

INTERCOMMUNION

INCONSISTENT, UNSCRIPTURAL,

AND

PRODUCTIVE OF EVIL.

BY

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"Because there is **one loaf**, we the many [members of the one Church at Corinth] are **one** body; for we all partake of **the one loaf**."—1 Cor. 10:17.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that you keep the ordinances **as** I delivered them unto you."—1 Cor. 11:2.

MEMPHIS, TENN.

BAPTIST BOOK HOUSE:

GRACE, MAHAFFEY & CO.

1881.

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Intercommunion, Unscriptural and Inconsistent.

CHAPTER I.

Reasons for offering a new book in defense of Scriptural Communion—Because 1. Grounds and arguments by which our present practice is supported manifestly untenable and unsatisfactory; 2. Concession made by our standard authors fatal to the existence of Baptist churches; 3. A new treatment of the whole subject can be offered.

Why a new book on “Communion,” about which so many books have been written? Why a pair of new shoes when you have bought so many? What better answer can be given than “Because the old ones are no longer serviceable?” The fact is – and it is but the part of candor to admit it – that the old current arguments by which Baptists have attempted to vindicate our entire consistency in restricting our Communion to our own denomination have been shown to be **untenable**, and our principal arguments **sophistical**. The result is, dissatisfaction with our present practice of restricted Communion is manifestly increasing yearly, both in the ranks of our ministry and the masses of our thinking membership.

This state of the case imperiously calls for a thorough re-examination of the whole question, to ascertain whether the cause lies in the fact that our present practice is wrong, or our arguments illogical, or both. Then it is the conviction of the writer that our standard authors, who have written in defense of our practice, in order to escape the charge of “bigotry,” “illiberality,” and “uncharitableness,” have conceded so much to the denominations opposed to us, that Baptists have, in fact, no foot of ground left to stand upon, and no alternative seems left us but to search for other and more defensible ground and arguments, or surrender at discretion. I do not say this because my confidence in a scriptural warrant for strict Communion is shaken; for I firmly believe that all the teachings of Scripture and all arguments based upon reason, are in favor of **strict** Communion, as it has been conceded by a distinguished affusionist that all the arguments are in favor of immersion as the apostolic act of baptism,¹ but, in my humble opinion, the true line of defense – the **impregnable** scriptural argument – has never been clearly laid down; while, as I have suggested, an indefensible line of argumentation has been hastily adopted, and, in attempting to defend it, concessions have been made fatal to our existence as a denomination.

In addition to this, our churches, while holding fast to the form of sound words, have been insensibly beguiled by the fraternal feeling and the plea of courtesy into the practical surrender of **Church** for **denominational** Communion, thus immeasurably weakening the whole

¹ Olinthus Gregory.

life of defense, and, in fact, abandoning our chief bulwark to the enemy, and, by our practice, perverting the sacred symbolism of the Supper.

It seems to me evident, that if our arguments in support of the practice of our churches were scriptural and our practice consistent, they would have been like the shoes of God's ancient people, imperishable,—

“Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”

So fully convinced am I of the truth of the above, that, for years past, I have chosen an altogether new line of battle, and developed defenses which the most powerful of our opposers have been compelled to pronounce impregnable. It is my personal conviction that of all questions pertaining to Baptist faith or practice, this one of “Close Communion” has been the most **superficially** and **inefficiently** treated, which must be the reason for the general and growing dissatisfaction in the very bosom of our churches. This can not be said of our views of the subjects, design and act of Christian baptism, and is it not because these have received a more **scriptural** and **logical** treatment?

Numerous, therefore, as are the books, tracts, and treatises upon “Close Communion,” I trust I will be pardoned for offering for the consideration of my people and the public an altogether new treatment of the whole subject of Church Communion, developing what I consider its impregnable strength from two sources—(1.) The constitution of the Christian **Ecclesia**; (2.) The divine symbolism of the ordinance itself; (3.) From the positive teachings of the Scriptures forbidding denominational Communion; and (4.) The practice of the primitive churches and not from mere “**analogy**,” or, as it is denominated, “orderly example.” I shall prove, if I know what constitutes proof, that it is not only unscriptural, inconsistent, and productive of evil for Baptist churches to invite members of other denominations to their Communion tables, but wrong so to invite members of our sister Baptist churches—*i.e.*, that **denominational** Communion,² as at present practiced by Baptists, is unscriptural, inconsistent, and fraught with manifest and manifold evils. I only asked to be impartially heard, if such a thing is possible. If I do nothing more than to awaken a general discussion of the whole question, or offer a **clew** that will conduct our churches out of existing confusion, my effort will not be altogether fruitless. Other and abler pens may take the direction indicated, and lead the denomination into “all truth” upon this subject.

I propose, in the first place, to show—

I. That the many concessions, so fatal to Baptists, made by all our standard writers who have volunteered to defend our restricted practice, are not sustained by the facts in the case—indeed, are disproved by the self-same authors themselves!

2. That the principal positions hitherto taken by our own writers in defense of Restricted Communion, not only force wide open the doors of our own tables, which they seek to close, but surrender every just claim we have to exist as Christian churches.³ Like soldiers attempting to

² In this book I shall, for convenience, use the term Denominational when applied to Communion to designate the common practice of our churches in inviting all members of the Baptist denomination present, and even district associations and State Conventions to partake of the Supper with them:

³ It is a fact, as regretful as true, that an enemy could, with little trouble, by collecting and arranging all the admissions made by our prominent men in favor of the denominations opposed to us, and what they have asserted adverse to our historical succession as churches, establish the claims of these denominations to be scriptural churches, and that the rise of Baptist Churches was many centuries this side of the apostles! Touching our history this has already been done, and the book is before me!

defend the outposts, surrender the citadel itself; so very many of our authors on Communion, while attempting to defend our present practice of Communion, **have surrendered the denomination**. There can be no question but these false positions should henceforth be abandoned.

3. That the scriptural argument used by our writers, is, to say the very least of it, the very weakest the word of God affords, and that these are rendered wholly uninfluential by the concessions of our standard authors on Communion.

The ground being properly cleared of these obstructive matters, I shall make “my best endeavors” to bring to the front and establish, “beyond successful contradiction,” the clear, positive, and impregnable scriptural arguments in support of **local Church Communion**, as opposed to the modern practice of indiscriminate denominational Communion.

During the thirty-four years of my uninterrupted editorial connection with “*The Baptist*,” I have written little upon the subject of Communion, as all my brethren have noticed. The reason has been not that I was not a staunch believer in **restricted** Communion, but satisfied of the inconclusiveness of the current arguments, “hackneyed and worn,” and suspicious of their logical accuracy, I hesitated, and that at that sagacious remark of the wise man before my eyes, “Whoso breaketh a hedge a serpent shall bite him,” warned me, that before presuming to encounter such a peril in attempting to break the “hedge” of an old and popular usage, I should be thoroughly convinced it was my duty to break it. Now fully convinced as to my duty, I boldly cleave through the hedge with “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” and offer a new line of argumentation that is equally adapted to offensive as to defense warfare. The great Wellington sagely remarked, that a position only adapted to defensive operations was a dangerous one, and such is the position Baptists now occupy upon the Communion question—only fitted for defense; and that it is both a weak and dangerous position, has been demonstrated by the immense losses we have sustained as a denomination by occupying it.

My aim will be to indicate the scriptural position of the Lord’s Supper in the Churches of Christ, and to defend that position with unanswerable arguments, which will not only establish the fact that different denominations can not intercommune without perverting and profaning the ordinance, and eating and drinking condemnation to themselves, but as conclusively show that **intercommunion**, now so generally practiced among Baptists, is not only unscriptural and inconsistent, but is working many and serious evils, and immense loss to our denomination.

To all those who regard this plan and purpose as sufficient to warrant one more “little book” by an old editor on the subject of Scriptural Communion at the Lord’s table, these pages are affectionately commended.

In justification of what I have said, I submit the following from the pen of Rev. George B. Taylor, D. D., our present missionary to Rome, when editor of the *Christian Review*:

“The most prominent of our denominational journals have, within the last half year, contained communications from Baptists, in different parts of the country, expressing, to say the least, the absence of satisfactory conviction that baptism is ‘the true limit to Communion;’ and, recently, in some of these journals have appeared communications which, in view of the prevalence of inquiry on the subject, **call for another treatise in defense of Restricted Communion**. We mention these circumstances, unimportant in themselves, as straws which show how the winds of opinion and feeling are blowing. The author himself is aware of not a few prominent Baptists—ministers and laymen in different States—men not suspected of heterodoxy—who, more or less cautiously avow, at least, **that the arguments commonly used in favor of Restricted Communion to the baptized, seem to them not entirely satisfactory**. How many there are, practicing this restriction, who do so because they have received it from their fathers, or find it practiced by those around them, it were difficult to say, and not pertinent to our present object to inquire; though the fact that there are **many** such, would **certainly be a reason for the re-discussion of the whole subject**.”