

Anna Clayton

The Quaker after Truth. CHAPTER VIII. (Continued.)

"Thank you, sir, for the privilege, but I thought it was a church ordinance, and that there was no church but the Baptist church."

"I well, we had forgotten about that; how you do bother us! But you can't come with us, sir, it is against our principles! Do not you know, sir, what our great Andrew Fuller said? Why, sir, he said, 'The tendency of mixed Communions is to annihilate, as such, all the Baptist churches in Christendom! Do you seek to promote the dissolution and ruin of the Baptist denomination as such? If you do not, take heed to your ways.' Is not this sufficient caution? Shall we not heed the warning coming from not only such a man as Andrew Fuller, but also from all learned Baptist divines? Do you see that it is done with us, sir, at the Lord's table—this is the matter—and now, please just let us alone!"

Elder Clayton leaned his head upon his hand, and commenced with his own thoughts. "Anna," he said at length, "it is true, every word of it is true. But you must be advised that for twenty years here I have been advocating such principles, and really I do not know what I was advocating."

"If you should choose the other alternative," continued Anna, "and admit that 'Pedobaptist Societies' are churches, as the terms are, then, you must be equal to the Baptists in church membership, and consequently have a legal right to commune, as much as a Baptist church; and further, it would be no more illegal for a Baptist to commune with them, than with any Baptist church of which he is not a member. If they are churches, they have an equal right to the Lord's table, and a right to wherever and whenever the table is spread."

"You are right, Anna," said Elder Clayton; "and henceforth, and ever after, I must be an open communionist. But the baptism—I do not understand what people have a right to those notions; and I mean those who believe in Pedobaptism and sprinkling, and do not want to be baptized, but simply to commune with those who are doing a great wrong in using upon the principle to us."

"I shall go over to Deacon Sims," continued Elder Clayton, "not to baptize, but to commune with him, to comfort and strengthen. And I hope of the Spirit of Christ in them to recognize Christians as Christians, and fellowship them as such, let them be called by what name they will. And not only recognize individual Christians, but recognize the churches which God recognizes. Henceforward and forever, as long as I live," he continued, rising to his feet, and looking up as though calling heaven to witness, "I will never by a straw to the way of Christian fellowship and communion—God's gifts to the church—never, never, never. Then you are fully determined?"

Anna Clayton entered. Her face was pale, and her eyes were full of tears. She had been waiting for her husband to return from the meeting. She had heard the report of his conversion, and she was now standing before him, her heart full of joy and sorrow.

"The door opened, and Brother Burton and Mother Clayton entered. Mother Clayton, with her characteristic impetuosity, the broke forth: 'So then, Miss Anna, you've been proselyting! I thought the mischief was in it! Let me catch you at it again, if you think best! Why couldst you let Mary alone, and not get her on the track to serve the devil too?'

"Stop, mother," replied Anna, "she thought me, I did not force my principles on her, she drew them from me. Do you call that proselyting?"

"Yes, I do call that proselyting. Let me catch you at it again! I won't have such a hypocrite—"

"I cannot spare Anna," replied Elder Clayton, "for she is the light of the household; nor can I make an example of Deacon Sims, for if I had been there I would have done so."

"The fact is, Brother Burton, I am convinced that close communion is not based on Gospel principles; and I am determined that I will neither be confined to them myself, nor enforce them upon others."

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to be here no more forever. And now, a few hours hence and that relation will be broken some other man will fill my place, and break the bread of life to you; but I would like the most season of prayer before this hour arrives. Brothers and sisters let us pray."

The good man knelt down, surrounded by his friends, and poured out his soul to God, craving his blessing on the church, and the dear precious souls kneeling with him at the mercy-seat. He was always eloquent in prayer; but now the earnestness and depth of his feelings gave tenfold power and beauty to his thoughts and expressions. There was a meekness and pathos in them, that touched the hearts of his listeners, moving them even to tears; some even sobbed aloud. Day on Sims followed over his pastor and prayed earnestly for God's blessing to follow the brothers and sisters of the church which he was no longer a member—the church with which he had been connected for so many years.

Elder Clayton gave her legs lord a good deal of respectful indignation, and good cause. Brother Burton seemed ill at ease. He paced up and down the room, and then said that he would like a private interview with Elder Clayton, whereupon Anna withdrew from the study, and left them alone.

"The mischief is in it!" exclaimed Brother Burton, "but certainly! Every thing is going wrong. The truth is, Brother Clayton, you must move the girl's mother, or you might as well give up the ship. It is just as I told you, two-thirds of the young people will believe anything she tells them."

"Yes; Anna's word was always to be depended on. That evening this afternoon," continued Brother Burton, "has had the very worst influence. You should have seen how your church members flocked in to hear him. And I've been told that Deacon Sims and his wife partook of the Communion with him. You must be right to it wherever and whenever the table is spread."

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