

The Meaning of the First London Confession About the Administrator of Baptism

Introduction

Our purpose **is not to set in any kind of judgment concerning the preaching and baptism of others, but only to give some statements concerning the First London Confession of Faith. Once these are read and understood, then each living child of God can come to his or her own conclusion.**

When our Particular Baptist forefathers issued the First London Confession of Faith in the 1640s and 50s, they were answering the Protestants, the Roman Catholics, the Seekers, the Open Membership Baptists, and later the Quakers. They tried to make their statements plain, brief, and to the point. However, their statements were often misunderstood and misstated by others. One such example is that the Administrator of Baptism being a Preaching Disciple. Here is that article:

.41.

The Spiritual Qualifications for the Administrator of Baptism.

The person designed by Christ to dispense baptism, the scripture holds forth to be a disciple; it being nowhere tied to a particular church officer, or person extraordinarily sent; the commission enjoying the administration, being given to them considered as disciples, being men able to preach the gospel.

Matt. 28:19; (Mark 16:15,16); John 4:2; (Acts 8:4, 5, 12, 38; Acts 10:48; 16:3, 15,29,33, and 18:1, 5, 8, compared with I Cor. 1:16,17).

Since that era many have falsely concluded that the Particular Baptists then held that anyone who was a professed Christian and a professed Christian Minister could baptize. Most who so argue hold to the Protestant Concept of the Universal, Invisible Church and that I Cor. 12:13 refers to Spiritual Baptism rather than water baptism by a Gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, that is a true Minister of the Gospel. Our forefathers of the Closed Membership Churches hold that I Cor. 12:13 was water baptism.

Another important point here is to note that our forefathers **did not consider other ministers as true ministers who were not dipped upon a profession of faith and who did not preach the same gospel as they**

did, the doctrines of grace. They did not consider others as being members of the true visible church of Jesus Christ who were not of the baptized order and did not preach the true gospel. They considered all others to be either saints in Babylon still, or ministers of Satan.

John Spilsbury, the main writer of the First London Confession of Faith, stated:

7. As for the absence of original sin, and power in the will to receive and refuse grace and salvation being generally offered by the Gospel, and Christ dying for all persons universally, to take away sin that stood between them and salvation, and so laid down his life for a ransom for all without exception, and for such as have been one in God's love, so as approved of by him in Christ for salvation, and in the Covenant of Grace, and for such to fall so as to be damned eternally, and all of the like nature, I do believe is a doctrine from beneath, and not from above, and the teachers of it from Satan, and not from God, and to be rejected as such that oppose Christ and his Gospel. (Taken from the final pages of his *A Treatise of the Lawful Subject of Baptism*, London 1643 and 1652.)

For more information about these matters please see our Vindication of the Good Old Paths:

5. The polity of separation and non-recognition in the following:

- a. Personal Separation from the world;**
- b. Church Separation from the unbaptized;**
- c. Gospel Separation from those called Free-Willers.**

Several baptized brethren holding to the Particular Baptist Faith and Order explained this article and we will not quote from two of them, Hansard Knollys and Daniel King. Both of these ministers walked with John Spilsbury and the old church he gathered in 1633 at Wapping and continued on in the same faith and practices until their demise.

In the 1650s Daniel King was called upon to write a large work to answer the Seekers and their arguments against the succession and perpetuity of the Gospel faith and order of Jesus Christ. He first published his answer in 1650 from London. He had the help of many other dear brethren such as John Spilsbury, William Kiffin, Thomas Patient and John Pearson. He published his second edition in 1656 from Edinburgh, Scotland in 1656. This is the one we use because it is a much larger work and answers more questions and makes some statements much more plain. Part two is a defence mainly of the First London Confession of Faith and gives us a very good understand about the administrator of baptism being a preaching disciple. Here is the title page:

A

WAY TO SION

SOUGHT OUT, AND FOUND, FOR BELIEVERS TO WALK IN:

OR,

A TREATISE, Consisting of Three Parts.

In The First Part is Proved,

1. That God Hath Had A People on Earth, Ever Since the Coming of Christ in the Flesh, Throughout the Darkest Times of Popery, Which He Hath Owned as Saints, and His People.
2. That These Saints Have Power to Re-Assume and Take Up As Their Right, Any Ordinance of Christ, Which They Have Been Deprived of By the Violence and Tyranny of The Man of Sin.

Wherein It is Cleared Up By the Scriptures, And Arguments Grounded Upon Scripture, Who of Right May Administer Ordinances, And Amongst The Rest, the Ordinance of Baptism With Water.

The Second Part

Contains a Full and Large Answer to Thirteen Exceptions Against the Practice of Baptizing Believers, Wherein The Former Particulars Are More Fully Cleared Up.

The Third Part

Proves That Outward Ordinances, And Among The Rest The Ordinance Of Baptism Is To Continue In The Church, And This Truth Cleared Up From Intricate Turnings And Windings, Clouds And Mists That Make The Way Doubtful and Dark.

By **DANIEL KING**, Preacher of the Word Near Coventry.

The Second Edition.

Jer. 50:5 - They Shall Ask The Way To Sion With Their Faces Thither ward.
2 Chron. 20:12- Lord, We Know Not What To Do, But Our Eyes Are Upon Thee.
Matt. 7:7- Seek And Ye Shall Find.

Printed at London, and Re-Printed at Edinburgh, by Christopher Higgins,

1656.

Here is King's explanation:

I ANSWER.

That A Disciple Able To Preach The Gospel May Baptize, Proved By Argument.

We do not affirm that every common Disciple may dispense Baptism, or any other Ordinance in the Church, but that a disciple able to preach the Gospel may dispense it, that we affirm, it being nowhere in Scripture tied to any Officer, either Pastor, Teacher, Elder, Deacon, or any other. But to Disciples as Disciples preaching the Gospel, are commanded also to Baptize, Matt. 28:19. Beside, we do not affirm that every common Disciple able to preach neither, may dispense Baptism; for women are Disciples, Acts 1:14, and some of them able to preach the Gospel as Priscilla, Acts 18, yet we do not affirm that women may Baptize. *But a Disciple able to preach the Gospel, and moreover chosen and designed of the Church thereunto*, which has power to elect and choose Administrators and Officers, in and of Herself; and so He is something more than a common Disciple in this, though He be no Pastor neither. And see the 13th Exception against the Seeker, where it says, That there is no such power for Ordinances as is pretended, but believers as Disciples may Administer, and so did the Apostles, and believers formerly, as they were Disciples, Matt. 10:1, compared with Matt. 28:18, John 8:31. If ye continue in My word then are ye My Disciples indeed.

How could they continue in His word, if they did not do all things the word commanded? Now He does not say, Then shall ye be Apostles, or Officers, but Disciples indeed. Isa. 8:16, Bind up the Testimony, Seal up the Law among My Disciples. Acts 9:10, There was a certain Disciple named Ananias, etc. and this man Baptized Paul. And so the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, Acts 11:19-21, administered as Disciples only. Now they that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that rose about Stephen, traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but to the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cirene, which when they came to Antioch spoke unto the Grecians preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. And these believers are called a Church, verse 26. And Barnabas when He was come, it is not said He Baptized them: But His work was to exhort them, that with purpose of Heart they would cleave to the Lord; showing that they were Baptized by the MEN of Cyprus and Cirene, and other Disciples that preached the word. For they were a Church at Barnabas' coming, not to be planted but built up.

But the truth of this lies clear out of the commission, Matt. 28:16---ult., where the commission is given them as Disciples, and no otherwise, and so Mark 16 also.

For thus I ARGUE.

1. The Commission Was Given Them Not As Apostles Nor Pastors, But As Disciples.

The Commission was given them either as Disciples, or as Apostles for I think it will never be proved, it was given to them as Pastors, or Officers of particular Congregations, seeing the Pastor does not give being to the Church, but the Church gives being to the Pastor, Acts 14:23, They ordained them Elders [by Election] in

every Church.

2. There was no Pastor, nor Apostle neither, in Office till after Christ's Ascension, Eph. 4, He Ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, and He gave some Apostles, etc. and some Pastors and Teachers. But this commission was given them before Christ's ascension. Therefore it could not be given them as Apostles, nor Pastors of particular congregations. That it was given to them as Apostles the word is silent, and no where affirms. And beside if they were to Baptize only as Apostles, then they were to preach as Apostles and no otherwise, for the same Commission that holds forth the one, holds forth the other. But a man may preach as a Disciple merely, as Apollo, Acts 18:24-26. He is called, a certain Jew born at Alexandria, an Eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures; and He began to speak boldly in the Synagogue, whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had Heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. But now had He been as Apostle, He should not have needed to have been taught by Aquilla and Priscilla, He had known the way of God from Christ, which shows He was but a Common Disciple. So 1 Pet. 4:10, As EVERY MAN hath received the gift even so let him minister, as good Stewards of the manifold grace of God. Mark it as every man. And lest any man should say, this is meant of Pastors, the next verse makes it clear it is not. For He says, If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the Ability that God gives, etc. Now if this speaking should be meant of Pastors only, or Officers; but that is false, for a man may do the poor good when He will, and therefore the other clause is of common Disciples exercising their gifts, as Disciples only, for Edification. Acts 8:1, etc., They that were scattered abroad upon Stephen's persecution which were all the Church at Jerusalem; except the Apostles, went every where preaching the Word. Acts 11:19,20, And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cirene, MEN, common Disciples, as I shall show afterwards. Mark 14:7.

Therefore such a one may Baptize, for preaching the Word is the greater Ordinance, as appears. 1 Cor.1:17, CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, BUT PREACH, YEA, AND A MAN MAY BE BAPTIZED BY A MAN THAT WAS NOT AN INSTRUMENT TO BEGET HIM TO THE FAITH, 1 Cor. 1:14 compared with 1 Cor. 4:15.

2. Arguments Taken From Christ's Promise.

2. Those that Christ sends forth to preach and Baptize, He promises His presence with them to the end of the world, Matt. 28. ult. But if none may perform these duties but Apostles, then none can expect Christ's presence but Apostles. But the Church has Christ's presence as a Church, and as they are believers, not Apostles, Rev. 2:1, Rev. 12:3, AND GOD DWELLS WITH THEM AS DISCIPLES OR BELIEVERS, 1 John 1:3,6,7, THAT WHICH WE HAVE HEARD DECLARE WE UNTO YOU, THAT YE MAY HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH US, AND TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST, and verse 7, AND IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT, AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT, THEN HAVE WE FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER, and the Lord says in Isaiah, I DWELL WITH HIM THAT IS OF AN HUMBLE AND CONTRITE SPIRIT, TO RECEIVE THE SPIRIT OF THE HUMBLE, ETC. Therefore Disciples as Disciples may preach the Gospel, and Baptize.

3. Else No Gospel Can Be Preached.

3. If Disciples as Disciples may not preach the Gospel and Baptize, then there is no Gospel that may be preached at all, for who may do it?

If you speak of Ministers, men in public, under the dark times of Antichrist, there was no man in public Office, that were or could be called by a true Church: therefore they could not act by virtue of a true call, and so what they did was not by virtue of Christ's commission, but there were them in dark times of Antichrist that preached the Gospel, Rev. 11, My two witnesses etc. I have shown you already the sad consequences of such a Doctrine.

4. Christ's Disciples Merely.

4. Christ's Disciples Baptized as Disciples merely, John 4:1,2. Now when the Lord knew how the Pharisees had Heard that Jesus made and Baptized more Disciples than John (though Jesus himself Baptized not but His Disciples) so that His Disciples as Disciples Baptized in Christ's time, for as yet they were not Apostles, nor Pastors, as I showed before, for those gifts were given by virtue of Christ's Ascension, Eph. 4:8-11. But let us examine the proof to the Exception. The ground is given that Disciples may not do it, because they are not qualified as the first Dispensers were, or rather those in the Primitive times, Mark 16:17. But does He say they are no believers, or that they may not preach till these Signs show themselves in them? Acts 2:3,4, And there appeared to them cloven Tongues, etc. But does any Scripture say, let none preach the Gospel, but He that has these very gifts? Is not He that has the Word of Wisdom, and the word of knowledge, endued with it from the same Spirit, as well as He that has Miracles and Tongues? 1 Cor. 12:8-10. And does not the Scripture say 1 Peter 4:10, As every man hath received the gift even so let him Minister, etc. Another proof is, Acts 2:16,17, To which I say, This is principally meant of extraordinary Prophecy, because Daughters are brought in to Prophecy. But in case their gifts are not Extraordinary they are not permitted to speak in the Church, 1 Cor. 14, yet it hinders not but ordinary gifts of the Spirit are meant Here also, and so ordinary Prophecy by the same Spirit. For Apollo was not Extraordinarily inspired, for then He had known the way of God perfectly; yet He prophesied, or preached, and 1 Pet. 4:10. But a clear place for it is Rom. 12:6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace given to us, whether Prophecy; let us prophecy according to the proportion of Faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering, etc. So that these proofs make nothing, being well examined. Acts 18.

Please note that by the term "public office", King meant those known openly to the public. Our brethren in history were men who had to be in hiding because of severe persecution by those who did not agree with them.

King explained that an administrator of baptism was one who preached the true gospel and who was chosen and appointed by the suffrage or vote of the church. The Elders who helped him gave their consent and support to this position. We feel this is very well put.

Hansard Knollys also wrote against the Seekers. Here is the title page:

THE

SHINING
OF A
FLAMING FIRE
IN ZION

or,

A Clear Answer unto 13 Exceptions, against the Grounds of New BAPTISM;
(so-called) in Mr. Saltmarsh his Book, Intituled, The Smoke in the Temple, p. 15,
ect. Which Exceptions

Were tendered by him to all Believers, to show them, how little they have attained, and
that there is a more glorious fulness to be revealed.

ALSO A POSTSCRIPT;

Wherein (to the like end) some Queries are propounded unto Believers.

by HANSARD KNOLLYS,
a Minister, and a Witness of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 4:5; Matt. 21:24, 25

LONDON,
Printed by JANE COE, according to Order, 1646.

Answer

We do not affirm, that every common Disciple may Baptize, there was some mistake in laying down our Opinion, page 14. Where it is conceived, that we hold, Whatsoever Disciple can teach the word, can make out Christ, may Baptize, and administer other Ordinances. We do not so. For though believing Women being baptized are Disciples, Acts 9:36, and can make out Christ; yea, and some of them (by their experimental knowledge and spiritual understanding of the way, order, & Faith of the Gospel) may be able to instruct their Teachers, Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3, yet we do not hold, that a woman may preach, baptize, nor administer other Ordinances. Nor do we judge it meet, for any Brother to baptize or to administer other Ordinances; unless he have received such gifts of the Spirit, as fitteth, or enables him to preach the Gospel. And those gifts being first tried by and known to the Church, such a Brother is chosen and appointed thereunto by the Suffrage of the Church.

In conclusion

Thee older brethren took a very strong position that only ministers of their faith and order, the Particular Baptist way, were true gospel ministers and administrators. They held that such a man was called and gifted by the Holy Spirit, his divine call to the ministry, and then when his gifts and abilities were tried and known by the church, the church being satisfied, he was then chosen by the vote of the church to be a qualified administer of the gospel and ordinances.