

MINUTES

OF THE

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS,

Held at Indian Fork Meeting-House, Shelby County, Kentucky, on the second Friday in October 1828.

BROTHER SILAS M. NOEL delivered the introductory Sermon, from Acts II, 42; after which, letters from eighteen Churches were received, read and the names of their Messengers enrolled as follows, to-wit:—

CHURCHES, and days of month- ly meetings.	MESSENGERS' NAMES.	Added		Restored.	Dismissed	Excluded	Dead.	TOTAL.
		By Bap	By Let					
SOUTH BENSON, 3rd Saturday.	William Hickman, Jun. and S. I. M. Major,	43	5					275
HOPEWELL, 4th Saturday.	William Darr and Samuel Miles,	16	3	1	1			92
FRANKFORT, 4th Saturday.	S. M. Noel, Robert Johnston, H. Wingate, Benj. Hickman, James Gibbs, J. Dudley,	57	5		11	1	3	165
MOUTH CEDAR, 2nd Saturday.	S. B. Calvert, T. Wilhoite, William Ellis,	21	10					68
BUCK RUN, last Saturday.	John Taylor, B. Taylor, Isaac Wilson, Isaac Wingate, William D. Hubbell,	29	3	2	9		2	143
BEECH CREEK, 1st Saturday.	Samuel Jesse, Wm. Ware, Moses Scott,	4		2	5		2	140
INDIAN FORK, 1st Saturday.	Abraham Cook, Wm. Christie, Henry Bohannon,	2	11	7	18	4	1	87
SIX MILE, 4th Saturday.	G. T. Harney, W. W. Ford, James Ford, S. C. Robinson,	37	4		17	2		221
BUFFALO LICK, 3rd Saturday.	Tarleton Lee, Wm. T. Webber, Jas. Guthrie, Gideon Mitchell,	5	2		5			85
FORKS ELKHORN, 2nd Saturday.	Wm. Hickman, Sen. Wm. Graham, E. Vaughan,	23	5	2	2	1	3	86
ZOAR, 4th Saturday.	T. Hayden, William E. Bartlett,				11	4	2	54
MOUNT CARMEL, 1st Saturday.	John Harrod, B. Harrod, Elijah Harrod, John Crutcher,	3	1			1	1	52
LEBANON, 3rd Saturday.	John Thompson, Z. Lee,	1				9	1	23
NORTH BENSON, 1st Saturday.	Landon Sneed, John Yount,	1	1		3			37
PIGEON FORK, 2nd Saturday.	M. Tipton, E. Yates, John T. Daniel,	6	6		2	1	1	71
MOUNT PLEASANT, 1st Saturday.	Virgil Poe, Isaac Calvert,	5	5		1		1	52
BETHEL, 3rd Saturday.	S. Bryant, Josiah Green, G. Sullenfer, Charles Macey.	13	8		4	1	1	51
UNION, 2nd Saturday.	F. Etherton, T. Poindexter, N. Shelton,	19	4		5			36
Grand Total,		285	73	14	112	17	19	1738

Brother WILLIAM W. FORD was chosen Moderator, and HENRY WINGATE Clerk.

Letters from corresponding Associations called for, received, read, and their Messengers invited to a seat with us, as follows, to-wit:

From Elkhorn, Geo. Blackburn, John M'Donald and Thomas Lyne; *North Bend*, David Lillard; *Concord*, J. D. Alexander; *Salem*, Warren Cash, D. Walker, A. King; *South District*, no Messengers; *Long Run*, J. Woods, H. M. Basket, S. Vancleave; *Sulphur Fork*, J. Metcalfe, A. Bohannon; *Blue River*, a letter, but no Messenger.

A letter was received from "the Baptist Association," at Hillsborough, Woodford county, expressing a desire upon their part, to enter into and maintain a correspondence with this Association; which was unanimously agreed to, and the right hand of fellowship given to her Messengers, Brothers L. Barnes and William Dale.

The Circular Letter called for, read and adopted.

Brother G. T. Harney offered the following resolution, which was read and adopted, to-wit:

Resolved, That this Association adopt the following plan of correspondence with sister Associations, for the present year only, viz. That some person be appointed to write a corresponding Letter, which shall be printed in our Minutes; and any member or members of our body presenting said Minutes to any sister Association with whom we correspond, it shall be considered as our letter to them, and he or they as our Messenger or Messengers.

And thereupon Brother Harney was appointed to write said letter.

The Moderator, Clerk and Brothers Noel and Ben. Taylor appointed a Committee of Arrangement.

And after singing and prayer, adjourned until to-morrow morning, 9 o'clock.

SATURDAY, October 11th, 1829.

The Association assembled, and after prayer by Brother Wm. Hickman, Sen. proceeded to business.

Brother B. Taylor, from the committee of arrangement, made a report, which was read and adopted.

Brother Noel offered the following Preamble and Resolution, which were read and adopted, to-wit:

Whereas the Church at Zoar, have manifested a desire to continue in friendship and fellowship with this Association, by requesting leave to withdraw their offensive letter: Agreed that we bear with that Church, and decline the further consideration of this case.

Brother J. Vardeman invited to a seat with us and to aid in counsel.

The following *quære* from the Church at Beech Creek, was read, to wit: "Is it, or is it not, contrary to the rule of gospel order, for Ministers to go into the bounds of other Churches and baptise persons who object to joining any Church?" Which *quære* the Association refused to answer.

The next Association to be held at the Forks of Elkhorn, Franklin County, on the third Saturday in September 1829.

The Corresponding Letter to sister Associations read and adopted, as follows, to wit:

The Franklin Association, now in session at Indian Fork Meeting-House, Shelby County, to the several Associations with whom we correspond, sendeth greeting.

BELOVED BRETHREN: We have been permitted to meet in another Association. The Churches composing our body are generally at peace, and some of them have been blessed with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and sinners have been converted to God. The Associations with whom we correspond, give us the joyful tidings of the spread of the work of God among them. From the signs of the times, we hope the period is not far distant, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters do the great deep, and the Redeemer's kingdom shall prevail over the kingdom of darkness, ignorance and error.

The number added to our Association by baptism, is near three hundred. We ask you to continue your correspondence, and give us an account of the number baptised within the last year, that we may be enabled to make an estimate of the number baptised in the State; and in our next correspondence we will give you the information, as far as practicable.

The following Messengers were appointed to bear said letter, to wit:

To Elkhorn, to meet in Lexington, on the 2d Saturday in August 1829—S. M. Noel, Ben. Taylor, Samuel Jesse and Jephthah Dudley.

Long Run, Chenowith's Run, Jefferson county, 1st Friday in September 1829—Abraham Cook, Samuel Jesse and J. Crutcher.

Licking, time and place unknown—S. M. Noel, J. Dudley and Samuel Jesse.

North District, time and place unknown—John T. Daniel, G. T. Harney, and John Crutcher.

Concord, Long Ridge Meeting-house, Owen county, 4th Friday in August 1829—Isaac Wingate, Josiah Green, T. Wilhoite, S. B. Calvert and William Ellis.

South District, Perryville, Mercer county, 3d Saturday in August 1829—James Gibbs.

North Bend, Salem, Boone county, 3d Friday in August 1829—
T. Wilhoite.

Salem, Union Meeting-house, Hardin county—W. W. Ford,
John Crutcher and Gideon Mitchell.

Union, time and place unknown—G. T. Harney and Tarlton
Lee.

Sulphur Fork, North Six Mile, Shelby county, 4th Friday in
September 1829—Moses Tipton, John T. Daniel, Abraham Cook,
W. W. Ford and Thomas Poindexter.

Baptist, Glenn's Creek, Woodford county, 1st Saturday in Oc-
tober 1829—Edmund Vaughan, James Gibbs, Wm. Hickman, Jun-
T. Wilhoite, William Darr, Josiah Green and Benjamin Taylor.

Brother Benjamin Taylor appointed to write the next Circular
Letter.

Brother Abraham Cook to preach the next Introductory Ser-
mon; and in case of failure, Brother William Hickman, Jun.

Brothers Cornelius, Cash and Taylor, to preach on to-morrow.

Brothers Noel, Dudley, B. Hickman and the Clerk, to superin-
tend printing the Minutes.

W. W. FORD, *Moderator*.

H. WINGATE, *Clerk*.

*Be prepared to
be with us, do not
be in the back room
we will save it disloyally*

CIRCULAR LETTER

OF THE

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS,

Adopted in October 1823.

TO THE CHURCHES COMPOSING THE FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION.

IN refusing to commune with our pedobaptist neighbors, we have disoblged them exceedingly. It seems that we have forfeited all claim to their courtesies in future. We are represented as a morose, churlish, intolerant people, of selfish habits and unneighborly conduct. We are denounced and charged with a degree of bigotry unparalleled since the darkest ages, because our tables are fenced by what they are pleased to term a proscriptive system, because we do not recognize a free or promiscuous communion. We have heard these denunciations with silent forbearance, until we are no longer permitted to forbear. Conscious of the rectitude of our practice, and anxious to follow peace with our neighbors, we have patiently endured these scoffings, until to brook them longer would savour of disloyalty. The period with us, has arrived, when the honors of Heaven's King, as associated with *the terms of communion*, require to be defended. In this annual address, we hasten to signify to all whom it may concern, that we do not decline the duty assigned us.

Now, be it known to all advocates of free or open communion, that we do most solemnly protest against all ecclesiastical attempts to prescribe terms of communion. The Head of the Church has vested no power in any community on earth, to make or modify laws or ordinances. To attempt it, is an impious invasion of his supreme royal prerogative. He has long since put an end to the business of legislation for the Church. In the sovereign exercise of his power, as King of kings, he has prescribed the terms and conditions on which his people shall have a place in his house and a seat at his table. It may be justly expected of his friends, that they will receive his code entire, with gratitude and submission; that they will not arraign his wisdom, wound his majesty and sully his glory, by ascribing imperfection to his plan. Before they approach the symbols of his broken body and shed

blood, it becomes them to wear the simple attire of saints, not the gorgeous livery of *the beast*. If neither Moses nor the Elders of Israel could change a pin of the Tabernacle, can those living under the new economy open up a new way to the Lord's table, and be guiltless? The Spirit of inspiration points with unerring hand to one way, leading through the sacramental grave of Jesus. If others venture to bridge his grave, in order to reach the eucharistic banquet, let them see to it. We would have you to keep the ordinances as they were *once delivered*, carefully observing the *order*, as well as the *manner*. To observe them in any other *order* or *manner*, impairs their sanctity and divests them of their sacred character.

Baptism and the Supper are *positive* appointments in the Christian Church. We know nothing in regard to them, as to mode, subject or design, further than Christ, the great institutor, has revealed. All besides is mere human invention, and makes them our own institutions, and not those of Christ. Between these ordinances there is a scriptural order and connection. Baptism was first instituted, then the Supper. John and Christ's disciples were baptising multitudes, at a time when it would have been impious to have taken the bread and wine as a religious duty. After the appointment of the Supper, Baptism, on all occasions, had the priority. According to the Commission, the nations are first to be discipled, then baptised. Those who are not born of the water, as well as of the Spirit, cannot enter into the kingdom (or church) of God, and of course are not entitled to the immunities of Church members. As soon may you find, by searching the Scriptures, an uncircumcised Jew at the paschal feast, as an unbaptised believer at the Lord's table. On the day of pentecost, "they that gladly received his word, were baptized; and the same day there were added *unto* them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." The various baptisms recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, are to the same effect, tending, as with one voice, to prove that baptism is the previous duty of a believer, without which he cannot enter the Church, and consequently, cannot approach the table. If we advert to the spiritual import of the two ordinances, we have an additional argument, proving that baptism has precedence of the supper. In baptism we have an emblem of our union and communion with Jesus Christ, in his burial and resurrection—professing that we reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God. In baptism we profess to have received spiritual life; at the Lord's table we have the emblems of that heavenly food, by which we live and grow, and by virtue of which we hope to live forever. And as we are born of the Spirit but once, so we are born of the water (or baptised) but once; but as our spiritual

life is maintained by the continued agency of the Holy Spirit, and as our comforts flow from the exercise of faith in a crucified Redeemer, so it is our duty and privilege often to receive the Supper. Whether, therefore, we consider the order of time in which these two institutions were appointed, or the order of words in the great Commission, or the order of administration in the apostolic practice, or the scriptural import of each of these solemn appointments, *Baptism must ever precede the Supper.* To labor this point, would seem useless; for were we to ask all the Churches on earth, whether baptist or pedobaptist, (with a light exception,) is it lawful to admit unbaptised believers to fellowship at the Lord's table? they would readily say, with the Apostle, "we have no such custom," neither the Churches of God that were before us.

Such, then, is the pattern exhibited in the New Testament!—a pattern entirely expressive of the mind of Christ, and given for future imitation to the end of the world. To observe the ordinances according to any other pattern, and not in the order and manner in which they were originally delivered, is *not* to obey or worship God, because he hath not required it at our hands; it is nothing short of *solemn mockery.*

Baptism, however, is not the only prerequisite to fellowship in the Supper. Those, and only those, who continue steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and in fellowship, are to break bread. Hence, all latitudinarians, errorists and heretics, as well as those who do not *manifest* their fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ, by their walk and conversation, are excluded from this privilege.

It is said, that pedobaptist believers ought to be received into our communion, because they conscientiously believe that they are baptised. Well, we conscientiously believe *that they are not baptised.* To say the least, on this point we are at issue. The question, then, is simply this: What shall our practice be, pending the issue? Shall we practise according to our *own belief* or according to the *belief of our neighbors?* Free communion requires of us, to disregard our own faith, and to conduct ourselves according to the faith of others—to admit that *sprinkling* or *pouring* is baptism, to those who believe it to be baptism; and what is this, but to surrender the whole matter of controversy between us and the pedobaptist sects in regard to Christian baptism? Once more; if we do all this—if we literally comply with this very modest requisition—if we discard, in this particular, our own views of the Scriptures, and agree, through courtesy to our neighbors, to act according to their views, what shall we do when they differ, when they maintain conflicting and contradictory views?—A Methodist might require us to break the loaf with awakened sinners, as a mean of conversion; a Presbyterian would say, stop

till I read the Abrahamic Covenant and the Sinaitic Covenant. He reads, and concludes, very justly too, that neither Noah, a preacher of righteousness, nor Melchisedeck, that illustrious type of Messiah, had they been sojourners with Moses and the Israelitish Church in the wilderness, could have taken the *passover*. They were prohibited by God's positive command, because of their uncircumcision. He then supposes (without proof,) that baptism is a substitute for circumcision, and the supper in the place of the passover; and therefore he cannot admit any unbaptised person to the supper—a safe conclusion from false premises.

We arrive at this conclusion in another way, as shown already. The Methodist seeker must be rejected, or we disoblige Presbyterians. The unity of the Church is lost among pedobaptists. God seems to have confounded their tongues; they cannot understand each other in regard to doctrines, ordinances, discipline or government. Their most learned divines, their most profound biblical scholars, as well as the inspired writers, have told them, repeatedly, in a way easy enough to understand, that *immersion*, and *immersion only*, is baptism, and most of them disregard the admonition. What can it profit us, if we are to retire from the one foundation, to gain a name or a place in this modern ecclesiastical babel? For a moment turn your attention to a Presbyterian communion. At their table we find a different company; none but members of a Church are admitted here; there are no seats at this board for those who are yet out of the Church, seeking religion; and whether there shall or shall not be seats at this table, for all the (LITTLE ONES) children of believers, of *three years old and upwards*, is not as yet entirely settled in this venerable Church. A recent work by the Rev. John M'Farland, late Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Paris, Kentucky, settles at least one point—(a point, however, long since settled by others)—that these LITTLE ONES, if entitled to baptism, are not to be denied the supper. When we look at the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, Chap. 25, Sec. 2; their larger Catechism, Ques. 62; their Form of Government, Chap. 2, Sec. 2; their book of discipline, Chap. 1, Sec. 6; their Directory for Worship, Chap. 9, Sec. 1; and particularly, when we notice the Minutes of their General Assembly of 1811, we may reasonably presume that these children of baptism, when come to years of discretion, must take the supper, or be excommunicated. If all other hindrances were removed, can it be expected of us, to fellowship at the Lord's table, either Methodist seekers or Presbyterian minors, in regard to which, they cannot agree among themselves? Or shall we make invidious distinctions among the guests with whom we should associate at the tables of our neighbors, by inviting some of them to commune with us, while we reject others? Would our Methodist friends be content, were we to refuse seats

to their seekers? And if we invite them, why not invite all awakened sinners in our own congregations? Would our Presbyterian friends be content, were we to refuse seats to their minors, "members of their Church—*federally* or *ecclesiastically* *holy*—holy enough (as they say) to enjoy the holy ordinance of baptism"—born members of the Church? Can we reject these, and still expect a free communion with the residue of these sects? Would we commune with any people who reject those admitted by us, to the Lord's table? And if we admit their minors, why not bring our own to the supper also? Can we admit that the children of pedobaptists have higher claims to the ordinances than our own? These difficulties meet us at the very threshold of free communion, as regards two of the pedobaptist sects only. What amount of difficulty must be removed, to commune with the whole, God only knows. Before we begin to commune with them as societies, we must allow that persons confessedly unbaptised, and uncircumcised too, in heart, have claims on our fellowship in the supper.

As to the ordinance of baptism, pedobaptists are not likely ever to agree among themselves. Methodists appear to think themselves authorised to baptise infants, without regard to the faith of their parents; and Presbyterians cannot tell whether it requires the faith of father or mother, or whether that of the grand father or step mother may not do; nor are they agreed at what age the privilege of being baptised upon the faith of another, ceases. In regard to the supper, they are not less embarrassed and divided. They cannot tell whether these infant Church members should come to the supper at the age of three years, seven, or thirteen; most of them already think with us, that they ought not to come at all, while irreligious; and yet, every argument adduced to prove their right to baptism, tends at least with equal force to prove their title to the supper. Nor can even a plausible pretext be assigned for baptising them, if they are to be denied Church privileges. From this dilemma it is believed pedobaptists cannot extricate themselves; they must either cease to baptise children, or admit them to the supper. When they ascertain the mind of their Master on these points, and practise accordingly, the free communion question will be stripped of some appalling features.

We have ever considered infant communion (like infant baptism) as appertaining to the strange conceits of the Papacy. While our protestant neighbors can relish these unsavoury sprouts of the dark ages, they deny to us the satisfaction of meeting them at the table. The want of faith, as well as the want of baptism, according to our understanding of the Bible, is an insuperable bar to the communion; nor can we, by our practice, encourage any unbeliever, either old or young, to partake of the supper, lest they

should eat and drink, *not discerning the Lord's body*. Were pedo-baptists to discard their *sprinkling and pouring of water*, and to practise the one baptism, in the primitive mode, while we differ so radically in regard to the requisite qualifications for these ordinances, we cannot walk together in keeping of them; for what they call *keeping*, in our opinion amounts to a *breaking* of these commandments. With this amount of difference between us, it is worse than idle to talk of a free communion.

"*Receive ye one another as Christ also hath received us,*" Rom II, 17. This passage is often relied on, in support of a promiscuous communion. It is said, that such as God has received, we have reason to suppose he communes with; and, therefore, in the exercise of a Christian temper, we cannot refuse to receive them. This argument proves too much. According to this reasoning, if a man be considered pious, he must be received at the supper, no matter how heterodox, or even heretical he may be. And why should the *receiving* be limited to the supper? Why not infer from this text, that he should be received at once into Church membership, his errors and heresies notwithstanding? Why invite him to the table, and deny him any other privilege? Is it because this is less sacred than others? But what has this text, (or Rom. XIV, 1-5, or Rom. XV. 1, 6, 7, often cited and relied on,) to do with the terms of communion? What has the eating or not eating of meats in apostolic times to do with the principles of eucharistic fellowship? There is a hard straining of things when these obsolete and antiquated rites are set in contrast with New Testament ordinances.

Another argument has been addressed, with great effect, to the feelings and passions of Christians. "If believers cannot commune together in this world, how can they expect to enjoy fellowship together in Heaven?" This flimsy remark, which deserves not the name of an argument, with some, is conclusive; and yet, no one dare to deny, that there are many in Heaven who have rejected the use of both ordinances. Who will say that among the different kindreds, tongues and tribes who form the illustrious throng at the decisive hour, there will be none who never saw nor practised the sacred ordinances in any form? May not some, even of those excluded from Church privileges on earth, be admitted into the kingdom of Heaven? How often do trials and contentions, sharp and incurable, occur among brethren of the same Church; and yet may we not hope that one Heaven will hold them all after death? Yes; Death, the great leveller, will extinguish all strife, and bring the dust of contending Christians to rest in sweet agreement in the grave, and the spirits of all good men to dwell together in a state of uninterrupted felicity.

It is said that a promiscuous communion would advance the interests of our denomination. We reply, that our interests are

not dearer to us than our principles. Can any religious community consent to barter principles for numbers? But, should we concede every thing demanded by the advocates of free communion; should we concede what Presbyterians themselves dare not concede—and yet, strange to tell, they demand of us the concession—that *baptism is not a prerequisite to the Lord's supper*; should we do all this, would it swell our numbers? The experiment has been made. Robert Hall, of England, years ago, made the concession, published and defended with great ability, his system of free communion—a system built upon the preposterous notion, *that baptism may come after the supper*. Has he advanced the interests of English Baptists? Has he contributed to swell their numbers, or the numbers of his own Church? Notwithstanding he possesses extraordinary pulpit talents, his Church is comparatively small, and his labors are not successful. The Minutes of their Associations too plainly evince a sad retrogression of Baptist views in England. This decay is attributed, principally, to the influence of open communion sentiments—to an impious transposition of the ordinances. Absurd and unscriptural as Mr. Hall's system may appear, probably no better can be devised for free communion Baptists; for, according to any plan, they are a contradiction to the faith and order of the whole Christian world. Nor can we allow that they have contributed largely to advance either the interests or the reputation of the Baptist Churches. There is in their practice a species of novelty, incongruity and absurdity, unparalleled in Church history.

It is said, *that the practice of free communion has a tendency to blend and amalgamate the different communities of believers into one great mass*. If this be true, why are not those protestant sects, who have communed with each other for ages past, blended? Why are not Methodists and Presbyterians blended? Can it be said, that they are in a state of preparation for it? Are they better prepared to blend and amalgamate now, than they were twenty years ago? Let their respective religious periodicals answer.

We speak of invitations to the supper. The phrase is unscriptural. The primitive Christians needed no invitation; they were members of Churches, and we believe most confidently, that these were Baptist Churches of Christ. The table was prepared, and every member knew his privilege. These members of Baptist Churches were the only communicants, in apostolic times. Now, while we believe this to be the pattern shown in the New Testament, are we at liberty to depart from it?

Moreover, if we encourage our members to commune with pe-dobaptist sects, why should we refuse letters of dismissal to those who desire to join them? And if we recommend members to them, can we consistently reject those who bring recommendatory letters *from them to us*? To impose a Church censure for

no other offence than that of joining a society in communion with us, would be truly ridiculous. Free communion, then, requires us to change our discipline, as well as our views of the ordinances.

We might further enquire, whether the pedobaptist world is at this time in circumstances to invite us to their table? Is there not among the protestant sects a variety of separate communions? Have they not points to settle, and difficulties, stubborn and unmanageable, to encounter, before they can commune with each other? Indeed, we have yet to learn, whether the several divisions, even among those of the same name, commune with each other. When did Presbyterians of the Scotch Kirk, or General Assembly Presbyterians and Presbyterian Seceders; when did Presbyterian Burgher Seceders, and Presbyterian anti Burgher Seceders, and Presbyterians of the Constitutional Associate Presbytery, and Presbyterians of the Relief Kirk; when did all these Presbyterians profess fellowship for each other in the supper? Is the old contest about Rouse's version of David's Psalms concluded? When did Methodists of the Wesleyan connexion, and of the new connexion, and of Lady Huntingdon's connexion, and of that connexion now aiming at independence, and Calvinistic Methodists; when did all these Methodists and Presbyterians agree on terms of communion? When did Trinitarian and Unitarian pedobaptists sit down together? And when are they likely, by friendly stipulations, to open a communion with the grand division of pedobaptists—the Queen Mother with her eighty millions of communicants? Should we now agree to practise a free communion, to which, or to how many of the pedobaptist sects should it be extended? Must we enter into their controversies and identify ourselves with some one department of them, to the exclusion of the rest; or shall we commune with all of them, regardless of their distinctive peculiarities, and of their non-fellowship for each other? Can we do this and incur no guilt? Before there was a pedobaptist on earth, either catholic or protestant, we were a New Testament Church, built on the foundation of Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ the chief corner stone. Here we have stood, immovable, through centuries of peril and of blood. The gates of Hell have not prevailed against us. We desire no other foundation. It is now too late for us to engage in the collisions of protestants and catholics. When they return to the one foundation, they will find us ready to hail their arrival—where there shall be one fold and one Shepherd, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one communion.

To present you with every prominent objection to a promiscuous or free communion, would far exceed the limits of a Circular. There is one, however, yet to be named, which demands consideration. We allude to the government of the Church. Has it

been the pleasure of Almighty God, in his code of irreversible law, to subjugate the Church to the absolute and uncontrolled domination of a hierarchy? Are the clergy, whether called Popes or Cardinals, Bishops or Archbishops, Presiding Elders or Circuit Riders,—are *they* divinely appointed to rule the Church? Is it true, that the great principle of *self-rule*, and with it all other principles sacred to free government, are exploded in the inspired charter of the Church? Must Christians, and the children of Christians, be taught, even in the nursery, that they are born to be ruled by a privileged order of men, which perpetuates itself, from generation to generation? That in great compassion to their imbecility and incompetency to govern themselves, God has committed them to the guidance of the Priesthood, another order of human beings, free from the frailties of ordinary persons? When men are thus induced to make an unqualified surrender of their Church rights to the privileged *few*, are they likely to be very jealous of their civil rights? Why should the civil privileges, even of an American citizen, be more sacred or of greater value than his religious rights? If this frightful system of Church government were from Heaven, it would become us to acquiesce; but we have the happiness to believe the contrast to be awful, between the hierarchies of pedobaptists and that perfect pattern of free government exhibited in the organization of the primitive Churches; and, moreover, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the grand emancipating principle, which, in its progress, will prostrate all usurped authorities, monarchies and despotisms, civil and ecclesiastical. But not on the principles of pedobaptists. Their monarchical institutions, *built on the foundation of birth-right membership and federal holiness*, militate against such happy results. These brilliant achievements are reserved to grace the triumphs of Immanuel in the latter days of the Church militant, when neither the parental *trunk*, now bending under the frosts of many hundred winters, nor the *branches*, broken off by the hurricanes of the 16th century, nor any vestige of the family, shall be seen in all God's holy mountain.

Free communion is not calculated to hasten this bright era of the Church. Though in theory plausible, in practice it has ever failed to diminish sectarian competitions, to augment those cementing ties which constitute the bond of fellowship, or to blunt the keen edge of controversy. It may create the *appearance* of union and fellowship, but not the *reality*. No attempt to improve the plan devised by Infinite Wisdom, can succeed. Among Baptists, free communion implies, most palpably, one of two things; either *that the want of baptism is no bar to communion*, or *that there are three modes of baptism*. It furthermore implies, *that the want of Church fellowship is no bar to communion*. These concessions cannot be made, without treating with high contempt, the pattern drawn by the pencil of inspiration.