

**BELIEVERS' BAPTISM, AND
COMMUNION CONSIDERED:
WRITTEN IN REPLY TO A LETTER
FROM MR. J. BRIDGMAN**

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Believers' Baptism, and Communion Considered: Written in Reply to a Letter from Mr. J. Bridgman by John Foreman

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JOHN FOREMAN

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BELIEVERS' BAPTISM,

AND

COMMUNION CONSIDERED :

Written in Reply to a Letter from

MR. J. BRIDGMAN, M.A.,

WALWORTH.

BY JOHN FOREMAN,

MINISTER AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, HILL STREET, DORSET
SQUARE.

—
"—— to fulfil the word of God."
—

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To the Church of Christ meeting for the worship of God
in Mount Zion Chapel, Hill Street, Dorset Square,
London.

DEARLY BELOVED,

It is well known to most of you, that on the 17th of October, I attended the ordination of our brother Wycherly, at Crosby Row Chapel, King Street, Southwark. And that the part of the service assigned for me to take, was to state the *nature of a gospel church*. I took that part, as many of you were present to witness, and as I have for years considered, and do now consider, that such services are most decidedly sentimental, and demand us to be more than usually explicit and pointed on the principles by which we are distinguished as a denomination, and pretty well as much hated: I was accordingly plain on the exclusive right of believers to baptism, and of baptized believers' exclusive right to communion, according to the only order known or to be found in the New Testament for the church of Christ; and I offered to pay the national debt of England, if scripture could be found to oppose these conclusions.

Our brother, Mr. J. Bridgman, of Walworth, was greatly offended at my remarks, and wrote me a letter, in which, without the divine Judge, or the apostolic jury, he has passed very heavy sentence of condemnation both upon me, and our sentiments, without being able to shew that either are wrong by one fairly quoted text.

I turned the matter about for some time in my mind, until I concluded upon a public reply; and I have written it accordingly, and shall, with mercy's leave, after a time bring it before the public.

Should any one think that I am treating our brother unfairly by giving a public answer to a private letter, I would observe that he charges me with *known falsehood* in my public labours; and that the public ought to know and judge for themselves, and the Lord on their consciences, by his sacred word, be Judge for us all. Not desiring to take any unfair advantage of my brother, I

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have set the chief things of his letter down in long quotations, in order that those who read my answer, may as well know what he has really said.

I hope that I have not written so much under the spirit of controversy, but what it will be seen that I have been somewhat moved by the Spirit of truth, and the love of truth, with the word of truth. And that you will not have to say, that it is all lost time to read this, as you have confessed it has not been so with other little productions of my pen.

The Lord abundantly bless and prosper you, as he has done, and pour out of his Spirit in every mercy-way upon you. Do continue to pray for me, my dear brethren, while I have the honour to be

Your very affectionate Pastor,

JOHN FOREMAN.

27, Sanford Street, Lisson Grove.

January 17th, 1838

BELIEVERS' BAPTISM

AND

COMMUNION CONSIDERED, &c.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter came to hand Oct. 21, or the day following the date thereof. At first sight I thought of giving a short and private answer only, but in looking it over again, I feel convinced that justice to you, to myself, to the truth, and to the denomination to which I have the honour to belong, demands an answer in a very different way.

My labour in the pulpit at *Crosby Row*, on the eighteenth, in stating the nature, constitution, and order of a gospel church, seems greatly to have displeased you, both in manner and in matter too; so that beside speaking very low and contemptuously of me, calling me "*The Preacher*" sixteen times on your single sheet, you have condemned our sentiments as a denomination as false, on *exclusive* believers' baptism and the communion of believers only as so baptized; and then you wish us to *blush*. But at this I am not surprised, and had you stayed here, I should have taken but little notice, because it would have only been to me a marking out the difference that we know exists in sentiment between us. But as I challenged any one to find one text of Scripture in the Word of God for *infant sprinkling*, and for *any other communion* at the table of the Lord than that of believers, who are baptized on a profession of faith in Christ, you have so strangely perverted and misapplied the Word of God for the purpose, and seem, with a look of disdain upon us, to please yourself in the triumph you suppose you have gained over the challenge. And your deadly charge also upon the integrity of my public character in the pulpit that day, you having taxed me with saying *what I knew not to be the truth*, I must consider demands a public trial. Your several reflections, as well as statements, on the senti-

ments in dispute, shall be fairly sectioned out, and set down in your own words for observation. And

FIRST—"He said, indeed, (else I should not have thought it) that he came after much prayer; but what think you? Could a man under such influence, exhibit flippancy of manners, and use light and low language?"

I am a plain man, Gen. xxv. 27; using great plainness of speech, 2 Cor. iii. 12; to make the matter plain upon tables, Hab. ii. 2; using similitudes, Hos. xii. 10; but not enticing words, 1 Cor. ii. 4; not preaching to please men, Gal. i. 10; nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, 2 Cor. iv. 2; considering it my duty to contend earnestly for the faith, Jude 3.; to diminish not a word, Jer. xxvi. 2; and to hold in derision all things that are not true by any word from the mouth of the Lord, Ezek. xxiii. 32.

And thus I laboured on the day I offended you, and reflecting thereon in regard to this part of your letter, I do recollect two or three things that I said, to which I suppose you refer, and which I will here set down. And

1. I observed, that profession of religion is now wrought into such a multitude of diversified forms and figures, that to state the fashion of a Church, according to the many gospels of the present day, I should have an endless job, and never come to a conclusion; for that it was like a field of land I knew in the country, which was called *quæer field*, because it had so many corners; having just before that also said, that if I had come there that day to work by the day, I should have to take my stand upon similar ground to that of the Jew-invented system which our Lord condemned in Mark vii.; but that as I came to work by the Bible, I should take my stand in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

2. I observed that what I said against infant sprinkling, in its having no support as an ordinance of God in the plain Scriptures of the New Testament, was not said out of want of love to the persons of my Independent brethren in the faith of God. But that I would say, the case was something similar to a circumstance which occurred in my family; when a little boy of mine, who had one day been out, and that when he came home, he said he had found such a nice pretty thing, and had got it in his bosom, but when it came to be examined what

this nice thing was, it was found with some alarm to be a nasty *Toad*, and that, although the toad was thrown away with great resentment, the child was loved none the less; for that children would pick up any thing.

3. I said that, even some of the Pædo-baptist, or (as infant sprinkling is no baptism) Anti-baptist ministers themselves very evidently felt a difficulty in reading over those parts of the Word of God where believers' baptism is too plainly stated to be fairly concealed, and that they would hack, hem, stammer, and skip over them, similar, to a person that I knew who was a poor reader, and that when he came to any place in the chapter where there were any hard words, he would do so and get over them. I did not then state any circumstances, but will now, that will justify such an observation, and—

1. The late beloved Dr. Hawker was one day preaching at Plymouth, and in quoting a passage of Scripture, he left off very abruptly, just at the verge of something plain to the point of believers' baptism, and several of his people observed it, and were struck with it, and who afterward went to the Doctor, and asked him his reasons for so doing. And the Doctor's reply was, "That he had been many years where he was, and that he did not then care to say any thing on that subject." The Doctor came to town a few days after, and those friends reading the Scriptures for themselves, acted by their authority, and were baptized.

2. About eighteen years ago, an Anti-baptist was preaching in *Conway-street Chapel*, in London, and a little forgetting himself, it would seem, he was taken by an evident surprise in making a quotation from the Acts of the Apostles, saying, "Can any man forbid—seeing they have received the Holy Ghost as well as we;" leaping over the words *water*, *that these should not be baptized*. This was done very *dry*, but not very *clean*, from a handling the Word of God deceitfully. But if the whole text had been read, some of the people there who had received the Holy Ghost, might have been inclined to wet both head and foot in obedient honour of their baptized Lord; but that would not have been the thing to the preacher's purpose.

3. About twenty-four years ago, an Independent minister was ordained over a people in the county of

Suffolk, and in his confession of faith, he declared his firm belief in infant baptism, meaning sprinkling; and the only solitary passage from the Word of God, which he quoted in support thereof, was the following one, and *that* sawn asunder in the following cruel manner, saying, *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off; leaving out the words, Even as many as the Lord our God shall call, Acts ii. 39.* Thus changing the countenance of the text, and reducing the great promise of all spiritual blessings, and of eternal life, to the election of grace of that people, to a mere carnal convenience for the support of what *corruption* only invented and introduced, *pride* and *worldly interest* has fostered into custom, and custom has sanctioned into a law; and which fleshly passions and carnal reason now receive as a most important boon from heaven, although no one is able to shew any right for so doing by any one plain passage in the whole Scriptures, even if you send down to *Moses* and *Aaron* for a plan of New Testament house-keeping.

4. The late beloved *Mr. Harn*, minister in the establishment at *Debenham*, in the county of Suffolk, was one day asked by a friend of mine, who used often to hear him, and on whom he used to make his friendly calls, where infant baptism or sprinkling was to be found written in the Scriptures, and he frankly and unhesitatingly answered, "It is nowhere written in the scriptures, but it is established by law."

5. About two years ago an Independent minister in town was preaching on a subject in *Isaiah*, and in quoting a passage from the Acts of the Apostles, he very evidently, unawares, read down to the subject of believer's baptism, and being in manifest confusion, he hacked and hemmed as though he wanted to cough, and so he leaped over the place and out of his difficulty. And this he was obliged to do, or he would soon have had to read, *They both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him; and we know that this must have been very much against the grain, because this gentleman threatened to write against the Baptists when I first came to settle in London.*

6. A minister now in the establishment in the county of Gloucestershire who has several children, has never had any of them sprinkled for the want of anything