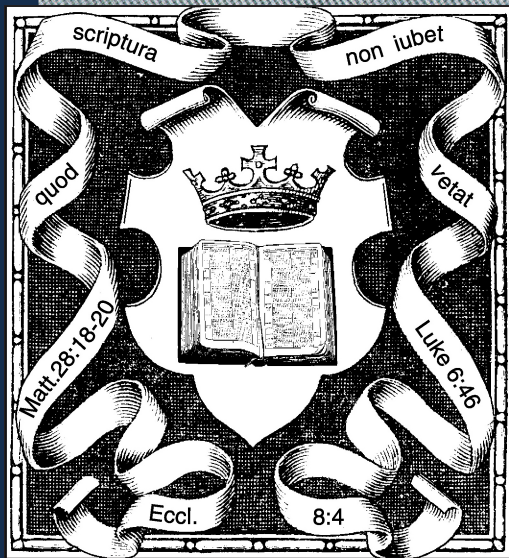


The Baptist Distinctives Series      Number 20



# The Terms of Communion at the Lord's Table

R. B. C. Howell



## *Quod scriptura, non iubet velat*

The Latin translates, “What is not commanded in scripture, is forbidden:”

**On the Cover:** Baptists rejoice to hold in common with other evangelicals the main principles of the orthodox Christian faith. However, there are points of difference and these differences are significant. In fact, because these differences arise out of God’s revealed will, they are of vital importance. Hence, the barriers of separation between Baptists and others can hardly be considered a trifling matter. To suppose that Baptists are kept apart solely by their views on Baptism or the Lord’s Supper is a regrettable misunderstanding. Baptists hold views which distinguish them from Catholics, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians, and the differences are so great as not only to justify, but to demand, the separate denominational existence of Baptists. Some people think Baptists ought not teach and emphasize their differences but as E.J. Forrester stated in 1893, “Any denomination that has views which justify its separate existence, is bound to promulgate those views. If those views are of sufficient importance to justify a separate existence, they are important enough to create a duty for their promulgation ... the very same reasons which justify the separate existence of any denomination make it the duty of that denomination to teach the distinctive doctrines upon which its separate existence rests.” If Baptists have a right to a separate denominational life, it is their duty to propagate their distinctive principles, without which their separate life cannot be justified or maintained.

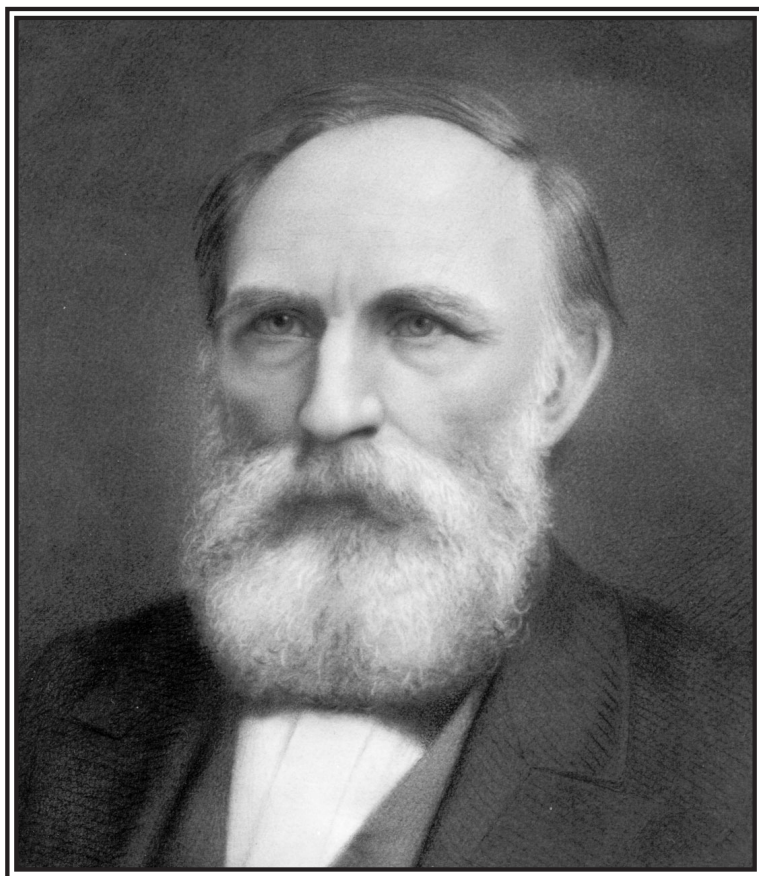
Many among today’s professing Baptists have an agenda to revise the Baptist distinctives and redefine what it means to be a Baptist. Others don’t understand why it even matters. The books being reproduced in the *Baptist Distinctives Series* are republished in order that Baptists from the past may state, explain and defend the primary Baptist distinctives as they understood them. It is hoped that this Series will provide a more thorough historical perspective on what it means to be distinctively Baptist.

The Lord Jesus Christ asked, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). The immediate context surrounding this question explains what it means to be a true disciple of Christ. Addressing the same issue, Christ’s question is meant to show that a confession of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent and untrue if it is not accompanied with a corresponding submission to His authoritative commands. Christ’s question teaches us that a true recognition of His authority as Lord inevitably includes a submission to the authority of His Word. Hence, with this question Christ has made it forever impossible to separate His authority as King from the authority of His Word. These two principles—the authority of Christ as King and the authority of His Word—are the two most fundamental Baptist distinctives. The first gives rise to the second and out of these two all the other Baptist distinctives emanate. As F.M. Jans wrote in 1894, “Loyalty to Christ as King, manifesting itself in a constant and unswerving obedience to His will as revealed in His written Word, is the real source of all the Baptist distinctives.” In the search for the *primary* Baptist distinctive many have settled on the Lordship of Christ as the most basic distinctive. Strangely, in doing this, some have attempted to separate Christ’s Lordship from the authority of Scripture, as if you could embrace Christ’s authority without submitting to what He commanded. However, while Christ’s Lordship and Kingly authority can be isolated and considered essentially for discussion’s sake, we see from Christ’s own words in Luke 6:46 that His Lordship is really inseparable from His Word and, with regard to real Christian discipleship, there can be no practical submission to the one without a practical submission to the other.

In the symbol above the Kingly Crown and the Open Bible represent the inseparable truths of Christ’s Kingly and Biblical authority. The Crown and Bible graphics are supplemented by three Bible verses (Ecclesiastes 8:4, Matthew 28:18-20, and Luke 6:46) that reiterate and reinforce the inextricable connection between the authority of Christ as King and the authority of His Word. The truths symbolized by these components are further emphasized by the Latin quotation - *quod scriptura, non iubet vetat*— *i.e.*, “What is not commanded in scripture, is forbidden.” This Latin quote has been considered historically as a summary statement of the regulative principle of Scripture. Together these various symbolic components converge to exhibit the two most foundational Baptist Distinctives out of which all the other Baptist Distinctives arise. Consequently, we have chosen this composite symbol as a logo to represent the primary truths set forth in the *Baptist Distinctives Series*.



THE  
**TERMS OF COMMUNION**  
AT  
**THE LORD'S TABLE**



**R. B. C. HOWELL**  
**(ROBERT BOYTE CRAWFORD)**  
**1801-1868**

THE  
TERMS OF COMMUNION  
AT  
THE LORD'S TABLE

by

R. B. C. HOWELL

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*With a Biographical Sketch of the Author by John Franklin Jones*

*“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you.” (I Corinthians 11:2)*

Philadelphia, PA

The American Baptist Publication Society

1846



**The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.**

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Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth.

— *Psalm 60:4*

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**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

ISBN# 1579785050



TO THE  
**BAPTIST CONVENTION**  
OF THE  
STATE OF TENNESSEE

By whose solicitation the work was undertaken, this little volume is most respectfully inscribed. If the efforts of the writer to illustrate the law of God, and the duty of Christians, in regard to SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION, shall be so fortunate as to merit the regard, and receive the approbation, of a body so learned in the Scriptures, and so well qualified to determine "what is truth," the recollection of his success will ever prove a rich reward to

Their fellow labourer in the Gospel,

And devoted brother in Christ,

THE AUTHOR.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

This little work has attained a popularity unanticipated by the author. Its wide circulation in this country, and its republication in England, he regards as the best testimonials of its usefulness. He has attempted some improvements in this edition, which he flatters himself will be acceptable to his readers. What they are, will be seen by those who may look over its pages. He again sends it forth, with his sincere prayer to God for his blessing upon this effort to defend and sustain the truth.

Nashville, Tennessee

February 3, 1846

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## INTRODUCTION

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**THE** terms of intercourse at the Lord's table, have not been adequately discussed. Numerous fugitive productions have, at different times, appeared, mostly in the form of pamphlets, tracts, circulars of associations, and articles in the religious journals of the day. A few reprints of transatlantic works have been made. Booth and Fuller have been issued by our own denomination; and by our Pedobaptist brethren, Bunyan and Hall. But none of these, well written and useful, as many of them are admitted to be, are considered exactly of the character demanded. They are either too superficial and brief, or too elaborate and profound. They deal in generals, on the one hand, discuss arguments, and controvert doctrines, that do not obtain among us; or, on the other, they array the investigation in a deep and metaphysical process of literary and logical acumen, which render it of little worth, except to the few who are thoroughly educated. My object has been to pursue the medium between these extremes. I have written, not for scholars and divines, but for the mass of the people. I have sought, therefore, to avoid equally the ambiguity attendant upon studied sententiousness, the confusion of tortuous and protracted reasoning, and the tedium of a weary prolixity.

To the several works of Robert Hall, in favor of Mixed Communion, is devoted, as will be seen, rather special attention. If any apology is necessary for replying, as much at large as our limits would permit, to the imposing theories of which he was the advocate, it may be found, not only in his

great abilities as a writer, joined to the fascination of his glowing and brilliant style,—characteristics which must ever invest them with no small degree of popularity,—but in the additional consideration that, in all parts of our country, they have been procured in great numbers, and circulated with the utmost industry, as the strongest weapons that can be employed against us. It was thought necessary that the charm of his authority should be dispelled; the sophistry of his principal arguments exposed; and that our brethren who cannot find time, or facilities, for extensive reading, should have at command, in a small compass, the information requisite to meet and refute those who may employ his reasoning. How far this object is accomplished, the event only can determine.

The sacred table should be surrounded only by purity and brotherly love. The many melting recollections with which it is associated, render a single discordant note there, painfully repulsive. It is connected with every consideration calculated to elicit the holiest feelings of the renewed soul, the most entire consecration to God, and the most unfeigned love to his people. We therefore expect to see every communicant fully imbued with the spirit of Christ, and conscious of no other feelings than those which prompted the great sacrifice, of which this is the established memorial. We recoil from the thought that censure, or reproach, should ever reach so pure a circle, or that the principles of their intercourse should become matter of invective and controversy. But upon earth, alas! we are not permitted to realize perfection. Yet corrupt, and his passions still unsubdued, man's nature characterizes every act in which he is engaged. Feelings of worldliness find their way into the midst of his holiest devotions. As a consequence, the Lord's supper has, of late, become the arena upon which the fierce spirit of conflict battles for the mastery in sectarian strife. While our Pedobaptist brethren have

planted their artillery on these holy ramparts, as upon the very citadel of Zion, that they may pour into our ranks a more destructive fire; a disposition appears to be growing among our own people, to employ it as a means of dispensing rewards, and inflicting punishments. These agitations ought, by every means in our power, to be resisted. While permitted to prevail, they must be productive of incalculable injury to the advancement of truth and righteousness, as well as to the cultivation of brotherly love, and Christian union.

Disappointment may, by some, possibly, be felt, when it is found that I have not even alluded to several of the most prominent topics which belong to the subject of Sacramental Communion. To divest the rite of those mists in which it has so long been enshrouded, by the Popish expositions which represent it as an expiatory sacrifice, and teach the transubstantiation, or, the no less irrational, though protestant notion, the consubstantiation, of its elements, on the one hand; and, on the other, to refute the modern doctrine which assumes it as an "effectual means and seal of grace," would be a work of undoubted importance. Unless "the signs of the times" are deceptive, a full discussion, in our country, of all these dogmas will very soon be demanded. The task would be equally profitable and delightful to illustrate the metaphorical character of the eucharist, the various vital doctrines, and amazing facts, it exhibits to our view, connected immediately with our redemption, sanctification, and salvation; the nature of the spiritual measures by which its reception should be preceded and accompanied; the advantages arising from its regular observance; and numerous other considerations having direct and collateral bearings upon the subject. But were all these topics introduced, they would require more of both time and space than I have at present at command. Nor is it particularly necessary, since several works, embracing these

topics, are accessible to our people, in some of which they are discussed with candor, and in a few, the general style and argument partake but little of the party prejudices which so frequently disfigure the productions of all the sects in relation to Christian fellowship and communion.

The internal controversy in relation to strict and free communion, the American churches have, thus far, almost entirely, escaped. I cannot but congratulate them on an event so fortunate. Agitations of this character are always productive of consequences the most lamentable. On the other side of the Atlantic they have prevailed for more than a century, and are now shaking the English church to its very foundation. Individuals have been found in our country, who express doubt as to the propriety of strict communion. A few isolated instances exist of communities who practise upon the opposite principles. But no association, nor even a single church, respectable for either numbers or intelligence, has, within the compass of my information, seceded from the great body of the denomination upon this ground. Our whole mighty army, bearing the banner of undeviating obedience to the word of God, the *whole* word of God, and *nothing but* the word of God, upon the ample folds of which is inscribed—"ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM," presents an unbroken front. The internal controversy, therefore, need be considered, only in so far as may be necessary to guard our churches against its evils, and to maintain ourselves in opposition to the arguments drawn from that source by Pedobaptists.

The doctrine and worship of the true church of Christ, have never been popular with the world. Sometimes, and in some countries, one portion, and in other ages and nations, another, has been, during the whole Christian period, made the occasion of bitter reproach, and pleaded in justification of every persecution. It is still emphatically true, that "as

concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." Our ecclesiastical polity has sometimes rendered us peculiarly obnoxious. Uniformly, in all countries, modeled upon the plan of the New Testament, it has ever necessarily been strictly *republican*. Such a government has an invariable tendency to exalt the intellectual powers, and to inspire an irrepressible love for political freedom. The inalienable right of all Christians to full liberty of conscience, free from any control whatever from the civil magistrate, and their accountability in matters of faith to God only, is another doctrine we have cherished, with enthusiasm, from the days of the apostles, until now. And, under all governments, we have constantly protested against the unholy alliance of church and state—the blending of the spiritual with the civil power. These and other similar characteristics, so offensive to a venal priesthood, so odious to the minions of political authority, and which the populace have been taught to loathe and abhor, could impress none but philosophers, and truly enlightened Christians. The multitudes have ever been ready to take the yoke, and move as they were directed by their leaders. In our own country, since the adoption of the present form of national government, these tenets, which, if history speaks truly, had no small influence in fixing its character, have been sufficiently popular. All parties *now*, tacitly or avowedly, accord their approbation. Until that time, however, as at the present moment, in every government in continental Europe, and in all the American states south of the Rio del Norte, they had called down upon the head of the church, the vengeance of every petty ruler, and ambitious despot. Political favorites have ever delighted to kindle the fires by which we were consumed, and left no efforts unattempted to exterminate us from the face of the earth.

All the principles of the church of Christ, however, have

not yet been adopted. Even Protestant denominations, and in our own free land, imagining that they still have reason to resist us, do so, in a manner evincive that they have not lost entirely the spirit of their ancestors. Their swords and chains are broken, their prisons are demolished, and their fires extinguished; still they have the means of annoyance. It is confidently alleged that our distinguishing doctrines had their origin with "the madmen of Munster," that they yet remain the same with theirs, and are, therefore, essentially revolutionary, and fanatical; our baptism is pronounced, in high quarters, indecent, revolting, and dangerous; and our *communion* is derided as, in principle, the very essence of bigotry, and, in practice, selfish, intolerant, and proscriptive.

To all this, were we so disposed, we might very successfully reply with the argumentum ad hominum. Were there Baptists among the men of Munster, and is our church therefore responsible for all the excesses of the mass in that scene? Then the Huguenots of France, are responsible for all the extravagancies and impostures of the Camisards, and the French Prophets; the Presbyterians are responsible for all the ravings of Irvingism; the Episcopalians for the fanaticism and fooleries of the followers of Joanna Southcote; the Methodists for those of Anna Lee; and the Pedobaptists generally for the Fifth Monarchy Men of London, who rose for KING JESUS, and threw that metropolis into consternation. But no sensible man will brand a whole denomination with shame, for the follies, or the crimes, of a few individuals who may chance to be ecclesiastically connected with it. We glory in our whole spiritual ancestry, among whom we number the Apostles of Christ, and the saints and martyrs of all ages.

The baptismal controversy is believed to be drawing near its close. A century of conflict is about terminating the victory in favor of apostolic forms. The noise of the tumult in

that region is evidently subsiding. As the light of science has grown more and more bright, and candor has mingled with the piety of christians, truth has gradually gained ground. 'That infants should not be subjected to a rite which can do them no good whatever, and which, so far as they are concerned, is without authority in the word of God, is an impression which is rapidly advancing; and immersion, in the name of the Holy Trinity, is so evidently the only scriptural baptism, that on these points our opponents feel themselves driven to the wall. The growing popularity of the primitive mode and subjects of baptism, is sufficiently illustrated by the fact that, after the most poignant and ingenious ridicule that can be heaped upon them, all denominations are, even now, forced frequently to employ them, or lose many of their most estimable members.

One point of attack—Sacramental Communion—remains. Here the popular breeze appears, for the moment, to favor our assailants, and the onset is universal in all quarters. The more grave of our neighbors read us solemn lectures on christian liberality, humility, brotherly affection, and the importance of spirituality above mere form in religion. The pedantic and flippant catch the theme of detraction, and shower around us the shafts of their ridicule. The vulgar crowd follow, with coarse epithets, and boisterous denunciations! All these it becomes necessary for us to meet, in the best spirit and manner we can command. In attempting to do this, I would not be considered as laying claim to any knowledge on the subject not possessed by thousands of my brethren, but simply as manifesting a disposition, which I certainly deeply feel, to contribute my feeble aid to the triumph of "the truth, as it is in Jesus."

It is my purpose to conduct this controversy in the true spirit of our holy religion; it is true, we differ with christians

of other denominations, yet, for them all, we can, with the utmost sincerity, aver, that we cherish the most hearty good will. We assail no one, we challenge no one, and trust that to none we shall give offence. We confess ourselves not indifferent to the good opinion of the virtuous, and intelligent, of every order in society. Nor is any thing further from our intention than a design, by any thing that we may say, to foster a sectarian spirit. We will not, if it can be avoided, "widen the branch, already too capacious, between christians of different denominations." We do not imagine that every excellence is confined to our own ranks, nor are we reluctant to acknowledge the children of God wherever they may be found. On the other hand, we deprecate, with equal earnestness, that spirit of *liberalism* which hesitates not to sacrifice the commandments of God to the courtesies of religious intercourse. If the pious tenor of a consistent christian life, which embodies our own principles, with unconcealed freedom, candor, and affection to all, will do so, we shall secure the favorable regard of our brethren of every class. But if their kind consideration demands a departure from the inspired law, we must not, we dare not, pay the price. Jehovah alone is legislator in his own kingdom. He has formed unalterably its government, and institutions. It is ours, not to repeal, change his laws, or add to their number, but humbly, and faithfully, to obey him in all things.

We have one, and only one, favor to ask, on this, or on any other subject in relation to either our doctrine or practice; it is that we may be patiently heard in our own defence, and have awarded to us a candid and impartial verdict. If, when so judged by the law of God, we are fairly convicted of material error, we will not shrink from, nor seek to avert the sentence of condemnation. On the other hand, if we are clearly sustained, we shall confidently expect to receive the ingenuous approval of the wise and the good, of every denomination.



“REASONS WHY BAPTISTS OUGHT TO TEACH THEIR DISTINCTIVE VIEWS . . . First, *it is a duty we owe to ourselves*. We must teach these views in order to be consistent in holding them. Because of these we stand apart from other Christians, in separate organizations. . . We have no right thus to stand apart unless the matters of difference have real importance; and if they are really important, we certainly ought to teach them.”

JOHN A. BROADUS

*The Duty of Baptists To Teach Their Distinctive Views.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1881).

“No religious denomination has a moral right to a separate existence unless it differs essentially from others. Ecclesiastical differences ought always to spring from profound doctrinal differences. *To divide Christians, except for reasons of gravest import, is criminal schism*. Separate religious denominations are justifiable only for matters of conscience growing out of clear scriptural precept.”

J. L. M. CURRY

*A Baptist Church Radically Different From Paedobaptist Churches.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1889).

“There is something distinctive in the principles of Baptists. They differ from all other denominations; and the difference is so great as not only to justify, but to demand, their separate existence as a people . . . What distinctive mission have the Baptists, if this is not their mission? - to present the truth in love on the matters wherein they differ from Pedobaptists. What is there but this that justifies their separate denominational existence and saves them from the reproach of being schismatics? *If they have a right to denominational life, it is their duty to propagate their distinctive principles, without which that life cannot be justified or maintained.*”

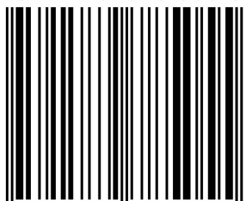
J. M. PENDLETON

*Distinctive Principles of Baptists.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882).

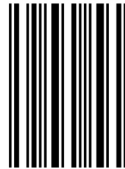
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