

THE ADMISSION OF UNBAPTIZED PERSONS TO THE LORD'S SUPPER INCONSISTENT WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT.

[A Letter to a Friend, in 1814.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

THAT the following is a genuine letter, written by the hand of our much lamented friend Mr. Fuller, no one who is at all acquainted with his manner of writing will deny.

In making war upon the common enemy, he was always found in the foremost rank, always among the first to take the field. But when he was called to animadvert on friends and allies, how strikingly different was his conduct.

In January last I received a parcel from him, enclosing a letter, in which he says—

“DEAR BROTHER,

. I have sent you Dr. Baldwin, which you may keep till I see you, if it be for half a year. Also a manuscript of my own and I wish none to see it but yourself, and that no mention be made of it. If any thing be written on the other side, it may, if thought proper, be printed, but not else.

Yours affectionately,

A. FULLER.”

Kettering, Jan. 16, 1815.

The above will justify me in withholding the letter till now; and the long expected publication of Mr. Hall, which has just appeared, equally requires that I withhold it no longer.

The manuscript has many verbal corrections and interlineations, exhibiting proofs of the care and deliberation with which this letter was composed. It may be proper for me to say, the *title* was written by the author himself, and the whole is printed with that scrupulous fidelity which I have thought due to the writer, as to one of the greatest men of the age, and one of the brightest luminaries of the Christian church.

Stepney, July 25, 1815.

WILLIAM NEWMAN.

LETTER, ETC.

DEAR SIR,

THE long and intimate friendship that I have lived in, and hope to die in, with several who are differently minded from me on this subject, may acquit me of any other motive in what I write than a desire to vindicate what appears to me to be the mind of Christ.

So far have I been from indulging a sectarian or party spirit, that my desire for communion with all who were friendly to the Saviour has, in one instance, led me practically to deviate from my general sentiments on the subject; the reflection on which, however, having afforded me no satisfaction, I do not intend to repeat it.

You request me to state the grounds of my objections to the practice in a letter, and I will endeavour to do so. I need not prove to you that it is not for want of esteem towards my Pædobaptist brethren, many of whom are dear to me. If I have any thing like Christian love in me, I feel it towards all those in whom I perceive the image of Christ, whether they be Baptists or Pædobaptists; and my refusing to commune with them at the

Lord's table is not because I consider them as improper subjects, but as attending to it in an *improper manner*. Many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, who partook of Hezekiah's passover, are supposed by that pious prince to have “prepared their hearts to seek the Lord God of their fathers;” but having eaten “otherwise than it was written,” he prayed the Lord to “*pardon* every one of them,” and therefore could not intend that the disorder should be repeated, 2 Chron. xxx. 17–19.

I have been used to think that our conduct on such questions should not be governed by affection any more than by disaffection, but by a regard to the revealed will of Christ.

A brother who practises mixed communion lately acknowledged to me, that “he did not think it was a question of *candour* or *charity*, but simply this, *Whether there was or was not an instituted connexion in the New Testament between baptism and the Lord's supper*. If there was, we ought not, under a pretence of charity, to divide them; for surely Jesus Christ may be allowed to have had as much charity and candour as we!” Yet we hear a great outcry, not only from Pædobaptists, but Baptists, against our want of candour, liberality, &c.; all which, if this concession be just, is mere declamation. To what purpose is it, too, that such characters as *Owen, Watts, Doddridge, Edwards, &c.*, are brought forward in this dispute, unless it be to kindle prejudice? If it were a question of *feeling*, their names would doubtless have weight; but if it relate to the revealed will of Christ, they weigh nothing. Is there, or is there not, an instituted connexion between baptism and the Lord's supper as much as between faith and baptism? If there be, we might as well be asked, how we can refuse to baptize the children of such excellent men, as how we can refuse to admit them to the Lord's supper. If a man call me a bigot, I might in reply call him by some other name; but we should neither of us prove any thing, except it were our want of something better to allege. The question respects not *men*, but *things*. It has been painful for me to “withdraw from a brother who has walked disorderly;” nevertheless I have felt it to be my duty to do so. I was not long since assured by a Pædobaptist friend, that, “If I could think free communion to be right, I should be much *happier* than I was;” and it is possible that in some respects I might. If I could think well of the conduct of a brother whom I at present consider as walking disorderly, or if I could pass it by without being partaker of it, I doubt not but I should be the happier; but if that in which he walks be disorder, and I *cannot* pass it by without being a partaker of it, I had better be without such happiness than possess it.

The question of free communion as maintained by Baptists is very different from that which is ordinarily maintained by Pædobaptists. There are very few of the latter who deny baptism to be a term of communion, or who would admit any man to the Lord's supper *WHOM THEY CONSIDER AS UNBAPTIZED*. Some few, I allow, have professed a willingness to receive any person whom they consider as a believer in Christ, whether he be baptized or not. But this is probably the effect of the practice, so prevalent of late among Pædobaptists, of decrying the importance of the subject. I have never known a Pædobaptist of any note, who conscientiously adheres to what he thinks the mind of Christ relative to this ordinance, who would thus lightly dispense with it. The ordinary ground on which a Pædobaptist would persuade us to practise free communion is that their baptism, whether we can allow it to be quite so primitive as ours or not, is nevertheless *valid*, and that we should allow it to be so, and consequently should treat them as baptized persons by admitting them to the Lord's table. It is on this ground that *Mr. Worcester*, in his *Friendly Letter to Mr. Baldwin*, pleads for open

communion.—He allows that if Mr. Baldwin could demonstrate that baptism is to be administered only in one mode and to one kind of subject, and that immersion is not a mere circumstance or mode of baptism, but essential to the ordinance, so that he that is not immersed is not baptized, his sentiment of close communion “would be sufficiently established,”—pp. 8, 9. To the same purpose is the drift of the reviewer of *Mr. Booth's Apology*, in the Evangelical Magazine. But to admit the validity of pædobaptism would not overthrow strict communion only, but baptism itself as performed upon persons who have been previously baptized in their infancy. If infant baptism be valid, it ought not to be repeated; and he that repeats it, what his opponents have been used to call him, an *Anabaptist*. The ground of argument, therefore, does not belong to *the subject at issue*. Its language is, Do acknowledge our baptism to be valid, and allow that whenever you baptize a person who has been sprinkled in his infancy you rebaptize him:—that is, Do give up your principles as a Baptist, in order that we may have communion together at the Lord's table!!!

Very different from this are the grounds on which our Baptist brethren plead for free communion. As far as I am acquainted with them, they may be reduced to two questions. 1. Has baptism any such instituted connexion with the Lord's supper as to be a prerequisite to it? 2. Supposing it has, yet if the candidate consider himself as having been baptized, ought not this to suffice for his being treated by a Christian church as a baptized person; and does not an error concerning the mode or subjects of Christian baptism come within the precepts of the New Testament which enjoin forbearance, and allow every man to be “fully persuaded in his own mind?”

Let us calmly examine these questions in the order in which they are stated:—

First, *Has baptism any such instituted connexion with the Lord's supper as to be a prerequisite to it?* No Baptist will deny it to be a duty incumbent on believers, but he may consider it as having no more connexion with the Lord's supper than other duties, and the omission of it, where it arises from error, as resembling other omissions of duty, which are allowed to be objects of forbearance.

If there be no instituted connexion between them, it must go far towards establishing the position of Mr. Bunyan, that “Non-baptism (at least where it arises from error) is no bar to communion.” If Mr. Bunyan's position be tenable, however, it is rather singular that it should have been so long undiscovered; for it does not appear that such a notion was ever advanced till he or his contemporaries advanced it. Whatever difference of opinion had subsisted among Christians concerning the mode and subjects of baptism, I have seen no evidence that baptism was considered by any one as unconnected with or unnecessary to the supper. “It is certain,” says Dr. Doddridge, “that as far as our knowledge of primitive antiquity reaches, no unbaptized person received the Lord's supper.”—Lectures, p. 511. See Mr. Booth's *Apology*, sect. 1. The practice of Christians having been uniformly against us, I acknowledge, does not prove us to be in the wrong; but an opinion so circumstanced certainly requires to be well established from the Scriptures.

To ascertain whether there be any instituted connexion between the two ordinances, it will be proper to observe the manner in which such connexions are ordinarily expressed in the New Testament. It is not unusual for persons engaged in argument to require that the principle which they opposed should, if true, have been so expressed in the Scriptures as to place it beyond dispute. This, however, is not the ordinary way in which any thing is there expressed. Nor is it for us to prescribe to the Holy Spirit in what manner he shall enjoin his will, but to inquire in what he has enjoined it. A Pædo-

baptist might say, If teaching be indispensably necessary to precede baptizing, why did not Christ expressly say so, and forbid his disciples to baptize any who were not previously taught? A Roman Catholic also, who separates the bread from the wine, might insist on your proving from the New Testament that Christ expressly connected them together, and required the one before and in order to the other.

To the former of these objections you would answer, Let us read the commission:—“Go, . . . teach all nations . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . . and, lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Is it not plainly the *order* of things as stated by our Lord Jesus Christ, you would add, that we are first to *teach* men, by imparting to them the gospel; then, on their believing it, to *baptize* them; and then to go on to *instruct* them in all the ordinances and commandments which are left by Christ for our direction. Thus also to the Roman Catholic you would answer:—Let us read the institution as repeated by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians,—“I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the night in which he was betrayed *took bread*: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took the cup*, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye *eat this bread, and drink this cup*, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” You would add, How dare you put asunder the wine and the bread which Christ hath thus manifestly joined together? The former of these answers must, I think, be approved by every Baptist, and the latter by every protestant. But the reasoning in both cases proceeds on the supposition, that the ordinary way in which the mind of Christ is enjoined in the New Testament, is by *simply stating things in the order in which they were appointed and are to be practised; and that this is no less binding on us than if the connexion had been more fully expressed*. It is as clear in the *first* case as if it had been said, Go, first teach them the gospel; and when they have received it, baptize them; and, after this, lead them on in a course of evangelical obedience.—And in the *last* case, it is no less clear than if it had been said, First take the bread, then the cup, and never partake of the one without the other.

But if this be just reasoning with a Pædobaptist and a Roman Catholic, why should it not be so in the present case? If the above be the ordinary mode of Divine injunction, we can be at no loss to know what is enjoined respecting the duties in question. All the recorded facts in the New Testament place baptism before the celebration of the Lord's supper.

The first company who joined together at the Lord's table were all baptized. That Christ was so himself we are expressly informed; and of the disciples we are told that they baptized others (John iv. 2); which would not have been permitted had they, like the Pharisees and lawyers, refused to be baptized themselves.

The next mention of the celebration of the supper is in the second chapter of the Acts. The account given is, that every one of them was exhorted to “repent and be baptized,” and that they who gladly received the word “were baptized;” after which they were “added to the church,” and “continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread, and in prayers*.”

The question put by the apostle Paul to certain disciples at Ephesus, who said they had not heard whether there were any Holy Ghost, “Unto what

then were ye baptized?" clearly intimates that there were no Christians in those times who continued unbaptized. He does not ask whether they had been baptized, taking this for granted, but merely to *what* they had been baptized.

The nature and design of baptism, as given us in the New Testament, shows it to have been the *initiatory* ordinance of Christianity. It was not, indeed, an initiation into a particular church, seeing it was instituted prior to the formation of churches, and administered in some cases, as that of the Ethiopian eunuch, in which there was no opportunity for joining to any one of them; but it was an initiation into the body of professing Christians. And, if so, it must be necessary to an admission into a particular church, inasmuch as what is particular presupposes what is general. No man could with propriety occupy a place in the army without having first avowed his loyalty, or taken the oath of allegiance. The oath of allegiance does not, indeed, initiate a person into the army, as one may take that oath who is no soldier; but it is a prerequisite to being a soldier. Though all who take the oath are not soldiers, yet all soldiers take the oath. Now baptism is that Divine ordinance by which we are said to *put on Christ*, as the king's livery is put on by those who enter his service; and, by universal consent throughout the Christian world, is considered as the badge of a Christian. To admit a person into a Christian church without it were equal to admitting one into a regiment who scrupled to wear the soldier's uniform, or to take the oath of allegiance.

There are instances in the New Testament in which the word baptism does not mean the baptism by water, but yet manifestly alludes to it, and to the Lord's supper as *connected with it*; e. g. 1 Cor. x. 1-5, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same *spiritual meat*; and did all drink the same *spiritual drink*: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." The Corinthians had many amongst them who had polluted themselves with idolatrous practices, and yet presumed on being saved by Christ. The design of the apostle was to warn them, from the examples of the Jewish fathers, not to rely upon their having been partakers of the Christian privileges of *baptism and the Lord's supper* while they indulged in sin. The manner in which these allusions are introduced clearly shows the *connexion* between the two ordinances in the practice of the primitive churches.

Thus also in 1 Cor. xii. 13, we are said "by one Spirit" to be "all *baptized into one body*, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and all made to *drink into one spirit*." The design may be to illustrate the spiritual union of all true believers in one invisible body, as originating in the washing of regeneration, and as being continued by the renewing of the Holy Spirit: but the allusion is, I conceive, to the ordinances of *baptism and the Lord's supper*; by the former of which they were initiated into the body of professing Christians, and by the other had communion in it. See Poole, Henry, and Scott on the passage.

From these instances, we have equal evidence that the two ordinances were connected in the practice of the first churches as we have of faith being connected with baptism, or of the bread being connected with the wine in the supper. The only difference between these cases is, that the one requires a part and the other the whole of a Divine institution to be dispensed with. Is it for us to make light of the precepts of Christ, under the notion of profiting and edifying his people? If we have any ground to expect his pro-

sence and blessing, it is in "teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever he has commanded" us.

But let us proceed to the second question, *Whether, if the candidate consider himself as having been baptized, this ought not to suffice for his being treated by a Christian church as a baptized person; and whether an error concerning the mode or subjects of baptism be not a subject of Christian forbearance, in which every one may be allowed to be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

That there are cases to which this principle will apply is certain. Concerning eating or not eating *meats*, and observing or not observing *days*, the apostle teaches that every man should "be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Who art thou," he asks, "that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.—Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.—Hast thou faith? have it to thyself," Rom. xiv.

These passages have often been alleged in favour of free communion between Baptists and Pædobaptists; and if the principle laid down by the apostle applies to that subject, though originally he had no reference to it, the reasoning of our brethren is just and right.

The case, I conceive, must have referred to the prohibition of certain meats, and the observance of certain days, under the *Jewish* law; which being no longer binding on Christians, some would avail themselves of this liberty, and disregard them; others, not having sufficient light, would regard them. Had it referred to any customs of *heathen* origin, or which had never been, nor been understood to be, of Divine appointment, it is not conceivable that those who regarded them should "regard them *to the Lord*." In this case every man was allowed to judge and act for himself, and required to forbear with his brethren who might be otherwise minded.

That we are to apply this principle without restriction few will maintain. Should the first principles of the gospel, for example, be rejected by a candidate for communion, few who pretend to serious Christianity would think of receiving him. Yet he might allege the same arguments, and ask, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.—Hast thou faith? have it to thyself." In this case, we should answer, that the language of the apostle was misapplied; and that it was not his design to affirm that Christians in a *state of religious society* had no right to judge of each other's avowed principles; for, if so, he would not have desired some to have been cut off who troubled the Galatians, Gal. v. 12. Nor would the church at Pergamos have been censured for having those amongst them that held pernicious doctrines, Rev. ii. 14, 15. Private judgment is every man's birth-right, considered as an *individual*; but as a candidate for admission into a *voluntary society*, it is essential that there be an agreement, at least, in first principles: for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?"

And as we are not so to apply this forbearing principle in matters of *doctrine* as to raze the foundations of Divine truth, neither shall we be justified in applying it to the dispensing with any of the *commandments* of Christ. The meats and days of which the apostle speaks are represented as not affecting the kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God," he says, "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," ver. 17. But if they had required a positive commandment of Christ to be dispensed with, they *would* have affected the kingdom of God, and the

apostle would not have written concerning them as he did. In short, it is not just to argue from Jewish customs, which though once binding had ceased to be so, to Christian ordinances which continue in full force. The tone which the apostle holds in respect of those Jewish rites which ceased to be obligatory is very different from that which respects commandments still in force: "Circumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God," 1 Cor. vii. 19.—"I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you," 1 Cor. xi. 2.

If to be baptized be a qualification requisite to Christian communion, (which under the second question I have a right to assume,) it is absurd to suppose that it belongs to the candidate exclusively to judge of it. It is contrary to the first principles of all society for a candidate to be the judge of his own qualifications. Apply it to any other qualification, as faith in Christ, for instance, or a consistency of character, and you will instantly perceive its absurdity. We must return to the first question: Is baptism prerequisite to the Lord's supper? If it be so, it must belong to the church to judge whether the candidate has been baptized or not. But the principle on which the apostle enforces forbearance is often alleged as applicable to this question.—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye,—for GOD HATH RECEIVED HIM." It is doubtful whether *receiving* here means admission to communion. Mr. Booth has shown that this is not the ordinary meaning of the term; but allowing this to be the meaning, and that God's having received a person furnishes the ground and rule of our receiving him, still there is nothing in our practice inconsistent with it. If receiving a brother here denote receiving him into Christian fellowship, the meaning is, receive him to the ordinances, and not to one of them without the other. We are willing to receive all who appear to have been received of God to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper: if we object, it is because they wish to be received to the one *without the other*, of which there was no example in the first churches. Let it also be particularly noticed, that our brethren who plead for receiving Christians as Christians receive them to the ORDINANCES AS UNDERSTOOD AND PRACTISED BY THEM, and this we do. If the prejudices of a pious catholic would permit him to request to join with them at the Lord's supper, they would, as we have often been told, receive him; but to what? Would they provide a wafer for him, and excuse him from drinking of the cup? No; they would say, We are willing to receive you to the Lord's supper, in the way we understand and practise it; but we cannot divide the wine from the bread without dispensing with an essential part of the institution. Such is our answer to a pious Pædobaptist. We are willing to receive you to the ordinances of Christ, as we understand and practise them; but we cannot divide the one from the other without dispensing with an institution of Christ.

OBJECTIONS.

It has been said that "we all practise a worse mixed communion than that with Pædobaptists; that we have *covetous* and other *bad characters* amongst us," &c. If we "bear them that are evil" in things of a moral nature, this is our sin, and we ought to repent of it, and not to argue that because we do wrong in one instance we ought to do so in another. If we omit to admonish and exclude manifestly wicked characters, it is of but little account that we are strict in regard to baptism; but in reproving us, our Lord would not complain of our not being alike lax in things positive as we are in things moral, but of our not being alike strict in both. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

There is, however, a wide difference between bearing with individuals, even in things which are evil, where that evil lies so much in the *motive* as to be very difficult of detection, and making it a *rule* to tolerate men in such vices. It was no reproach to Christ and his apostles to have had a Judas amongst them, though he was a "thief," so long as his theft was not manifested; but had there been a *rule* laid down that covetousness and even theft should be *no bar to communion*, the reproach had been indelible.

It has been said, "If our practice of strict communion be right, it ought to be to us an act of *self-denial*, and not of pleasure, inasmuch as charity would be unable to take pleasure in excluding those from communion whom we consider as Christians." And this so far as it relates to men is true, but it is no less true of many other duties, in which we may be called to act differently from our brethren, and to reprove them.

"But in thus denying ourselves," it has been further said, "we deny some of the best feelings of the human heart." This I cannot admit. The best feelings of the human heart are those of love and obedience to God; and if I deny myself of the pleasure which fellowship with a Christian brother would afford me, for the sake of acting up to the mind of Christ, or according to primitive example, I do not deny the best feelings of the human heart, but, on the contrary, forego the less for the greater. It is a greater pleasure to obey the will of God than to associate with creatures in a way deviating from it.

We may act in this matter from temper or from prejudice, rather than from a conscientious regard to the mind of Christ; and they who oppose us may act from worldly policy, or a desire to court applause as candid and liberal men; but neither of these cases proves any thing. The question is, whether, in admitting unbaptized persons to the Lord's table, we do not deviate from the mind of Christ.

I am willing to allow that open communion may be practised from a conscientious persuasion of its being the mind of Christ; and they ought to allow the same of strict communion; and thus, instead of reproaching one another with bigotry on the one hand, or carnal policy on the other, we should confine our inquiries to the precepts and examples of the New Testament.—
I am affectionately yours,
ANDREW FULLER.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

[In reply to a Correspondent.]

THAT there are circumstances attending the worship of God, whether it be moral or positive, which are not the objects of Divine appointment, I allow; such as the tunes in singing, and whether we baptize in a pool or in a river, or drink the wine at the Lord's supper out of a silver or pewter or wooden cup. Each of these is alike indifferent. I do not admit, however, that we have no example of uninspired preaching. On the contrary, we have no proof, that I remember, that even the apostles themselves were under the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit in their sermons, nor in all their writings; though they were in those which have place in the Holy Scriptures. Be that as it may: if what every preacher advanced had been inspired, it would itself have contained the oracles of God; but in that case there would have been no propriety in that direction—"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," 1 Pet. iv. 11.