

THE
Duty of Baptists
TO TEACH
Their Distinctive Views.

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“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”
—Matt. xxviii. 20.

The things he had commanded included the internal and the external elements of Christian piety. Of the latter, they include ethical instruction and directions as to the conduct of Christian societies. These directions were afterward supplemented by the inspired apostles giving instructions as to the constitution and government of the Christian Societies, or churches, and the characteristic ceremonies they were to observe. These matters pertaining to the Christian societies are certainly not so important as the internal and spiritual elements of piety or as ethical principles and precepts, but still are important. We may be sure they are, from the fact that Christ and his apostles gave direction concerning them; and we can see why they must be important. It is impossible to maintain mental health if the body be abused or neglected, for bodily conditions react upon those of the mind. And the externals of piety are the natural expression of its spiritual essence, which cannot be healthy if they are disregarded, exaggerated, or perverted. The tendency of human nature is usually not to neglect religious externals, but to exaggerate or pervert them. The New Testament gives us a very simple patten in these respects—simple organization, simple government, simple ceremonies. But men early began to magnify their importance and to change their character and application.

Early Judaizers and their Successors

Did you ever consider what became of the Judaizers who gave Paul so much trouble? When we last observe them in history, in connection with Paul’s latest recorded visit to Jerusalem, they are really beaten, but still numerous and active. When, in the second century, we again get a clear view of the early Christians, the Judaizers seem reduced to be a mere handful. But has the tendency really disappeared? Nay; it is beginning to strike through and through the Christianity of the day, and from that time onward a painfully large portion of Christendom has had only a Judaized Christianity. When men began to exaggerate the importance of externals, they would soon begin to change their character. Coming to believe that baptism brings regeneration and is indispensable to salvation, they would of course wish to baptize practicable for the sick and the dying. Beginning to fancy that the bread and the wine really became the glorified body and blood of the ascended Saviour, they not unnaturally took to withholding the cup from the laity, lest their awkward handling should spill some drops of the sacred fluid, which would have been profanation. And, in addition to these tendencies should have a stronger government.

The Baptists Opposed to Judaizing Influences

In Opposition to all this, Baptists insist on holding to the primitive constitution, government, and ceremonies of the Christian societies, or churches; and this on the principle of recognizing no religious authority but the Scriptures themselves, and of strictly observing all that the Saviour has commanded. Now, the Saviour says in our text that we must *teach* them to observe all things whatsoever he commanded. These commandments include the matters just mentioned, concerning which the people who allow themselves to be called Baptists differ widely from large portions of the Christian world, and are persuaded that their own views are more scriptural, more in accordance with the Saviour's commands. They must therefore feel themselves required to *teach* these things as well as others. Hence, the text lays upon us the duty of which I have been requested to speak—the *duty of Baptists to teach their distinctive views*.

Distinctive Views of Baptist Churches.

It may be well to state briefly what I understand to be the leading distinctive views of the Baptist churches. The fact that certain of these are more or less shared by others will be remarked upon afterward.

(1) We hold that the Bible alone is a religious authority; and in regard to Christian institutions the direct authority is of course the New Testament.

(2) We hold that a Christian Church ought to consist only of persons making a credible profession of conversion, of faith in Christ. These may include children, even comparatively young children, for God be thanked that these do often give credible evidence of faith in Christ! But in the very nature of the case they cannot include infants. The notion that infants may be church-members because their parents are seems to us utterly alien to the genius of Christianity, not only unsupported by the New Testament, but in conflict with its essential principles; and we are not surprised to observe that our Christian brethren among whom that theory obtains are unable to carry it out consistently—unable to decided in what sense the so-called “children of the church” are really members of the church and subject to its discipline. The other notion, that infants may be church-members because so called “sponsors” make professions and promises for them, seems to us a mere legal fiction, devised to give some basis for a practice which rose on quite other grounds. Maintaining that none should be received as church-members unless they give credible evidence of conversion, we also hold in theory that none should be retained in membership who do not lead a godly life; that if a man fails to show his faith by works, he should cease to make profession of faith. Some of our own people appear at times to forget that strict church discipline is a necessary part of the Baptist view as to church-membership.

(3) We hold that the officers, government, and ceremonies of a Christian society, or church, ought to be such, and such only, as the New Testament directs. AS to ceremonies, it enjoins the very minimum of ceremony; for there are but two, and both are very simple in nature and in meaning. We insist that baptism ought to be simply what Christ practised and commanded. We care nothing for the mode of baptism, the manner of baptizing, if only there is a real baptism according to the plan of indications of Scripture. As to the significance of the ceremony, we understand it to involve three things: The element employed represents purification; the action performed presents burial and resurrection of Christ, and symbolizing the believer's death to sin through faith in Christ and his resurrection to walk in newness of life; and performing the ceremony in the name of the Lord Jesus—in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost—makes it like an oath of allegiance, a vow of devotion, to Jesus Christ, to the Triune God. The early Roman Christians had a food word for this idea if only the word could have remained unchanged in use: they called a *sacramentum*, a military oath. AS the

Roman soldier in his oath bound himself to obey his general absolutely so in baptism we solemnly vow devotion and obedience. But, alas! the word “sacrament,” like many another word in Christian history, has come to be employed in senses quite foreign to its original use. AS to the second Christian ceremony, we hold that not only the bread, but the cup also should be given, urging, as all Protestants do—and Baptists and Protestants in one sense, though in another sense distinct from the Protestants—that our Lord commanded us to do both, and no one has a right to modify his commands. And the significance of the bread and wine is understood by us to be, not transubstantiation, nor consubstantiation, nor real presence in any sense, not even according to the Calvinism view that a special spiritual blessing is by divine appointment attached to the believing reception of these elements, but simply according to the Zwinglian view that these are mementoes, remembrancers of Christ, and that, taking them in remembrance of him, we may hope to have the natural effects of such remembrance blessed to our spiritual good. As to the order of the two ceremonies, we believe the New Testament to indicate that the second should be observed only by those who have previously observed the first and are walking orderly. This is in itself not a distinctive view of the Baptists, for they share it with almost the entire Christian world in all ages. The combination of this general Christian opinion, that the New Testament requires baptism to precede the Lord’s Supper, with our Baptist opinion as to what constitutes baptism, leads to a practical restriction which many regard as the most marked of all our distinctive views; while for us it is only an incidental, though logically inevitable, result of that principle which we share with nearly all of those from who it ceremonially separates us.

(4) We hold that these societies called churches were designed, as shown in the New Testament, to be independent. They have no right to control one another. Ample warrant there is for cooperation in benevolence and for consultations as to questions of truth and duty, but without assuming to legislate or in any sense to rule one another. And they must be independent of what we call the State as to their organization, faith, worship, discipline, while, of course, amenable to the State if they violate those moralities which are essential to public welfare; nor must they suffer themselves to be dependant on the State in the sense or receiving from it pecuniary support.

Now, I repeat that we do not consider these external to be intrinsically so important as the spiritual, or even the ethical, elements of Christianity. But they are important, because they express the spiritual and react upon it healthily or hurtfully, and because the Author of Christianity, in person or through his inspired apostles, appointed and commanded them. And we think it a matter of great importance that they should be practised in accordance with, and not contrary to, his appointment—that, in the language of his text, his disciples should observe and conserve (for the word includes both ideas) all things whatsoever he commanded them.

We are glad that as to one or another of these distinctive views some of our fellow-Christians of other persuasions agree with us more or less. We welcome all such concurrence, and it is not now necessary to inquire whether they hold those opinions with logical consistency. For ourselves, we do not claim to be fully *acting* upon these views, but we aim to do so, acknowledge ourselves blameworthy in so far as we fail; and we desire, notwithstanding our shortcoming in practice, to hold them up in due prominence before ourselves and others.

I wish now, first, to present reasons why Baptists ought to teach their distinctive views, and then to remark upon means and methods of performing this duty.

I. Reasons Why Baptists Ought to Teach Their Distinctive Views.

1. *It is a duty we owe to ourselves.* We must teach these views in order to be consistent in holding them. Because of these we stand apart from other Christians, in separate organizations—

from Christians whom we warmly love and delight to work with. We have no right thus to stand apart unless the matters of difference have real importance; and if they are really important, we certainly ought to teach them. We sometimes venture to say our brethren of some other persuasions that if points of denominational difference among evangelical Christians were so utterly trifling as they continually tell us, then they have no excuse for standing apart *from each other*, and no right to require us to stand apart from them unless we will adjure, or practically disregard, our distinctive views. But all this will apply to us likewise unless we regard the points of difference as having a substantial value and practical importance as a part of what Christ commanded, and in this case they are a part of what he requires us to teach.

And this teaching is the only way of correcting excesses among ourselves. Do some of our Baptist brethren seem to you ultra in their denominationalism, violent, bitter? And do you expect to correct such a tendency by going to the opposite extreme? You are so pained, shocked, disgusted, at what you consider an unlovely treatment of controverted matters that you shrink from treating them at all. Well, the persons you have in view, if there be such persons, would defend and fortify themselves by pointing at you. They would say, “I am complained of as extreme and bigoted. Look at those people yonder, who scarcely ever make the slightest allusion to characteristic Baptist principles, who are weak-kneed, afraid of offending the Paedobaptists, or dreadfully anxious to court their favor by smooth silence: do you want me to be such a Baptist as that?” This one extreme fosters another. The greatest complaint I have against what are called “sensational” preachers is not for the harm they directly do, but because they drive such a multitude of other preachers to the other extreme—make them so afraid of appearing sensational in their own eyes, or in those of some fastidious leaders, that they shrink from saying the bold and striking things they might say, and ought to say, and become common place and tame. And so it is a great evil if a few ultraists in controversy drive many good men to avoid sensitivity those controverted topics which we are all under obligation to discuss. The only cure, my brethren, for denominational ultraism is a healthy denominationalism.

2. *To teach our distinctive views is a duty we owe to our fellow-Christians.* Take the Roman Catholics. We are often told very earnestly that Baptists must make common cause with other Protestants against the aggressions of Romanism. It is urged, especially in some localities, that we ought to push all out denominational differences into the background and stand shoulder to shoulder against Popery. Very well; but all the time it seems to us that the best way to meet and withstand Romanism is to take Baptist ground; and if, in making common cause against it, we abandon or slight our Baptist principles, have a care lest we do harm in both directions. Besides, ours I the best position, we think, for winning Romanists to evangelical truth. Our brethren of the great Protestant persuasion are all holding some “developed” form of Christianity—not so far as developed as Popery, and some of them much less developed than others, but all having added something, in faith or governances or ordinances, to the primitive simplicity. The Roman Catholics know this, and habitually taunt them with accepting changes which the church has made while denying the church’s authority, and sometimes tell them that the Baptists alone are consistent in opposing the church. We may say that there are but two sorts of Christianity—church Christianity and Bible Christianity. If well-meaning Roman Catholics become dissatisfied with resting everything on the authority of the church and begin to look toward the Bible as authority, they are not likely, if thoughtful and earnest, to stop at any halfway-house, but to go forward to the position of those who really build on the Bible alone.

Or take the Protestants themselves. Our esteemed brethren are often wonderfully ignorant of our views. A distinguished minister, author of elaborate works on church history and the

creeds of Christendom, and of commentaries, etc., and brought in many ways into association with men of all denominations, is reported to have recently asked whether the Baptists practise trine immersion. A senator of the United States from one of the Southern State, and alumnus of a celebrated university, was visiting, about twenty years ago, a friend from another State, who casually remarked that he was a Baptist. "By the way," said the senator, "what kind of Baptists are the Pædobaptists?" Not many years ago a New York gentleman who had been United States minister to a foreign country published in the *New York Tribune* a review of a work, in which he said (substantially), "The author state that he is a Baptist pastor. We do not know whether he is a Pædobaptist or belongs to the straiter sect of Baptists." Now, of course these are exceptional cases; but they exemplify what is really a widespread and very great ignorance as to Baptists. And our friends of other denominations often do us great injustice because they do not understand our tenets and judge us by their own. As to "restricted communion," for example, Protestants usually hold the Calvinism view of the Lord's Supper, and so think that we are selfishly denying them a share in the spiritual blessing attached to its observance; while, with our Zwinglian view, we have no such thought or feeling. These things certainly show it to be a very desirable that we should bring our Christian brethren around us to know our distinctive opinions, in order that we may at least restrain them from wronging us through ignorance. If there were any who did not care to know, who were unwilling to be deprived of a peculiar accusation against us, with them our efforts would be vain. But most of those we encounter are truly good people, however prejudiced, and do not wish to be unjust; and if they will not take the trouble to seek information about our real views, they will not be unwilling to receive it when fitly presented. Christian charity may thus be promoted by correcting ignorance. And be sides, we may hope that some at least will be led to investigate the matters about which we differ Oh that our honored brethren would investigate! A highly-educated Episcopal lady some years ago, in one of our great cities, by a long and patient examination of her Bible, with no help but an Episcopal work in favor of infant baptism at length reached the firm conviction that it is without warrant in the Scripture, and became a Baptist. She afterward said, "I am satisfied that thousands would inevitably do likewise if they would only examine."

But why should we wish to make Baptists of our Protestant brethren? Are not many of them noble Christians—not a few of them among the excellent of the earth? If with their opinions they are so devout and useful, why wish them to adopt other opinions? Yes, there are among them many who command our high admiration for their beautiful Christian character and life; but have a care about your inferences from this fact. The same is true even of many Roman Catholics, in the past and in the represent; yet who doubts that the Romanist system as a whole is unfavorable to the production of the best types of piety? And it is not necessarily an arrogant and presumptuous thing in us if we strive to bring honored fellow-Christians to views which we honestly believe to be more scriptural, and therefore more wholesome. Apollos was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, and Aquila and Priscilla were lowly people who doubtless admired him; yet they taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly, and no doubt greatly rejoiced that he was willing to learn. He who tries to win people from other denominations to his own distinctive views *may* be a sectarian bigot; but he may also be a humble and loving Christian.

3. *To teach our distinctive views is a duty we owe to the unbelieving world.* We want unbelievers to accept Christianity; and it seems to us they are more likely to accept it when presented in its primitive simplicity, as the apostles themselves offered it to the men of their time. For meeting the assaults of infidels, we think out position is best. Those who insist that

Christianity is unfriendly to scientific investigations almost always point to the Romanists; they could not with the least plausibility say this of Baptists. And when an honest and earnest-minded skeptic is asked to examine with us this which claims to be a revelation from God, we do not have to lay beside it another book as determining beforehand what we must find in the Bible. Confessions of faith we have, some older and some more recent, which we respect and find useful; but save through some exceptional and voluntary agreement we are not bound by them. We can say to the skeptical inquirer, "Come and bring all the really ascertained light that has been derived from studying the material world, the history of man, or the highest philosophy, and we will gladly use it in helping to interpret this which we believe to be God's word;" and we can change our views of its meaning if real light from any other sources requires us to do so. There is, surely, in this freedom no small advantage for attracting the truly rational inquirer. But, while thus free to search the Scriptures, Baptists are eminently conservative in their whole tone and spirit; and for a reason. Their recognition of the Scriptures alone as religious authority, and the stress they lay on exact conformity to the requirements of Scripture, foster an instinctive feeling that they must stand or fall with the real truth and the real authority of the Bible. The union of freedom and conservatism is something most healthy and hopeful.

4. There is yet another reason—one full of solemn sweetness: *To teach our distinctive views is not only a duty to ourselves, to our fellow-Christians, and to the unbelieving world, but it is a duty we owe to Christ; it is a matter of simple loyalty to him.* Under the most solemn circumstances he uttered the express injunction. He met the eleven disciples by appointment on a mountain in Galilee; probably the more than five hundred of whom Paul speaks were present also: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and disciple all the 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." The things of which we have been speaking are not, we freely grant, the most important of religious truths and duties, but they are a part of the all things which Jesus commanded; what shall hinder us, what could excuse us, from observing them ourselves and teaching them to others? The Roman soldier who had taken the *sacramentum* did not then go to picking and choosing among the orders of his general: shall the baptized believer pick and choose which commands of Christ he will obey and which neglect and which alter? And, observe, I did not quote it all: Go, disciple, baptizing them, "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." Shall we neglect to teach as he required, and then claim the promise of his presence and help and blessing?

II. Means and Methods of Performing this Duty

1. *One of the best means of teaching our distinctive views to others is the thorough instruction of our own people.* Brethren of other persuasions need not be repelled or offended if they find us taking suitable occasion in pulpit discourses to teach our young members what Baptists believe, and why. If they perceive we are not striking at them through our members, but in simplicity and sincerity are feeding our flock, they may even listen with interest. And then, if they choose to take these things to themselves of their own accord and on their own responsibility, why, all the better, of course. But our young members greatly need such instruction for their own sakes, and it is often grievously neglected. On a recent occasion a cultivated young lady stated that she had never in her life heard a word from the pulpit as to the relation between baptism and the Lord's Supper, and yet she was the daughter of a well-known Baptist minister, and her pastors had been men of marked ability and earnest Baptists. Do you

think it a rare case? You can find such by thousands. And we ought to teach these things, in their measure, not only to our young members, but at home to the youth of our families. Suffer another fact for illustration: I once knew a lad of sixteen, well educated for his years, whose father was a zealous and quite influential Baptist layman and his pastor an able and eloquent minister. The boy had been baptized, and with great joy and trembling had sat by his father's side and taken bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus. Some weeks later a Methodist preacher came through the country—a rare thing in that neighborhood—and after preaching he very tenderly invited all Christians to come to the Table of the Lord. The boy wanted to go, and knew of no reason why he should not, but thought he would wait till his older brother and sisters went forward; and, as they did not, he inquired on the way home why it was, and on reaching home asked his father about it. The argument was made plain enough, but it was all new to him. Pastors, parents, and all had never thought it necessary to explain the matter to anybody. I mention these homely incidents with the hope of arousing such Baptists as my voice can reach to consider how it may be in their homes and their churches. Not should this instruction be neglected in our Sunday-schools. The current lesson-system can, of course, make no immediate provision for such instruction, but it leaves ample room for it by giving lessons that embrace controverted matters, and it calculates that ever denomination in its lesson-helps will explain these matters according to its views. It is clear, then, that Sunday-schools connected with Baptist churches ought to use Baptist helps for the study of the lesson. If some undenominational publications are so valuable for teachers as to be desired also, they ought to be used only in addition to those which explain according to Baptist beliefs. We do not withhold instruction in our Lord's other teachings till the pupil has become a believer, and why should we withhold it as to his commands regarding church-membership and ordinances?

Three benefits ought to follow from thus teaching our youth: *First*, it will restrain them from hereafter going to other denominations through ignorance. Some reasons for such change cannot be touched by instruction. But not a few take such a step because they were never taught the scriptural grounds for Baptist usage, and so they readily fall in with the plausible idea that "one church is good as another if the heart is right." There can be no doubt that well-meaning persons have in this way been lost to us whom early instruction might have retained. *Secondly*, we may thus render them better Christians. I fully agree with an eminent Presbyterian minister who recently said, "We make people better Christians by making them better Presbyterians, better Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians." There are some very excellent people in our time who think it a merit to be entirely undenominational, and who proclaim that they "love one church as well as another." But, where not deluded, such persons are few and quite exceptional; in general, the truest, most devoted, and most useful Christians are strong in their denominational convictions and attachments. I repeat, then, that by proper instruction in our distinctive views we shall really make our young people better Christians. And, *thirdly*, we thus prepare them to explain and advocate these views in conversation—a thing which is often called for, and when properly managed may be very useful.

2. *If actions speak louder than words, we may practically teach our distinctive views by everything that builds up our churches in Christian character and promotes their legitimate influence.* Baptists are in some respects placed at serious disadvantage in consequence of trying to do their duty. They have not restricted their ministry to men who had a certain fixed grade of education, but have encouraged all to preach who felt moved to do so, and whom the churches were willing to hear. In this way they have greatly helped to meet the vast demand in our country, and have gained a powerful hold upon the masses. What would have become of the

scattered millions in this new country had it not been for the Methodists, the Baptists, and some others who have pursued a like course? But the result is, that we have a great mass of comparatively uneducated ministers and members. Moreover, our Episcopal and Presbyterian brethren brought over the sea the social influence derived from an established church; and this social superiority they have easily maintained in many of our cities; particularly as their ministry was at the same time restricted to men having considerable education. The result is that, while Baptists have many families of excellent social position and influence, and many ministers of high cultivation, yet, in virtue of having a great number who are in these respects comparatively wanting, they have to bear, as a denomination, the odium of social and educational inferiority. I do not regret this as regards our past. I think our principle as to the ministry is right, and I rejoice that we have been able to take hold of the multitude. But we must strive earnestly to better this situation in the future by steadily lifting up this great body of people as fast as we can. Whatever elevates the educational condition of our denomination or gives more of social influence, provided this be not gained by worldly conformity, will help in securing respect and attention for our distinctive tenets. And a like effect will be produced by the increasing development of benevolence among our churches, and by a completer report of what is actually done.

3. *If we wish to teach our distinctive views to others, it is necessary to understand those whom we propose to reach.* I remember a teacher of modern languages who would often elaborately explain some French or German or other idiom with which we had no difficulty at all, and then pass over as not needing explanation many a phrase we could not understand. He knew the language he was teaching, but was not well acquainted with the language of his pupils. If we would in any way teach effectively, we must know how things look to the persons addressed; we must get their point of view. Now, Baptists are not, on the whole, so ignorant of the denominational opinions of others Christians as they are of ours, because our circumstances have compelled us to give some attention to that matter. Yet we need a much better acquaintance with them if we would speak to any purpose in public or private I respectfully urge upon all ministers and upon intelligent private members of both sexes that they shall study, by reading and personal inquiry, each of the leading religious bodies with which they have to do—shall study them in three respects: (a) Inquire what are the characteristic peculiarities of this body of Christians differencing them from others, and if possible get at the fundamental opinions which account for these peculiarities. (b) Consider in what respects they particularly deserve our admiration and, with the necessary changes, our imitation. Each denomination emphasizes certain aspects of truth or departments of duty, and will in regard to these present us a very instructive and inspiring model. (c) Strive to ascertain how they regard our tenets, practices, and spirit—what things in us they especially dislike, and with what they might easily feel sympathy.

Such inquiries will help us in several ways. They may restrain the tendency to react from what we regard as the errors of others into an opposite extreme, as Protestants have done with reference to some errors of Popery, and many Baptists with reference to prelatical or pastoral domination, to clerical support, etc. They may check the unconscious adoption or imitation of opinions, sentiments, or phrases which are inconsistent, or at least incongruous, in us. We rejoice in that “progress of Baptist principles” among Pædobaptists which Dr. Curtis’s book so well describes, and perhaps fail to inquire whether there be not a counter-influence which deserves better attention, and which may not be wholly beneficial. And then this study of other denominations will enable us better to adapt ourselves to those whom we would influence. When you address to Methodists an article suited to High Churchmen, or *vice versâ*, what in the world are you thinking about?

4. *We should study the wise treatment of controverted topics.* Upon this point I venture to offer several practical suggestions for what they are worth.

(a) Years ago I asked the now lamented Dr. Jeter how he managed about matters in dispute between us and other denominations. His reply was, in substance, “I never go out of my way to avoid such topics, and never go out of my way to find them. When naturally suggested by my subject or the circumstances, I speak of them, and I try to speak without timid fear of giving offence, and without fierce vehemence, as if taking hostility for granted, but just treating these matters, so far as I can, in the same tone with which I speak of other thing.” This seemed to me then, and still seems, an admirable statement of the course it is generally best to pursue. Some are constantly going out of their way to find such topics through a bred-and-born love of controversy or a mistaken judgment as to its necessity and benefits. Others go out of their way to avoid all disputed questions, and want nothing to do with controversy of any kind. This latter class might be advised to study the history and recorded writings of a man named Paul. He did not shrink from controversy. Yea, and his Master and ours is polemical on every page of his recorded discourses, always striking at some error or evil practice of the people around him.

(b) Dr. Jeter’s plan may further suggest—what I think is true—that it is commonly better to treat these topics as they occur in our ordinary discourses. Set sermons have certain advantages; even public debates may still be useful in some few quarters, though most of us think their day of usefulness on this country is passed. But set sermons forewarn our hearers holding different opinions to come with armor buckled and visor closed, watching that no shaft shall reach them; while some excellent people take them as an invitation to stay away. They are no doubt sometimes appropriate and helpful, but in general the other course can scarcely fail to prove best.

(c) I think it very undesirable to connect sharp polemics with the actual administration of ordinances. Do not go into a defence of our restriction of the Lord’s Supper when about to take the bread and wine. Whatever you can say will repel some hearers and deeply pain some others, while such a discussion can scarcely prove the best preparation for partaking. Try to bring out the sweet and blessed meaning of the ordinance and to observe it with unpretending reverence and solemnity, and it will itself teach all concerned. I think Baptists often mar the wholesome solemnity of this ordinance through the persuasion that they ought then and there to defend their restricted invitation. And when about to baptize, it is usually best simply to read the New Testament passages which give the history and significance of the ordinance, and then with solemn prayer and a carefully-prepared and reverent administration of the rite to leave it and the Scripture to make their own impression. If an address or sermon be given to present the practical lessons of baptism, especially that we should walk in newness of life, that will be more seemly, and often more convincing, than to argue the proper subjects and proper action of baptism. Of course, any such suggestion as this must be subject to exception, but I am persuaded it will generally hold good.

(d) We should use mainly arguments drawn from the English Scriptures and from common experience or reflection; only occasionally those which depend on learning. Scholarship is greatly to be desired in ministers—and may we have much more of it!—but the highest function of scholarship in preaching is to take assured results and make them plain to the general understanding, and certain thorough evidence which the unlearned can appreciate. If you pour a flood of learning about your hearer, and he remembers that two Sundays ago there was a torrent of learning from Dr. Somebody on the other side, then, as he does not understand and cannot

judge, he is apt to conclude that he will not believe either of you. And do not let us beware of using doubtful arguments as if they were conclusive.

(e) We may treat these subjects by other means as well as by preaching. Many opportunities will occur in conversation, for one who has a cultivated social tact and conversational skill, to relieve some prejudice, parry some thrust, or suggest some point for research or reflection, far more effectively than it can be done in the pulpit, and this without unpleasantly obtruding such subjects or in any wise violating the delicate proprieties of life. And carefully chosen tracts, books, or periodicals will often reinforce the sermon or conversation, or even reach some who would not listen to any public or private spoken words. We have already a great wealth of good literature of this kind, with which preachers and intelligent private members should make themselves as thoroughly acquainted as possible, so that they may know how to select precisely the most suitable for every case—a matter of the very highest importance.

(f) We must always speak of controverted subjects in a loving spirit. Baptists occupy, of necessity, a polemical position; let us earnestly strive to show that it is possible to maintain a position in the spirit of true Christian love. This is really good policy; and, what is ten thousand times more, it is right.

5. *Let us gladly co-operate with our fellow-Christians of other persuasions in general Christian work as far as we can without sacrificing our convictions.* Men who think ill of us are sometimes sorely perplexed. They say, “Look at these narrow-minded, bigoted ‘close-communion’ Baptists! How zealously they work in our union enterprise! how loving they seem to be! I don’t understand it” It is well to increase this perplexity. At the same time, we must not allow our conscientious differences to be belittled. Sometimes in a union service you will hear a well-meaning and warm hearted man begin to gush, till at length he speaks quite scornfully of the trifles that divide us. In such a case one must find some means of diverting the dear brother’s mind to another topic, and either publicly or privately inform him that such talk will not quite do. Indeed, this is coming to be better understood that was the case a few years ago. In Young Men’s Christian Associations, for example, one seldom encounters now the unwise speeches in this respect that were once somewhat common. We must learn how to distinguish between abandonment of principles and mere practical concessions in order to conciliate—a distinction well illustrated for us in Acts xv. and in Paul’s action as to Titus and Timothy. In the case of Titus the apostle would not yield an inch, would not give place for an hour, because a distinct issue of principle was made; and shortly after he voluntarily did, in the case of Timothy, what he had before refused, there being now no issue of principle. I may sometimes be difficult to make the distinction, but that is a difficulty we may not shirk. One of the great practical problems of the Christian life, especially in our times, is to stand squarely for truth and squarely against error, and yet to maintain hearty charity toward Christians who differ with us. This assuredly can be done. The very truest and sweetest Christian charity is actually shown by some of those who stand most firmly by their distinctive opinions.

6. *Finally, let us cultivate unity among ourselves.* The Baptists of this vast country are, in fact, united. Dr. Barnas Sears, who had exceptional opportunities of observing, spoke to me not long before his death of the fact that our theological seminaries are all teaching the same doctrines without any central authority to keep them united. And the fact is more general. Apart from mere excrescences, American Baptists are wonderfully agreed—wonderfully, if you remember it as an agreement reached and maintained in perfect freedom. This unity becomes more manifest to anyone in proportion as he gains a wider acquaintance. For example—pardon my taking local names to illustrate—there is any a brother in Mississippi with no knowledge of

New England who, if he should spend a few weeks in Boston, would be astonished to find himself surrounded by real, right-down Baptists. And is some brethren in New England should go among those dreadful Landmarkers, whom they have seen so severely censured by newspapers that do not seem to know even the meaning of the term, they would conclude that most of the said Landmarkers are really very much like themselves, and not dreadful at all. Dr. Fuller was fond of giving a story told by William Jay. Mr. Jay walked out one day in a dense English fog. Presently he saw approaching him a huge and monstrous object that made him start. As they drew nearer together it assumed the shape of a gigantic man; and when they met, it was his own brother John.

And American Baptists are becoming more united just now. A few years ago there was in some quarters a movement toward the propagation of “open communion” which at a distance awakened concern. But the estimable brethren engaged in that movement have gone in peace or have peacefully subsided into quiet. And in some other quarters ultraists are losing influence, and brethren who once followed them seem now disposed not at all to abandon any principle, but to avoid pushing differences among ourselves into an occasion of denominational disruption. So the general outlook is now very encouraging.

Let us cultivate, I say, this unity among ourselves. In order to do so, our watchwords must be freedom, forbearance, patience. There can be no constrained unity among us. The genius of our ideas and institutions quite forbids it. That newspaper, seminary, or society which undertakes to coerce American Baptists into unity will soon weary of the task. We must be forbearing and patient, and not discouraged by many things which under the circumstances are to be looked for. Competing journals and other institutions may get up an occasional breeze; each great city may show a too exclusive interest in societies there located: that is natural, if not wise; personal rivalries may sometimes curiously complicate themselves with questions of principle and of general expediency: it may cause regret, but need not cause wonder; East and West may pull apart in some respects, and North and South; even the “celestial minds” of our noble women may not always perfectly agree about organizations; we co-operate fully in some matters, partially in some, perhaps work separately in others, yet with hearty fraternal kindness,—but let us cultivate freedom, forbearance, patience, and we shall be substantially united more and more.

This growing unity among ourselves gives us increasing power to impress our denominational opinions to others; and the more zealously we strive to teach our distinctive views to others, the more we shall become united among ourselves.