

Let us carefully exclude the black sheep.' So they withdrew themselves from the general body of Christians, and started an organisation of their own. They set up a select and exclusive Church.

But alas! how impossible is it, even with the strictest discipline and the sternest rules, to keep out evil altogether. Into the smallest sect and the most rigid it will creep. There is a Judas among the twelve, and Satan in the guise of the hypocrite meets us everywhere. You may lock your doors and draw your bolts, but you only fasten him in.

The Baptists have discovered this, like many other people, and the constant splits in their body bear witness to it. Thus there are General Baptists, and Particular Baptists, Baptists' New Connexion, Strict Baptists, Scotch Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists, and so forth—each striving to frame that impossible thing—a pure and select Church upon earth. It is, in truth, an old dream.

So early as the second century the Montanists strove for it, but without success. Tertullian, their leader, is loud and bitter in his denunciation of the Church for admitting back into communion those who had fallen into sin. Then came the schism of the Novatians—the Puritans of the third century; and then the Donatists, the ancestors of the modern Baptists. Their doctrine was emphatically condemned at the Council of Arles, A.D. 314, and they subsequently fell to pieces. But the vision of an earthly Church, 'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,' has continued from that day to this to charm some zealous souls, and to enlist their sympathies.

And here the question suggests itself: 'Are the Baptists, after all, seeking for the right sort of thing? Have they not made a grave mistake in the idea they have formed of the Church of Christ? Have they not altogether misunderstood its purpose and mission?' The Church was not intended to be a select club in which the best Christians were to enjoy one another's company in undisturbed intercourse—a

select and exclusive circle of Heaven's favourites.' Its aim is not merely to supply these chosen ones with spiritual delights and to keep them well guarded from the wicked world around. That were a poor and miserable conception of the Church's work.

The purpose of Christ through His Church is far wider and nobler. It is to be a great school into which sinners are to be brought and gradually educated into ripe Christians. It is like a vast field in which the tares are mingled with the wheat until the final harvest. It is the flinging of a net with a daring hand freely out into the wide waters of the world, and the enclosing of good and bad fishes together is the result. Certainly this implies risk and peril and chance of defeat. People who visit among the sick may catch the infection themselves. And those who go into scenes of moral pollution to rescue the victims are not free from danger. But in view of the nobility of the work, who stops to count the cost? The Church, like her Master, extends a welcome to publicans and sinners, even though her character in the sight of the world suffer thereby. She, too, comes amongst men, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

2. The second peculiar doctrine of the Baptists arises out of the first. And it is this that gives them their name. They baptize only adults. Not all adults, but those whose personal faith and character seem to justify their admittance among the members of the community. They object to infant baptism. Nay, they follow an heretical practice of early Christian times by baptizing over again children who have already been admitted into Christ's flock by this rite.

The Church, on the other hand, teaches that none may be excluded from the blessings of this Sacrament whom Christ has not excluded. She remembers that there are no Scriptural words to be found denying children admittance into His kingdom. She recollects how He rebuked the disciples when they would have kept them from Him with the words, 'Suffer