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THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.
FREE COMMUNION.

BY REV. SERENO D. CLARK, SECRETARY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL
BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

PART II.—THE SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES AND CANONS OF SCRIPTURE
PRESCRIBING AND REGULATING CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

SECTION IV.—*Arguments and Considerations corroborative
of the above Conclusions deduced from Apostolic Toleration.*

I. Strict communionists, by the particular texts which they cite to justify their exclusion of evangelical Pedobaptists, associate them with unchristian characters, directly contrary to repeated acknowledgments of their decided piety and Christian enterprise. The texts are: (1) Rom. xvi. 17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." These were factious persons, divisive spirits, who had embraced heretical sentiments, which both corrupted their own characters and exerted a pestilential influence on others. They are described in the succeeding verse, such as "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ," as are sensual, serving their appetites, and as with professions of godliness are artful, deluding the unsuspecting, and thus evincing characters unworthy of Christian confidence. (2) 1 Cor. v. 11: "But now I have written unto you not to keep com-

pany, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an ~~one~~, no not to eat." The terms here employed need no explanation, signifying as they do, characters which every decent man abhors. (3) 2 Thess. iii. 6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." The brother whom Paul here speaks of as walking disorderly, was one who led "a dissolute life"; according to Robinson, one who took such practical views of Christ's coming immediately to judge the world as led to the neglect of ordinary business; to live dishonestly on the earnings of the more industrious; and to indulge in extravagant fancies to the corruption of his own morals and the morals of others; who even persisted in doing this after being repeatedly admonished to the contrary. In 1 Thess. v. 14, such are denominated "unruly," i.e. ungovernable men, proud, self-willed, betraying an utter want of Christian temper. (4) Titus iii. 10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject." The word rendered heretic (*αἰρετικός*), signifies, according to Dr. Robinson, "one who creates dissensions, introduces errors, etc., — a factious person." The eleventh verse reveals his character more unequivocally: "Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." Conybeare and Howson render the last clause: "and by his sins is self-condemned." In like manner it may be shown that all those from whom the apostolic churches were instructed to withdraw had forfeited the Christian confidence of their brethren, were sowing seeds of dissension, and destroying the faith of others.

To apply these passages, therefore, to evangelical Pedobaptists, is logically classing them with those disreputable characters described in them. Our opponents seem half-conscious of the injustice done us by such application, and therefore endeavor to soften the implied censure by the most

generous acknowledgments of our high Christian character and zeal. "We fully admit and heartily admire the pure lives and eminent piety of many of those whom we are not accustomed to invite to partake with us in this sacred rite. We rejoice with all our hearts in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ manifested in them, and in the work which he is doing in the world by their honored agency. We know that they enjoy manifest and manifold tokens of being loved and accepted of Christ"; even "enjoy much larger measures of his spirit than most of us enjoy."

Here is a plain inconsistency. If we are such characters as those described in the passages above applied to us, we cannot be admired for our eminent piety. On the other hand, if we are distinguished for devoted piety, Christian zeal, and purity of life, then these texts are not justly applicable to us.

But from this inconsistency our Baptist friends cannot extricate themselves, so long as with a Christian spirit they endeavor to justify their exclusion of living evangelical churches from the memorial supper, in which by their own confession the latter have an equal interest, and to which among themselves they have an undisputed right.

II. The conscientious tenacity with which Baptists and Pedobaptists hold to their respective tenets, instead of making against, demands free communion. A tender regard to the consciences of brethren in Christ is distinctly taught in 1 Cor. x. 28, 29. The instruction is: Hurt not the conscientious feelings of a brother. Respect them. Your conscientious convictions, enlightened, as you believe, by the scriptures, are exceedingly sacred to you. Remember that his conscientious convictions, enlightened by the scriptures, are just as sacred to him. Deal kindly, then, with him for his conscience' sake, as you would have him deal kindly with you for the same reason. This respect, due to the Christian consciences of our brethren, is taught with equal explicitness in Rom. xiv. 5, 10, 13. We are not to judge or condemn them. God is their judge.

The conscience of a heathen or of an infidel, from whose minds the truths of the Bible are excluded — the conscience of one who discards its essential truths, or of one who shows great indifference to the commands of God — may be treated with disrespect; but the conscientious scruples of those who are prayerful readers of God's word, and who endeavor earnestly to work the righteousness of faith, are to be treated very differently. A man has nothing more sacred or inviolable than a conscience thus enlightened; nothing from which he would not sooner part than its soft whispers of peace. Such a conscience is most easily wounded. A slighting word or act of another gives it pain. It is that, therefore, which Christians should most highly respect in each other, and treat most tenderly.

Rev. J. T. Smith, in his reply to Dr. Peters on baptism, meets the objection that persons are sometimes so circumstanced that their immersion would be a physical impossibility, thus: "When the law of Christ requires a definite physical act (as it does in both the ordinances of the church) and there is a physical impossibility of performing it, the law is virtually obeyed, and it is so accepted of God, when the desire is felt and expressed of performing it" (p. 149). But is there not a moral necessity which is just as decided an impediment in the way of performing a voluntary act? It is said that God cannot lie. Joseph felt the same impossibility when he said: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Luther evinced the same necessity when he said before his opposers, laying his hand on his heart: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me; Amen!" Is there not in these instances a necessity which is as strong an impediment to a conscientious act as a physical necessity? Is it not a necessity of far more dignity and nobleness? Does it not mark a character most like God? Is it not the consummation of moral sublimity?

There are multitudes, men of talent, of scholarship, and earnest piety, among the Pedobaptists, who with Christian simplicity are fully resolved, with our Pilgrim Fathers, "to

follow the Bible, let it cost what it may," but who are so thoroughly convinced that the views of our opponents respecting baptism are unscriptural, that they could not submit to them without violating the strongest convictions of conscience. When told they must adopt them and act accordingly, or be excluded from sacramental communion, they feel bound to the latter alternative by the same constrainings of conscience as held Joseph in the house of Pharaoh, and Luther before the Diet at Worms. Such are certainly to be commiserated, if not justified. We cannot see why they are not held by a necessity as imperative, and as worthy of Christian regard and sympathy as a physical necessity.

That this is the condition of our Baptist brethren not less than our own, they repeatedly affirm, and we believe. Here, then, are two classes of professing Christians alike devoted, and alike conscientiously adhering to the word of God as the ultimate rule of faith and duty. Now shall one exclude the other from its sacramental board on account of supposed errors conscientiously held? Not so the apostle taught. He bids us respect each other's conscientious convictions touching modes of rites and forms of church order; and so long as we see in each other the image of the Master, to spread boards of sacramental love reciprocally free.

III. Inclusion in a covenant guarantees its privileges (Gal. iii. 29). Here Paul asserts that the believer in Jesus is included in the Abrahamic covenant, entitled to all the blessings of that covenant, and of course to all its privileges as dispensed under the gospel. He who was in the Abrahamic covenant under the old dispensation was entitled, as a true Israelite, to all the privileges of the Jewish church. So he who is in the same covenant under the dispensation of the gospel is entitled, when he has proved his interest in it, to all the privileges of the gospel church. Circumcision brought one into the Abrahamic covenant, but faith brings him into it under the gospel. If we are brought into the gospel covenant by faith, then after manifesting it by pub-

licly taking the vows of God, we are entitled to the public privileges of that covenant.

IV. The right of Pedobaptists to the communion among themselves, insures to other professing Christians the privilege of partaking with them. Our Baptist friends freely concede this right to orthodox Pedobaptists. But if it is right for Pedobaptists to observe the Lord's supper in their own churches, the act must be pleasing to Christ. Consequently, on their own principles, the Baptists may and ought to commune with them. But if it be still maintained to be wrong for Baptists to commune with orthodox Pedobaptist churches lawfully celebrating the sacramental supper, it is so: 1. Because it is the special mission of the former to maintain the ordinances of the gospel in their exact form and order. But we have shown that to refuse sacramental fellowship for such cause cannot be proved scriptural. 2. If wrong, it is so because some moral taint would be contracted by such associations. But it will not be pretended that any moral taint can be contracted by sacramental associations with those with whom Christ communes, and who are distinguished for their Christian virtues. 3. If wrong, it is so because the communion of the Baptists with the Pedobaptists would sanction the errors and misapprehensions of the latter. But communing with others at the table of Christ does not sanction their faults. Were it the necessary result of intercommunion, the Baptists would sanction the sins of their own brethren whenever they gather around the sacramental board. But this they will not admit. No more do they sanction the errors of Pedobaptists by sacramental communion with them. Sacramental communion with another is simply a recognition of a common oneness in Christ. Hence the communion of the Pedobaptists in the Lord's supper is really the sin, not the uniting of the Baptists with them; a sin of which some of the latter are so far from complaining, that they even affirm it to be the duty of the former to commit it in obedience to their perverted consciences.

V. The inevitable results of Baptist principles of church

communion, were they universally adopted and carried out, show their unscripturalness. These results flow from a scriptural fact in connection with a law of mental activity. The fact is that the exact organization of the gospel church, its exact mode of discipline and form of worship are, in their details, far from being distinctly defined in the New Testament. This is affirmed by Andrew Fuller and Dr. Arnold. The law is that the human mind, endowed with large discursive powers, easily swayed by feelings or warped by prejudices, often guided to its decisions by peculiarities of temperament and logical tendencies, early associations or educational proclivities, will, when employed in investigating religious forms, be almost sure to reach different conclusions. To insist, therefore, that the gospel church shall be constructed and administered precisely according to the apostolic model, or that every Christian society, however small, has the right to exclude from its communion all who in the least deviate from what they believe to be that model, will cause instead of peace, animosity; instead of union, divisions and subdivisions without number. The noblest immunities of the human mind, as at present circumstanced, render such a result inevitable.

This has been painfully true in the past; nor so long as partially sanctified hearts diffuse their disturbing influences through our moral sensibilities and around our loftiest powers of thought, can the future promise in this respect much improvement. For only prove one gospel rite or form of worship modal, and reason sees not why another may not be modal, and then another, and another; indeed, it sees no adequate cause for not giving to all the same inflexible nature. Nor if Christ saw a necessity for constituting one modal, can the reason see why there is not the virtual necessity for making others, nay all, modal; in other words, were it necessary to give one a fixed, inflexible character contrary to the freedom of the gospel, why not give all a similar character, contrary to the freedom of the gospel? Thus the myriad minds of God's people, wandering

on from age to age, one fixing here and another there, will not be likely to harmonize anywhere. But as the great majority of Christians in the past have not decided that exactness in mode is essential to the proper administration of a gospel rite or form of worship, the extreme result above supposed has not been reached, and by the continuance of the same cause we trust it will not be reached in the future. But let the principle of strict communionists be universally adopted, and no limit to division in the catholic church can be fixed. Indeed, there could be no catholic church but the invisible church. Thus the principle, that no indulgence should be allowed to mistakes regarding a rite or positive law because it is a part of the constituted form of the scriptural or modal church carried out to its legitimate results, would ensure war rather than peace, and shiver into shreds the visible body of Christ, thus proving the principle unscriptural.

VI. Three principles of divine action respecting the Christian church admitted both by ourselves and our opponents, can be made to meet in sacramental fellowship only on the ground of Christian consciousness. 1. The Divine determination to guarantee to man the enjoyment of the full immunities of his nature in unrestricted inquiry concerning matters of religious belief and practice, guided only by the requisitions of revelation and the dictates of a holy heart. 2. The Divine determination to have a holy church entirely spiritual in its nature, separate from the world as Christ was separate from the world. 3. The Divine determination that this holy church, made alive by the life of Christ dwelling in its members, should, even while scattered over the world, and coming and passing away as the generations revolve, be united in one, so as to form a personal unity with him who is their Lord and life, according to his prayer in John xvii. 21, 22. These are glorious purposes of God respecting his church, not one of which would we alter. These must be harmonized in church organizations and sacramental communion. Where can they find their point of agreement?

Nowhere, we confidently aver, but on manifested faith, uniting all to Christ and to each other. We are therefore prepared to affirm,

VII. This is the only principle on which a true visible catholic church can be founded in a sphere of intelligences but partially sanctified, to each of whom is guaranteed the right of private judgment. Circumstanced thus, two things are indispensable to the highest efficiency of the church of Christ—spirituality and concord. Concord without spirituality is a lifeless mass. On the other hand, spirituality without agreement and co-operation cannot rise into full efficiency. When the vitality of the individual Christian is manifestly in sympathy with the vitalities of all other professing Christians, the church is in its normal state. In such a state alone can it become the true visible catholic church. For that church must have an internal unity as well as an external; indeed, the internal is the essential element out of which the external must grow.

We had a fair experiment of attempted harmony, grounded on external rites and usages of worship, in the Jewish church. Its divine authority linked the Jews to their religion and its ritual services with chains of steel. But with all their attachment to its forms, and their unity thereby secured, the Jewish church was exceedingly defective in spirituality. Formality found in her enclosure a congenial soil. It luxuriated everywhere. Hundreds were palsied by it in every generation. The Jewish church could never have nurtured the religious life of humanity to its full strength. It was indeed designed only for the scaffolding by which God was building up the temple of his spiritual church, destined in the ensuing dispensation to rise in its full splendors. It was not constituted to grow by the independency of sanctified thought. It was never fitted to become the one church of the world.

The Romish church has effectually tried the experiment of establishing herself as a catholic church on external observances under the gospel dispensation; and, though by

suppressing free thought she has extended her sway far and wide, yet, as the atmosphere of independent thinking begins to circulate through the iron-barred apartments of her spacious fabric, she already begins to totter. Her constitution, antagonistic to freedom of inquiry, insures her downfall. "Failure" is written on every stone of her proud edifice. When the light of individual judgment shall illuminate all her dark dungeons she will inevitably fall as a decayed temple. The elasticity and expansiveness of human thought is too great to be confined by any iron railing of rites and forms. All churches established for the express purpose of defending a rite, and therefore churches assuming too much the character of ritualism, will, equally and for the same reason, fail of securing true catholicity, the perfect coalescence of spirituality and concord.

We may safely predict, on grounds purely psychological, that the Baptist church, if it retains the dogma of restricted communion, will never become the visible church universal, absorbing all others into itself. The only rock on which such a church, destined to fill the world, increasing in power and solidity as the centuries roll on, can be built, is the harmony of recognized Christian consciousness.

VIII. The dignity and glory of the principle of sacramental fellowship which we are advocating recommend its adoption. It founds the churches, not on a lifeless rite, but on a spiritual vitality. Reason illuminated, elevated, and refined by revelation, and love kindled by the Holy Ghost, are the noblest and most beautiful realities in the intelligent creation. This is a foundation which has life in itself, and vitalizes the whole superstructure resting upon it.

It is a principle replete with noblest generousities. It demands so much decision, blended with so much charity of judgment, such inflexible adhesion to the leading principles of the redemptive scheme, combined with so much elasticity respecting non-essentials, that it is extremely difficult for the human mind unaided to comprehend it. It is a truth so grand, so antagonistic to man's selfishness, pride of opinion,

and proneness to misplaced decision in regard to principle, and yet so admirably adapted to meet the claims of free thought and the requisites of a holy church, that its discovery can hardly be deemed the result of human sagacity. Manifestly, the example of our compassionate High Priest, and the divinely inspired pen of Paul were needed to bring it convincingly before the comprehension of mankind. A principle so noble and ennobling must occupy a central place in the church of Christ.

IX. Exactness of mode, psychologically considered, is much more important in the eucharist than in baptism. Baptism signifies our ingrafting into Christ and dedication to him. The Lord's supper not only signifies these, but that Christ is the source and nourisher of his imparted life within us. The subjective state required of the recipient is therefore in some respects different. He is commemorating the death of his Lord. He is kneeling, as it were, with him when "exceeding sorrowful"; bowing and gazing upon him suspended in torture on the cross; hearing his groans of anguish and cry of desertion; and is kindling with emotions the tenderest and most sympathetic.

Such being the position of the Lord's supper and the subjective state appropriate to its reception, the comparative evils to the Christian life of misapprehensions respecting the two rites will readily suggest themselves. 1. The sympathies and affections of the recipient of the sacramental feast constituting the highest spiritual state, are most attenuated and delicate, often most evanescent; and hence, in the partially sanctified heart, most easily disturbed, by thoughts and associations at all incongruous to themselves; and in a service usually occupying from half an hour to an hour, almost certain to be. Even mistakes concerning its accidents are exceedingly liable to produce injurious effects; and when these disturbing forces assume the character of unfailing associations of its celebration, most disastrous spiritual results will be sure to follow. This the history of the church confirms. Hence the apostle so earnestly exhorts to self-ex-

amination as preparatory to, and in connection with, its observance, that the mind and heart may be cleared of all uncongenial thoughts and emotions during the hallowed hour. He has left no such instruction touching preparation for baptism. The reason is obvious. 2. Baptism is to be administered but once. The Lord's supper is to be often repeated. A mistake or misapprehension often repeated, must of necessity intensify or multiply the evil effects. 3. The manner of a son's adoption into a family cannot be so important as the method of his conduct afterwards. It cannot be true that the conscientious mistakes of a domestic servant in performing her daily tasks—mistakes liable to disturb the whole household—are of no consequence; while if she make a conscientious mistake touching the precise mode of entering the family, she must be treated as an alien.

In view of these considerations, exactness in mode, to human view, must be less important in baptism than in the eucharist. If therefore Christ has made baptism modal, and the eucharist not so, the reason lies in the inscrutable depths of divine sovereignty. In respect to it we can only say: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Our leading design in this part of our discussion has been to transfer sacramental communion from the modality of baptism (including the reception of the rite in infancy),¹ as its basis, to a baptism accepted by Christ; to show that the freedom of the gospel dispensation extends to its rites constituting a ritual liberty, which insures the acceptance of a rite or ceremony when its essentialities are retained, and it is performed in a manner conscientiously believed to be scriptural; that ritual precision, while an element homogeneous with a ritualistic church, is utterly incompatible with a church disenthralled from ceremonial bondage; that if the gospel church has one rite or form of worship, modal, while the others partake of the free spirit of the church of which they are the abiding exponents, the reason can

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, No. 83 p. 452.

discover no assignable cause for the distinction. Consequently, it has been our endeavor to show that when a society of Christians in covenant with God and with each other have submitted to baptism in the form conscientiously believed to be scriptural, Christ accepts them as baptized Christians, and the body as a true church entitled to the privileges of a church. According to principles Part I. pp. 490, 491 the higher law of charity, therefore, is to be our guide, and free sacramental communion becomes the law.

We have now traced our argument through three processes of demonstration: (1) Shown that free communion is demanded by the nature and genius of the gospel; (2) by the laws of associated Christianity; (3) by the radical element of the Christian church itself. A perfect harmony subsists between them; all tend to one point; all culminate in one glorious summit—the unity of the redeemed in their Head, symbolized by the holy supper, the memorial feast of the household of God. We might have concluded *a priori* that the rites and institutions of the gospel, and the manner of observing them would be in entire agreement with its spirit and genius; and on a thorough and careful investigation we find *a posteriori* the conjecture true.

Hence we have dwelt so much in this discussion on charity or unity in Christ. Charity must be the determinative character of a system which is the product of mercy; and the essence and life of the gospel is, and must be, the life of the gospel church and of its institutions. If free communion is in full harmony with the spirit of the gospel, and close communion is not, the former must be true, and the latter untenable. Indeed the whole controversy is a battle about love; call it ritual righteousness, expediency, wisdom, suitability, congruity, fitness, it is resolvable into this all-comprehending affection—how it may be most intelligently, wisely, and successfully exercised in relation to the positive institutes of the gospel, and in keeping with it.

PART III.—THE PRECEDENCE OF BAPTISM TO THE LORD'S SUPPER
NOT DEMONSTRABLE. THE HISTORICAL ARGUMENT. CONCLUSION.

SECTION I.—*Precedence of Baptism to the Lord's Supper
not demonstrable.*

Founded upon the indispensableness of mode in baptism, strict communionists maintain the further position that there is a constituted order in the two rites of the gospel—baptism necessarily preceding the holy supper.¹ This order the divine Lawgiver has established as unalterably as the institutes themselves. It cannot be reversed for the sake of comfort or convenience even for an hour. They even affirm that all obligation to partake of Christ's supper is based upon the previous reception of baptism. So indispensable, indeed, is this order, that it would be a sin to partake of the eucharist unbaptized; this order being as fixed and unalterable as that established between circumcision and the passover in the Mosaic ritual.

The battle between free and strict communionists among the Baptists rages most fiercely around this point. To the Pedobaptists, however, it is a matter of comparatively little concern. In their estimation, the argument for free communion already presented is sufficient. The denial of the necessary precedence of baptism to the eucharist is only corroborative of previous conclusions; only shows that the free ritualism of the apostles applies not less to the order than the mode of gospel rites. Not that the order is deemed of no importance. Pedobaptists, indeed, generally admit the propriety of the precedence of baptism to the eucharist; some maintain that it should invariably precede it; others, that while this order is the rule, it is not the inevitable rule. Their main positions are two: 1. Their baptism is acceptable to Christ on the Pauline principle already discussed. 2. They deny the truthfulness of a fixed inviolable order in the sacramental rites of

¹ Curtis, pp. 74, 141, 247; Arnold, pp. 16-19; Denison, p. 84; Brantley, pp. 1-8; Howell, pp. 152-179.

the gospel, so that baptism, in all circumstances and in all ages, must precede the eucharist; obligation to partake of the latter depending entirely on the reception of the former. This denial, they maintain, it is not necessary for them to demonstrate. It will be enough to show that the invariable antecedence of baptism to the sacramental supper is incapable of proof. For if this point can be made clear it will also be clear, first, that the Baptists may enjoy the privilege of communion with Pedobaptists around the table of their Lord; and secondly, if it may be their privilege, it is their duty.

We will now present some considerations disproving the necessity of baptismal precedency in sacramental ordinances.

I. We lay it down as an axiomatical proposition, and as fundamental in our argument relative to the view before us, that whatever is essential to a ritual service requires a positive precept or its equivalent. The two rites of the gospel are appointed by express precepts. So it is with all its outward observances, unless they are developments of some principle incorporated in the institutes of the old dispensation, and brought over to the new. But our Baptist brethren deny all authoritative connection between the Mosaic and the gospel church. Its rites and all that pertains to their essentiality must therefore be definitely prescribed by precepts. If, then, the precedence of baptism to the Lord's supper be an essentiality, we may expect to find the order definitely stated in the form of positive law. Precedent, in the circumstances, to be admitted as law, must be so clearly, so indisputably the legal will of Christ in the matter as to preclude all reasonable possibility of mistaking its authoritative significance; otherwise it may be justly esteemed an accident, not an essentiality.

II. This necessary precedence of baptism to the Lord's supper must lie either in the inherent natures or necessary relations of the positive laws enjoining the rites, or in the legal enactment of the Lawgiver. A positive law is a distinct requisition prescribing a specific action. The baptismal law, "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," imposes a

specific obligation. The eucharistic law, "Do this in remembrance of me," imposes another specific obligation. Each stands by itself, and prescribes an act standing by itself. One sustains no dependent relation to the other. One may be observed acceptably with no thought of the other. There is nothing in their natures, nor in the nature of things, nothing in the language in which they are couched, nor in the circumstances in which they were given, establishing incontestibly the precedence of one to the other. Certainly there is nothing in their natures or their relations which forbids the Lord's supper to be put before baptism, if Christ had so ordained. Nor can the indispensable antecedence of the latter to the former be established by any process of moral reasoning. It is not enough to affirm that since baptism is simply dedicatory while the eucharist is commemorative and to be repeated, the single act should naturally be performed before the commemorative and reiterated. There might be a suitableness in its priority in ordinary cases, but that alone would not be sufficient to establish a law of invariable antecedence. Nor is it enough to say that as baptism marks the beginning of the Christian life, indicating the first public act of consecration to God, and as the eucharist denotes nurture, increase in the spirit of consecration, the former must precede the latter by natural necessity, as planting the tree naturally precedes its cultivation. We admit there may be a propriety in first dedicating the soul to God in baptism; but the propriety of the precedence of one rite to another is a very different thing from a fixed inviolable law demanding it. Certainly the propriety does not imply that the neglect of the first cancels all obligations to perform the last. The neglect of one sign of dedication to God is no reason, in itself considered, for neglecting another; most assuredly it cannot imply a prohibition to perform the other. Private prayer or individual communion of soul with God, very properly goes before public prayer or worship. This, we might say, is the natural order. But no one will maintain that neglecting private prayer exempts one from the duty of uniting in public

prayer. Even the neglect of one moral law does not release from obligation to others. We are required to love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. But the failure to love God does not release us from the duty of loving our neighbor. Much less can disobedience to one of many positive precepts which stand independently, each on its own basis, be a justifiable ground of disobeying others. The fact, therefore, that there may be a propriety in receiving baptism before the eucharist, does not establish a fixed law of precedence, so that obligation to the latter is annulled by neglect of the former. Plainly, nothing but the express declaration of the Lawgiver can determine the precedence of baptism to the Lord's supper to be so vital that our obligation to partake of the last depends entirely upon our previous submission to the first. In the Mosaic dispensation, circumcision was distinctly prescribed as the necessary prerequisite to the reception of the passover. If a connection subsists between baptism and the Lord's supper equally fixed and unalterable, we have a right to expect a precept prescribing the order equally definite. But that such a precept can be found is not pretended. Precedent is the only remaining method by which the inviolable connection in question can be established. But it seems exceedingly incongruous to the character of Christ as holy Lawgiver in his church, to leave an essentiality in its most important ordinance to be learned by the successive generations of his disciples from the uncertainties of precedent.

III. The necessary precedence of baptism to the eucharist cannot be proved by apostolic precedent. Although it seems to us unreasonable, very much like an absurdity, to suppose that an essentiality of the determinative ordinance of the gospel church, instead of being distinctly stated, should be left to be spelled out from the practice of the apostles by those who should come after them; yet this is one of the main grounds on which our opponents build their argument for an inherent and invariable connection between the two rites. The principle is this: as the disciples were appointed

by Christ to erect the superstructure of the visible church, their example constitutes a law of order in its sacramental ordinances, universal and unalterable, though it be not stated in the form of a statute. From this point, thus established, they infer that the neglect of baptism annuls all obligation to partake of the holy supper. That baptism preceded the Lord's supper in the practice of the apostles, so far as known, we readily admit; and yet, that it establishes a law binding the church, in all situations and in all periods of her eventful history, is not to our minds conclusive. A precedent, to become a law universally obligatory, must as indisputably express the legal will of Christ as a direct precept. This is self-evident. But judged by this criterion, the apostolic example relative to the priority of baptism to the eucharist is exceedingly defective.

1. The foundation of the argument is laid in conjecture. It is assumed that Christ gave to the apostles a precept or rule making the eucharist dependent on baptism in such a sense that the observance of the former is prohibited, unless preceded by submission to the latter. This is the first conjecture. The second is, that it was thought best to conceal the precept and require the church, in succeeding ages, to spell out its existence from the practice of the apostle. But why was it not recorded, that the latest generation might have the advantage of a preceptive statement as well as they? It would have occupied but little space to record the precept, "Baptism must invariably precede the Lord's supper." Why was it not? The only conceivable reply is: There was doubtless some wise reason for the omission. But this is nothing more than a pious guess. Thus the very foundation of the argument is enveloped in the mists of conjecture, which gives to the whole an air of unsubstantialness.

2. The bare precedent of an external observance in Christ's kingdom does not prove a principle. The only object in referring to apostolic precedent is to establish a law. But a law is always based on a principle; in other words, it is carrying out into a practical rule of life a thought or desire

of the Lawgiver. It is therefore much more important to ascertain the principle enjoining a church rite, than to ascertain the practice of those who founded the church. Indeed, the paramount object in ascertaining the practice is thereby to ascertain the principle which the uniform practice is supposed to imply. A principle — the reason or motive for a rite — never changes; the rite itself, or its relations, may be modified by circumstances. Hence, the alleged uniform example of the apostle, relative to the point in question, may not prove a universal law.

Look at a parallel instance. The institutes of circumcision and the passover were both neglected the greater part of the time the Israelites sojourned in the wilderness. Moses, as lawgiver of Israel, stands in the same relation to the institution of the order and discipline of the Jewish church, as the apostles stand to the institution of the gospel church. Moses celebrated the passover on leaving Egypt and the ensuing year; but never again. Circumcision was also at first practised; but was neglected ever after during his life. Indeed, the administration of both institutes was omitted for some time after his death. Now suppose there had been no positive statement of the appointment of these observances by law, or of their relative order; and suppose the records of the Jewish church had closed at the death of Moses, as the records of the apostolic church closed at the death of the apostles; what inference could have been justly drawn by the Jews in after times from the practice of Moses respecting the obligation to observe circumcision and the passover? Plainly, that they might be omitted at discretion. Precedent, in this case, taught what was directly at variance with law. The principle on which God acted was, that he would have a people distinct from the other nations, and who should be known as a people separated to his worship and service. He therefore instituted a sign of this separation. But the principle could be carried out while they were isolated in the wilderness without the sign. Circumstances in this case, and that too in a purely ritual church, not only modified the

rites, or their relations to each other, but led to a precedent which actually sanctioned their omission altogether. The uniform practice of the apostles, therefore, cannot of itself prove that the antecedence of baptism to the Lord's supper is to be an invariable law in all the subsequent conditions and ages of the church.

8. The precedent of the apostles in this case is specially unsatisfactory on the ground assumed by the Baptists in discarding entirely the Old Testament as a source of instruction concerning the rites and institutes of the gospel church; affirming it to be a new organization having no dependence on the Mosaic. The rites and institutes of a church succeeding another and occupying its place, grounded in the same covenant, incorporating the same great principles and leading designs — as the gospel church is supposed by the Pedobaptists to take the place of the Sinaitic church — may be much more satisfactorily learned from precedent, than when the church is believed to be an entirely new organization, with a new and more spiritual covenant, and with new rites and forms of worship. In the former case — the new organization on old principles — there may be a change in the mode of the rite, institute, or observance, while the principle or reason of it in its new organic form is substantially the same. In such a church the example of its founders very easily assumes the authority of law.

Take for illustration the institution of the Christian Sabbath. There is a reason lying deep in man's physical and moral nature for the devotion of one seventh part of time exclusively to religious thought and service; his physical nature requiring rest, and his moral welfare demanding occasionally an entire suspension of secular thought and feeling. This principle or reason for the law of the Sabbath recognized in the old dispensation and still remaining, the question is appropriately asked: Is there any indication that devoting one day in seven is forbidden in the New Testament, or is this want in man's nature met in any other way? If not, the example of the apostles in observing the first day of the week as a day

of religious service is very satisfactorily transformed into a law setting apart the first instead of the seventh as the holy Sabbath.

Infant baptism is another case in point. The covenant of the gospel church being but a new dispensation of the Abrahamic covenant which included children with the parents, the question arises: Is that narrowed down so as to exclude the children of those who by professed faith are received into it? As the Jews in the time of Christ were very strongly attached to this feature of the covenant, we naturally conclude that if it were narrowed or modified so as to exclude the children of believing parents, we should have some intimation of it; indeed, a positive prohibition of their dedication by the use of the initiatory rite. But when, in the absence of all such intimation or prohibition, we hear Paul saying (Gal. iii. 29): "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"; we naturally conclude that the Abrahamic covenant has flowed down to us in a channel as deep and as broad as under the old dispensation. And when we see the apostles acting just as if the covenant had come down to us with all its rich promises, blessing the children with the parents; Paul at one time baptizing "the jailor and all his straightway," while we have no evidence that any but himself believed; and at another, baptizing Lydia and her household without the least intimation that any believed but herself; and hear him saying "I baptized also the household of Stephanas"; the example of the apostles points at once to a law requiring, or to the privilege permitting, the children of believing parents to be received into the covenant under its new as under its old dispensation by the application of the seal.

In view of these instances we see just the weakness of the argument from the precedent of the apostle as viewed by the Baptists. In a newly organized church in which we have no old principle or covenant long developed in rites and usages to fall back upon, the force of example in authorizing outward ceremonies and their order must always be feeble;

because these may change with circumstances, while the principle or covenant remains unaltered and unalterable. The practice of the apostles respecting the Sabbath can never prove, with absolute certainty, that the first day of the week is to be observed to the end of time as a day holy to the Lord, without relying on the principles and commands of the Old Testament. Hence it is that our Baptist brethren are so undecided in respect to the holiness of the Sabbath as prescribed in the fourth commandment. For the same reason the bare example of the apostles can never teach with unerring certainty the precedence of baptism to the holy supper. It can no more prove this order to be an undeviating law than the practice of Moses in neglecting the rites of circumcision and the passover proves that these Jewish institutes might be omitted in all succeeding ages of the Jewish church, or celebrated according to the will of their leaders. The precedent of the apostles may prove that the principle could be best carried out then by putting baptism before the eucharist; but it does not prove that circumstances or individual cases may not rise in the subsequent history of the church, when the principle, or more important principles, will be better carried out by reversing the order.

4. Whatever is not vital, but adventitious or incidental, to an institute or to its administration, cannot be considered binding in all ages and in all circumstances. When a precedent is so situated that it may have legitimately arisen out of existing circumstances, it wants the element of law. It has no necessary dependence on a superior will. The unleavened bread used in the eucharist, its reception in a reclining posture, its celebration in an upper room, and at evening, are of this sort. These are all incidentals, and may be modified by circumstances, while the spirit of the ordinance remains intact. So the antecedence of baptism to the eucharist may be incidental, never designed to be an invariable law to all succeeding ages.

5. This argument from apostolic precedent, taken in its length and breadth, and carried into the various branches

of Christian conduct, is a sword with two edges. When employed relative to sacramental fellowship, it cuts directly across the line of thought pursued by our opponents. Precedent of thought or principle, is much more important than precedent of external observances. Hence, the argument drawn from the apostolic precedent relative to fellowship is much stronger than the argument of our opponents for the priority of baptism to the eucharist; the latter being a precedent of action merely, the former of thought or principle. What was that principle? It was that the gospel is a system of forgiveness — that Christ's disciples must forgive as he forgives (Eph. iv. 32). Consequently, it was their belief that they must fellowship sacramentally all whom Christ thus fellowships. Hence, their precedent of fellowship is a precedent of the deepest Christian thought and experience — the expression of Christ's heart, his yearning desires towards all his disciples. It is therefore a principle as wide as the whole circle of accredited believers, and lasting as time. It is treating Christ's disciples just as he treats them. From this principle the primitive disciples never deviated in ecclesiastical action. Thus we have in the example of the apostles relative to eucharistic fellowship the precedent of principle and action combined. It has all the force of our opponents' argument with the irresistible force of a precedent of thought, of Christian feeling in addition. Besides, this primitive precedent of communion has for its basis a definitely stated precept (Rom. xv. 7): "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ received us, to the glory of God."

Consequently, the apostolic precedent relative to free fellowship contains every element requisite to constitute it a law invariable and immutable, meeting all individual cases in every period of the church's history. It is a uniform precedent of action, and a precedent of principle, of thought or design, as unalterable as the feelings of the Saviour's heart. It contains just what, and just all, that is necessary to give it the authority and force of a universal law. The inference, therefore, of our opponents, that the precedent of the apostles

is an unbending law, excluding all the unbaptized from church fellowship, coming as it does in direct collision with another precedent confirmed by a precept, cannot be justly drawn. For it is impossible that apostolic precedent should establish two laws demanding lines of conduct exactly opposite, so that obedience to one is necessarily disobedience to the other.

IV. The apostolic commission, it is maintained, expressly teaches the precedence of baptism to the sacramental supper. It is recorded Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. This is called "the law of the Christian church." Here we have, it is said, the things we are to do and the order in which we are to do them. Men are first to be taught the way of salvation, then baptized, and afterwards instructed to observe all things commanded them; and among these "all things" to be observed is the Lord's supper. This order, it is said, is to be strictly followed. Hence, it is inferred that the omission of baptism implies a forfeiture of the privileges of the eucharist. But this, to say the least, is a far-drawn conclusion, and fastened to its premise by threads extremely attenuated. Besides, according to our reasoning under the preceding head, it is by no means legitimate. This mention of baptism may imply the natural order, even the order preferred by Christ, and still it may not prove that the omission of baptism exempts from all obligation to the Lord's supper and all the other things to be observed; even rendering it a sin to observe them. It may imply a propriety in the order, the best way, a general rule. But when we undertake to make it a universal rule — an iron track which can never properly be deviated from in any circumstances, and draw from it the still further inference, that the omission of baptism excuses from the duty of the eucharist, even rendering its observance, however conscientious one may be, or however tender or strong his attachment to his Saviour, offensive in his sight, we draw from our fancies or prejudices, not from the living word.

Besides, if this inference is correct, it proves too much. The "all things" to be observed doubtless include all Chris-

tian duties and privileges. If the neglect of baptism deprives of the privileges of the eucharist, and exempts from the duty of observing it, then neglect of baptism releases from obligation to all Christian duties, and deprives of all Christian privileges. It releases from obligation to prayer and public worship, brotherly love, contributing to the necessities of saints, warning sinners, admonishing the erring among those who profess the Saviour's name; indeed, from laboring in any capacity for Christ. If the omission of baptism releases not from all these duties, and it is still urged that it releases from the duty of the sacramental table, then the omission of baptism releases from a part only of the duties included in the "all things"; which is an extremely distorted interpretation of the passage. It is making a discrimination utterly without warrant. The position of our opponents drives them to this absurdity, unless they assume the ground that the "all things" imply simply church duties and privileges, in distinction from Christian duties and privileges. But this distinction would be equally unreasonable. It would make "all things" to mean only one thing. Thus, their inference from the apostolic commission involves them in most glaring inconsistencies.

Is it still said, we think their inference has some evidence to support it? It will not materially strengthen our argument to deny this. Evidence of a given point, and a demonstration of it, are two very different things — often standing as wide apart as truth and error. It is just this difference — the fact that this inference is not demonstrable — on which we insist, and on which we rely for the maintenance of our cause, because it furnishes ample ground for the exercise of charity towards those who, in the baptist sense, conscientiously mistake the order of the Christian institutes.

V. Could the priority of baptism to the eucharist be proved to be a law of Christ's house, we should still deny the right of the Baptists to withhold sacramental fellowship from the orthodox Pedobaptists on two grounds, discussed in Part II. Section 2: (a) because Christ manifestly accepts of baptism

as well in the form of sprinkling as in the form of immersion ; (b) because ritual freedom extends to the order of gospel rites not less than to their modes ; and thus releases the church from the obligation of insisting upon the precedence of one to the other as a term of sacramental recognition. On these unchanging principles of the New Testament we plant ourselves, with no apprehension of being disapproved by the Master.

Strict communionists found an argument for the precedence of baptism to the eucharist on the identity of John's baptism with Christian baptism. This identity is denied. But we have not time to enter largely into the discussion of the question ; nor do we deem its solution essential to our argument. We will only mention a few considerations which go to show the impossibility of identifying the two. We would premise that sameness of form does not prove rites identical ; identity of import alone proves this.

1. The discriminating manner in which John's baptism is invariably spoken of, indicates a difference between it and the Christian rite. It is never named without some descriptive adjunct guarding or limiting its import. It is the baptism of water, or John's baptism, or the baptism of repentance. Neither the evangelists nor the apostles ever call it by the simple name "baptism," by which they designate the Christian ordinance.

2. John's baptism did not belong to the Christian dispensation, and could not therefore be identical with Christian baptism. John's work was preparatory. He came simply as the harbinger of Christ ; not to set up his kingdom, but to prepare the place for its erection. The predictions of the prophets demonstrate this (Isa. xl. 3, 4). Here is an allusion to pioneers sent before a victorious monarch going to take possession of a city or territory. Their service was to prepare a way for his coming. The monarch did not approach till their work was completed. They did not organize his government ; this dignity was reserved for the monarch to do in person. So Christ did not take possession of his kingdom,

or set it up by the agency of John. John had no such commission. He was simply a forerunner — a reformer. He came in the power of Elijah to call the nation to repentance, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” Christ could not set up his kingdom till that reformatory work was done. Wherever, therefore, we place the mission of John, whether in the old dispensation, or in a dispensation peculiar to itself — a sort of preparatory dispensation — a state of twilight between the dawn and the rising of the sun, it most undeniably did not belong to the new dispensation, unless we can identify two things utterly distinct — a preparation for an event with the event itself. John’s baptism in form may indeed have been introduced into Christ’s kingdom after it was founded, and he had assumed the prerogatives of king. But this is a very different thing from supposing it to be identically the same. The nature and significance of a rite must always partake of the nature and significance of the dispensation whose purpose it serves.

3. The fact that the Messianic kingdom of the new dispensation was not set up till after John’s baptism was instituted, shows that it was not Christian baptism. This is not a matter of inference as adduced under the last head, but positively stated. John proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; it was approaching, but had not come. He speaks of Christ, the head of this kingdom, as the *ἐρχόμενος*. We know that Jesus did not even begin to preach for some months after John began to baptize. Now it is plain that a sovereign or absolute monarch must be sole lawgiver in his own dominions. It would be an absurdity to speak of the laws or institutions of Cyrus before he ascended the throne; certainly before the kingdom of Persia was founded. This must be especially true respecting Christ, who is sovereign in the highest sense, so exalted that he can admit no counsellor. All the rites and ordinances of his kingdom must surely have originated with himself. It is universally allowed that Christ originated every other rite or part of the discipline and order of his church except baptism. Even the

Pedobaptists, who maintain that the principles of the rites of the gospel church were brought over from the Mosaic dispensation, admit that they were brought over by his sole authority. Surely the Baptists, occupying the position that all the institutes of the Christian church are enactments entirely new, must admit this. It is extremely inconsistent to maintain that the most important rite of the new dispensation; as they affirm, the very foundation stone of Christ's visible church, was instituted even before the distinctive form of his New Testament kingdom had begun to be. John's averments also — "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me"; "He must increase, but I must decrease"; He that cometh from heaven is above all" — clash with the idea that John was empowered to set up the kingdom of Christ, to enact and promulgate its laws. The time and manner of promulgating the law of baptism have, too, a striking significance as bearing on this point. It was directly after he had announced that all power in heaven and in earth was given him to administer his mediatorial kingdom. The logical connection is this: As I have accomplished the work of atonement and instruction, I am now fully empowered to promulge the laws and institutions of my kingdom. "Go ye, therefore," etc. (Matt. xxviii. 19). Why, in this last commission, did he designate baptism, and not the memorial supper, if both had been appointed before? Does not the omission of the latter indicate that baptism was now first appointed, and its formula stated?

4. John's baptism was not administered in the name of Christ, and therefore was not Christian baptism. Nothing is more determinative of the nature of baptism than the name in which it is administered. To be baptized into the name of any one is to be baptized into his authority — into a profession of his principles, implying unreserved submission to them as the rules of life. To be baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, is a solemn dedication of the whole being to the Triune Jehovah; it is an acknowledgment of all the blessings which each of the

Persons of the Holy Trinity has engaged to confer on believers in the scheme of atonement ; a belief that the Father is one's covenant God and Protector, that the Son is his Atoning Sacrifice and Intercessor, and the Holy Spirit, his Sanctifier. We are not informed that the baptism of John was administered in the name of any one. It was simply a baptism unto repentance. It was not administered in the name of Jesus ; for when John began to baptize, Jesus was not known to him. We have no knowledge that he changed his practice in this respect afterwards. He certainly did not baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity. His baptism, therefore, was not identical with the Christian rite.

5. The faith required in the two baptisms was totally different. The one being a faith that the Messiah was speedily to come ; the other a faith or trust in his blood shed for the remission of sins as a ground of acceptance with God — a faith so dissimilar, that while the former may be exercised by the natural man, the latter can be exercised only by the regenerate. Our Baptist brethren especially insist that this higher faith is implied in Christian baptism, regarding it even as a symbol of Christ's death and resurrection ; and consequently as expressive of faith in him as our dying and risen Lord. Did John's baptism have this profound significance ? The opinions of Christ's disciples, even up to the period of his death, refute the supposition.

6. Those who were received into the church by the apostles after the kingdom of Christ was actually set up, were baptized according to the injunction given just before his ascension, notwithstanding they had received John's baptism. This was unquestionably true of some of the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost. But, not to insist on this, it is certain that the disciples at Ephesus, who had previously received only John's baptism, submitted to Christian baptism.

7. It is plain that regeneration, or vital union to Christ, was not the determinative qualification for the reception of John's baptism, while this is the determinative qualification

for Christian baptism; which distinction marks the vital difference between the two rites. Whatever may have been the nature of the repentance to which John summoned the Jewish nation, it is evident that he did not insist on the manifestation by the candidate of that repentance which is alone the product of the renewed heart.

We have no disposition to deny that John inculcated genuine repentance. Indeed, we do not see how a holy God, who looks at the heart, and in estimating character always weighs the spirit, could have commissioned one in preparing the way for the Messiah to preach anything but true, godly sorrow for sin. But what kind of repentance was John commissioned to preach, and what kind of repentance did his hearers actually exercise, and what kind was made the ground of baptism, are questions very different from each other, the confounding of which has caused much perplexity. We admit, therefore, that the *μετάνοια* which John preached was that repentance which flows from a regenerated heart; but we see no evidence that this was made a test qualification for the reception of baptism. If he did require it, he must have been deceived times almost without number. For it is said that Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were baptized by him — doubtless many thousands. All these confessed their sins. Now if they had been regenerated, and their repentance was truly Christian, they would have accepted Christ when he came. But the highest number of Christ's disciples named is about five hundred. The other hundreds baptized by John rejected him; which can be accounted for, only on the supposition that, while they professed repentance, their hearts had not been renovated by the Holy Ghost. The probability is, that but very few of them had been born again; and therefore that evidence of regeneration was not deemed an indispensable qualification for the rite. Their repentance, in the language of Dr. Justin Edwards, was a persuasion of "the necessity of repentance in order to the remission of sins" (Note on Luke iii. 3. See also Luke vii. 29). It was baptism unto repentance (*εἰς*)

expressing purpose (Bloomfield on Matt. iii. 11 ; Mark i. 4. See Robinson, under *εἰς*, d). These passages plainly indicate that evidence of regeneration was not demanded of the candidate for Johannic baptism.

Hence, while Christian baptism is appropriately called the "laver of regeneration," John's baptism is appropriately called the "laver of repentance." The editor of Olshausen (Vol. i. p. 257) has well expressed this difference. "In John's baptism it was virtually said: 'As thou art now immersed, so hast thou deserved to be destroyed in death; as thou now arisest, so shouldest thou arise a new man.' In the Christian baptism, on the contrary, the language is: 'As thou art now immersed, so art thou now buried into the vicarious death of Christ; as thou now emergest, so art thou born again a new man.'"

John also suggests a similar distinction between his baptism and that of Christ, in his intimation that the demands of the latter would be far more profound and heart-searching (Matt. iii. 11, 12; John i. 6-13). The purport of these passages is: "You may receive my baptism on a false profession of repentance, or of superficial reformation; but when Christ, whose forerunner I am, shall come, your sincerity shall be searchingly tested. He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire; he is the Regenerator; he will receive none to his kingdom who are not thus wrought upon by the Holy Ghost. He will make a thorough sifting among those who receive my baptism; all who are not united to him by the graces of the Spirit will be regarded as chaff, and burned with unquenchable fire."

Thus Christian baptism, as the initiatory rite to the Christian church — a church of regenerated members, — demands the evidence of regeneration; a change which the great majority of those who received John's baptism had not experienced, and which indicates a similar difference in the nature of the baptism which Christ instituted.

For these reasons, and for others which might be adduced, John's baptism can never be proved identical with Christian

baptism. We have therefore no determinative evidence that Christian baptism was instituted before the eucharist; the eucharist being instituted before Christ's death; Christian baptism, not till just before his ascension.

The two great arguments for the precedence of baptism to the eucharist, built on the identity of Johannic with Christian baptism, therefore fall to the ground. 1. It is argued that as Christian baptism was first instituted, it must be first administered. This argument is exceedingly feeble. But whatever strength it has rests entirely on the assumption that John's baptism was Christian baptism. If that is not Christian baptism, the eucharist was first appointed, and therefore, according to the argument, is first to be administered. 2. That the disciples being baptized with John's baptism, were baptized before partaking of the sacramental supper. But if John's baptism was not Christian baptism, the disciples with whom the Lord's supper was first celebrated were not baptized. Our opponents themselves admit that there is no decided proof of the baptism of only two of them, even with John's baptism. But if Johannic baptism is not Christian baptism, there is not a particle of evidence that one of them ever submitted to the Christian rite. What shall be done with this precedent? Ought it to have no authority with those who rely so much upon precedent when pointing in the opposite direction?

SECTION II. — *The Historic Argument.*

The Christian church has given, in every age and country, its almost unanimous testimony in favor of receiving to her fellowship, in the emblems of the Saviour's death, all who give satisfactory evidence of faith in his blood, separation from the world, and dedication to his glory. All her central governing influences have been in this direction. It was a vital point in the primitive church. It was not deemed more important to profess Christ than to maintain the unity of all in him. True, there were some dissentients, such as the Donatists and Novitians, as there were from most other es-

sential truths of the gospel. But the great body of the church rose against these advocates of dissent. It is remarkable that the church, amidst all her contentions both in the East and in the West, should have preserved this central principle so incorrupt till she sank under the clouds of error and formality which chilled her very life amid the frosts of the Middle Ages. And it is not less remarkable, that when she emerged from that darkness in the sixteenth century, this spirit of unity rose with her as an inseparable part of her very existence. It was earnestly defended by Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and all the other great lights of the Reformation. It was incorporated in all the important Protestant creeds of Europe. But we have not time to enumerate the details necessary to substantiate the above views. This vein of argument has been skilfully and successfully wrought by Dr. J. M. Mason, in his work on "Terms of Communion"; to which the reader is referred for particulars.

This historical argument expresses the religious consciousness of the Christian world. It tells us unmistakably how the Christian heart feels concerning sacramental communion.

We admit that the general voice of the church relative to topics merely ritual or dogmatical, entirely disconnected from Christian experience, carries little weight with it; but when it relates to vital points of the gospel which the Spirit vivifies and works into the soul as practical realities, it becomes significant and worthy of regard. The incidentals of the Lord's supper belong to the former; its spirit and essentialities to the latter. The uniform voice of the church, of the wisest and most learned, of those who have drunk deepest of the pure wells of salvation, advocating sacramental fellowship with all whom the Saviour receives, shows that it is the dictate of the most vital experiences of the gospel, and should be heeded.

Before closing this head, we will briefly allude to one historical argument which bears with peculiar force on the Baptists, owing to their historical position to infant baptism. They maintain that this was unknown to the apostles. It

began to be introduced in the second century, and in the fourth, or a little later, became a universal custom till the rising of the sun of the Reformation, which dispersed the clouds which had gathered over this as well as other important truths. Now, either infant baptism became at once a universal practice, contrary to all observation in regard to the operations of the human mind in receiving newly propounded opinions, especially one based on so complicated a process of reasoning as that of infant baptism; or the custom came in gradually; some receiving the innovation, others rejecting it; so that there must have been, as now, two classes of Christians — Baptists and Pedobaptists. Consequently they either tolerated each other and communed together; or one separated from the other, and set up a new organization. But we have no evidence that the Baptists and Pedobaptists who lived during the alleged transition state of the church were divided into distinct communions. On the hypothesis of the Baptists therefore, that infant baptism is an innovation, free if not mixed communion, during the period that elapsed from its introduction to its universal prevalence, is a moral certainty.¹ The idea that Baptists and Pedobaptists, on grounds of Christian charity, should extend to each other sacramental recognitions, is an opinion, on the historical position of the Baptists as old, at least, as the third century.

Such are some of the leading positions and arguments of the advocates of free communion. They are so clear, decisive, and scriptural, that we cannot doubt either their truthfulness or their eventual reception by the churches. Propitious indeed to Zion will be the day when those who belong to the one body in Christ, and “are members one of another,” shall treat each other with the tenderness and cordiality which the ineffable unity demands.

¹ See Dr. Pond's Lectures on Christian Theology, pp. 690, 691.