

ARTICLE III.

THE DECLINE OF INFANT BAPTISM.

BY HENRY C. VEDDER.

SOME four or five years ago, a well-known Baptist pastor incidentally remarked, in a sermon, that infant baptism is declining among all Pedobaptist denominations. The sermon was reported in a local paper, and a Presbyterian pastor's ire was roused. He denied that infant baptism is declining, and challenged the Baptist pastor to prove his assertion. For some weeks the controversy was hot, and all the local champions of pedobaptism rushed into print, eager to vindicate their "peculiar institution." The aid of Dr. E. F. Hatfield, the clerk of the Presbyterian General Assembly, was invoked, and he marshaled an imposing array of statistics to prove that infant baptism, so far from declining, has been, of late years, more generally practiced than ever, at least among Presbyterians. The Baptist pastor found himself in an embarrassing position. He was morally certain of the correctness of his assertion, but had not the facts at hand to sustain it, nor could he obtain them from leading scholars of the denomination. But as he did not feel justified in retracting his statement, yet could not make it good, he was conscious of appearing in a false light before the community. He had been out-talked, but not answered; silenced, but not convinced.

The writer's attention was attracted to the controversy, and believing the assertion of the Baptist pastor to be correct, he cast about for proofs of it. These were obtained with difficulty; but during the past four years a mass of evidence has slowly been accumulating, which is believed, at length, to be amply sufficient to settle the question, so

far as all candid men are concerned. It is the object of this article to present a part of that evidence as briefly and pointedly as may be.

THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE.

The proofs which will be produced to show that infant baptism is declining are of three kinds, and may be called positive, comparative, and superlative. The first, or positive proof, consists of admissions by Pedobaptist ministers and journals that the practice of infant baptism is on the decrease. These are quite numerous, and of themselves would go far to settle the question. Still they are, for the most part, statements of opinion unsupported by statistics, and might possibly be wrong. Therefore, more evidence is needed, and this is furnished by the comparative proof. The census of 1870 showed that there were twenty millions of people then, in this country, of marriageable age and upwards—that is, the age of nearly all the communicants of every denomination. The number of births within the year was reported as 1,100,475. That is, taking the population of the whole country, there was one birth for a little less than every twenty people of marriageable age and over. But the birth-rate in Pedobaptist churches must be even greater than this, because many families, containing several persons each, are represented by only one communicant. But taking the average above given, if any Pedobaptist denomination is found to have baptized in the year 1870 less than one infant to every twenty members, the fair inference will be that infant baptism is declining in that body. The comparative method has yet another application. The percentage of infant baptisms to communicants in the different denominations may be compared, and if one body is found to baptize, say one infant to every ten members, while another body baptizes only one infant to fifty members, the conclusion can not be doubtful. Still further, if the proportion of infant baptisms to members has remained stationary, while the proportion of adult baptisms has

greatly increased, it is clear that infant baptism can not have been practiced rigidly; for in that case adult baptisms would have continued to be rare, since adults baptized in infancy, when converted, would have joined "by profession," and not by baptism. These applications of the comparative proof would be enough to convince most reasonable people of the true state of the case, but for any obstinate doubter there remains what I call the superlative proof. If, on comparison of the percentage of infant baptisms to communicants in the same denomination, it is found that there has been a marked decrease during the last twenty-five or fifty years, the case is closed and no reply is possible, except it can be shown that the figures have been juggled with in a dishonest manner.

These lines of proof will now be applied in turn to each of the leading evangelical denominations of this country. In each case, if the denomination has any official manual, the figures and facts have been taken from that, and the utmost pains has been taken to secure absolute accuracy and to be scrupulously fair.

INFANT BAPTISM AMONG EPISCOPALIANS.

First, let us consider the case of that body which modestly calls itself "The Church," and brands all other bodies as "sects." In this case the "positive" line of argument must, perforce, be omitted, as no direct admissions of decline in the practice of infant baptism by Episcopalians have fallen within my notice. But the comparative and superlative proofs are full and satisfactory. I have been able to find no official summary of Church statistics, though each diocese publishes tabulated statements annually. These are collected and tabulated by several "Church Almanacs," published by private enterprise, and of these I have chosen, as probably most accurate, the "Church Almanac" of Messrs. Pott, Young & Co. Previous to 1863 it was not customary to give tabulated statements, but the reports of each diocese were briefly summarized. Many of these,

however, did not report either the number of baptisms or communicants. Taking the year 1850 as our standard and point of departure, we find sufficiently full reports from the dioceses of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Louisiana, Alabama, and Wisconsin. They report, in all, 38,467 communicants, 5,236 infant baptisms, and 1,028 adult baptisms. This is a ratio of one infant baptized to every seven members, and one adult to every thirty-eight. The following table will show the relation of these facts to those disclosed by the subsequent history of the Church:

YEAR.	COMMUNICANTS	INFANT BAPTISMS.	ADULT BAPTISMS.
1850	38,467	5,236	1,028
1863	122,955	22,092	3,894
1865	134,170	21,781	4,952
1870	176,563	21,749	5,059
1875	272,174	30,580	7,526
1880	322,713	29,368	6,509

It should be added that these statistics are not complete, for many diocesan convention journals contain no statistical summaries, and the editor of the "Church Almanac" can give only such figures as he can get. Nor are they quite correct as far as they go, since some dioceses report their baptisms in a lump, without specifying whether they are of infants or adults. But they furnish a fair *relative* standard, and one year may be compared with another with substantially accurate results. The figures for 1880 show a proportion of one infant baptism to eleven members, and one adult baptism to fifty members. In these computations no decimal fractions are given, the nearest whole number being considered sufficiently accurate for all practical purposes. This is a decrease in both kinds of baptisms, and shows that "The Church" was growing much less rapidly in 1880 than it was in 1850. Had the same rate continued, the infant baptisms in 1880 would have numbered 46,100, or 16,732 more than the actual number;

while the adult baptisms would have been 8,490, or 1,983 more than are reported. The fact that there were 4,344 "unspecified" baptisms in 1880 does little to mitigate this conclusion—the fact is clear that Episcopalianism is relatively decreasing, though as to positive numbers increasing; and the decrease is mainly in the item of infant baptisms; for, counting all the "unspecified" baptisms as baptisms of infants, there were more than 12,000 fewer infants baptized in 1880 than should have been baptized had the rate of 1850 obtained.

The following table will throw additional light on the question of the observance of infant baptism in different dioceses, according to the statistics of 1880:

DIocese.	NO. OF PARISHES.	COMMUNICANTS	INFANT BAPTISMS.
Albany	113	11,887	1,094
Central New York.....	106	12,033	900
Central Pennsylvania...	89	7,013	1,040
Connecticut.....	155	20,211	1,507
Long Island.....	89	14,942	1,671
Michigan.....	64	6,502	739
Massachusetts.....	134	16,522	1,625
Virginia.....	140	12,616	1,105

These fluctuations are quite remarkable, and the differences are evidently not due to the fluctuations in the birth-rate among the different parishes, so much as to the varying respect that is felt for the practice of infant baptism. It is worthy of note that the most marked decrease is in the Eastern and Southern seaboard States, where "The Church" has existed longest. In the Middle and Western States, where it is comparatively a new-comer, the ratio of infant baptisms is much higher.

A similar state of things is said to obtain, even in England, where every babe is born into the Church, and supposed to be baptized unless its parents are Dissenters. Yet, in a letter to the *Spectator*, of July 10, 1880, F. Simcox Lea stated, as a well-known fact, that a comparison of the

parish registers of London with the official records of births shows that the "baptized" children are less than half; and he hints that much the same is true elsewhere.

THE REFORMED (DUTCH) CHURCH.

The records of this Church are the oldest of any in the United States, but it is not necessary to go back beyond 1841, in which year there were 23,962 members, 1,983 infant baptisms, and 277 adult baptisms—a proportion of one infant baptized to every twelve members, and one adult to every eighty-six. That there has been a decline from this proportion is admitted in this extract from a report of the meeting of the Classis of Paramus, published in the *Christian Intelligencer* during the Summer of 1879, the exact date having been lost:

"In view of the great neglect of infant baptism, the Classis, at its Spring session, requested Rev. F. H. Van Derveer, D. D., to prepare a paper on this subject. An exceedingly able and instructive paper was presented by Dr. Van Derveer and a copy of the same was requested for publication."

This is a frank confession, but it is more than warranted by the facts, as the following table will show:

YEAR.	MEMBERS.	INFANT BAPTISMS.	ADULT BAPTISMS.
1841	23,962	1,983	277
1851	34,586	2,075	259
1861	50,295	4,050	470
1865	54,286	3,064	540
1870	61,144	3,421	974
1876	74,600	4,230	1,954
1880	80,208	4,080	738

The above years are chosen, not from caprice, and still less with a desire to "cook" the figures so as to sustain any theory, but because they were the ones that could be obtained at the rooms of the Reformed Church's board of publication. They are believed to afford a perfectly fair relative test of the practice during the last forty years; and they show that the infant baptisms have declined to one for

every twenty members, and the adult baptisms to one for every one hundred and nine members. This is a similar result to that shown by the Episcopalian figures; the Reformed Church is steadily losing ground, but principally in the matter of infant baptisms. How true was the phrase, "great neglect of infant baptism," used by the Classis of Paramus, appears when we examine the annual statistics for 1880 in detail. We find facts which we tabulate as follows:

CLASSIS.	WHOLE NO. CHURCHES.	CHURCHES REPORTING NO INFANT BAPTISMS.
Geneva	17	9
Michigan	9	4
Montgomery	23	10
Orange	26	9
Saratoga	14	7
Schoharie	14	8
	—	—
	103	47

A large part of these Churches represent from one hundred to three hundred and fifty members, and at least half that number of families. A still further examination of the general table of statistics reveals a state of things which will be made plain by tabulating a few representative cases:

CLASSIS.	FAMILIES.	INFANT BAPTISMS.	ADULT BAPTISMS.
Albany	1,568	90	63
South Bergen	1,025	97	12
Cayuga	756	47	45
Grand River	1,605	366	1
Kingston	1,430	95	35
North Long Island	2,223	219	29
South Long Island	1,619	244	36
Montgomery	1,861	65	31
Orange	2,010	85	60
Wisconsin	1,424	375	8

Does any one in his senses suppose that the difference between classes like Wisconsin and Kingston, Albany and

Grand River, Orange and South Long Island, is due to a difference of birth-rate and not to a difference in regard for the "ordinance" of infant baptism? The conclusion is so plain that nobody can fail to draw it, and it is all the more emphatic, because in this table we have given the number of families in each Classis instead of the Church members. In whatever light we examine the Reformed statistics we find the testimony all pointing in one direction—to a great and growing laxity in the practice of infant baptism. And this has occurred in spite of the fact that the Reformed Church is one of the most, if not the most, conservative of all the evangelical denominations in the land.

AMONG THE PRESBYTERIANS.

Not long ago the *Christian at Work*, in an editorial paragraph, gave some figures on infant baptism, with this comment: "But one conclusion is deducible from these statistics, the adherence to infant baptism is not only practiced by less than *one-half* the Presbyterian Church membership, but there is a decided falling off of the practice." That this is not a new thing may be inferred from a remark of the *Princeton Repository*, several years ago: "Fifty years ago about two hundred children were baptized for every one thousand members, now but fifty, one-fourth as many."* "Calvin," the genial and acute Chicago correspondent of *The Presbyterian*, wrote in a letter not long since: "In our German churches, during the last year, the baptisms of infants were *one to every seven and one-half members*, while in our American churches, for the same time, they were only *one to every thirty members*" (italics his.). And, at another time he mentions, as a remarkable circumstance, that during the pastorate of a certain Presbyterian minister over a church at Dayton, Ohio, "there were added to the church, on certificate, eighty-five; on examination, one hundred and thirty-nine; *by infant baptism*, one hundred and ninety."

* Quoted in the *Canadian Baptist*. The writer has not been able to verify the quotation, but has no doubt of its correctness.

italics his again). These are samples of the numerous admissions by Presbyterians that I find among my papers, and they will suffice for this part of the proof.

When we turn to the official statistics of the denomination, as furnished by the Minutes of the General Assembly from year to year, we find the following facts revealed:

YEAR.	COMMUNICANTS.	INFANT BAPTISMS.	ADULT BAPTISMS.
1831	182,017	12,198	4,390
*1840	126,583	7,844	1,741
†1850	O. S., 207,254	10,372	2,772
	N. S., 139,797	4,096	1,714
1860	O. S., 292,927	15,631	5,156
	N. S., 134,933	3,506	1,690
1870	440,561	16,476	10,122
1880	578,671	12,960	9,232

The statistics of the Southern Presbyterians, since they became a separate body, I have not attempted to gather; they would give completeness to the table, but add no special force to the conclusions.‡ We see that the proportion of infant baptisms to communicants has gradually fallen from one to fifteen in 1831 to one to thirty in 1880. The lately published statistics for 1881 are even more unfavorable: communicants, 581,401; infant baptisms, 13,484; adult baptisms, 8,179—or one infant baptism to 33 members. There were nearly 2,000 more infant baptisms in 1860, when there were but 426,000 members than there are now with nearly 600,000 members!

When we come down to details, the official statistics for the last year are even more damaging. Take the New York Presbytery, for example. The Fifth Avenue Church, Dr. John Hall pastor, reports 1,730 members and but 21 infant baptisms; the University Place Church, Dr. R. R. Booth

* These figures are for the "Old School" Presbyterians only, the "New School" statistics for this year not having been published.

† The figures for the Old and New School bodies are given separately for 1850 and 1860; before 1870 the two bodies had united again.

‡ In 1880 the proportion of infant baptisms to members in this body was one to twenty-five.

pastor, has 1,193 members, with 46 infant baptisms; the Fourth Avenue Church, Dr. Howard Crosby pastor, has 1,384 members, and reports only 17 infant baptisms; the Brick Church, Dr. Bevan pastor, has 1,100 members, and baptized 23 infants; and the Madison Square Church, Dr. C. H. Parkhurst pastor, with 777 members, reports not a single case of infant baptism during the year. Here are the five largest Churches in New York, among the most active Churches of the denomination, and containing many of its best laymen, and their average is less than 1 infant baptism to 58 members! Then take the Brooklyn Presbytery: Dr. Cuyler's Church reports 1,761 members and 31 infant baptisms; and Dr. Talmage's, 2,471 members and only 49 infant baptisms. Or the Albany Presbytery, where the principal Albany Church reports 734 members and 12 infant baptisms; and the Amsterdam Church reports 512 members and not an infant baptism during the year. Or there is Philadelphia, where some of the principal Churches report as follows: Spruce Street, 563 members and 8 infant baptisms; Bethany, 1,340 members and 25 infant baptisms; First, 566 members and 7 infant baptisms; Cohocksink, 788 members and 22 infant baptisms; Kensington, 820 members and 16 infant baptisms. One might, perhaps, suppose that the reason of this decline is that our Presbyterian brethren of the Quaker City have fewer babes born to them than people in general; but when one sees that the Grace Church, with only 212 members, reports 45 infant baptisms, that hypothesis is negatived at once.

We might continue this line of proof indefinitely, but we suppose that after the figures we have given no one will dispute this conclusion: Infant baptism is rapidly declining among Presbyterians, especially in the more intelligent Churches; and in the denomination, as a whole, less than half as many infants, in proportion to members, are now baptized as were baptized fifty years ago. This conclusion may be unpalatable, but truth is often unpalatable.

IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

For admissions as to the decline of infant baptism readers are referred to the records of the various conferences *passim*. They abound with passages like the following, taken from the records of the North Carolina Conference for 1880:

"During the progress of the twentieth question the matter of infant baptism came up, owing to the small number of infants reported baptized in some of the districts.

"Rev. A. W. Mangum spoke in reference to the injury done to the cause of infant baptism by a prominent Methodist publication.

"Rev. J. P. Moore thought that the cause was because of the objection parents had to having their children baptized, when they themselves might object when they came to years of discretion. They object to performing their children's religious creed, to which Mr. Burton replied, that it was thus shown that the people did not have a proper appreciation of the subject, and were not thoroughly educated in it.

"After some other remarks by the bishop, in which he enjoined a strict attention to the cause of infant baptism, the regular order was continued."

That there are good reasons for the bishop's admonition the facts will show as we proceed. And, first, let us glance at the general statistics of the denomination, as contained in the "Minutes of the Annual Conferences," published by the Methodist Book Concern:

YEAR.	MEMBERS AND PROBATIONERS.	INFANT BAPTISMS.	ADULT BAPTISMS.
1857*	820,519	27,937	27,583
1860	994,447	32,902	39,464
1865	929,259	32,891	29,150
1870	1,367,134	50,453	66,481
1875	1,580,559	58,218	66,718
1880	1,742,922	58,535	59,330

In the eight years from 1868 to 1877, inclusive, the adult baptisms outnumbered the infant baptisms by over one hundred thousand! The above table shows a decline from the

* Earlier statistics are not obtainable. Members and probationers are lumped together because the infants of both are expected to be baptized. The table does not include the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

proportion of one infant baptism to twenty-two members and probationers to one for twenty-nine. A comparison of these figures with those given above for the Episcopalian and Reformed Churches shows that the Methodists have been lax in the matter of infant baptism for twenty-five years, and are becoming more lax every year. Had the same rate prevailed among the Methodists last year that the Episcopalians reported in 1850, the former should have baptized nearly a quarter of a million infants, or more than four times the number actually baptized. But, in order to understand the fluctuations among Methodists with reference to this rite, a glance is necessary at the following table, taken from the "Minutes" for 1880:

CONFERENCES.	TOTAL MEMBERS.	INFANT BAPTISMS.	ADULT BAPTISMS.
East German.....	3,809	617	5
East Maine.....	12,542	61	638
North Indiana.....	35,263	311	1,386
Philadelphia.....	49,775	4,640	984
Central New York.....	33,195	272	1,545
Chicago German.....	6,258	597	6
South Illinois.....	27,216	665	1,204
East Ohio.....	44,133	722	1,443

These selections fairly represent the various conferences. Among the German conferences the proportion of infant baptisms to members is 1 to 9; in the Philadelphia Conference it is nearly the same; while in East Maine it falls to 1 to 205! A still further study of the statistical tables reveals the following startling facts: In the New Jersey Conference there are 49 churches of 100 or more members each, that report no infant baptisms. In the Maine Conference there are 108 churches, of which 93 report no infant baptisms, and 39 of these have 100 members or more each. Three churches, that contain 1,334 members, report only 40 infant baptisms, or one to over 300 members. In Central New York 17 churches of over 200 members each report no infant baptisms; and the same is true of fully twice that number of churches that have over 100 members

each. These are not exceptional conferences; the same state of things exists in the conferences of Vermont, Michigan, Illinois, Providence, North Ohio, North-west Indiana, and several others. After this showing it would be superfluous to produce further proofs of the decline of infant baptism among the Methodists. The one who rejects such evidence as this is incapable of conviction by any weight of testimony that can be imagined.

AMONG THE CONGREGATIONALISTS.

The admissions by Congregationalists themselves that they no longer practice infant baptism as they once did are numerous and significant. The completest and frankest statement of the case was made in a very recent number of the *Boston Congregationalist* (January 18th of this year), the leading organ of the denomination. That journal, in an editorial article, remarked: "The simple fact appears to be that the doctrine of the evangelical Churches as to infant baptism is in a transitional state, and has, at present, a materially loosened hold upon the popular conviction. . . . Congregationalists—under the attrition of Baptist friction on the one side, and the force of their own principles of individualism on the other—have become a good deal demoralized in this particular." On this head nothing more need be said. "The attrition of Baptist friction" is good, very good.

Let us turn now to the official statistics of the various issues of the *Congregational Year-book*. The facts discerned may be briefly summarized in this table:

YEAR.	MEMBERS.	INFANT BAPTISMS.	ADULT BAPTISMS.
1859*	250,452	5,061	10,529
1865	263,296	4,133	4,974
1870	306,518	5,134	6,335
1875	338,313	5,184	8,743
1880	384,332	4,989	5,893

* No complete statistics of any previous year are obtainable.

In 1859 the ratio of infant baptisms to members was as one to fifty, while in 1880 it had sunk to one to seventy-seven. The decrease is both positive and relative. If the Congregationalists had baptized as many infants, proportionally, as the Episcopalians in 1880, they would have reported over thirty thousand cases; and if they had practiced the "ordinance" as faithfully as the German Methodists in the same year, they would have reported more than forty thousand cases—unless it can be proved that the birth-rate among Congregationalists is markedly below that which prevails among the other two bodies named. And, at any rate, the fact can not be explained away that there has been a great declension from the state of things that prevailed among Congregationalists themselves in 1859. To give a still further idea of the extent of the non-observance of infant baptism in this denomination the following table will serve an excellent turn:

STATES.	MEMBERS.	INFANT BAPTISMS.
Connecticut.....	55,598	690
Illinois.....	22,409	304
Iowa.....	15,512	242
Maine.....	21,400	142
Massachusetts.....	91,439	968
Michigan.....	17,083	215
New Hampshire.....	20,134	126
New York.....	33,964	399
Ohio.....	22,650	298
Vermont.....	20,083	190

Maine and New Hampshire report thirty-three per cent more members than Iowa, yet the latter rejoices in nearly twice as many infant baptisms as either of the others. The more the above figures are studied the greater will be the reader's astonishment at the meagerness of the figures in the right-hand column, and at their curious fluctuations; and the more will the ingenuity of a Congregationalist be taxed to explain them on any hypothesis other than that of the journal above quoted.

But to represent adequately the facts of the case still another table is necessary:

STATES.	CHURCHES.	NO REPORT.
Connecticut.....	298	117
Illinois.....	244	157
Iowa.....	234	151
Maine.....	238	188
Massachusetts.....	526	282
Michigan.....	233	180
New Hampshire.....	187	131
New York.....	258	164
Ohio.....	212	147
Vermont.....	198	129

By "no report" it is meant that so many Churches as are represented in the right-hand column did not report *a single case of infant baptism during the year*. That is to say, in ten of the chief States of the Union nearly two-thirds of the Congregationalists have either ceased to practice infant baptism at all, or practice it very seldom. There has been no ingenious "cooking" of the figures to bring out this conclusion; the States have been taken in alphabetical order, those reporting less than fifteen thousand members having been excluded merely to shorten the table. Had the desire been to make the worst possible showing for Congregationalism in this matter of infant baptism, States might have been inserted like Indiana, where, out of thirty-one Churches, twenty-four report no infant baptisms, and the seven others report only twenty, all told, while the membership of the State is one thousand six hundred and eighteen—one infant baptism to each eighty members.

From the facts and figures that have been given above, the following general summary may be deduced: 1. The statistics of each of the leading Pedobaptist bodies show a great falling off in the number of infant baptisms from the practice of fifty years ago. 2. Among the Episcopalians the ratio of infant baptisms to communicants has decreased

from one in seven to one in eleven; among the Reformed, from one in twelve to one in twenty; among the Presbyterians, from one in fifteen to one in thirty-three; among the Methodists, from one in twenty-two to one in twenty-nine; among the Congregationalists, from one in fifty to one in seventy-seven. These facts appear to me to warrant a few general conclusions, namely:

1. The practice of infant baptism is declining so rapidly that, unless the decline shall be arrested in some way that can not now be foreseen, there is need of little prophetic gift to announce its practical extinction at no distant day. If the present tendency of things continue for another twenty-five years, it will be extinct among the Congregationalists, and nearly so among the Methodists and Presbyterians. The Episcopalians may be expected to resist this tendency of things more successfully than any other body, but there is no reason to suppose that they will ever be a relatively stronger denomination than they now are. The Reformed Church is fast merging into the Presbyterian, and may cease to exist as a separate body in another fifty years.

2. This declension of practice must be ascribed to a co-extensive and contemporaneous change of conviction among Pedobaptists regarding the nature of infant baptism. If it were still regarded as an ordinance, that every Christian parent was bound to observe on pain of disobedience to his Lord, there would be no such laxity. The same Churches that neglect infant baptism duly observe the Lord's supper, and baptize (administering what they regard as baptism) every unbaptized adult who unites with them on a profession of faith. Candid Pedobaptists admit that there is no command in the Scriptures for the baptism of infants, and that the practice is without warrant of apostolic precedent. At most, they look upon the ceremony as a public and solemn dedication of babes to the service of God, and consider it a privilege, rather than a duty, to have one's children thus consecrated. The idea of duty

once removed from the ceremony it ceases to be considered as of prime importance. A man-made rite is a much less desirable thing than a divinely instituted ordinance, and infant baptism has thus fallen into something very like contempt. Not a few godly Pedobaptist parents have so far attained to the truth that they see baptism to be an act of personal obedience to Christ, a condition that can be met in no way but by the conscious act of the person baptized. They, therefore, deliberately decline to deprive their children of the privilege of obeying Christ for themselves, by having a meaningless and empty rite performed over them in their unconscious infancy. Views like these may be trusted to propagate themselves from generation to generation.

3. The influences that have brought this change to pass are very many, but chief among them may be named "the attrition of Baptist friction." For more than five centuries Baptists have maintained an unflinching protest against the substitution of the tradition of men for the commandment of God. On whatever other points of doctrine they may have differed, or in whatever else they may have deviated from the true standard of faith and practice, on this point they have been a unit. They have insisted that the Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ should consist only of those who give credible evidence of regeneration through personal faith in him, and have been baptized on public profession of their belief. That faithful testimony, sealed with the blood of many martyrs, is at length bearing fruit. To God and his Word be the glory.