

B. ALLEN TO A. CAMPBELL,

AGAINST RECEIVING MEMBERS TO BAPTISM MERELY ON
A PROFESSION OF THEIR FAITH.

Brother Campbell,

I READ, with a great deal of pleasure, your *Christian Baptist*. Your April number was truly pleasing. On some topics, however, introduced into that work, I have doubted whether the editor has not, in opposing error, sometimes gone to an extreme I will specify one case—that of receiving members into the church on the bare expression or declaration made by the cunuch to Philip, the evangelist. Now, that, amongst the Baptists, there are some times many unnecessary questions asked, and many, very many, unnecessary and enthusiastic things told, is admitted and lamented. It is also admitted that in the New Testament, there is no example of any being received into the church or churches by the relation of a christian experience. But, brother, you admit on some other cases, (and that of divine command too) that a change of circumstances and customs may justify a change of practice, where the manifest design and spirit of the practice or command of Christ and his apostles are not violated; as in the case of the “*holy kiss*,” five times enjoined by the apostles, being strictly obeyed by the *christian shake-hands*, and this is argued from the change of custom and circumstances. Now that there is a change in the circumstances of the people in christian countries, when compared with those of apostolic ages, is manifest. Then the great question was, Is Jesus of Nazareth *the Christ*, or is he not?—Did he really rise from the dead, or did he not? The apostles and disciples of Christ, on the one part, affirmed; the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, on the other part, denied and contradicted—and so unpopular was the bare confession, that Jesus was “*the Christ*,” that it subjected the person to infamy and reproach, if not to death. Under these circumstances, a bare declaration that they did believe Jesus was the Christ, and a desire publicly to obey him, was a sufficient evidence to the apostles and brethren that there was a change of heart. Add to this, also, the notable case of Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, who, for deception, were struck dead, producing fear on all the people, “and of the rest durst none join themselves unto them.”—But now circumstances are very different, (at least in some of these things;) it is now no great disgrace to profess that *Jesus is the Christ*: no great dishonor to *obey him*; no great fear of scourgings, imprisonments, and torturing deaths; no signal judgments on hypocrites and impostors, to make others fear. If, therefore, the apostles required the strongest evidence that *then* could be given of sincerity of heart, is it not reasonable that we should require the strongest evidence that can *now* be given of a real change of heart in those whom we invite into our union and fellowship as members of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. You will not understand me as supposing that the strongest evidence of a change of heart consists in a *systema*