

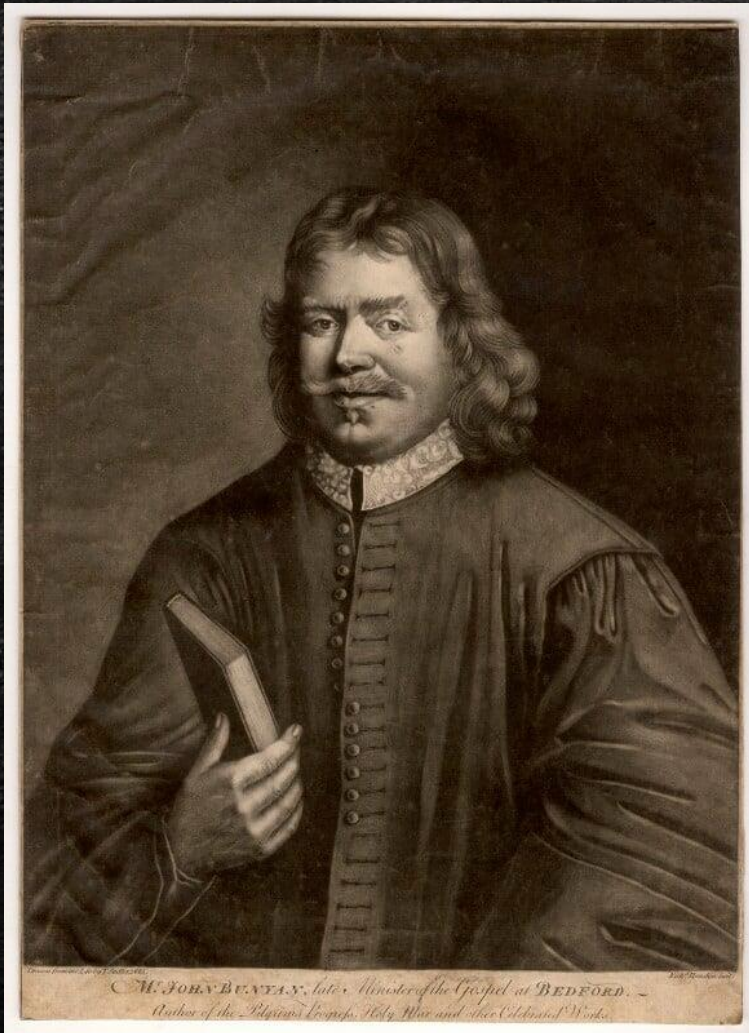
‘Therefore Receive One Another’

John Bunyan and William Kiffin on the Terms of Church Communion

Bunyan and Kiffin: Baptist Giants

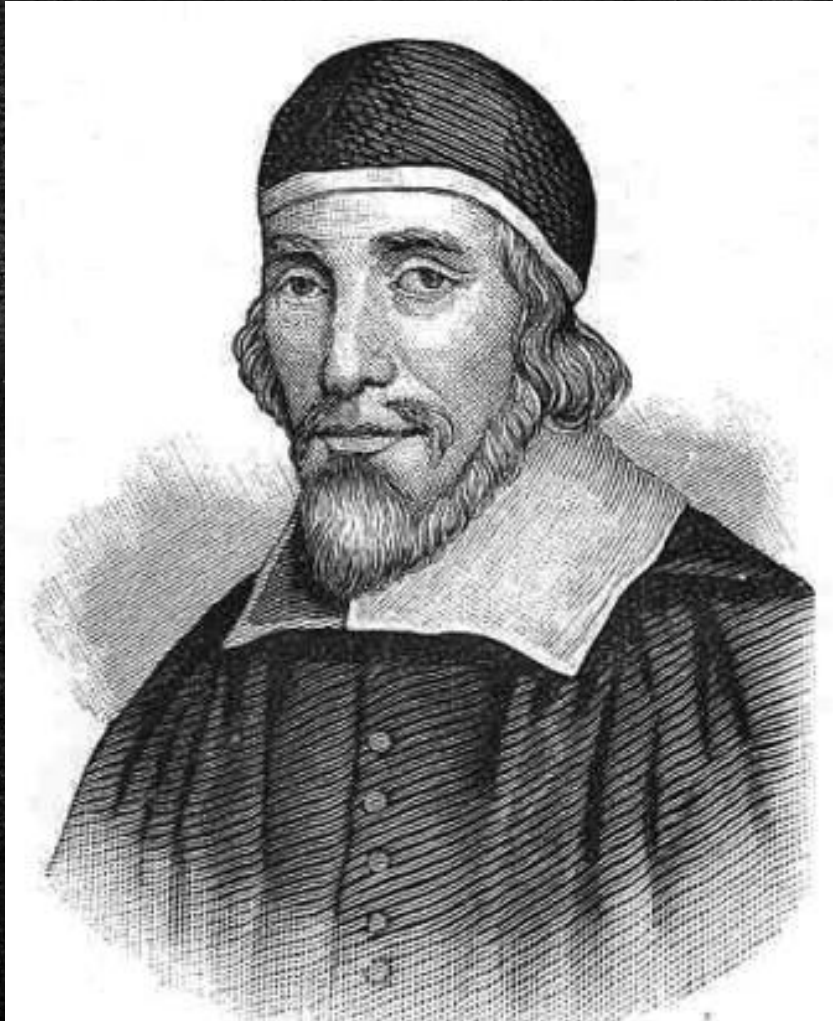


John Bunyan (1628-1688)



“Therefore receive one another as Christ has received you, for the glory of God.” (Romans 15:7)

Henry Jessey (1601-1663)



- Third Pastor of the Independent Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church
- Baptized in 1645 by Hanserd Knollys (a former member of his Church)
- Practiced Open Membership/
Open Communion Table

William Kiffin (1616-1701)



“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us”

(2 Thess 3:6)

Appendix to 1677/1689 Baptist Confession

“We are not insensible that as to the order of God’s house, and entire communion therein there are some things wherein we (as well as others) are not at a full accord among ourselves, as for instance; the known principle, and state of the consciences of diverse of us, that have agreed in this Confession is such; that we cannot hold Church-communion with any other than Baptized believers, and Churches constituted of such; yet some others of us have a greater liberty and freedom in our spirits that way; and therefore we have purposely omitted the mention of things of that nature that we might concur, in giving this evidence of our agreement, both among ourselves, and with other good Christians, in those important articles of the Christian religion, mainly insisted on by us.”
(Nehemiah Coxe)

Resolution of the 1689 Baptist Assembly

“In those things wherein one church differs from another church in their principles or practices, in point of communion,... we cannot, shall not impose upon any particular church therein, but leave every church to their own liberty to walk together as they have received from the Lord.”

John Bunyan: 'A Confession of My Faith'

"I hold it requisite that a faithful relation be made thereof by the party thus to be received; yea, if need be, by witnesses also, for the satisfaction of the church, that she may receive in faith and judgment as best shall suit her holy profession."

John Bunyan: 'A Confession of My Faith'

"I count them [the ordinances] not the fundamentals of our Christianity, nor grounds or rule to communion with saints: servants they are and our mystical ministers, to teach and instruct us in the most weighty matters of the kingdom of God: I therefore here declare my reverent esteem of them; yet dare not remove them, as some do, from the place and end, where by God there are set and appointed; nor ascribe unto them more than they were ordered to have in their first and primitive institution."

John Bunyan: 'A Confession of My Faith'

"John gathered no particular church, yet was he the first and great baptizer with water; he preached Christ to come, and baptized with the baptism of repentance, and left his disciples to be gathered by him."

"Philip baptized the eunuch, but made him by that no member of any particular church. Neither was Cornelius made a member of the Church at Jerusalem by his being baptized at Peter's command at Cesarea. Neither were they that were converted at Antioch by them that were scattered from the church at Jerusalem, by their baptism, if they were baptized at all, joined to the church at Jerusalem."

John Bunyan: *'A Confession of My Faith'*

"Baptism in water makes thee no member of the church, neither particular nor universal; neither doth it make thee a visible saint. It therefore gives thee neither right to nor being of membership at all."

John Bunyan: 'A Confession of My Faith'

"If you can shew me the Christian that in the primitive times [ie. the Apostolic age] remained dark [ie. uncertain] about it [believer's baptism], I will shew you the Christian that was received without it."

"For it is God that createth light [ie. certainty of conscience]; and for them to do it without light would but prove them unfaithful to themselves, and made them sinners against God; 'For whatsoever is not of faith is sin' (Romans 14:23)."

John Bunyan: 'A Confession of My Faith'

"Now I say, that he that believeth in Jesus Christ hath richer and better than that [of baptism in water], viz. is dead to sin, and that lives to God by him, he hath the heart, power and doctrine of baptism: all then that he wanteth, is but the sign, the shadow, or the outward circumstance thereof. Nor yet is that [outward sign] despised, but forborne for want of light [certainty of conscience]."

John Bunyan: 'A Confession of My Faith'

"Now him that God receiveth and holdeth communion with, him you should receive and hold communion with... Receive him 'to the glory of God.' To the glory of God is put in on purpose, to show what dishonour they bring to God, who despise to have communion with them; who yet they know have communion with God. For how doth this man, or that church, glorify God or count the wisdom and holiness of heaven beyond them, when they refuse communion with them, concerning whom, they are by the word convinced, that they have communion with God."

William Kiffin: 'A Sober Discourse'

"This opinion [open membership/ open Table] has a direct tendency to invalidate, or indeed, quite throw out of doors and discontinue the use of a foundation ordinance [baptism], or principles of the Gospel of Christ (Heb 6:2). For if unbaptized persons may be admitted to all church privileges, does not such a practice plainly suppose that it is unnecessary... The Baptists (if once such a belief prevails) would be easily tempted to lay aside that reproached practice, (which envious men have unjustly derided an aspersed) of being dipped, that is baptized, and challenge their church communion by virtue of their faith only."

William Kiffin: 'A Sober Discourse'

"If it be once admitted that it [baptism] is not necessary to church communion, every man of sense will infer, that our contentions for [baptism] were frivolous, our separation schismatical, and our suffering the penalties of human laws, foolish: and consequently we shall be exposed to the reproaches of such as are (without this advantage) ready enough to revile and persecute us."

William Kiffin: 'A Sober Discourse'

"Here is the right Gospel order: First, they that gladly received the word; that is, they that believed, and no other, were immediately baptized.. which was the second work, and the same day (viz., after they believed and were baptized) 'there were added unto them (that is, received into church-fellowship, by faith and baptism) about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship' (that is in the same faith and communion) 'and in breaking of bread and prayers' (that is, in the enjoyment and administration of church ordinances)."

William Kiffin: 'A Sober Discourse'

“The receiving here [in Romans 15:7] cannot be meant to receive into the church as members, because the Apostle writes this epistle to the church and these weak members as part of the church; but the receiving here intended is into the affections of each other; that the differences that were amongst them should not hinder the Law of Love, which they, and every Christian ought to cherish and exercise towards each other.”

Robert Hall Jr.: 'On Terms of Communion'

"Suffice it to remark, that there is scarcely a writer in the three first centuries, to descend no lower, who has not spoken upon this subject [of baptism] in a manner, which the advocates for strict [ie. closed] communion at least, would deem unscriptural and improper: scarcely one from whom we should not be taught to infer, that baptism was absolutely necessary for salvation... Is it surprising then, that those who contend for baptism as essential to salvation [ie. proponents of baptismal regeneration], should consider it as an essential prerequisite to communion?"