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John Bunyan's *Confession of my Faith* and Restoration Anabaptism
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On 21 January 1672, the Bedford Congregation, in full assembly, chose John Bunyan as its pastor. Although he was not yet officially released from his twelve-year imprisonment in Bedford gaol, Bunyan was allowed to attend. This was an important occasion, on which several other appointments were made and a fast was observed five days later, in Bedford and the nearby villages of Haynes and Gamlingay, to recommend these new appointees to the grace of God:

After much seeking God by prayer, and sober conference formerly had, the congregation did at this meeting with joynt consent (signified by solemne lifting up of their hands) call forth and appoint our brother John Bunyan to the pastorall office or eldership. And he accepting thereof gave up himself to serve Christ and his church in that charge, and received of the elders the right hand of fellowship. The same time also, the congregation having had long experience of the faithfulness of brother John Fenne in his care for the poor, did after the same manner solemnly choose him to the honourable office of a deacon [...]. The same time and after the same manner, the Church did solemnly approve of the gifts of, (and called to the worke of the ministry) these brethren: — John Fenne, Oliver Scott, Luke Astwood, Thomas Cooper, Edward Dent, Edward Isaac, Nehemiah Coxe (Tibbutt 71-72).

Around that time, Bunyan embarked on a design to promote unity among Restoration Baptists with the redaction of *A Confession of my Faith*. (Greaves, *Glimpses* 271-72, 638) This rather short piece is therefore one of the first that Bunyan composed as pastor of the Bedford Church while he was engaged in the controversy with the Latitudinarian sympathiser Edward Fowler.¹ Bunyan vindicates the open-communion, open-membership practice of his own Congregation, a model of toleration he thought other Baptists should emulate, throughout the country, for peace and unity. There were two separate issues in this essentially baptismal controversy: first, whether a believer baptised in infancy could be admitted as a full member of a Congregation without being re-baptised; second, whether a Baptist Congregation could share the Lord's supper with non re-baptised believers. Bunyan used the term 'communion' in its traditional sense, reaching deep into Catholic usage of the Latin *communio* and forward to one modern, but specialised English sense, meaning Church membership, that is to say, a fellowship of observance and beliefs not broken by dissension about matters of doctrine or ritual. Despite his emphasis upon concord, fellowship, and unity, *A Confession* inspired nearly a decade of bitter controversy, some readers accusing Bunyan of folly, Machiavellism and treason. (Bunyan, *MW* 4: 193, 196-97, 233, 270, 286; Paul 42)²

¹ In his recent biography of Bunyan, Richard Greaves dates the appointment of Bunyan on 21 December 1671. (Greaves, *Glimpses* 287) The entry was written on 'the 21th of the 10th moneth', which, in most instances, is 21 January 1672. This is the practice that H.G. Tibbutt adopts when dating the Church Book's entries given in old style. 21 January is also the date suggested by Ted Underwood, in his preface to Bunyan's controversies in the 1670's (*MW* 4: xvii).

² *A Confession* provoked responses by Thomas Paul, *Some Serious Reflections on that part of Mr. Bunions Confession of Faith: Touching Church Communion with Unbaptized Persons* (London, 1673) which Bunyan answered in *Differences in Judgment upon Water-Baptism, no Bar to Communion: Or, To Communicate with Saints, as Saints, proved Lawful* (1673), and by John Denne, *Truth Outweighing Error: Or, An Answer to a Treatise Lately Published by J.B. Entitled, A Confession*

The theological arguments that Bunyan adduced on this count are well documented. (Brown 219-225; Greaves, *John Bunyan* 135-45; Greaves, *Glimpses* 271- 79; Hill 292-95; Underwood 456-69; Campbell 141-43; de Vries 112-117; Mullett 49, 100, 176-82; Davies 45-46; Lynch 40-41) He agreed with his opponents in rejecting paedobaptism and promoting the necessity of adult immersion. Elsewhere, Bunyan refers to ‘the Brethren which refuse to be baptized, as you and I would have them’. (Bunyan, *MW* 4: 212) Bunyan had no difficulty admitting that those who rejected baptism ‘wanted light’, ‘erred’, ‘failed’, were ‘dark’ or ‘weak’ in their faith and he himself had very probably accepted baptism on joining the Bedford Congregation. (Bunyan, *MW* 4: 169-71, 172-73) He differed from other Restoration Baptists on just one issue: whether those who believed that they were ‘sin[ning] against [their] own soul’ in accepting baptism (but who were nonetheless ‘visible saints’) were to be barred from Church-communion and Church membership. (Bunyan, *MW* 4: 178) Men such as Thomas Paul, William Kiffin, John Denne and Henry Danvers thought that they should be. Bunyan, on the contrary, pleaded for toleration and inclusion. Closed-communion was contrary to love and edification, he thought, and it hindered unity.

It has perhaps not been sufficiently emphasized that Bunyan’s position on Church membership, though no doubt unusual, was not so very singular. There were instances of open-membership Churches across the country outside Bedford, in Southwark, Hexham, Bristol and Hull. (White, ‘Open Membership’ 330-34; Nuttall, *Visible Saints* 36-37, 199-201) Vavasor Powell, John Tombes, and of course Henry Jessey, whose principles Bunyan appended to his *Differences in Judgement*, had all pleaded in favour of open communion. (Bunyan, *MW* 4: 253-64, Greaves and Zaller, s.v). If Bunyan’s emphasis on baptism as a thing indifferent, and on love and unity, had been the standard fare of open-membership advocates since the 1650s, why did his writings on the subject arouse such strong feelings in the early 1670s? First of all, Bunyan was taking an almost unprecedented step by publishing a Confession of Faith. The term ‘Confession of Faith’ was understood to be the declaration required of any prospective member as a condition of admittance to a separatist Church. But this is not the sense in which Bunyan’s text was written and understood. In 1644, the first Confession of Faith of seven Particular Baptist Churches in London had appeared³. It presented doctrinal tenets, made it clear that the Baptists were ‘orthodox’ Christians, asserted their legitimacy, and distinguished the Baptists from more radical movements, like the Anabaptists. Baptist Confessions of Faith were collaborative public statements, usually issued by an association of Churches, individual Baptist Confessions being therefore very rare. Vavasor Powell’s appeared posthumously, as a section of his *Life*, in 1671, and Thomas Collier’s, published in 1678, was a reaction to the 1677 revised Baptist Confession. (see

of his Faith, and A Reason of his Practice (London, 1673). Thomas Paul and Henry Danvers replied to *Differences*, eliciting the last of Bunyan’s tracts dedicated to the subject, *Peaceable Principles and True: Or, A Brief Answer to Mr. Danver’s and Mr. Paul’s Books against my Confession of Faith, and Differences in Judgment about Baptism no Bar to Communion* (1674).

³ This text, which was revised in 1646 and reissued 1651 and 1652, was abandoned when the Baptists modified the Westminster Confession in 1677 and again in 1689. For a comprehensive survey, see Lumpkin.

Bagshaw 35-36; Nuttal *Welsh Saints* 37-54) This means that Bunyan had almost no precedent to draw upon when he embarked on such a design.

Bunyan opens his address to the reader with a reworking of 1 Peter 4: 12 (which he cites): '*I marvel not that both your self, and others do think my long Imprisonment strange*'. If we compare the beginning of the 1644 Confession of Faith, we notice a rather similar formulation: '*Wee question not but that it will seeme strange to many men...*' (1644 *Confession* A2r). The London Baptists conclude that their principles might be proclaimed at large, though the ministers be confined: '*We have therefore for the cleering of the truth we professe, that it may be at libertie, though wee in bonds, briefly published a confession of our Faith*' (1644 *Confession* A2r). In the same way, Bunyan signed his preface 'Thine in Bonds for the Gospel', referring to his imprisonment in Pauline terms. Unlike Bunyan, however, the Baptists had insisted that their Confession was a consensual one. This was 'their' confession, whereas Bunyan published only 'his'. One might argue that Bunyan is having it both ways. On the one hand, his confession appears to be the work of an individual believer and was read that way by some of his critics; on the other hand, he deliberately uses language that evokes documents issued by associations of Churches. Furthermore, he invited criticism by the persona he adopted: righteous, suffering, isolated, a champion of the right to follow conscience. We must remember that in 1672 Bunyan was virtually a nonentity among his dissenting colleagues, but he gave lessons in toleration, peace, and unity, not to mention Bible-reading, to eminent (and for the most part, better-educated) members of the Baptist community. It is little wonder that his detractors suggested that his polemic on Church membership was an ill-chosen piece of self-advertisement: '*But you suggest, I did it, because I was so willing to be known in the World by my SINGULAR Faith, and Practice. . . I did it for popular applause and fame*'. (Bunyan, *MW* 4:196)

To some extent, however, this unduly restricts the debate about open communion to the printed controversies. In doing so, one risks passing over some other contexts for discussion, taking forms which somewhat relieve Bunyan's isolation. It will be helpful to develop a fuller sense of the range of opinion that Bunyan encountered, especially in London, where the patterns of agreement and dissent were not always those that the printed sources suggest. This requires a little contextualisation. Between the publication of Bunyan's *Differences* and *Peaceable Principles*, the Particular Baptist Henry Danvers published *A Treatise of Baptism*, under the initials 'H.D.' This text inspired an impressive number of responses from paedobaptists, or 'Olympian Games', in the phrase of one commentator (Wills A4r); within three years Obadiah Wills, Richard Blinman, Joseph Whiston, Thomas Delaune, John Tombes and Richard Baxter, to mention only the most prominent disputants,

had all become directly involved. (Greaves, *Saints and Rebels* 169-171)⁴ Danvers's *Treatise* rapidly became popular, and within a year was issued in a new, revised edition. In the first edition, Danvers answered Bunyan's *A Confession and Differences*, but this was not his main concern. The 'postscript' was almost an after-thought, Danvers having just received *Differences* as he was finishing his work. It was taken out from the second and edition. For reflections on Bunyan's and Danvers's respective positions, we must examine therefore the works printed between the first and the second editions of Danvers's *Treatise*. One is Obadiah Wills's *Infant-Baptism Asserted and Vindicated by Scripture and Antiquity* (1674).⁵ Finished late in June 1674, with a preface by Richard Baxter, it is a long commentary on Danvers's *Treatise* which directly accuses his opponent of having plagiarised other people's work, most notably John Tombes's (Wills 1: A2r). He graduated from Exeter College, Oxford in 1649 and was working in Alton Barnes in Wiltshire before his ejection in 1660. He had apparently secured the position by informing against the previous curate for using the Book of Common Prayer. (Matthews, s.v) In 1672, Wills sought a license as a Congregationalist. Of particular significance are his references to Bunyan's own work, which seem to have been entirely overlooked by modern scholars. These are the words of a man who was clearly not a Baptist, but who had an informed judgement of what was being discussed in that community:

And yet I find that they are not agreed among themselves. . . . Mr *Paul* [is] a great Zealot against Communion with any that are not Baptized in their Way. . . . Mr *Kiffin* it seems is of the same judgement. Of the same judgement is *John Bunyan*, a more moderate Antipædobaptist, who is for *Union and Communion with Saints, as Saints*, and who condemnes the rigidity of his Brethren, and who maintains in his Answer to the scurrilous (not serious) Reflections of *Paul*, 'That differences in judgement about *Water-Baptisme* ought to be *no Bar to Communion*'. Mr Bunyan sees no cause to repent after severe checks from his Brethren. . . . Mr *Tull* also, a moderate and very ingenious Antipædobaptist, is of Mr. *Bunyans* judgement. (Wills 1: 46-47)

If any doubt persisted whether Bunyan was indeed considered a Baptist by his contemporaries, this should dispel them. (Ban 367-76) It also shows that modern readers distinguish perhaps too sharply between the Particular Baptists and General Baptists of the Restoration period, on the grounds that they differ on such major issues as predestination and perseverance.⁶ This may well have been true of the period of the Civil War or Interregnum when 'co-operation, even friendly communication between the two sorts of Baptists, was practically impossible'. (McGregor 28) But the 1670s controversy

⁴ The last work that I have found directly linked to this controversy is Giles Firmin, *The Plea of the Children of Believing-Parents, for their Interest in Abraham's Covenant*, published in 1683.

⁵ After Danvers's rejoinder, Wills retorted with *Vindiciæ Vindiciarum: Or, A Vindication of a late Treatise, entituled, Infant-Baptism Asserted and Vindicated by Scripture and Antiquity* (1675) and again, with *Censura Censuræ: Or, A Just Censure of the Unjust Sentence of the Baptists upon an Appeal against Mr Henry D'Anvers* (1676). It is very difficult to refer to *Infant-Baptism* with accuracy because the work was apparently printed in two different places and the pagination is therefore erratic. The pagination restarts after chapter 7. In what follows, we will treat chapters 1-7 as a first part (noted 1) and the rest as a second part (noted 2).

⁶ The major distinction in the Baptist community was between General Baptists, holding Arminian views on universal grace, and Particular Baptists maintaining a Calvinistic conception of predestination. The General Baptists, associated with the names of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, showed more obvious signs of continental influence than the later Particular Baptists, whose origins are traced to Henry Jacob's Church founded in 1616, or, as it is sometimes called, after Jacob's successors, the 'Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey' Church. (A.C. Underwood 28-62; Watts 5-14; White, 'Open Membership' 331; Horton Davies 2: 490-521; Barrie White 51-62)

suggests that by the time of the Restoration, the differences were really between those Baptists (whether Particular or General) who accepted communion with unbaptised believers, and those who did not. However much Obadiah Wills, as a Congregationalist, agreed with Bunyan's open-communion principles, he nevertheless uses Bunyan's text to discredit the position of the entire Baptist community. Bunyan is very often mentioned or quoted when Wills wants to prove that the Baptists are incapable on agreeing of fundamental tenets, falling into bitter and sterile disputes: 'First, how furiously do they contend among themselves? What a heat is there between Mr. *Bunyan* and Mr. *Paul*, both of them for Baptizing Believers?' (Wills 2: 274-75; also 1:46; 1:51-52) Wills, in some sense, agrees with both parties: with Bunyan's practice, and with the Baptists' resentment of the fact that Bunyan had betrayed them and divided their ranks. Moreover, there is no hint anywhere in Wills's treatise that Bunyan had gained overwhelming sympathy in Congregational circles because of his open-communion principles: he was clearly an outsider, and Wills always challenges him on this point.

There is a final element in Wills's discussion that is worth considering: the link he makes between Bunyan and 'Mr *Tull*'. This, I believe to be a reference to Samuel Tull, a Particular Baptist preacher in London. On the whole, we possess little information about him. (Whitley 1:65, 74, 81; White, 'organisation' 213, 218-19) There is evidence that in 1657 he joined a Congregation later known as Petty France, where Benjamin Cox and Edward Harrison (two men who had worked at various times in their respective careers in Bedfordshire) were already in place. (Ivimey 2: 15-17; White, *Association* 3: 129, 131, 189; Whitley, 'Harrison' 214-220, Laurence 133-34, Greaves and Zaller, s.v) Tull probably stayed there until his death in 1677. Tull was preaching in Cheapside, Harrison at his home in Petty France, and Cox in Thames Street. The Petty France Congregation is rarely mentioned in connection with Bunyan, although there are indications that he may indeed have been well acquainted with some of its members. It was not an open-communion Church but it was known to welcome believers who came to London with letters of recommendation from provincial Churches. There is no evidence that it insisted on baptizing believers who came to it after rejecting baptism in their original Congregation, making it *de facto* an open-communion Church, although it insisted on baptising its own members. (Wiston 2:180-229; Ivimey 2: 396-415; Whitley, *Baptists* 136-17; Dowley 233-39) This, in itself, made Petty France quite exceptional on the London Baptist scene.

In September 1675, Petty France ordained as co-pastor another famous figure of Bedfordshire Nonconformity: Nehemiah Cox. A former member of Bunyan's Church, Cox had been a key figure in the organisation of the Bedfordshire Baptist Churches while in prison with Bunyan. (*ODNB*, s.v.; Dowley 235; Greaves, 'Organizational response' 478-79). He was called to the ministry on the day Bunyan was chosen as head of the Bedford Church and he was himself considered at one time to lead the Hitchin Congregation. (Tibbutt 72; *Glimpses* 269) A final member of Petty France needs to be mentioned: John Gammon. Bunyan preached his last sermon before Gammon's Congregation in Boar's Head Yard, off Petticoat Lane, probably on 19th August 1688. Gammon was an open-

communion Baptist, like Bunyan, but he had been in Petty France for several years until he was 'spared' to Boar's Head Yard in 1684. (Whitley, *Baptists of London* 105; Whitley, 'Edward Harrison', 219; Brown 372-74) It is probable that he was introduced to Bunyan by Nehemiah Cox. This means that in a supposedly 'closed' Congregation like Petty France in the 1670s, were expressed 'rigid' views on baptism, such as Cox's, and 'moderate' views, such as Tull's and Gammon's. Given this network of associations, it is tempting to conclude that Petty France might have provided Bunyan with a Baptist London circle where his views were heeded, despite the printed criticisms that have survived.

More attention should now be paid to the context in which these controversies were taking place. Well into the Restoration, Baptists had to address the resurgence of the long-standing charge that they were barely distinguishable from Anabaptists and that, as such, they were particularly prone to heresy, rebellion, sexual licence, enthusiasm and murder. These attacks were of course directed towards other sects, but there was a major singularity in anti-Baptist tracts: the consistent use of the term 'Anabaptist' that immediately evoked Münster rebellion, and unacceptable religious, social and political behaviour. Bunyan himself, in *The Heavenly Footman*, warned his readers not to have 'too much Company with some *Anabaptists*, though I go under that name my self'. (Bunyan, *MW* 5: 153) Historians have long recognised the scapegoating of Civil War Baptist sects and their association with Anabaptism. (McGregor 23-63; Smith 23-103) It is time this material be foregrounded in connection with Bunyan, for Restoration Baptists, especially after Venner's rebellion, were submitted once again to the same allegations. This influenced the resurgence of baptismal controversies in the 1670s and the anxiety concerning the names that were given to Bunyan and the dissenting ministers.

Let us briefly review a few examples: the link between Anabaptism, enthusiasm and dream, and the charges of murder. Anabaptism had possessed a very special relationship to enthusiasm from the early days of the Reformation. The origin of the word 'enthusiasm' in that sense has been traced to Bullinger's 1560 text against the Anabaptists, while Luther preferred *Schwärmer*, a naturalistic bee-metaphor, for the 'Zwickau prophets' (Heyd 11-12) It was therefore comparatively easy for seventeenth-century anti-Baptist heresiographers who pretended to rely on historical truth to claim that the names 'Anabaptist' and 'enthusiast' were interchangeable, a position that had already been formulated by Robert Burton. (Burton 3: 330, 338, 358, 362, 387) The authors could complain of the 'Phanatical Enthusiasms' of the Anabaptists, citing key Reformers, to assess the challenge the movement posed to mainstream Protestantism. (Featley A4r) Enthusiasts convinced themselves that God could speak to them in fits, in ecstasies, in dreams, as He had done in Apostolic times for the preservation of the Church, then in its infancy. '*Enthusiasts*', wrote Ephraim Pagitt, 'pretend that they have the gift of Prophecy by dreams, to which they give much credit'. (Pagitt 36) A close link between Anabaptism and dreams could be established with at least some degree of historical accuracy. Time and again, the heresiographers claimed that Anabaptists were descended from Nicholas Storch, the notorious dreamer who inspired Thomas Müntzer and John of Leyden: in a word, Anabaptist violence,

social and political unrest originated from dreams and expressed themselves through dreams. (*Short History* 6; Edwards 1:52; Featley 31; Pagitt 3; Pressick 1) When we recall the title-page of Bunyan's most famous allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which advertises itself so emphatically as a dream, and is accompanied by a 'sleeping portrait' engraved by Robert White, we should remember that for some readers this immediately qualified the work as that of a potentially heretical enthusiast.

With enthusiasm came the even more serious charge of murder. Today, it is barely possible to capture the experience of being baptised, in the seventeenth-century, by total immersion. The advance to the river, perhaps in a cold month; the pressure on the head as the minister pushed the believer under. This was perhaps in the mind of Wills when he wrote, 'What can such think of, but their danger, and how they shall escape being throttled or drowned.... [It] shall so confound the senses, and put tender folks into such an afright and amaze for the present, and at such a time when they had need have their minds most serene to contemplat of the glorious Mysteries represented in the Ordinance'. (Wills 2: 260) In 1651, Richard Baxter had argued against John Tombes that the Baptists broke the sixth commandment against murder and inspired unnecessary terror in believers. He borrowed this from Robert Baillie, who had made a similar charge in 1647 (Baillie 171):

In Cities like *London*, and among Gentlewomen that heve been tenderly brought up, and ancient people, and shop-keepers, especially women that take but little of the cold ayr, the dipping them in the cold weather, in cold water, in the course of nature, would kill hundreds and thousands of them, either suddenly, or by casting them into some Chronicall Disease. (Baxter 134)

Of course, such testimonies come from opponents of adult baptism, who emphasise these things with a polemical intent. But any believers inclined to ponder the physical danger of baptism would not have been re-assured by the reminder that immersion represented the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ: 'Abiding under the Water', Henry Danvers writes, 'how little a while soever, denotes Christ's descent into Hell, even the very deepest of lifelessness'. (Danvers 241) It is not too difficult to imagine how, in the midst of the British winter, some believers approaching baptism might well have supposed that they faced a lifelessness not entirely symbolic.

In addition to these charges of enthusiasm and murder, 'dipping', as it was known at the Restoration, kindled rumours of sexual promiscuity as pastors were routinely accused of taking advantage of women stripping before entering the water. In this context, it is possible that Bunyan's rather unfortunate horseback episode with the twenty four-year old Agnes Beaumont was perceived by some parties as a piece of characteristically Anabaptist licence, strengthening the evidence that he might have been regarded in that light by many. In February 1674, Bunyan agreed to take Agnes to a meeting in Gamlingay. After they were spotted en route mounted on one horse, rumours began to spread. Agnes's father subsequently died, and allegations circulated that she had poisoned him on Bunyan's advice, though she was later cleared of all charges and left a detailed account of the true events. If Bunyan was indeed known as an 'Anabaptist', rumours about his equestrian activities might

have been encouraged by popular prejudices about the sexual mores of the sect (Bell 3-17; Mullett 101-103; Spargo: 40, 87-93; Greaves, *Glimpses* 309-12; Kathleen Lynch, 71-98).

Dipping smacked of heresy, enthusiasm and political rebellion; it also kept alive satires of mass baptism and lechery. Systematic dipping for Church membership, as advocated by Bunyan's opponents, was naturally even more open to such charges and if we overlook this context we risk misunderstanding Bunyan's sense of urgency and the violence of his tone. The solution, according to him, was the adoption of a common name, supported by a unified Church practice, that would diffuse the traditional connection between dipping and Anabaptism.

All Baptists repeatedly insisted that the customary extension of the word 'Anabaptists' to themselves was unjustified. The title-page of the 1644 Confession of Faith reads: *The Confession of Faith, of Those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists*. This was exacerbated soon after the Restoration. In January 1661 Venner's insurrection posed a new threat to the sectaries. Inevitably, the concern about names was again voiced, both by Baptists and their enemies. (Greaves, *Deliver Us* 49-65; Greaves 'Seditious Sectaries' 33) On the title-page of *A Judgment and Condemnation of the Fifth-Monarchy Men, their late Insurrection* (1661), the subtitle is 'Also How far the Guilt of that fact may justly be imputed to Those that are commonly distinguished by the Names of Independents, Presbyterians, Anabaptists and Quakers'. In their following 'Apology', dated 28 January, the Baptists thirty signatories, including William Kiffin, Henry Denne, Thomas Lamb and Francis Smith, complained that their long-standing association with the Anabaptists was an irrational 'misrepresentation' that caused them endless trouble:

And we pray that it may be seriously considered, whether it be rational, just or Christian, to impute all the errors and wickedness of any Sect of Christians in one age or Country, to the persons of another age and Country, called by the name of the former? especially when these errors or impieties gave not the name to the Sect, (as in our case) nor can be reasonably supposed to be the consequences of that opinion from whence the Sect had its denomination. (Apology 11)

This is a fine example of the co-operation of Particular and General Baptists in time of trouble. Both were equally branded 'Anabaptists' and both suffered immensely from the fanaticism of the Vennerites: 'We most sadly see and feel that among many it is to become enough to render a man criminal to be called *Anabaptist*'. (Apology 5) These men felt, at this point, that they needed to re-assert even the most basic facts: there was absolutely no connection between the rejection of paedobaptism and political rebellion. They were certainly motivated in doing so by the publication of the Congregationalists' own 'Apology', printed a few days earlier, that directly linked Venner's rising and the Münster events, and that must have contributed a little more to the scapegoating of Baptists. (*Renunciation* 2)

This recurrent anxiety about names illuminates Bunyan's suggestion that unity should begin with the relinquishing of confessional titles. In a famous passage, Bunyan expressed a wish that the name

‘Christian’ be preferred over any other (Bunyan, *MW* 4:270). A few years after this plea, in 1677, the Baptists put forward a new Confession of Faith. Interestingly enough, for the first time, the name ‘Anabaptists’ was dropped from the title-page and replaced by ‘Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith)’, not an indication that anxiety about the nickname had subsided, but on the contrary, that the Baptists were starting to assert their identity without resorting to degrading terms. Although the term ‘Christian’ is qualified with the subsequent mention of adult baptism in the parentheses, this is the term Bunyan suggested all the Baptists should adopt. This 1677 Confession was modelled on the Westminster one. It was far more substantial than any of its predecessors and aimed to establish a *rapprochement* between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians: ‘We did in like manner conclude it best to follow their example in making use of the very same words with them both, in these articles (which are very many) wherein our faith and doctrine is the same with theirs’ (1677 Confession A3r; Lumpkin 235-40; Dowley 234) The Lord’s supper was not restricted to those re-baptised, as it was in 1644, and an article (modelled on a standard paragraph of Congregationalist declarations) was added on ‘the Communion of saints’, perhaps a gesture towards the ‘mixed communionists’.

Doubts persist as to the principal author of this text, but some historians of the Baptist movement have suggested that it might be William Collins. (Lumpkin 236; Dowley 234) This is, of course, of special interest to Bunyan scholars because William Collins was, at the time, the co-pastor of the Petty France Congregation with Nehemiah Cox.⁷ I have suggested that Bunyan’s open-communion principles might well have been discussed at Petty France by members such as Tull and Gammon, who shared Bunyan’s convictions. In 1676, at a time when the government renewed its attacks on dissenters, Bunyan disappeared for a few months from Bedford. Richard Greaves has suggested that he accepted the hospitality of prominent Congregationalists. (Greaves, *Glimpses* 315, 338-39) But it is equally plausible that we should look for him in the house of one of the Londoners he knew best, his old friend Nehemiah Cox, in a Congregation that had gained a reputation for welcoming provincial Baptists in the capital. If William Collins is indeed to be credited with the redrafting of the Westminster Confession that appeared in 1677, I suggest he cannot have failed to be influenced in his choice of words and names by the arguments of the open-communionists who gravitated around Petty France: John Gammon, ‘the ingenious Mr Tull’, and the refugee Bunyan.

⁷ According to Richard Greaves, Cox ‘had become a co-pastor with the Congregationalist John Collins in London’ (Greaves, *Glimpses* 528). It was in fact the Baptist William Collins, and not the Congregationalist John Collins, who shared the pastoral duties in Petty France with Cox from 1676.

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