally conscientious in entertaining our different doctrinal sentiments and in adopting our different ritual practices; otherwise, we can have little hope of success in promoting Christian harmony by friendly discussions on mutual differences. We believe a want of confidence in each other's conscientiousness and sincerity has greatly retarded, in the past, the progress of truth—certainly the progress of Christian friendliness—by means of controversies between evangelical denominations; and in none more than in discussions on the present subject. A great point would be gained, not only to the cause before us

but to all debatable topics in the religious sphere, could we persuade ourselves that we are mutually conscientious, and mutually acting for the highest interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. Indeed, consistency demands that Baptists and Pedobaptists be thus persuaded, or decline longer to receive and hold communion with each other as Christians.

We are now prepared to understand the exact point of difference between us. It is summarily a difference of belief and practice respecting baptism; mainly, touching the mode of administering the rite and the order of administering it. The Baptists believe that immersion is the only scriptural mode of baptism, and that as Christ has enjoined baptism as a prerequisite to the eucharist, they must exclude from its reception all unbaptized persons. Consequently the Pedobaptists, who consider sprinkling or pouring baptism equally with immersion, must be included among the unbaptized, and deemed unqualified to participate in the communion service. This is the central point around which all their arguments for restricted communion revolve.

True, they allege another ground of difference: the vindication of believers' baptism, and the consequent denial of infant baptism. But the denial of infant baptism does not materially change, though it may enlarge, the ground of difference between us. It is still a difference of mode in a broader sense. The Pedobaptists as earnestly maintain that faith is the only scriptural ground of baptism as do the Baptists. The difference is simply this. The Baptist believes that his personal faith gives warrant for his personal baptism only; the Pedobaptist, that it gives warrant for his baptism and for that of his children also; while he maintains, most decidedly, that the privilege of baptizing children is exclusively confined to believing parents; and that baptized children have the privilege of being admitted to full communion of the church only after personally believing and recognizing as their own the parental act of dedication performed in their behalf, binding their infancy to the altar of God before they were qualified to do it for themselves.

We are aware that some Baptists disavow any dispute between themselves and us concerning the mode of baptism, affirming that immersion is "the thing itself, and alone the thing required." But this is little more than a *petitio principii*. The whole history of the controversy, and the present attitude of the parties demonstrate, that there is a dispute about the mode of baptism; certainly, whether only one mode or several modes are allowable. If they insist that the rite is modal, and we deny it, is there not a difference respecting mode? But we have no disposition to contend on this point. What we mean by a different mode of baptism, in its broader sense, is substantially what they mean by different views of baptism; and we shall use these phrases interchangeably in this discussion.

There are one or two other supposed differences, but which, when analyzed, will be found only differences in manner or process.

Our Baptist brethren allege that their doctrine of a pure church, composed only of believers, is a point of difference between us; averring that we introduce infants into the church by baptism, and consequently that our churches are, in part, composed of members without personal faith. But on this point there is no real difference between us. However loosely some Pedobaptists may express themselves respecting infant church membership, we neither practically nor theoretically maintain that the gospel church, as a communicating body, may contain unbelievers. The profession of personal faith we deem indispensable to full membership. One can commune with Christ only by being united to him, and the sinner is united to him only by faith. We by no means regard baptized children as members of the church in such a sense as to entitle them to commune at the Lord's table. Such come into church relations proper only by a personal profession of faith, by personally entering into covenant, and personally recognizing the baptismal act of parents in their behalf as their own. The precise relation which baptized children sustain to the church is a matter

which alone concerns ourselves, not at all our opponents, so far as it relates to intercommunion. We may be in error, but the error affects not the grand element of a pure church. We being as stringent advocates as themselves of the doctrine that none but evangelical believers, nor any who recognize not the law of baptism as a token of faith, should be received into full communion with Christ's visible body, our churches contain none who are not professedly baptized believers. Hence, should our opponents commune with us, they would commune with none who dissent from their own principles respecting the character of the church; nor, should they invite us to commune with them, would they invite any who profess not to believe and to have been baptized. All that divides us, therefore, is a difference of manner in professing our personal faith by baptism. Our churches are composed, equally with theirs, of believing members.

Our opponents pretend another difference, alleging that we do not comprehend the gracious affections signified by baptism as they do; we administering it to unconscious babes; they maintaining that the gospel, as a spiritual system, requires the rite to be a personal act, expressive of personal faith. But this is fundamentally identical with the last-named difference, and like it may be resolved into a difference of manner or process. We essentially agree with them concerning the spiritual affections which baptism implies. As a rule, we receive no one to the full communion of the church who submits not professedly to baptism, either through his parents or by his own act, and as a sign of personal faith. The real difference, therefore, between us on this point is only a difference in the manner or process by which baptism becomes expressive of personal faith or dedication.

Our opponents admit that mistakes concerning the mode of any other external act or rite destroy not its validity or its acceptableness to God; not mistakes even concerning the most precious of all Christian rites — communion with Christ in the commemorative emblems of his death. The form of

administering this, they deem of little consequence. But the mode of baptism occupies a very different place in their consideration. This they single out from all other rites and ceremonies, or forms of worship, and insist that it must be administered in the *precise manner* which they believe the scriptures demand, viz. *immersion*. Not only so, but they make the mode of its administration the foundation of their distinctive church organization, and, planting themselves on this narrow platform, logically unchurch all other Christians. On the other hand, we do not believe that *form* is more essential to baptism than to any other ordinance.

More than this: they concede that indulgence should be given to many differences of opinion respecting the doctrines of grace; and, notwithstanding these differences, they freely receive those who entertain them to the communion; but they claim that to different opinions and practices touching baptism there should be shown no forbearance, no tolerance. The great Head of the church has made this rite so essential a qualification for the eucharist, and defined its mode so clearly by the verb *baptizo*, that no indulgence should be shown those who consider anything baptism aside from immersion, or give it any other position than at the entrance to the church, however conscientious they may be. We, on the other hand, do not believe that charity is to be thus restricted in her benign workings. We behold her wearing a countenance radiant with a nobler and more impartial benevolence, and spreading her mantle not less freely over misconceptions of outward observances than over errors touching vital truths. While, therefore, our opponents *practically* maintain that errors concerning an outward rite are more important than errors respecting the doctrines of grace within the limits of credible piety, and are more efficient to debar from the Lord's supper; we maintain that errors respecting a rite are no more offensive to God than errors touching doctrines directly bearing on the spiritual affections, and have, therefore, no more efficacy to obstruct the way to the communion board. Indeed, we believe the former errors

are far less displeasing to God than the latter, and have far less power to prevent sacramental recognition.

This leads to a fundamental difference between us. They maintain that mistakes or misapprehensions in ordinances which do not prevent the immediate communion of the soul with God, disqualify for communion with Christ; while we maintain that no mistake or misapprehension which prevents not immediate communion with God can prevent acceptable communion with him in an ordinance symbolical of that communion. This, to our minds, is self-evident. He whose soul is in sympathy with God, is not only qualified for communion with him here, but also in heaven. To deny, therefore, that sympathy of soul with God, and fitness for communion with him here and in heaven, are qualifications for an ordinance, is to require higher qualification for communion at Christ's table than for eternal fellowship with him above. This is a position so uncongenial to every dictate of the Christian heart, that nothing but the unequivocal declaration of the great Lawgiver himself can persuade us to accept it.

We do not, therefore, acknowledge the truthfulness of the assertion of Dr. Hovey, that "the principles which require Baptist churches to limit their invitation to the Lord's supper to Christians of their own faith and order, are identical with those which determine the action of other evangelical churches in this matter." Nor do we concede the truthfulness of the position frequently taken by Pedobaptists, that "if we adopted the views of the Baptists respecting baptism, we should adopt their views respecting communion." This is by no means a scriptural inference. The Bible lifts us to a far higher point of view from which to survey this subject.

This brings us to a difference of fundamental importance to our argument, and should be distinctly understood at its opening. It is a difference in the primary element—the starting-point—of our respective processes of reasoning. The Baptists ground their argument, as we have said, on

baptism — its mode and position. Hence they make the celebration of one rite a qualification for the celebration of another; and thus, in part, convert the gospel into a ritual system like that of Moses, partaking of its main element, ceremonial holiness. Their whole argument is built on this ritual basis, and conducted throughout on the principle that the law of gospel ordinances is as rigid and uncompromising as were the Levitical institutes.

The starting-point or basis of our argument is *totally different* — the *spirituality* of the gospel church, the essential element of which is union to Christ — holy love or charity, binding all believers into one living body, whose development must ever be the growth and free workings of individual graces. Fellowship in it is not, therefore, a matter of constraint, yielding obedience to certain prescribed forms, which may be congealed into a mere dictum of the conscience. It is the warm, free outgushing of Christlike affections. Our argument thus starts from a different point, and lies along a different track from theirs. It is not at all affected by their cogent logic based on the modus of baptism. Consequently it will not be necessary to answer, in every case, their positions. By establishing ours, theirs will be undermined and fall from beneath them.

Allowing the Baptists, therefore, to be correct in their views of the mode and subjects of the rite, there remains a further question: Do different views of baptism, or of its mode of administration, conscientiously entertained by a portion of the professed followers of Christ, justify our Baptist brethren in excluding them from church communion? In other words: Are there two classes of Christians, who are equally conscientious and devout, who equally believe themselves to be in covenant with God, and to have been baptized as the scriptures direct, the one entitled to the privileges of the Lord's supper, and the other not?

The exact import and full force of the position which we maintain, and the strength of the position of the Baptists which we oppose, will be best understood by estimating the

strength of their position from their own point of view. We shall do this by gaining accurate views of the significance which they attach to baptism; and thus its importance as a prerequisite for the communion compared with other qualifications. They regard baptism as merely a *sign* of the radical change in the affections and will implied in regeneration — a sign of repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus. These affections and purposes existing, the baptismal water is applied in the name of the holy Trinity, as an emblem of inward purification and dedication to Christ. Andrew Fuller observes: "The immersion of the body in *water*, which is a purifying element, contains a profession of our faith in Christ, through the shedding of whose blood we are cleansed from all sin. Hence, baptism in the name of Christ is said to be *for the remission of sins*. Not that there is any such virtue in the element, whatever be the quantity, nor in the ceremony, though of divine appointment; but it contains a *sign* of the way in which we must be saved. Sin is washed away in baptism, in the same sense as Christ's flesh is eaten and his blood drank in the Lord's supper: the sign, when rightly used, leads to the thing signified."

Our opponents are careful to denominate baptism a sign in distinction from a seal. We can see no very decided difference between a public sign expressive of inward feelings, which can be regarded in no other light than as a public pledge, and a confirmatory token of such feelings, which is a seal. But we are willing to accept their definition in the present case; for it weakens, rather than strengthens, their position. Baptism then, in their view, is important only as a public recognition of one's union to Christ and to the brotherhood, and a token of obedience.

We are now prepared to estimate its comparative importance in connection with the other prerequisites. God looks at the heart. His communion is with the spirit; an outward act, in itself, neither facilitates nor obstructs it. Baptism, in itself considered, neither increases the fitness of the

candidate for the communion, nor diminishes it, it being a mere positive precept; and a positive precept, enjoining an outward rite having no moral element, has no moral power in itself. All its moral power lies in its accidents or implications. The power of baptism, as an initiatory rite to the church, to weaken or intensify the moral affections, lies in the felt obligation to obey a command of Jesus: the conscientious purpose to obey, or the consciousness that it is obeyed; or more particularly, perhaps, the idea of consecration to God in covenant; and thus the thought of the Triune Jehovah as a participant in the transaction. Aside from these it has no power to move the moral affections. The writer has baptized by immersion, and administered the rite to infants; and he has felt as deeply solemn and awed by a sense of the Divine presence in the latter case as in the former; indeed, more tender and tearful, for the subject is more fitted to move the finer sensibilities; the affecting idea in both cases being the thought of dedicating an immortal spirit to Jehovah, and binding it to his altar forever.

Let it be borne in mind that we are seeking qualifications for the communion of spirit with spirit, of heart with heart. Now with all these spiritual qualifications possessed, the soul in full sympathy with Christ; the public profession made; the union to God's covenant people effected; the law of baptism admitted and acted upon according to present light, but misapprehended in its precise form — the question is: Does *this misapprehension alone* justify an exclusion from the table of Christ? This the Baptists affirm; we deny. We see, then, just the strength of our position in opposition to theirs. They plant themselves on the shell of the gospel, and draw their arguments from its surface; we plant ourselves within its very heart, and draw our arguments from its essence.

The thesis, then, which we shall endeavor to substantiate in the ensuing discussion, formally stated, is this: *we are to receive to the sacramental board all whom, as a church, we have satisfactory evidence that Christ receives, according to the*

direction of Paul: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." This evidence must, of course, be scriptural, decided, such as would convince an intelligent Christian mind, and given in a way fitted to satisfy the body of believers with whom the fellowship is enjoyed.

We are anxious that this ground-principle of our argument and its legitimate bearings be definitely understood, that we may avoid all just occasion for the deduction of unwarrantable inferences, especially for the pretext that it tends to break down the order and discipline of the churches.

The sacramental supper is a symbol both of communion with Christ and with the saints. This last is too often overlooked. True, it is the table of the Lord, and not ours; but it is his table where those united to him commune, not less with each other than with himself. The true idea of it is communion with the Head and with all the members, to his honor who spread it. The brethren, therefore, need confidence in the piety of those with whom they commune; otherwise there can be no communion in spirit. Confidence is based on evidence. Communicants, therefore, must give to each other testimony of their mutual union to Christ. This demands, of course, some *public expression* or *form of profession*. Hence, there may be exceptions in the application of our principle.

1. There may be reasons determining that one fully believed to be a Christian by individuals should not be received to the table, because he either has not had the opportunity to give the church the appropriate evidence of his faith, or has been unwilling to do it. Hence, we do not believe that the administrator has a right to give the emblems to one whom he may regard as a Christian, while the brotherhood have not had the opportunity of gaining equivalent evidence. Nor has an individual the right to come to the table on the ground that he believes himself to have evidence of faith before he has given the membership a recital of the evidence. Hence we do not believe that the

administrator has any right to give out the general invitation: "All who love our Lord Jesus Christ are invited to partake with us of this feast." It is an infringement of the rights of the brotherhood.

True, we invite to occasional communion members of other sister churches, of whose piety we have no further testimony than the fact of their membership. We also receive members to permanent communion by virtue of letters of dismissal and recommendation. But the ground of such action is the presumption that the church of which the invited are, or of which the transferred were, members, have been faithful in the discharge of their covenant duties. While a church is supposed to be a living body, sound in faith, and evangelical in practice, the members in regular standing are considered participants of her vitality. This, confidence in a sister church demands. True, all sister churches may have unworthy members. So may the church to which we ourselves belong. This is an evil incident to the church militant; and is a matter which concerns close not less than free communionists.

On the other hand, when a church has become corrupt in doctrine and loses her vitality, her corruption is supposed, in like manner, to adhere to all her members. If we invite any of them to our sacramental board, they are exceptional cases. The ground of judging of qualifications is now changed. Instead of determining their fitness by the character of the church to which they belong, we determine the fitness of each one on his own merits. If convinced by personal acquaintance that one in covenant with the corrupt church has not partaken of her corruptions, but is holding on to Christ by a vital faith, even though his vision is somewhat obscured by the murky atmosphere in which he has lived, we may and ought to welcome him to our communion table.

2. The church may be justified in withholding fellowship from one whom, as a body, they consider a Christian, on the ground of his having imbibed some error or errors which evangelical denominations generally regard as destructive to

vital godliness,— such as the errors of Universalism, Unitarianism, or Catholicism. True, one intellectually involved in either of these delusions may be so little influenced and moulded by it, owing to some peculiarity in his mental conformation or educational modes of thought, that he may, notwithstanding, be deemed a Christian by those best acquainted with him, and the church with whom he worships may be willing to receive him as one whom Christ receives; yet it may not be expedient, for two reasons: 1. It would be welcoming an error which the sister churches have agreed to discard from their communion, and, not knowing the facts in the case, they might justly be grieved. It would be a betrayal of Christian confidence. 2. It might be regarded as sanctioning an error which, in most minds, becomes fatal to the inception or growth of true piety, and might tend ultimately, owing to the encouragement thereby given to the error, to the eternal destruction of multitudes. And thus, by bringing such with us when coming around the sacramental board to honor Christ, we might entail great dishonor on his precious name. Such cases may be exceptional to our ground-principle, and by stating them we show its scope and bearing.

It is for our opponents to prove that Pedobaptist errors respecting the mode and subjects of baptism are attended with similar results, alike destructive to souls and dishonorable to Christ. But this their own professions respecting the piety and Christian zeal of Pedobaptist churches unequivocally deny.

There is a passage in Dr. Hovey's argument for close communion demanding some reply. We will give it in this connection as further explicative of the measures and bounds of our principle. "But if churches observing the Lord's supper may invite to this ordinance only those who give to them satisfactory evidence of piety, it is plain that Baptists cannot welcome the members of Episcopal, Lutheran, Unitarian, or Universalist churches, as such, to the communion. For it is well known that persons are freely received into churches of

all these denominations who do not profess to have experienced a change of heart. It is known that persons christened in infancy are presumed by many Episcopalians and Lutherans to have been regenerated thereby, and are therefore, at a suitable age, admitted by confirmation to full membership in the church. It is known that views of depravity and regeneration are entertained by Unitarians and Universalists quite unlike those of evangelical Christians, and accordingly that many are received into their fellowship who cannot, in the judgment of charity, be esteemed pious. Hence Christians who believe in the new birth and reject the doctrine of baptismal regeneration are unable to regard membership in any of these churches as suitable evidence of piety. They are ready to acknowledge that large numbers of true believers may be found in the four denominations just mentioned, but they cannot look upon the terms of admission to church fellowship in either of them as being suitable tests of piety, nor can they presume that men are real Christians merely because they have borne such tests. The consequences are obvious. It is impossible for Baptists, with their present views of faith in Christ as prerequisite to the Lord's supper, and of the proper fruits and evidences of faith, to invite members of the denominations named above to this ordinance."

This, in its position, has some appearance of argument, but appearance is all. 1. The fact that we cannot fellowship those churches who deny the eternal destruction of the wicked and the supreme divinity of Christ, and those who believe in baptismal regeneration, is no reason for refusing fellowship to Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, Methodists, etc. — churches who maintain the essential doctrines of the gospel, and discard the notion of baptismal regeneration. Besides, might not Dr. Hovey find those in churches of his own denomination who maintain some of these identical errors, or errors equally pernicious? And would not the very reason he assigns for not fellowshipping the churches above named, lead him, in consistency, to re-

fuse sacramental recognition to some of his own sister churches?

2. He turns the mind of the reader from the main point in debate. The point in debate is, whether we shall exclude from the Lord's table those who have mistaken views concerning an *external rite*. But the reason for not fellowshiping the churches specified, is their wrong views of fundamental gospel doctrines, and consequent want of faith—matters not at all in dispute between us. Deficiency of faith or piety is a reason which should lead us, not less than the Baptists, to reject them. Thus, whatever of argument the paragraph contains is based entirely on our own principles. Besides, by refusing fellowship for the want of evidence of union to Christ, Dr. Hovey justifies the implication that he would commune with them provided they gave sufficient evidence of such union. In this manner he confounds himself by confounding differences. Indeed, we could never see why this paragraph was introduced into an argument for withholding sacramental communion from Pedobaptist churches of the Calvinistic faith; errors respecting baptism having nothing to do with the assumed reasons for the exclusion.

3. There is only one point of difference, as stated in the paragraph, between us. He seems to have decided that the Episcopal and Lutheran churches are no longer to be classed among the evangelical; we have not yet so decided. Each church doubtless has the right to determine what churches she will regard as evangelical, and what not. If the Baptists have decided that the Episcopal and Lutheran churches are no longer living bodies, it is their right to assume the responsibility of withdrawing fellowship from them. We have no dispute with them on this point. But in that case, and if the want of faith is the determinative reason for the exclusion of these churches, then, on the principle of fellowship among the churches above considered, all individual members of them who give decided evidence of being actuated by the vital truths of the gospel

should be received irrespective of the mode of their baptism; otherwise the paragraph has no force in an argument for restricting sacramental recognition to those who practise immersion.

Dr. Hovey lays down four principles of the Baptists which form a sort of sub-foundation on which he proposes to build his argument for strict communion. They are these: 1. "The New Testament is our ultimate authority in respect to church order and action." 2. "The constitution and work of the Christian churches are definitely fixed by the New Testament." 3. "Churches observing the Lord's supper must determine what are the scriptural qualifications for admission to it." 4. "Baptists ought to follow out their doctrine of baptism, if correct, to its legitimate results. If they are right in holding that nothing but the immersion of a believer into the name of the Trinity is Christian baptism, they may fearlessly accept all the consequences of this belief."

In adducing these as the under-ground supports of his argument, he indicates that restricted communion strikes its roots deeper into the heart of the gospel than we have allowed. In this respect they convey a wrong impression. We most cheerfully admit the three first, so far as they bear on the present controversy. They have no determinative force. They are equally consonant with our position as with his. In substantiating our views we rely no less on the New Testament than do our opponents in refuting them. Indeed, we can but think if they could loose themselves from certain influences imbibed from the study of the Mosaic economy, they would receive our principles with more favor. The fourth we reject, because it overlooks one main principle of church communion taught by the apostles.

We wish the fact distinctly in mind at the outset of our argument, and kept steadily there during its progress, that the Baptists do not argue the duty of withholding fellowship from us on the ground of errors in doctrinal belief or of defective evidence of faith and Christian fidelity; but solely on the ground of supposed misapprehensions respecting

baptism. It will be our aim to show that such misapprehensions, while subsisting with soundness of doctrinal belief and manifestations of the Christian life, are not justifiable reasons for withholding sacramental communion. What Dr. Hovey says touching faith as a prerequisite has no relevancy to the question in debate.

This point covers all we design to substantiate. It is not our object to disprove the distinctive sentiments of the Baptists, nor to vindicate our own; nor is it to persuade either party to surrender their peculiar ecclesiastical organizations; but, while defending each his own doctrinal views and ritual observances, to extend to the other sacramental fellowship. We do not propose to advocate so much *mixed* communion as *free* communion.

From the above discussion it is manifest that our principle has, logically, no disorganizing tendencies in respect to the formation, the discipline, or government of the churches. It most decidedly maintains the importance of visibly covenanting with God and with his people, and of making some public profession of faith, satisfying the Christian judgment of the brotherhood. It only denies, with the exceptions on grounds alluded to above, that the *precise form* of making the profession, provided it be done in a prayerful and conscientious manner, is a justifiable occasion for refusing church fellowship.

This ground-principle of church fellowship is no innovation. It has been generally admitted by Protestants, especially by the Puritans, in all ages since their organization as sects. We will record the testimony of a few leading minds.

The language of the Bohemic Confession is this: "As to the differences which may obtain among the churches in external rites or ceremonies, we think it of no importance, for these greatly vary among Christians, according to variety of place and nation. Ceremonies change; but faith, Christ, the word, change not." The Belgic Confession — a confession approved by the continental divines at the Synod

of Dort, waving all 'minor differences, contends for the church's unity, on the ground of the common faith of Christians, and insists that it is the duty of every one who loves the Lord Jesus to hold communion with her, "through the medium of any one of her branches to which he may have access in any part of the world." The Helvetic Confession: "It is to be observed that we diligently teach in what the truth and unity of the church principally consist, that we may not rashly excite and cherish schisms in the church. It consists not in ceremonies and external rites, but rather in the truth and unity of the catholic faith." Melancthon writes: "Since we agree in the principal articles of Christian doctrine, let us embrace each other with mutual love. Nor ought dissimilitude and variety of rites and ceremonies to sever our affections." Even John Calvin, that stern man, whose life was thought, and who gazed on the immutable principles which proceed from the heart of Jehovah and support his moral dominions with a steady and unblinking eye; and who is generally regarded as the inflexible advocate of doctrinal consistency and of rigid discipline, with scarcely a vein of Christian kindness in his nature, maintained substantially the same free sentiments respecting communion. "Our assertion that the pure ministry of the word and the pure celebration of the sacraments [immersion, we know, did not enter into his idea of the pure celebration of baptism] is a sufficient pledge and earnest of our safety in embracing, as a church, the society in which they shall both be found, goes so far as this, that she is never to be renounced so long as she shall persevere in them, although in other respects she may abound in faults. Even in the administration of doctrine or sacraments some defect may possibly creep in, which yet ought not to alienate us from her communion." "Since no man is perfectly free from the clouds of ignorance, we either shall leave no church at all, or we must forgive mistakes in those things where ignorance may prevail without violating the substance of religion, or hazarding the loss of salvation." The Westminster Confession: "All saints that

are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." The Cambridge Platform: "The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church, because weak Christians, if sincere, have the substance of that faith, repentance, and holiness which is required in church members. Such charity and tenderness is to be used, as the weakest Christian, if sincere, may not be excluded nor discouraged." Cotton Mather: "The churches of New England make only vital piety the terms of communion among them." John Howe: "I will adventure to offer these things to serious consideration. 1. Whether for any party of Christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real sin?— I would ask: Whose is this table? Is it the table of this or that man, or party of men, or is it the Lord's table? Then, certainly, it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who would dare to invite others, or forbid these? 2. If it be a sin, is it not a heinous one? This will best be understood by considering what his limits are. Nothing seems plainer than that it was his mind Christianity itself should measure the communion of Christians as such." Stillingsfleet: "What charter hath Christ given the church to bind men up to, more than himself hath done, or to exclude those from her society who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men, at the great day, for keeping such out from communion with his church whom he will vouchsafe crowns of glory to?" Jonathan Edwards, that profound theologian and earnest advocate of doctrinal soundness and church discipline, drew up the

following form of a public profession which he stood ready to accept from candidates for church communion : " I hope I truly find in my heart a willingness to comply with all the commandments of God, which require me to give up myself wholly to him, and to serve him with my body and my spirit. And do accordingly now promise to walk in a way of obedience to all the commandments of God, as long as I live." He also affirms that his opposers at Northampton, and Rev. Mr. Clark of Salem, with whom they corresponded, substantially agreed with him in maintaining " that it is visible saintship, or, in other words, a credible profession of faith and repentance, a solemn consent to the gospel covenant, joined with a good conversation and competent measure of Christian knowledge, is what gives a gospel right to all sacred ordinances."

Dr. Dwight drew up a form of confession for the church in Yale College, which " only exacted of its communicants an assent to such articles as lie at the foundation of Christian experience." Dr. Samuel Worcester drafted a confession of faith and covenant for the church in Fitchburg, in 1798, of which he says : " It was intended, indeed, that the new form should be used in the future admission of members. Still it was not considered as an absolutely indispensable term of admission that the candidates should consent to every article in the doctrine of faith. For it was never designed to exclude any from our communion who appear to be the real subjects of experimental religion." On the authority of Dr. Duffield, " The Presbyterian church, while in the ordination of its ministry it pledges them to its confession of faith," as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy scriptures, " has never prescribed any doctrinal test or form to be applied and used in the admission of members into its communion."

Such is our fundamental principle, demanding alike order and freedom ; such are its able and numerous vouchers. We will now proceed to show its application to the controversy before us.

We shall divide our argument into three general divisions: I. The Nature and Genius of Christianity; II. The Specific Principles and Canons of Scripture prescribing and regulating Church Fellowship; III. The Indispensable Precedence of Baptism to the Lord's Supper incapable of Proof; 'The Nature of John's Baptism; 'The Argument from History, etc.

PART I.—THE ARGUMENT DRAWN FROM THE NATURE AND GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY.

The genius of the gospel is breathed forth in the song of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men." It is the utterance of love, mercy, free forgiveness to enemies reconciled through the great Mediator. This furnishes the key with which we penetrate the heart of gospel ordinances, unfold their deepest import, and show their harmony.

I. From the spirituality of the gospel dispensation in distinction from a dispensation of rites and ceremonies as media of religious service and worship. This distinction is well expressed by Dr. Hovey: "Surely it will be admitted that the Mosaic economy differed greatly from the Christian. The former had a national organization, a national temple, a national atonement; the latter has none of these. The former had an extensive and burdensome ritual, sacrifices, oblations, purifications, to be made by those who served unto the shadow of heavenly things; the latter has almost no ritual at all. No ordinance of the earlier economy is preserved without change in the later. No rule as to meats and drinks, divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation, is taken up by the new economy and laid on the necks of believers for all time. The handwriting of ordinances that was against us has been blotted out. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria: 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.'"

The worship of the gospel is worship of the heart. It is contra-distinguished from worship through ritual sacrifices and external services. It is the direct communion of the individual spirit with the great Spirit. The reason assigned is, "God is a spirit." As he is immaterial, he cannot commune reciprocally with materiality; a mere external act cannot answer the sympathies and desires of the Eternal Mind. The spirit of the worshipper, that which is like in nature, or homogeneous with himself, can alone satisfy these. The naked soul, as in the upper sanctuary, where seraphs bow without any media,—except, as some suppose, the great Mediator,—is to come directly up before its Creator and Sovereign, holding affectionate intercourse, and breathing forth the reverential adoration becoming the children of the Highest. Under the gospel, the only sacrifice accepted on the altar is a burning heart, blending its flame with the Heart of the universe.

The same distinction between the old and new dispensation, in this respect, is brought out repeatedly in the Epistles. Paul, in dissuading the Galatians from Jewish formalities, tells them that under the old dispensation mankind were under tutors and governors—in bondage under the elements of the world, to rites weak and beggarly; but under the new dispensation they enjoy the freedom and familiarity of sons; and that Jerusalem, which is the spiritual or gospel church, is free from all burdensome rites or cumbersome ceremonials intervening between the soul and God. Hence he exhorts them: "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"; affirming that "in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by love." Thus the essentiality in the church of the new dispensation is faith in Christ, or a regenerated spirit in harmony with himself. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It is, then, the glory of the gospel, as distinguished from

the legal institutes of Moses, that the religion which it teaches is purely spiritual. It is religion seated in a heart spontaneously rising to its Creator and Lord, glowing with love, sinking in humility, bowed in submission, animated with faith and hope, awed with reverence before the dazzling glories of the throne, and yet soothed and sweetly melted in communion with him who sits thereon, through the intercessions of the only Mediator. There is no prescribed ritual constituting ceremonial holiness which must be rigorously performed before the soul can go forth on its free excursions of hallowed worship and cheerful service. Adoration is acceptable in any place, in any circumstances, in any posture, which the renewed heart dictates. True, external acts are commanded — public worship and prayer. But these are nothing in God's sight without the heart; they are, indeed, only its outward expression. Two sacramental rites are instituted. But their import and designed tendencies are entirely spiritual. Baptism with water but intensifies our conscious need of purification; and the bread and wine of the sacramental table but vivify the scene of Calvary and our sense of the preciousness of the blood there spilt. The intended use of gospel ordinances is to assist, not obstruct, our spiritual apprehensions; to intensify, not abate, our spiritual enjoyments; to quicken, not deaden, the sympathies of the soul with God.

Now is it reasonable to suppose that in this purely spiritual system God would appoint an external rite so vital to the constitution of his church that her very existence should depend on its right administration; that even the conscientious misapprehension of its nature or mode by a portion of Christ's disciples would be a justifiable ground of excluding them from a service of the highest fellowship with himself and his people; especially when they who labor under the misapprehension are apparently just as desirous of pleasing the great Head of the church as are they who exclude them? Would not the fellowship of true Christians, on such grounds, render the gospel rather a ritual than a spiritual

system? In its nature, how would it differ from the Mosaic economy, which demanded the excision of all neglectors of circumcision and other outward institutes from God's people?

No class of Christians are more established than the Baptists in the conviction that the New Testament contains a dispensation of grace different from that contained in the Old; so different that they can find no foreshadowing of church government or order in it, maintaining most earnestly that "we are remitted to Christ and his apostles for light on all questions of church order and action." But in what does the New dispensation differ more from the Old, than in its spirituality and freedom from bondage to ritual service? This they admit. And yet, with a strange inconsistency, they make the mode of administering an ordinance the ground on which to erect an exclusive church organization. Do they not transfer the spirit of the Old Testament, in its rigid attachment and servitude to rites, into the New? How is the power of one rite to place a flaming sword in the entrance to another consistent with emancipation from ritual thralldom?

Corollary: The ordinances of the gospel should be spiritually interpreted, in harmony with its spiritual nature. The rites which the gospel institutes and enjoins must be, in their nature, like itself. As it is spiritual, they must be spiritual. They cannot consist in mode. If so, the gospel contains within itself an incongruous element. We should look mainly, therefore, at the spirit of them. The feelings, intention, design, with which they are administered, should be deemed determinative, and not their particular form, as under the Mosaic dispensation. The Sinaitic ritual was modal throughout. Mode was essential to all its observances. He who failed in this, failed altogether. On the contrary, the spirit of gospel ordinances constitutes their essentiality. This is clearly brought to view by our Saviour in his conversation with the woman of Samaria. Place and form of worship, so essential under the Old dispensation, are of no consequence under the New. He who

worships in spirit, whatever the outward expression, is accepted. This principle, transferred to the rites, renders their precise form of minor consideration. Is the ordinance, whatever its mode, performed with right feelings and motives? Is the intent of the rite answered? This constitutes its essentiality, and is sufficient. The reverse of this thought will exhibit it more clearly. Modal rites, exactness in their order and relations, one being indispensable to another, prove a church ritual. The character of the rites, in this respect, always determines the character of the church. Hence, the quality of one being given, the other is known. Modal rites prove a church ritual; a spiritual church proves its rites spiritual. In perfect agreement with this principle, the Baptists, not less than ourselves, reject the idea of modality from every other church institute or act of worship. Why make baptism an exception? Why is not the spirit of the ordinance — the right feelings and motives in the use of water administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, sufficient to constitute baptism? It is not enough to say that baptism enters into the very constitution of the visible church; for so does the Lord's supper. There are the same reasons for making the latter modal, as the former. The truth is, to make either of them modal is contrary to the spirit of the gospel church. This Andrew Fuller virtually admits: "We should endeavor to ascertain on what principles the apostles proceeded in forming and organizing Christian churches — positive or moral. If the former, they must have been furnished with an exact model or pattern, like that which was given to Moses in the mount, and have done all things according to it; but if the latter, they would only be furnished with general principles, comprehending, but not specifying, a great variety of particulars." "There is scarcely a precept on the subject of church discipline but what may, in substance, be found in the Proverbs of Solomon."

This principle extended to the rites of the church, as consistency with the above extract demands, would give

them a spiritual interpretation. Such interpretation is given to one — the Lord's supper — by the Baptists themselves. Why is it withheld from the other? Is it because it would undermine the tenet of close communion?

II. From the nature and character of divine love manifested specifically to believers. This contains several elements:

1. It is the same in kind as that which the Father bears towards his co-eternal Son. We can never fully comprehend the strength and endearment of God's love to his people, except by seeing it in the light of this paternal love of the Godhead.

a. This love is specific in character, distinct from that which God feels originally for any other being. He loves the spirits he has made, as possessing an intrinsic value surpassing the comprehension of the human mind. But he values and loves his Son as a being whose nature is too transcendently excellent to be created. It is love felt for the uncreated, as contrasted with that felt for the created. Rational love must ever be proportioned to the excellence of its object. As self-existence is immeasurably superior to created existence, God's love for his Son must be inconceivably more intense than what he feels for any finite existence; indeed, than for all finite existences combined.

b. It is love which the Father feels for his only-begotten Son — a Son partaking of his essence, to whom he discloses the whole depth of his being and of his counsels. John represents him as "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father"; signifying, according to Chrysostom, and approved by Alford and Bengel, "community of being," represented under the form of the tenderest parental love. It is this parental love eternally enjoyed — a love which (to speak according to the law of all finite affection) has been strengthening by communion the most blissful through eternal years. He was "brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." This is love of transcendent excellence. It is, indeed, of a nature so exalted that, while cumbered with flesh and sin, we may be scarcely

capable of catching a glimpse of its glory. But it is a wealth of affection revealed in scripture, which will be forever unfolding to the redeemed, and will be contemplated with increasing delight and rapture.

It was a part of the divine plan in redeeming mankind through the incarnation and death of the only-begotten Son, to make those who believe one with him. Hence Christ's disciples "are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," constituting his "fulness." They are elevated into the embrace of the same love in which he himself dwells, so that the Father feels for them the same tenderness and endearment which he feels for his well-beloved Son. Heirs and joint-heirs with him, the Father has given them, with him, an inheritance at his right hand, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." This "exceeding weight of glory," reserved for Christ's disciples, will be a perpetual testimony of the Father's affection for them as one with his Son, proving them to be more esteemed than all the rest of his dominions. True, he rejoices, as only Jehovah can rejoice, in those enraptured beings, which compose the cherubic and seraphic throngs about his throne. He delights unutterably in the glorious anthems poured forth from the myriad harps of those who have never sinned. But he values them all combined not as he values his Son; and consequently not as he values those who are made a part of him in such an endeared sense that they constitute "his fulness." "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in his saints" can indeed be no more estimated than can be the preciousness of the Son to the Father.

2. It is self-sacrificing love. The sacrifice of the Father in giving up his Son to the death of the cross was proportioned to the love he bore him. As that love is inconceivable, so the greatness of the sacrifice is inconceivable. The Son must have been dearer to him than all created beings united. Consequently, the sacrifice must have been greater

than would have been the destruction of them all. Speaking *more hominum*, he could more easily have annihilated all those worlds which lie scattered through immensity, displaying so brightly his wisdom and power; could more cheerfully have hushed in unbroken silence the anthems of his glorified throng; stilled every throbbing heart of the myriads of intelligences in all worlds, than have dismissed his own dear Son from his bosom, to become the object of scorn and derision to his enemies, the victim of ignominy and death for our sakes. But this sacrifice, unutterable as it was, he cheerfully made, to secure our deliverance from suffering and sin.

3. It is eternal, electing, and consequently forgiving love. The divine love which embraces the church being the same as that which the Father feels for his Son, it must be co-existent with him, eternal, and immutable. There is, of course, an additional element—the desire or purpose to provide a ransom for sinners. This element is forgiving love. The Father could not feel this towards his Son; but he must have eternally felt it towards rebels whom he determined to make one with that Son. Hence the eternal purpose to save sinners is called “the purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Thus electing or forgiving love lies at the foundation of the gospel scheme. This wonderful scheme originated, but it originated in love which had no origin. This the apostle declares: “Who [God] hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” See also Eph. i. 9; iii. 11; Matt. xxv. 34. In harmony with this, God says: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Thus mercy, compassion for sinners, love choosing enemies, was the moving element in the mind of God determining him to erect a church out of the ruins of the apostasy.

Nothing demonstrates the magnitude and intensity of divine love to sinners, its exhaustless depths, its inconceivable purity, and unconquerable power, like its eternity. It is

greater, purer, stronger, than aught that begins to be; co-eval with the Divine mind itself, it is as pure and immutable. Before the foundation of the world it existed in all the ineffable excellence of self-existence; and moved alone by this, God chose the saints in Christ. His eye was upon them when "shapen in iniquity." After their moral powers were developed, he saw them contending with him, even despising his offers of pardon; but his purpose, through the atonement and power of the Holy Ghost, to make them one with the Mediator, and thus participants in divine holiness, to the praise of the glory of his grace, moved steadily on. It would not be stayed in its course. Their inward pollution and actual transgressions were no impediment. Sin had no power to check the eternal flow of redeeming love. It comes to the elect in despite of sin, renewing and sealing them with the Holy Spirit of promise. This unconquerable compassion, forgiving love, constitutes the very genius of the gospel. It lies underneath it, giving it subsistence and life. Its permeating power gives character to all its developments. It is the richest glory of the church here, and will be its richest glory forever.

4. It is justifying love. It not only seeks to pardon the guilty, but has actually justified all who believe in Jesus. "Whom [Christ] God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that he might be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." "And by him all that believe are justified from all things." Hence, those who have received Christ are entitled to all the blessings and privileges vouchsafed in the scheme of grace. Justified freely, all their sins are forgiven. If all their wilful acts of disobedience are forgiven, then all their errors and mistakes, certainly all conscientious mistakes, are forgiven; and of course their mistakes relative to baptism. Consequently the believer stands acquitted before God of all sins, or of involuntary mistakes relative to principle or practice.

Such is the nature and intensity of Jehovah's love to Christ's disciples, binding them indissolubly to his heart;

from whom he will be forever as unwilling to be separated as from the Son of his bosom.

Two or three questions arise: 1. Is it reasonable to suppose that God would, for any cause consistent with evidence of vitality, reject a part of this loved body from a feast spread as a symbol of his common love to them all; thereby giving occasion for his enemies to say that he loves not one portion as he loves the other, contrary to fact? 2. Does it seem possible that God would sanction the reign of a divisive spirit in this body, made indissolubly one in his Son, sundering it in twain? 3. Is it rational to believe that God would actually command one portion of a purely spiritual church to exclude another portion of it, even to set up a distinctive church organization, thereby creating a schism in the body, for the sake of preserving the exact form of an external rite? The following considerations will aid us in solving these questions:

1. The intention of the sacramental table is to bring the believer peculiarly near his Lord. It is an actual feeding on Christ the sacrifice. It is not only a memorial, but a means of spiritual vitalization; designed both to qualify for heaven, and to give foretastes of heaven. It is one of the richest privileges of the Christian.

To debar Christ's disciples from this table implies two things: (a) God's rejection of them from the service be-tokening the most intimate communion with himself, which is a virtual rejection from all communion; for it is an absurdity to suppose that God communes tenderly with those in private, whom he refuses to acknowledge in public as his own people. (b) God's requiring a portion of those whom his ineffable love has made one body with his Son to stand sentinel at the door of gospel ordinances, and to exclude another portion, as spiritually worthy as themselves, from an ordinance implying the holiest and sweetest communion on earth, and emblematic of the eternal union of them all in heaven.

To suppose that God would reject from his table of

tenderest communion with himself those whom he loves with an endearment beyond the power of language to express, because they have mistaken sprinkling for immersion, is to our minds an absurdity; indeed, not far from a contradiction. They are one in spirit, and yet may not be one visibly, neither making practical uses of their oneness, nor availing themselves of the mutual benefits accruing therefrom. They are linked to Christ and to one another in closest bonds, and yet may not show forth together his death of love which makes them one; because, forsooth, while all have submitted to the baptism of water in the name of the holy Trinity, a part have not used water enough in its administration, or, in making the dedication implied in the rite, have not gone through the exact process which some may deem scriptural.

2. There is congruity in all divine institutions. God is infinite reason as well as infinite love. The productions of Infinite Reason subsist in perfect order and symmetry. God's perception and appreciation of agreement, suitability, harmony, beauty, congruity, are also perfect. The spirit of any institution from his hand is of course one; every single part is in agreement with every other part. This is true of the Mosaic church. The divine reason and appreciation of symmetry and beauty being one with love in design, unite equally in requiring the gospel church to be perfectly congruous in its several parts and relations.

Now there is no congruity between God's determining in eternity to exalt all Christ's disciples into the same incomprehensible and immutable love as that with which he loves his Son,—to cherish them forever in the bosom of his forgiving mercy, suffering no enormity of their sins to check its onward flow till its consummation in glory, and his requiring a separation between them, even after Christ is made unto them, all alike, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," on the ground of conscientious misconceptions touching a bare rite. There is no congruity between Jehovah's forgiving every fault and error of Christ's

disciples, even requiring us, in imitation of himself, to overlook all their errors in doctrine and all their mistakes in practice, *except one*, and that one having no immediate bearing on the affections or character.

3. To human reason there is no consistency in God's separating those whom he loves so intensely and immutably for so slight a cause as our opponents assign. We are aware of danger in rejecting a professedly scriptural position on the ground of its apparent inconsistency with the decisions of our reason; but the danger lies in founding the inconsistency on partial views of God's character, of his providences, and institutions; while it is pre-eminently a sound position when founded on enlarged and impartial views of the divine perfections and ways. God constituted our minds to perceive the order and symmetry of his plans and their developments; he even calls upon us to judge of the equity of his laws and ordinances. In occupying, therefore, the position afforded by the broadest and profoundest views of God, of his scheme of pardon, and its unfoldings in social organizations, it is to our minds inexpressibly inconsistent for him to separate a portion of those exalted into such endearing relations to himself, because they have made a prayerful and conscientious mistake concerning any duty. But when the rejection is predicated on conscientious misconceptions touching a bare rite of the gospel church, the apparent inconsistency is greatly aggravated. It is inconsistent alike with the divine reason, holiness, compassion, and love of congruity, and all their manifestations in evangelical institutions; and the profounder and broader views we take of the foundation and workings of the redemptive scheme, and of its forgiving Author, the greater will the inconsistency appear. It is, indeed, impossible for us, constituted as we are, to see any consistency in establishing a spiritual church on a ritual foundation, or in making the peculiar mode of a rite the determinative test of admission to it; thereby excluding as well believers as unbelievers from God's covenant love, in direct opposition to the dictates of that love in eter-

nity and at every moment of time. Our opponents may say that baptism is a positive institute, and its propriety or impropriety is not to be judged of by its apparent consistency or inconsistency with the spirit of the gospel. True, it is a positive institute; but still our reason will question the consistency of giving a mere external rite, in a spiritual church, the power of admitting or excluding from its most precious ordinance. This inconsistency the mind will feel. It is felt by our Baptist brethren. Rev. Andrew Fuller remarked to Robert Hall: "When mixed communion is placed on that footing [vital union to Christ], I never yet ventured to attack it."

4. This inconsistency, to our apprehension, is enhanced by the fact that all believers are, through justifying faith, alike treated as if they had never fallen into error or sin.

Now with what propriety can he who is thus fully justified be excluded from the rite which is the special symbol of fellowship with Christ and his followers through his pardoning blood? If he gives his brethren fair evidence that he is accepted of God through faith, and has entered into covenant with him, can he not claim communion with them, even in the highest form, on the plea that his Lord communes with him? When Christ says: "There is now no condemnation to him," does not he who excludes him from the table commemorative of justifying love, say: "I condemn him"? Is it maintained that he is excluded in obedience to a positive precept? If so, then God requires us to exclude from the feast designed as a symbol of pardon and reconciliation those whom he has freely acquitted of every condemnatory sentence and restored to full communion with himself, — the very persons, indeed, whom he has invited to it. It is saying: While I justify them, you may not justify them; while I release them from all obnoxiousness to my displeasure, you must show them my displeasure by forbidding them a privilege given all my acknowledged disciples. If this be not a contradiction, it cannot be easily discriminated.

When, therefore, this eternal purpose of forgiving love

springing from the lowest depths of divine compassion, both forming the foundation and pervading every part of the gospel scheme, is so far carried into execution as to bind his chosen to Christ in holy sympathy, so that they dwell in him and he in them; when the dispensation of types and shadows has passed, and the dispensation of spiritual worship, in which heart blends with heart in adoring praise, has taken its place; when the rites which he has instituted in it partake of its own spiritual character, designed only to intensify our spiritual apprehensions and enjoyments; when he has commanded his disciples, without exception, "Do this in remembrance of me," thus instituting a tender memorial of himself and of their union to him as their common Source of life, — we cannot conceive it possible that he would divide this body thus tenderly loved, — would even exclude a part from the board spread by the same love which qualified them all, in heart and soul, to partake of it acceptably, for the simple reason that they conscientiously misconceive the mode of another rite, or the order of its administration. We see in the act no indication of that love, the strongest, tenderest, purest in earth or heaven. We see in it no congruity with the free spirit of the gospel, which receives into communion all who worship "in spirit and in truth." We see in it no consistency with what God has so richly promised to all who are in his Son. Such action might be supposable under the rigid ritualism of the Mosaic economy; but has it any place under the purely spiritual economy of the gospel, where "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love"? .

III. From the nature and development of Christian or brotherly love. This is the love of Christ, our elder brother, transfused into the soul. Shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, it dwells in every heart in which the gospel dwells, and is therefore called Christian love, because homogeneous with that of Christ. This is the essence and measure of brotherly love. Our Saviour said to his disciples: "As I have loved you, ye ought also to love one another."

a. It is love the tenderest and most enduring of all earthly affections. As we are to love Christ better than all other objects or beings, so there is a peculiar tenderness and strength of attachment towards those who evince a resemblance to him. The soul of the believer warms at once towards even a stranger who bears his Saviour's image. True, it is often smothered by the remains of depravity smouldering within; yet it will break out as surely as the pent up fire finds vent. No animosities can utterly suppress it. When supposed injuries, which for a time may have crushed it down, are removed, it rises with more than its former vigor. A life divinely inspired, it may be buried, but never die. The Christian friend is the dearest of all friends; and when this noblest affection is consummated in heaven, it will be seen invested with a lustre and charm of which we have at present no conception.

b. It is the nature of love to attract the soul of him who possesses it towards its object. He feels kindness, tenderness, compassion towards him. He desires to impart to him the best he has to bestow; enjoys not an immunity or privilege which he would not gladly share with him. This is specially true of the tenderest and strongest of all human affections. Every saint pre-eminently desires to share every benefaction with his brother saint. There is no exclusiveness in the holy fraternity. Communion in the supper of the Lord being the most precious of public privileges, every believer will desire every other believer to share it, if possible, with him. The exclusion of the beloved in the Lord will always be a self-denial. We do not, therefore, understand how a body of believers, knit together in this sweetest and purest affection on earth, can have the heart, by a judicial act or standing rule, which they meet as often as they come to the communion board, to exclude brethren whom they tenderly love, and whom they believe the Saviour tenderly loves, from the touching memorials of that death on which they all depend for acceptance with God. Can the exclusion be the dictate of the yearning heart of Jesus over his erring disciples?

c. Love is an excusing spirit. It is ever seeking some palliation for the defects of its object. How natural for the parent to excuse a wayward child, even though guilty of very grave offences. True affection is always thus excusing. No more satisfactory reason can be assigned for looking over the defects of a friend than the fact that God has forgiven him. Every right-minded parent would fly to press to his bosom an erring child whom he believed Christ had received to his. Genuine Christian love is, in like manner, pre-eminently an excusing disposition. It prompts one to apologize, to find some palliation, for a brother's fault. He who possesses it cannot well retain estrangement of feeling towards one whom he is thus seeking to excuse, when convinced that Christ has received him, and is giving him the earnest of his everlasting inheritance. What better warrant do the strict communionists desire for looking over the faults of their Pedobaptist brethren, than the ever-accumulating evidence that Christ forgives and owns them?

d. Besides, Christian love derives its character from that eternal purpose of love in which the scheme of salvation had its origin. It is the love of forbearance, of long-suffering, of forgiveness; love to the frail, to the erring, to all in Christ. It is love not only to those doing us good, but to those doing us evil. "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." "Be merciful as your Father also is merciful." This is Christ's spirit, and they who belong to him have, in some degree, imbibed the same. Obedience to the command, "Love one another," is the spontaneous growth of the renovated soul. The forgiveness of a brother's faults is the natural outgushing of the Christian's heart. It is one of his richest pleasures.

Such being the nature and developments of Christian love, we cannot conceive it possible that a system of church organizations and ordinances so richly pervaded by it, should contain the principle of restricted communion. We see not the least consistency between its dictates and excluding

from fellowship, in the ordinance so peculiarly expressive of brotherly love and forgiveness, any who have given satisfactory testimony of their Christian vitality by a public profession, and received what they conscientiously believe to be scriptural baptism, for no other reason than that they have misapprehended the nature of the rite. We know that our Baptist brethren profess to exercise the required "fervent charity" towards those whom they admit to be in fellowship with their common Head, and on their way to heaven, where they expect to praise Christ forever with them, while they feel bound to reject them from the sacramental board. We have no disposition to deny their sincerity. But it is very difficult for those thus excluded, while conscious of love to Christ and to all who are in him, to conceive that the excluding act is the dictate of evangelical love — compassion to the erring.

The following facts and considerations to our minds greatly increase this apparent inconsistency :

1. The prayer of Christ for his disciples : "That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the joy which thou gavest me, I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." None will question that this prayer embraces all believers, and implies a most endearing connection — a connection which will authorize him to acknowledge them as part of himself before the assembled universe, and to exalt them above all the orders of heaven, as sharers in his own peculiar glory and blessedness. They may not all have the same degree of moral excellence ; yet they are one with Christ, and equally accepted as his own. Consequently, they are alike recipients of whatever his pardoning love secures to those that are his. The answer to this prayer constitutes the vital element of associated Christianity and its highest glory. It forms a union entirely spiritual in its nature, and nothing but what is purely spiritual. *what first*

separates from Christ, can sunder it. But exclusive communion boldly sunders this most precious union for which Christ prayed, and over which the Godhead rejoices; and sunders it professedly for the sake of pleasing him who prayed the division might never be.

This bears marked inconsistency on the very face of it; and it is not apparently diminished, but increased by meditation. Indeed, the more fully we comprehend the depth, extent, and preciousness of the prayer, "that they may be one as we are one," the greater appears the inconsistency of dividing them for a mere external rite. How much more compatible with its import the affirmation of a bold reprover of error, and yet a man of catholic feelings, who, in reply to some friends soliciting him to separate from Christian brethren because they were not precisely of his way of thinking, nobly said: "*I will be one with all who are one with Christ.*"

2. The oneness or union of the church is its grand element of power over the affections and the consciences of men. This constitutes her greatest efficiency in subduing the nations to Christ. Never are mankind so powerfully moved by Christianity as when it can be said of its professors: "Behold, how these brethren love one another." Division in her ranks is always weakness. The spirit of the world is the opposite of this — selfishness and contention. The design of the redemptive scheme is to destroy it, and in its place to diffuse peace and good will. One chief design of Christ in organizing a church was that his disciples, filled with holy love and zeal, might present one solid front to the armies of sin. Now would Christ order the separation of his disciples, and thus diminish their power to do his work, for the sake of establishing immersion as the only mode of baptism? Would not this be dividing his kingdom against itself? Or will our brethren, in opposition, aver that there is more spiritual power in immersion, over sprinkling, than in the consolidation and visible union of Christ's disciples?

3. If the principle of close communionists is correct, Christ, by shedding abroad his love in our hearts, kindles a desire

like his own, the full exercise of which he restrains. He commands us to love our brethren as we love him, and still forbids the highest manifestation of it. He requires us to forgive their faults and errors, and then forbids us to forgive, or overlook even, the substitution of sprinkling for immersion,—an error that has no perceptible bearing on his spiritual kingdom.

4. This holy, forgiving love, like his own, demands as free a flow in his disciples as in himself. It craves as wide a scope, and embraces as wide a range of objects. It would forgive all whom Christ forgives; would receive all whom Christ receives; would commune with all with whom Christ communes. Said a Baptist clergyman to the writer: "It is my principle that we commune at the sacramental table with all the saints on earth. This is a precious thought to me, a very grand thought, and becomes more and more so." A fact demonstrating that free communion is the outflow of the Christian heart.

5. Do our opponents justify their rejection of us on the ground that we have not received scriptural baptism? Admitting that we are in error on this point, Christ has forgiven us, owned and blessed us. This they freely concede. What, then, is their position? "We acknowledge that Christ has forgiven you, putting no difference between us in the bestowment of spiritual blessings, but we may not tolerate you." Is this the spirit of that church whose foundation-stone is forgiving mercy?

6. Personal obedience to the gospel is the personal exercise of the same forgiving love in which the wonderful scheme originated. This spirit enters into every precept of the gospel. Can, then, the act of dividing his body be obedience to Christ?

IV. From the holiness in which both the love of God to his children and the love of his children to each other are grounded, and which constitutes the primary element of all evangelical fellowship. Holiness is the only ground of God's complacency in his own character or in the character

of his creatures. The fallen can be elevated into communion with God only by restoration to holiness. In this element originates all the complacency felt between holy beings, and in this complacency is founded all the fellowship which subsists in the spiritual universe. This principle is implanted by regeneration in every soul united to Christ.

Hence, there is a reciprocal attachment between the followers of Christ, a cleaving to each other, as inevitable as the laws of their being. The moment a Christian sees in another this cleaving to Christ, he is himself conscious of a cleaving of soul to him as to a brother beloved. Consequently, on this reciprocal complacency there is an indivisible fellowship among all true Christians. It is based on a law of moral existence. Two holy beings cannot help feeling this mutual sympathy. Every angel feels it; every saint on earth or in heaven is under the power of its attraction. This element of fellowship, holiness in the soul, is a simple feeling. It cannot be halved or quartered. It either exists, or does not exist. One is either regenerate, or he is not. Consequently, any degree of fellowship on this ground implies every degree. Christ is given to the renovated or justified, and with him God freely gives all things—all privileges. If we may fellowship such in prayer, in worship, in the interchange of all other Christian courtesies, we are warranted in communing with them in the highest symbol of sacramental recognition, in accordance with the injunction, "Receive ye one another as Christ also received us"; unless the Master of the feast has forbidden. Certainly a holy soul can refuse fellowship with one whose holiness draws the divine complacency, only by being schooled by the disciplinary process of a prohibition.

We may have dwelt longer on this first Part of our discussion than some may deem desirable. But so important, in our estimation, is this argument, that we regard it as virtually deciding the question in debate. It in fact does decide it with the great majority of uneducated Christians among the

Pedobaptists. For the spirit of the gospel reveals to us the feelings and dispositions, the desires and purposes, which govern Christ as lawgiver in his church. It also shows us the spirit of the Christian into whose heart the spirit of his Master has been transfused. Hence, this argument proves that the Christian who rejects a brother from the highest token of fellowship does violence alike to his own feelings and the feelings of his Saviour. Consequently, many logical minds, even in their holiest moods of thought, are fully convinced that Christ could never have made the observance of a mere ceremony the indispensable entrance into his spiritual church. Such a necessary regulation, it is felt, would be incongruous to the whole spirit and tenor of the gospel. It would be like binding oaken leaves to the silken petals of the lily, pretending their oneness with it to enhance its delicate beauty. To prove that the gospel contains such an incongruity demands evidence the most unmistakable and decisive.

Such are some of the fundamental principles and facts of the gospel: its spirituality; its origin in electing or forgiving love; its genius, as partaking of the spirit of its origin; its nature as a scheme of pardon for rebels, through Jesus Christ; in connection with the precious truth that all who are united to him by faith are forever one with him in affections and destination. In view of them, the mind forms at once the following judgments concerning the relations of Christians to each other:

1. That they are brethren, equally dear to their Head, and enjoying equal rights and privileges.

2. That as imperfect and erring beings, needing daily to repent and to ask forgiveness of God themselves, they should exercise mutual forbearance and forgiveness towards each other.

3. That the great law of charity should govern them relative to their intercourse and to their mutual enjoyment of common rights and privileges; should especially govern their conduct in relation to those who are involved in con-

scientific or involuntary mistakes respecting outward rites which are mere signs of inward feelings; not the essence of spiritual life, but the instituted forms in which that life expresses itself.

Hence, the further discussion of this subject must proceed on two or three admissions:

1. As the presumption is in favor of unrestricted communion, the burden of proof lies on those who deny it. Its opposers are required to demonstrate the ground they assume, while its advocates have only to disprove their positions or the conclusiveness of their reasoning.

2. When the scriptures leave the establishment of a rite, its relations, or its order in uncertainty, we are to interpret its import according to the genius of the gospel; for we cannot believe that Christ would institute an ordinance at variance with this.

3. We are not to look for evidence of the distinct inculcation of these fundamental principles of Christian fellowship, founded in the nature and genius of the gospel, but for evidence of their express denial. For, so clear and unanswerable are they to the intelligent Christian mind, that we come irresistibly to the conclusion, that if Christ intended to introduce into his church other principles of fellowship, he would have given us decisive precepts enjoining them.

We admit that if Christ has promulgated any positive precept to the contrary, or has given any decisive instruction concerning baptism, exceptional to the foregoing fundamental gospel principles, legally making it a necessary prerequisite for the Lord's supper, or made the precise form of administering it essential to its validity; and therefore a failure in its mode, in its relation, or order of administration a bar to the Lord's supper, the above reasonings and conclusions fall to the ground.

For the complete establishment of this part of our argument, our next inquiry therefore is, can such a positive precept, so utterly incompatible with the spirit of the gospel scheme, be found?

The New Testament contains no decisive announcement that there can be but one form of baptism, or that the priority of the rite to the eucharist is fixed by an immutable law; certainly, none determining that they who conscientiously misconceive the nature or mode of the former rite should be debarred admission to the latter. The law in the Mosaic ritual, prescribing the priority of circumcision to the Passover, was so definitely stated that no one could misunderstand it. If Christ intended baptism to precede the eucharist by a rule as fixed and undeviating, it is reasonable to suppose it would have been as distinctly announced. Especially is this the only reasonable supposition on the ground assumed by our opponents, who maintain that the gospel church is, in the absolute sense, a new institution, having a new covenant, and new laws of order and discipline, sustaining no organic relation whatever to the Mosaic economy. Consequently, no inference can be legitimately drawn from the established precedence of circumcision to the Passover, proving the same order and relation to subsist between baptism and the sacramental supper; one of their leading principles of reasoning on the subject under discussion, propounded by Dr. Hovey, being "that the New Testament is our ultimate authority in respect to church order and action." Hence, he adds, "we are unable to discover in them [the Old Testament scriptures] any proper model or account of a Christian church." If, then, baptism is to precede the eucharist as invariably as circumcision preceded the Passover, we have a right to expect in the New Testament a rule prescribing it, as intelligible and definite. But we have no such rule. This Baptist writers concede. Says Dr. Arnold: "We must ascertain what the will of the Lord is in this matter as well as we can from particular examples, from general principles, and from incidental allusions contained in scripture." "It seems very plain to us Baptists, that the scriptural terms of admission to baptism are repentance and faith; and yet we do not find anywhere in scripture the express words, 'Let every penitent believer be

baptized, and let none but penitent believers be baptized;’ nor even precisely that form of verbal warrant which we sometimes hear quoted as scripture, ‘Repent, believe, and be baptized.’ I do not say that the proper qualifications for admission to the Lord’s supper are equally clear from the scriptures; but I say that they are to be ascertained and proved by the same kind of evidence.” This, then, is “the kind of evidence” on which alone this able writer relies to prove the necessary antecedence of baptism to the Lord’s supper; freely admitting that there is no direct command establishing the order of the rites. Dr. Hovey virtually makes the same admission; for, while affirming that an “orderly observance of these rites is a solemn duty,” he makes no pretension to the discovery of an express rule prescribing the order; but establishes his position entirely by general reasonings. The nature and force of this argument from precedent we propose to discuss in our Third Part. All we wish in this connection is to show that what, from the genius of the gospel we had a right to expect, the institution of a canon giving invariable precedence of baptism to the Lord’s supper, and thus restricting church fellowship alone to those who submit to the rite, we do not find. This omission, on our own principles, is matter of astonishment. But on the ground of the Baptists, that the gospel church is an original institution, entirely disconnected with the former dispensation, it is utterly unaccountable.

The above argument, therefore, deduced from the nature and genius of the gospel, remains in its full force, furnishing substantial basis for all our ensuing arguments, imparting to them decisiveness and strength.

Should our opponents aver, by way of objection, that while their arguments are admitted to be inferential, ours are virtually so, and that consequently our position is as feeble and uncertain as theirs; we reply, granting the averment in a sense true, it carries not with it the force the objection intends. An inferential position, entirely agreeing with the spirit of the gospel, demands not the same accuracy

in data, nor the same invincible logic in the deductions to render it authoritative, as does an inferential position at utter variance with that spirit. Our position may contain only a higher probability of truth than theirs, and still be enough to warrant correspondent action. While such is the inconsistency of their position with the whole tenor of the New Testament, and so contradictory is it to some of its plainest precepts, that unless the deductions by which it is reached have all the distinctness and force of a definite precept, it will not afford justifiable ground of disfellowship; a distinction this which we wish our readers to bear in mind in pursuing the arguments which are to follow.

There is one thought in this connection which is deserving of the momentary consideration of our opponents. The "*kind* of evidence," the mode of reasoning, on which they so satisfactorily rely to establish the antecedence of baptism to the sacramental supper, is precisely that on which we rely for the vindication of infant baptism, and in part for disproving the modality of the rite; though, as we consider the gospel church essentially the same as the Sinaitic, standing on the same covenant, based on the same great principles of grace, the arguments for our conclusions are far more satisfactory on our point of view than theirs can be on their point of view. Hence, while essaying to strengthen their works on one side, they are compelled to adopt a mode of reasoning which incalculably weakens them on the other. For, only prove that infant baptism is evangelical and that the initiatory rite to the church is not modal, and our alleged wrong views of baptism are refuted. The ground of strict communion is removed. Their fortifications are demolished by their own guns.