

CHAPTER VIII.

The author's positions sustained by the Editors of the "Christian Review," Dr. F. Wilson, Dr. G. B. Taylor, by the late Dr. A. M. Poindexter, of Va., and by Facts.

Wishing my readers to see that I am not captious, or altogether singular, when I say that most of the authors who have volunteered to defend our present practice of communion have unwittingly not only conceded that Protestant Pedobaptists and Campbellites are evangelical churches, and therefore scripturally baptized, and entitled to observe the Lord's Supper; but they have forced wide open the doors leading to our communion table, and, in fact, **surrendered our right to exist as a denomination**. I will quote here, at some length, from the *Christian Review*, when edited by those sterling Baptists, F. Wilson, D. D., of Md., and G. F. Taylor, of Va., 1858. The article is from the pen of Dr. Taylor himself:

"But may not Pedobaptists commune, and ought they not to do so? This is a question asked by the advocates of open Communion—asked with an air of triumph, as if the necessary affirmative answer must also involve free Communion; **and we admit that the answers given by most writers for close Communion seem to tend to this**. For instance, Prof. Curtis, in his work on Communion, admits that Pedobaptist societies are churches [and, we may add, nearly every Baptist writer on Communion—see Chapter III], and contends that the Supper belongs to churches. **If this is true, these churches have a legal right to commune; and it would therefore be no more illegal for a Baptists to commune with one of them than with a Baptist Church to which he did not belong**. This mode of argument ignores—not to say denies—the special connection between baptism and the Supper, which makes the former essential to the legality of the latter; it would, moreover, have no force, save with those who admit that a person may commune only with the particular (local) church to which he belongs. Even Prof. Curtis shrinks from this conclusion, to which, however, **all his argument tends, and makes the Supper a symbol, not only of church relations actually existing, but of such also as might exist**. Well, we think that, **if Pedobaptist societies are churches, and legally entitled to all the privileges and prerogatives of churches, there are circumstances in which, both legally and properly, a Baptist might unite with one of these churches, reserving those rights which would be cheerfully accorded to him, in many such churches, touching his peculiar views; and, if this is so, he may, while not actually a member, commune with such a church and symbolize his possible relation of membership to it**. Other writers for close Communion **leave open a yet wider door to the objector**. They admit both—that the Supper belongs to the churches, and that Pedobaptist societies are such; whence it follows that the observance of the Supper by these bodies is legal, while they do not contend for the peculiar restriction plead for by Prof. Curtis. If pressed, indeed, to tell why we may not commune with Pedobaptist churches, they say, 'Because that would sanction error.' **But how is their Communion an error, if they are churches, and if Communion belongs to churches?** The error must be in something else, and not in Communion. How is their error such that they may legally practice, and yet we may not sanction it? We deem the difficulty due to the admission that Pedobaptist societies are churches—**an admission, we believe, fatal to close Communion, and leading also to false conclusions in another direction**; since, if baptism admits to church membership, and Pedobaptists are already church members, Mr. Whitney's absurd conclusion, that Pedobaptists are not scriptural subjects for baptism, seems to follow.¹ But, as this reasoning is logical, and as the first premise is undoubted, we must deny the second premise, which admits Pedobaptist societies to be churches."

¹How can Mr. Whitney be far from the exact truth, when the overwhelming majority—nine-tenths or nine-teen-twentieths—of Pedobaptists **were** brought into their societies in unconscious infancy, and were professedly made the children of God by baptism; or, as adults, received baptism for the remission of sins and regeneration of heart; uniting with the Church in the belief that they were thereby united with Christ? It is confirming these already

Can any one resist reasoning so clear and conclusive? These editors are conservative men, and they are forced by logical exigencies to their conclusion. They could have stated the case more emphatically, viz.: If Pedobaptist societies are, indeed, evangelical churches, then Baptist churches can not be more so; then their ordinances, and sprinklings, and pourings, and communion, are as scriptural and valid as the immersions and Lord's Supper of Baptist churches, to all intents and purposes; then it is just as right, and just as much the duty of every Christian, under any and all circumstances to join **them**, as to join Baptist churches; and then Baptist churches could be, and should be dispensed with altogether. This is the end to which the **fatal** admissions, I have pointed out, with all the inexorable force of logic, drive every reasoning mind.

To the above I will add the testimony of a witness—than whom the South never produced a more intellectual, and, withal, a more logical mind—the late Dr. A. M. Poindexter, of Richmond, Va. When editor of the "*Commission*," he had occasion to review the work of Samuel Davidson (Baptist) on Baptism and Communion. He copies these two expressions of Dr. Davidson's:

"Although we are in debate with the congregational body represented by Mr. Wood, etc. There is much in that section of the Church that we admire and love,' and other language of similar import, by one who holds (p. 240, and elsewhere) 'baptism can be performed by immersion only, and was made by the inspired apostles a uniform and indissoluble prerequisite to church-fellowship; and hence to receive the unbaptized to communion would be an alteration of the basis upon which the Christian Church has been organized.'"

And says:

"We should like to be informed, without equivocation, how a body, composed of persons who have failed to comply with a uniform and indispensable prerequisite to church-fellowship, and which has altered in its very structure, 'the basis upon which the Christian church has been organized,' can be 'a section of the Church of Christ!' It is time to have done with such jargon. **If Pedobaptist societies are Christian churches, then Baptism is not a prerequisite to membership in a Church of Christ; and, if baptism is not a prerequisite to membership in a Church of Christ, then it can not be proved to be a prerequisite to Communion.** Why should we permit a **false** charity to cause us to obscure the truth on this subject? This is done whenever we use language so loosely—at one time calling any society of professedly converted persons a Christian church, and at another speaking of baptism as indispensable to membership in a Church of Christ."

The words of such a mind and such a man, should arrest the attention of the leaders of denominational opinion, and surely every friend of truth should do his utmost in placing these considerations before the people. The reader can see that Dr. Poindexter fully indorses my position; that by admitting, by **word** or **act**, Pedobaptist and Campbellite societies to be evangelical churches, is admitting that there can be Christian churches without scriptural baptism, which Pedobaptists agree with all Baptists in denying; and then open communion and mixed membership inevitably follow, as they have in England.

deceived millions to address them as Christians and brethren in Christ, simply because they are members of those human societies. It is a solemn and sad fact, that, as a general thing, the members of Pedobaptist societies are not scriptural subjects for Christian baptism, because they have not been "born from above"—have never been the subjects of the quickening and renewing influences of the Holy Spirit. Question them, as we have done, and the reader will soon be satisfied that they are strangers to regenerating grace.

We need no longer wonder at the increasing dissatisfaction among our own people—among our **ministers** as well as members—with the arguments adduced by those who have volunteered to defend this important ordinance of God's house. Can it be a matter of surprise that so many Baptists can see nothing improper or inconsistent in their going to the tables of Pedobaptists and Campbellites, when they are taught by such eminent teachers that the ordinance administered by them is indeed the Lord's Supper, and those bodies evangelical churches, and that the members of one sister or evangelical church can scripturally participate in the Supper with the members of any other sister church?

Does not this account for the rapidity with which books, tracts, and treatises on communion have been multiplied of late, they being efforts to satisfy the increasing inquiries of the people, but all in vain?

And does not this account for the thousands of Christians who join Pedobaptist and Campbellite societies yearly under the firm conviction received from their own writers and their preachers, that they are joining truly "evangelical" and "orthodox" churches? And for those other thousands of Baptists bearing letters of good-fellowship from Baptist churches, who, on removing "West," or into other neighborhoods where a Baptist church may not be altogether convenient, naturally "wanting to be in **some** church," untie with the nearest Pedobaptist or Campbellite society, and for the balance of life give their means and all their Christian influence to building them up; and dying, leave their children bound fast in the deception? These deluded Baptists have been taught that "**all** the leading denominations around them are evangelical churches," and that "in all the fundamental and essential doctrines of salvation they agree with Baptists," and they can see no impropriety in uniting with those bodies; and who that admits them to be evangelical can? And then they see and are made to **feel** that, by so doing the offense of the cross ceases, and they will thereby very materially enhance the social positions of their families in the community.

We learned when in California, in 1878, that there were multitudes of those who came to that State Baptists, who put their letters into Pedobaptist societies—Baptists being weak and poor as a general thing—and that in the one city of San Francisco there are lost Baptists enough to form a church financially stronger than any Baptist church in the city of States. We heard the name of an ex-Baptist deacon who is the largest paying member in a fashionable Pedobaptist society. He was spoken of as an exemplary Christian man. He today, conscientiously no doubt, believes what his Baptist instructors have taught him, that he is a member of an evangelical church of Christ, and that there is no **essential** difference between Baptists and Pedobaptists; but he enjoys a far higher social position than he could among Baptists.

While penning the above, my eye has fallen upon this statement from the New York *Observer*, a standard Presbyterian paper, that has observed with great satisfaction what is transpiring among us on this question. He says:

"We have recently heard the names of some of the most eminent Baptist clergymen and professors mentioned as persons holding views favorable to the abandonment of the restricted Communion practice. They are not anxious to promote agitation, not much less to disturb the peace of the church by the discussion of the subject unless it is necessary; but they are gradually disseminating those views and principles which will eventually work a change in the practice of the churches."

A full half score of these men, D. D.'s, have already left us for some other denominations, and we doubt not scores of others are ripening to take their places of open dissent and protest, and are even **now** doing it. Does it not become us diligently to inquire what these

“views and principles” are, that are so well calculated to betray the Baptists into the hands of Pedobaptists? If they **have been doing this**, or if they **are doing this** in their books or papers, we must have met with them, whether we have recognized their tendency or not. Now the following views do characterize nearly all the writings of Northern authors, editors and newspaper writers, and we confess it with shame, some of our Southern writers and popular preachers—

1. That Pedobaptist societies are evangelical or Christian churches.
2. That they have a right to observe—and do observe—the Lord’s Supper.
3. That their ministers are authorized to preach and to baptize.
4. That the immersions of such men are valid, and may properly be received by Baptist churches.
5. That it is right and expedient for the Baptist ministers to affiliate with Pedobaptist ministers, and exchange pulpits, thus showing to the world that they are equals, **officially** and **ecclesiastically**.
6. That it is right and expedient to hold union meetings with such denominations and even to invite their ministers to participate in the ordination of Baptist ministers.

In view of the considerations urged above, are we not justifiable in affirming that such views and principles do inevitably and more successfully than an out and out advocacy of the practice itself, lead our people into open Communion?

Subtle and far-seeing men have affirmed that a writer is far more likely to carry his point by laying down and establishing his **premises**, and leaving his intelligent reader to draw the **conclusion**, since, by announcing it himself, he might make an alarm and provoke opposition.

CONCLUSION OF PART I.

In closing this part of my book, I ask my brethren—ministers, editors, and authors especially—is it not high time to make a full end of all this “jargon,” as Brother Poindexter calls it—these concessions so unfounded in fact, so prejudicial to strict Communion in any sense, and so utterly destructive of our existence as a distinct people?

If they are continued to be made under Baptist colors, are we not justified in marking these, as the men among us who are insidiously working, “by complimentary words,” the subversion of Baptist doctrine and polity? It is evident that the professed Baptist, who conscientiously believes that Pedobaptist societies are evangelical churches, can both conscientiously **commune and unite with them**.

May I not ask you, brethren, in the coolness of sound reasoning, if we have failed to hold our own for the past fifty years, by occupying this old line, in defending our communion—which was originally selected for **defense** only? Can we hope to accomplish, by any means, as much in the fifty years to come, since this line has been successfully blown up, and irreparably breached in so many places that the confidence of its most valiant defenders has been materially impaired?

Are you not willing just to examine, without prejudice, the new line I propose, and which, in repeated charges, the enemy have found to be not only impregnable as a line of defense, but an incomparable position for offensive warfare? This is all I can ask of you; this I have a right to expect from you; *i.e.*, that you will prayerfully and honestly, as those who have to give an account unto God, examine my positions by the word of God.

In reaching scriptural convictions upon this subject, it will be necessary for us to get a clear conception of an evangelical church, and determine whether it is **one specific body**—organism—or many and diverse ones. This subject will be discussed in Part II.

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