

CHAPTER III.

The definition of the terms “Scriptural,” “Evangelical,” “Gospel,” “Christian,” “Orthodox,” etc. The admission of Baptist authors that the leading denominations are Evangelical, Christian, Gospel, etc.—Drs. Howell, Arnold, Samson, etc.

It is urged, in defense, by those who apply the terms “Evangelical,” “Christian,” “Orthodox,” to opposing sects, that they are not synonymous with **scriptural**, and they do not mean that they are conformed to the scriptural pattern of a scriptural church. If they do not mean this, the world and those sects understand them to mean it. “Liberalists” have no right to use words with opposite or different significations from their definitions in our standard Lexicons. Let us refer the question to Webster’s Unabridged:

“**Scriptural**.—1. Contained in the Scriptures; 2. According to the Scriptures or sacred oracles.

“**Orthodox**.—1. Sound in the Christian faith; 2. According with the doctrines of Scripture—as an orthodox creed, or faith, or church.

“**Christian**.—1. Pertaining to Christ, taught by him, or received from him, as the Christian religion, or Christian doctrines.

“**Gospel**.—1. Accordant with the Gospel.

“**Evangelical**.—1. According to the Gospel; consonant to the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel published by Christ and his apostles.”

With these definitions before the reader’s eyes, he needs no word of ours to see clearly that they are as nearly synonymous as words can be. They mean substantially the same thing, and “Evangelical” is the strongest of them all, if, indeed, one implies a greater degree of accordance with the teachings of Christ and his apostles. No church can truthfully be called “Evangelical,” unless, in all the essential elements of a church, it conforms to the teachings of Christ and his apostles. This covers all the ground. Friends of Christ and his truth should persistently refuse to allow liberalists to use this term to mean any thing more or less than Webster’s definition, which they seem determined to do.

I will now call the reader’s attention to a few noted examples of the real use of these terms.

Dr. Howell asserts and implies it throughout his elaborate work on Communion, though admitting it **once** would accomplish all the harm to our cause that a thousand repetitions of it could do:

“Between Baptists and the members of **all the surrounding evangelical denominations**, we cherish for them, as the people of God [?], the sincerest affection.”

If it be true that all the surrounding denominations are evangelical, or the various Protestant bodies—for I will grant the author means no other—then his work on Communion,

and all he ever wrote in a long life against Pedobaptists, was but a ruthless assault upon the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, as will be shown in a subsequent chapter:

“And it is evident that all the respectable writers we have quoted, and others of all the **evangelical churches**, concur with them.”—p. 117, Lon. Ed.

He refers to all Protestant Pedobaptist societies, at least, here, as in the former quotation, and the reader will mark that he in the one sentence pronounces them “**evangelical denominations**,” and, in the latter, “**evangelical churches**.”

“They [the views alluded to] originated with the churches in Switzerland [Pedobaptists], but, with some modification, are now the prevailing sentiments of evangelical Pedobaptists.”—p. 195. Lon. Ed.

Whether we understand the term “evangelical,” as applied to **Pedobaptists** personally, or to their **societies**, he admits that they are “evangelical.”

“The evangelical portion of them [Pedobaptists] will, I doubt not,” etc.

It can not be denied that this author admits that the **members** of Pedobaptist denominations are “**evangelical Christians**,” and their societies “**evangelical churches**.”

Prof. Curtis, in his very able work on Communion, as frankly admits, throughout his book, that Pedobaptist societies are “**Christian**” and “**evangelical churches**.”

It must be supposed that **he** used the term “church” according to his own definition, given on pp. 36 and 37:

“Whoever carefully studies the New Testament, will find the word Church, when applied to a Christian assembly, is used in two distinct sense: (1) For a particular congregation of **professed** believers [mark him, not a mixed body of professed believers and unconscious infants]; (2) For the Universal Church—the general assembly and Church of the first born.”—p. 36.

“Each separate Church, then, is recognized in Scripture as a **divinely** organized society, having its own special prerogatives and relations independently of all other bodies, and for the employment of which it is answerable to the Head of the Church alone.”—p. 37.

This being his own definition, he can not be justified in calling any organization a Church that is not a “divinely organized society of **professed believers existing independently of all other bodies**,” etc.; for to apply it to any **humanly** organized society, religious or otherwise, **not of professed believers**, would only serve to confuse rather than instruct his readers, and confirm members of such societies in their errors.

Prof. Curtis, through five entire chapters, 112 pages, seems studiously to avoid applying the terms “evangelical,” or “orthodox,” or “Christian Church,” to Pedobaptist societies; but occasionally applies the term **Church** to them, *e. g.*, “belonging to **churches** of other denominations.”—Page. 96.

“That we do not participate in the occasional celebration of the Lord’s Supper with **churches** of other denominations, whose members we do not consider baptized.”—p. 97.

He here, contrary to all standard writers, whether Baptist or Pedobaptist, concedes that there can be a Church, and a **Christian Church**, without baptism, where not a member of the body is baptized!

But when he comes to meet the objections of Pedobaptists, that we unchurch them by our terms of Communion, he seems to break down altogether, and disowns and throws overboard his own previous definitions, to make fair sailing under Pedobaptist skies. After admitting that almost all Pedobaptists—he could have said all, without an exception, known or heard by us—regard baptism as essential to a Christian church, he says, “We shall, however, express in all candor our own opinion,” just as though he had not done so in his first definition given above!

“The **original** word for church is used with different significations in the Scripture. [Not in its **primary** sense, which is the only one we have any thing to do with.] In one sense even the tumultuous assembly at Ephesus is so designated (**ecclesia**) Acts xix: 22.¹ Any Christian congregation, especially if assembled for worship, would have been thus called in the time of the Savior and his Apostles (Matt. xviii: 17).² All organized religious bodies acknowledging the Headship of Christ, and assembling for the worship of the Father through him, we [Professor Curtis] regard as Christian churches. We only do not consider them as **regular** churches, according to the new Testament pattern: ‘If a company of believers without any **baptism** at all—as, for instance a body of Quakers—claimed the title, we should have nothing to say against it.’”—Pages 117, 118.

In thus repudiating his first, and, so far as it goes, a correct definition of a Christian church, Professor Curtis concludes that any organization of professed believers, with or without any kind of baptism, claiming to be a church, is a church in his estimation! Is such a writer a safe instructor upon this subject? He furthermore states that a company of believers, **not organized according to the New Testament pattern** may be considered a Christian church! This means, in plain English, that a body organized in open manifest violation of the teachings of Christ, is a Christian church, which means, is **organized according to the teachings of Christ!** If this is not a palpable self-contradiction, we do not know what is one.

Dr. Arnold, professor in Madison University, in Hamilton, N. Y., in his work “Prerequisites to Communion,” yields the question he attempts to defined by the fatal admission—

“But, strictly, **evangelical** Pedobaptists, with whom we have chiefly to deal in the present controversy,” &c.—p. 16.

Dr. Hovey, the distinguished president of the Newton Theological Seminary, Massachusetts, in his little work on Communion, also admits it:

“From what has been said, it appears that the principles which require Baptist churches to limit their invitation to the Lord’s Supper to Christians of their own faith and order, are identical with those which determine the action of **other evangelical churches** in this matter. Hence we can not perceive the fitness of calling their practice ‘Close Communion.’ In principle it is as open as that of most orthodox churches; as open as the New Testament allows them to make it.”—p. 68.

¹ Not the multitude, (**demōs**), nor the disorderly crowd, (**ochlos**), was designated here (**ecclesia**), but a specific body of qualified citizens whose names were enrolled—a body corresponding to the House of Commons in England. This **ecclesia** convened at its accustomed place of meeting, the theater, and the disorderly multitude rushed in. It was not a tumultuous **ecclesia**, but **demōs**—populace. When the officers of the **ecclesia** could not learn from the multitude any definite charge for the **ecclesia** to consider, he dismissed that body and dispersed the crowd.

² Here Professor Curtis errs again, for the **ecclesia** referred to here by Christ was an organized body empowered to exclude, from its fellowship and membership, an offending member who would not be governed by its judicial decision—and, therefore, it was a judicial body—a Christian Church.

Here, in three sentences, in one paragraph, and on one page, Dr. Hovey admits that Pedobaptist societies are “evangelical churches,” and “orthodox churches.”

Dr. Samson, late president of Columbia College, D.C., in his little book, “The Christian Law of Union in Communion,” is in accord with the above, in admitting the **evangelical** character of the **members** of Pedobaptist societies as well as of the societies themselves—

“Discussion in all **evangelical** churches, since the alliance, have turned on the issue of union and Communion, this being the natural result of that conference.”—p. 6.

“Mission of Baptists among **evangelical** Christians.”—page 8.

“**All evangelical** Christians agree in the general statement,” etc.—p. 9.

“Believing with all other **Christian denominations**,” etc.—p. 20.

“Injustice to other **Christian denominations**,” etc.—page 31.

“The experience of **churches**, other than Baptists,” etc.—p. 36.

“The variety of views, arising in great degree from different constitution of human minds, has given origin to varied denominations of **evangelical Christians**, which are sometimes said to have different missions.”—p. 45.

And Dr. Samson nowhere offers the least protest to this view, only claiming that “the Baptists certainly have a very important mission.”

“By common consent, the assembled delegates of the evangelical alliance, representatives of evangelical churches of every name and nation.”—p. 50.

From a perusal of Dr. Samson’s book no one would receive the impression that he even imagined that Pedobaptist societies were a whit less **churches** of Christ than Baptist churches, but everywhere speaks of them as “evangelical churches,” and “evangelical denominations,” and of their members as “evangelical Christians.”

Rev. Henry Colby is another author who, through the American Baptist Publishing Society, essays a defense of restricted Communion of the Lord’s Supper in a twenty-one page Tract.

He contributes his influence to impress Pedobaptists and the world, as well as Baptists, that Pedobaptist societies constituted, as Dr. Osgood says, upon principles subversive of the whole scheme of Christianity, are indeed the true churches of Christ, only somewhat “irregularly constituted,” yet truly **evangelical**, and possessed of the ordinances—administering the Lord’s Supper, but only “**prematurely!**”

I quote a few statements:

“The **real question** we understand to be this:

“**Ought we to acknowledge that evangelical Pedobaptists are qualified to partake of the Lord’s Supper?** We say **evangelical** Pedobaptists, because those with whom we have to do chiefly in this discussion do not ask us to receive any others.”—pp. 3 and 4.

He must mean all the Protestant Pedobaptists as opposed to Catholics.

“We simply declare, concerning Pedobaptist **churches**, that, in our judgment, they are **irregularly constituted**; and, as for the table which is spread by them, the bread is there, the wine is there, the

prayers are offered, and the elements duly distributed to many devout persons, who partake of them in faith, and find the occasion a precious **means of grace**" [?]. "We have no disposition to deny that it is the Lord's Supper. But since baptism scripturally precedes the Super, our view is that they partake of it **prematurely**."—p. 14.

"The declaration that our practice casts **contempt** upon their churches or their table is a misrepresentation of our [Mr. Colby's] attitude."—p. 15.

This author allows no one to mistake his qualified endorsement of Pedobaptist societies as **scriptural churches**, and the rite professed to be observed by them for the Lord's Supper as really and truly the Supper. I can not resist the question here: If organizations irregularly constituted—which means in violation of the law of Christ—are, indeed, Christian churches; and if it is the Lord's Supper, though "**prematurely**" observed—which means in violation of the **order** in which it was commanded—then why not say their sprinklings of water are **evangelical baptisms**, though a different **act** than Christ commanded?

I could fill pages more with like admissions, but these must satisfy all that I have not misstated the fact when I say that all our leading writers, in defense of Close Communion, have admitted that Pedobaptist societies are evangelical churches and in substantial agreement with us on the fundamental doctrines of grace and teachings essential to salvation.

In addition to these frank admissions, all these authors, and the hosts who follow their leadership, seal their teachings with the highest possible **practical** endorsement of the evangelicalness and real scriptural character of "all the leading denominations around us." They, one and all, advocate the validity of the immersions of all these sects; and, as often as they have opportunity, receive them into Baptist churches, where they believe that no organization on earth is authorized to administer Christian immersion, except a true Church of Christ.

They, one and all, practice and defend the policy of pulpit exchange and pulpit affiliation with the ministers of all these sects, thus accrediting them, before all men, as truly **ordained ministers of Christian churches**—since no organization, save a true Church of Christ, can ordain and commission a man to preach the gospel.

It is useless to say that such ministerial affiliations and fellowships do not accredit and indorse them as scriptural ministers, for it does indorse them as such. These ministers so understand it, and have a right to so understand it. Their people so understand it, and have a right to do so; and the world so understands the act, and have no right to understand it otherwise (see App. A.).

These admissions are far from being only expressions of "courtesy"—mere "trifles light as air." These logically necessitate the following grace—

CONCLUSIONS:

I. That there can be an "evangelical" or "Christian" Church **without scriptural baptism**, and practicing infant baptism.

All of the above writers concede this cardinal principle with Baptists, by admitting that Pedobaptist societies are Christian churches; and Prof. Curtis makes the admission in so many words—"churches baptized or unbaptized."

II. That all EVANGELICAL churches are SISTER churches.

No one can, with reason, question this. No church can be more than evangelical any more than one circle can be rounder than round, or than one square can be more square than

another. Baptist churches are denominated “sister churches” because they are, one and all, evangelical.

The third irresistible conclusion is—

III. That “all the leading denominations around us,” and Baptist churches, are sister churches, and, consequently, of the same faith and order.

Then, what other conclusions invincibly follow?

If members of sister churches, of the same faith and order, can scripturally commune together, as all the above writers admit and advocate, then it follows—

IV. That Baptist churches may scripturally practice open communion with “all the leading denominations around us.”

This is a clear surrender of the **citadel**. But another conclusion—

V. Baptist churches can properly and consistently dismiss members by letters to, and receive members by letters from, “all the leading denominations around us.”

This certainly follows, for we say dismissed when joined to another church of the same faith and order; and if they are evangelical churches, they, most assuredly, are of “the same faith and order.”

But the crowning consequence of the admissions of our brethren is—

VI. Baptist churches are not evangelical churches, and, therefore, have no moral or scriptural right to continue their existence.

And thus, in attempting to defend an outwork, our defenders surrender the citadel and the garrison at discretion!

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