

Such, then are the invaluable truths "signified" in the baptism of infants. They are the most important in the Word of God.

The doctrines symbolized in baptism are those on which the *Membership* of the Church of Christ is founded. He who believes that all men are spiritually dead, and who has hope of the forgiveness of sins through the atonement of Christ, and who by his life, gives evidence that he believes them, has those qualifications which entitle him to be received member of the visible church. An association which is not founded on these great principles does not deserve the name of a Christian Church.

When a person would enter the church he must enter by the gate of baptism: The church signifying by this ordinance, that all who are within believe that all men are by nature sinners, and that salvation is only by the blood of atonement. He who enters without believing these commits an act marked either by superstition or impiety or both.

As baptism is the symbol of the Church's faith, and of the ground of the Church's fellowship, and as the administration of it constitutes either a declaration of membership, or is the act by which admission is given, it must certainly be a *church ordinance*, and as such, ought to be administered in the presence of the church. If there be any services which more properly are church services than others, the sacraments are these services.

Besides, the sacraments are intended to edify the church, and therefore to administer either of them in private is to deprive the church of one of the means appointed for her profiting.

Let us suppose that the church understands the meaning of the ordinance of baptism, and regards it with that reverence to which God's institutions are entitled; then, what more natural for a church member when a child is baptized than to say, That reminds me of my state by nature. I was conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity. But God, in the aboundings of his grace, has had mercy upon me. By him I have been brought out of a state of sin and misery and admitted into his family. I who was helpless as a little child have been delivered from the wrath to come and now have good hope through grace. Such are the thoughts which will arise in the mind of an intelligent christian on witnessing the administration of baptism. And these thoughts constitute the material of which the christian life is composed—humility, arising from a consciousness of his guilty origin and sinful living, and gratitude, for having received a free salvation. The one, being the sentiment with which he ought to regard himself, and the other, the sentiment with which he ought to regard God. A Christian is a compound of these sentiments. Every thing about him when he acts as a christian, is influenced by both. The greatest service then that can be done to the Church, is to press on their attention motives to these indispensable qualities; and as baptism is eminently fitted for this purpose, the church must be injured when deprived of an opportunity of witnessing it.