

## CHAPTER V.

*The statements of many of our authors concerning the evangelicalness of the leading denominations examined. The criterion by which they are to be judged, not Charity, but the Word of God.—The sources of our information as to what they hold as their acknowledged doctrinal standards.—Do Baptists agree with the sects of Presbyterians touching how adults are to be saved?—An appeal to their standards and their scholars.*

I propose, in these chapters, to develop, from the standards of the leading sects, their faith and teachings touching the one great vital doctrine of Christianity, viz.: How a sinner is to obtain the benefits of Christ's death—pardon, regeneration, and salvation. If the system of a sect is diseased at this point, the malady is mortal, the body is as good as dead, and, like a contagious corpse, should be buried out of contact. It has become a bounden necessity to determine the question, whether all the leading denominations agree with Baptists touching the essential, vital doctrine of grace—the way a sinner may be saved—since so many of our authors—through ignorance (it is the most charitable judgment) of the doctrinal standards of the sects—are so free to affirm a substantial agreement. The latest work, by a popular author, scarce dry from the press, not only indorses the evangelicalness of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists; but extends the circles of Christian charity (?), and embraces Reforming Campbellites (a sect unheard of by me, and unknown to the world), Reformed Lutherans, Low Church Episcopalians, and even **Old Catholicism**, whose divinely written name is “Mystery, Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth;” and the teaching is, that all these agree with Baptists as to how a sinner is to come to Christ for pardon, regeneration and salvation. If this statement is not true, it is time for such a misleading and dangerous untruth to be no longer published from our press and our pulpits; but, if true, for Baptists to cease from the earth, and no longer trouble the Christian world with their ceaseless contentions about empty forms and ceremonies not essential to either the life of Christianity or the salvation of a soul.

To ascertain the doctrinal belief of any denomination, we are not to take the faith of this or that man, but its published symbols, and acknowledged standards, and the concurrent testimony of its founder, and the publicly recognized and indorsed exponents of its doctrines, as its theological professors, etc.

And it is befitting to say, here, that Christian charity has no office to perform in this task—it is not her province. I am aware, that, by a large class, it is denounced as the lack of Christian charity to question the essential orthodoxy of the creed of any sect! What term in mortal language is more wrested and abused than “charity”—“Christian **charity**”—or used for a fouler purpose, so unworthy of her heavenly origin, since they would force her to be an accomplice of the most deadly errors! What has charity to do with printed propositions – articles of faith, or formulated systems of religion? Her office is but two-fold—(1) To succor the needy; (2) To kindly construe motives. Creeds need no alms, and articles of faith have no motives for us to judge kindly. No; this talk about charity being applied to Christian doctrines or ordinances is all delusive, deceptive, and fraudulent. The mandate of the divine Father to all his children is:

“Prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good”—the true; and to abstain from and reject every form of evil, and to hate every false way, for Christian charity alone rejoices in the truth, and is never an accomplice of error.

Before we can decide whether these various sects all agree with Baptists as to the way a sinner is to come to Christ for salvation, it will be necessary for the reader to know what the Baptists do hold and teach upon this point. I can state our faith in a few sentences.

Baptists teach that a sinner must come to Christ by personal faith before he comes to the Church; that the plan of salvation is, not through the Church and its ordinances that a sinner comes to Christ, but by faith through Christ to the Church and its ordinances—**Christ before the Church.**

Stated in another form:

The sinner must, in every case, come to the blood of Christ, that cleanses from all sin, before he can come to the water of baptism, which is the figure of his having been cleansed.

It is **through Christ**, by faith, **to the water**; and not **through the water to Christ**. It is **Christ before water**. He must go down into the water **with** Christ—formed within the hope of glory; and not go down into the water **for** Christ. We see, then, it is:

**Blood before water.**

**Salvation before baptism.**

**Possession before profession.**

Let us first notice—

**The Presbyterian Denomination.** The forty-nine<sup>1</sup> sects which constitute it, I understand, accept the Westminster Confession of Faith with more or less or no modification.

I do not expect that any statement made in these pages concerning the doctrinal teachings of the various sects will be received as true that I do not prove to be so, beyond all possible contradiction, by their doctrinal standards. I protest I have no desire to misrepresent their views in the slightest degree, and shall therefore confine myself strictly to the Confession of Faith and the most distinguished exponents of it.

The first question to be settled is, what is the distinction between the Presbyterian “church” and all other denominations, claiming to be churches? If we turn to its Confession of Faith, chapter xxv, section 2, we will find this definition:

“The visible church, which is also Catholic or Universal, under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the **true religion, together with their children**, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, **out of which there is no ordinary possibility** of salvation.”

To say the least of this definition, it denies that Baptist churches, and Campbellite societies to be visible churches of Christ. If the reader should ask a Presbyterian minister if he believed that Baptist churches were conformed to the apostolic churches, he would answer, No.

We draw two legitimate conclusions from this definition, helpful to the settlement of the question of inter-denominational Communion—

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<sup>1</sup>At the first Pan-Presbyterian Assembly, which met in Edinburgh, July, 1877, twenty-two sects of Presbyterians were represented, and twenty-seven others expressed a desire to be represented—forty-nine!

1. That Baptist and Campbellite communities are not churches of Christ. Presbyterians can not, except by abandoning their own principles of confession, invite them to their tables; but they do, and hence their insincerity and inconsistency.

2. That Baptists and Campbellites, being out of the visible church, there is no ordinary possibility of their salvation.

3. The first step for a sinner to take toward salvation is to join the Presbyterian Church, to which alone is committed the ordinances and other administration.

The reason of this will be seen when we understand their views of the saving efficacy of the ordinances. We will first notice what they hold and teach concerning

### **BAPTISM.**

“Baptism is ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God to walk in newness of life.”—Chapter 10.

Of this language, Dr. Howell says: “Much guarded caution characterizes the language of this passage; indeed it appears almost a jumble of nonsense; but the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is, nevertheless, fully embodied and maintained.” We turn to the Shorter Catechism and find this additional light:

QUESTION.—What is a sacrament?

ANSWER:—A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

Q.—Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?

A.—The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

The explanation of the operation of the sacraments we will find in Larger Catechism, answer 161:

Q.—How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

A.—The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from the piety or intention of him by whom they are administered; but only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessings of Christ by whom they are instituted.”

William Norton, of England, commenting on this language, says:

“Except as to the **intention** of the administrator, this is precisely the doctrine of Rome.”

Lest we possibly put a wrong construction upon these teachings, let us inquire how the most eminent Presbyterian divines and professors of their theology, understand and explain this. Matthew Henry was ordained in 1687. In his “Treatise on Baptism,” he says:

“The gospel contains not only a doctrine, but a covenant. Baptism wrests the keys of the heart out of the hand of the strong man armed, that the possession may be surrendered to him whose right it is. The water of baptism is designed for our cleansing from the spots and defilement of the flesh. In baptism our names are engraved upon the breastplate of the high priest. This, then, is the efficacy of baptism; it is putting the child’s name into the gospel grant. We are baptizing into Christ’s death; that is, God doth, in that ordinance, seal, **confirm**, and make over to us all the benefits of death of Christ.

We begin to see why there is ordinarily no salvation out of the Presbyterian “church,” since regeneration, sanctification, salvation,—indeed all the benefits of Christ’s death are made over to us in the act of baptism! And Christian baptism can only be administered in the Presbyterian “church,” since the ordinances are in, and not out, of the visible church.

Dr. Dwight was elected president of Yale College in 1795. In his “System of Theology,” first sermon on baptism, he says:

“When children die in infancy and are scripturally dedicated to God in baptism, there is much and very consoling reason furnished to believe that they are accepted beyond the grave.”

The converse of this cautiously worded statement must be true, viz., that there is **little or no consoling reason** furnished by the Scriptures that unbaptized infants are accepted beyond the grave. This is said of the unbaptized infants of believers, what then are we left to suppose is the horrid fate of the unbaptized infants of all unbelievers?

Well wrote a Pedobaptist against this doctrine when put forth by Dr. Pusey:

“Strange doctrine! Which leaves us in doubt of the eternal salvation of millions of millions of hapless infants, because they have not been subjected to a rite which depends **wholly on the will of another**; nay, which may be withheld by the parents precisely because they have conscientious scruples on the subject; in obedience, as they suppose, to the will of God.”

But hear her theologians, the exponents of her faith. Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, says:

“We are baptized in order that we may be united to Christ, and be made partakers of his benefits. This baptism unto repentance is a baptism that the remission of sins may be obtained.”—Pritchard, *Infant Baptism*, p. 124.

Dr. Nevin, formerly professor at Princeton, and finally president of the Mercersburg Seminary of the German Reformed Presbyterian Church, says:

“The church (Presbyterian) makes us Christians by the sacrament of holy baptism, which she always held to be of supernatural force for that very purpose.”—Pritchard, *Infant Baptism*, p. 124.

John Calvin, the father and founder—the author and finisher of the Presbyterian faith, says:

“By baptism God promises remission of sins, and will certainly fulfill his promises, etc.”

If we open the standard hymn-book we find that the same doctrine is sung as well as preached.

These are specimens:

“Abr’am believed the promised grace,  
And gave his son to God;  
But **water seals the blessing now**  
That once was **sealed with blood.**”

—121<sup>st</sup> Hymn, 1<sup>st</sup> Book.

“Baptismal **water** is designed,  
To seal his **cleansing grace.**”

—141<sup>st</sup> Hymn, 2<sup>nd</sup> Book.

Now, if baptism is the seal of the covenant of grace, as Presbyterians certainly do teach, then no one unbaptized, young or old, have been saved, or ever will be. Baptists hardly agree with these views, and they do most certainly involve all that is essential to salvation and the whole system of Christianity and the character of a scriptural church, and we think thoroughly subversive of both. Indeed, if Presbyterianism is the system of Christianity, Baptists have never held or taught it; and if the Presbyterian denomination is a church of Christ in any sense, no Baptist church can be so considered.<sup>2</sup>

I close this chapter with the strong and pungent language of Dr. Osgood, of Rochester University, New York:

“Their views of Church constitution subvert what Baptists regard as **the fundamental doctrines of salvation**, and, therefore, our disagreement from all Pedobaptists is nothing less than *toto caelo*...Their churches are, to our view, formed in **direct contravention of God’s way of salvation; their constitution is at war with the doctrines of God’s grace.**”—*Commentary*, p. 11.

We ask the Baptist authors and editors of America, if this statement be true—and we have proved it in this chapter to be so—can we call the Presbyterians an “evangelical” or a “Christian church.”

Is it telling the **truth** to do so? They have no Lord’s Supper to invite us to; since the ordinance, as perverted by them, is no more of the Lord’s Supper than the Mass of the Catholics is the Lord’s Supper, and a Baptist would eat and drink unworthily should he partake of either the one or the other. I would as soon participate in a Romish **mass** as a Protestant **sacrament**.

Some Christian Presbyterian, who has experienced regeneration of heart by the exercise of a personal faith, may say, I do not believe or profess the above doctrine of sacramental salvation. But so long as you are identified with, you do profess it, uphold and teach it by all your influence; and if you were baptized in that body you did profess it personally or by proxy. If you do not believe it, and as you would not be your influence teach others to do so, and to depend upon sacraments for salvation, you should renounce the doctrine by leaving the Presbyterian Church at once. So long as you are a member you can in no way effectually protest against those unscriptural doctrines.

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<sup>2</sup>According to the definition of a church given in the confession, there is no church of Christ save one composed of those who profess the true Presbyterian religion, together with their children.

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