

God. Moral Institutions are those, the reasons of which we see, and the duties of which arise from the nature of the case, prior to the external command. Moral commands may be obeyed in different modes, according to expediency. Positive commands must be obeyed in the way marked out, and admit of no alteration. To our first parents was given positive law. God gave them no reason why they should not eat the forbidden fruit: it was enough that *he* forbade them. Abraham was commanded to offer up his beloved son on mount Moriah. God gave him no reason for this strange sacrifice. His will was all the reason necessary. Circumcision was a positive institution. When any action is positively commanded, any other action, however sincere the actor, is of no avail. When Moses erected the tabernacle, he was positively commanded to do all things according to the pattern shown him on the mount. Positive Institutions were used as tests of obedience, and sometimes pointed the obedient to Christ.

A. If Abraham went to the mount to offer up his son, it mattered not by what way: would not the same argument hold good in regard to the use of water in the name of the Lord?

B. If Jesus had merely told his disciples to go and *use water*, to believers this argument might stand; but if he told them to perform an action in water, any other action would not be obedience. Had Abraham chosen any other place than mount Moriah to offer up his son, he would not be obedient to the will of God.

A. But is it not very uncharitable to pass sentence on those who use THREE modes instead of one?

B. I pass sentence on none; it is enough to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. I hope, however, to be delivered from that kind of charity that insults reason, and contradicts revelation. But what authority has any to restrict it to *three modes*? Why not be more charitable and admit any mode that the ingenuity and caprice of men may invent, and most charitable in its exclusion altogether, as the use of water is to many, who are called good people, an offensive ceremony? Those who can shift to suit the people ought to select some other than a positive command of Christ for the purpose. Baptism is a positive obedience, but pleasing men is nothing less than a profane trifling with the dreadful name.

A. It is said the mode is not essential, being only the ceremonial part of a positive institution; as in the Lord's supper the number of