

PROTESTANT PEDOBAPTISM

AND THE

DOCTRINE OF A CHURCH.

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“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—*John* i. 12, 13.

AS on the forehead of the high priest who stood in the presence of God there was bound the glittering gold with “Holiness to the Lord” written upon it, so on the brow of his churches has Jesus inscribed these words of light, that they might herald to all the world, that his churches are the manifest miracles of his grace. These words proclaim the genealogy, in eternity and in time, of every soul known as his.

Mark the steps of approach—all who come—receive him by faith—they become sons of God—

are justified and adopted—and they do this, not by right of inheritance—not by the unaided exercise of any or all natural gifts—but because they are endowed with the very life of God—are born of him by the Spirit.

THE ONE WAY OF SALVATION.

There is but this one way of salvation for all men—for any man. Its oneness and its perfect adaptation for all speak the love and the wisdom of God. God sends his word either written, or spoken by human voice. This word, revealing God's way of salvation through Jesus Christ, is made powerful in the hearts of those that read or hear by the Holy Spirit. By that Spirit they loathe sin and believe in Jesus as their surety and atonement. With him they die and with him they rise. For his sake they are justified, accepted as righteous before God. He was made sin for them that they might be made the righteousness of God in him; and by the Spirit they live unto God, increasing in holiness and in knowledge of their God and Saviour. There is but this one way of salvation revealed. It is revealed for those who can hear and believe. We are never told how God saves those dying in infancy, or those who are bereft of reason. We

believe that he does save *all* infants who die, and saves them through Jesus' blood, but in a way inscrutable to us. Certainly, so far as we have any means of judging, he does not save them by faith.

Within the sphere of our consciousness, and according to the Scriptures, the invariable order of the way of salvation is—*first*, the word, preached or read; *second*, faith; *third*, the life of faith. The order of God's gracious purpose and acts for the salvation of a soul is—*first*, he chooses; *second*, he calls by his Spirit through the word, communicating life and its exercise, faith; *third*, he justifies; *fourth*, he glorifies—receives into his eternal kingdom.

This is the Scriptural order, and all Protestant confessions of faith agree in this order. There is no evidence in Scripture that this order is ever reversed, or any step omitted or transposed. The confessions of all saints agree that this is the way by which they are led.

In giving salvation God never deals with men in the mass, always with individual souls. It is a testimony to the unspeakable worth of the soul, to the freedom and mighty responsibility of each man, that God condescends to deal with him as though there were no other man on earth.

With each one rests the decision of the question of questions—life or death.

FALSE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH.

For 1500 years there has hung around the word church and its synonyms in other languages an amount of mystery, to which the New Testament gives no warrant. With some denominations of Christians the church is often spoken of as though, apart from the individuals of which it is composed, "it were a moral person standing to Christians in the same relation in which a mother does to her children. To the church, Christians are said to owe their spiritual birth, the church educates her children, nourishes them with her ordinances, prays for them, and, if needs be, corrects them." That such an idea is a pure figment of the imagination; that no such thing exists as this corporate entity, this metaphysical abstraction, this abstract personality performing acts of thought and will distinct from those of the individual members who compose the body,—is patent to every reader of the New Testament.

With a church, as with each Christian life, there is an intimate, essential connection between the outward form and the internal spirit—between doctrine and life. The tree is known by

its fruit. There can be no contradiction between God's doctrines and his precepts. The positive commands of God are—must be—in absolute harmony with his doctrines. There can be no contradiction between his doctrines of salvation and his precepts concerning his churches. What his churches are to be, how constituted, how maintained, is not a question of subordinate interest, but of paramount importance. One thing is certain, they must be, in their origin and continuance, in exact accordance with the doctrines of God's grace to man. They were to be the visible manifestations of those doctrines to the world—"the epistle of Christ written with the Spirit of the living God." If our constitution of a church is scriptural, it will be in harmony with the other doctrines of God's grace. If it is unscriptural, it will conflict with those doctrines, and before the world and on the minds of the members who uphold such a church will certainly tend to obscure, if not to efface those doctrines.

Both Luther and Calvin saw clearly that the central point of their controversy with Rome was just this doctrine of a church. Luther says: "What is the dispute between the Papists and us? It is the dispute about the true Christian

church. The dispute is not whether we must believe the church—whether there is a church—but which is the true church.” Calvin says: “We only contend for a true and legitimate constitution of the church, which requires, not only a communion in the sacraments which are the signs of a Christian profession, but, above all, an agreement in doctrine.”

Luther and Zwingli and their followers separated from and condemned the Romish Church, not on account of the Romish constitution of a church, but on account of the false doctrines which Rome taught respecting salvation. In thus separating from Rome and preaching the truth, they deserve the highest commendation. But they retained essentially the Romish constitution of the churches.

The central point of the controversy between Baptists and Protestant Pedobaptists is not the doctrines of grace—for, thanks be to God, we generally agree there—but it is the constitution of a church. And this we hold to be a point of supreme importance for the free course of the word of God on earth. Baptists are thought to be great schismatics because, agreeing with evangelical Protestants on the great doctrines of the gospel, antecedent to the doctrine of a

church, they refuse to acknowledge Pedobaptist churches as rightly formed, or to hold their administration of the ordinances as scriptural. Having granted so much, it is assumed we ought to grant everything else. We refuse to walk together where we think others offend against Christ's truth; but we joyfully walk with them where we are agreed. And this point of difference involves not merely that which is outward and subordinate, but draws in its train immediate consequences which affect the doctrines of God's grace to sinners.

The earliest Protestant divisions of the Pedobaptists were between the Lutherans and Zwinglians, afterwards Calvinists. They differed, and differ still, mainly in their views of the Lord's Supper.

The Presbyterians differed from the English Established Church mainly on the orders in the ministry and their powers.

The Independents differed from the Presbyterians on the powers of the individual churches.

The Methodists differ from other evangelical Protestants in their aristocratic form of church government.

But they all have at the base the same constitution of the churches. And the Baptist, exist-

ing before either of these denominations, stands opposed on deepest principle to that constitution. Our opposition is not like that between themselves, on points of acknowledged secondary interest, but on one point of primal fundamental importance.

The New Testament uses the word church only in two senses—one including all true believers, at all times and in eternity; the other including those who have professed to believe in Jesus and are united by the ordinances into separate local societies.

If the order and plan of salvation has been correctly stated, there are no materials on earth out of which to form a church—God's society—God's assembly—but those who are born of God. That unbelievers are found in the churches is not due to the defect in the model, but to the defect that inheres in human judgment.

THE CHURCHES, THE MIRACLES OF THE SPIRIT.

The churches, then, were to be the flower and fruit of salvation. God's choice, God's call by his Spirit and word, regeneration, faith, justification, adoption—such is the gracious process necessary to the formation of a church; for it is the process invariably pursued in the formation of

all its parts. The churches were by their very existence to testify to all the way by which they were led. A church so formed is the constant manifestation of the Spirit. Let the Spirit cease to convert men and bring them to such a church, and it dies out with the first generation. How different would have been the story of church history if, instead of bringing into the churches by blood, by the will of the flesh, by the will of man, the churches had been kept to their original constitution, dependent only on the Spirit of God for increase.

The Baptist holding these views is compelled to object most strenuously against the constitution of all Pedobaptist churches, not simply in the interest of the form of baptism, but far more in the interest of the only way of salvation. Their churches are, to our view, formed in direct contravention of God's way of salvation; their constitution is at war with the doctrines of God's grace, and at war, too, with their own confessions of faith. We are exhorted to renounce our views of the form of baptism, so that there may be no division between us. But back of our view of the form of baptism there lie difficulties in the way of union far greater than any outward form. We do not mean to insinuate that we do not be-

lieve them Christians. God forbid that we should harbor such a thought of the thousands on thousands who in so many points have adorned and illustrated Christian life, and who are now zealous for God and his Christ. We believe them, as bodies, to be eminent in Christian virtues. We do not sit in judgment on their Christianity to condemn it. But this we say, that while we may so highly regard them, we are compelled to bear our testimony—unequivocal and earnest—against what we esteem to be grievous errors against the doctrines of God.

PEDOBAPTIST ERRORS.

1. *It is an error to admit unbelievers to church membership.*

While in all Pedobaptist confessions the very essence of the churches is made to consist in faith, they are guilty of the palpable contradiction of intentionally and constantly introducing those who do not believe—who cannot believe—as members of churches.

I know that each Pedobaptist denomination has its own mode of explaining this away—each differing from the other. Either one of two things they should do before inviting a Baptist to renounce his clear views and consistent prac-

tice concerning the church—either alter their confessions or cease their practice, which is at war with their confession. We agree with them that the very essence of the churches is faith, as it is the essence of the life of each member; and we rejoice that they confess this; and we beseech them, for the glory of our Master and Redeemer, to put away the inconsistency of their practice.

2. *It is an error to make church membership precede the hearing of the word.*

This leads us to notice another difficulty of much more moment. The Scriptures know nothing, we know nothing, and Protestant confessions know nothing, of churches which are not the body of Christ. To be in the church is, according to the New Testament, to be in Christ. Not that the church and Christ are synonymous; but because none were to be admitted but those who gave evidence of being in Christ. Now, the Scriptures represent the external instrument of our union with Christ and his church to be invariably his word. "We are born again by the word of God," Peter says, (1 Pet. i. 23); and Paul, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," (Rom. x. 17); "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. x. 14); "Of his own will begat

he us by the word of truth," (James i. 18). But if before hearing, before faith, before the apprehension of the word, either an outward ordinance or the collective church is placed as the means of union with Christ, there arises a positive contradiction between the Scriptures and the constitution of such a church. Nay, the union with Christ by that act is asserted to be, not internal and spiritual, but external and formal. The first thing needed is, not the word and faith, but the church. If the church ever rightly—according to God's purpose—precedes the word in the salvation of any soul, then why do we never hear the apostles exhorting men to join the church that they may come to Christ, but always hear them insisting on attention to the word, that men may be saved? By the constitution of Pedobaptist churches, a grievous injury is done to the word of God and to thousands of souls, in reversing God's order of salvation. The rightful place of the word is usurped by the church. The place of absolute truth for the enlightenment of the soul is taken by the broken lights of human representatives of that truth; and with thousands there is ever a film over their eyes as to the relation the word holds to the church and to their salvation.

Nor does the error stop here, as all church history shows us. When the word and its work are put away as prerequisites of church membership, and the church assumes the place of the word, and is the external means for uniting souls to Christ, that which is merely formal and outward becomes its greatest power, and that which is internal and spiritual is secondary. That which is outward in it assumes immense importance in the eyes of its upholders, and its polity and government are to be maintained at every expense for the good of souls.

It is one of the most marvellous, enigmatical facts of history, that all Protestant Pedobaptist churches, coming forth from the tyranny of Rome, and protesting against her tyranny over the consciences of men, should have become in a few years almost as bitter persecutors for their form of faith as Rome was for hers. Luther and Melancthon persecuted; Zwingle and Calvin persecuted; the Reformed Church of Holland persecuted; the Established Church of England, the Presbyterians of Scotland, the Presbyterians and Independents of England, the Congregationalists of New England—all fell into the same error as Rome had done, and defended it on the same grounds. Can this strange inconsistency be ex-

plained? There is only one solution apparent. Differing as they did from Rome, yet they actually formed their churches on the same basis as that of Rome. The church was put before the word; and, in their view, the salvation of souls demanded its existence; and with a quiet conscience its upholders could punish, with all bodily misery and deprivation of goods, those who denied its validity.

On the other hand, from the first hours of the Reformation till the present, no Baptist church can be shown which has ever favored or defended religious persecution. Nor can any Baptist author be found who has favored or defended the same. Their witness has been clear and unmistakable on the side of religious liberty, not tolerance—freedom, not sufferance—not for themselves alone, but for all men. This, surely, is not due to any intellectual or moral superiority on the part of Baptists, but must be due to a principle that inheres in their religious thinking; and I take it, that principle is to be found in just this holding the precedence of the word of God to the church. In their view every man must come face to face with the word of God. By that he must be convinced, and must decide the supreme question concerning his soul's life, before he

possesses any qualification for membership in a church. Having referred him there, the decision is between him and his God—and no outward means of flattery or of punishment can effect the change, which is the work of God's Spirit alone.

When a Pedobaptist argues with a Romanist against the fundamental constitution of the Romish Church, he always takes the full Baptist position—but when he argues in favor of the Pedobaptist churches, he is compelled to take the Romish position and use Romish arguments.

3. *It is not in accordance with the Scriptural plan to make church membership precede regeneration.*

The church is according to the Scriptures a society of those born of God, regenerate persons. This birth, this regeneration, is the work of the Spirit alone; and its result, immediate, invariable, and indestructible, is life—not capacity for the reception of life—not powers which may develop into life, but life itself. So that they who are born again, born of God, live unto him a life which is totally different from their natural life; and by this life alone can the new birth, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, be recognized. But the wilful, persistent introduction of unregenerate persons into a church, and ascribing to them

any interest whatsoever in it, is to do despite to the Creator Spirit who formed the world, and forms every soul that is born again. They are thereby asserted to have been born unto God by blood, by the will of the flesh, by the will of man; which to our eyes appears to be as flat a contradiction of God's plain word as it would be possible to make.

All who come to God, all who belong to him, all who have any part or lot with Jesus, are represented by the Scriptures as called by the Spirit—"called out of darkness into his marvellous light"—called according to God's purpose. This is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit. All who are so called, do come to God. This word in its use in the Scriptures does not signify a mere external speaking the invitation of God, but it also means the sure operation of the Spirit on the heart, by which one is made gladly and longingly to hear the word of God. Those thus called are the sons of God. "For ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." But to teach or imply that those who have never known the gracious work of the Spirit, and of course give no evidence of it, are in any sense

members of Christ, is to strike at the very root of salvation—the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit precedes the reception of Jesus, which is accompanied with the gift of the privilege of becoming the sons of God.

And just as surely do the Scriptures teach us that where the Holy Spirit does not thus work to bring to life, and open the heart and the ear to long after and hear the word of God, there death reigns. There are, there can be, no neutrals between the state of death and life. Men are either dead in trespasses and sins, or they are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; or as another Scripture states it, is death, "for the mind of the flesh is death." And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; or as Paul states it, is life, "for the mind of the Spirit is life." "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." But when the Spirit calls, then he "bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." If the Spirit has given one life, if the Spirit has called him out of darkness into marvellous light, then, but not till then, has he any qualification, or any right to admission to the household of God, un-

less we acknowledge that there may be dead members of him who is Life itself.

It may be objected to us that there are undeniably many members of Baptist churches who give no evidence of spiritual life. We grant it. But no Baptist church ever admitted them knowing them to be dead. They desired admission and gave credible evidence on their entrance that they were born of the Spirit—and on that evidence they were admitted. That afterwards they proved to be dead, only shows that men striving after God's model may often be led astray by Satan, transformed into an angel of light.

4. *It is an error to allow the church to take the place of faith.*

We have seen that the church cannot be put in the place of the word, that it cannot be put in the place of the Holy Spirit, for that would be to suppose the earthen vessel to be formed without clay, and without the potter's hand. Neither can the church be put in the place of *faith*. The word is the first external means of our union with Christ—it is the visible manifestation of Jesus. By the Spirit life is given to behold Jesus in his word, and to trust in him. The evidence of this work of the Spirit, and the

only internal, spiritual means of union with Christ within our consciousness, is faith. By this—not as a meritorious cause, but as a prerequisite—by this alone are we justified, accepted as righteous for Jesus' sake before God. Without faith it is, and ever has been since the fall, impossible to please God. We “are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” (Gal. iii. 16). And this faith, this spiritual apprehension of Jesus as our Saviour, is the sovereign gift of God. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God.”

In our thinking we may separate the work of the Spirit in regeneration, which is below our consciousness, from the result of that work, faith, which is our conscious act. But really they never are divided. The life the Spirit gives is the life that exists by faith. And of no soul in this world can it be said that it is saved, unless it believes in Jesus. Faith is the first opening of the eye as the dead comes forth from the tomb at the Spirit's call. It is the exercise of the resurrection-life. It is the conscious means and evidence that the soul lives. To produce faith in any soul is just as great a miracle, is just as marvellous an exhibition of omnipotence, as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And so

the apostle prays that the Ephesians may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

Before the exercise of faith—before this conscious trust in Jesus as our sole surety and intercessor—whatsoever we do, however excellent it may appear, is sin, for it does not spring from the right motive. The Scriptures and the experience of every converted man teach this same truth. It is only faith in Christ, not our works, that renders us pleasing in the sight of God. Then we do, for the first time, put away our own righteousness, which is of the law, and trust only in that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith.

This faith is inseparable from its fruit—works for God. The two are as closely compacted as regeneration and faith. But every Bible reader sees the vast difference between saying, that regeneration proceeds from faith, and that faith proceeds from works—or *vice versa*. In the one case salvation is man's work; in the other it is God's gift. In the one case we assert the merit of works; in the other the pure grace of God.

Most Protestant denominations hold these truths as strongly as we do, and have and do set them forth with power. Our controversy with them is not on these truths, but upon the utter inconsistency of the constitution of their churches with these most vital points. While holding these precious doctrines they do put their churches in the place of faith—for thousands of their members are taught that by the ligature of the church they are somewhat united to Christ, when they are sure, and the churches are sure, that they have no faith. Luther and Calvin, and their followers in Europe and England, contended with all their gigantic powers against Rome for the scriptural doctrine of justification by our faith only. Yet no sooner did they begin to constitute their churches than they practically denied all their words and justified Rome—for they admitted most of their members on the faith of others.

With perfect justice a German Roman Catholic author of this century, writing on the Reformation in Germany and the fierce persecution of the Baptists of that day by the Protestants, asks the Protestants, How such persecution in that century or in this can be defended by them? The Protestants, he says, left the Romish Church

following their great dogma, justification by faith alone. They proclaimed the doctrine in words, but denied it in their churches. The Baptists formed their churches in perfect accordance with this central doctrine of Protestantism, and yet they were more bitterly persecuted by Protestants than by Romanists. So much so, that Baptists fled from Protestant lands to find a refuge in the tender mercies of Romanism.

When the church is put in the place of faith in the order of salvation—when one is said to be united to Christ, a member of Christ, before he exercises faith—they reverse the whole gospel scheme of salvation. By that act it is practically declared that salvation is of works, not of faith. It is not “of faith that it might be by grace.” But the apostle declares that the promise of salvation is “by faith that it might be of grace;” “and if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.” We submit that that practice which makes salvation of works, and that confession which makes salvation of grace, are not exactly consistent; nay, they are contradictions of each other. And with all such im-

perious contradictions one or the other must obtain the mastery and banish its adversary.

Augustine held justification by faith, but he also held to a union with Christ by the church. His was the master mind of the ancient Catholic Church, and Rome has logically followed out his views of the church, and by necessity banished his scriptural doctrine.

To see the most pernicious effects of this gross inconsistency of practice with profession of the truth, we must go, not to the denominations of our own land, but to the Protestant churches of Geneva, France, Holland, Germany, England. Supported by the State, with all the citizens of the land members of the churches, with numerous ministers who savor of the charnel house, who have long forgotten and ceased to preach that salvation is “of faith that it might be by grace;” no confession of faith is required of the members, no discipline is exercised, so that you find great numbers of these members who deny the divinity of Jesus and the existence and our need of the Holy Spirit. Is it surprising that the idea of conversion to God with them is esteemed equivalent to lunacy; and a suggestion that they are not just such churches as the New Testa-

ment sets forth, is met with the scorn such ignorance deserves?

One of two things must be, as history teaches us it has been; either Protestant Pedobaptist churches must be truer to their confessions of faith and alter the constitution of their churches, or they must be truer to the constitution of their churches and put away their confessions of faith. We believe they will choose the first, and will exalt and proclaim and conform to the word of God.

5. *Entrance to the church was not designed to precede the evidence of God's choice.*

There is one more point where an insurmountable difficulty meets the Pedobaptist constitution of a church. They, for the most part, believe, as we also do, that all this scheme of grace, this use of the word of God, this regeneration by the Spirit, this gift of faith, is in consequence of God's gracious choice—his predetermination to bestow salvation upon certain souls. Why he should choose one and pass by another, we can assign no reason, while at the same time we fully believe that there is no unrighteousness with him. The Scriptures assert the fact that he does so elect, and the result in actual experience is in perfect accordance with the statements of

Scripture. This choice, this election, does not interfere in the slightest degree with man's responsibility, or with the perfect freedom and assurance of the gospel call to all. Every man knows he is responsible to God. The sense of direct responsibility to the Supreme Ruler of all is planted so deep in the mind of every human being, that the most degraded Hindoo, or Chinese, or Fetish worshipper of Africa, or the brutalized Australian or Feejee Islander, as well as all the inhabitants of lands called Christian, proclaim it by deed if not by word. Man's, every man's, responsibility to God for all his words and works and thoughts, is asseverated by Scripture just as strongly as God's choice of his people.

It is not for me to enter into a proof of this Scripture doctrine here. It is sufficient for us now that Calvinist and Lutheran, Presbyterian and Independent, the English Church and Dutch Reformed, have all proclaimed their belief in it by their authoritative confessions. The great majority of Baptists have held the same, to wit: that all the means of salvation flow out from God's sovereign, unconditioned, election of his people. Let me quote the excellent statement of Dr. Hodge, in his second volume on Theology, p. 333: "The ground of this election is not

the foresight of anything in the one class (the saved) to distinguish them favorably from the members of the other class (the lost), but the good pleasure of God. . . . That all those whom God has thus chosen to life and for whom Christ specially gave himself in the covenant of redemption, shall certainly (unless they die in infancy) be brought to the knowledge of the truth, to the exercise of faith, and to perseverance in holy living unto the end."

I quote from Dr. Hodge (p. 314, vol. ii.) another statement quite as true as the preceding, which is important just here. "The order of the divine decrees, or in other words the relation in which the several parts of the divine plan stand to each other, is very far from being a matter of idle speculation. It must determine our theology, and our theology determines our religion." We believe that. If, as the Romanist teaches, faith results from good works—if the gift of salvation is bestowed upon us for any good work or any worth in us, then man is not helpless or ruined or lost. If I fall down a precipice and am bruised and broken in some parts, yet able to climb up again and reach a point of safety, I cannot be said to be utterly ruined and lost. If salvation is a rope let down from heaven

which one may catch by a bound into the air—just the strength required both of mind and body to make that bound, measures the good yet remaining in us, and measures too just the amount we are required to supplement to the work of God for our salvation. Christ in that case did not come to save the dead and the lost, but to help man save himself. And the Spirit does not make alive from the dead, but only arouses the drowsy. But if that which is born of the flesh is dead, destitute of all spiritual life to God; if the mind of the flesh, its whole course of thought, runs in the way of and issues in the ocean of death, then every one born again to God by the Spirit, must be so made alive, because God—while the soul was dead—predetermined to make it alive, and also predetermined all the means to that end. This purpose of God's mind, as it stands written broadly on every page of God's word, and in the experience of all who come to him, must, in all right thinking, stand as the antecedent cause of life and faith. In Scripture, to be elect, and to be called of God, are convertible terms. The elect are the called; the called are the elect. On two points the Scriptures warn us. We are not to pry into this eternal counsel of God as though by searching we could

find it out; and we are not to deny the fact, but are to ascribe his work of grace to "his good pleasure which he purposed in himself."

How is this gracious choice made known? By the work of his Spirit in the heart and life of the individual, and we judge of this work by the evidence furnished by the life and profession of the individual. It would seem, then, near akin to monstrous presumption—and nothing but hoary false tradition could ever blind good men to that fact—to lay our hands upon any one and say, this is one of the elect of God, before God has given us any evidence of the fact by the work of his Spirit. Of no one born of flesh can this choice be affirmed till God's work appears in him. He or they who make men believe that they are united to Christ, are members of his body, in any sense, before the work of the Spirit is manifested in faith in them, take their presumptuous stand beside the sovereign, secret will of Jehovah, and profess to declare it, before he has made it known, and by their act profess to bind that free and sovereign will to the sinful work of a lost, dead soul.

To put the church before faith, to put it before the work of the Spirit, to put it before the word, is to attempt to put it in the place of God's sov-

ereign, secret will, and there it breaks upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler.

The constitution of that church cannot be scriptural which thus wages incessant war, not only with distinct and separate truths of God's word, but (in Dr. Hodge's words) "with the relation in which the several parts of the divine plan stand to each other." This relation, Dr. Hodge says, "determines our theology, and our theology determines our religion."

A CHURCH THE CULMINATING POINT OF GOD'S VISIBLE WORK OF GRACE ON EARTH.

The Baptist holds to the simple Bible truths, that man is born spiritually dead—that life can come, does only come, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, and this life is given by God in accordance with his purpose. Joyfully, earnestly, does he carry the gospel call to all, and urge each one to believe in Jesus, assuring each one that if he believes he shall be saved. But before he dares to assure any man that he is a member of Christ or has any part or lot with him, he must see the evidence of the precious work of the Spirit in that man. The assembly of God's people, the church, is the gathering together of those who have thus given credible evidence

of being born again; and so it is the culminating point of God's visible work of grace on earth. The scriptural doctrine of a church does not conflict with, but follows and depends upon and honors, each doctrine and the relation of the doctrines of God's grace to man. A church can be rightly composed only of those who have "received Jesus, and to whom he has given the privilege of becoming the sons of God, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

These are the radical differences between the Baptist and Pedobaptist constitutions of a church. Put the ordinances of a church entirely out of view for the moment, and beyond them how wide is the difference between us. What puny superficiality then to assert that the form of one ordinance is all that makes a Baptist church to differ from others, or that Baptists exist merely to uphold that form. If there are any Baptists so blind as to acquiesce in a statement so far short of the truth, I pity them. We are set for the defence, not of one part of the truth only, but of the churches of the living God according to the New Testament model. And not merely for the form of a church, but for that form as it is connected with all the truths of salvation, as well

as for all those truths as they are related to a church.

"The difficulties of Protestant Pedobaptism touching the doctrine of a church" are, that, holding what are usually termed the doctrines of grace, they constitute their churches in indefensible contradiction to these truths.

Our refusal to walk with them in their churches is based not merely upon their change of the form of baptism—for neither historically nor logically is that true. Suppose all Pedobaptist denominations to-day returned to the scriptural form of baptism, but still retained their peculiar constitution as churches, we should be compelled to protest against them and deny that they were formed according to the word of God. Our refusal to walk with them in their churches is not based upon any belief among us that they are not excellent Christians, taught of the Spirit of God in many ways, zealous in good works, who hold communion with our Lord Jesus Christ, and have a blessed hope of life eternal with him. Let this be stated in its broadest form—let it be proclaimed from the house-tops—let it be known in every Pedobaptist household in the land, that in other things we can bid them God speed, but not in their constitution of churches. Here we

see an error against God's truth, and as we love that truth, we protest in word and life.

God forbid that by this protest we should seem to lay our hands on our hearts and say to Pedobaptists stand off, we are holier than you! Paul had no such feeling when he withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed. It was in the interest of that truth which was dearer and more precious and vital than all earthly ties, and I do not believe many pious Baptists live who have any pleasure in this protest for itself; but as they have been saved by Jesus and taught his truth, they must uphold that, whatever opposes. Nor can those now antagonistic, be one in churches till all churches are by their constitution brought into entire harmony with that truth. God grant that day may soon come.

Brethren, these facts are burdened with lessons for us. If we have more truth on our side, by that we are placed under a mightier responsibility—a responsibility not answered by a mere blatant protest, but demanding of us lives wholly consecrated to God. The worldly Baptist has no excuse, and so far as we can judge will be worthy of a deeper condemnation than those who have not seen God's truth so clearly. Our

churches must proclaim their protest against error much more by the lives of the members than by mere assertion, or the assertion of the error of others will be their own condemnation. Our churches must be pure in doctrine—living in faith—strict in discipline, if they are to be true witnesses for our God and his Christ.

THE END.