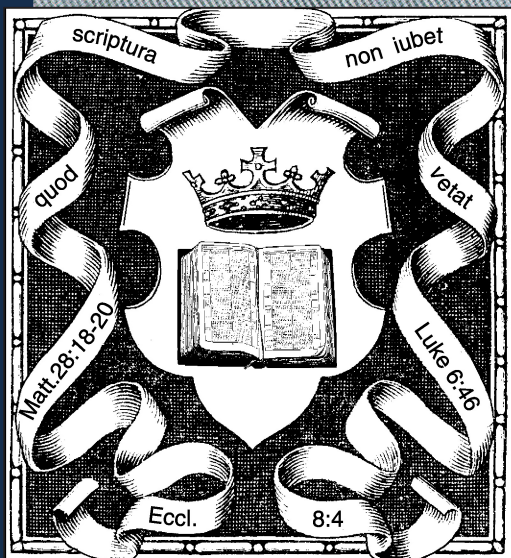


The Baptist Distinctives Series Number 39



Baptism, A Term of Communion

Joseph Kinghorn



Quod scriptura, non iubet velat

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

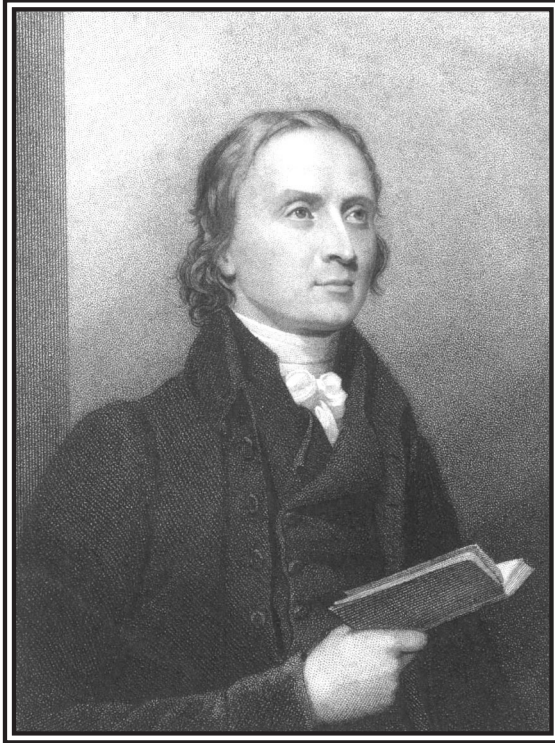
On the Cover: Baptists rejoice to hold in common with other evangelicals the main principles of the orthodox Christian faith. However, there are points of difference and these differences are significant. In fact, because these differences arise out of God’s revealed will, they are of vital importance. 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*.

BAPTISM,
A TERM OF
COMMUNION



JOSEPH KINGHORN
1766-1832

Photo courtesy of:
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives,
Nashville, Tennessee

BAPTISM,
A TERM OF
COMMUNION

AT THE
Lord's Supper.

BY JOSEPH KINGHORN.

— THE FIRST CONSIDERATION IN EVERY ACT OF WORSHIP IS ITS CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD, WHICH WILL OFTEN JUSTIFY US IN DECLINING THE EXTERNAL COMMUNION OF A CHURCH, WITH WHICH WE CEASE NOT TO CULTIVATE A COMMUNION IN SPIRIT.

Robert Hall, *Terms of Communion*, p.6

With a Biographical Sketch of the Author by John Franklin Jones

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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# 1579786308

PREFACE.

As the introduction to the following work, takes a general view of the controversy between the advocates and opponents of mixed communion, it would be improper here to enter into particulars, or to detain the reader's attention. I am aware, that some will consider a defence of the conduct of those Baptists who oppose mixed communion, as of itself a proof, that they lay too much stress on the opinion by which they are distinguished from their brethren. Such persons, however, should recollect, that though a particular subject, when brought forward by debate, must unavoidably become prominent, it does not at all follow, that those who plead its cause, are esteeming it above its real importance.

He who thinks that baptism was only a temporary institution, should remember, that he differs not from the Baptists alone ; but also from the greater part of the Christian world.

Those Pædobaptists who believe that baptism (according to their views of the ordinance) is necessary to communion, surely will not blame the Baptists for thinking so too ; because, however the parties may differ, respecting either the mode or subjects of the institution, they agree in this principle, that obedience to the rite which the Lord enjoined, is requisite to orderly fellowship with his church.

If an objection be raised against the sentiments of those who are called strict Baptists, by any who allow baptism to be a law of Jesus Christ, but think, that whether it be regarded or not, is practically of little consequence ; let them inquire, how it came to be appointed by the Lord ? Let them account for his enacting a law, which they have discovered to be of trivial value, before they oppose such as maintain that it demands the steady obedience of his church, in submission to the authority by which it was promulgated.

Those who admit that baptism was intended to be permanent, it is presumed, will grant, that the appointment of the Lord should be punctually obeyed. Few will venture to assert, that one system was enacted for the early ages of the church, and another for those of later date ; we should, therefore, enquire what was the will of Christ, on the presumption, that, like his character, it continues unchanged. The whole controversy now before us, hinges on the question, whether we ought to obey the direct law of Christ, and the explanation given of it in the conduct of the apostles ;—or, whether we are justified in being guided by inferences, which, as I have endeavoured to shew in the following pages, are not correctly drawn from New Testament premises. The result of my own investigation of this question is now laid before the world ; and respectfully submitted to all those who feel interested in the subject.

INTRODUCTION.



IT is neither a fondness for controversy, nor a desire to promote it, nor a spirit of opposition to the friends of mixed communion, (many of whom are truly excellent men) but it is a conviction of the importance of the subject discussed in the following pages, which has led me to present this work to the Christian world.

Various causes have by degrees drawn the attention of Christians to the question of church communion ; and those who are called strict Baptists, who admit to the Lord's supper only such, as in their estimation, have been baptized, have long had, exclusively, to bear the charges of being narrow minded, bigotted, and illiberal. The zeal which of late years has been excited for spreading the knowledge of God, and calling sinners to attend to the gospel of salvation, has united together good men of different denominations in mutual attachment and exertions ; and thus eminently useful effects have been produced, both to the world, and to the parties themselves.

But with this good feeling and Christian exertion, there has often been mixed a portion of bad reasoning ; and it has appeared, as if some very excellent men were disposed too much to neglect the positive commands of the Lord, in their great zeal to unite all Christians in one body, and bury all party distinctions.

Hence many have been led to ask, why should our difference of opinion separate us from each other? Why not unite, as Christians, at the Lord's table, and in all the duties and privileges of our religious profession; not striving about inferior objects, but keeping solely in view the great and important truths, in which we are all agreed?

This fascinating theory, which in the present state of things cannot be realized, has often brought forward the question of communion, between the Baptists and Pædobaptists; yet it has seldom extended far; the attention of the religious public was not generally excited to it, and the discussion of course soon came to an end. But as the Rev. R. Hall, in his "Terms of Communion," has directed the minds of men to this subject in an elaborate treatise, in which the point at issue is represented, as the application of a general principle to a particular instance; the question is likely to be investigated by many, who hitherto have not considered it.

Every one who is acquainted with Mr. Hall, will readily bow to him with the greatest deference. I have for many years known him, and acknowledge myself under many obligations to him. His "works praise him in the gate;" his pre-eminent talents are confessed; his praise is in all our churches; still it must not be forgotten, that splendour of genius has often adorned mistaken opinions; and the influence of abilities may promote error, as well as support truth.

Although the work now presented to the public, would not have been written, had it not been for Mr. Hall's publication; yet it is designed, rather as an explanation and defence of the principles and conduct of the strict Baptists in general, than as a reply to the whole detail of his observations. I have noticed the principles of his reasoning; I have endeavoured to mark their tendency; and have given such replies as appear to me deserving

of attention. To have gone farther, would not only have been needless, but would have endangered personal controversy, which is always an evil, and particularly painful among friends. It is what I conceive to be the truth, and truth which is now of importance to the constitution of our dissenting churches at large, Pædobaptists as well as Baptists, for which I plead; and if this be only established, the less any good man's mind is hurt, the better. In examining the principles of an argument, it is not necessary to investigate all its minor operations; if a tree be cut at its root, the branches will wither and die without farther labour. I have also noticed many things which I have met with elsewhere; have marked the bearings of the subject as they occurred to my own mind; and have endeavoured to reply to what I thought might be advanced against my own opinion.

Though the strict Baptists have to bear all the blame of illiberality and want of candour, because they openly and practically maintain, that baptism is essential to communion, yet they are by no means the only persons who act on the system; who, if it be right, ought to support it; or, if it be wrong, ought to give it up. *Pædobaptist* churches generally act on the same principle. I believe the cases are comparatively few, in which they would openly acknowledge, that it is right to receive any to communion who have not been baptized, in that way which they deem sufficient. The constitution of their churches, the formularies to which they appeal as expressing their general sentiments, and the opinion of their leading characters, in the great majority of cases, favour the sentiment of the strict Baptists, that baptism is requisite to communion. For the question is not, whether they would refuse a person who had received baptism from another religious denomination, but whether they would receive such as have had none at all?

The practical cases which may require them to decide on this point are few; but that has nothing to do with the *principle* which Mr. Hall has laid down. His argument must either stand or fall by the decision of the question;—whether a person, in other respects unexceptionable, ought to be received as a member of a Christian church, who is on all hands acknowledged to be unbaptized?

And, not only are the Pædobaptists concerned in the controversy as much as the Baptists, but, if his principle be adopted, the constitution of all our dissenting churches will be altered; and then it deserves inquiry, whether by the alteration they will be *more like*, or *unlike* the churches of the primitive age. Nor does it rest here; the question of dissent is placed on new ground: and we must plead, *not for the liberty of copying the apostolic church*; but for the *additional liberty* of manifestly *departing from it*. How far this will be an advantage should be the subject of serious enquiry. If we ought to substitute our interpretation of the spirit of the New Testament precepts, for an attention to the literal appointments of the Lord, let it be proved that this is our duty. If the church of Christ ought to enquire into the faith and practice of those who wish to become members, but *not* into their baptism, let this also be proved. Whatever is truth, will in the end shine by its own lustre; but let it be remembered, that if these points are established, we have new positions to defend, and are liable to attacks in a new direction. If either a Baptist or Pædobaptist dissenter, be desirous of introducing the unbaptized to communion, it will be impossible for him to say, that he wishes to see the churches of his denomination, acting on the same plan with those of the purest ages; without he believes, that in the apostolic church some were admitted, who were not baptized at all: but I never heard of any who maintained this

opinion. The Society of Friends, and those few who think baptism was not designed to be permanent in the church, are of course not taken into the account, since they do not belong to either of the bodies above mentioned.

As I wish for nothing but the establishment of what I believe is the truth, I shall be glad to see it promoted by any means which God may condescend to use. If any one should be stimulated from the defects which he may perceive in the following work, to come forward and supply my "lack of service," I shall rejoice; and if any invitation of mine can animate him, I most cordially give it. It signifies little, who contributes the most to the support of the great cause of truth, if only it be maintained in the spirit of the gospel. The stone which sharpens a tool has its use, however blunt it may be in itself. I shall be thankful, if I serve a common cause in no higher capacity than this.

————— "fungar vice cotis; acutum

Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exors ipsa secandi."

HOR.

It has been said, that the cause of mixed communion is popular among our young ministers; especially those who have enjoyed a liberal education. It may be so. I have not had the opportunity either of affirming or of contradicting the assertion. But of one thing I feel certain, that the line of study by which our best educated ministers ought to be distinguished, will not promote that system. A general course, which may be of great use in forming the taste, and improving the mind, may accord with the sentiment of mixed communion; and if it extends no farther than to render those who pursue it, agreeable to the best informed classes of society with which they may mingle, it is not at all unlikely to have that effect. The fashion of the present day, among those who boast of any degree of superior

information, is to say much in favour of candour and liberality;—real excellencies, which we can scarcely prize too highly; but which are often little understood in their nature, or felt in their genuine operation. And while many affect to be more under their influence than they really are, others may be tempted to adopt, with too little consideration, such sentiments as will secure them from the charge of narrow mindedness and bigotry. Our young ministers may sometimes be surrounded by persons of these classes, and whilst from the purest motives, they wish to render themselves acceptable to those among whom they labour, it is not at all unlikely that the sentiments and feelings of their friends may have some influence: and if they have not had time to carry on their enquiries to any extent, or have not a taste for employing their literary acquirements in theological pursuits, there is nothing in the direct tendency of their education, that will oppose any system which good men adopt. But if, after devoting the prime of their attention and study to the sacred oracles, they investigate the opinions and history of the ancient church, they will be convinced, that the maxims of antiquity would never lead them to adopt the plan of mixed communion. They will see the truth of *Dr. Wall's* assertion, that, “*among all the absurdities that ever were held, none ever maintained that, that any person should partake of the communion before he was baptized.**” They will find, that without arguing from the general manner in which the ancient writers speak of baptism, as the first external rite to which the converts to Christianity ought to attend, there are evidences which expressly prove that they were baptized, *before* they were admitted as members of the church:—that all the facts on record in the history of the ancient church, which

* *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* p. ii. c. ix. p. 518.—Ed. 2d:

bear on the subject;—all the impressions which those facts made on the minds of the primitive Christians;—and their reasonings, and decisions, on a variety of cases which came before them, respecting church fellowship, clearly shew, that mixed communion is both in principle and practice, *a modern invention*.

The question concerning communion, is intimately connected, both with the Constitution of the Church of Christ, and with the effects which must arise from the introduction of a plan different from that prescribed in the New Testament. A Baptist ought to enquire, how far he is justified, if he agrees to admit into a church, persons unbaptized, whose whole weight of example and influence, will be in opposition to that ordinance, by which believers were commanded to testify their faith in the Lord Jesus? It is a serious thing to patronize *in the church* a system which directly tends to set aside any of the commands of the Lord, whether moral or positive. For even supposing that in the issue, truth will overcome error, it does not follow, that the best way is to bear with what we believe to be wrong, under the persuasion that time will rectify it. For, the question returns, is this doing the will of the Lord? If we have “no law,” there can be “no transgression,” in adopting any system which our judgment or taste may prefer: but if there be a law for the formation and regulation of the church, then we ought to enquire, whether the admission of unbaptized persons as members of the church, be supported by the law, or not? All these considerations will engage the mind of the enquirer, while he is examining the subject of communion. I have endeavoured to turn the reader’s attention to the evidence which has struck me. Others will probably do the same. Thus, in time, the whole argument, and the whole evidence of the controversy will be brought to view. In the mean while, let those who are the most exposed to attack, recollect that

there is nothing surprising in the popularity of error, nor in its being supported by the most splendid talents. It has so often been the fate of the truth of God to be run down as unreasonable, or rejected as distasteful, that the cry raised against the strict Baptists, appears to me a presumption that they are right. Their great argument is, *the New Testament supports our practice*; and in all ages, those who in other things pleaded for truths, or practised duties, solely on this authority, have uniformly had a strong current of opinion to strive against.

In reviewing the history of this controversy, it is observable, that the strict Baptists have seldom been the assailants. Walking, as they believe, in the way of the Lord, they have repeatedly been called forward to defend themselves: they have done so: with what success it is not for them to say; but until it be proved, that the New Testament warrants the systematic omission of an ordinance, the nature of which is conceived to be understood, and the authority of which is acknowledged to be binding; they will think it right to persevere in their old plan. While any party can say, concerning a commanded Christian duty, "*so did the Apostolic Church, and therefore so do we,*" they have the support of an argument, which is *very short*,—*very plain*;—but *very forcible*.

The reader who is acquainted with the "*Apology for the Baptists,*" written by the late venerable ABRAHAM BOOTH, will find, that in the following pages I have taken ground somewhat different from his. He has said much that is excellent; nor do I see how many of his arguments can be answered, by those who believe that the positive ordinances of the gospel are of any consequence. My regard for his talents and character is *very high*; but I hope a common cause will not be injured, if I have adopted rather a different mode of defence.

It is not improbable, that it may be more needful in futurity, than it has been in times past, to plead for the authority of the institutions themselves. Many are inclining to the opinion, that Baptism is either of no authority, or, that it is not a rite of any great consequence. They do not know how to blame those who attend to it, but they do not like it; and find what reasons they can, either to oppose it, or to excuse themselves from it. All these persons are greatly pleased with mixed communion; and the tendency of the system is practically so much in their favour, that it cannot be a matter of surprise, if their opinion be promoted by it. For although it is granted, that those Baptists who plead for it, do not mean to deny the perpetuity of baptism, still it seems difficult to conceive, how any man can eagerly contend, that obedience to an ordinance, designed to shew our faith, and universally observed in the primitive church, is not necessary to communion, and yet have that sense of its authority which ought to attach to every specific command of the Saviour.

Nor will the practical influence of communion without baptism, be felt by the Baptists alone: the Pædobaptists will be equally affected by it. For if they adopt the wide principle laid down by Mr. Hall, they will not only change the constitution of their churches, but will find, that although they reason on the subject differently from the Baptists, yet a rite of any kind which is believed to be of so little consequence, that all the privileges of the church may be had without it, is soon held in very low estimation, and easily neglected. It is therefore their interest, quite as much as ours, to give the subject of the following work a thorough investigation: and if it only be done in the spirit of Christian meekness, truth will in the end be promoted.

“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).

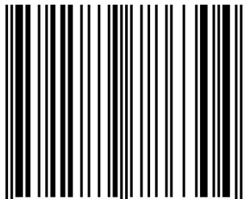
“There is something distinctive in the principles of Baptists. They differ from all other denominations; and the difference is so great as not only to justify, but to demand, their separate existence as a people . . . What distinctive mission have the Baptists, if this is not their mission? - to present 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

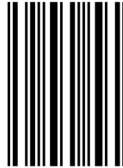
Distinctive Principles of Baptists.
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882).

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