

I mean this as applicable to such as were converted on, or after the day of Pentecost. But when you say "in order to be admitted into the primitive churches," if you mean that baptism was viewed as in all circumstances necessary to admission, in the same sense as conversion was necessary; I cannot go with you. I will admit that if a professed convert had refused to submit to baptism, he would have been rejected, but not, observe, because the want of baptism was viewed as of itself an absolute disqualification for communion in these churches, but because refusal to submit to what was *then* incontrovertibly the will of Christ would have been necessarily viewed as wilful disobedience to his laws, or contempt of his authority. And if you, dear brother, could say of Pedobaptists, as such, that their refusal to be immersed must necessarily be viewed as wilful disobedience, or contempt of the authority of Christ, then you would be right; it would be utterly vain to contend with you. Nay, I will cheerfully admit, that if close communion had had this ground to stand upon, there would have been absolutely "NO GROUND FOR OPEN COMMUNION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT." But I know, brother, you set up no claim to such ground for close communion,—I know you could make us out a list—a long list of names of Pedobaptists both from among the living and the dead, concerning whom, if you hear it said, or even insinuated, that they refused to be immersed, from a disposition to disobey, or condemn the authority of Christ, you would spurn the insinuation as flagrantly unjust. What! you would say, John Owen a contemner of the authority of Christ? Or even Richard Baxter; eulogized in an article in a late *Ch. Mess.*, in terms of unmeasured veneration. Yes, Richard Baxter, who, though an inveterate opponent of the Baptists, is yet characterized by brother Nutter, (I presume, a *close Baptist*) as the "ever to be remembered, great and good Nonconformist divine, one of the most spiritual and successful ministers of the gospel of the times in which he lived." Yes, Richard Baxter, concerning whom brother Nutter says "I esteem it a peculiar privilege to have been born and brought up in the same town wherein so excellent a man lived and laboured so successfully that Kidderminster was brought from being a town without a praying family to be a town almost without a prayerless family. And who, brother Nutter is sure, left such a savour of heaven and heavenly things that the effects continued to be felt for many generations." And brother Nutter might have added, that the works of this same Richard Baxter; such as his *Call to the Unconverted*, and *Saint's Rest*, are, perhaps, at this present time doing more every day in the way of converting sinners and edifying saints than many a living *Regular Baptist* minister by his personal labours, and must the "ever to be remembered" Baxter be classed with the disobedient,—the contemners of the authority of Christ? Can that system be sound that

requires the exclusion of a Baxter from the Church of Christ? Surely it requires revision. This, dear brother, is our grand—our insurmountable objection to close communion; it has, indeed no respect of persons, except they be immersed; an Owen may delight as much in serving and exalting Christ as Paul;—a Baxter may be as zealous for the glory of God in the conversion of sinners as that Apostle;—they may both possess the fervent love of John; they may do an incalculable amount of good in converting sinners and building up saints; it matters not to close communion:—according to it they must, as to qualification for admission to the privileges of the house of God, be contented to take their place with the "disobedient," the contemners of the authority of Christ. True, it is admitted cheerfully, that close communionists in general would be very far from classing Owen, or Baxter, or any pious Pedobaptists, with the disobedient, it is of their system that we speak; with the inconsistency between it and themselves, we have here nothing to do.

It is not uncommon for our close brethren to ask "to what purpose is it that such characters as Owen, Baxter, Watts, &c., are brought forward?" We reply, to great good purpose, especially as a sample of the characters whom close communion rejects or excludes from the church of Christ; for the fact that it does require the rejection of thousands of such characters is surely strong presumptive evidence that the principle is a flagrant fallacy. Yes, though the various express injunctions to receive those whom God has received had not been in the New Testament, yet the fact that close communion requires the rejection of even such characters from the Church of Christ as Owen or Baxter, would be, in our view, more than sufficient to condemn it; but when we are expressly commanded to receive even "the weak in the faith," shall we be told it is not to the purpose to refer to such characters as Owen, or Baxter, and say to close communionists your system cannot be right, because instead of receiving "the weak in the faith" according to the express law of the New Testament, it rejects many both of the weak and the strong. When we say it is not very likely that, as God so very evidently received and communed with an Owen and a Baxter *himself*, he would nevertheless make it our duty to refuse to receive or to reject them from *our* communion, shall we be asked "to what purpose are such characters brought forward?" when it is frankly acknowledged by our close brethren that there are among those whom they deem unbaptized vast numbers of eminent christians, such as Owen and Baxter; and when it is equally frankly admitted that in New Testament times there was not among the unbaptized a single christian even of the meanest grade; surely we might with the strictest propriety ask them "to what purpose do you tell us that the immersed *only* were admitted to the New Testament Churches?"