

Let us again consult the Divine word. In Acts xvi. 27, we have the character of a suicide; in the 27th verse he is under deep convictions; and in the 33rd verse he is baptized—that done, he is fit to become a member of the church of Christ, and entitled to sit down at the Lord's table."

Now does Mr. D. want us to receive this as proof that Christian character is not necessary as a test of admission to the Lord's supper? Verily he does, otherwise the quotation has no meaning: then we are stricter than he is, in a very important sense. We would rather have one unimmersed person in a Church *with* Christian character, than ten immersed persons *without* it. It is a matter of deep regret to find a REGULAR Baptist minister appealing to the new Testament for proof of such a dogma, a dogma which we had hoped was exploded throughout evangelical Christendom a century ago.

But admitting that Christian character is unnecessary as a test of admission to the Lord's Supper. This passage is surely badly selected as a proof of it. Does Mr. D. really believe that the jailor, when he was baptized and admitted to the Church, was destitute of Christian character? Then I repeat, it is surely matter of regret that a REGULAR BAPTIST minister should be found so much in the dark as to what constitutes Christian character. We are expressly told that the jailor believed, and it is impossible to read attentively the New Testament without being convinced that *faith* is there held to be the main ingredient in Christian character.

There is only one other matter to which I shall direct attention in the mean time: it is the question which he asks his opponent, did God ever reveal a *non-essential* command?

Whether Mr. Ball attempted a direct answer to the important question does not appear in the report; it is therefore uncertain whether he would have answered in the negative or the affirmative. It is, however, pretty certain from its connection with the context that in Mr. D's opinion the question could be answered *only in the negative*. It sounds somewhat as if he had said, I dare you, Mr. B. to say that ever God revealed a non-essential command. It would be useless to enter into the question whether God ever gave *any* command that was not essential; let it suffice to come at once to the very question at issue, viz: whether God's command "be baptized," as understood by Baptists, be essential or not; and however much Mr. D. may be surprised at it, I unhesitatingly answer the question in the negative: it is *not essential*; and I could quote not a few good regular baptists corroborating my view. In the meantime I merely refer to the article in the *Ch. Mess.* immediately following the Report, headed "Sheer Misrepresentation." The truth is, all the Baptists with whom I have ever been acquainted, *regular* or *irregular*, would have taken it as the most grievous slander, or affront, to have it even insinuated that they believed baptism to be *essential* to salvation. Such

insinuations they are not at the pains to answer: they repel them with contempt.

From the article alluded to, we learn that a Dr. Elliott had dared to say "according to Baptist teaching, one can't be a Christian till immersed by a Baptist; and he can't get into heaven without first being a Christian."

This is certainly no worse than to say that baptism is *essential* either to Christian character, or to divine acceptance; yet the editor of the *Watchman and Reflector* is evidently at a loss how to express his detestation of the calumny. Almost any Baptist would repel the statement of Dr. Elliott with disgust; perhaps the very pastor of the Vittoria Church would; yet here is Mr. D., an intelligent regular Baptist minister, asking a question from which, standing where it does, the following inferences are fairly deducible.

1. That Mr D. believes God never did reveal a *non-essential* command.

2. That as the command "be baptized" is God's, he (Mr. D.) believes that it is *essential*, and that too, in all possible circumstances. And by examining the context it will be easily perceived that he understands its observance, *by immersion*, to be essential to the existence of Christian character, and consequently to salvation.

In closing, I remark, there is in the discussions of the advocates of close-communication, whether written or verbal, a striking peculiarity observable. In general, they in the outset profess great respect and veneration for many Pedo-baptists, express high admiration of their Christian character and devotedness; but alas! before they get through, their confidence dwindles into suspicion, their admiration of excellence into uncharitable questioning of sincerity; it is even broadly insinuated that they may be viewed as contumacious schismatics, as persons in fundamental error. So much is this the case that I have long been convinced that the close-communication theory cannot be maintained without questioning the Christian character of Pedo-baptists. And considering the bright evidence of genuine Christian character afforded by thousands of them, that system which requires its being questioned, may fairly be viewed as carrying along with it its own refutation. Surely there must be something radically wrong about the system that requires to question the sincerity of such men as those in the short list already quoted in this article.

Z. F.

For the Gospel Tribune.

ARGUMENTS FOR OPEN COMMUNION.

BY THE LATE REV. MR. KINGHORN, NORWICH, ENGLAND.

It is pretty generally known by Baptists at least, that Mr. K. was the great opponent of Hall on terms of Communion, and wrote no less than three voluminous replies to Mr. H.; perhaps the most plausible of any that has appeared.