

Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper

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A Brief Commentary on the GOSPEL STANDARD

Articles of Faith relating to the Ordinances of a Gospel Church.

Published by

GOSPEL STANDRD BAPTIST TRUST LTD., 1977

Obtainable from Mr. O.G. Pearce,

8 Roundwood Gardens, Harpenden, Herts, AL 5 3AJ, England

WE believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued till His second coming; and that the former is requisite to the latter; that is to say, that those only can Scripturally sit down to the Lord's Supper who, upon their profession of faith, have been baptized by immersion in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and that, therefore, what is called "mixed communion" is unscriptural, improper, and not to be allowed in the churches of Christ.

We deny and reject, as unscriptural and erroneous, the baptism of infants, whether by immersion, sprinkling, pouring, or any other mode.

We reject as blasphemous the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration; that is, that the person baptized is or can be regenerated in, by, or through baptism, much less, if possible, by infant sprinkling:— GOSPEL STANDARD ARTICLES XV, XVII, XVIII.

THE saints of God are not lawless. Delivered from the law of sin and death, liberated from "bondage to fear", the freedom to which they are

called is a bond-service of love to their dear Redeemer, whom they acknowledge as their only blessed Head, Commander, and Leader. Of God He is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). In Him alone they glory. He is their King. To Him they own complete allegiance. They are under law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21). Being Christ's freemen, they are consequently His servants. Purchased at such a cost, set free by such power, they are constrained by a sense of deepest obligation to surrender themselves and all they possess to Him to whom they belong. To them His burden is light, His yoke easy. They gratefully subscribe to His rules, and would fain serve Him with their whole being; although until freed from a body of sin and death, they feel their service to be extremely poor and faulty. Without hesitation they acknowledge themselves to be unprofitable servants (Lu. 17:10). Liberated from the galling yoke of their wreathen sins (Lam. 1:14), delivered from the rigour of Sinai's relentless demands, and released from the intolerable burden of guilt (Ps. 38:4), such will be enquiring in affectionate anxiety: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Nor is this enquiry born of any suspicion as to the sufficiency of Christ's merit and work, but the outcome of genuine gratitude for it, and satisfaction in it.

"What shall I do, was then the word,

That I may worthier grow?

What shall I render to the Lord?

Is my enquiry now."—Cowper.

Admiration for divine wisdom, as well as love to Christ's Person, will produce an unreserved submission to His will, and a diligent investigation of that will as revealed in His Holy Word. For if our general conduct, as professed believers, is to be regulated by the precepts and instructions of the infallible Scriptures, most certainly our religious observances must be derived from the authority of the great Head of the church whose statutes are engraven in the New Testament. It was when there was no king in Israel

that every man was a law to himself, doing that which was right in his own eyes (Jud. 17:6). It is much to be feared that such libertinism is frequently cloaked with that convenient term undenominational. True, the broad-based spiritual union of the people of God is deeper than mere denominationalism, but that is not to say that indifference to Scripture order is to be encouraged. The character of the superstructure is not negligible because the foundation is good (1 Cor. 3:11).

Meekness becomes redeemed sinners. Such, the Lord beautifies with salvation, and has promised to guide them in judgment and to teach them His way (Ps. 149:4; 25:9). If in humble submission and gracious teachableness we consult the Word of God, we shall find but two ordinances instituted by Christ for perpetual observance by His people in the church on earth: Baptism, and the Lord's Supper—the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. The fact that the Lord Jesus Himself has founded a gospel church-state with prescribed ordinances, raises that state and those ordinances immeasurably above the level of merely human organizations. We are not here discussing the constitution of a gospel church; this has been done elsewhere. But it is well to recollect the Scriptural significance and authority of our regular observances by which we are distinguished as Strict Baptists. Especially in a day when the tendency is to generalize, we should examine our consciences and refresh our minds as to what we do believe, and why we practise Baptism and Strict Communion. We trust it is in no isolationist spirit or selfishness that we adopt an insular position as to church communion, which, we might note in passing, does not or ought not to interfere with spiritual fellowship between us and those who truly fear God but who do not follow our order. We definitely repudiate the theory that any ordinance is essential for salvation, or that salvation is suspended upon the observance of any rite. At the same time we need to guard against depreciating what Christ Himself has given to His people to observe. Nothing which He commands can be unimportant. Nothing which He has not definitely laid down in His Word can be warrantable as part of our worship. That many good and gracious people have failed to perceive or neglected to

comply with what is so clearly revealed as Christ's will, is a mystery which we cannot solve. We would, however, seek grace to humbly walk according to that wise saying of the Lord to Peter: ". . . What is that to thee? follow thou Me"(John 21:22). May He give us the courage and strength ever to do so!

Whatsoever is not prescribed in the New Testament is not permissible for any man to observe in institutional religion. Of all inventions of men in the House of God, Divine Holiness asks: "Who hath required this at your hands?"

For "whatsoever is not of faith is sin", and whatsoever is not found in Holy Writ cannot be of faith; there being no other revelation of the will of God to man. However fervent, "worship" not according to knowledge is unacceptable to a righteous God. The perfect freedom belonging to true gospel worship is the antithesis of self-will and independence. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. These things write I unto thee...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth" (II Tim. 3:16-17; I Tim. 3:14-15). If we adopt any rite, sacrament, or ordinance on the ground of human tradition or usage, without the definite sanction of the Word of God, we are very liable to superstition—"old wives' fables", "commandments of men", "will worship".

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Believer's Baptism has for its authority the positive command and example of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is defined and inculcated in the New Testament. Were it not so, we dare not practise it. It is an honour to be permitted to observe the sacred ordinance. We are not left at haphazard concerning its significance, its mode, or its proper subjects. Were there no other Scripture, that of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20 were ample warrant for

our custom. Uprising from the sacred tomb, graciously asserting His divine investiture with universal authority, as God-man, our all-powerful Conqueror thus solemnly commissioned His disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] 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. Amen." This commission is simple, direct, explicit; prevarication is inexcusable. Here is, first, teaching. Secondly, the result of teaching as made effectual by the operation of the Holy Ghost,—discipleship; being taught of God, they learn to come to Christ for all their salvation: "They shall be all taught of God, and great shall be their peace" (Isa. 54:13; John 6:45). Thirdly, baptism, as a sign of discipleship, a profession of faith. Fourthly, further instruction in the truth and ways of the Lord.

But we have, further, the divinely-inspired account of how the apostles interpreted and discharged their Lord's commission. After His resurrection Christ made Himself known to His people "by many infallible proofs", and having been seen of them forty days and spoken to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, He gathered them at Olivet, promised them the Holy Spirit, lifted up His holy hands and tenderly blessed them, and was then taken up in a cloud out of their sight (Lu. 24:50, 51; Acts 1:19).

According to their divine Master's direction, the disciples returned from Olivet to Jerusalem, where they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brethren. On the first Pentecost after the ascension, there descended the promised Spirit, filling the apostles with His power so that they spake of the things of God to the cosmopolitan multitude assembled, in their several tongues.

Peter's testimony bore wondrous fruit that day; three thousand persons being added to that little band of a hundred and twenty original disciples. In what manner were they "added"? By teaching, conviction,

repentance, faith, profession, baptism, communion. We read: "Now when they heard this [Peter's preaching the gospel of Christ's atoning death and resurrection], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:37-39). That it should be written: "Then they that gladly received Peter's word were baptized," plainly declares that there were no infants included in that holy rite. "And your children," said Peter, obviously meaning such of them as had been or should on reaching maturity be effectually called by grace,—"even as many as the Lord our God shall call". Thus were there three thousand baptized believers added that day to the church at Jerusalem, and thereafter "daily such as should be saved" (v. 47).

The next divinely recorded instance of baptism is that of Philip, the deacon and evangelist (Acts 8). In consequence of the persecution of the church at Jerusalem, the disciples were scattered abroad throughout Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto the people; performing miracles among them, casting out unclean spirits and healing the sick. "And when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women." Believers' baptism!

It is solemn to reflect that even in apostolic times when miraculous powers were conferred on some ministers, imposture was not unknown. Among those who heard Philip preach, and professed faith, and was baptized, was one Simon the sorcerer. This man seeing the apostles' success, soon betrayed his pride and hypocrisy, thinking to purchase similar gifts for himself. Peter, who with John had come from Jerusalem on hearing of the reception the gospel had in Samaria, ministered a terrible rebuke: "Thy money perish with thee . . . thou hast neither part nor lot in this

matter." This case affords serious proof that the outward rite of baptism possesses no inherent virtue, and overthrows the sacramentarian view that it automatically conveys grace, although it is certainly a sacred ordinance commanded by Christ Himself.

The Lord tenderly sympathised with Philip's distress in having baptized an impostor, and He ameliorated it by giving him the privilege of ministerially instructing the Ethiopian eunuch, whereby the latter was brought to the obedience of faith. Reading in Isa. 53, the Ethiopian sought Philip's exposition of the place. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." A suffering Saviour presented to the eunuch's faith drew out his fervent love, and he sought to manifest his affiance by baptism at the hands of his instructor. "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Doubtless remembering vividly his recent impostor, Philip applied to his pupil a very serious test: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." An unhesitating unequivocal and evidently affectionate response, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," satisfied Philip, and "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit caught away Philip." By this repetition: "down into, up out of", did God the Holy Ghost anticipate and forestall the subsequent error of sprinkling in place of baptism?

The third instance on record of baptism is that of Saul of Tarsus, who had "made havock of the church, entering into houses and haling men and women to prison". The circumstances of his conversion were remarkable, if not unique; he was destined for an apostle. But the same Jesus, the Son of God, who was revealed to Saul, every poor Spirit-taught sinner is brought to know and love. Saul was initiated into the ministry at Damascus by the laying on of the hands of Ananias, who thereupon baptized him, being thus directed by the Lord (Acts 9; 22; Gal. 1:16). The great apostle who declares that he received not the gospel from man (Gal. 1:12), nevertheless received

his introduction to baptism and to the ministry through the instrumentality of a humble disciple (Act 10:10).

We have, next, the relation of the baptism in Caesarea of Cornelius and his company, to whom by divine appointment Peter preached. In his rehearsal of the matter to those of Jerusalem who questioned the propriety of his conduct, Peter said: "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." So evident was it to the apostle that the Gentiles had been gifted with grace to receive the Word of Life by Peter's mouth, that he sounded forth that notable challenge: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" And explaining the case to the enquiring Jews, he asks: "What was I, that I could withstand God?" plainly implying that refusal to grant them baptism would be equivalent to no less than opposing God Himself who had blessed those Gentiles with repentance and faith: "And when the apostles and brethren heard these things, they glorified God, saying: Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 10:11). So highly important is this despised ordinance of Christ.

In Acts 16 there is recorded the conversion of Lydia and her household, and of the jailor and all his house; and their baptism. It would appear that these two favoured households formed the nucleus of the Philippian church which in ten years was to grow to considerable proportions (Phil. 1:1). It is significant to notice in passing, that the apostles were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach at that time in Asia, Mysia, and Bithynia, though they "assayed" to do so; indicating the supreme sovereignty of God in the disposal of His servants' ministry, and in calling His elect by that instrumentality. Attention ought also to be given to the fact that the apostles "spake the Word of God unto the jailor and all that were in his house; and he was baptized, and all his, straightway; and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house". Now, believing in God, and rejoicing in Him on receiving the Word of His grace, are not acts of unconscious infants;

though some have attempted to infer from the words, and all his house, that there is here a warrant for infant baptism,—and inference we cannot accept.

The same point applies to the eighth instance of baptism mentioned in Acts 18: “Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised.” Believers’ baptism again!

At Ephesus certain disciples—“all the men were about twelve”—receiving further instruction from Paul, were thereupon baptized in the Name of Jesus, to regularize, as it would seem, their professed discipleship---(for they appear to have been baptized by the disciples of John, (John’s baptism and that of the Lord Jesus Christ (both extensive though brief: Mat. 3:1-6; John 4:1), appears to have been the initial of professed discipleship. A gospel church-state was not yet established, and the sacred ordinance of the Lord’s Supper was not initiated until the night of Christ’s betrayal. But the qualifications for that preliminary baptism were: reception of the truth preached, repentance, confession of sin, with a hope of pardon. Christ’s forerunner stoutly withstood those who sought baptism but did not receive the truth nor evince the fruits of godly fear: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Mat. 3:7-8).)---the forerunner of the Lord, while comparatively ignorant of the doctrine of Christ,) and in order to their instatement into the ministry (Acts 19:7). The method was the same as in all the other instances:—hearing, believing, repentance, baptism. During the two years Paul preached at Ephesus, many were brought to repentance and to the obedience of faith: “Many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. . . So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed” (Acts 19:18-20). In his farewell appeal to the Ephesian elders, Paul declared to them that he had kept back nothing that was profitable, testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (20:21). Baptism was one thing which he had not kept back from them. Again, ten years later, in writing his epistle to the church at Ephesus, he reminded

them that "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

Throughout the divine record of the Acts of the apostles, the baptism of believers is a prominent institution attended to in agreement with Christ's commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Is it not very significant that there is not one instance of infant baptism, and that in each case receiving the Word of truth, repentance, and profession of faith, precede baptism?

Having briefly considered Scripture teaching and instances which prove Believers' Baptism to be a divinely-prescribed ordinance to be observed to the end of time, let us enquire a little into its import. For although Christ's mere command and gracious example afford sufficient warrant for its observance, we are not left in the dark as to the meaning of baptism; we are not called upon to blindly submit to a meaningless rite. Though obedience is a question of faith and love, it is not inconsistent with spiritual intelligence. Should the Holy Ghost give us a gracious understanding of the divine mystery couched within the ordinances of Christ's church, it would tend to enhance in our esteem the privilege and increase the obligations entailed in their observance.

It is indeed the sacred significance and the divine authority upon which Believers' Baptism rests, which render it so important and to the believer so attractive; although at the same time it possesses no inherent virtue,—not in the slightest degree does it contribute to salvation or influence regeneration.

The weighty signification of the ordinance is reflected in its mode of administration,—by immersion. If that is infringed, the vital spiritual truths underlying the ceremony are violated and the true meaning of the ordinance nullified. Baptism is an overwhelming; therein the ceremony symbolises the believer's union to the incarnate Son of God in His precious death and burial, and—in coming up out of the water— His rising from the dead: "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye are risen with Him through the faith of the

operation of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). With this definitely Scriptural truth in view, the word baptize in this connexion can have no other meaning than total submergence. Sprinkling would invalidate the representation. In every day usage the term immerse is met with to convey the meaning of overwhelm, which if not universally is most generally the intention of the Greek word baptizein. We are familiar with such expressions as "being immersed in debt, overwhelmed in trouble or in cares," etc.

Subsequent to His exemplary water baptism by John in the Jordan, Christ referred to His forthcoming sufferings as a baptism; "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). Was not the holy Sufferer completely overwhelmed with the seas of divine wrath penally due to Zion's sins? It were blasphemy to suggest that He merely received a few drops of that awful and just fiery wrath on His sacred devoted Head. Sprinkling would seem by implication to enervate such wondrous declarations as: "He hath made Him to be sin for us. Who knew no sin"; "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"; "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief" (II Cor. 5:21;

Rom. 8:32; Isa. 53:10). Of an agonizing Saviour, David in prophecy spake: "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me." Could this be strictly wholly true of any but the blessed Messiah? In Psalm 22, 40, 69, and others. His overwhelming sufferings are portrayed. Isaiah shows Him deeply involved in grief and sorrow. In the Garden-scene He is agonizing unto death from the wrath of that bitter cup whose penal dregs He was to drain for the redemption of His dear but sinful and unworthy people. On the cross He was overwhelmed, yet He did not fail, for in His distress He cried in perfect faith to His hidden God: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

If there is any connection between Believers' Baptism and these sacred mysteries, it surely behoves us to most cautiously examine ourselves as to our attitude to the despised rite. Definitely, Holy Scripture declares the connection: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus

Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:3-5). Such a Scripture could scarcely bear to us the meaning it does, except for the fact that baptism by immersion was the apostolic doctrine and practice.

Baptism therefore is a solemn profession of faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; and of vital union with Him therein. It is also an acknowledgment of the believer's obligation to manifest in his conduct a being dead indeed unto sin and to the world, and a being alive unto God through Jesus Christ. "In that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (6:10-11).

Writing to the Ephesian church Paul says: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all." This one baptism is evidently Believers' Baptism, not the baptism of the Spirit (which is essential for salvation), for he had already spoken of the "one Spirit" (Eph. 4:4-6). This immersion baptism Paul himself personally administered. By saying: "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel," he did not in the slightest belittle that sacred ordinance or excuse its neglect; but subordinated it to the doctrine of the gospel which he was sent to preach and which, he said, should be the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (I Cor. 1). He magnified not himself but his office as a preacher of the cross, being "determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). That he personally baptized only Crispus and Gaius, and the believing household of Stephanas, was not that the ordinance was unimportant, but lest some might say that he ostentatiously baptized in his own name.

Baptism also symbolises regeneration (new birth - hs) which, though more strictly a new creation, may be likened to a resurrection. For a regenerated (born again - hs) soul, through the action of the law in his experience, dies to the law and to all hope of justification through the works thereof; and when the Saviour is revealed dies also to the law by the body of Christ, that he might be united to Him who is raised from the dead. This union is by the faith of the operation of the Spirit of God, and is the exertion of Christ's resurrection power in the soul. Submission to baptism is an open declaration or profession of this experimental death and resurrection by virtue of union with Him who was dead but is alive for evermore (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:19; Eph. 1:20; Rev. 1:18). However, the symbol is not accessory to the spiritual substance. The heresy of baptismal regeneration virtually repudiates the work of God the Holy Ghost whose sovereign prerogative it is to quicken the dead (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13; Titus 3:5-6; John 3:3). How many thousands who were sprinkled in infancy and "confirmed" in youth, have nevertheless lived and died unregenerate(not born again-hs), impenitent, and in their sins!

But though we emphatically repudiate the tenet that baptism is necessary for salvation, and declare regeneration(the new birth-hs) to be an imperative pre-requisite for baptism, yet due regard should be given to Christ's word: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Peter, too, connects baptism and salvation: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3:21). A "good conscience"—that is, one purged by the precious blood of Christ, qualifies for baptism, which may be considered as an emblem of that Fountain of purgation which is opened for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1). And the answer of a good conscience is the approving testimony of the Holy Spirit upon the act of believing obedience. The knowledge of salvation comes through an experience of the remission of sins (Luke 1:77), which flows from the blood of Christ: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the

forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7). As Noah's eight were "saved by water" when the ark rode upon the flood and rested again on the earth when the waters assuaged, so believers are saved from the deluge of divine wrath due to their sins, through faith in Christ (the Ark of grace) and His atonement. Noah by faith prepared the ark to the saving of his house, being shut therein by God Himself. Believers are saved in Christ the antitypical Ark of grace Who outrode the storm of divine vengeance, though His sacred humanity was for a while submerged beneath the awful flood. By His obedience and death the Prince of Life fulfilled the law, exhausted its penalty, satisfied justice, vindicated the divine attributes in the exercise of free mercy toward sinful men, and rising, conquered the grave, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Death could not hold Him! He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection (Rom. 1:4). Says Peter: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Water is the figure. In baptism it sets forth the death and burial of the Lord Jesus, and "coming up out of" the watery grave symbolises His resurrection. The baptized believer thus openly professes his faith in and union to his once-crucified and now risen and glorified Head and Saviour, makes submissive acknowledgment of His Lordship and surrenders to His all-wise disposal. The honoured disciple who is constrained by redeeming love to follow his Master's condescending example and to obey His gracious command in being baptized in the Name of the Trinity, thereby acknowledges his obligation and avers his intention,

by the help of grace, to live henceforth "not unto himself but unto Him who died for him, and rose again" (II Cor. 5:15).

However much we may be perplexed by the fact that many of the Lord's own people (some indeed of the choicest of His saints) have either neglected baptism altogether or practised infant sprinkling, we must firmly abide by our conviction which is based upon Scripture teaching and analogy. It is with solemnity and in no trifling spirit of partisanship that we reject infant baptism and any other mode of baptizing than by immersion, the form

which most nearly represents burial and resurrection, and—which is most important—was the mode used in apostolic and sub-apostolic times. This must override all considerations of possible offence to those whose practice differs from ours. We hold Believers' Baptism to be the pathway of public obedience and an open profession of discipleship; that it is indeed obligatory for church membership and admittance to the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper; but, we repeat, not that it is essential for salvation. Faith and love must precede any right and acceptable observance of the ordinances. Justification (a great point in salvation) is by faith without works. But neither faith nor love is at the command of the child of God. He may sometimes mourn a hard unfeeling heart even when partaking of the sacred emblems of His Saviour's suffering death. That does not invalidate the ordinance, but it shows that there is no intrinsic virtue in it, and that the partaking of the substance by faith (whether in baptism or the Lord's Supper) is sovereignly dispensed; that we may not lay disproportionate emphasis upon the ordinances themselves.

Personally, we are by conviction, experience, and practice a Gospel Standard Strict Baptist, but when we were baptized it certainly was not with a view to securing salvation. Feeling the love of Christ in our heart, we deemed it a solemn privilege (not a legal duty) to follow the Lord Jesus in His despised ordinance. Should any person be persuaded to be baptized in order to contribute to their salvation, their act would not be one of acceptable obedience. A mercenary spirit is the antithesis of gospel obedience. The impelling motive is love, not fear—Christ's sweet appeal made effectual by His Spirit in the sinner's heart: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." A poor lost sinner blessed with repentance and living faith in a revealed Christ, and the Holy Spirit's divine assurance (or at least some sweet hope) that God for Christ's sake has forgiven his sins, will follow his dear Redeemer in humble gratitude and love—not to obtain salvation but because he possesses complete salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work; his one desire being to know and love Him more and more. His obedience will not end in being baptized, nor be circumscribed by

Ordinances alone. There will be a fervent desire to conform to all the Lord's will (Col. 4:12; Heb. 13:20-21).

To summarise:

(I) Christ Himself submitted to baptism by John in the Jordan, whereat the Trinity gloriously revealed Themselves.

(II) The early disciples and apostles practised baptism according to their Lord's commission.

(III) The churches of Rome (6:3-4), Corinth (Acts 18:8; I Cor. 1:12-17), Caesarea (Acts 10:47-48); 21:8-16), Galatia (3:27), Ephesus (Acts 19:5; Eph. 4:5), Philippi (Acts 16:15-33), Colosse (2:12), Samaria (Acts 8:12), and all the gospel churches of the first two or three centuries A.D. were composed of baptized believers.

(IV) The Son of God Himself commanded baptism to be observed by His followers.

(V) There is no Scriptural example of the baptism of an infant, or of an adult other than by immersion.

(VI) The first known instance of infant baptism in the third century was disapproved by certain of the godly fathers of the church.

(VII) Sprinkling instead of baptism did not occur until about the beginning of the fifth century.

(VIII) The Lord Jesus Christ promised His gracious presence with His ministers and people, as receiving the gospel and observing this His ordinance, unto the end of the world.

In consideration of the foregoing, we humbly re-affirm our Articles XV., XVII., and XVIII., submitting that our form of admitting members to church privileges, including the Lord's Table, has the highest authority; always bearing in mind the essential pre-requisites of repentance and faith.

We admit that it is possible to elevate the ordinances of the church above their proper place, an undue emphasis carrying the implication of inherent virtue in the ceremony itself. This we repudiate. At the same time, bearing in mind the divine authority, we cannot but look upon neglect of baptism, or a perversion of the sacred rite, as highly improper. We have very much to deplore. It would be good were Paul's commendation of the Colossian church justly applicable to us; "Joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." We believe that a revival of gracious authority and unction in the ministry and thereby of love and zeal, with knowledge, in the churches, would bring a fresh appreciation of the deep significance of our church ordinances as well as a renewed recognition of our church obligations.

In this connection, it might not be unprofitable for church members to consider whether,—and if so, how far,—they may have, by an unbecoming walk and ungracious spirit, stumbled and deterred gracious souls from seeking church membership. Alas, that some should become so hardened from the fear of God, which always tends to erring from His ways (Isa. 63:17), that their consciences no longer seem to register the guilt of such violation of the precepts as worldly conformity, neglect and formality in respect to the truth of God and His House, and coldness regarding His people. A humble walk and conversation pervaded by the savour of Christ's name, is attractive to gracious souls, whereas one savourless member may seriously damage a whole church, and repel rather than encourage those who would seek union in church fellowship. See II Cor. 2:15; Song 6:1; Mat. 5:13. Distressed exercised souls mourning their barrenness may find Hosea 14 helpful and instructive.

Various hindrances to obedience may occur to those who realise the holy solemnity of eternal matters, and the seriousness of a public profession of Christ's great Name and cause. Some, deeply convinced of their sinfulness and unworthiness, may be anxiously exercised as to their own fitness for submission to those ordinances which they are persuaded have

Scripture authority, and in which they see an attraction. This hesitancy is not to be lightly swept aside for while no son of Adam will ever be worthy in himself of the privileges of the gospel, yet a certain degree of spiritual experience is needful for gracious obedience to Christ's ordinances.

Our method of asking "candidates" to relate before the assembled church somewhat of what they believe God has done for their own souls (not what they have acquired in religion), we believe to be Scriptural and expedient. Among the advantages is the formation thereby of a spiritual union between the members of the church and the new ones brought in, enabling them to be received with heart-felt gratitude, affection and holy joy. Thus there is a knitting together in the very bond of perfectness (completeness), and the church is edified thereby (Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19; 3:14). Timothy had "professed a good profession before many witnesses" (I Tim. 6:12). Peter enjoins the elect strangers to be ready always to give an answer to those who asked them, a reason of the hope in them, with meekness and fear (reverence). The very nature of spiritual love is to desire to speak well of Him who is loved for what He is, as well as for what He has done for the soul. And when a person has done his very best, he realises how inadequately he has spoken of His blessed Lord and Master. But this cannot be without some gracious acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, which produces fervent love and incites a longing for the honour of being allowed to walk in His ways. Although a gospel church-state did not then exist, David's resolve, when blessed of his God, was inspired by the same motive that operates in the hearts of all who properly seek admittance into a gospel church: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Ps. 66:16).

It is not merely a stipulated quantity of experience or religious knowledge which fits a person for gospel privileges, although there must be something secretly wrought in the soul by the Spirit of Christ, which has brought at least a hope that He died for their sins and reconciled them to God by His sin-atonement sufferings. Until this is imparted, one taught of the

Lord will not properly rest nor feel liberty to “go forward” in a public profession. Very tenderly we would say, such would be well advised to humbly wait still on the Lord,—thanking Him for every token and encouragement,—for that one great and all-sufficient incentive which overcomes all fear, produces liberty, removes all reluctance, while it increases a sense of unworthiness—the redeeming love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost (Rom. 5:5).

Sweet indeed have been some occasions when a trembling believer, constrained by love, has related in godly simplicity how they were convinced of their sins, brought to realise their hopeless case, and then led to Jesus Christ and His precious atoning blood. Nothing is more attractive than a penitent sinner humbly endeavouring to speak out of a broken and affectionate heart his admiration and love for his Lord and Redeemer, who saved him at such a cost. To such an one a church will say with spiritual warmth: “Come in thou blessed of the Lord; why standest thou without?” A company of such favoured people, though of varied stature in experience, know the sacred pleasure of uniting in mutual worship and praise: “Self-renouncing, grace admiring,

Made unto salvation wise;

Matchless grace their bosoms firing,

O how sweet their songs arise!

‘None but Jesus!’

From His blood their hopes arise.”

We feel that this method of admitting members could not be abandoned without serious loss to the churches.

Another hindrance is fear of falling, and thus bringing reproach upon that worthy Name professed. Better immeasurably entertain this fear than presume upon self-strength; yet if sincerely entertained, that fear is no proper bar to obedience. For the grace of God is as sufficient after profession

as before; certainly it is no less needed. Apart from this, none can stand, and none need more than the promise: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Indeed, such a fear when sanctified, will rather be helpful, inasmuch as it will necessitate the prayer of faith for mercy and upholding grace day by day.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. AMEN." (Jude 24-25.)

THE LORD'S SUPPER

HAVING dwelt briefly upon Believers' Baptism as an initial rite to the public profession of Christ's Name and a pre-requisite to church communion and the Scriptural door of entrance to the Lord's Supper, we now venture a few observations upon the latter most sacred privilege. Whilst the formal sacramentalist may over-emphasize his ceremonial and give a disproportionate view of the Ordinance, yet the true spiritual significance of the Lord's Supper can hardly be exaggerated. Rightly observed, it is a spiritual communion of the body and blood of Christ. Abused, it becomes an "eating and drinking damnation" (I Cor. 10:16; 11:29). For if Christ preached becomes a "savour of death unto death" in those hearers who never receive the truth in the love of it, much more an unworthy partaking of the very emblems of His precious sufferings and death becomes a means of condemnation to the participant. Perilous beyond expression, in this regard, is the continual urging of worldly church-folk to repeatedly receive the "sacrament" at the hands of a carnal clergy, as if thereby to extenuate their habitual ungodliness and to provide for impunity in its continuance! We trust we have not so learned Christ. Our trouble is not that we cannot have more of the world's vain enjoyments, but that there is in us a depraved nature disposed to violate the aspirations of the new man of the heart. The papal and (with few exceptions) the Anglican concept of the Lord's Supper is today very far removed from its divine original simplicity. But our present

design is rather to attempt a brief outline of our own apprehension of the Scripture doctrine and practice, than to expose the abuse and perversion of Christian ordinances.

Unspeakable condescension and majestic simplicity graced every action and word our blessed Redeemer employed at the institution of His divine Ordinance. The circumstances of that holy conclave were truly remarkable. Eleven of the twelve disciples were present with their divine Master in that upper room. Judas had been present at the Passover immediately preceding, but not until he had "gone immediately out" after receiving the sop, did the Lord Jesus thus tenderly address them: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. . . A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. . . A little while and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me. . . In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 13:30-35; 14; 15; 16). Then followed the holy prayer of intercession to His divine Father,—a touching, tender, dignified expression of His affectionate care for His unworthy but beloved people, and a rich epitome of His never-ceasing advocacy for them in heaven. "Father! O Father! Heavenly Father! O My Father! O righteous Father!" Sacred intimacy, clear intimation of essential eternal relationship! "Those whom Thou hast given Me. . . I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it. . . Not ashamed to call them brethren. . . I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren." O blessed Paternal adoption of the unworthy elect children, through the eternal Son's incarnation and redeeming work! (John 17; Gal. 4:5; Heb. 2:11; Eph. 1:5).

And this adoption was not confined to those eleven, nor was the Communion. It did exclude the twelfth, Judas being one of the twelve, but a devil (John 6:71). True fellowship with the Father and with His Son (I John 1:3) extends to all for whom Christ prayed and for whom He died, (these

being co-extensive with all who are by the Holy Spirit made true believers:) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in Us." "And other sheep I have; them also I must bring." "I lay down My life for the sheep." "Ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep" (John 17:20-21; 10:15, 26).

Such was the atmosphere of that upper room immediately prior to the awful enactments of Gethsemane and Calvary. "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went with His disciples. . . and Judas also knew the place." The traitor had deprived himself of the privilege of hearing the most sacred of all Christ's affectionate utterances, being engaged in assembling the "band of officers and men" to take Him whom he had all along feignedly owned as his Master. To his own place he soon went, and to this condemnation was he appointed (I Pe. 2:8; John 17:12). From the upper room to the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and to the betrayal and the judgment hall and the cross, went forth the great Redeemer and Captain of our salvation, to unfold in awful reality the mystery of the broken bread and the poured-out wine. ("The body [substance] is of Christ": Col. 2:17.) Those guileless lips which but a few minutes previously had uttered over the sacred elements the hallowed formula, "This do in remembrance of Me," were now employed—not in self-vindication but in noblest obedience: "The cup which My Father hath given Me. shall I not drink it? O My Father, if this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done!"

Thus became available for all true believers the Bread of Life and the Cup of blessing (John 6:53; I Cor. 10:16). This is the source of all spiritual communion. And church communion (where real) flows from the knowledge of this, and is regulated by Holy Scripture. In it there is:

(1) An act of humble obedience to the Lord's own command: "This do in remembrance of Me."

(II) A public witnessing to the Lord's death: "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (I Cor. 11:26).

(III) An act of worship, a grateful acknowledgment of deepest indebtedness to the Lord of life and glory for eternal redemption (Eph. 1:7).

All such acts of obedience and of worship, fruits of grace in the exercise of faith and love, conduce to a renewing of spiritual strength to the participants; whilst the Lord condescends to be glorified therein. Whenever He by the comfort of His love and felt presence signalizes His approval of such acts, an unspeakable honour is put upon the worshippers. The absence of this, while a matter of anxious soul exercise, is not a reason for discontinuing the obedience.

The requisite preparation is laid down by the apostle: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (I Cor. 11:20). By means of sincere self-examination, in the light and power of the Holy Ghost, the believer may come afresh to feel his deep need of that precious sin-atoning sacrifice which is represented in the Lord's Supper. Confession of all discovered transgressions and sins will follow, and a believing application to the throne of grace for mercy and pardon. Faith thus working by love, purifies the heart, dissolves it in contrition; sin is hated and forsaken anew, and Christ becomes again the Chiefest among ten-thousand and altogether lovely to the soul. Then as Christ's body is discerned, there will be an intelligent, reverential, humble partaking of the sacred elements as the divinely-selected symbols of a crucified Redeemer and His dying love. None can truly partake of "Christ our Passover slain for us", without the bitter herbs of conviction of sin and sorrow for sin" (I Cor. 5:7; Exod. 12).

"He took the bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said: Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." The mystery of Christ's broken body is too sacred to allow of any deviation from the very elements Himself defined and used in

that inaugural Supper. Bread, as broken by Himself, the dear Saviour chose to be the ceremonial representation of His sacred crucifixion. It is not less than sacrilege to use any other substance or adopt any other manner. Wafers are not bread. Cutting is not breaking. Christ took bread, and He blessed it (gave thanks), and brake it.

“This is My body”—represents My body, now to be given by way of sacrifice—“given for you.” For you? Yes, to make atonement for your sins: “Who His own Self bear our sins in His own body on the tree” (I Pe. 2:24). O the ugliness of sin! O the love of Christ, the Lamb of God, in bearing away the sin of the world (John 1:29)! And O His condescension in instituting this solemn ceremonial remembrance, and saying to sinners: “This do in remembrance of Me!” O the unworthiness of the sinner! Worthy Christ and His death to be had in everlasting remembrance! “Memory,” says Bunyan.

“is an act of love.” Divine love says:

“I ask no price for all I give,

But O remember ME!”

I give Myself, and with that gift all others. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32.)

To eat the emblem of Christ’s broken body is a public profession of having received Christ crucified by faith as the very life and nourishment of the soul. “I am the Bread of Life.” Here is a substantial repast for the famishing poor. Here is life for dying sinners. “Tis by Thy death we live, O Lord.” What mind of man will ever fathom the deep significance of Christ’s word: “As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me” (John 6:57)? The doctrine of Christ is solid nutrition to faith (I Tim. 4:6). This spiritual partaking does not depend upon the Ordinance. It is to be feared that many partake of that who never spiritually receive Christ by faith; while some have real communion with the

Lord who never sit down at His Table here below. But the due observance to His example and command, is frequently made a means of grace to the soul whereby the Holy Ghost strengthens faith and grants "the substance with the sign".

Hereby, also, mutual love between members is sustained, revived, and increased; love being the "bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14). For in the self-examination prescribed as a preparation for the holy Supper, there will come into consideration, among other matters, our attitude and behaviour and feeling towards our fellow-members. There cannot be communion where discord prevails. All selfishness, pride, jealousies, animosities, hypocrisies, envies, malice, evil thinking and evil speaking, must be studiously eschewed and emphatically renounced, and grace sought to pardon and subdue. The very holiness of the Feast precludes an approach to it while harbouring unkind feelings against any saint, or whilst nursing any sin. The least felt realization of interest in "Christ our Passover slain for us", (under whose shelter alone there is deliverance from the "wrath to come",) produces a humbling sense of deepest obligation to loyalty to Christ's Lordship. And as that obligation is mutually felt, bands of fellowship and communion will be fostered in a sober attendance upon the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Tender love and reverential fear thus flowing out to the great Head, the members partake of the savour of that "precious ointment that ran down" to the skirts of Aaron's garments. Good indeed is it for "brethren thus to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133); each feeling the unworthiest and least. As says Paul: "Ye are one body and one bread" (I Cor. 10:17), referring to the Communion. Flowing from this "dew of Hermon" will be a united striving for the good of the church and the honour of Christ, a mutual prayerful interest, exhortation, and provocation unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24). As the Feast is to be partaken of "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth", and "they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle", there must be a going forth without the camp bearing Christ's reproach—a godly separation from the world, in all who would manifest a loyal subjection to the King of grace. It is a shame and disgrace to the Christian profession when persons

appear at the Communion Table in the livery of the enemies of the Holy One of God. Of all places, this least becomes worldly conformity. It is a holy convocation.

In the Levitical dispensation, the eating of the blood was expressly forbidden: "For the life is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). But in the gospel dispensation, the blood is to be partaken of— ceremonially in the Ordinance, and spiritually by faith: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). That not a bodily but a believing partaking is the chief intention, Christ Himself clearly stated: "The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life" (vs. 63). As the disciples of old, so every true believer is compelled to depend upon communications from Christ for spiritual life: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (vs. 68).

The church of Rome (and the imitators of that foul system, the Anglo-Romanists) deny the cup to the laity. But the Lord Christ said, as He took the cup and gave thanks and handed it to His disciples: "Drink ye all of it; for this cup is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Presumably those clerics wish to reserve to themselves the sacerdotal power to remit sin, and think to do so by exclusively drinking the sacramental wine. An arrogant and blasphemous claim indeed! We are neither dependent upon ecclesiastics nor upon the sacrament for divine pardon. But since we all need the remission of sins, and there is none apart from the shedding of blood, Christ emphasized His disciples all partaking of the "blood of the grape, the fruit of the vine". An apt representation of the manner in which Christ's most precious blood was shed: the pressure of divine wrath, the weight of imputed sin, the agony of His holy soul; the piercing of that sword of inflexible justice awaking against the Man Jehovah's Fellow! "This do in remembrance of ME!"

But there is the Testament. "A testament is of force after men are dead." Settled upon all the elect is God's eternal good will, everlasting blessedness, great and precious covenant promises. They are heirs of promise, joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. As God-Man, the eternal Son of God incarnate, He received the inheritance of a more excellent Name than angels (Heb. 1:4). He is exalted at the right hand of the Father, sits with Him on His throne, and is King in Zion. His people are His inheritance. Their inheritance they receive as adopted sons through the redeeming blood of the everlasting covenant (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:17). All Christ is and has is theirs: all blessings contained in those exceeding great and precious covenant promises which in Christ Jesus are Yea and Amen (II Pet. 1:4; II Cor. 1:20). These things the sacred Cup in the Ordinance sets forth. Eternal redemption from sin, death, and hell, and an eternal inheritance according to the New Testament,—the will of God in Christ Jesus. A full cup of salvation for sinners, in consequence of the drinking by the Lord Jesus of the bitter cup of wrath due to their sin.

"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." "Drink ye all of it"—the cup of remembrance. "This do in remembrance of Me." O the costliness, O the freeness, O the fulness, O the bitterness, and O the sweetness of salvation!

We would speak tenderly with respect to the necessity we feel of confining the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and church privileges strictly to those who have been baptized on a profession of their repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By this restriction we do not say or imply that none but those who thus obey their Lord are saved. This we have already noticed in our remarks upon Believers' Baptism. The distinction must be preserved between spiritual private communion and public church communion. We firmly believe that our practice of admitting only baptized believers to the Communion service is strictly according to Scripture revelation, apostolic procedure, and early church practice. That other methods have been

adopted by some who truly fear the Lord is mysterious. But the fact that they are godly people must not allow us to exercise what is miscalled

Christian charity, and modify what we solemnly believe to be Christ's order. He is the only Head of His church, and our esteem for the best of men must be always subordinate to our loyalty to our only Redeemer and Lord.

That the primitive form, unmodified, of the Lord's Supper and of Believers' Baptism is to continue in the church to the end of time, we have express Scripture proof. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and 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. Amen." "As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (Matt. 28:18-20); I Cor. 11:26).

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 12:20-21).