

THE BAPTIST LANDMARK

“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK, WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET.” PROVERBS 22:28

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HARMONIZING BELIEFS

by M. A. Brawner

One of the blessings of growing up around a number of God-called brethren is the benefit that comes from getting to be present when doctrine is discussed. These early impressions no doubt had a direct impact when the Lord called me to preach years later. From those beginnings, I was impressed that God is the author of the Bible. He knows exactly what is written on every line. Though God revealed His word over an extended period of time, everything that was shared always *harmonized*. The words written by Moses go along with what was later written by Isaiah. The words found in the Proverbs fit perfectly with those contained in the Psalms. Like a chain, each book of the Bible links to every other book in perfect unison so that there is one harmonious volume from God found therein.

When applying the word “harmonize” in this way, most everyone gets what it means. Noah Webster provided the following definition, “Harmonize: To agree in sense or purport; as, the arguments harmonize; the facts stated by different witnesses harmonize.” When harmony is found, disagreements are left out. When speaking of arguments, those that harmonize support each other. They go along together.

The same is said when it comes to understanding what a particular text of the Bible means. For example, when we read a verse of scripture and conclude that God wants a certain thing done. Then later, we read another verse of scripture that plainly contradicts our previous conclusion, we know that we had the wrong concept initially. Our conclusions failed to harmonize. We had an idea that proved to be wrong. Why was it wrong? It was wrong because of lack of harmony or agreement between conclusions.

The same needs to be applied when it comes to those things we believe about the doctrines of the Bible. Our belief about soul salvation needs to harmonize with our belief about eternal security of

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RESTRICTED COMMUNION

by H. B. Little

Among Christianity, there are varying views on who should receive communion. Some congregations allow all “believers” to receive the Lord’s Supper. This practice is called *open communion*. Some restrict the Lord’s Supper to baptized church members in good standing. This is called *close communion*. Others restrict the Lord’s Supper further, allowing only members of the local church to receive communion among themselves. This is called *closed communion*.

I am a member of a closed-communication Baptist church. We restrict communion to members of our local church. However, the title of this article is *Restricted Communion*. As the title suggests, I would like to consider the following question: Should the Lord’s Supper be restricted to faithful scripturally baptized believers? In other words, should communion be *close* or *closed*, as opposed to *open*?

As with any question regarding church practice, we should examine this question in the light of the scriptures. “To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to this word, It is because there is no light in them.” Isa 8:20. If our opinion does not agree with the word of God, it is wrong. And no amount of sentiment can make it right. Again, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Ti 3:16-17. The Bible is the source of our doctrine—instruction. By this instruction, our churches know how to carry on God’s work. If it was our work, we could do what *feels* right. But our commission is from the Lord Jesus Christ. He said “observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Mat 28:20. Let us lay aside feelings and popular opinion, and let us consider what the scriptures teach.

Let’s consider who the Lord served when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. He did not serve the masses that were looking to

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ALIEN IMMERSION

by J. H. Grime, 1909

In order to a correct understanding of any question, we should have a definite understanding of the meaning of all terms employed, and positions assumed. By the term “Alien Immersion” is meant immersions performed outside of Baptist churches, by persons who are in no way connected with them. It is commonly understood to refer to immersions performed by Pedobaptists and Campbellites. The question of divergence is, whether Baptist churches should recognize such immersions as valid baptisms, and receive members thus immersed into their churches, without immersing them again. There will be found among Baptists certain persons who take either side of this question. It will be the purpose of these pages, if possible, to determine the attitude which the denomination has occupied on this point in the past. The whole question turns upon the authority of the administrator. Those who believe in the reception of alien immersion, hold that the character of the administrator has nothing to do with the validity of baptism. They hold that if we have a proper subject—a true believer in Jesus Christ—a right design—to obey God, and symbolize our death to sin and resurrection to a new life—and a proper action—the total immersion of the body in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that we have a gospel or valid baptism, it matters not what may be the character of the administrator. On the other hand, those who oppose the reception of Alien Immersion, hold that in addition to the three qualifications stated above, to have valid or gospel baptism, there must be a legal administrator—one authorized by a gospel (Baptist) church. Of the former there are two classes. The one insists on receiving alien immersion at all times and without restraint; while the other class believes it is valid, but “opposes the reception of it on the principles of good order.” Of the latter there are also two classes; the one believes we should have direct church action in each particular

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the believer. The things we believe about becoming a part of the family of God needs to harmonize with what we conclude about becoming a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same goes for what we believe about the Church as it is made up here in time and how the Church will be made up in eternity. Have we considered what we believe about just these few doctrines? Do you know whether your beliefs on these matters harmonize with each other? If they do anything other than harmonize, are you comfortable with the fact that you must be holding to error when it comes to your relationship with God? Perhaps considering how these doctrines need to harmonize is time well invested for eternity's sake.

The belief we hold about soul salvation needs to harmonize with what we believe about the eternal security of the believer. Many who will read these lines firmly hold to the belief that soul salvation is received by grace through faith. It is a gift of God. All who have truly been born again readily admit that their salvation is of the Lord. They did the submitting and God did the saving. End of story; no arguments to the contrary offered. Then, when it comes to the security of that salvation, many will say that the state of their soul is fixed forever. Their soul salvation will never be lost because the Lord is keeping it for them. Certainly, there is the outward part of every child of God that wants to behave according to its sinful nature but things are far different for the born again soul.

Here is where harmony is found in these two doctrines. We know that the Bible teaches that salvation is by grace in the absence of all works, Eph 2:8-9 and Tit 3:5. The Bible is also clear that the things which come of grace cannot be of work, and vice versa, Rom 11:6. Likewise, it is clear that the saved soul will never do a work which could condemn it before God, 1 Jn 3:9. So then, the works of a fallen man have nothing to do with the salvation of a soul. Likewise, the works of the same fallen nature of man have nothing to do with the eternal security of a soul. Salvation is of grace and eternal security is of grace. When these teachings are held firmly, harmony is found. (As a side note, we would do well to help others understand that those who hold to these

doctrines also firmly believe in the chastening hand of God. It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Let's be careful to teach this doctrine as firmly as the other two just mentioned.)

We should also be concerned about our beliefs regarding what it takes to become a part of the family of God as it relates to becoming a part of the Lord's Church. The Bible states that a person becomes a part of the family of God when they are born again, Gal 3:26. The new birth is by grace through faith as was already

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case; while the other class believes that it is sufficient when the church confers her authority upon the minister in his ordination. The whole thing turns, however, upon the question of church authority. The question may be stated thus: All Baptists are agreed as to the subject, design and action of baptism. But when they come to the administrator they reach the point of divergence.

The question, we think, is sufficiently clear now that we may proceed to look after its history. Perhaps this would be a good place to state, that the rejection of alien immersion is a Baptist peculiarity. Even the Roman Catholics, with all their proscriptive and persecuting arrogance, have ever received, the baptism of heretics (as they are pleased to call all who differ from them). If for any cause they rebaptize one, they give what they call "conditional baptism," employing this ceremony: "If thou art not baptized, I baptize thee," etc. Protestant denominations, as a rule, have always received baptism from the hands of others. It is true that in their general meetings they have at times discussed the propriety of receiving baptisms performed by Catholics. But they have usually given indefinite decisions in the matter, with the understanding that if they invalidated Catholic baptism, they invalidated their own, since they received their baptism from the Catholics. It is true also that John Wesley rebaptized Dissenters in order to get Catholic, or Episcopal authority, for their baptism. These are isolated cases, however, and as a rule the statement holds good, that it is peculiarly a Baptist practice.

The history of this question has its beginning with God himself. When God would begin the ordinance of baptism, he began it by emphasizing the administrator—in sending a man direct from God. John 1:6. The administrator was further emphasized by Christ. When the time came for him to be baptized, he did not say the administrator is non-essential, and therefore seek baptism at the hands of some Rabbi, or Priest, in his own town (Nazareth), but walked sixty miles to get baptism at the hands of a Baptist preacher—the heaven-sent legal administrator. (See Mark 1:9; John 1:33.) Christ further emphasized the administrator when he raised the question as to whether "John's baptism was from Heaven, or of men." Matthew 21:25. And he still further emphasized the administrator when he told the "Pharisees and lawyers that they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of John." Luke 7:30.

The administrator is still again emphasized in that those baptized by Christ's disciples are said to be baptized by Christ himself. John 3:22 and 4:1-2. Just as the State hangs a criminal through the sheriff—their legal agent—so Christ baptized through the disciples, his legal administrators. Such could never be said of one hanged by a mob; it matters not how guilty the one lynched might be. Just so no one could be said to be baptized by Christ unless baptized by one commissioned by Him.

[From J. H. Grime, *History of Alien Immersion and Valid Baptism*, 1909, p. 5-8]

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addressed. However, a child of God has to be baptized into the Lord's Church by that baptism only His Church has been authorized to administer. Joining the Lord's Church is the first work a child of God will do to the honor and glory of God. So then, a person becomes a child of God by grace, while the child of God becomes a member of the Lord's Church by work.

An explanation was offered earlier about how a child of God REMAINS part of the family of God. They remain part of the family of God by grace. Salvation is received and kept by grace. Yet, what of Church membership? It comes by work, but how is it kept? Do we all realize that, seemingly, a vast amount of the people of God go through life and never consider this question? A Church member can lose their position in the Church. If they lose it, they will do so by failing to do the works that all Church members are assigned upon joining. Church membership comes by work and is kept by works. The scriptures says, "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Eph 2:10. The great commission states that those who have been baptized into the Church are to be taught to "observe all things" that the Lord has commanded, Matt 28:20. Also, in Titus 3:8, a faithful saying is presented. It states that it should be constantly affirmed, "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

Children of God enter the Church by work and they REMAIN in it by work. This is NOT just any work. It is the "works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." For example, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, we read about a Church member who fell into a life of open ungodliness. This ungodliness was an obvious failure to maintain the good works God had called them unto. So, what action was the Church called on to carry out? It was called on to remove that person from their membership and restrict them from the Lord's Table, 1 Cor 5:11-13. To suggest such a person will lose their salvation fails to harmonize with other doctrines. However, to conclude their works allow them to be suitable for Church membership also lacks Bible harmony. Let them first repent of ungodliness and return to the works God

had called them unto. Only then can a Church operate in harmony with the teachings of the Word of God.

There is also a need for harmony in our beliefs about the nature of the Church in time compared to its nature in eternity. There appears to be a large number who understand that there is a difference between being in the family of God and being in the Church the Lord organized. It has been well said that the family of God is universal in nature while the Church is local. The nature of the two is obviously different. It is possible to be born again and never unite with a sound Church.

There are also those who admit that a person who actually finds a true New Testament Church could live in such a way as to fail to remain a member. If the Church fails to separate from them here in time, the Lord will separate them out when the Church is judged as described in the scriptures, 2 Cor 5:9-10. The nature of Church membership and soul salvation is obviously different. Soul salvation is eternally secure, but Church membership is NOT. One is of grace; the other is of work.

All need to realize that the Church in eternity will consist of those who maintained works assigned of God while members in time. Can any honestly reconcile that a person failed to be part of the Church in time but could somehow be counted as part of the Church in eternity? For instance, those who got saved but never joined the Church at all. Likewise, those members who turned back from doing the works assigned them of God in time, could we honestly conclude they would be part of the Church in eternity? How could such thoughts harmonize at all?

It is the Church in eternity that the Lord says He will marry as His Bride. If a child of God fails to be or remain in the Church in time, how could that person be part of the Bride in eternity? The Bride made herself ready by observing all He commanded, Matt 28:20. She maintained the good work of God, Titus 3:8. She walked in those good works God before ordained, Eph 2:10. Therefore, she will be granted to be dressed in white linen at the marriage of the Lamb, Rev 19:7-8. Does anything else even come close to harmonizing?

Let's take time to examine what we believe in the light of the Word of God. We need to examine the doctrines we believe to ensure they harmonize while

we live here in time. God will surely examine them with us when we get to eternity.

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DEFENDING OUR FAITH

by H. B. Little

Are we able defenders of the Baptist faith? Do we know what we believe? Do we know why we believe it? Are we able to scripturally and logically explain what we believe? Or do we just take someone else's word for what we should believe?

We should be able to tell others why we are Baptists: why the Old-Time Baptist way is the gospel way. After all, the command of "teaching...all things" (Mat 28:20) was left to the Lord's churches. It was not left to the preachers and deacons. It was not left to the older members of the churches. The responsibility belongs to every member. Parents are commanded to "bring [their children] up in the...admonition [instruction] of the Lord." Eph 6:4. This means the parents must know the instruction of the Lord. They must be able to teach it. Were previous generations of Baptists better prepared to "give an answer to every man that asketh"? 1 Pe 3:15. In 1860, Dr. David Benedict wrote:

Fifty years ago there was a very vigorous renewal of the baptismal controversy in this country, and all the old arguments of the Pedobaptists, and the whole catalogue of bad stories against the Baptists were circulated by their opponents with uncommon zeal and activity...The various writers on the Baptist side, as usual, took pains to show how fully their sentiments were established by the original terms in the Scriptures which pertain to the subject. Those writings were so thoroughly studied by the common people, and were so often quoted by them, that one of the ministers, in his defense of Pedobaptism, sarcastically said, "Even the Baptist women talk Greek, in disputing with me on the subject of baptism." Fifty Years Among the Baptists, pages 81-82.

In 1860, Bro. Benedict had seen a decline in the readiness of church members to defend the faith. I wonder how we stand today.

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see some miracle. He did not serve those who were hungry in the desert. He served only His faithful apostles—the eleven. The first qualification for their apostleship was “the baptism of John.” Act 1:22. They had been discipled by John the Baptist. John “baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” Act 19:4. John preached that a personal, penitent faith in the coming Savior was a prerequisite to baptism. The eleven were baptized believers. Furthermore, the Savior said these men were “they which have continued with me in my temptation.” Luke 22:30. Judas, the betrayer, “went out immediately” after the Passover. John 13:30. Following the Passover meal, the Lord’s Supper was taken. Judas was absent. The Lord restricted the ordinance to faithful baptized believers.

Let’s consider the practice of the apostolic church regarding who should receive communion. On the first Pentecost following Christ’s resurrection, we find an account of the preaching and practice of the Lord’s church. Peter preached the gospel to the people, and they were convicted of their sins—or “pricked in their heart”. Act 2:37. When the people asked what God had commanded, Peter answered, “Repent, and be baptized.” Act 2:38. The people who “gladly received his word [the ones who had been sorrowful and became glad having been converted] were baptized”. Act 2:41. The baptized converts “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Act 2:42. Notice the steadfast—unwavering—baptized believers broke bread with the church. The apostolic church restricted the ordinance to faithful baptized believers.

Let’s consider an allegory from the Old Testament regarding who should partake of the Lord’s table. Paul used the example of the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt to teach us church doctrine. He said that they “were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink.” 1 Co 10:2-4. Paul was speaking about the Hebrews passing through the

Red Sea. He says that they were baptized unto Moses in the sea. After this baptism, they ate the manna and drank from the Rock. Only those who passed through the sea received this spiritual meat and drink. This is a picture of the two ordinances: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism comes first. The Lord’s Supper comes after baptism.

Let’s consider the historical Baptist position regarding who should receive communion. J. T. Christian (1854-1925) was a Baptist preacher, author, and educator. He published several worthy titles, such as *A History of the Baptists* and *Baptist History Vindicated*. He also wrote *Close Communion* which was published in 1892. The views expressed in this work were those generally held by the Baptists in the American South and West at that time. He wrote:

The Baptists are strict communionists and are likely to remain such. We want to be just as close as the Word of God. If we have prospered as a people, it is because we have rigidly adhered to the Word of God. Whenever we turn aside from this well-trodden path for mere sentimentality or transient popularity, the day of our power and usefulness is gone. We are compelled to search for the old paths, and when we have found them to walk in them. Despite all criticisms and abuse we have prospered as strict communionists. The reason is not far away. In the face of all clamor we have adhered to God’s Word and God has greatly honored us... There is neither argument nor wisdom in open communion. It is based upon mere sentiment, and that a false sentiment... We think the Lord has laid down in the New Testament certain prerequisites to the communion. We think the Scriptures warrant definite terms of approach to the Lord’s Supper. The divine order is, first, faith; second, baptism; third, church membership; fourth, discipline; fifth, doctrine; sixth, the Lord’s Supper. No man has a right to the Lord’s table who has not exercised faith, been baptized, and is a member of a church, subject to its discipline, and agreeing with it in doctrine...

The Baptists of Bro. Christian’s day were “strict communionists.” They “rigidly” held the tenets of God’s word. They believed the Bible to teach restricted

communion. They believed the divine—God given—order is faith, baptism, church membership, discipline, doctrine, and then the Lord’s Supper. In other words, they restricted the ordinance to faithful baptized believers.

The Bible teaches restricted communion. The ordinance is to be observed by faithful baptized believers. The Lord restricted communion to these terms. The apostles restricted communion to these terms. Our Baptist forefathers restricted communion to these terms. We should restrict communion to these terms also.

A REPLY TO SENTIMENT

by A. S. Pettie, 1910

Several years ago, by invitation of the Baptist Church at Hickory Grove, Graves County, Kentucky, I met Rev. J. T. Pender in a public oral discussion of the communion question. Mr. Pender was the affirmant. He was an experienced and able polemic. His first argument for open communion was about as follows: “A man was sick unto death. During his sickness he was converted. He was too sick to be immersed and received into the Baptist church of which his wife was a member. But he desired to commune with his Christian wife before he died. He sent for a Baptist preacher. When the preacher arrived he declined to officiate. His theory would not permit him to officiate. Then a preacher of another denomination, an open communionist, came and gave the bread and wine to the dying man and his wife. How broad and liberal, how beautiful is open communion.”

In reply I said: “The Scriptures teach, are the opening words of the proposition my friend affirms. The very form of his thesis calls for proof from the Scriptures. That was a pathetic story he told. It was recited well. It almost made me cry. But I don’t believe he can give us chapter and verse for it. I don’t believe it is in the Bible. Why didn’t he read or recite a text from the Scriptures? I suspect his collection of death-bed stories is large. I know he cannot present a passage from the word of God which sustains his affirmation. I suppose he should not be censured for using that which he has, or for failing to do that which cannot be done.

[From a sermon delivered by A. S. Pettie in the First Baptist Church Shepherdsville, Kentucky, 1910. Provided by Baptist History Homepage.]