

ARTICLE V.

CLOSE COMMUNION.

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It is our purpose in the present Article to state the chief reasons which have led the Baptists of America, with few exceptions,¹ to invite only Christians of their own faith and order to the Lord's table; believing that such a statement will tend to promote Christian fellowship between them and others. Should this discussion seem to be tinged in any degree with a partisan or uncharitable spirit, we beg leave to disclaim such a spirit, and to refer the evil to its proper source, inaccuracy of language. Without expecting that the following argument will be deemed conclusive throughout by the majority of our readers, we certainly anticipate their assent to a large part of it, and we bespeak for the whole a candid perusal. It will be necessary for us to mention, at the outset, a few doctrinal principles which underlie the argument for "close communion." These principles are held to be true and fundamental by nearly all the members of Baptist churches in our land. We shall state them as briefly as comports with the design of this Article, not attempting an extended vindication of their truth.

One of these principles is, that the New Testament is our ultimate authority in respect to church order and action. Accepting without reserve the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament scriptures, and believing that to the end of time they will be exceedingly precious and useful to the Christian, we are nevertheless

¹ It is proper to say that we refer to regular, or Calvinistic, Baptists only. In this country the Free-will Baptists practise open communion, while those of England practise what is called close communion.

unable to discover in them any proper model or account of a Christian church. Their laws, and histories, and songs of praise bear the impress of Judaism. Even their predictions of the Messiah and his reign are expressed in language determined by the peculiarities of that dispensation. And 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. The Jewish nation may indeed have been typical of the spiritual Israel or kingdom of Christ, just as the Jewish sacrifices were typical of Christ, the Lamb of God; but it would be as unsafe to infer the organization of a Christian church from the national organization of the Israelites as it would have been to infer the manner of Christ's death from the manner of slaying a lamb by the Jewish high-priest. Bearing in mind, then, the difference between the two economies and the natural dependence of language in every age upon previous or existing usages and institutions, we are not surprised that the Old Testament fails to describe beforehand with literal accuracy the polity and working of a Christian church; much less are we surprised at the impossibility of deriving the rites of the new dispensation from those of the old. Evidently, so far as the Bible is concerned, we are remitted to Christ and his apostles for light on all questions of church order and action. And as to extra scriptural teaching, we shall hardly be expected to go far in search of it while the Word of God is intelligible, and the language of Chillingworth is

remembered: "The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."

Another of these principles is, that the constitution and work of Christian churches are definitely fixed by the New Testament. It is not true, we think, that the writings of the apostles authorize us to look upon the constitution of a Christian church as elastic, variable, discretionary, capable of being adjusted by the wisdom of officers or members to the ever-changing tastes and conditions of society. Christianity has indeed a spirit and a form, a soul and a body, but they are perfectly and divinely fitted to each other. If one of them suffers, the other suffers also. If the spirit degenerate, the form will be perverted; if the form be injured, the spirit will languish. Their mutual sympathy and dependence may not always be manifest, but they surely exist, and will in due time appear. The records of Christianity in every age prove this. And we are satisfied that the New Testament nowhere authorizes Christians to adapt their ecclesiastical polity and action to the institutions, the prejudices, or the genius of any people or epoch. It rather makes it their duty to offer the world the same Christianity, both in spirit and form, which they find delineated by apostolic men. To found the church was the work of Christ and his inspired followers. The former prescribed the qualifications for membership, and laid down the rule of discipline for private offences; the latter organized numerous churches, administered the ordinances, attended to the appointment of suitable officers, and gave important directions as to the discipline of public offenders.¹ And thus, by inspired example and teaching was the proper constitution of Christian churches determined for all time. On this point the writings of Paul are very instructive. He took care to ordain elders in every church which he planted; he insisted upon the maintenance of faithful discipline in the churches; he evinced by his conduct great respect for

¹ Matt. xvi. 18, sq.; xviii. 18; Jno. xx. 20; Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14. — Matt. x. 32, sq.; Luke xiv. 26, sq.; Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; Jno. iii. 3, sq. — Acts xiv. 23; xviii. 8; Tit. i. 5; 1 Cor. v. 1, sq.

church action and authority; he proclaimed the value of unity, order, coöperation, in every church; he exhorted Christians to remember, obey, and support their pastors; he exalted the custom of all the churches to the position of a moral law for believers; he affirmed his own directions in respect to order and decorum among the brethren to be commandments of the Lord; and he declared that his teaching, not only of doctrine but also of duty, was the same in all the churches.¹ Hence it is manifest that Paul attached no little importance to the proper organization and action of the churches. Nothing was left to accident or the caprice of uninspired men. The body was fitly framed together; and it is only necessary to examine with care the words of this one apostle in order to ascertain the normal constitution and functions of a Christian church.

Another of these principles is, that churches observing the Lord's supper must determine what are the scriptural qualifications for admission to it. The ordinance is placed in their hands with instructions, and it is practically impossible for them to observe it without interpreting those instructions. They spread the table for their Master, and they must also invite the guests. They may say: 'The New Testament authorizes us to welcome to this feast all men, or all believers in Christ, or all members of Christian churches;' but, having prepared the supper, they cannot well say: 'Our responsibility now ends; certain terms of admission to this table are laid down, we believe, in the New Testament, but it is a delicate point, and we forbear to indicate them;—let every man do what is right in his own eyes, freely partaking, if he thinks himself entitled to do so.' This would be saying: There is instruction in the New Testament which the churches of Christ may pass over in silence; they are indeed "the pillar and ground of the truth," and should proclaim the terms of baptism, of membership in the church, of admission into heaven, but

¹ Acts xiv. 23; Tit. i. 5.—1 Cor. v. 1, sq.; 2 Thess. iii. 6.—Acts xiv. 26, 27; xv. 2, 3.—1 Cor. xii. 12, sq.—Heb. xiii. 7, 17; Gal. vi. 6.—1 Cor. xi. 16.—xiv. 37.—iv. 17.

it is not their duty to explain the terms of communion at the table of the Lord; this portion of the revealed will of God they may forbear to teach, although it is often misunderstood. Such a position is wholly untenable. No man would assume it except by necessity. But if churches observing the Lord's supper must determine what are the scriptural qualifications for this ordinance, manifestly they can only invite those to partake of it who are believed to possess these qualifications. If the scriptures in their judgment make true faith in Christ a term of admission to the Lord's table, they cannot invite those who give them no satisfactory evidence of having such faith. If baptism is made another term by the same authority, they cannot invite those who are believed to be yet unbaptized. In all cases the invitation must express the views of doctrine and duty held by those who give it. For they have no right to make the opinions of others their standard of action. They have no right to place honest error on the same level with truth, overlooking the sacredness of the divine law, and regarding only the sincerity of the human subject. Wrong does not become right, nor falsehood truth, because it is believed to be so. Christians should not, therefore, treat any man as if he had obeyed a command of the Saviour when they believe he has not obeyed it, for by so doing they disparage the objective divine rule; nor should any man wish to receive from them such treatment, for it is wishing them to honor his profession at the expense of Christ's command.

Another of these principles is, that 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. Loyalty to Christ will bring with it no real unkindness to his friends. Obedience to one of his directions will not be found to violate any other. All his commands are harmonious, and no possible conditions of society can make them discordant. To believe them har-

monious, when Christianity is in a normal and healthy state, as in the apostolic age, is not enough; they are equally so, it must be admitted, when the people of God are in a partly disorganized state. For true charity does not consist in assenting to every opinion, and endorsing every act of a fellow Christian, but in thinking no ill of his purposes, and seeking to rectify his errors. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Paul was not uncharitable when he "withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed." The very plainness and boldness of his reproof betokened large confidence in the radical integrity of his brother apostle. So, likewise, a strict obedience to the law of baptism, with all it involves, although it may separate a part of Christ's disciples from the rest, at certain points, and may give birth to discussion and admonition, is yet entirely consistent with fervent charity between those who differ. It may not, indeed, be so easy for Christians to obey all the laws of their Master, when some of them have mistaken the path of duty, and discord seems to reign, as it would be if all were of one mind, walking visibly in the same path; but, nevertheless, it is possible, and therefore no servant of Jesus can plead his desire to obey one command as a valid excuse for not obeying another. If, then, Baptists are correct in their views of baptism, they ought not to hesitate in accepting and justifying the consequences; but if wrong in their views of baptism, they are doubtless wrong in the consequences also. The latter error, however, grows out of the former, and must be corrected through it, if at all. We claim, then, that the following argument establishes the duty of "close communion" on the part of Baptists, provided the immersion of believers, in the name of the Trinity, and nothing else, is Christian baptism. This is believed to be true by all consistent members of the Baptist denomination. It is plainly the logical and, if true, the scriptural basis of their practice of restricted communion. Having stated these principles, we have reached the main question, and shall proceed to consider, from a Baptist point of view, what are

the scriptural prerequisites to communion at the Lord's table.

Faith in Christ is the first prerequisite. Only true Christians are entitled to partake of the supper, and only those who give credible evidence of piety should be invited to partake. In support of this position, we appeal: (1.) To the import of the ordinance itself. It is partly commemorative. "This do in remembrance of me." "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." It is a memorial of the dying Redeemer, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine carry the heart back to Calvary, and bring before it the spotless victim in his passion. But those who have no spiritual connection and affinity with Christ, no trust in him as their atoning sacrifice, or love to him as the Holy One, cannot feel any proper interest in the sacred mementoes of his passion. They are at heart self-righteous. They do, in fact, reject his proffered aid, and repudiate his atonement. Whatever admiration they may feel for him as a man or a teacher, they feel no gratitude to him as a Saviour. How, then, can they heartily commemorate his death, or be entitled to celebrate that event in company with his friends?

To put the question is to answer it. Again, it is partly symbolical. "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you." "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." It will be observed that the act of eating and drinking the consecrated elements is made very prominent. And with reason; for by partaking of the bread and wine, the communicants signify most clearly their reception of Christ by faith as the support of their spiritual life. They profess to be united with him, as the branch is united with the vine, and to draw from him, as their Sacrifice and Redeemer, present supplies of grace. If not, if the sole object of the supper is to commemorate the dying Saviour, without symbolizing any special relation of the communicant to him, why does the former partake of the elements at

all? Why is it not enough to break the bread and pour out the wine in sight of all the people? The act of eating and drinking is altogether unmeaning and superfluous. But if this act signifies the reception of Christ by faith and a vital union with him, then it is most significant and essential. An omission of it would rob the ordinance of more than half its meaning. Hence we say that the Lord's supper was intended to symbolize and express the believer's relation to Christ. How, then, can any person who rejects the Saviour wish or dare to approach his table? Or how can one who gives no satisfactory evidence of faith in Christ be invited to this table? It is also partly typical. "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down [at table] with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." From these and similar expressions of the Word of God, it appears that the Lord's supper was meant to foreshadow the blessed fellowship of heaven. With what propriety, then, can those who lack the one indispensable qualification for that fellowship be welcomed to the communion? It is evident, therefore, from the import of this ordinance, that faith in Christ is the first prerequisite to it.

In support of this position we appeal: (2.) To the example of Christian churches in the apostolic age. So far as the point in question is concerned, their practice seems to have been uniform. The sacred emblems were never offered to unbelievers. All notices of this ordinance in the New Testament favor the opinion that those, and those only, who gave credible evidence of piety were admitted to the supper. Some have referred to the case of Judas as an exception, but without sufficient reason. For it is probable, if not certain, that he went out to accomplish the betrayal of Christ before the supper was instituted; but if he remained with the rest, and partook of the eucharist, it was in the character of a true disciple, the omniscient Saviour

alone perceiving his hypocrisy. Is, then, the example of churches under apostolic guidance of any weight in the present case? We believe it is. When Paul declares with reference to a practice far less closely connected with the gospel than this, "We have no such *custom*, neither the churches of God," he appears to regard this fact as a final *ne plus ultra* argument against it. Yet, in the case to which he refers, it is impossible to determine whether the custom of the churches rested on special instruction from the apostles, or on their own sense of propriety and modesty. But the practise now in question must have been established by the apostles. They received the ordinance from Christ, and they caused it to be observed in the primitive churches. Whatever may be urged in favor of the opinion that they suffered certain prevalent evils to exist for a time in the churches, trusting to the general principles of Christianity and the spirit of love which it created for their ultimate removal, it cannot surely be supposed that by their own positive agency they established any but right customs. Hence the fact that believers only, according to the records of the New Testament, were welcomed to the Lord's supper in the apostolic age, is ample proof that such only should now be invited. As faith in Christ was then prerequisite to communion, it must still be prerequisite.

In support of this position we appeal: (3.) To the caution which Paul gave to the Corinthians. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup," — words which imply the necessity of personal preparation for the ordinance. In what this preparation consisted may be learned from the context. Paul had just spoken of the supper as a memorial of Christ and a proclamation of his vicarious death, adding that "whoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord"; and soon after, as a reason for self-examination, "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." That is to say: Whoever does not appreciate the sacrifice of Christ, and feel his

need of it as an atonement for sin, whoever does not receive Christ with love and trust as the source of spiritual life in his soul, is unprepared for the Lord's supper; if he partake, it will be unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body; he will eat and drink judgment to himself. It is not to be supposed that such language as this was uttered by an apostle who deemed it proper for unbelievers to partake of the Lord's supper. Had the Corinthians been taught by Paul, when he was with them, to invite or admit to the communion any persons who were held to be unregenerate and incapable of spiritual discernment, they would have been astonished at the words cited above, and compelled to look upon his teaching by letter as irreconcilable with his teaching by voice.

For these reasons, in brief, we maintain that faith in Christ is prerequisite to communion with him at his table. It would not be difficult to strengthen our argument for this view, but we deem it unnecessary. The treatise of Jonathan Edwards on "The Qualifications for Full Communion," and his "Reply to Mr. Williams," render an elaborate discussion of the point superfluous.¹

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

¹ The Works of President Edwards, Vol. I. p. 81, sq. New York: Leavitt and Allen. 1856.

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,¹ 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. To do so would be to trample on their firmest convictions of duty, and pay respect to the opinions of men at the sacrifice of loyalty to Christ. They are not, of course, expected or desired by any thoughtful Christian to do this.

Baptism is the second prerequisite. Only baptized believers are entitled to a place at the Lord's table, and such only can properly be invited to partake. To justify this statement we shall consider: (1.) The relation of the two ordinances to each other as symbols. It is generally admitted, we suppose, that baptism symbolizes the beginning of the new life, and the Lord's supper its furtherance. The former speaks of change from one spiritual condition to another, from moral pollution to moral purity, — putting off the old, putting on the new, — while the latter speaks of growth, progress, power, in a present condition. The one represents a single event, a sudden transition, a consecration of its subject to a new service and master, while the other represents an ever-recurring duty, refreshment, and joy. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ;" "*As often* as ye eat this bread

¹ We shall not, of course, be understood as placing these four denominations on a level, either as to the correctness of their theological opinions, or as to the power and purity of their Christian influence.

and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." The life of faith must be originated before it can be nourished; and an ordinance which represents the inception of this life must naturally precede one which represents its existence and support. In baptism a sinner publicly renounces the service of satan and declares his allegiance to Christ; at the Lord's table he takes his place among the acknowledged friends of Jesus and receives from him the tokens of love and favor. Can there be any doubt as to the order in which these sacred rites should be observed? Shall a rebel appear at the king's table and recline in his bosom before he has solemnly abjured his wickedness and avowed his future loyalty? Shall he be formally recognized as a citizen before he is formally qualified for citizenship? It is plain to us that the import of baptism makes it prerequisite to the communion, that one who neglects or refuses to observe the initiatory ordinance has no right to observe the subsequent ordinance. Salvation, indeed, depends upon neither of them; *fides integra secura est de salute*;¹ yet an orderly observance of these rites is a solemn duty, and a neglect of them grievous disobedience.

To justify our statement we may consider: (2.) The practice of Christian churches in the apostolic age. Beginning with the inspired record at the day of Pentecost, and tracing the history of Christians until that record closes, we find no hint of the presence of unbaptized persons at the Lord's table, no intimation that they were ever invited to commune. But we do find that baptism is treated as the first great duty to be performed after exercising faith in Christ, and that the eucharist, if noticed at all, is assigned to a later period. When the multitude cried out on the day of Pentecost: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you"; and "they that gladly received his word were baptized." After this "they continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine and in fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers."

¹ Tertullian, De Baptismo.

So, too, the people of Samaria, "when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, were baptized, both men and women." With equal promptness were the eunuch, and Saul, and Cornelius, Lydia and her household, the jailor and all his, baptized when they had believed. It is said also that "many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."¹ If, then, the history of apostolic labor given in the Acts puts any one point beyond the reach of controversy, it is this: that baptism followed the exercise of faith as its primary and authorized expression. In no case is the Lord's supper put before baptism; in no case does the narrative recognize any interval between faith and baptism to be filled by the Lord's supper; in no case are believers brought into the church and afterwards baptized. The order appears to have been one and the same in every instance, and baptism always preceded the communion. On this point the testimony of the scriptures is univocal; and, if apostolic precedent can be relied upon as a guide to duty, we may be sure that baptism is prerequisite to communion at the Lord's table.

But to this it has been objected that some of the eleven who were present at the institution of the supper, had never been baptized at all; that none of them had received Christian baptism, and hence that Christ, whose example has more authority than the practice of any number of apostolic churches, did not make baptism a term of admission to his table. It will be necessary for us to examine the several points of this objection. And, in the first place, is it reasonable to conclude from the tenor of the gospel narratives that some of the twelve were never baptized? We think not. Two of them at least, and possibly all, had been disciples of John the Baptist prior to their connection with Jesus. When it is remembered that large numbers of the Jews resorted to John for baptism, that he admitted to this privilege those who bore the fruits of repentance, and

¹ Acts ii. 38, sq.; viii. 12, 36, sq.; ix. 18; x. 46, sq.; xviii. 8.

that he directed their thoughts to a greater one about to appear, even "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," it is natural to infer that the most truly religious of the people became his disciples, and that from this class the Saviour chose his personal attendants. And the probability of this inference is strengthened by the promptness with which the latter forsook all and followed Christ. It may, indeed, be supposed that they were drawn to Jesus by a special divine power, which acted without regard to any spiritual preparation in them; but this hypothesis is hardly plausible. John was sent expressly to prepare the way of the Lord; and it may be presumed, in default of any evidence to the contrary, that individuals whose hearts had been prepared by his preaching were selected by our Saviour to be his personal attendants. Again, it appears from the fourth Gospel, that Jesus, by the hands of the twelve, baptized those who became his disciples.¹ And if it was his custom to have his disciples baptized, it may be taken for granted that he did not make the case of his most eminent followers an exception. Those who believe that he did should have positive evidence for their opinion. "Order is heaven's first law"; and surely it must have pervaded the action of him who came down from heaven. If, then, any of the twelve were not baptized by the harbinger of Christ, they doubtless submitted to this rite when they left all to follow Jesus. It may also be worthy of remark, that those first called by him were disciples of John;² as such they had been baptized already, and were therefore qualified to administer the ordinance in a regular way to others. The words of Peter, too, when the disciples were about to fill the place made vacant by the death of Judas, may have a bearing on the question before us. "Wherefore, of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, *beginning from the baptism of John* unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of

¹ Jno. iii. 26; iv. 12.

² Jno. i. 35, sq.; Luke v. 1, sq.; Mark i. 16, sq.; Matt. iv. 18, sq.

his resurrection." It is further to be remembered that Christ himself was baptized in order "to fulfil all righteousness." This last expression may have a far deeper sense than some have supposed, but it certainly *includes* a fulfilment of all the rites and duties of religion. And such was the relation of baptism to Christ's work and his people, that it was necessary for him to receive it. But if he himself and his disciples generally were baptized, we must conclude that the twelve also were baptized, previous to the institution of the holy supper. The indexes all point in the same direction, and there are no real grounds on which to rest a different conclusion. If moral evidence is ever satisfactory, it should be in such a case as this.

But, in the second place, was John's baptism virtually Christian baptism? This is denied by the objection before us. Christian baptism is supposed to have been first authorized by the Great Commission, and to have been first administered on the day of Pentecost. Hence none of those who were present at the institution of the Lord's supper had received it. We are aware that many distinguished scholars approve this view, but the following reasons constrain us to reject it: The ritual act of baptism was the same before and after the death of Christ,—expressed by the same word, and performed in like circumstances. It is safe, therefore, to conclude that its symbolical import was the same. If it represented the new birth, or purification of soul, when administered by Paul, it probably signified the same when administered by John the Baptist. If the ordinance, as used by John, had not been understood to symbolize an inward change,—the beginning of a new spiritual life,—it could hardly have been adopted by Christ to represent such a change. But we are not left to inference on this point. The qualifications for baptism suggest its meaning as a symbol, and these qualifications were virtually the same before and after the ascension of Christ. "John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." His language was: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

“Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.” “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.” And the words of Peter to those who “were pricked in their heart,” were: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” Moreover, the Lord himself had said to his disciples: “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached, in his name, among all nations.” Did the word “repentance” mean one thing in the mouth of John, and another thing in the mouth of Peter? Can any but genuine repentance secure the remission of sins? Or can there be genuine repentance without a radical change of heart, without the new birth, in which the soul begins a life of spiritual obedience? We are confident that John insisted upon that “repentance which is unto life, and which needeth not to be repented of,” as prerequisite to baptism. Hence, he repulsed the Pharisees and Sadducees, saying: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.” But this radical change of the moral state, or disposition of the soul, which was required alike and equally by John the Baptist, by Christ himself, and by his chosen apostles, involves every spiritual grace. It can no more exist without faith than memory can exist without thought. Indeed, the virtues of the new life are not simply bound together by strong affinities; they are vitally and inseparably united. Contrition, faith, and love interpenetrate, pervade, and qualify each other. The presence of one is the presence of all, and the absence of one is the absence of all. They are fruits and evidences of regeneration, always in a cluster. But “repentance” is a comprehensive term, signifying, properly, conversion as a spiritual change, and including all the principles of the new life. It is faith, love, contrition, taking the place of unbelief, hatred of God, and hardness of heart. It gives, in one word, the essential condition of baptism. And it is just this renovation of heart which baptism, as a

ritual act, symbolizes, — in what way we are not required by our present theme to show. But is not baptism a sacrament, an oath of allegiance and service, and hence the *formula* an important part of the ordinance? How, then, could it signify the same, or virtually the same, when it was simply “unto repentance,” and when it was “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?” Far be it from us to undervalue the full light of the gospel. We do not claim for those who had true repentance before the day of Pentecost as much knowledge of Christ as was possessed by Christians afterwards. But we do claim that the difference between the former and the latter was a difference of knowledge, and not of spiritual state; that both were accepted servants of God, and believers in the Messiah, and that both were alike *in* the kingdom of God. For the Saviour himself declared: “The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”¹ The faith of the former class was more general, but not less real, than that of the latter; they were looking and waiting for the Messiah, ready to receive him in all his offices, and they were baptized, not without distinct reference to faith in him when revealed. John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. It is also worthy of note that John taught them to expect, with the Messiah, extraordinary operations of the Spirit: “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Three topics, then, were the staple of his preaching; namely, repentance toward God, faith in the coming Messiah, and the miraculous agency of the Spirit. How much light he was able to shed on these Christian themes it is not for us to say, but more, certainly, than any earlier prophet. We know, however, that he demanded evidence of a change of heart, — which change prepared the subjects of it to receive the full doctrine of Christ and the Holy Spirit, — as pre-

¹ Luke xvi. 16, cf. Matt. xi. 13; Mark i. 1, sq.

requisite to baptism, and that he intimated very distinctly the peculiar office of each. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Hence we infer that those disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus had neither been taught nor baptized by John himself, but by some rash follower of his; and especially, as the reason for their re-baptism seems to have been their ignorance of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Whatever, then, may have been the formula made use of by John in administering baptism, we believe that the ordinance was essentially Christian, and that, as a general rule, those who had received it from him, as well as those who had received it from the disciples of Christ, were admitted, as properly baptized, to Christian churches on and after the day of Pentecost. Many of the "three thousand" were perhaps thus added to the company of avowed Christians in Jerusalem.¹ The wonders of the Pentecost, and the words of Peter, may have fully opened their eyes, for the first time, to the fact that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and that he was now baptizing his disciples with the Holy Ghost. It may be remarked, further, that Christ himself was baptized by John. Yet he observed the ordinances of the new economy, as well as those of the old, "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." Says Turretin: "The baptism of Christ should be no other than the baptism of believers, because he is the Head, and believers are the members; because it was proper for him to sanctify the use and sacrament of our baptism by his own; because baptism is a symbol of the unity of believers in one mystical body (Eph. iv. 5), not only with one another, but also with Christ, the Head (1 Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 27); and because his circumcision was identical with the circumcision of the Jews." *Locus XIX., Quaestio XVI.* But if it were probable, as it is not, that some of the eleven who were present with Christ at the institution of the supper, had never been baptized, we should

¹ Acts ii. 41. The writer entertains this opinion himself, but is not sure that any of his brethren approve it.

nevertheless look to subsequent example for light concerning the duties of believers generally. The calling and position of the apostles were extraordinary, and what they were permitted to do in such a case cannot safely be urged as a precedent against what they taught others to do. The uniform practice of believers under their instruction must be held conclusive of their judgment as inspired men upon the question in debate; and this uniform practice, as we have seen, puts baptism before communion at the Lord's table.

It is to be considered, (3.) That Christians of every name, from the apostolic age to the present, with hardly a dissentient voice, have declared baptism to be a prerequisite to the eucharist. It would be easy to produce ample proof of this statement, but we deem it unnecessary. The only protest worthy of note has been made by a portion of the English Baptists. Moved by a desire to receive all whom Christ has received, they have overlooked the marks of distinction between visible churches on earth and "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven," and have assumed that all who belong to the latter should be welcomed to the highest privileges of the former. Forgetting that Christ has nowhere identified the terms of admission to his favor with the terms of admission to a local church, they have closed their eyes to the example of apostolic believers, and have marred the order and symmetry of the Lord's house. However noble their spirit and purpose, they have placed themselves in a solitary and false position, a position which we think they will ere long abandon, to resume their place with the great body of believers, who maintain that baptism is prerequisite to the Lord's supper.

Our second statement, then, is justified by the symbolical meaning of the two ordinances, by the uniform example of the primitive churches, and by the common judgment of Christendom. But if it is correct, the duty of Baptist churches is obvious. They must welcome to the Lord's table only those whom they suppose to have been baptized.

For if it is evident that no man should expect to be saved at last, unless he believes that he has complied with the terms of salvation, and that no church should endorse and encourage his expectation, unless it shares his belief, or, in other words, is satisfied of his compliance with those terms; it is equally evident that no Christian should deem himself entitled to the communion until he believes that he has complied with the scriptural terms of admission to this ordinance, and that no church should invite him to commune unless it shares his belief, or is satisfied that he has complied with those terms. Hence Baptist churches can invite those only who have been immersed in water on profession of their faith, to partake of the eucharist. Should they welcome to this sacred rite those who were sprinkled on profession of their faith, or those who were merely christened in infancy, they would deliberately trample on what they hold to be the law of Christ; for, while they look upon such persons as still unbaptized, they believe baptism a prerequisite to communion. But it is well known that all other evangelical churches not only make use of sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion, but also administer the rite to infants; it is therefore impossible for Baptists to invite the members of these churches, as such, to the Lord's table. However heartily they may accord to them faith in Christ, the first qualification for communion, — and most heartily, we are confident, they do this, — they are compelled to pronounce them destitute of the second, which is baptism; and, therefore, mindful of the paramount claims of Christ, they refuse to modify or disturb the order of his house. Such is their true position; and the readers of this Article will doubtless recognize it as identical in principle with their own. Yet an opinion prevails to some extent among those who have not duly considered the point, that the act of partaking together of the Lord's supper is a proper sign and test of Christian fellowship, so that the piety of one who is not invited to partake is called in question. This act would indeed be such a test, if piety were recognized as the sole qualification for communion; but not otherwise. If baptism is understood to be also pre-

requisite, then obviously uniting at the Lord's table is a sign of fellowship in the matter of baptism as well as of piety. The ritual qualification is endorsed no less distinctly than the spiritual. Hence members of the denomination for which we now speak, honor the piety of multitudes whom they cannot invite to the eucharist, and utterly disclaim the use of this ordinance as a sign or test of simply Christian fellowship. Might not this fact be more distinctly acknowledged than it is by some of their assailants? But to proceed :

An orderly church walk is the last prerequisite. None but members of some Christian church, whose "conversation becometh the gospel of Christ" and who "strive together for the faith of the gospel," should be invited to the communion.

In support of this position we remark : (1.) That becoming connected with a Christian church naturally precedes partaking of the eucharist. It has already been shown that baptism is properly the first public act of consecration to God and his service. By submitting to this rite one solemnly avows his faith in the triune God and his purpose to obey him in all things. He takes his place under the banner of Christ, and pledges himself to have no other master. And what next? The great army is made up of companies, one here and another there, and he can have no regular connection with it unless he joins one of these companies, unless he enters a particular church. Uniting with a local church is therefore the immediate sequence and, as it were, the natural counterpart of the baptismal vow. Hence the latter is often called "the door into the church," and membership is supposed to follow it as a matter of course. There are, to be sure, exceptional cases ; persons are sometimes converted and baptized when there is no church and when they are unable for a time to become members of one. This was true, we suppose, of the eunuch whom Philip baptized. But such instances do not affect the general rule. It is still true that in all ordinary circumstances church membership follows directly after baptism ; certainly it precedes admission to the Lord's table. Besides, it must be

borne in mind that partaking of the holy supper is an act to be repeated until the close of life, while uniting with a Christian church is an act to be performed but once, unless a repetition is made necessary by local changes. At what point of time, then, shall the church relation be established? Surely not at the close of one's Christian life and service nor in the middle of that service, but obviously at the beginning of it. No good reason appears for assigning it any other place.

In support of our position we remark: (2.) That the Lord's supper is a church ordinance. It was meant to be observed and administered, not by individual Christians at will, nor by irresponsible companies of believers, but by the churches of Christ as such. This statement is justified by the language of Paul to the Corinthians. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Because it is one bread, we, the many, are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." "When ye come together in church, I hear there are schisms among you; and I partly believe it. When, therefore, ye come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper; for in eating each one takes before another his own supper." "Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and put to shame them that have not?" "So then, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait for one another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home, that ye come not together to judgment."¹ Several points of great interest are fixed by these words of the apostle:

In the first place, the Corinthian Christians were evidently accustomed to "meet together" in order to observe the Lord's supper. No less than four times within the space of a few verses does Paul connect their coming together in one place with the celebration of the eucharist. This was their custom; there is no hint of any irregularity; it was their uniform practice. Whether they commemora-

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16, 17; xi 18, 20, 21, 22, 33, 34.

ted the death of Christ daily or weekly or monthly, we are not told, but the language cited above makes it certain that they always met together for this service. Indeed, it seems to have been the proper and avowed object of their assembling. Although the way in which some of them partook of the love-feast before the eucharist betokened little respect for the latter, they met professedly, without doubt, to eat not their *own* but the *Lord's* supper. No other view explains the repeated and emphatic manner in which their "coming together" is connected with this ordinance.

In the second place, they could not properly observe it without coming together. This is not said, but implied. Many things could be done by Christians separately. "Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" "If any man is hungry, let him eat at home." But it does not seem to have entered the apostle's mind that the *Lord's* supper could be eaten at home. No word of his letter intimates the propriety of such an act. There were parties, factions, rivalries, in the church at Corinth. Some were for Paul, some for Apollos, some for Cephas. Selfish and contentious men fomented discord in presence of the speaking emblems. The rich slighted the poor and the poor envied the rich. Their solemn feast had become a grief and a scandal. Was there no group of lowly disciples who met in some upper room to receive with reverent and thankful hearts the memorials of their dying Lord? No church within the church bound together by ties of holy fellowship to observe apart the precious ordinance? Has not Paul, who was so careful to "praise" the Corinthians for their good conduct, spoken of at least one such faithful group? Not a syllable does he breathe of such a company or service. Instead of this, his language firmly points to the whole body of Corinthian believers as presenting themselves at the Lord's table. Fixing his mind on the members of this body, he says: When ye come together in one place, it is not to eat the *Lord's* supper,— your professed, as it should be your real, object,— but, as your conduct shows, it is for each one to eat his *own* supper, which might have been taken at home. Again,

being present with them in spirit, he explains in one respect the import of communion: Since the consecrated loaf is one bread, we, the many, are one body; for all of us — *οἱ πάντες* — partake of the one bread. By signifying thus our union with Christ and dependence on him for spiritual life, we signify our union with one another, and the church of many members is represented as one body. According to these passages, the eucharist was observed by the collected church, and no abuses which might attend such an observance of it could justify individuals or families in celebrating it at home.

In the third place, the Christians at Corinth came together “in church” to observe the holy supper. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, the word *ἐκκλησία* had already become the appropriate designation for an organized body of Christians. It was either applied to the whole company of believers in every age, or to a local church, as that of Antioch. In the passage before us it must be used in the latter sense; a sense which it generally has in this Epistle. Hence the words *ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ* signify in church form or capacity, and give evidence that the Corinthian believers celebrated the eucharist as a church. This view of their meaning is confirmed by a clause in the context. Rebuking some of his readers for their conduct when together, he says: “Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God?” In other words: There are two possible explanations of your conduct; either you have no houses in which to take your daily food, or, if you have them and yet feast yourselves in church, you certainly despise *the church of God*. The apostle, be it observed, does not say, “the Christian brethren;” to despise them were indeed a grave offence, but he says, “the church of God,” a very different expression; and by it he means “the church of God at Corinth,” — an organized, responsible body, entrusted with the duty of exercising discipline, and preserving in their purity the ordinances and worship of Christ’s house.¹ It would have been no

¹ See 1 Cor. i. 2; vi. 4; x. 32; xi. 16; 2 Cor. i. 1; viii. 1, 18, 19, 23, 24; xi. 8, 28; xii. 13. Also, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 11, 12, 13; ii. 6, sq.

small sin for the Corinthian Christians to treat each other with disrespect as individuals, but it was a far greater crime for them to despise the order, authority, and good name of the church, — a divine institution and society, responsible under Christ for the conservation and diffusion of his truth until the end of time.

Plainly, then, the Lord's supper was observed by the saints in Corinth as a church, and any disorderly or selfish conduct attending it was not only a grief to individuals, but an act of contempt to the church, as such. This appears to be the obvious meaning of Paul's language. Bearing in mind, then, the repeated statement that the Corinthian disciples "came together" to observe the Lord's supper, the clear intimation that they could not observe it properly without coming together, and the plain testimony that they met in "church" to observe it, we feel ourselves authorized to say that they broke bread as a church, and treated the eucharist in all respects as a church ordinance. It is therefore needless to examine further the apostle's words on this point. But it is important to remark that, in no other instance, has an inspired writer spoken at length of the manner of celebrating the eucharist in the primitive churches. If the New Testament anywhere indicates, with special clearness, the practice of those churches planted and trained by the apostles, it is in this passage. Every other reference to their practice is comparatively brief and indistinct. Yet every other reference serves to confirm the view which has been taken of this. One of them reads thus: "And on the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread, Paul preached to them, — about to depart on the morrow, — and continued his speech until midnight."¹ To whom did Paul thus preach at Troas? To the members of the Christian church in that city, we reply; and for such reasons as follow: They were deeply interested in the apostle's discourse, listening quietly until midnight. No opposition was raised, no dis-

¹ Acts xx. 7.

turbance created; a young man fell asleep during the service. We read of no conversions, no first fruits of the gospel in Troas, as the result of this protracted address. Moreover, the meeting was on the first day of the week, and Paul seems to have tarried seven days, that he might be present. It may, therefore, be presumed that they were accustomed to meet on that day for worship and the breaking of bread. Indeed, every line of the narrative reminds us of an assembly of Christians. Besides, Troas had been visited twice before by the apostle, once on his way, for the first time, to Europe, and again in the period which elapsed between the writing of his first and second letters to the Corinthians. Both these visits were brief, yet not, perhaps, without fruit. Of the first, nothing is said which either warrants or forbids the hypothesis of his making known the gospel to some in that place. Luke appears to have joined him there. Of the second, he thus writes: "When I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and a door was opened unto me in the Lord, I had no rest for my spirit, because I found not Titus, my brother; but, taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia."¹ Now if there were not previously a church in Troas, this language implies that he preached there long enough, at least, to learn the state of the city, and the attitude of its inhabitants towards the gospel. Some were doubtless converted, and, according to the uniform practice of the apostle, were presently brought together in a church. From these disciples he separated himself with great reluctance, impelled by his anxiety to see Titus, and learn the condition of the church at Corinth. With such hints on record, all conspiring to show that there was a goodly company of the faithful in Troas, we have ample grounds for believing them to have been associated in church order and fellowship, maintaining Christian worship on the Lord's day, and observing the ordinances of the gospel. If they had not been thus united, would Paul have tarried there a full week, and then left

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

them again, without setting in order the things that were wanting, and ordaining elders in that city?¹ It is evident, then, that the apostle broke bread with a Christian church in Troas, and that the narrative of this event by Luke strengthens our argument from the language of Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. Turning back, now, to the beginning of apostolic labor at Jerusalem, we have another record of similar bearing. With a few words inserted, to bring out the sense more distinctly, it reads thus: "On that day there were added" to the company of Christian disciples "about three thousand souls; and they applied themselves constantly to the teaching of the apostles and the communication" of alms, "the breaking of the" sacramental "bread, and the" social "prayers."² These Christians were baptized; they were under the guidance and teaching of the apostles; they met together almost daily for social worship; they provided for their poor with great liberality, and they were living in the same city. Were they not, then, to all intents and purposes, a Christian church, a distinct, organized, responsible body, prepared to act in concert upon all matters of discipline and common interest? If not, when did they become such a body? A community of baptized believers, under common instruction, and united in worship,—what is it but a church of Christ? Indeed, it is expressly called by this name, only a few verses further on. "And the Lord added to to the church³ daily such as should be saved." And after this record of their breaking bread together, they are habitually spoken of as "the church," "the church at Jerusalem."⁴ But the Christians at Jerusalem, it may be replied, did not meet together and observe the Lord's supper as

¹ Acts xiv. 23; Tit. i. 5.

² Acts ii. 41, 42. See Professor Hackett's note on this passage.

³ The words τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ are probably genuine, though wanting in a few of the best manuscripts.

⁴ The Scriptural Terms of Admission to the Lord's Supper. By Rev. A. N. Arnold, D.D. Boston: Gould and Lincoln. We take pleasure in referring to the work of Dr. Arnold as an almost perfect statement of the grounds of restricted communion, as practised by the Baptists.

a church; for they are described as "breaking bread from house to house." This objection is more plausible than conclusive. For whether the words *κατ' οἶκον* signify "from house to house," or rather "at home," "in private houses," instead of in the temple, no evidence can be gleaned from this expression that the Lord's supper was intended for the use of Christian families, or social circles, as such. The circumstances of the church at Jerusalem were peculiar. Although believers in Christ were suffered to meet with others in the temple for worship, it would have been manifestly improper, if not impossible, for them to celebrate the eucharist there. By so doing they would have been sure to inflame the wrath of the Jews, and make the courts of the Lord's house a theatre of strife and blasphemy. It may be taken for granted, that they could use neither temple nor synagogue for any service distinctly and visibly Christian. Hence, if they wished to act as a separate community, they had to meet in some place of their own. *Meyer* thinks they had a common meeting-house from the first, which is referred to by the words *κατ' οἶκον*. This certainly may have been the case. But if it was not, if they had no one place large enough to receive them all, and therefore met in several places to break bread, — one or two of the apostles presiding over each assembly, — this provisional arrangement might not have caused the holy supper to be esteemed a family or a social rite; it might have existed without violating the principles which were to be plainly expressed by the regular working of the church. The essential points were guarded. Only those who had been baptized, and were walking together in the faith of the gospel, partook of the supper. The emblems were not carried out of the church. They were not used at pleasure by families or groups of brethren. There was oversight, order, harmony, coöperation. In short, we conclude, from the narrative of Luke, that the Lord's supper was observed by the saints in Jerusalem as members of the church.

Finally, we come to the institution of the supper by our Saviour himself. Many were the persons in Judea, Galilee,

and Samaria, who had believed in Christ and had been baptized. We read of "above five hundred brethren" by whom he was seen at once after his resurrection. Many of these brethren were doubtless in Jerusalem at the passover when the eucharist was instituted. But they were in no proper sense a church, a distinct responsible body, called out from the rest of the nation, and acting together as the servants of Christ. "For the Greek word" *ἐκκλησία*, "which expresses the idea of working, calling out, also suggests that of convoking, calling together, and is therefore most appropriate to the Christian church as a select, organized body, called out by divine choice from the mass of men, and called together by divine authority as a spiritual corporation."¹ But, on the other hand, the little band of disciples, to whom the supper was first administered, were essentially such a body. They had been summoned to his side by the Saviour's voice; they were his recognized and constant followers; they were under his instruction, and stood forth the champions of his cause; they had a common purse and a faithful treasurer; they were united in belief and in action; in a word, they were in all important respects a Christian church, a responsible community separate from the world and associated in the service of Christ. Thus the other notices of the Lord's supper in the New Testament confirm, rather than weaken, the evidence afforded by Paul's language to the Corinthians, that this ordinance was intended for the churches, as such, and was administered in apostolic times to none but members of Christian churches in good standing. "When we read of the baptism of single individuals, as of Paul and the Ethiopian eunuch, there is never any intimation that the administration of the Lord's supper followed. Even when whole households are baptized, as in the case of Lydia, the Philippian jailor, and Crispus at Corinth, the same silence is observed. But when great numbers were baptized, as on

¹ Alexander on the Acts, Vol. I. p. 96. Compare Litton (E. A.), The Church of Christ, etc., Chap. IV. p. 203, sq.

the day of Pentecost, we find them soon after joining in the celebration of the Lord's supper."¹ And in all these instances of "breaking bread," there are good reasons for supposing the presence and action of a Christian church. It may also be remarked that this ordinance appears to have been restricted uniformly by the early Christians to church members. "This food," says Justin Martyr, "is called among us *εὐχαριστία*; of which no one is allowed to partake who does not believe that what we teach is true, and has not been bathed in the bath (*λουσαμένῳ τὸ . . . λουτρόν*) for the remission of sins and unto regeneration, and does not live as Christ has enjoined."² Three prerequisites are here laid down; namely, faith, baptism, and an orderly walk; and, with few exceptions, Christians of every name, from the apostolic age to the present, have agreed in this matter with the contemporaries of Justin. It seems to us, therefore, unnecessary to say more in support of our third position. In view of the qualification last named, an orderly church walk, the Baptists of this country do not for the most part feel themselves at liberty to invite to the Lord's table those members of other churches whom they look upon as unbaptized. As the eucharist is a church ordinance, they hold that none but members of the church observing it are strictly entitled to partake, and that none can properly be invited to join with them in the service, who could not be welcomed, without change of views, to full membership. They also hold that those who are giving, and pledged to give, the weight of their influence against what is believed by a church to be essential in doctrine and practice, cannot properly be received into its fellowship. If admitted, they would sow the seeds of dissension and thus prove themselves "heretics" in the primitive sense of the term. By receiving them the church would pull down with one hand what it is holding up with the other. Thus those members of Pædo-baptist churches to whom we now refer, do steadily

¹ Dr. Arnold, *Terms of Admission*, etc., p. 39.

² *Apol.* I. c. 66.

affirm and teach by their ecclesiastical position that infant sprinkling is in effect Christian baptism, or else that baptism is not prerequisite to full membership and an orderly walk in a Christian church. In either case they throw the whole weight of their example against the doctrine of believer's baptism, a doctrine which in the judgment of Baptists is essential to Christian obedience as well as to the perfect organization and highest purity of the church. How, then, can their church walk be endorsed by the latter as orderly? Is it believed to be so? Were the members of any Baptist church to act as decisively in some other way, against this doctrine, would they not be esteemed by their brethren subverters of the truth and originators of division? And, the church being right in its doctrine, ought it not to withdraw its fellowship from them as walking disorderly and not after the gospel? "Now I beseech you, brethren," says Paul to the Romans, "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them."¹ But if a Baptist church ought to withdraw the hand of fellowship from those who set themselves firmly against the duty of obeying what it deems a plain command of Christ, has it a right to offer this hand to the same persons as soon as they are united with another church, or to any persons who assail persistently the duty in question? But one reply is possible. If communion at the Lord's table were a sign of Christian fellowship merely, the case would be entirely different; Baptists would then gladly invite all who give evidence of piety to partake with them. But such a sign it can never be while, besides faith, baptism and an orderly church walk are the scriptural terms of admission to the Lord's supper.

Before closing this discussion it is proper to remark that several Baptist ministers and churches in this country do not insist upon the third qualification named by us. Believing that faith and baptism are the only prerequisites to communion laid down in the New Testament, they feel them-

¹ Rom. xvi. 17. Comp. Tit. iii. 10; Gal. v. 12; 1 Cor. i. 10.

selves at liberty to invite all baptized believers to partake with them of the sacred emblems. Our reasons for rejecting their view and practice have been already given; for the brethren themselves, however, we cherish the highest esteem.

From what has been said it appears 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. Hence we cannot perceive the fitness of calling their practice "close communion." In principle it is as open as that of most orthodox churches; as open as the New Testament allows them to make it. We freely admit that it is "restricted"; and so it must continue to be while the example of apostolic Christians and the authority of inspired men retain their hold on the conscience; but we see no good reason for pronouncing it "close."

In reality, the great question between other denominations and the one for which we have endeavored to speak, relates to the subjects and the rite of baptism. A more careful examination of this question may, perhaps, in time, by the blessing of God, bring together those who now differ; and if it does, whether by a change of belief on the part of Baptists or by a change on the part of Pedo-baptists, the former will be relieved of a duty, the performance of which occasions them far more sorrow than it does others,—the duty of restricting their invitation to the eucharist to members of Baptist churches. Such a "consummation is devoutly to be wished." May God hasten it by revealing his truth to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ! Then shall we rejoice, not only in Christian fellowship, but also in sacramental fellowship.