

is not deserving of the name Lutheran. Also on neighboring churchless people the pastor may and ought to urge the duty of having their children baptized and of sending them to a Christian school or Sunday school, and frequently this may be made a strong mission argument. Of course children are not to be baptized against the will and without the consent of the parents or guardians, but the necessity of Baptism and the duty of parents must invariably be insisted on, not only because of the responsibility falling on parents, but especially also because of the great blessing which a baptized infant may bring to a house.

When it is uncertain whether a person has been baptized or not, and no certainty can be obtained, the sacrament should always be granted. Neither should it then be administered in a qualified form, as: If thou wast not baptized before I now baptize thee, because this might render the present Baptism dubious to the mind of the applicant.

Baptism as a solemn act should be performed with due solemnity. Never should the pastor go through with it in a perfunctory manner; for thereby it loses much in edification to the parents and other witnesses. And the proper place for the performing of Baptism is the church, and the proper time, the time of public worship, that it may serve for the edifying of all.

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## CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ERROR AND ERRORISTS.

Indifferentism and unionism are two prominent traits of the Church of our times. In constantly widening circles pure doctrine is viewed as a matter of little importance, while error in doctrine is deemed an innocent trifle. We are constantly told in our day that the Christian who differs from us in religion merely sees truth from a different standpoint, and that we should not deny him the right hand of

fellowship on account of this doctrinal difference. This sentiment threatens to deluge the Church. It is published from thousands of pulpits and bruited in numberless papers. Preachers of different churches form ministers' unions, exchange pulpits, and officiate together at funerals. The members of different sects hold union services, commune at strange altars, and unite in religious endeavors. This practice is praised as a proof of true Christian charity. Those Christians, however, who insist on pure doctrine and warn against error and teachers of error are very unpopular. They are reproached and even derided. They are called sticklers for orthodoxy and narrow sectarians. They are told that their conduct is inconsistent with the spirit of the gentle and meek Galilean who said: "Judge not: condemn not!" Thus the champions of "union" would make it appear that our Master was tolerant toward error and teachers of error. But that is a gross misrepresentation. Our blessed Redeemer's relation to error and teachers of error was just the reverse of what they would make it appear. His true attitude is plainly set forth in the Gospels. In these days of indifferentism and consequent unionism it will surely be well to ponder His attitude often. Let us first consider His attitude toward error, and, in the second part of this paper, His attitude toward errorists.

### 1. CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ERROR.

In the days of our Lord there were three sects, or parties, in Palestine, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. The latter lived in retirement near the Dead Sea; and it is nowhere recorded that Christ came in contact with them and their errors. With the Sadducees, however, who mingled more with the people and were represented in the Sanhedrim and especially in the service of the temple, Christ came into public conflict on two occasions. This Jewish sect denied the resurrection. That was their leading error. But although the Sadducees were largely men of rank and

of wealth, their error did not meet with favor and acceptance among the people in general. It was strongly combated by the popular and intensely patriotic party of the Pharisees. But while the Pharisees clung to the doctrine of the resurrection, they falsified a number of other Scripture truths. They corrupted both the formal and the material principle of true religion. They added to the Word of God by their traditions, and took away from it by their restricted interpretation.

The Sermon on the Mount presents several samples of their corrupt interpretation of the divine Law. Their traditions are frequently referred to in the Gospels. One of the most highly prized of these man-made traditions prescribed the proper observance of the Sabbath. According to this tradition it was unlawful to heal on the Sabbath or to carry any kind of burden, because both acts involved servile labor. For the same reason it was prohibited to pluck ears of corn on the Sabbath and to rub them in the hands, since the act of plucking the ears was regarded as a form of reaping, and the act of rubbing them as a form of threshing. Another tradition prescribed the washing of hands before meals and other religious ablutions. Besides these, there were other commandments of men which the Scribes and Pharisees had received to hold, Mark 7, 4. 8. They taught that these human additions to the divine Law were binding on all; nay, they even placed them above the divine Law, inasmuch as they taught that, whenever these oral traditions came into conflict with a written commandment of God, the former were to be obeyed and the latter to be set aside, Matt. 15 and Mark 7. The person who transgressed these traditions was considered a sinner, the man who observed them was counted a saint. This Pharisaic perversion of the formal principle naturally led to a perversion of the material principle, to a corruption of the doctrine of justification. Concerning this cardinal doctrine of Scripture the Scribes and Pharisees taught that they were

able to keep all the commandments, and merited life by their own righteousness.

These are some of the principal errors with which Christ came into contact. Now, what was His attitude toward these errors? If we are to believe a late evangelist, His method of dealing with error was to largely ignore it, letting it melt away in the warm glow of the full intensity of truth expressed in love. Teaching the truth was, indeed, the principal part of His work. He said unto Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." But to bear witness unto the truth is already a rebuke of error. However, Christ did not merely rebuke error by implication, He rebuked it also expressly and openly. He opposed error in thought, word, and deed. He did not, indeed, go out of His way to find matter for controversy; but He neither evaded nor ignored erroneous teaching. He boldly faced, exposed, and denounced it wherever He met it. He bore witness against it in His majestic discourse on the mountain. In this marvelous sermon He exposed the false Pharisaic interpretation of the divine Law, and also opposed the Pharisaic idea of righteousness. Nor was this the only occasion on which He antagonized error; He pursued the same method to the close of His public career; in fact, most of His conflicts with error occurred in the last year of His ministerial life. His first recorded attack on Jewish tradition was made in Jerusalem, about nine or ten months after the beginning of His ministry in Judea. He was attending the unnamed feast of the Jews, John 5, 1, which was probably Purim (March 19, 782 A. U. C.). At the pool of Bethesda He found a poor paralytic. He cured him, commanding him to rise, take up his bed, and walk. But it was Sabbath on that day. This was only one of seven cures which He wrought on the Sabbath. (See Mark 1, 21; 1, 29; 3, 1. John 9, 14. Luke 13, 14; 14, 1.) The fact that He chose the Sabbath for performing these cures is worthy of note.

It shows that He intended to openly exhibit His condemnation of the traditional Sabbath; and the inspired records show that He succeeded in this. (For further Sabbath controversies see Matt. 12, 1—8, and parallel passages.) His attitude of antagonism to traditionalism was perhaps never more pronounced than in His crushing reply to the Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem who censured Him for permitting His disciples to eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands. (Matt. 15 and Mark 7.) This was shortly after His return from the Passover mentioned John 6, 4, about one year before His crucifixion. In this reply He openly denounced traditionalism in stern and strong words. He declared that the traditions of the elders were the commandments of men, that the observance of these man-made commandments is a vain worship of God which often involves a direct and gross violation of God's holy will. And when His disciples, at the first opportunity after this denunciation, expostulated with Him on the danger incurred by His attack on Pharisaic precepts and principles, He answered and said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15, 13.) This statement exhibits most plainly our Savior's position with respect to every erroneous doctrine. He regarded false doctrine as a weed which His heavenly Father has not planted. Hence it has no right of existence. He deems it His duty to pluck it up by the roots, to destroy it completely and utterly. (For Christ's refutation of the Pharisaic idea of righteousness see Matt. 5, 20. Luke 17, 10; 18, 9—14, and other passages. His encounter with the error of the Sadducees is recorded Matt. 22, 23 sqq., and parallel passages.)

Such was the attitude which our Savior assumed and maintained toward error in doctrine—an attitude of implacable hostility. But why did He set Himself in open opposition to false doctrine? Why did He expose, assail, and condemn it? What was the motive of His remorseless

antagonism to error? It cannot have been love of strife that prompted Him to take this position. Such a motive was utterly foreign to His pure and peace-loving soul. Neither should this motive be found in the hearts of His followers, for it is an utterly unworthy motive, and only serves to make friends for false doctrine. But while the great Prince of Peace was not a polemic from choice, He opposed error because He knew that error in doctrine is a dangerous thing. He looked upon it as noxious or harmful. About seven or eight months before His crucifixion and death He said to His disciples in the parts of Dalmanutha, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." (Matt. 16, 6.) Here He bids them beware of the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and Sadducees, v. 12, of their *false* doctrine, of course. (See Matt. 23, 2. 3.) He likens their false doctrine to leaven. This figure implies that false doctrine is a corrupt and corrupting thing. Leaven is a piece of sour dough which is in a state of putrefaction. It is, therefore, a sign of impurity and corruption. (1 Cor. 5, 7. 8. Lev. 2, 11.) By comparing false doctrine to leaven, therefore, Christ characterizes it as a distinctly impure and corrupt thing. But this does not exhaust His meaning. Leaven is also a corrupting substance. It comes out of corruption, and corrupts that with which it is mingled. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Gal. 5, 9.) The microscopic yeast plants in the piece of sour dough are in continual motion. Under favorable circumstances they multiply with extraordinary rapidity and quickly pervade the whole lump, changing it into their nature. Even so the leaven of error grows and develops most rapidly. It propagates itself with amazing rapidity. It penetrates and pushes through till it pervades, and so corrupts the holy bread of Scripture truth on which our souls are fed. Therefore, take heed and beware of leavenous doctrine. Beware of even a single false doctrine, be it ever so small; for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Moreover, false doctrine also

spreads itself with a corrupting effect through the heart that admits it. Look at the Pharisees and Sadducees. The leaven of their error caused their hearts to swell and inflate with spiritual pride. It led them to trust in themselves as being righteous, and to despise others. It blinded them to the deep depravity of their whole nature and to their need of a redeemer and of regeneration. It led them to reject and persecute Christ, the only Redeemer, and to die in their sins. That was the effect, the fearful and fatal effect, of their leavenous teaching. Indeed, erroneous doctrine is not a harmless thing, as many imagine. It is a most dangerous, pernicious, and ruinous thing. It injures and ruins the soul which admits it. No wonder, therefore, that our blessed Redeemer who died for our souls opposed all error in doctrine, and earnestly cautions us to take heed, and beware of the leaven of false doctrine.

Having considered Christ's attitude toward error, we will now proceed to consider His attitude toward teachers of error.

## 2. CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ERRORISTS.

In order to understand our Redeemer's position in relation to teachers of error properly, it is necessary to bear in mind that there are two general classes of errorists, viz., conscious and unconscious teachers of error. The first and worst class of false teachers consists of such as consciously turn from the known truth and stubbornly hold to their error. They knowingly encourage and propagate their corrupt doctrines, and wittingly deceive and destroy simple souls. Alas, there are many such teachers of error, Tit. 1, 10. 11; 3, 10. 11. But there are also many who propagate error in ignorance. They are ensnared in the errors of their denomination; but their intentions are honest. They do not make it a point to deceive others, but are rather deceived themselves and blindly follow their leaders without really knowing what they are doing, like those two hundred men