

E V I L S

OF

INFANT BAPTISM.

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EVILS OF INFANT BAPTISM.

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”—*Gal. v. 9.*

IT cannot for a moment be doubted that the servants of Christ should honor and defend his truth. And I mean by “his truth,” comprehensively, “the gospel of the kingdom.” For the Saviour of men, in his ever memorable response to Pilate, spoke distinctly of his kingdom as being not of this world, not dependent on the sword for existence, or growth, or defence, and then added this significant statement: “To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world, that I may bear witness to the truth.” From which language, interpreted by the context, I infer that the kingdom of Christ

rests upon truth, and is to be enlarged and defended by faithfully manifesting the truth, that is to say, by declaring the facts, the principles, the laws, the duties, and the ends of that kingdom, or, to gather all into a single phrase, by preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Whatever Jesus taught, either by his own lips, or by the mouth of his apostles, is therefore embraced in the truth.

But is it necessary to oppose error in order to honor and defend truth? Must we protest in so many words against false doctrine, in order to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?" These questions may be answered, no, and yes, according to circumstances and the points in debate. For consistent thinkers the establishment of a given truth is doubtless the overthrow of the opposite error. And this method of action has sometimes great advantages. It is often more effectual than any other, and always more agreeable. It may be safely chosen when the views in question are plainly and directly opposed to each other. Thus the doctrine of universal salvation may be completely demolished by proving that some of

our race reject the only means of salvation, and are lost forever; for that doctrine is a formulated denial of the final ruin of a single soul, and the simplest mind will see that it cannot be true, if any perish. But there are errors as to doctrine and duty which do not stand out in the light of day, each over against an opposite truth, and so sharply defined, so equally matched with that contrasted truth, that the reception of the one carries with it perforce a rejection of the other. Far oftener is error associated with truth, or clad in the garments of truth, and so able to deceive the unwary. Far oftener is it a tincture of evil permeating the mass of truth, like the leaven of which the apostle speaks in my text.

For it is agreed by the best interpreters that in this place leaven is an emblem of evil, that it symbolizes either teachers of error, or the error which they teach. I adopt the latter sense, as being more natural and obvious than the former; but if the former was intended by the apostle, the text is still pertinent to my theme—the "Evils of Infant Baptism,"—for false teachers do evil by means of the error which they diffuse. It is not their personal influence, their eloquence,

or their persuasiveness which, in and of itself, poisons and corrupts, but it is the false doctrine commended thereby. Silently, secretly, steadily, does this work its way through every particle of the lump, and though small in amount, effects a startling change in the quality and state of the whole. Judaism, sometimes represented in this epistle by circumcision, its initial rite, is here in the mind of Paul, and is denounced by him as leaven pervading the whole lump with evil. A small error it might have seemed to those who thought it an error; not a formal rejection of Christ, the Lord, but only a perpetuation of the type with the reality which it typified; only a clinging to the shadow as well as the substance which it outlived; only a retention of the carnal ordinance along with the law of life; only a commingling of the natural with the spiritual, of that which constituted one a Jew outwardly with that which constituted one a Jew inwardly, tending to obscure the truth and darken the mind—this it was, and only this, which the apostle looked upon as an error endangering the very life of a pure Christianity and church. Good as Judaism certainly had been in its own

day and for its appointed service, it was no more fit to be connected with a Christian church, than is the body of a worm to be united with the butterfly that has escaped from it, or the natural body of man to be joined with his glorified body; and every attempt to combine the two must result in harm to Christian doctrine and life.

A similar view must be taken of infant baptism. It has no natural place in the kingdom of Christ. Hence those who hold, in other respects, the apostolic doctrine as to that kingdom, find it the hardest task to justify this practice, and make it coalesce with the remaining elements of their creed. The farther one moves from the Papal Church towards the Apostolic, the more difficult does the comprehension of infant baptism become, and the more liable is it to be neglected as a practice of uncertain origin. The rite seems to be at home in the Papal Church, and everything else agrees so perfectly with it, that one is justified in surmising that infant baptism is, in fact, the "little leaven that has leavened the whole lump," the tincture of error which has corrupted every part of the system. But I must pass from this general

statement, and endeavor to point out with all fidelity, and at the same time with sincere good will to Christians of every name, some of the evils of infant baptism.

I. *Infant baptism takes away from the Christian ordinance a large part of its meaning.*

If the Papal theory of a mysterious, sacramental virtue in baptism is unworthy of confidence, and the efficacy of the rite, as a means of grace, depends largely upon the truth which it brings into the mind and heart, anything which weakens its significance must be an evil; and the greatness of the evil must correspond with the amount of truth thus ignored and lost.* Now, the Sacred Record shows that in the apostolic age, Christian baptism was a solemn profession of faith in Christ on the part of him who received it. For, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul says to the Christians of that province:

* The translator, reformer, and martyr, Tyndale, says of the sacraments: "There is none other virtue in them than to testify and exhibit to the senses and understanding the covenants and promises made in Christ's blood;" and, "where the sacraments or ceremonies are not rightly understood, there they be clearly unprofitable."—*Tyndale's Rational Theology in England*. etc., p. 41.

"Ye are all sons of God through the (your) faith in Christ Jesus. For all ye who were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." Here the apostle alleges the fact of their having put on Christ, by their own act, in baptism as an evidence of their faith in Christ, and so of their sonship to God. "Ye are all sons of God, for ye have all believed in Christ, and ye have all believed in Christ, for ye have all taken him solemnly to be your Lord and your life, by submitting to baptism. If your profession in this act was sincere, ye are truly identified with Christ by faith, and therefore are sons of God." The only alternative to this view of Paul's language, is one that makes it teach the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; for he could not have appealed to the fact of their baptism as an evidence of their faith, unless it was either the root or the fruit of faith, unless it either originated or attested faith; and I need not state to this assembly the reasons which require us to look upon the act of putting on Christ in baptism as an avowal of faith, rather than a production of it, for the first time, in the heart.

With this passage may be compared another, addressed by the apostle to Christians of his own day: "Know ye not, that all we who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through our baptism into his death; that, like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life."

The translation which I have read is that of Dean Alford. A little further on they are exhorted to reckon themselves "to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." In the baptismal symbol and profession they had died to sin, separating themselves formally from the love and service of it, even as Christ, their Lord, in another way and respect, had also died to sin, separating himself from its burden and curse forevermore. Their baptism was an act by which they renounced openly the service of Satan and accepted that of Christ. This was true of all the faithful in Rome; but it is not true of persons christened in infancy. Their own death to sin, their own entrance upon a new life, their own union with Christ, cannot be ex-

pressed by an ordinance administered without their knowledge or consent.

In harmony with my interpretation of these two passages are the several notices of baptism in the Acts of the Apostles. When the hearers of Peter on the day of Pentecost gladly received his word, they were baptized, but not before. When the people of Samaria believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women. When the Ethiopian eunuch listened to the same Evangelist proclaiming Jesus, and asked the privilege of putting on Christ by baptism, the rite was promptly administered. Saul of Tarsus was not baptized until he gave evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus; nor Cornelius until he received the gift of the Holy Spirit; nor Lydia until her heart was opened by the Lord to attend to the words of Paul; nor the jailer until he believed, and all his house. In every instance cited, baptism appears to have followed and attested faith in Christ; and I find no case recorded in the New Testament where this ordinance was not understood to be a declaration of such faith. Even

John's Baptism signified a change of mind,* an entrance upon a new and spiritual life, which had already brought forth its appropriate fruits. When, therefore, the rite of baptism is applied to infants, a large part, and it may be the most important part, of its meaning is lost; and if, as we all believe, it was divinely instituted to symbolize and emphasize certain great truths in "the gospel of the kingdom," it must be an evil and a sin to disavow, or even ignore, one half its original significance. If any man deems this language severe, let him weigh the following words from the last chapter of Revelation: "I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, that if any one shall add to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any one shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city." It must not be forgotten by us that the truth of God is sacred, whether expressed in words or in

* *Μεράνοια*, a strong and far-reaching word, applied only in the New Testament to a radical and spiritual change.

ordinances; and it is not in our power to say confidently that more evil is done by adding to that truth than by taking from it; by introducing rites not prescribed by the Founder of our religion, than by mutilating or misapplying those prescribed.

It is also proper for me to suggest that the application of baptism to infants not only takes away from the Christian rite a large part of its meaning, but that it tends to a change of the rite itself, by substituting affusion or sprinkling for immersion, and thus diminishing still further its original significance. While saying this, I do not forget the practice of the Greek Church, numbering so many millions, but I am satisfied, nevertheless, that the feebleness of infancy has had much to do in reconciling parents and pastors to what Cyprian calls "a compend, or abridgment," of this holy ordinance.* To this conviction I am brought by the nature of

* See *Cypriani Opera*, i. p. 197 (Gersdorf's ed.). "In sacramentis salutaribus necessitate cogente et Deo indulgentiam suam largiente totum credentibus conferunt divina compendia." Cyprian is here speaking of cases where "adspergi vel perfundi videntur *ægri*, cum gratiam dominicam consequuntur."

the case and the records of history, without appealing to the valid principle that deviation from apostolic example in one respect renders further deviation comparatively easy.

But does the substitution of affusion or sprinkling for baptism lessen its significance? Beyond a doubt this is to be answered in the affirmative; for, according to the obvious meaning of Paul's language in the sixth chapter of Romans, baptism represents vividly the death, burial, and resurrection of the candidate, his dying, through faith in the death of Christ, to sin and the law, and his rising through faith to a new life unto God, and free obedience. But, quite apart from this inspired exposition of the symbolism of the rite, immersion suggests to the mind all that sprinkling does, and far more.

Not many years ago a thoughtful woman made known to me her desire to be immersed, although she had been sprinkled in early life. When asked why she felt so strong a desire for immersion, her reply included and emphasized this declaration: "I feel that I ought to express in baptism the devotion of my whole being to the Lord." And in a recent sermon by Mr. Spur-

geon, the following words are addressed to the members of his church:

"We who have been baptized upon profession of our faith, were taught in that solemn ordinance to bless the Lord with our entire being, for we were not sprinkled here or there; but we were, in the outward sign, buried with the Lord Jesus in baptism unto death, and we were immersed into the name of the Triune God. If our baptism meant anything, it declared that we were henceforth dead to the world, and owned no life but that which came to us by the way of the resurrection of Jesus. Over our heads the liquid water flowed, for we resigned the brain, with all its powers of thought, to Jesus; over the heart, the veins, the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the significant element poured itself, symbol of that universal consecration which deluges all the inward nature of every sanctified believer. My baptized brethren, I charge you, belie not your profession."

Now if this appeal rests upon the symbolism of the rite, as I believe it does, and if the application of it to infants has tended to the substitution of sprinkling for immersion, the evil has

been great. For truth has been hidden, truth which the Saviour came into the world to reveal, truth which he was pleased to signalize and enforce by a holy ordinance, truth which a disciple in the freshness of his first love wishes to confess in the clearest manner possible. Who can measure the evil resulting from the practice of withdrawing such truth from the eyes of men?

I must now add, that young converts do often, if not always, esteem it a privilege to put on Christ by baptism, and sometimes express regret at their being prevented from so doing by a rite imposed upon them in infancy. But what is even more to be deplored, some who believe it their duty to avow their new-born faith and love by following the Lord in baptism, are led by their regard for the feelings of others to stifle their own convictions and wrong their own souls. This surely is a sore evil under the sun; and, so far as I can see, it is due to the practice of infant baptism.

II. *Infant baptism ascribes to the ordinance an imaginary virtue.*

I do not for a moment claim that it originated a belief in baptismal regeneration; for an im-

partial study of the Christian literature of the first three centuries after Christ will reveal the fact, that a certain regenerating efficacy was attributed to baptism long before the latter was applied to infants. Decisive proof of this may be found in the First Apology of Justin Martyr,* and in the Shepherd of Hermas. The Shepherd was written about the middle of the second century, and it plainly asserts that not even the saints of a former dispensation could be saved through Christ, without going down into the baptismal waters and experiencing their life-giving virtue. Hence the apostles, after finishing their earthly course, are said to have preached Christ and administered baptism to the patriarchs in Hades. If, then, the question of priority between the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and the practice of infant baptism is answered from history, the doctrine must be said to have preceded the practice by more than fifty years. And, if it went before the practice, it must have led to it. For let any man believe two things, namely, that infants need the new

* See the account of Baptism, § 61.

birth in order to be saved, and that this birth is only realized in baptism, and an argument of tremendous cogency will urge him to apply the rite to babes, even before they are eight days old.* But the writings of the early Christians reveal their belief of these two things more than half a century before the faintest traces of infant baptism appear. The nature of the evidence and the nature of the case compel us therefore to say, that the practice of infant baptism owed its first existence to the theory of baptismal regeneration.†

* Note the words of Cyprian (i. p. 168, Gersdorf's ed.). "Quantum vero ad causam infantium pertinet, quos dixisti intra secundum vel tertium diem, quo nati sint, constitutos baptizari non oportere, et considerandam esse legem circumcisionis antiquæ, ut intra octavum diem eum, qui natus est, baptizandum non putares, longe aliud in concilio nostro omnibus visum est. In hoc enim quod tu putabas esse faciendum, nemo consensit, sed universi potius judicamus nulli homini nato misericordiam Dei et gratiam denegandam." The whole letter and argument are a curiosity, but they show that baptism was deemed necessary to the salvation of infants.

† And this circumstance accounts for the slight resistance which it encountered at the outset. The tendency of the period was towards ritualism. Tertullian, who first refers to infant baptism, though only to oppose it, refers

But, if the theory originated the practice, the practice has reacted in favor of the theory. For the two are natural allies, and neither is strong apart from the other. As it is well-nigh impossible to maintain infant baptism without the aid of that theory, so I believe it would be found impossible to support that theory for a long time without the complement and strength afforded by the practice.

It is indeed true that some justify the practice on the single ground that infants are brought into covenant relations with Christ by baptism,

also to the sign of the cross as commonly employed; and to various established customs which followed baptism—the anointing of the candidate, the imposition of hands, the eating of milk and honey, and the refraining from the bath for a whole week. Now it is impossible for any one to show when these and other ceremonies were first introduced. Ritualism was in the air, and the introduction of new rites, or the wider application of existing rites, was natural and easy. Hence, the exact date of the rise of infant baptism can no more be given than the exact date of the rise of the other additions to apostolic baptism, or the time when other ceremonies were first introduced. The spirit of the age and the culture of the people made these ritual innovations welcome, and not until their evil effects began to be in some degree obvious, could we expect to meet with remonstrances against them.

while all who are not baptized are left to the uncovenanted mercy of God. The effect of the ordinance is not therefore supposed to be moral, in the heart or character, but rather civil or perhaps legal, in the standing of infants before God. They are more likely to be converted in after life, because the seal of the covenant is applied to them in infancy, securing to them a larger measure of privilege or grace. Thus, many years ago, an orthodox clergyman lost a disobedient son by drowning. There was very little, I suppose, in the lad's character to relieve the father's anguish, yet the latter expressed a hope, founded on the single fact of his early baptism, that his boy had fallen asleep in Jesus.* And this instance is but one of many. For all who believe in infant baptism have an

* That pious father, who had doubtless offered prayer a thousand times in the name of Jesus for his wayward son, and who knew and taught that the prayer of God's dear children will be heard by their heavenly Father, yea, heard it may be sometimes in the very hour of death, forgot all the promises of God in this respect, and found his only comfort in thinking of an outward rite administered to his child in infancy. I sympathize profoundly with his sorrow, but, with the New Testament in my hands, I wonder at the direction in which he turned for relief,

impression that, in some way and to some extent, the saving grace of God depends on the reception of this rite. Ignoring the proper use and blessing of baptism, as a sacred and symbolical confession of Christ, which contributes to growth in character and life, they fix their attention upon its supposed virtue in procuring or producing the new birth. Ten years ago I had a long interview with a distinguished theologian of Berlin, in which the progress of our views in Prussia was freely discussed. He conceded at once that neither sprinkling nor pouring was sanctioned by the apostles; their baptism included an immersion of the subject in water; but he strenuously asserted that the ordinance must be useless, if it be not either a cause or a condition of the new birth. He seemed unable to comprehend its value as a testimony to the truth and as a means of grace to believers. Moreover, he deplored the labors of our brethren in Germany for two reasons especially; first, because the most earnest Christians were drawn from the Lutheran Church into the Baptist ranks; and, secondly, because the religious welfare of the people was amply

secured by the established faith. When reminded by me that great multitudes appeared to contemn the law of God, the gospel of Christ, and the holy Sabbath, he appealed to their having received baptism and the eucharist, as the ground of his belief in their ultimate salvation. His reliance was placed on sacramental grace. And this professor of theology is a representative man, a teacher of the faith that rules in the fatherland. His views are honored by the Lutheran Church of to-day.

Nor are they confined to the members of that Church, but are accepted by a large part of the Church of England and of the Church of Scotland, together with all who belong to either the Papal or the Greek Church. Baptismal regeneration is therefore taught by an overwhelming majority of those that apply the rite to infants. And is not this doctrine the logical result of their practice? If the church is the kingdom of Christ; if babes must be renewed in order to share the life of that kingdom; and if they are to receive baptism, which, in the case of adults, conditions or attests their entrance upon that life, must not this ordinance in some

way rescue the infant soul from ruin by imparting grace? It can convey no truth to the mind of the babe; it can testify of no conscious change, experience, or purpose in the heart of the babe; but may it not, as a sacrament, work in the unconscious spirit, infusing the principle of a holy life? The application of the rite being conceded, what more comforting theory of its virtue can be imagined? This theory is a key which opens the lock and explains the usage; therefore it must be and is correct.

But if the practice were to be laid aside as unscriptural, or were to be everywhere neglected as of doubtful origin and utility; if baptism were for any good reason to be again restricted to persons who seek it of their own accord, how long would it be, think you, before nearly all that know the Lord would accept the obvious meaning of the New Testament, and see in this ordinance an acknowledgment of grace already received, a profession of faith already implanted in the heart, a symbol of the new birth from God, manifesting itself to the world in cheerful obedience? Let infant baptism pass away, and the seductive error of baptismal regeneration will

not long survive. Let infant baptism pass away, and believers' baptism, ordained by Christ and honored by the apostles, will soon take its place—a change that cannot, I verily believe, be sought too kindly, too conscientiously, and too persistently by the friends of Jesus. Says Dr. Hodge: "The reception of baptism, so far as adults are concerned, is an intelligent, voluntary act, which from its nature involves, 1st, a profession of faith in Christ, and 2d, a promise of allegiance to him. This is clear from the command of Christ to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. A disciple, however, is both a recipient of doctrines taught and a follower. Everyone, therefore, who is made a disciple by baptism, enrolls himself among the number of those who receive Christ as their teacher and Lord, and who profess obedience and devotion to his service. This is further clear from the uniform practice of the apostles. In every case on record of their administering the rite, it was on the condition of a profession of faith on the part of the recipient. This has also in all ages been the practice of the church. No

man was admitted to baptism without an intelligent profession of faith in Christ, and a solemn engagement of obedience to him. The practice of Romanist missionaries, in baptizing the heathen in crowds, can hardly be considered as invalidating this statement." These sentences from the pen of a distinguished Pedobaptist divine, though perhaps a little too unqualified, confirm my position. For according to their testimony, the application of baptism to adults has in every age and in all branches of the church been restricted to those who avow their faith in Christ. But Paul distinctly affirms that "No one can call Jesus Lord, but in the Holy Ghost;" and John reiterates the same truth by saying, that "Every one who believeth that Jesus is the Christ, hath been begotten of God." Admit the statement of Dr. Hodge, that, by the common, if not universal consent of Christians, faith should precede baptism in the case of adults, and the testimony of the apostles, that the work of the Spirit in regeneration is presupposed by faith, and it follows, that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration would pass away with the practice of infant baptism, or at least would

soon follow after it. The latter may therefore be justly charged with aiding and abetting the evil involved in the former.

III. *Infant baptism mars the constitution of the Christian churches.*

To prove this I am called to show that Christian churches ought to be composed of such persons only as give credible evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus; for infant baptism brings into them persons who do not give this evidence. Your attention is therefore invited to but a single feature of an apostolic church. It was a company of believers in Christ. I do not mean to say that there were no hypocrites in it, for Judas and Ananias and Simon Magus bore the name of disciples for a time; and so fair a show of sincerity did they make, that only an eye which pierces through every disguise could detect their falseness at the outset. But I mean that these few deceivers, as well as all the worthy disciples of Jesus, were baptized and banded together in churches upon a profession of their personal faith, a profession that was apparently honest and heartfelt, the utterance of a new life in the soul.

In support of this position, I refer you again to a passage in the Epistle to the Galatians: "Ye are all sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus. For all ye who were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." This letter was addressed to the churches of Galatia, and the passage which I have read, to all the members of those churches. "Ye are no longer," is the meaning of the apostle, "kept as wards under the law, as minor children under a schoolmaster, but ye are all sons of God, by adoption, through your faith in Christ, which was solemnly professed by you in your baptism." Now, if children in their minority had been baptized in Galatia along with their believing parents, and on account of their parents' faith, and if this process had been going on for a period of ten years, since the first visit of Paul to this province, there must have been many in the churches, say, one-third or one-half the members, who did not by their own act put on Christ in baptism. How then could the apostle say: "Ye are all in Christ by faith, and, therefore, are sons of God, for ye did all put on Christ in baptism?" His language appears to

be strained and unnatural, if addressed to companies of men, only a part of whom had avowed their personal faith in baptism, or indeed in any other way. And the same may be remarked of a passage in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "For in one spirit also we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit,"—language which is best explained by supposing that baptism was administered to those, and those only, who were believed to have the Spirit of God, so that spiritual incorporation into the body of Christ went before professional and sacramental. For this epistle was sent, not to a part of the church of God in Corinth, but to the whole of it, "together with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place." It is true that the church is also described as those who are "sanctified in Christ Jesus," "called saints," not, however, to suggest the idea of a church within the church, but to remind the members, one and all, of the grace which they had received from God and had thankfully acknowledged before the world.

With equal certainty may it be affirmed that Paul addressed all the members of the church at Philippi as "saints in Christ Jesus," and as notable for their fellowship in respect to the gospel; for in his greeting he invokes "the grace of God upon all the saints in Christ Jesus which are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," naturally meaning the entire church of that city; and in the last part of his letter he remarks: "When I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me in account of giving and receiving, but ye only," which implies that the persons to whom he wrote composed a church. It would be easy to multiply citations from the letters of Paul, showing that membership in a Christian church was deemed by him presumptive evidence of genuine faith, and certain evidence of avowed faith; hence, until weighty reasons constrain us to believe that some were brought into the apostolic churches, who either would not or could not make any profession of their own faith, I must hold and teach that those churches were companies of believers, that such persons only were

admitted to them as gave credible evidence of love to God and faith in Christ.*

But against this view of Christian churches in the first age, two objections have been

* The Augsburg Confession says: "Est ecclesia congregatio sanctorum, in qua evangelium recte docetur et recte administrantur sacramenta. . . . Lyra testatur: Ecclesia consistit in illis personis, in quibus notitia vera et confessio fidei et veritatis. . . . Ecclesia est. . . . congregatio sanctorum, qui vere credunt evangelio Christi, et habent Spiritum Sanctum. Catechismus Major: Credo, in terris esse quandam sanctorum congregatiunculam et communionem ex mere sanctis hominibus coactam sub uno capite Christo, per Spiritum Sanctum convocatam, in una fide, eodem sensu et sententia, multiplicibus dotibus exornatam, in amore tamen unanimem, et per omnia concordem, sine sectis et schismatibus. Ch. of Eng.: Ecclesia Christi visibilis est cœtus fidelium, in quo verbum Dei purum predicatur et sacramenta, quoad ea quæ necessario exiguntur, juxta Christi institutum rectè administrantur. Scotch ch.: Unam ecclesiam constanter credimus, id est, societatem et multitudinem hominum a Deo electorum, qui illum recte per veram fidem in Jesum Christum colunt et amplectuntur, qui ejusdem ecclesiæ solus est caput, quæ etiam est corpus et sponsa Christi Jesu. Helvetic ch.: Oportet semper fuisse, esse et futuram esse ecclesiam, id est e mundo evocatum et collectum cœtum fidelium, sanctorum inquam omnium communionem, eorum videlicet, qui Deum verum in Christo servatore per verbum et Spiritum S. vere cognoscunt et rite colunt, denique omnibus bonis per Christum gratuito oblati fide participant."

presented, one of them drawn from the parable of the tares, and the other, from the so-called Jewish Church. The parable of the tares, according to Dr. Hodge, proves "it is not the purpose of God that the visible church on earth should consist exclusively of true believers." "Our Lord," he remarks, "expressly forbids the attempt being made. He compares his external kingdom, or visible church, to a field in which tares and wheat grow together. He charged his disciples not to undertake to separate them, because they could not, in all cases, distinguish the one from the other. Both were to be allowed to grow together until the harvest." On this interpretation of the parable, and the corresponding use of it in the justification of infant church membership, I submit the following reflections: 1. Christ explains his own parable, and declares "the field" in question to be "the world," not "the visible church;" and his definite interpretation is to me an end of doubt. 2. He declares "the reapers," and so, by parity of reason, "the servants of the householder," to be "angels," not "the children of the kingdom." The children of the king-

dom are represented in this parable, according to the Master's own word, by "the good seed." 3. He charges the introduction of the evil seed to "the devil," not to "the servants of the householder," much less, to the "good seed," "the children of the kingdom." 4. He says that the tares, or darnel, was sown by night, that is, secretly, and not by day, or openly. Would the defenders of infant baptism have the friends of Christ do that openly, in the face of the sun, which the Saviour himself ascribed to Satan, working stealthily under cover of night? I cannot withhold an expression of amazement at the use which they have made of this parable. The true meaning of it may be given in the words of William Arnot: "It appears to me, then, that the Lord's direct and immediate design in this parable is, not to prescribe the conduct of his disciples in regard to the conflict between good and evil in the world, but to explain his own. Knowing that their Master possessed all power in heaven and in earth, it was natural that Christians of the first age should expect an immediate paradise. Nothing was more necessary for the support of

their faith in subsequent trials, than distinct warnings from the Lord, that even to his own people the world would remain a wilderness." In a word, the early Christians must be taught that their King, with all the powers of nature and of the heavenly world at his command, would not root out evil from the earth in which his children were, until the end should come; and what he would not allow his ministers, his servants, his angels, to do, until the end of the world, lest some of the children of the kingdom should be destroyed with the children of the wicked one, it may certainly be inferred that he would not have the children of the kingdom do themselves. Persecution is, therefore, implicitly condemned. The wicked are not to be exterminated by the righteous. But the passage has no reference to the discipline of offenders by the church; nor does it, in the slightest degree, sanction the introduction of ungodly persons into the church. It says not a word in respect to the constitution of the church, favorable to infant membership. The "good seed" are "the children of the kingdom;" "the tares" are *not* "the children of the kingdom," but *are* "the

children of the wicked one." There is nothing, then, in the parable of the tares to show that the house of God should not be built exclusively of what are supposed to be "living stones," and much to show that it should be built, so far as intention goes, of such stones only.

The second great argument for recognizing certain persons who are not supposed to be converted as members of Christian churches, is the constitution of the Jewish nation. The terms of admission to a Christian church may be learned, it is said, from the terms of admission to the congregation of Israel. As in the latter, the condition of the children was determined by the condition of the parents, so must it be in the kingdom of Christ.* Says Dr. Hodge:

* In setting forth the nature of the visible church, Dr. Hodge lays down the following propositions: 1. "The visible church is a divine institution." 2. "The visible church does not consist exclusively of the regenerate." 3. "The commonwealth of Israel was the church." 4. "The church under the New Dispensation is identical with that under the Old." 5. "The terms of admission into the church before the advent were the same that are required for admission into the Christian church." 6. "Infants were members of the church under the Old Testament economy." 7. "There is nothing in the New

"In the sight of God, parents and children are one. The former are the authorized representatives of the latter; they act for them; they contract obligations in their name. In all cases, therefore, where parents enter into covenant with God, they bring their children with them." Again he says: "If a man joined the commonwealth of Israel, he secured for his children the benefits of the theocracy, unless they willingly renounced them. And so when a believer adopts the covenant of grace, he brings his children within that covenant, in the sense that God promises to give them, in his own good time, all the benefits of redemption, provided they do not willingly renounce their baptismal engagements."

It will be observed that Dr. Hodge first asserts that *parents* and children are one in covenant relations, and then that *a man* and his children are one in these relations. There is a difference between the statements which must not

Testament which justifies the exclusion of the children of believers from membership in the church." 8. "Children need and are capable of receiving the benefits of redemption."—(pp. 547-558).

be overlooked. For in the earlier economy it was the father, not the parents, who represented the family; hence none but male children, who might become heads of families, were circumcised. The husband was as truly the representative of his wife as he was of his children, of his daughters as he was of his sons, and of his servants, with their children, as he was of his own wife and children. Will asserters of infant baptism apply this to the Christian economy, and, when a man is baptized on profession of his faith in Jesus, proceed to baptize his wife and children also, even though the latter are old enough to believe for themselves, but do not? Unless they are willing to go to this length, they cannot justly claim to make the Jewish congregation a model for Christian churches. But they do not commonly go to this length; for they see that it would ill accord with the genius of Christianity, in which the spiritual is all-controlling, while the formal and natural is wholly subordinate. When the Saviour, on a certain occasion, "stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold, my mother and my brothers! For whosoever shall do the will of

my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," he made manifest the ties which are recognized as alone valid in his reign. But this was not the only occasion when he uttered words relevant to my subject: he said at another time: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. . . . Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Also, "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me;" and by this language he pointed very distinctly to a new order of things, to a kingdom into which no one could enter without personal faith and confession, into which men would come as individuals, not as families, the father for himself and the son for himself, and in which all natural affinities and distinctions would be merged in the one sacred kinship of soul to Christ, and the one infinite distinction between faith and unbelief, life and

death. I grant that the natural Israel was typical of the spiritual Israel; but the type moves on a lower plane than the thing typified; into the typical nation men entered by natural birth, into the nation typified men enter by spiritual birth; those born of Abraham according to the flesh were circumcised, those born of God by the Spirit are baptized.*

Besides, if the Christian church is but a continuation of the Jewish, how is the preaching of Christ to be explained: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish?" Had the Jews willingly renounced their circumcision and their covenant standing? If they had, by their self-righteousness, though not intentionally, have not all children baptized in infancy, and still impenitent at the age of ten or twelve, renounced their

*When it suits their purpose Pedobaptists are ready enough to recognize the disparity between the Mosaic economy and the Christian. Thus Cyprian, in reply to the argument that baptism should be deferred to the eighth day after birth, because circumcision was performed on that day, says in his letter to Fidus, containing the decision of a council: "Nam quod in Judaica circumeisione carnali octavus dies observabatur, sacramentum est in umbra atque in imagine antepremissum, sed veniente Christo veritate completum," etc. (Gersdorf's ed. i. p. 170.)

baptismal vows in the same way? And if this be so, what advantage is there in the rite? Are vows renounced better than no vows at all? Is there aught in the New Testament to justify such a view? Was not rather the gospel offered freely to all? Did not God bestow his grace on the uncircumcised Gentile as largely as on the circumcised Jew? But if mere unbelief on the part of a baptized child does not, as I understand Dr. Hodge to say, destroy his standing in the church, nor deprive him of the blessing of the covenant, then I submit that the progress from the shadow to the substance, from a kingdom that made large use of carnal weapons to one that employs only spiritual weapons, has been small indeed. Until, then, it can be shown that the type is on a level with the thing typified, and that Pedobaptists christen wives and grown-up children, as well as infants, on the faith of their husbands and fathers, they cannot rightly go back to the Jewish theocracy to learn the constitution of a Christian church.

I therefore return with full confidence to my position that a Christian church, as defined by the New Testament, is a company of persons

giving credible evidence of their own faith. It will of course be recollected that I am giving but a single feature or characteristic of a church. And it is needless for me to insist that infant baptism, according to the doctrine of its ablest advocates, either introduces unbelieving children into the church, or assumes them to be already in the church at birth, or implants in their hearts sacramental and regenerating grace. Those who reject the last theory—that of baptismal regeneration—do therefore deliberately sow tares, to use their own figure, in the field which is the visible church. To employ a second figure, they put stones that are not “living” into the building of God. They wittingly and willingly mingle the carnal with the spiritual, and, I may say without offence to truth, apply the name “saint” to many a one whom they believe to be utterly un sanctified in heart. To do this seems to me equally against the word of God and against sound reason. It puts us back into the ritual and typical dispensation, into the state of pupilage, and offers the shadow of a spiritual kingdom in lieu of the reality. And so it mars the testimony given by the very consti-

tution of an apostolic church to the nature of Christ's kingdom, as one which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

It may, however, be said by some who practise infant baptism, that a covenant relation with God is not a church relation, that children are consecrated in baptism and brought into covenant relations with God, but are in no sense members of the Christian church. But the position given to christened yet unconverted children by this theory is too uncertain to satisfy the mind. They seem to be neither in nor out of the kingdom; as a Catholic might say, they are in a sort of “limbus infantum,” akin to the everlasting home of children who die in infancy, unchristened. For one I am unable to comprehend the relation which they hold to the covenant, or the principle on which they have been baptized; nor do I see that those who take this view of their position have any more light than I.

IV. *Infant baptism facilitates the union of church and state.*

This, if I mistake not, has been denied, though

it stands before my mind as an almost self-evident truth. The testimony of history is not, perhaps, decisive on the point, but whatever force it has favors my position. The friends of infant baptism claim that this rite has the same place and office in the Christian church, as a visible body, which circumcision had in the Jewish theocracy; but that theocracy was a union of church and state, and circumcision was confessedly adapted to it. The story of the Jewish people shows how naturally a person could be claimed as a subject of both church and state by a rite applied in infancy. But this is not the only instance. Since the reign of Constantine many examples of the union of civil and religious authority in the same government are on record. In some instances that union has been formal and complete, in others it has been tacit and partial. The Pope wielded the two swords for ages over a part of Italy; and would not perhaps refuse, if invited, to wield them over the whole world. The Emperor of Russia has pontifical as well as imperial power. In Spain and Austria, in France and Bavaria, there has been no exact line of demarcation between the func-

tions of the church and those of the state. The power of the state has, however, been nearly always at the service of the hierarchy, and the influence of the hierarchy has been with those who were over the people. There has been a kind of holy alliance between kings and priests, for the purpose of keeping the people in subjection, and this alliance has been none the less effective because it has left the parties to it apparently distinct. It is scarcely necessary for me to specify other instances of a similar character. The history of England, Old and New,* of Prussia† and the smaller German States, would illustrate the union of the two swords for the attainment of one and the same end. And in all these nations the practice of infant baptism made the partial or complete identification of church and state easy. For if the church can give to all the

* See Uhden's "New England Theocracy," Backus' "History of the Baptists," "Life and Times of Isaac Backus," "The Writings of Roger Williams," etc.

† The sufferings of Mr. Oncken in Hamburg, and of others in Prussia proper, illustrate the later and milder forms of religious persecution. Mr. Oncken's testimony as to the source of opposition to his work, namely (in a whisper) infant baptism! deserves notice.

people in their infancy a place in her sacred enclosure and a certain rank among her children, the state can easily endorse that act and make it a qualification for public service; nay, it can be persuaded to enforce the claims of the church upon the respect and support of all her children. But if men are admitted to the church on the sole ground of their personal faith; if it is deeply felt that religion is a service of God by the conscience and the heart, and that without this inward spiritual life, all outward forms are a pretence and a lie; in other words, if the door into the church is closed to all but those who enter of their own accord, with love to the Saviour in their hearts, it is plain that a union of church and state becomes practically impossible. For many worthy citizens will not bow to Christ; many who render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, will not render to God the things that are God's. An honest faith in the Redeemer cannot be exacted by the civil power; but an honest faith in him is the one thing which qualifies a man for the church. Very soon, therefore, the state learns that its weapons are not meant for the kingdom of Christ, and that

the only thing it can properly do is to care for the natural rights and temporal interests of the people. Let infant baptism give place everywhere to believers' baptism, and the union of church and state will soon come to an end.

But what evils flow from the union of church and state? Evils manifold and dreadful, from some of which we turn away with unutterable horror. Worldliness, ambition, strife, deception, persecution, massacre! these are the terms to be employed in characterizing the evils in question. But even these terms, quietly uttered in the sanctuary, fail to bring before our minds the terrible scenes which they represent in the history of the Christian religion. The secularization of the clergy, their love of power and display, their idleness and vanity, their disregard of sound doctrine and pure morals, have been largely due to their dependence on the state for support, to their acquaintance with political arts and intrigues, and to their commerce with ungodly magistrates. But the old adage is true: "like priest, like people." When their spiritual leaders become worldly, ambitious, corrupt, the people are almost sure to follow. So when the

power and splendor of the Roman emperor were reflected upon the clergy, ambitious men began to seek office in the church, and the whole body was gradually leavened by their influence. Pagan temples, Pagan statues, and Pagan rites were dedicated to Jehovah, while the severe and holy simplicity of the early Christians passed away. And thereafter, down through the ages, an adulterous connection between church and state was the source of infinite mischief to the former, and, I fear, of little good to the latter. But I may not attempt to describe that mischief fully. It will be enough for me to recall a single feature of it. The Papal Church is careful to disclaim persecution. It is never her own act. The Pope, as a spiritual ruler, does not take the life of a heretic. How then, it may be asked, have the fires of persecution been kindled? The reply is at hand: by the state in close alliance with the church. By the state doing the sacred judgment of the church. By the Pope, as a civil ruler, executing the will of the same Pope as vicar of Christ. *By* godly magistrates drawing the sword in their civil capacity to suppress what they have condemned as

their spiritual capacity. And so, tender and enlightened consciences have been mocked and flouted, gentle and saintly souls have been sent up to God from amidst the flames, and the best blood of Christ's earthly flock has flowed in torrents. But more cruel than the last act have often been the tortures that went before it. Confiscation, banishment, the dungeon, the rack, for a clear conscience and a pure life! in New England, in Old England, and throughout Europe! with now and then a Duke of Alva,* or a St. Bartholomew massacre! Such horrors kindled the soul of Milton when he prayed:

* Says Mr. Motley of the Council of Troubles, called also the Blood-Council, over which the Duke of Alva presided in the Netherlands: "So well did this new and terrible engine perform its work, that in less than three months from the time of its erection, eighteen hundred human beings (or twenty a day) had suffered death by its summary proceedings; some of the highest, the noblest, and the most virtuous in the land among the number; nor had it then manifested the slightest indication of faltering in its dread career." "Alva reserved for himself the final decision upon all causes which should come before the council, and stated his motives for so doing with grim simplicity. 'Two reasons,' he wrote to the king, 'have determined me thus to limit the power of the tribunal; the first that, not knowing its members, I might be easily

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Ev’n them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold,
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O’er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learned thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

Persecution, however, is scarcely possible

deceived by them; the second, that *the men of law* only condemn *for crimes which are proved*; whereas your majesty knows that affairs of state are governed by very different rules from *the laws which they have here.*” But this was not enough. “Upon the 16th February, 1568, a sentence of the Holy Office condemned *all the inhabitants* of the Netherlands *to death* as heretics. From this universal doom *only a few persons, especially named*, were excepted. A proclamation of the king, dated ten days later, confirmed this decree, and ordered it to be carried into instant execution, without regard to age, sex, or condition. This is probably the most concise death-warrant that was ever framed. Three millions of people, men, women, and children, were sentenced to the scaffold in three lines.” And this for heresy. I need not speak of the St. Bartholomew massacre · the climax is horrible.