

had failed to convert sinners to whom it had been faithfully preached, and say 'it matters not whether the failure is from the gospel, or from the depravity and wickedness of those who rejected it,—the result is the same; a fact is a fact, &c.' Does it not matter whether the blame be charged on the right or the wrong subject? You say the fact that open communion is impracticable can hardly be denied. Be assured, brother, it is positively denied, and the contrary affirmed, viz., that open communion has been demonstrated to be practicable in more than *three times ten instances*. An instance in your own experience, to which you refer, is surely not to be viewed as any decided evidence that open communion is a failure. Having been only a few months "pastor of an open communion church, you "baptized," you say, "all the Pedobaptist party, and then shut the door." What was their number you do not say; but the phraseology implies there were several. Let me ask, brother, are you sure you would have been equally successful with the same individuals had they not happened to be in the church on the open principle; or if you had dealt with them on the close principle, that is, excluded them till they should do their duty? I think it is very questionable. It may be, some of them, or even all of them, had they not been admitted to the church on the open principle, would have remained to this day Pedobaptist. But you "baptized them all and then shut the door"; and it may almost be inferred from the context that you were at the same time "half way" open. You shut the door. Then sure enough, you had unity as far as baptism was concerned, but where was your "visible diversity"? You shut the door. It may be there were no Pedobaptists without worthy, or wishing to come in, but suppose there had been standing without, suing for admittance, some standing as high in the favour of their Lord as yourself, or any within, or even higher,—and you aware that such was the fact.—This is possible:—but for my part, were it not that I know it has been done, I should think it impossible to find one possessed of a moderate share of Christian modesty that could shut the door against certain Pedobaptists that could be named, and then boast of the deed. A voice from heaven would be necessary as a warrant; and that would be barely satisfactory; as it would necessarily have somewhat the appearance of being contradictory of the voice eighteen centuries ago enjoined "what God hath cleansed that call not thou common."

I now proceed to notice your three "notable instances adduced to illustrate and demonstrate the impracticability of the open theory:—The first is Bunyan and his church. It is somewhat remarkable, that Bunyan's is the only open church that is instanced as having become Pedobaptist, but so it is, as far as my information goes; and it is urged as evidence that the open theory cannot be acted upon but with the great risk of Baptist churches becoming Pedobaptist. It appears to me, however, this case

can be accounted for without attributing the least influence to open communion. Bunyan was highly popular in the best sense; he was followed by crowds; and very many of them were converted: and there is no doubt that he laboured harder to convince them of their sins, than to persuade them to submit to immersion. He was successful in gathering a numerous church on the open principle; and there is no doubt that a great proportion of the members, whether baptized or not, were genuine converts. It is not improbable that a majority of the church gathered by Bunyan remained Pedobaptists; and if so, though he himself was a Baptist, his church could not be properly so designated. On Bunyan's death, the church chose a Pedobaptist pastor, from which it may be inferred that the majority was then Pedobaptist: but this proves nothing against the practicability of the open theory; for all that appears, it continued to be acted on under the Pedobaptist pastor; for it is not alledged that he made Pedobaptists of all the Baptist party "*and then shut the door*"; and how can it be proved that its operation was not upon the whole more for the glory of God and the good of souls than the operation of close communion would have been in the circumstances? And how can it be proved that a single convert would have submitted to be immersed that was not immersed, though Bunyan had acted on the close principle? I think, brother, I may appeal to yourself if it be not probable that, had Bunyan shut the door as you did, many converts, who became members of his church, and were edified by his ministry, would have remained without, and might have, in consequence, fallen back to the world. What you mean by the insinuation that baptism *was put half way to the door*, unless, perhaps, that the ordinance was treated by the church with only *half that regard* that it claims;—admitting there was ground for the allegation, it is not so bad as it would be to treat an ordinance of Christ of still greater importance with *total* disregard; and we hold the injunction, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye", to be a positive ordinance of Jesus Christ; and that ordinance is by close communion *put to the back of the door*, or to the outside entirely.

Your second notable instance is that of the celebrated Hall and his church: after passing a glowing eulogy on whom, you refer to the singularly divided state of his church,—that being such that it was necessary to administer the Supper to one division in the morning, and to the other in the evening. This it must be confessed was a rather singular mode of proceeding; but where was the blame? Surely, brother, you cannot but see if there was blame, it must be charged solely to the close communion theory. The Pedobaptists and open brethren would have cheerfully sat at the same table with the close, but the close would not sup with them! And this demonstrates the impracticability of the open theory!—Instead of that, it demonstrates it to be practicable; and that too in peculiarly adverse circumstances;