

SCRIPTURAL COMMUNION.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following treatise on Scriptural Communion was written in numbers, and printed in the editorial columns of the *Religious Herald*, with a view to its ultimate publication in a more permanent form. The reader will naturally desire to know why it was written, and we will endeavor to gratify that reasonable curiosity.

The subject is of great intrinsic importance. The Lord's supper is of divine appointment, and is wisely and graciously adapted to promote the piety, happiness, and usefulness of his disciples. Its scriptural observance is closely and inseparably connected with wholesome church discipline. As churches become

unsound in doctrine, loose in morals, and negligent in government, they grow more "liberal" in their communion. The barriers to the Lord's table are gradually removed, until the world is turned into the church and the church is turned into the world. If churches would retain their purity and efficiency—not to say their vitality—they must carefully keep the Lord's supper as it was instituted by Christ and celebrated by the primitive saints.

The importance of the subject is augmented by the fact that our (Baptist) views of it are the point against which our opponents direct their heaviest batteries and their most impetuous assaults. This is not surprising. With close communion, as it is called, Baptist churches must eventually stand or fall. If we would perpetuate our denominational existence, we must contend firmly, earnestly, and vigorously for this article of the faith which we have received from the Lord.

The teaching of the Bible is so plain on the subject of baptism that young converts, almost universally, if left to the dictates of their own understandings, deem it their duty to be immersed. It is necessary, therefore, to resort to some means to prevent their defection from Pedobaptist ranks. A direct discussion of the subject of baptism is not deemed expedient. Pedobaptists of learning, piety, and reputation have made so many concessions in regard to both the subject and the act of baptism that they are greatly embarrassed in maintaining their cause. They adroitly aim to create a diversion by attacking close communion. As this practice has, to those who examine it superficially or with prejudice, the appearance of exclusiveness and bigotry, and as appeals in opposition to it may be addressed to the feelings rather than to the intellect, it is found to furnish a most convenient means of stifling convictions of duty in reference to baptism, and of turning

inquirers into Pedobaptist communions. It is of no consequence that they adopt the principles which logically lead to restricted communion. This fact is ignored in their appeals. They continually affirm that they admit the validity of our baptism, while we do not admit the validity of theirs; they invite us to their communion, but we repel them from ours. Their liberality is held up in contrast with our exclusiveness, and the young converts, whose warm hearts would lead them to commune with all mankind, are persuaded that it is most illiberal and unchristian that they should be debarred the privilege of communing with their pious unbaptized kindred and friends. These remarks are not, we are pleased to say, applicable to Pedobaptists indiscriminately. Some have the candor to admit that they hold, in common with us, that baptism is a pre-requisite to communion, and that if our views on the subject of baptism are scrip-

tural, our restricted communion is consistent, right, and commendable.

The agitation of the subject of restricted communion in this country is increased by the extensive circulation of the writings of Spurgeon, who, though a sound Baptist in other respects, is known to be an open communionist. A few—very few—Baptist ministers at the North and in the West have recently publicly avowed open communion sentiments. The subject must undergo fresh discussion. Some may be unsettled in their views on communion, others inquiring concerning it, and yet others need to have their faith more strongly fortified.

A plain, brief tract, for general circulation, setting forth the scriptural relation of baptism and church-membership to the Lord's supper, and the logical consequences of loose communion, seems to be needed at the present time. Against the many valuable treatises on the subject already in circulation we have

nothing to say. Let them be widely diffused and carefully studied. We wrote because the matter presented itself to our mind in a strong and convincing light, and we hoped that a brief statement of our views might contribute to impress on other minds the conviction that we felt ourself. We commend the work to the candid consideration of inquirers after truth and to the favor of God, whose cause we are desiring to promote.

J. B. JETER.

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SCRIPTURAL COMMUNION.

CHAPTER I.

SCRIPTURAL COMMUNION.

By the term *communion* we mean a joint participation of the Lord's supper. We shall limit our discussion to the scriptural qualifications of a communicant and the consequences which logically follow our premises. To these subjects we invite calm, careful, and candid attention.

It will be readily conceded by every person having any respect for the Lord's supper that all men are not qualified to partake of it. The question naturally arises, Who is to judge of their qualifications? To this inquiry two answers may be given:

1. Every communicant must be the supreme judge of his own fitness.

This plan, and only this, secures *free communion*. It imposes no restraint on any one whose judgment or inclination prompts him to partake of the Lord's supper. Greater *liberality* than this none can desire. Let us, however, consider the legitimate consequences of this scheme of communion. It nullifies church discipline, placing it beyond the power of a church to exclude from her communion any member, however corrupt his principles, flagrant his crimes, and odious his character. It places the Lord's table without the pale of the church and within the domain of the world, and must inevitably lead to its desecration. Whoever will—from motives of superstition, vanity, selfishness, or profanity, as well as from motives of piety—may approach it without hindrance from church or State. A table thus unguarded and prostituted is not the Lord's table. "Ye cannot," says Paul, "drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." 1 Cor. x. 21. It may be asked, Does not the apostle say: "Let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of that bread," etc.? Cer-

tainly; but this language was addressed, not to men of the world, but to "the church of God" which was at Corinth. 1 Cor. xi. 28. Church-members were exhorted to receive the communion with self-scrutiny, lest they should receive it to their own condemnation.

2. Every church is authorized to judge of the qualifications of her communicants.

The exercise of this ecclesiastical right constitutes what is called *close communion*. It may be more or less restricted, but every church in Christendom, Catholic or Protestant, orthodox or heterodox, imposes some terms of communion—places some restraints on access to it. The door may be opened wide, but the wall of separation between the church and the world is not entirely demolished. No church, however liberal, or rather loose, its views, will invite impenitent horse-thieves, gamblers, and prostitutes to its communion. All churches, then, to a greater or less extent, are *close communionists*.

Restricted communion is right. Christ has invested his churches with authority to exercise discipline over their members. An incorrigible church-member is to be treated as

“a heathen man and a publican.” Matt. xviii. 17. The church in Corinth was commended for debarring from her communion an incestuous member. 2 Cor. ii. 6. Paul lays down the law on this point clearly: “I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.” 1 Cor. v. 11. The preceding verse shows that the apostle had reference, not to social intercourse, but to church communion, in this prohibition; but if the language be understood of social eating, certainly it forbids promiscuous eating at the Lord’s table. It cannot be maintained that those who were forbidden to eat socially with the ungodly were at liberty to commune with them. We need not farther discuss this point. A church not authorized to protect its highest and most sacred intercourse from the intrusion of the profane and the licentious is in a pitiable condition of imbecility and exposure.

By what *standard* should churches judge of the qualifications of their communicants?

They should judge, not by their own tastes, feelings, or prejudices, but by the Scriptures. In settling this point, the question should be, not, What thinkest thou? or, How feelest thou? but, How readeest thou?

Repentance, faith, and a holy life are moral qualifications of communion, admitted, by most evangelical Christians, to be required in the New Testament. Baptism and the Lord’s supper are both positive institutions. They derive their authority, not from their perceived adaptation to promote men’s spiritual interests, but solely from the revealed will of the Lawgiver. Repentance is right, and commanded because it is right: baptism and the Lord’s supper are right only because they are commanded. Both these institutions are precisely what the will of Christ made them. Their connection with each other, if any exist, is an instituted connection. Whether, in their administration, baptism should precede the Lord’s supper or the Lord’s supper baptism, or whether one shall take precedence of the other, must depend entirely on the divine will; and what that will is, can be learned only from the Scriptures. In the settlement

of the question Reason has an important part to perform, but her office is, not to sit in judgment on the wisdom or value of these institutions, but simply to inquire and decide what Christ has revealed concerning them.

CHAPTER II.

BAPTISM PRECEDES COMMUNION.

WE are now to inquire whether Christ established any connection between baptism and the supper. We maintain that, in the order of their observance, he ordained that baptism should have priority, and that the apostles and their co-laborers invariably observed this arrangement.

INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER.

The supper was instituted on the night previous to the Lord's crucifixion. The institution of baptism was of prior date. John, the forerunner of Christ, received it from heaven (Luke xx. 4, 5), and Christ honored and confirmed it by his example. The differences between John's and the apostolic baptism were circumstantial and not essential. Only the apostles partook of the supper at its institution. Of their previous baptism, though we have no express information of it,

there can be no reasonable doubt. They would scarcely have failed to imitate the example of their Master, sanctioned, as it was, by a voice from heaven and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost. Those who were not baptized of John rejected "the counsel of God against themselves" (Luke vii. 30); and it can hardly be supposed that Christ selected his prime ministers from this disobedient class. Besides, the disciples of Christ continued the work of baptism after John's ministry began to decline in popularity, and they surely did not refuse to be baptized themselves. John iii. 30 and iv. 2. It is then as clear as any point in theology need to be that the first participants of the supper had previously been baptized. We do not lay any stress on this point, but present these remarks merely to obviate any objection that might arise against our main position on the ground that the first recipients of the supper had not been baptized.

THE COMMISSION.

The apostolic commission, as recorded by Matthew, is as follows: "All power is given

unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Chap. xxviii. 18-20. This great commission is substantially given by Mark xvi. 15, 16, and by Luke xxiv. 47, 48, but only by Matthew is it fully and formally recorded. Never was a more solemn, important, and responsible commission conferred on mortals. Christ had recently risen from the dead; had shown himself to the apostles by infallible signs; for forty days he had been speaking to them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;" and now, as he was about to ascend to heaven, he committed to them the weighty and glorious task of continuing and completing the work that he amid toil and sufferings had commenced. Every word of this document was selected and all its terms were arranged by infinite wisdom for the infallible guidance of the apostles in their arduous work.

Three things they were required to do: 1. To teach or make disciples of the nations; 2. to baptize the disciples; and, 3. to indoc-trinate the baptized. The order of these duties was as clearly prescribed as the duties themselves. To invert or neglect this order was to set at naught the authority of the Law-giver. The arrangement was perfectly simple. Converts were to be baptized, and baptized converts were to be instructed to observe all the commands of Christ. One of these commands was to partake of the supper. This arrangement not merely places baptism before the supper, but makes the observance of the latter dependent on the observance of the former. Baptism precedes the supper as evidently as teaching does baptism.

It may be objected that by this mode of reasoning it can be shown that prayer, giving alms, and other moral acts, are not obligatory previously to baptism. We reply: Before the institution of baptism and the Lord's supper moral duties were binding on men. They spring from the moral law, and are of force on all persons, everywhere and at all times. But baptism and the supper are in-

stitutions of the new dispensation, obligatory only on such persons and in such forms and order as the Lord, by express terms or by fair implication, has prescribed. No order of moral duties is appointed in the law or in the instructions of Jesus, but in positive duties depending on statutory laws the order of their observance is pointed out.

APOSTOLIC PRACTICE.

How did the apostles understand their commission? This we may best learn from their acts. We turn then to the Acts of the Apostles, or the inspired record of their deeds. Their first labors under the commission were at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Christ had commanded them to remain in that city until they should "be endued with power from on high." That "power" they received when, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they were guided into "all truth," and qualified to confirm their testimony by "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost." A multitude came together, attracted by "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty

wind" that accompanied the divine baptism. To this assembly Peter preached with such clearness and pungency as extorted from many the anxious inquiry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It was a momentous question, and it received an inspired answer. "Repent," said Peter, "and" do what? not join the Church, not partake of the Lord's supper, but "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine," or instruction, "and fellowship and in breaking of bread," or partaking of the supper, "and in prayers." Here it is evident that the apostles followed the order prescribed in the commission. They made disciples, baptized them, took them under their instruction, and received them to the Lord's supper, which is described as the "breaking of bread," that being a notable thing in the feast.

Having seen the interpretation that the apostles placed on the commission as indi-

cated by their practice under the most solemn circumstances, we shall find that all their subsequent acts were in harmony with it. When the evangelist Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to the people, those who believed or became proselytes were baptized, both men and women. Acts viii. 12. They were doubtless subsequently formed into a church, and then partook of the supper, but on these points we have no specific information.

The Ethiopian treasurer, a Jewish proselyte, having attended one of the national feasts in Jerusalem, was returning homeward with his caravan. He was met by Philip, who preached to him Jesus and instructed him in the gospel. The nobleman promptly requested to be permitted, not to partake of the Lord's supper, but to be baptized. Professing a hearty faith in Christ, the evangelist baptized him. When or under what circumstances he partook of the supper we are not informed. Acts viii. 26-40.

Saul of Tarsus, divinely arrested in his mad career of persecution, was taught by Ananias the way of salvation, became a dis-

ciple of Christ, was promptly baptized, and afterward received the communion. Acts ix. 10-18.

Cornelius and his friends were the first Gentiles admitted into the church. Peter, by divine direction, preached the gospel to them. "The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" in attestation of their believing it, and they were immediately, by the apostle's command, "baptized in the name of the Lord." Their partaking of the Lord's supper was a privilege concerning which they were no doubt properly instructed, and which in due time they were permitted to enjoy.

Paul, who received his commission not with the twelve apostles, but directly from heaven, understood it precisely as they did. In the city of Philippi he and his companions commenced their European labors. Here Lydia and her household were first proselyted, then baptized, and subsequently received to the Lord's table. The same order was observed in regard to the jailer and his family. Paul and Silas spake to them the word of the Lord, and when they believed they were baptized "straightway," and after-

ward, though we have no specific information on the subject, they were indoctrinated and permitted to approach the Lord's table. Acts xvi. 13-34. In Corinth the apostle followed the same divinely-established order. "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized;" and subsequently, as we learn from the epistle to the church at that place, they ate the Lord's supper.

We have now examined every passage in the Acts of the Apostles which has any material bearing on the point under discussion, and from the examination it is indisputably clear that the apostles and their co-laborers invariably baptized disciples, and then taught "them to observe all things whatsoever" Christ had "commanded" them, among which things the Lord's supper occupied a place, and this arrangement was followed so frequently as to preclude any reasonable supposition that it was accidental.

CHAPTER III.

APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTION.

WE are now to inquire what light the apostolic epistles shed on this subject. The First Epistle to the Corinthian church is the only one, so far as we have noticed, that contains any specific directions concerning the observance of the Lord's supper. This epistle was addressed, not to the people of Corinth, but to "the church of God" which was at Corinth, to them that were "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." We might reasonably infer from the uniform practice of the apostles that the members of the Corinthian church had all been baptized, but we are not left to any uncertain inference on this point. We are expressly informed, as has already been noted, that when Paul and his companions first preached the gospel in that city, "many of the Corinthians, hearing, be-

lieved, and were baptized." What was true of the first converts was true of all the subsequent accessions to the church. In his epistle to them the apostle takes their baptism for granted: "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." vi. 11. The washing of the members of the Corinthian church, distinguished alike from their sanctification and their justification, can mean, as it seems to us, nothing but their baptism. This is an outward, ritual washing, symbolic of a moral one, as said Ananias to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins.*" In this interpretation of the passage most commentators concur.

To the church, then, at Corinth, composed of baptized believers, Paul gave particular directions as to their communing at the Lord's table. These instructions are contained in the tenth and eleventh chapters. The supper was manifestly *a church feast*. "The cup of blessing which we bless," or for which we give thanks, "is it not the communion," or joint participation "of the blood of Christ?" that is, of the wine metaphorically called his

blood? "The bread which we break, is it not the communion," or joint participation, "of the body of Christ?" that is, of the loaf which symbolizes his body? "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are *all partakers of that one loaf*" broken in the feast. So important did the apostle deem this *joint participation* in the supper that he urged the brethren when they came together to "break bread," to defer the service until all the communicants could be present. "Wherefore, my brethren," said he, "when ye come together to eat"—the Lord's supper—"tarry one for another." The members of the church were solemnly guarded against a profanation of the supper, and exhorted to partake of it with self-examination. xi. 27, 28. Guided by the apostolic instruction in these chapters, we are forced to the conclusion that the Lord's supper was a feast spread, not for the world, or for mere inquirers after truth, but within the church and for her members; that the conditions of communion and of church-membership were precisely co-extensive; and that the Lord's table was fenced around by all the laws and all the dis-

cipline which had been ordained to secure the purity of the church.

The Scriptures teach as well by their silence as by their announcements. What is not revealed, is not an article of faith; what is not commanded, positively or by fair implication, is not a duty. The Scriptures are silent as to any administration of the Lord's supper, except to churches in their organized capacity. They furnish no intimation of private communion. They give no account of the communion of the unbaptized. No man, taking the Bible for his guidance, would ever suspect that the supper is any other than a church feast, or that any but church-members are entitled to partake of it.

WISDOM OF THE DIVINE ARRANGEMENT.

We see the divine wisdom in the order of baptism and the supper. They are both symbolic ordinances. Baptism is the initiatory rite of the Christian church. It denotes the beginning of a new, spiritual life (Rom. vi. 4), the profession of fealty to the Lord Jesus. Gal. iii. 27. The supper is symbolic of that spiritual food which Christ provides

for the nourishment of the new life. "As the living Father," he says, "hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Yet he tells the Jews: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John vi. 57, 63. How appropriate it is that the ordinance which symbolizes the beginning of spiritual life should precede that which is emblematic of the food by which this life is sustained and developed! It is not strange that God, who delights in order, should make his positive institutions harmonize with nature, and symbolize in their order the birth, nourishment, and growth of the new man.

THE ARRANGEMENT NOT NEW.

The making the observance of one rite depend on the previous observance of another was no new arrangement in the divine government. Circumcision and the passover occupied, under the Mosaic dispensation, places similar to those filled by baptism and the Lord's supper in the Christian economy. The latter rites are not strictly substitutes for

the former. These institutions belong to systems differing widely in genius, spirit, and design. Infant baptism can no more be inferred from infant circumcision than can infant communion be deduced from the fact that infants partook of the passover. Circumcision was the initiatory rite of the Mosaic dispensation. No Gentile could be admitted into the "commonwealth of Israel" without it, and no lineal descendant of Jacob could retain his place in it if he neglected the rite. No male was permitted to partake of the passover, one of the great national feasts, who had not been circumcised; "for no uncircumcised person," said the Lord to Moses, "shall eat thereof." Ex. xii. 48. It might have seemed hard and exclusive to the Israelites that their uncircumcised friends and children should be excluded from a national festival, that celebrated their deliverance from bondage; but so was the will of God, and it was wise and beneficent. In making baptism a pre-requisite for communion, Christ did but adopt a principle previously sanctioned by divine authority and familiar to the Jews, among whom he labored.

GENERAL AGREEMENT.

There is no question of practical theology concerning which professing Christians are so agreed as that baptism is a pre-requisite of church-membership and communion. Romanists and Protestants, Lutherans and Calvinists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Pedobaptists, however they may differ as to the subjects, mode, design, and efficacy of the ordinances, unite, with few exceptions, in maintaining that baptism is an indispensable qualification for receiving the communion. It would be easy to cite proofs on this point, but they may be found in abundance in almost all our works on this subject. The denial of the position has been almost entirely limited to modern open communionist Baptists, whose logical necessities have impelled them to dissent from the established faith of Christendom, and to some of the minor Christian sects, whose looseness of principle has led them to an almost entire abandonment of ecclesiastical discipline. Apart from the discussion of the question of restricted communion, no earnest Christian, it

appears to us, would ever doubt that by divine appointment baptism precedes communion. Did men seriously believe that their salvation is suspended on keeping the ordinances as they were delivered by the apostles to the primitive churches, not one in a million, perhaps not one on earth, would fail to observe baptism preparatory to communion.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHAT VIEW SHALL PEDOBAPTISTS BE
INVITED TO COMMUNE?

WE have endeavored, and we think successfully, to show that under our Lord's commission, and according to the instruction and example of the apostles, partaking of the Lord's supper was restricted to church-members; and church-membership, to baptized believers. We take it for granted in this discussion that Baptist churches are constituted on the scriptural plan. Let us now inquire whether churches organized after the inspired model can scripturally invite Pedobaptists to their communion.

If a Baptist church invite them to their communion table, it must be under the notion either that *they are baptized* or that *they are not baptized*.

1. Shall we invite them to the communion under the notion that *they are baptized*?

To admit the validity of their baptism would be to stultify ourselves—to subvert our distinctive denominational principles. If sprinkling, infant sprinkling, is valid Christian baptism, then there is no need and no authority for Baptist churches, and the sooner they are annihilated the better. But we cannot admit that sprinkling or pouring is baptism.

When we consider that all lexicographers of note define baptism primarily by immersion or some equivalent term; that the Scriptures allude to it as a burial; that immersion was, except in cases of sickness, the universal practice of the churches for thirteen centuries; and that the Greek church down to the present time practices only immersion,—we cannot for a moment doubt that the immersion of the body in water is the divinely-appointed baptism. Sprinkling and pouring have no claim on grounds philological, historical, or theological, literal or figurative, to represent baptism.

But suppose we could admit that sprinkling or pouring is baptism, what shall we say of infant baptism? Is that of divine au-

thority? Can that be accepted as Christian baptism? For this we find no sanction in all the oracles of God. Christ did not command it. There is no example of it and no allusion to it in the Scriptures. It cannot be logically inferred from anything recorded by the pen of inspiration.

We cannot, then, consistently with our well-considered and deeply-rooted opinions, invite Pedobaptists to the communion *as baptized persons*. To do so would be to disregard our most solemn convictions, to trifle with truth, and to mock the God of truth.

It may be said that Pedobaptists have been baptized according to their own views of the ordinance, and we should respect their conscientious convictions. We grant it. We do not question their piety or honesty, nor do we impugn their motives. To their own Master they stand or fall. Still, the question presents itself, Shall we, in admitting them to the Lord's supper, be governed by their views or our views of baptism? Shall we disregard the divine law in deference to their opinions and feelings? It might seem very courteous and liberal in us to do so, but would

such a course be pleasing to our Lord? He holds us to individual responsibility. "Every one of us must give account of himself to God." Churches as well as individuals are responsible to him for their practice. If, then, we follow our own settled convictions, as God requires us to do, we can never invite to the communion Pedobaptists under the notion that they are baptized. We have a deep, earnest, and ineradicable persuasion that, according to Christ's will and the apostolic example, they have not been baptized.

Besides, if we should, in deference to their convictions and feelings, invite Pedobaptists to the communion contrary to our views of Christ's law, would it not be equally reasonable that they should abandon the practice of infant sprinkling, which lies at the foundation of our discord, from respect to our cherished opinions? We do not demand this of them. It is better to be conscientiously wrong than hypocritically right. We neither demand of others nor sanction in ourselves a sacrifice of conscience. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

2. Shall we invite Pedobaptists to the com-

munion under the notion that *they are not baptized?*

The Roman Catholic hierarchy claims the right of changing the ordinances of Christ. In the exercise of this assumed power, it has changed immersion into sprinkling in the baptismal rite. Calvin claimed, on behalf of the Reformed churches, the authority to change in some degree the same ordinance.* Baptist churches claim no such right. They deem it their duty to receive implicitly, to interpret honestly, and to obey punctiliously the commands of Christ. He has delegated to his churches no power to dispense with his ordinances or in any way to abridge or modify them. If he then has made baptism a pre-requisite to church-membership and communion, no man, no set of men, and no church

* "Acts viii. 38: 'They went down into the water.' Here we see the rite used among the men of old time in baptism; for they put all the body into the water. Now the use is this, that the minister doth only sprinkle the body or the head. . . . It is certain that we want nothing which maketh to the substance of baptism. Wherefore the Church did grant liberty to herself, since the beginning, to change the rites somewhat, excepting this substance."—*Calvin's Com. on Acts*, published by the Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh.

can, without an assumption of authority in derogation of the honor of the Lawgiver, admit the unbaptized to the supper.

But suppose a church holding Baptist principles were so inconsistent as to invite Pedobaptists to her communion, the invitation, if intelligently and honestly made, would run thus: "Brethren, Pedobaptists, we are, as you yourselves are, firmly convinced that Christ has ordained baptism as a pre-requisite to a participation of the supper; we are equally convinced that you have not been baptized, and have no scriptural right to partake of it; but, respecting your views and feelings more than the authority of Christ, we invite you to the communion." It would be discourteous, perhaps offensive, to offer such an invitation, and certainly it would not, by persons of a keen sense of propriety, be accepted. Yet this is the kindest invitation to Pedobaptists that could be honestly given by a church consistently holding Baptist principles. Communion, following such an invitation, would be a sham, offensive both to God and to men.

With whatever views Pedobaptists may be invited by Baptists to the communion table,

the invitation will, by them and by the world, be held as an admission of the validity of their baptism, or, at least, that baptism is a thing of no importance. We should be promptly and very properly told that baptism precedes communion, and that in receiving them to it we endorse their baptism, or are guilty of a gross inconsistency. All the arguments for mixed communion offered by Pedobaptists pre-suppose the validity of their own baptism, and they neither ask nor desire to commune with us but on the condition that we also shall admit it. Let those who can, with a good conscience, make the admission: for our part, we cannot.

CHAPTER V.

OBJECTIONS TO SCRIPTURAL COMMUNION.

HAVING stated the grounds on which Baptist churches decline inviting Pedobaptists to the Lord's table, we shall now notice some popular objections to restricted communion.

Before, however, we proceed to consider these, we may mention that if our positions in the preceding chapters have been scriptural, no objections against such communion can be of any validity. If Christ, in the exercise of his regal authority, has made the supper a church feast and restricted church-membership to baptized believers, then all objections against limiting communion to church-members and church-membership to the baptized are directed, not so much against the churches that maintain this order, as against the wisdom, goodness, and authority of the Law-giver. To every objector to the arrangement

we might reply in the language of James: "If thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." With these preliminary remarks, we will give calm and candid attention to the objections.

1. It is said: "It is the Lord's, and no church can forbid any of his children to eat of it, without an assumption of power and an infringement on their rights."

If it were our table, we might properly consult our taste, interest, or sympathies in inviting others to partake of it, but it is, as the objection avers, "*the LORD'S table*." He instituted the feast, and has an indefeasible right to prescribe the terms of admission to it. He has either prescribed these terms or he has not. If he has not, then the table is open to the world; and Jews, Turks, and infidels, as well as Christians, may approach it, from any motive of love, secular advantage, or contempt. If he has prescribed them—and who will deny that he has?—then they are wise, and the interests of piety and the honor of the Lawgiver alike demand that they should be strictly observed. These terms we have endeavored, in the light of Scripture, to present.

These it is the duty of every church firmly to maintain. The Lord's table is spread in the Lord's house, not for all who may account themselves his children, nor for those who may choose, from any motive, to share with them in the feast, but only for his children, who in the divinely-appointed way have been recognized and received into his visible family.

2. It is said: "We hope to commune with Pedobaptists in heaven, and the terms of church communion should not be more rigid than those of admission into heaven."

This plausible appeal is addressed to the heart rather than to the head—to the sympathies rather than to conscience. Has Christ, to whose authority we should all bow, made it a rule that churches shall invite to their communion all persons whom they hope to meet in heaven? Where is it recorded? If such a law exists, it is certainly very comprehensive. We hope to commune in heaven, not only with many Pedobaptists, both Protestants and Catholics, but with many who were never baptized, either in fact or fancy, with a multitude of idiots and infants who will die in infancy, and with many now living

in sin who will hereafter be led to repentance. Shall we open the door of communion to all these? Or, if not, where shall we draw the line of discrimination? The truth is, God, in the exercise of his sovereignty, admits to heaven whom he chooses, and, in the exercise of the same sovereignty, has established a visible church on earth, and has prescribed the conditions on which persons are to be admitted to membership in it and to a participation of its privileges. The most liberal construction of these conditions must exclude many from the church and its communion whom we fondly and confidently hope to meet in heaven; and the sweet anticipation of communing with them there may well reconcile us to the want of any ecclesiastical communion with them that must be secured by violating the law of Christ.

3. It is said, "We admit the existence of Pedobaptist churches and are inconsistent in declining to commune with their members."

Few words are more equivocal than the word *church*. It is thoroughly established in English literature in various senses. We read of the "invisible church," the "Catholic

Church," the "Episcopal Church," the "Lutheran Church," the "Presbyterian Church," the "Unitarian Church," the "Mormon Church," etc., etc., as well as the Baptist Church. We cannot change the meaning of the word, and it would be mere affectation to employ it in a sense not authorized by general usage. The term *ecclesia*, commonly rendered *church* in the New Testament, is also of equivocal import. It sometimes means the whole body of believers, sometimes a worshiping congregation, and sometimes a secular assembly. Acts. xix. 39, 41. Now, it surely implies no inconsistency to call an assembly or an organization a church, either in the popular sense of the English term or in the sense of the Greek word *ecclesia*, and to decline communing with it. It will hardly be maintained that Paul would have broken bread with the mob at Ephesus which cried out vociferously, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" and Luke styles it an *ecclesia*—a church—an assembly.

We speak of Pedobaptist churches, and the language is understood by all persons who do not choose to pervert it. We do not

mean that they are identical with the idolatrous mob at Ephesus or the primitive church at Jerusalem, but they are still churches, assemblies, or organizations separated from the rest of mankind. So far as we conscientiously can, we should sanction their principles and commend their piety and good works, while we faithfully condemn and vigorously oppose their errors. Sound policy, as well as due regard to truth and fairness, demands that we shall pursue this course. Pedobaptist societies are churches; but, in our judgment, they are not formed according to the apostolic model. We give them due credit for their intelligence, piety, and good works; but we have somewhat against them. They have corrupted the ordinance of baptism and subverted the order of church building; and we must neither say nor do anything that implies our sanction of these errors, nor place ourselves in a position in which we cannot bear consistent testimony against them; and in precisely this condition we should put ourselves by the practice of open communion.

4. Again, some say that our obligation to receive all sincere Christians is implied in the

words of Paul: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Rom. xiv. 1.

This passage, it seems to us, can have no material bearing on the question under discussion. The epistle containing it was addressed to the "saints" in Rome. The apostle took their baptism for granted. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore *we*"—that is, I, Paul, and you, saints of Rome—"are buried with *him by baptism* into death." Rom. vi. 3, 4. These baptized believers had disputes among themselves concerning the eating of meats and the observance of holy days. These, the apostle decided, were indifferent matters, concerning which freedom of opinion should be tolerated. These differences of views did not affect the piety or usefulness of the saints, or the authority and honor of Christ. The apostle urged them, therefore, to receive those who were weak in faith and not capable of discerning the insignificance of these matters. But baptism and the Lord's supper do not belong to this category. They originated in

the wisdom and goodness of Christ, and are enforced by his authority. To class them with things indifferent is to pour contempt on the divine government. If one command of Christ may be set aside, another may; if a positive precept may be annulled, so may a moral one; and thus his authority may be wholly subverted. His law is not mere advice to be received or modified or rejected at the pleasure of his subjects. "Ye are my friends," he says, "if ye do *whatsoever* I command you."

The text under examination has no reference to communion at the Lord's table. It involves no principle which can fairly be brought to bear on the question of restricted communion. Some weak Christians in Rome were conscientiously opposed to eating flesh, and the apostle urged the brethren to bear with their infirmity concerning this indifferent matter; but it is a grievous perversion of logic to infer from this advice that persons are to be received to church-membership and to the Lord's table who have neglected or perverted the ordinance of baptism.

5. Once more: "Close communion," it is

maintained, "indicates a *bigotry* incompatible with the spirit of the age."

Bigotry is a blind, proud, intolerant adherence to one's religious views. It is an evil confined to no sect, party, or age. It caused the death of the Son of God. It has filled the world with strife, persecution, and blood. We dare not deny its existence among Baptists, and could wish right heartily that its malign influence were limited to them. It is fair, however, to admit that their principles are peculiarly adverse to the spirit of bigotry.

No people more earnestly insist on soul liberty and personal responsibility than they do. They have no fellowship with sponsorial piety. Religious coercion is subversive of their fundamental principles. We feel the importance of guarding most earnestly against this pernicious spirit. We deny emphatically that keeping the ordinances as, according to our view, they were delivered to the primitive churches, in substance and order, without intolerance toward others or superciliousness in ourselves, is bigotry; but if this be bigotry, then we are bigots, and glory in our bigotry. We trust we shall never be moved

from our convictions, our duty, and our consistency by the vague charge of bigotry—a charge that is never preferred with greater zeal than by bigots, and is never more harmless than when it is directed against the advocates of truth.

That restricted communion is incompatible with the spirit of the age, we are not careful to deny. This spirit tends to liberalism, rationalism, and skepticism. It imposes upon us, as Baptists, the duty of guarding with sleepless vigilance those cherished principles which the Lord has entrusted to us, lest, borne away by the strong current of the times, we should prove recreant to our Master.

CHAPTER VI.

INCONSISTENCIES OF LOOSE COMMUNION.

HAVING disposed of some of the most plausible and popular objections against restricted communion, we now purpose to indict, under several specifications, the opposite practice—that is, *loose communion*.

Supposing this practice to be allowable (which we cannot do), we maintain that it is of *little practical value*. We are far from deeming communion at the Lord's table valueless. It is a divinely ordained means of Christian edification, wisely suited to nourish, in pious minds, gratitude and love to the Redeemer, and to strengthen holy resolutions; but all these ends are secured to them by communing in their own churches, or in churches maintaining a common faith and discipline. There is very little intercommunion between the members of churches

approving the practice. It furnishes a fine theme for declamation, when one would extol his own liberality or that of his denomination, but as a matter of fact it is a privilege—if privilege it be—which is not held in high estimation, even by its advocates. In the cities there is scarcely any intercommunion among the Christian sects that plead for it. In country churches the practice is less infrequent than in the cities, but still it is not common, is slightly valued, and sometimes leads to discord and bickerings. It will be conceded, we presume, by candid Christians, that they are very little indebted, if indebted at all, to the practice for their edification, comfort, or usefulness. If it were not a popular theme, having a show of candor and liberality, we should probably hear nothing of it. Actions are louder than words. Those church-members who press to the communion tables of other denominations than their own, as a means of spiritual improvement, are consistent open communionists; all other advocates of the practice simply employ it as a topic on which to display their assumed liberality, in favorable contrast with the im-

plied bigotry of those who oppose it. We have still more serious objections to it.

Open communion *subverts ecclesiastical discipline*. This practice must proceed on one of two theories—either that every person is the sole judge of his qualifications for communion, or that all the members of the intercommuning churches are entitled to come to the Lord's table. The first of these theories entirely abrogates church authority and discipline. Suppose a church adopting it should be so inconsistent as to *excommunicate* a refractory member, of what avail would be its action? The excluded member, differing from the church in judgment and having the sole right to decide on his own qualifications for communing, would come to the Lord's table, and have the perfect right to come, in defiance of the act of excommunication. We knew a case of precisely this kind. A member was expelled, formally and solemnly, from an evangelical church, on account of his undoubted ungodliness. At the communion which followed, the pastor, assuming that every one must decide on his own qualifications for partaking of the supper, gave the

general invitation for all to receive it on their self-examination, and the excluded member, without confession and without evidence of repentance, and in the exercise of his conceded right, annulled the judgment of the church and received the communion. If this theory is correct, church government is a farce and a folly. The line of demarkation between the church and the world is for ever obliterated.

Suppose the other theory be adopted, and none but the members of evangelical denominations be invited to the Lord's supper, then what follows? If different denominations have the same terms of communion, they are essentially one; if they have different terms of communion, they cannot come to a common communion without weakening or destroying the bands of discipline. Take this illustration: One church tolerates dancing among its members, another does not. A member excluded from a given church for dancing may be consistently received into fellowship by a church tolerating the amusement. Now could this member of a more lax church be received to communion in the church from which he

had been expelled without enfeebling its authority and discipline? It would be placed in the attitude of admitting to its communion table members of other churches guilty of offences for which it would excommunicate its own members. So long as churches insist on different conditions of membership they cannot practice open communion without inconsistency and the partial or entire abandonment of discipline.

Should it be said that the discipline maintained in open communion churches refutes our position, we have two remarks to make. *First*: Open communion is a theory but little carried into practice. It does not bear much fruit, because it is not heartily adopted. *Secondly*: churches, as well as individuals, frequently act inconsistently with their principles, but these principles steadily and surely lead to their results. Open communion, by a law that cannot be revoked, is tending to laxity of discipline, liberalism in sentiment, and we will not say what else.

Again, open communion betrays a *strong sectarian spirit in those who practice it*. The very reverse of this position has generally

been assumed to be true. Let us examine the matter. Sectarianism lies in causing schism in the church of Christ. Its unity, not only in faith and spirit, but in government and discipline, is devoutly to be desired. Those who needlessly divide it, or keep it divided, are censurably sectarian. Nothing can justify schism that does not demand a breach of communion. To separate from a church with which we are in fellowship and in which we can conscientiously commune is certainly wrong. Now, the intercommuning churches, by their own admission, have no just cause for a breach of their fellowship and communion. They can come to a common communion table. Whatever their differences in doctrine, rites, government, or discipline, they are not such as to interfere with their joint participation of the supper. Why, then, we inquire, in the name of charity and candor, should they have different tables? Their peculiarities in faith and forms are all such as they can mutually tolerate. Neither the dictates of conscience, nor zeal for truth, nor loyalty to Christ, demand that they should open different and opposing communions.

Their discordant views, as they do not affect the question of communion, are matters for forbearance, conciliation, compromise, and adjustment. It would be a beautiful evidence of a catholic spirit, of a *genuine* liberality, if these discordant sects should, as they might without any violation of conscience, abandon their rival communions and blend in a common one. But how stands the case? These sects maintain their independent and in some respects antagonistic communions with as much pertinacity and zeal as if they deemed their respective *shibboleths* essential to the vitality of the church. In every little village may be found a half dozen intercommuning churches, small, unable to support their pastors, with all the unholy emulation and strife incident to the struggle for pre-eminence. As all can commune in one church, why not have one, by whatever name it might be called, and thus save great expense, promote brotherly love, secure increased efficiency, and set an example of genuine catholicity? To this union there is, so far as we can discern, but one obstacle, and that is *sectarianism*.

From this sectarianism Baptists are free.

They do not cause a schism in the church for reasons which, in their own view at least, do not require a breach in communion. With us the conditions of church-membership and of communion are identical. We bar from membership and the communion the unbaptized, whether they are members of other denominations or candidates for admission into ours. Should we become convinced of the lawfulness of mixed communion, we shall not stop at that point, but consistently advocate the merging of all the intercommuning sects into a common body, with a common creed, common rites, a common government, and a common name; nor shall we be tenacious on points that do not affect the questions of fellowship and communion.

We will mention one more objection to open communion. It tends to the *destruction of Baptist churches*. Mixed communion leads logically and practically to mixed membership, and mixed membership to the gradual abandonment of Baptist principles. The causes of this result may be easily shown. These principles are not congenial with the spirit of the world. In all time, its taste,

fashions, wealth, power, and to a great extent its learning, have been fiercely arrayed against them. They can be maintained and propagated only by earnest and constant appeals to the oracles of God. The moment a Baptist church accepts mixed communion it strikes its colors. It proclaims that immersion and the restriction of baptism to believers are matters of indifference; that on these points it has no creed; and that all may decide them according to their taste, inclination, or convenience. The pastor does not feel at liberty to press on the consciences of his hearers an ordinance of Christ practically ignored by his church. The result of such a course can be easily foreseen. As neither faith nor immersion is essential to baptism; as immersion is inconvenient, unpopular, and non-essential; as infant sprinkling is a graceful, pleasing, and prevalent ceremony and secures the ends of Christian baptism,—is it any cause of wonder that Baptist views and practices should rapidly fall into desuetude? Under the demoralizing influence of open communion the progress of Baptist principles has been greatly retarded in England.

Many Baptist churches, so-called, in that country, have a mixed membership, and some—we know not how many—have, by the operation of the system, become Pedobaptist churches. The church to which Bunyan preached has undergone this change. It is questionable whether the Baptist churches would not have made greater advancement if he, good and able man though he was, instead of being numbered with them, had been their earnest opposer. All who desire the extinction of Baptist principles act consistently in supporting mixed communion; but as we believe them to be true and of great importance, and that it is our duty to contend earnestly for them and to avoid everything by which their progress might be hindered, we enter our solemn protest against open communion.

CHAPTER VII.

INCIDENTAL QUESTIONS.

WE close our discussion of scriptural communion with the consideration of a few questions which incidentally flow from it.

1. *Shall we admit to the Lord's supper persons who, having been properly baptized, are connected with Pedobaptist churches, or are unconnected with any church?*

The Lord's supper is a church feast. Only church-members are entitled to receive it. Church communion and church discipline are co-extensive. All the members of a church have a claim to approach its communion table, and the members of other churches of the same faith and discipline may partake of it by courtesy. Baptized persons holding themselves aloof from any church or in connection with Pedobaptist churches are in disorder. Those who voluntarily and persist-

ently refuse to connect themselves with a church are manifestly disobedient. The church is, by God's appointment, the home in which his children are nurtured, the school in which they are trained for heaven. To refuse to participate in its privileges is to dishonor the wisdom, goodness, and authority of its Founder. Those who do so proclaim, as clearly as their conduct can speak, that, however others may need these aids to piety, they are resolved to force their passage to heaven without them. We will not affirm that they cannot be saved—God is merciful—but, refusing to come under the discipline, they have no just cause of complaint if they are excluded from the communion of the church. Thousands treat it as a mere human institution, which they may honor or neglect at their own pleasure; and those who pursue this lax and wayward course can have no just claim to be placed among her children.

Those Baptists who join Pedobaptist churches are not only in disorder, but grossly inconsistent. They say: "We believe that only immersion is baptism, that only believers are proper subjects of the ordinance, that only

baptized believers are qualified church-members, and that Pedobaptist churches are organized on principles essentially wrong;" yet, in the face of these avowals, they abandon a church constituted upon these principles and throw the whole weight of their influence and employ all their energies in support of one based on opposite principles. They are Baptists in sentiment, Pedobaptists in influence. They know the right and pursue the wrong. They make themselves transgressors by building again the things which once they destroyed. In their baptism they bore testimony against infant sprinkling and infant church-membership; yet, in connecting themselves with a Pedobaptist church, they bear testimony in favor of these errors. A Pedobaptist church is not a suitable home for a Baptist; and if he, inconsiderately and inconsistently, make it his abode, he cannot reasonably hope to be recognized as a Baptist and to share in the privileges of the Baptist church.

2. *What shall be done with members of Baptist churches who persistently commune in Pedobaptist churches?*

They should not be treated as if they were vicious or ungodly. They are brethren erring from want of instruction, consideration, or firmness of principle. Having been overtaken in a fault, they should be restored in the spirit of meekness. In dealing with them many motives may be presented to induce them to change their course. To say nothing of the divine authority in the case, while they may deem it their right, they can hardly account it their *duty*, to commune in Pedobaptist churches. There certainly is no law of Christ and no principle of revelation which requires them to do it. The exercise of the privilege—if privilege it be—is not demanded for their comfort, growth in grace, or usefulness. In their own churches, or churches of their own order, they may commune as frequently as their spiritual interests require. They will lose nothing in respectability by a firm and consistent adherence to the faith and practice of their denomination. They should seriously consider whether it is proper for them to persist in a course which grieves their brethren, produces discord in the churches, and hinders the progress and triumph of principles ad-

mitted to be true and important. Usually, faithful instruction or kind remonstrance will induce those who have practiced mixed communion to abandon the practice, and this change should, in general, be satisfactory to their brethren. If, however, these means prove unavailing, it will be almost invariably found that the recusant members are influenced, not by conviction, but inclination, not by conscience, but feeling. In all religious communions, thousands are governed by fashion rather than principle, by interest rather than duty, by feeling rather than truth. Baptists have their share of these time-serving communicants. They are brave Baptists where Baptists are in the ascendant, but they shrink from the avowal of their principles where these are despised or unpopular. If they can elevate their social position, increase their patronage, or improve their prospect for success in life, by concealing or abandoning their principles, the temptation is too strong to be resisted.

In all such cases, arguments, appeals, and discipline are vain. The candidates for popular favor begin by decrying close communion,

as that is an unpopular practice, and end by a cordial affiliation with those whose principles they have professed to condemn. All, however, who, inconsistently with their principles, practice loose communion, do not belong to this class. Some are swayed by their feelings—a desire to commune with their kindred or friends—and a few are tangled in the meshes of sophistry, and conclude that the supper is a means of grace of which the baptized and the unbaptized, the church and the world, may alike partake.

After due forbearance, proper instruction, and affectionate exhortation on the part of the church toward a member who practices open communion, he must be required to choose between communing with those whose principles he accepts or those whose principle he rejects, with Baptists or Pedobaptists. With both he cannot persistently commune, unless Baptists are prepared to yield the principle of strict communion, or, at least, to connive at its violation. If one is permitted to commune with the unbaptized, all must be. If a church allows her members to commune with the unbaptized, for the same reason she

must permit the unbaptized to commune with her members. She is under the necessity, then, of expelling from her communion a member who persists in the practice of open communion, or of abandoning the New Testament rule of communion. It may be painful to exclude a member from a church for what seems to be an act of piety, but it will almost invariably be found that such a member holds Baptist principles loosely and feels but little interest in their diffusion—in truth, is only a Baptist in name, and will find a more congenial home among those who oppose these principles.

3. *What is the duty of a Baptist who, living beyond the reach of any Baptist church, has no opportunity of communing except with Pedobaptists?*

If the principles which Baptists hold are true, he should firmly maintain them. If communion with the unbaptized is wrong, it cannot be made right by circumstances. If it is improper to commune with an unbaptized society in the vicinity of a baptized one, it is wrong to do it anywhere. An isolated Baptist, then, should lift up his standard.

He may be poor, illiterate, feeble, and obscure, but his principles are divine and invincible. He is not alone, though he may seem to be, in their maintenance. On the pages of inspiration they are inscribed as with a pen of light, and many, in spite of all the prejudices of education, have a strong conviction of their truth. Let this solitary Baptist, instead of lending his influence to the support of what he does not believe, become a nucleus around which those may gather who adopt his views. Truth is mighty, and will prevail. He may live to see a church organized and the cause which he loves flourishing through his fidelity. In any event, Christ is with him, and will sustain and richly reward him in his efforts to maintain his ordinances inviolate.

4. *Should Baptists commune with all the sects that reject infant baptism and practice the immersion of believers?*

In this country several denominations of Christians belong to this category. Some of these sects decline, on conscientious grounds, to commune with Baptists or to permit Baptists to commune with them. Of course we

should not persecute them for their restricted communion. We may live, grow in grace, and ripen for heaven under the deprivation. Other of these sects would commune with Baptists, but Baptists refuse to commune with them. They differ from Baptists, some of them radically, on various points of doctrine, discipline, and aims; and communion not based on substantial agreement can be nothing better than hypocrisy, and is more likely to produce strife than union. With such of these sects as practice loose communion, Baptists, of course, cannot commune without an abandonment of their long-cherished principles, or flagrant inconsistency.

The question of communing with most of the sects of immersionists is not, with Baptists, a practical one. Some, however, think that they may properly commune with Disciples, or, as in some places they prefer to be called, Christians, but who are more generally known as Campbellites. Nearly forty years ago they were separated from Baptist churches for holding unsound religious principles and cherishing a contentious and schismatical spirit. Time and the study of the Scriptures

have wrought a favorable change in at least a portion of the sect. They are less heterodox, less pugnacious in spirit, and are building up the things which once they destroyed. We hope and pray that the time may come when Baptists and Disciples may see eye to eye and be united in spirit, aims, and labors; but that time has not yet come. Until it arrive, Baptists should firmly maintain their ground. Most of the Disciples are, we conclude, open communionists. This practice alone should debar us from their communion. Many of them entertain opinions concerning inherent depravity, the influence of the Spirit in conversion, and the efficacy of baptism which are subversive of evangelical truth and are of rationalistic tendency. Against these errors we must bear a faithful testimony, and this testimony we cannot bear if we commune with them. Whether Baptists should commune with them is a question to be decided not by individuals, or even by a single church, but by the churches in association—by the denomination.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

IF Baptists are right in their views of Christian ordinances, they have an important mission in the world. It is to restore those ordinances as they were instituted by Christ, delivered by the apostles, and kept by the primitive churches. This is an important, difficult, delicate, and responsible work. We are Christ's witnesses, and we should do nothing to weaken the force or blunt the point of our testimony. We are not called to bigotry, censoriousness, or strife. It is our duty to love all men, especially those who bear the image of Christ; to render to all due honor for their knowledge, holiness, and good deeds; and to cherish a becoming spirit of humility, modesty, and gentleness; but still to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." If Christ has made baptism a pre-

requisite to communion at his table, as Christians everywhere, with few exceptions, maintain; and if the immersion of a believer is the only baptism instituted by the Lord, as we firmly believe; then there can be no gain to the cause of truth or piety or Christian union by any participation in the supper in which these principles are discarded. If we are right in our views and practice, we are not responsible for any discord and strife to which they may give rise. Let us do our duty, committing our ways to God, calmly bearing all reproach, and we shall have our reward.