Papers on Baptism and the Lord's Supper

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An Examination of a Tract on Baptism

Examination of a tract entitled: “Is baptism a figure of what is, or what is about to be, possessed?”

It is proposed to bring the statements of this tract to the test of scripture. Though baptized myself as a believer, I cannot sympathize with such as are not only a sect but ignore scriptural light on baptism. On the other hand, who can fairly say that paedobaptism has been shown to be an article of faith? Tracts have been published, manuscripts lent about; but, as far as one can pretend to judge, we are far from having that warrant of holy writ which we justly look for before we accept any doctrine or practice as Christian. Yet one would think that of all matters, none would more seem to want the precious word of the Lord, who fails not habitually to provide for every need of the poor. These had, or might have, children from the first; yet not in one indubitable instance do we hear of their baptism. Even as to the nomination of elders, not nearly so constant a need as baptism, we have full instruction afforded. We know that the church never chose but only apostles or an apostolic delegate. Is the absolute silence as to children casual? Large-hearted and intelligent men on all sides admit that the households of scripture decide nothing as to this. There may have been no infants, or, if there were, the household might be said to be baptized without including them because of the nature of the case. We hear of people baptized, men and women, but not of children; we read of servants of the Lord brought on their way by the brethren with wives and children, but never of children where baptism is in hand. If it be a

truth and a privilege intended for the children of the saints, does this appear like His provident wisdom and way? He knows that multitudes of His own are not subtle-minded but simple, and would prefer one word of clear scripture, in doctrine, or precept, or example, above all the theories that ever were spun, even if they could lay hold of them. They feel suspicious when one advocate rests much on the adverbial form πανοικί (Acts 16:34); another on the difference between οἶκον and οἰκίαν (1 Cor. 1:16, 1 Cor. 16:15), especially as those who ought to know as well, with similar views in general, reject these criticisms. When such evidence is caught at with eagerness, the candid must own that real proof must be sorely wanting. The believer will do well to wait for solid ground from God's word. Open and thankful to receive all that is certainly taught by the Holy Ghost, he may have the conviction that as yet infant baptism is "not proven." The tract before me will not commend it to spiritual or even sober minds, but, on the contrary, will serve to warn many of the danger and evil of speculating even on an outward matter like baptism.

In his first sentence the author reveals the true source of the tract. A strong speech ("that they who hold so-called believer's baptism do so in the very teeth of scripture") set him to work. From beginning to end of the discussion this seems to have fired his imagination (pp. 3, 18). It thus becomes his text; and to support it the various passages of scripture adduced are bent with a rude recklessness beyond example. Infant baptism is not that of which I complain, but false doctrine as to adults which undermines the truth and tends to corrupt the Church of God. Every Christian will utterly condemn

his idea of baptizing persons in order to believe afterwards, and his systematic perversion of scripture in order to extract a show of divine authority for so gross an error.

On Matthew 28:19, 20, this is the comment: “Now, here we have our Lord’s commission, which is the only commission to baptize. The disciples were to disciple (ματητετευσατε) all nations; but what was to be the means by which they were to be discipled? ‘baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost,’ and having thus been made disciples, they were to teach them all things, etc..... It would seem, then, according to Matthew 28:19, persons were to be made disciples by baptism in order that they might be instructed about the Lord Jesus, so that they might know and believe on Him, and be taught in all He had said.”

First remark the absurdity of making this “the only commission to baptize.” For, on the face of it, either Mark 16 warranted Peter and the rest to baptize the Jews, or the apostles baptized them without any commission whatsoever from the Lord. The commission in Matthew contemplates all the nations, but not the Jews. Hence the mistake is evident of treating Peter’s action in Jerusalem at Pentecost as “just according to the commission of Matthew 28.” (p. 7), and again (p. 8), “Peter followed strictly the commission of Matthew 28.” How could he, seeing that, according to the tract, the only commission is to baptize the Gentiles, whilst Peter then baptized none but Jews?

But my next charge is a far graver one than making rash and inconsistent propositions. The Lord had the heathen directly in view and told His envoys to disciple them all,

baptizing them to the name of the Trinity, and teaching them all that the Lord enjoined. But what can one say of the assertion that baptism, is the means of making these heathen disciples? Who doubts that even the least esteemed in the church can judge this to the writer's shame? Need I quote John 4:1 to prove the folly of the thought that baptizing is the means of making disciples? "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John." Baptizing then is the outward form of defining him who is already a disciple. Indeed this I should have thought the most unenlightened Christian must have known without so express a disproof. So too the conduct of the apostles proves. Never do we hear of Peter, or any other, proceeding to baptize in the first place, but to preach; then, those who received the word were baptized. But it was the receiving and confessing the name of the Lord, not the baptism, which constituted them disciples, however certainly the initiatory rite followed their confession. And if the author's thought had been true, how could Paul have declared that Christ sent him not to baptize but to preach the gospel? He certainly laboured more abundantly than they all: was he not sent to make disciples? He tells us that he was not sent to baptize, but to do the real work by which disciples are made.

Had the participle translated "baptizing" been, like πορευθέντες, in the aorist, before the verb μαθητεύσατε, there would have been a ground of argument: as it is, there is none. For it is plain, that the Lord bids His servants disciple all the nations, baptizing them, teaching them, both following the act of making them disciples, one at once as being initiatory, the other all through their earthly career.

On Mark 16:15, 16, he observes, “In this we have not the commission to baptize, but simply the statement, that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and here, I suppose, all will be agreed.” Now I ask any candid man, Is not this a bold way of escaping the force of the scripture which destroys the main position of the tract? Does “he that believeth and is baptized” mean that a man is made a disciple by baptism in order that he might be instructed about the Lord Jesus, so that he might know and believe on Him? No Christian will hesitate which he is to choose — the words of the Lord which are unmistakably plain; or the words of the tract which pervert equally the Lord’s commission in Matthew, and what is called “the statement” in Mark. The gospel was to be preached to all, and he who believed it and was baptized (for some, Jews especially, might avoid baptism, while professing faith) should be saved. The discipling of Matthew answers to believing the gospel in Mark, followed in both by baptism. All admit that men might profess falsely of old as now; but this does not touch the question. It is a miserable thing to weaken the value of faith by raking together passages which speak of unreal believers or disciples.1 All admit the fact that hypocrites may deceive; but does the author mean that the Lord intended His servants knowingly or carelessly to receive such? If not, his reasoning only deceives himself. Besides, the last words of his comment contradict his own thesis; because here he speaks of baptizing persons “on their simple profession of faith” (p. 5), which is completely to shift his ground from making them disciples by baptism, in order that they might be instructed about Jesus, so that they might know and believe on Him. The truth was too strong for the author’s will. He is self-condemned.

Next comes Acts 2:38-41. The doctrine of the tract here is: “Peter did not tell them to believe, and then be baptized, but to repent — to judge themselves, and then be baptized for the remission of sins. Now, if they had truly believed, they would have had the forgiveness of sins; but they had not the forgiveness of sins, and therefore, they were not true believers; they were to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ that they might believe on Him, and through Him receive the forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost” (p. 7). Now I distinctly affirm that this is thoroughly bad doctrine, a falsification of God’s word, a delusion and a snare for souls. Is the author so infatuated with a theory as to set aside the fundamental truth of God’s operation in souls? Does he not see that the repentance on which Peter insisted before baptism implies faith? His doctrine here is the baldest Pelagianism or worse, a mere action on the natural conscience, a self-judgment without true faith, and baptism for the remission of sins distinctly said to be before faith also: “if they had truly believed” (argues he), “they would have had the forgiveness of sins.” The reasoning is wholly fallacious, for faith is supposed throughout as it is indeed inseparable from repentance. So repentance, though distinct from faith, is inseparable from believing. Hence if the Philippian jailer was only called on to believe, it would be as false to infer that he did not truly repent, as it is here to infer that there was no true faith because Peter only called on them to repent. There is not the smallest reason to doubt that the persons thus addressed were converted (always leaving room for the creeping in of false brethren) before they were baptized. Only we must remember that the proclamation of repentance and remission of sins in

Christ's name was a new thing; faith was not, nor new birth, but the administration of the blessings now first bestowed in Christianity. To suppose therefore, because these souls had not yet remission of sins, that they did not truly believe, is to reason to their state from the Christian's state, fully made known afterwards, and hence a very serious blunder. Is it forgotten that no Old Testament saint enjoyed the Pentecostal state of things? Yet were the saints of old born of God and true believers. The ground taken is false, and the result disastrous. The author has sacrificed God's truth to the imminent danger of souls, because he has merely taken up another's thought, ill-understood, which he himself, not having learnt it from God, does not know how to conciliate with the rest of the truth. I believe there is truth behind, not seen in general, as to the Christian estate introduced at Pentecost. But this tract, far from clearing the ground, destroys as far as it can God's immutable principles in dealing with souls.

The same strange confusion pervades the remarks on Acts 8:12: "What did they believe? The things concerning the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ. They were then baptized and so brought into the kingdom, and to the name of Jesus Christ; but whether they divinely believed in Himself is another thing " (p. 9). Did he not know that "the name" is used for the person? (John 1:12; 1 John 5:13.) He writes as though he thought the contrary. Instead of honestly owning the plain proof of his own error (for the chapter distinctly shows that the Samaritans, as believing the things preached, were baptized, contrary to the "doctrine" of the tract), he flies off in a vain effort to disparage the faith of all, because Simon Magus was shown to have

been false. “Thus we have in Acts 2 three thousand who were baptized before they believed [an egregious error, already pointed out], and were saved; but in Acts 8 we have one who was baptized after he believed, but was not saved. In the same chapter (ver. 15, 16), we read of those who had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but who had not received the Holy Ghost.... Whether the eunuch believed before or after his baptism we are not told. But the Scriptures only record that he rejoiced, after that he was baptized” (pp. 9, 10). Does the writer not know that the reception of the Holy Ghost is invariably after faith, not in order to it? Does he not see that Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, earnestly in quest of the truth already, who, because he believed, asked to be baptized, and not in vain?

The author feels the case of Cornelius to be in his way. “In Acts 10 we have the record of the conversion of the Gentile centurion, who did truly believe and did receive the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, contrary to the words of the commission, and contrary to the practice of Peter in Acts 2” (p. 10). It is really a pain to review a man so confidently talking of matters in which he displays a want of light quite astounding, and makes in a single sentence nearly as many errors as lines. For we have not the record of a conversion, but of bringing a Gentile already converted into the new christian estate. This ignorance our author shares with the mass of “so-called baptists.” Only, dark as Baptists may be, they respect the fundamental truths of God’s work in the soul, and are therefore kept from the far more serious error peculiar to the writer. Peter was to tell Cornelius words [this was the great thing rather than baptism], whereby he and his house should be saved. It is not

quickened (for we must gather from his walk and ways and prayers that he was already acceptable to God, Acts 10:2, 6, 22, 35) but “saved.” And if the writer does not apprehend the difference, he has everything to learn which a man needs in order to write on baptism with safety to himself and edification to others. Again, the case was not “contrary to the words of the commission;” for Cornelius first became a disciple, and was thereon baptized, as no doubt afterwards he received instruction in christian truth and ways. Nor was it “contrary to the practice of Peter in Acts 2.” For, as the Jews at Pentecost were not baptized till they received his testimony, so he gave no command to baptize the household of Cornelius till there was the public evidence of their faith by the extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The sole difference was, not “the practice of Peter in Acts 2,” but God’s gracious act preceding, not following, in order to encourage or stop the mouth of Jews, present or absent. But is it not monstrous to suppose, as the author does, that Peter follows the Lord’s commission2 with the Jews who were not included in it, and goes contrary to His words with the Gentiles who were expressly in His view? To what can one attribute such incessant mangling of every scripture noticed? Did one ever read a paper more unequivocally written under a spirit of error?

The case of Saul of Tarsus is dismissed very curtly. There is at least method here, which is to my mind a symptom even worse than thoughtlessness in things so grave. For the history of Saul’s conversion in chapter 9 is quite passed by: can one conceive that the author forgot it? Certainly it is an important testimony for one who professes “to take up every scripture referring to baptism” (p. 3). And if the author does not believe that

the great apostle was converted before he was baptized, I will repair his omission, and furnish evidence enough to convince every man who is not under the influence of a will-o'-the-wisp. "And Ananias went his way and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized." Such is the Spirit's report through Luke. It is for everyone to draw his conclusion whether the apostle was not a true believer till after he was baptized; or if he was, whether he too, like the poor Baptists, would not come in God's order, and God must go out of His order and take him to Himself (p. 12).

We have a brief allusion to the apostle's account in chapter 22. "When under conviction of sin, he is told to arise, be baptized, and wash away his sins" (p. 11). If we are to apply the reasoning to this case which we have had in pages 7 and 9, we must suppose the author meant that the apostle as yet had only a natural repentance or conviction of sins, and that he had not life; for if he had truly believed, the argument is, he would have had the forgiveness of sins; but he had not the forgiveness of sins, and therefore he was not a true believer, he was to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, that he might believe on Him, etc. Enough and more than enough of such mischievous talk. Granted indeed that the Baptists may not see the truth in these scriptures; but I solemnly arraign the anonymous author not of ignorance merely but of distinct and dangerous heterodoxy.

The same evil error runs through his misuse of the next two cases. “The jailer of Philippi is commonly referred to as one who was a true believer before he was baptized. Now the record does not say anything of the kind, but it does say that he believed and rejoiced after he was baptized (Acts 16:34). In Acts 19 we have those who had been baptized with John’s baptism, and they therefore had to be baptized again; and after their second baptism they receive the Holy Ghost.” Now the record is as plain as possible that, when the Philippian jailer asked in the utmost distress what he must do to be saved, he was told, not to be baptized first and believe afterwards (as runs this new gospel which is no gospel), but “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house,” without one word about baptism. No one doubts that the same hour he was baptized, and all his, straightway; but the word of God is too wise and holy to insinuate, or to give the smallest sanction to the dream, that he was baptized before he believed, because it is afterwards said that he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. It is remarkable on the contrary that, while his joy is given in the aorist, his faith is described in that form (πεπιστευκώς) which distinctively implies the present or continuing result of what is past.

But the second instance has a really ill look; for the apostle lets us know (Acts 19:2) that he reckoned the disciples to have believed before they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and received the Spirit, contrary to the thesis of the tract. Can we suppose that the writer had not read this or did not know it?

The author at the close (p. 23) supplies the omitted case of Acts 18, “where it says that ‘the Corinthians, who believed, were baptized.’ And that is the very people to

whom Paul wrote, warning them of introducing wood, hay, stubble: reminding them of the house of God in the wilderness, and comparing it with the house of God of this dispensation." Now a mind of ordinary uprightness that had held the idea of baptizing adults in order to believe would have at once felt that his theory was ruined by this single scripture, which cannot be broken. Besides, one might wonder that he did not fear to insult those of whom the Lord said to Paul at this very time, "I have much people in this city." No one doubts that, spite of apostolic vigilance, wood, hay, and stubble might be introduced; but I think every brother of sense will admit that to baptize people avowedly without faith is not the way to guard the house of God from such a danger.

Here too I must supply the omission of Lydia in Acts 16:14, 15, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul before she was baptized with her house. How can such accumulated proofs of his error be got rid of by an honest man? So, when baptized, "she besought us saying, If ye have judged (κεκρίκατε) me to be faithful to the Lord;" it was not faithfulness, the fruit of faith, given after her baptism, but contrariwise their conviction of her faithfulness implied in their baptizing her.

We have next passages from the Epistles; and first Romans 6:3, 4. "Here we have the order of the commission and the practice of Peter in Acts 2 maintained by the Spirit of God, showing again how exceptional was the case of Cornelius. The so-called believer's baptists [a very odd phrase indeed] hold that one must have Christ and must have died with Him before baptism: whereas the Holy Ghost teaches that one must be baptized in order to get to Christ... It is true

that many have received Christ and His death before they have been baptized, but then our question is, What is God's order? All those whom God in eternity has given to Christ shall come unto Him: if therefore they will not come in God's order, then God must go out of His order and take them to Himself; and this, blessed be His name, He has done, which is but a further manifestation of His love and grace" (pp. 11, 12). To my mind the Lord's commission, Peter's practice, and Paul's doctrine chime admirably together; but as we have seen that the writer mistook totally the first and second, so it remains to be shown that he does not understand, and of course misuses, the third. If the Baptists simply held that an adult must be accepted as converted, repentant and believing in order to baptism, they would take ground not to be shaken; if the writer simply asserted that there is an administration of christian blessing which the believer enters by baptism, he too would have confessed a truth which Baptists never put forth as far as I know. But in trying to follow another (who indeed is "very greatly taught in the word"), but unhappily without any proper understanding of the matter, he has really fallen into errors fatal to any man's testimony, whether in preaching or in teaching. Till one is baptized, one does not, properly speaking, profess Christ or Christianity; if true believers then, we thus come into its special blessings, one of which is to have died with Christ. Nothing can be more palpably erroneous than that "baptism is then quite a subjective thing." Such indeed is the notion of the Baptists who reduce baptism to signify the state of the baptized. The truth is that both baptism and the Lord's supper are objective: whether there is any subjective reality depends on the faith of the recipients. And I affirm that all scripture proves that the

adult ought to believe in Christ before he is baptized; and that the author's scheme is nothing better or else than a deliberate baptizing of natural men if not hypocrites under the awful pretension that such is God's order! It is in truth an order completely set aside by the uniform testimony of His word. This in my judgment "is very solemn" for the writer, and serious enough for all who for other reasons might essay to make light of it. It is not a casual statement; it is his settled doctrine, which all who read his tract must know full well that he intends, if he is to be regarded as responsible for his language. "Scripture" NEVER "teaches baptism unto Christ, who is the life, in order to get life" (p. 13), but on the contrary invariably shows that persons having life were baptized to Christ, who died, in order sacramentally to have part with Him in His death. The author holds decidedly false doctrine on a capital truth of God.

As to 1 Corinthians 10 the apostle warns how outward signs might be abused to self-deception, as well as to deceive others. But on the writer's scheme no provision should be against bringing in "lifeless professors" for in the very same page he teaches (and affirms most mistakenly that scripture teaches) baptism in order to get life. Were his eyes holden that he should not see how completely his notion is guarded against by "the solemn caution" of this epistle? To say that the house of God in Old Testament times and His house in the New must be the same in such respects as scripture does not affirm is pure assumption. That we are admonished by the apostle to beware of the sins of Israel or kindred evils is most true and salutary.

Galatians 3:27. “Here again baptism is before the reception or the putting on of Christ — or rather, it is the initiatory act.” So says the tract in the teeth of the text, which declares that, as baptism is to Christ, so not the law but Christ is put on. How “our so-called baptist brethren would have it” I do not know; but I am sure that the writer does say at least as wrongly as they in words, and worse than they in doctrine. The truth is that the verse teaches nothing about before or after, but rather, to my thinking, excludes such thoughts by identifying the putting on Christ with baptism to Him. In fact, as far as the sign goes, only the baptized have put Him on; but the receiving of Christ as life is another affair, as to which the tract from beginning to end is an incessant jumble of darkness and error. Scripture shows that believers only were contemplated for baptism, though a Simon Magus or other false professors might creep in unawares. The tract consecrates their entrance by denying it to be God’s order that men should first believe. How it could be said that they were afterwards to believe, unless baptism act ex opere operato, would perplex any to explain.

Ephesians 4:4-6. The writer’s use of this (pp. 15, 16) halts miserably, because the third sphere is not merely larger than that of the body or of profession, which is allowed, but also more intimate as regards the saints. It is false therefore to say that it is heathen or Unitarian ground. And, whatever people may reason, it must be owned that it is somewhat harsh to place infants on the ground of profession. It is a great mercy that the Son can and does quicken before we enter the arena of His Lordship. He was distinctly set forth as Lord to the Jews by Peter for them to receive, and in fact they did receive

the word to that effect, before they were baptized. Is the writer in earnest? One might almost imagine him to be a Baptist in disguise who wished to serve his party by pleading so absurdly against them.

So again on Colossians 2:12, his question ("Is the raising through the faith of the operation of God before or after the baptism?") may be left without notice.

As for 1 Peter 3:21, he says, "here I must freely confess my ignorance with reference to the answer of a good conscience." It seems to me that such an acknowledgement loses its worth somewhat from being immediately followed by a valiant argument for the old point. "The most intelligent of Bible students own it to be a most difficult scripture; one thing is certain, the good conscience is after the baptism, and by the resurrection" (p. 17). Nor can I admit the text to be so difficult, more particularly when you accept the true force of ἐπερώτημα which decidedly means "question" rather than "answer," "inquiry after," or "the thing requested." A conscience when awakened of God seeks and finds this in His righteousness, and hence one is baptized to all that it wants in being baptized to Christ. Thus the apostle does not hesitate to say, "which figure, (ὃ ἀντίτυπον), baptism, saveth..... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." It is here again no question of repentance or of quickening by faith, but of the new blessings vouchsafed on condition of Christ's name. One can then take the place of death in baptism, because His resurrection has given another place far better; one enters thus into God's mind according to Christ's death, but thus only in virtue of His resurrection. Hence too the force of "saveth" here as in Acts 11:14 the latter being the truth, the former the sign of professing it. The so-

called Baptists seldom if ever understand “salvation;” but neither does this tract which ridicules the idea of life before death; whereas nothing is more certainly true and scriptural, while his own thought is both unintelligent and a cheat of the enemy.

I conclude therefore that every scripture, without one exception (and it is childish to think there can be one as to the foundations of truth) is dead against the notion of baptizing faithless disciples as God’s order for such as hear the gospel. If not His order, whose order is it? and who has guided in this systematic perversion of the written word? Certainly not the Spirit of truth.

As to the appended “Word on Infant Baptism,” I may be the briefer (though I do not think his reasoning solid) because this not the object of animadversion but the avowed opening the door of baptism to known unbelievers, and this (must I not call it?) impiety styled the order of God, whose grace bears with those who enter as believers!

1. Romans 6 does not contemplate infants. It is straining the word to bring them in here. So, in Mark 16, they are not objects of testimony; and hence the damning of unbelievers does not apply to them.

2. If Timothy from a child knew the sacred letters, there is no reason why children, especially of Christians, should not. He certainly was not then baptized.

3. If “holy” in 1 Corinthians 7:14 must mean baptized and “in the house,” how comes the unbelieving wife, “sanctified” in the brother, to be left on unholy ground? So at least sober paedobaptists have hitherto thought: perhaps the writer goes all lengths, and will have her inside too.

4. The tract confounds “of such is the kingdom” with “theirs is the kingdom.” Compare Matthew 5:3, 10 with Matthew 19:14. I should have thought too that the notion of circumcising the males being replaced by the baptism of all infants might have been left with those who make the Lord’s-day to be the Christian sabbath.

5. The vagueness of “the house” just suits one who has got nothing to the point; and the argument about children going to heaven after death as a ground of reception here goes too far; for the same principle would forbid the rejection of the grossest offenders, of there was the least hope that they might be saved in the day of the Lord.

W. K.

P.S. I hear the tract is withdrawn, after being sent far and wide. This is not enough. False doctrine must be confessed, not merely withdrawn.

1 John 2:11 is used most unintelligently to prove that the disciples were such before they believed. The author would do well to consider Hebrews 11:8, 9, 17, and ask himself if it be therefore true that Abraham had faith before he had faith. Disciples may have their faith exercised again and again. (See John 2:22.)

2 This commission says not a word about the gift of the Holy Ghost, the manner of which constitutes the difference between Acts 2 and 10

Recent Baptismal Agitation

(B.T. Vol. 9, p.14-16, 32.)

To Mr. W. T. B.

Dear Brother, — You are not alone in speaking strongly of some tracts lately published. They are condemned not only by all who differ from the author’s views, but (what is of more importance) by wise and sober brethren who accept that which may be called the same side of the question. How grievous to have to speak of sides in the least of divine things! But so it is I have for many years said little on the matter, save where clearly called for. Every one who loves the Lord Jesus and serves the church has probably more or less observed the keen feelings and strong language the discussion of baptism is apt to excite, in utter disproportion to its relative place and as usual most heatedly among such as least understand its nature and consequences. It has seemed the plain path of grace and wisdom, not to say of truth and righteousness, to set one’s face resolutely against party-spirit, and so against the zealots of either side. They both tend to make a sect of their own, the horror of which, to me, is Done the less, because the sect would fight under Baptist or Paedobaptist colours. Indeed if there could be a shade of difference, where both tend to a common evil result, one ought to feel most where most truth was thus perverted. Those who thank God for the apostle Paul’s gospel should not forget his thankfulness on this score (1 Cor. 1:14-17); and the value of these words of the Spirit appears to me so much the more plain, weighty, and urgent in the actual weakness of the saints and confusions of Christendom.

It would be well for all to avoid one-sided and exaggerated statements. There is no doubt for instance that Baptists generally take wrong ground in advocating what is due to this institution of the Lord. They plead the instance of John the Baptist and our Lord's example for us also to accomplish all righteousness. they insist on the baptism of believers as a matter of obedience; they dedicate their babes meanwhile till they are converted and seek baptism for themselves. Granted that all this proves distressing ignorance not of christian baptism only but of christianity; but is it not forgotten that no less ignorance in these very particulars, involving the most fundamental principles, rests on the great mass of Paedobaptists, save that they talk of dedicating their children to God in baptism?

The only fair inference therefore is that the legal or Judaizing view complained of is quite independent of this question, attaching to the general creed and practice of Christendom, and surely developing itself in ordinary Baptists and Paedobaptists alike, though in a slightly different form and phrase. On a fair comparison I am afraid the statements about baptism made by the ancient fathers in general were no better than Tertullian's, and that the Mennonites are no worse than Lutherans or Calvinists or Anglicans. The departure from christian truth lies far deeper than this question; and the Paedobaptists generally are surely not less legal and superstitious than the mass of Baptists. Nor is there ground save for anguish and humiliation in considering the words and ways of them all as one weighs what Christ is to us and has called us to. Why then mix up all this with the question? The common Paedobaptist is as ignorant as the Baptist of the difference between John's

baptism and the christian one; they both know as much or as little of death and resurrection with Christ.

Again, which of the two has been the most guilty of erasing from Christian baptism its character of privilege conferred, by erecting it into a saving ordinance obedience to which is peremptory? Both have one far away from the revealed word, but not least the Paedobaptist So, as to the meaning of baptism, it will hardly be argued gravely that Paedobaptists ordinarily enter into it one whit better than Baptists. It was the former, not the latter, who invented the flattest possible contradiction of its character. It was not the more despised of the two who spread everywhere the dreadful error that baptism is the sign and even the means of new birth. At the same time I frankly allow that they both equally misunderstand death with Christ. It is therefore unfounded and unfair to reason against the Baptist system as the culprit when in fact Paedobaptism proves equally open to the same charges. The fault common to both lies elsewhere. They have both alas! forsaken to an enormous extent the fountain of living Waters, and they have each hewed out broken cisterns of a different pattern that can hold no water.

For my part I rejoice when brethren who have had a bias one way or other in days of law have learnt of the Lord to meet and go on in grace, whereto they have already attained walking by the same rule, and, if in anything differently minded, confiding in the God of all grace to reveal even this to them, Hence it is a joy to see that, spite of ruin, all simple-minded men agree that baptism is the initiatory institution of Christianity, and that believers, if they have not been, should be at once baptized as the sign of having part with Christ in His

death and resurrection. A true and loving and large heart seeks not to widen the breach, but rather to expose and rebuke, as of the enemy, all such efforts.

This is my reason for deploring the last of these tracts, which you justly say is the worst of the kind one has ever seen. I have in my time read not a few painful productions of Papists and Protestants; but I confess that not one occurs to my memory lower, looser, or more systematically perverting the scriptures. Were F. Xavier the famous Jesuit missionary alive, he would smile at such a justification of his procedure from such a quarter; and Charlemagne might have found a two-penny tract as useful is the sword to induce the Saxons to enter the river and be baptized.

For the doctrine broached is that faith before baptism is more wrong than right! that not believing but baptism is the means by which the nations were to be discipled! that they must be brought into the sphere of the church or assembly to receive not only the Spirit but His testimony concerning Jesus! and that this ground, which is Popish as far as it goes, is God's order!! To believe and be baptized is out of His order!!! To make sure of the meaning we are told that Peter did not tell the Jews at Pentecost to believe but to repent. "They were to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ that they might believe on Him!" etc. Hence even their receiving Peter's word is restricted to " Repent and be baptized," etc., and thus the men repenting after a Methodist sort without being true believers were added to the house over which Christ is Lord, so that they could own Him such, "for of course they must be in the sphere of His lordship before they can own Him Lord."

By this strange doctrine evangelizing is annulled and the purity of God's assembly destroyed. For the notion insisted on throughout is that adults not only may but ought to be received by baptism in order that they may believe and be brought to the Lord where the remission of sins is. Baptism to get life is not only the strangest want of intelligence but fundamentally false doctrine. "SCRIPTURE TEACHES BAPTISM UNTO CHRIST, who is the life, IN ORDER TO GET LIFE," p. 13. Scripture never teaches this, but on the contrary that the believer has part with Christ in death, and this by baptism as its sign. Nowhere do I remember from any one called a brother such a rash, not to say heartless, sacrifice of the gospel and the assembly of God to a novel idea, which after all is only the revival of an old error which has already corrupted Christendom. Can any notion of Baptists be worse?

I have not reasoned on the various scriptures, to every one of which the grossest violence is done, as indeed must be in order to silence their true sense and force a meaning completely opposed. It is to be hoped that few if any are prepared to endorse statements so erroneous and unholy, and that brethren everywhere will know what their duty is in dealing with such heterodoxy. It would be easy to expose the ignorance of God's word and the false reasoning, habitually displayed. My object for the present and in this periodical is simply to protest publicly against a dangerous and offensive production.

There are reasons why I desired to say not a word; but called on as I am by appeals from north, south, east, west, I could no longer hesitate to address myself to you the last of these applicants. May no love of party betray

even one into indifference to Christ and the truth. Yours affectionately, W. K.

It seems due to such is doubted the need for the Editor's remarks on the recent baptismal agitation, to say that the writer censured has not only confessed his grave error, but justified what was written in exposure of it. "I accept his letter, as being fully warranted by certain expressions I have made use of, and I own also that the statements I have made tire of such a nature as to fully justify the publication of his letter, even after I had withdrawn my tract." Those therefore who, in the face of this, complain of severity cannot be supposed to judge the false doctrine involved: else they would see more love in reproving than in palliating or cloaking it. May we thank God for what His grace has given, and look for yet more!

The Lord's Supper - 1 Cor. 11

The Lord’s supper differs from the other standing institution of Christianity in this, that while baptism is individual, the breaking of bread is congregational. Personal enjoyment merely is not God’s mind in the supper, but rather communion. The gospel gives high value and scope to what is individual; and we need this, for it is the first call from God to man, and should take precedence of all else. That soul is never right which loses itself in a crowd. One’s soul needs to be set right with the Lord in His grace by faith.

In baptism, being individual, each one is said to put on Christ as the sign of His death; for “as many as were baptised unto Jesus Christ were baptised unto His death. Therefore we were buried with Him in baptism unto death.” Burial unto His death is the aim; but it is individual, even if ever so many were baptised at the same time. There is no fellowship one with another in baptism. Baptism by proxy is an absurdity, if not worse. Christian baptism is the privilege of owning Christ’s death. There the soul is brought under solemn responsibility (though immense favour too); because he that is so baptised is called to walk as one alive from the dead. But this has nothing to do with others — it is one’s own responsibility, and is independent of association with any.

The Lord’s supper is another thing. It was not a mere circumstance that the disciples were assembled when the Lord instituted it. Their gathering to partake of it together is not merely a fact but a principle. It is therefore a question of fellowship with saints. There is

no such thing in scripture, or in the meaning of the institution, as an individual taking bread and wine in remembrance of Christ; the doing so would rather be an error to be forgiven. The blessedness of the Lord's supper consists in this, not only that it is essentially remembering Christ in common, but soon after also the one body of Christ. Being the expression of our joint Christian worship, what does not leave room for every member of His body, walking as such, destroys (as far as it goes) the character of the Lord's supper. Not of course, that in many a city all could eat together in one spot; but let them eat in ever so many, it was and must be on the same ground, and in real inter-communion. The truth indeed embraces all saints walking as such: whatever does not is not the Lord's supper.

There is another remark to make. Not only was Christian baptism liable to be perverted (and surely this has been the case far and wide in Christendom), but the Lord's supper was even more easily misused. Whether Christian baptism was or was not perverted in very early days is not now taken up; but certainly the Lord's supper was so almost immediately. It was the more open to have its character forgotten because it demands spiritual fellowship. The First Epistle to the Corinthians testifies to this. Even in apostolic times the Holy Spirit has recorded gross failure. How great the humiliation, and how deep the grief, for the apostle to expose it! But though to write 1. Cor. 11 was to spread and even perpetuate the bad tidings, the Spirit of God felt it necessary for their good and also for the welfare of all the assembly.

The way in which the misuse of the Lord's supper came in at Corinth is highly instructive. The Corinthians

valued the social character of Christianity more than moderns; and it is a very valuable trait. In those early days Christians loved to be together, and so partook of a love-feast. No doubt, plausible reasons were not wanting for uniting this with the Lord's supper. As all were assembled then, it would be a saving of time; why not on the same occasion take the two together? Was there not something like it at the last Passover when the Lord was here in person before instituting His supper?

Perhaps many Christians now are willing to take the Lord's supper together who would shrink from taking a meal in common. But the Corinthians had not yet lost sight of the bonds which unite the holy brotherhood. They had a stronger sense of it than some who like to speak of their faults. Nevertheless their low moral state exposed them to evil and error; and this effect, not being corrected in the Spirit, brought out dangerous fleshly activity. There was levity and looseness among them; Christ was forgotten. At these love-feasts they each brought their fare as for the convivial feast (or ἔρανος) of the Greeks. This was in point of fact a contribution meal. What a descent from Christianity to heathen practice, when each would bring his own! and thus the rich came with plenty, and the poor had little or nothing! Hence the open result of their coming thus together was, that selfishness, not love, characterised them. Those well off soon proved how easy it is to have too much; and the poor were made to feel lack on these occasions. So the whole scene became a reflection, not of heaven and God's grace in Christ, but of the proud heartless world; and the holiest feast on earth — the Lord's supper — gilded and turned into a disgrace to His name that covered all. In fact, their state at this very

time was such as to bring down His hand in judgment on His people.

Many wonder how this could be in the “church of God.” They forget Satan’s wiles and enmity; yet some go so far as to draw conclusions favourable to themselves and their own time. But the Spirit of God never leads to such thoughts. “The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;” and those only read it to profit who by it judge themselves rather than their brethren, and still less saints of primitive times just emerged from paganism. Let me inquire of each, Do you compare your ways with those of the Corinthians when beguiled of the enemy? How much wiser to judge yourselves, not by what they slipped into, but by what the apostle wrote, and what the Lord instituted! And let none think this too hard; for it is fair to ask, Who is entitled to alter the institutions of Christ? Has the church such a licence? Is she not, on the contrary, called to submit herself to the Lord as a virgin espoused to Him? What should we think of one who set herself up against her husband? Yet this is but a small part of what Christendom has done — taking advantage of His name to speak proudly and act independently; and most especially that church which claims for herself to have altered nothing, whereas to her remains scarce a shred of Christ in truth, love, and holiness.

But let us look at scripture, not to condemn Rome, but to prove ourselves. Let us search and see whether and how far we are doing the will of the Lord. How are we to know we are pleasing Him? His word is our only sure guide.

We have the description of the institution of the Lord's supper given to us in three of the Gospels — by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Eternal life and the gift of the Holy Ghost are the great themes of John. Neither baptism nor the Lord's supper enters into either his Gospel or his Epistles; but in the synoptists, or historic Gospels, we have a full account.

The apostle Paul too had a fresh revelation about the Lord's supper, not about baptism. He expressly tells us that the Lord did not send him to baptise but to preach the gospel. The others were given by Himself a commission to baptise. "Go ye therefore, and disciple all the nations, baptising them unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But the apostle Paul was called from heaven, and from his very conversion hears that the Christians are one with Christ. Of this the Lord's supper, not baptism, is the suited sign; and so it was revealed to him, though of course he was baptised and did baptise like another, at least occasionally.

Baptism is the confession of Christ, emphatically of Christ's death and resurrection. The Lord's supper is the symbol of unity with Christ, founded on His death Who is now on high. That those who partake of the one loaf are the one body of Christ is the great idea, as well as the announcement of His death. Hence the apostle Paul, who beyond all made known the mystery of Christ and the church, has a special revelation concerning this given to him from heaven. "For I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread."

Nothing strikes one more than the extreme simplicity of the materials the Lord was pleased to use for His supper. He “took bread.” What is more common than a loaf? He blessed, and broke, and gave to them, while they all remained in the same position. He blessed; but there is no thought of consecration here, still less of consubstantiation or of transubstantiation. He gave thanks; but He did exactly the same when distributing the five barley loaves and two fishes, though nobody would say that they were consecrated or changed. It is a delusion to conceive any miracle in the elements. Scripture intimates very expressly the contrary. The disciples ate bread and drank wine; and the whole blessing is the power of faith coming in and investing what was before it, though the simplest materials, with the deepest associations of God’s grace in the death of His beloved Son. “Ye announce the death of the Lord till He come.” What so solemn in itself, so precious to God, so loving to us, so separative from sin and the world!

Every scheme which exalts the elements, or aggrandises those who “administer’’ to the communicants, takes away from Christ. Any accessories of sight or sound accompanying it are human accretions contrary to His word. Scripture repudiates them as not of the Spirit, and of the first man, not of the Second. The Lord’s supper is of Him and to Him, and this so specially that to bring in anything else is to slight Him, being an infringement of His heavenly glory, as well as of the cross, whereby the world is crucified to the Lord, and the saint to the world. For He that hath His word and keepeth it, he it is who loveth Him. It is in vain to think we care for His glory if we slight scripture that reveals it.

He says to all His own, “Take, eat.” Not, Take thou; because this would bring in individuality, which is never the intent of the Lord’s supper, but the body; communion in the remembrance of Christ, but of Christ in death. In this His love is everything to the heart, and the common blessing of all is in and with Christ. His death separates believers from the world, and as His body we are one with Him Who is in heaven.

The love-feast was what we may call the Christians’ supper; this was its primary aim. It was their feast; but the Lord’s supper is far more. In it, therefore, so far from a person eating or drinking for himself alone, it is intended to contemplate the whole body of Christ, save those who may be outside through discipline or self-will. Whatever narrows this holy circle, either in principle or in practice, infringes on the Lord’s object in His supper. Hence the moment you bring in your peculiar doctrine, discipline, or polity, only admitting those who expressly or virtually subscribe to it, you make it your supper and not the Lord’s. If guided of Him, we meet there as members of His body; and everything else is set aside as secondary but Himself.

What can be more valuable in its place, and for God’s ends by it, than Christian ministry? It embraces rule as well as teaching, pastorship as well as preaching. There are those that can teach who have not the power of ruling; as, again, others who rule well, having great moral weight, who could not teach. Some again have the gift of preaching who themselves need teaching, and are not at all fit to lead on, clear, and establish the church of God. Nor does a gift for ministry in itself carry moral weight for rule. Thus scripture teaches, and so we see in the facts of every day.

Christian ministry was founded by the Lord Who died for us; but the spring flowed when He went up to heaven. If He gave gifts to men, it was after He ascended on high (Eph. 4:8-11).

This is very important; for if Christian ministry had commenced while Christ was on earth, it might be said that things have wholly changed since. There has been no change for Christ, but only alas! among Christians, since He went up to heaven. He is the risen Head now as then.

Our Lord Jesus when here below sent out twelve apostles in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel; as He sent out the seventy afterwards with a final message, but still in testimony to Israel. Was this Christian ministry? Not so. It was after His ascension that He gave gifts to men — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Not that these are all; but those named in Eph. 4 are enough for my purpose now.

When the Lord Jesus accomplished redemption and went to heaven, He from His ascension glory gave gifts to men. It is quite a new source of supply from above. What He did publicly when on earth was for Israel. The disciples were even forbidden to preach to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles. This therefore could not be Christian ministry. No doubt those previously used were again sent forth now; but they had a fresh mission when Christ went up to heaven. Has Christ then, I ask, ceased to give gifts to men? or is He still owned by us as the Head of the church, not in word only but in deed and in truth? And those who in practice and principle deny this and take His place, are they not really conspiring against Him and His rights as the fountain of all gifts for

the church? Rome is the chief of the conspiracy against the headship of Christ. Babylon — the false lady, the would-be queen — was not content to be subject, and is ever denounced as a strumpet going to be judged by God. Take care that you fall not into a similar error of disowning Christ's headship in another form, to speak of no other corruption.

Christian ministry is a divine institution and a permanent one. It is not like the local charge of elders, which required apostolic intervention, direct or indirect. If others plead for change, do you hold that it is the same now as when Christ first ascended? Christ, and Christ alone, through the Holy Ghost, has all authority in His hands. He gives gifts: not the foundation gifts of apostles and prophets (for that work has been done perfectly), but all needed to carry on the church, as evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Christ alone has the title of Head of the church; and the Holy Ghost is come down as alone competent to carry out His mind on earth in accordance with God's written word, as He acts and dwells in each saint.

But while we hold up the place of Christian ministry, and slight none who are Christ's gifts, owning all who are really His, and disowning all who are not, still there is one occasion where distinctions disappear, where only One is or ought to be the prominent one, even Christ in His grace to us; where, no matter what our position and standing in the church, everything for the time gives place to Christ and His death; and this occasion is the Lord's supper. Human presidency there is avoided in scripture. How precious therein to merge all else and have nothing before the soul but Himself Who died for us in infinite love! This the Lord (the night in which He

was betrayed) commended to the saints. This He would have us to do in remembrance of Him till He come. It is wholesome for the most highly gifted not always to be in the position of giving out; and it is well for the simplest saints not to be ever taking in. An evangelist, e.g., might else get so occupied with winning the souls of others as to forget he has a soul of his own to praise and remember the Lord; and so with every other gift. “They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” It is good for the heart of any man, no matter what his gift, to have for Christ a little quiet time; and that these quiet times should not be too far apart.

All this is provided for amply in the Lord’s supper. Souls should have such seasons when occupied neither with delivering nor with hearing a sermon. It is blessed when even the apostle is merged in the saint, when we and all are occupied only with the remembrance of Christ. There is a feast provided by His love, in which we all may enjoy Him together, and enjoy Him to the full; for He does not want us to treat His love as an uncertain sound. He would have our joy to be full. But if you value not this feast, because of its own nature and His love Who invites you, no wonder you cannot enjoy it. If you join in a rite which bears His name but with its character altered, how can you expect it to pass as the feast to which He invites you and guarantees His presence? Some make an idol of the Eucharist and worship its elements; others, running away from the idolatry of Rome, seem to have forgotten His word and to put His supper nowhere, save as a gloomy appendix to the sermon, and that but a few times in the year.

The early disciples came together not once a year, nor once a quarter, nor once a month, but the first day of the week to break bread. It is no new theory, no notion of moderns or ancients, but what God has written in Acts 20:7. Does it not concern you as much as me? It is Christ's feast for His own — what in a special way concerns you, children of God, though Christ and His glory even more.

I remember the time when the Lord's supper was a duty of dread, lest one might fall into the condemnation supposed to be written here — of eating and drinking "damnation," — guilty in respect of the body and the blood of the Lord. No wonder with such a danger before one, the Lord's supper could not be enjoyed, and to the believer, with no one to show any better, it was so much the more awful a burden. It was no feast, but a fast of the most trying description. It was a misrepresentation of the Lord's supper that produced so unhappy a result. Somewhat similar alas! is the condition of many a soul now, though the mistake is publicly corrected, but not in the Book of Common Prayer. It is "judgment" in the shape of sickness or death, but not "damnation."

But the Lord Jesus died on the cross to suffer for the sins of believers, and to blot them out. Yea, He glorified God about sin itself, instead of leaving it to stand as a perpetual reproach to God. The Son of God, having gone down under our evil in love, and risen again without it in righteousness, He from the glory gave these words to Paul for us. They come, in the infinite grace of God, from the Saviour Who witnesses to judgment borne for us, from resurrection accomplished, from the right hand of God: thence the Lord commends to us this institution of His grace. Do not treat it as a mere commandment, and

hence “a means of grace” for those who have not faith. It is a call of love, embracing all who are His, and only for His own, by faith. “Do this in remembrance of Me!” It is not for those who, slighting His love, love Him not. Christ’s death was God’s judgment of sin as truly as His remission of our sins.

For whom it is, need one say more? The only persons who have the smallest title to the Lord’s supper are those who rest on Him and His redemption. You might even be converted, and not yet be in a fit state to partake of this feast.

For the Christian state is more than being by grace turned from one’s evil ways to God. Besides this, the Christian believes the gospel of his salvation; he has peace with God, being justified by faith. He does not wait for righteousness, but is become God’s righteousness in Christ. We therefore wait for the hope of righteousness, that is, for glory. We do not require righteousness when going to heaven. There we shall have it gloriously; but here by grace we receive it, the object thenceforward being to glorify Christ whilst in the presence of His enemies and now called to serve Him. Here then we confess, by faith in His cross and glory, how truly all the evil is already judged; all the good is already given by our God and Father, whatever remains for the body at Christ’s coming.

For what does a person come to the table of the Lord? Is it to pour out his doubts? If he has them, he surely will; but this makes it an ordeal, not a feast. You would scarcely like this even at your own festivities. A gloomy heart or face suits not a marriage feast: it would slight the bridegroom and the bride, and might spoil all for

everyone else. Such a person would be best away; and the more you loved him, the less could you desire his presence thus, because of the pain to all concerned.

The soul that is troubled with doubts and fears had better look to Christ and listen to God's gospel. The Lord's supper is the best and holiest feast on earth; but whatever does not consist with His presence in peace and liberty, love and holiness, has no title to be there.

Ministry is not meant to furnish, adorn, or fence the table; he whom God sets first in the church comes there simply as a saint. Ministry deals with souls, preaches the gospel, gives meat in due season, guides, instructs, corrects, and rebukes. But to the Lord's supper we rightly come only as members of Christ's body — as once sinners but now saints, justified, happy in Christ's love, full of peace and joy in believing. "If we walk in the light:" such is the condition of a Christian. Hence the responsibility is to walk in accordance with the light in which we are. This is the object of ministry, to fit souls for and keep them in their place at the Lord's table. Thus the Lord's supper is the present practical end of the ministry for the worship of God; and the end is greater than the means.

As for the notion that you may have the Lord's table without the Lord's supper, it is beneath sober Christians. We may distinguish where we cannot separate. All such speculations are but the fruit of idleness with a certain small activity of mind, but none the less injurious to faith and practice.

One may well scruple to call it the Lord's supper when not taken according to the Lord's institution. But we may notice that there is a difference in the way in which

the apostle speaks in 1 Cor. 10 as compared with the language in chapter 11. In the first it is not the Lord's supper viewed from within. Neither their right state nor their wrong state is the point here discussed, but communion with Christ compared with what was outside. The apostle is contrasting it with what the Jew or the Gentile had. It is not the internal view of eating worthily or not; but, contra-distinguishing the Jew and the Gentile in their worship, he proceeds to show what the nature of the church's is. "We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."

"The table of demons" has been foolishly applied to that which is not celebrated according to the Lord's word. This is certainly not the meaning of the apostle's words, but a grave error on the part of those who have so misapplied it. The apostle is contrasting what the Christian has with the Jew on the one hand and the Gentile on the other. What the Gentiles sacrificed was to demons. The idol might be nothing; but their danger was from forgetting the demon that was behind it. Israel, again, had their peace-offerings their symbol of communion with Jehovah's altar. The church of God, as he shows, is as distinct from the Jew as from the Gentile. Thus the apostle is contrasting both with the Lord's table of which Christians eat.

But in chap. 11 he deals with the state of soul of those who partake of the Lord's supper. It is a question of Christians rightly or wrongly communicating. If you remember the Lord and His death, do not satisfy yourself with the fact that you are a Christian. You are made worthy by faith in Him and His blood; but ever test yourself whether you partake in a worthy manner. If the

day comes round, and you go as a religious habit, it is an unworthy partaking of it. Familiarity breeds contempt where the soul is so unexercised. Where self-judgment is kept up, the spirit of worship is strengthened and enlarged. The Lord's supper makes a distinctive appeal to the conscience, as it has a special place for the heart. This is not a theory, but the doctrine of God in 1 Cor. 11.

A word to you who have no doubts. Your danger is in coming to the Lord's supper without adequately weighing your ways and state of heart. "Let a man examine himself," not to see whether he be a Christian, as some say. But if assured of salvation as we ought to be, the Lord intends that there should be a solemn challenging of the soul every time, with a view to seeing in what spirit and state we come to the Lord's supper. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty with respect to the body and blood of the Lord. He falls into no small offence against Christ who treats His supper irreverently. Consequently the Lord does not fail to vindicate the honour of His name thus set at nought, as we see He did at Corinth.

It is not supposed that, when one has thus tried himself, he will stay away. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." It is well to search, judge, and blame yourself. For it is always assumed that a Christian is one who is here to obey and please God. To partake unworthily then means, not that the communicant is not a Christian, but that the Christian partakes without due self-judgment.

But, again, "damnation" here is quite wrong. The word κρίμα means "judgment." Its only possible force here is judgment in this world. The context is decisive and plain even for those who have no knowledge of the language

in which the Holy Ghost wrote. The saints have to judge themselves in order that they may not be condemned (or damned) with the world. Thus the solemn guard of the Lord maintains gravity and holiness among those who partake, on the peril of His judgment now.

When a soul begins to be careless, the first thing the Lord does is to make him feel miserable and distressed as to his ways, applying the word to his conscience. If he bows to the word, it is well — he is humbled and walks more softly in future. If he is hardened by not heeding the word, then comes in the work of those over him in the Lord to admonish, entreat, or rebuke, seeking to restore. A little evil unjudged always leads to a great deal more. If those that are gathered to His name fail, the Lord never fails to judge here by sickness or even by death. Such is the meaning of “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). It is death in this world. So Ananias and Sapphira sinned unto death. The time and circumstances made their sin heinous, and brought down on them the Lord’s dealing in a peculiarly solemn form; but the principle is the same.

W.K.