

NOVEMBER 13, 1867.

Address of the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel before the English Baptist Union.

Mr. Noel was the Chairman of the Session of the Baptist Union recently held at Cardiff in Wales.

Before reading his address, he said there was once a meeting where God was so pleased that he caused the walls to shake. Now the walls of Bethany Chapel (in which they were assembled,) had not shaken, although he thought God would be pleased with these meetings. They met under the influence of the many prayers which had been offered up to the throne of God, and he confessed that if he had had the inspiration of those prayers, he should have written a very different paper to read at that meeting than he had. They were met that morning as children of the living God, made children by the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ, who died in agony for them that they might be adopted. What debt did they owe to God for all this? They should present themselves as living sacrifices, whole, acceptable to God, and not to be conformed to the things of this world, but walking as true children of God, offer themselves wholly to His service, and to the advancement of His glory. He (the speaker) did not certainly expect to see such a monster gathering of pastors, for he only thought to see about thirty or forty present. Were there ever such facilities as they had at the present time for giving themselves up to God? They had assistance which was omnipotent, and they ought to do all that man could possibly do to further their Master's work. He wished particularly to speak to young men, and he would advise them to live so as to make a mark on time. They were losing energy as the time went on, and he would recommend them to waste no more time, but at once to devote their whole lives to the service of God. Young ministers should be Christ-like in their churches and in their lives, and they would be exceedingly blessed. Let them look at the 120 Galileans, who were uneducated men, and who from their earnestness, faith, love, joy, tenderness, courage, determination, and firmness, the world could not move, and they had consequently moved the world (applause); and if the teachers of the Gospel would do the same now, they would be blessed in the same manner. Mr. Noel then read the following address—

BRETHREN.—Allow me offer you some practical suggestions, which, containing nothing new, may be only the more important because they recall old-established truths and duties.

There is a constant tendency in the world to lower the terms of discipleship to Christ, and a general propensity in ecclesiastics to exalt themselves. From these two evils combined has sprung the doctrine that all those who are sprinkled with a little water by a priest become members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven. No language can exaggerate the value of these distinctions. A child of God is one whom God loves, protects, teaches, guides, and keeps, who has access to God at any moment, can obtain from him all blessings by prayer, and will live in His house above for ever. A member of Christ is one who is connected with him, as the members of our bodies are with us, one whom the Lord cares for, nourishes, and protects, as we care for our lambs, and from whom he never will be separated; and an heir of heaven is one who will have a perfect nature in a perfect home, among perfect friends, and being, after the resurrection, at the return of Jesus to judgment, made like Him in body and soul, will be blessed with His presence, and share in His joy through eternity. All this, falsely said to be the result of priestly sprinkling, is really obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus. Those only who trust to Him as their Saviour, relying upon His atoning sacrifice and His prevailing mediation, upon His merit, power, and love, to the exclusion of every other ground of confidence, become His members, children of God, and heirs of heaven. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9.) "As many as received him, to them gave he the power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12.) "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26.) "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17.)

Instead of persons becoming members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven, through the sprinkling of a priest, the Apostle Paul has said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be an accursed thing when the Lord comes;" and John, who had a prophet's authority, has said, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him."

Men become Christians by trusting to Christ for their salvation from sin and hell, to the exclusion of all other trust; and those who trust to the sprinkling of priests are under a miserable delusion. The Church of Christ, which is said by many to be the whole body of Episcopalians comprehending the Church of Rome, the Greek Church, and the Church of England, while all other denominations are shut out, is, on the contrary, the whole body of real believers who trust in Jesus and who love God, while all those in the Churches of Rome, Greece, and England, who do not so trust and love, are shut out. The Church is the body of Jesus, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Christ has loved the Church, and given Himself for it, that he might sanctify it and present it to Himself in heaven absolutely perfect. It is the general assembly of the heirs of God, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Multitudes of Roman Catholics and Anglicans are unconverted, sceptical, worldly, profligate, doing dishonour to Christ, and making the world blaspheme His

name; but the Church is the fullness of His glory and the fullness of his joy, because every member of it is saved by His atonement, and perfected by His spirit. To this Church no one is admitted, though a member of any local church, without faith in Jesus; and from it no one is excluded, to whatever Church he belongs, who has faith.

Since Jesus has redeemed us by His own blood, and now pleads for us in heaven, we are not our own, but His, bearing our sins on His own body on the tree. He died for us, that we should no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him.

Ministers who are called as evangelists to save the unconverted, and as pastors, to perfect the members of their churches, have a work so momentous, and so utterly beyond their unassisted power upon their hands, that relinquishing as much as possible all occupations which would distract them; they should give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word; and since deacons and members of churches have been bought at the same cost, and are loved by the Lord with the same affection, they should all, no less than ministers, yield themselves to God, presenting their bodies a living sacrifice, which is their reasonable service.

This debt of affection and of obedience should determine all our habits. No less than Paul should we each one say "The life I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." The life of that apostle was a model, and its main principle was faith in Jesus. By an equal exercise of the same principle we may attain the same character. Young men, especially if you set upon it during the years which are before you, so that you resemble him, you will do much good, and deserve much affection.

But I here wish to specify some duties laid upon us as churches by our debt to Jesus.

1. Since we must obey his will, as contained in the Scriptures, we must allow no one to interfere with that obedience. We cannot belong to the Establishment, because we cannot allow the State to interfere with his laws, or to usurp his functions, by determining who shall or shall not be pastors, or by preventing the church discipline which He has prescribed.

We cannot be Episcopalians, because we can find in Scripture no authority whatever from Christ or his apostles for the office of a diocesan; and are obliged to look upon the pretended apostolical succession and the sacerdotalism of some Anglican clergymen as priestly inventions which are unscriptural.

Loyalty to Christ forbids us to say such and such reform in our church may be required by His will; but the State or the bishop would not allow them. His authority must be supreme with us, and therefore we must be self-governing, or independent churches, like the church of Ephesus, or the church of Philippi; free to do all that we can see from Scripture to be our Master's will.

On this ground of obedience to His will we are obliged to differ from our Congregational brethren by baptizing believers alone. We can admit to the ordinance of baptism none but those who make a credible profession of faith in Jesus, because we can find no instances in Scripture of the baptism of infants, and because infant baptism, if it be not according to His law, subverts it, seeing that if all the infants of a country, or even the infants of the churches, are baptized, the law of believers' baptism is practically set aside.

And we immerse believers instead of sprinkling them. 1st. Because by consent of all the scholars the general meaning of the word which Jesus used in his great order, was not to sprinkle but to dip; and 2nd, because, by the testimony of all church historians, immersion not sprinkling, was the universal practice of the churches during the first three centuries of the Christian era.

And as Jesus when he was about to die under the hatred of those whose doctrines he refuted, or whose voices he condemned, said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." So we, if disliked for obeying our Saviour, may remember His words, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him." His single approbation outweighs all prelate or priestly censure; and if He loves us we may be happy.

But, brethren, it is not separation from the Church of Rome, or from the Church of England, nor a scriptural organization, nor evangelical doctrine, which can alone secure our Saviour's approbation. To the Church of Laodicea, which, like our own churches, was separated from the State, Independent and Baptist, he said, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Churches with a sound organization and evangelical creed may be exposed to our Lord's just censure, because cold, dead, and worthless.

How may we avoid this blame? He walks in the midst of the churches and says to each church connected with this Union what He said to each church of the seven addressed by Him from the Isle of Patmos, "I know thy works." As he is always present with us, to approve or blame us, how shall we obtain His blessing? If, as pastors and members of churches, we study His example, depend on His care, seek His glory, grow in grace, and consecrate ourselves to His service, we may possibly live down opposition; but, be that as it may, we are certain to please Him.

Here let me suggest to you, my ministerial brethren, frequently to remind the members of your churches that, while they are called like yourselves to "live to the Lord," they have a power which you have not; because, being

engaged in all employments, and mingling with all classes, they may make Christ known to many whom your voices can never reach.

Circumstances are now aiding us. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Such a tide is now set in. Never had the poorer classes, among whom we chiefly labour, such facilities for self-cultivation, or so much social influence. The universal diffusion of the Bible, the education of the members of our churches in day and Sunday schools, the liberty which enables them to profess faith in Christ without suffering much of any persecution, and the opportunities which they have of preaching Christ, give our members a social importance which they never had before. The recent Reform Bill, which many dread, may make us thankful. On the one hand, every patriot who contemplates the descent of power into the hands of the working classes may be thankful that there are so many of our members who, both by their word and example, diffuse among them respect for law and loyalty to Government; and on the other, we, their pastors, have the additional satisfaction of knowing that their social elevation will increase their Christian influence with all who are associated with them. Our churches are daily growing in numbers and in knowledge, which, besides adding to their comfort, has a favourable influence upon the morals and order of the whole community.

Still brethren the facilities for action we enjoy, or may obtain, cannot lessen our need of the continued supply of the Spirit of God. God has said, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." That great promise, which began to be accomplished on the day of Pentecost will receive a growing fulfilment till "All nations shall be blessed in Christ." But as at the beginning, so now the Holy Spirit works by believers. Three thousand were converted to Christ on the day of Pentecost, by a hundred and twenty poor, illiterate, uninfluential Galileans, chiefly of the working classes, who, full of the Spirit, and therefore full of faith, hope, love, and joy, preached Christ to them. We no less are commanded to be "filled with the Spirit," and God gives His Spirit to His children in proportion to their faith and prayers. He is therefore as ready to work by us as He was by the hundred and twenty. And if we and the members of our churches are, through the Spirit, so filled with faith, hope, love, and joy that we love and preach as the hundred and twenty did, we may yet see a large accession to our numbers and a great work of grace throughout our land.

Bound to obey our Master's orders, we must further maintain the discipline which, by His apostles, He has enjoined. By his express commands, all unchristian or immoral members should be put out of the church; from which it follows that none such should be admitted. And if unchristian or immoral members are to be rejected or put out, the same things should be done respecting unchristian or immoral ministers. We can therefore allow no officer of the crown, no bishop, no patron, to put over us, as many churches within the Establishment do—pastors who are unsound in doctrine or unchristian in life; but we must see to it that our bishops or pastors have the qualifications required by Christ. By His law pastors must be blameless, sober, apt to teach; not greedy of lucre, not novices in Christian doctrine, men of good character in the world, lovers of good men, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the Word of God. No other ministers have Christ's authority, or are appointed with His consent. Being therefore required as churches to see that our pastors are of the kind which He sanctions, we cannot allow pastors to be thrust upon us by patrons who may be ungodly men, but must, as the servants of Christ, elect them for ourselves; while each church is obliged, in loyalty to Christ, to practice the discipline which he has required, we are equally bound to maintain the faith once for all delivered to the saints, not as defined, and perhaps perverted, by fallible creeds or erring articles, but as contained in the infallible Word of God.

Since in our day there are two opposite classes of theologians, both eager and active, the one preaching sacerdotal errors, dishonourable to Christ and fatal to souls, the other no less zealous to introduce rationalistic notions still more deadly, we must labour to publish the Gospel, which is equally remote from both extremes. This is more incumbent on us because at this moment these two opposite systems, the sacerdotal and the rationalistic, nestle together in the Establishment and are alike tolerated by the ecclesiastical courts, as compatible with clerical engagements, by which means they are established as an active poison in thousands of the parishes of our land. Among the errors against which we have to strive, we must keep in view those Roman Catholic doctrines which gave to Mary, the mother of Jesus, to saints, to church laws, to popes, prelates and priests, the authority and influence which belong to the Lord Jesus alone. Loyalty to Him must make us zealous against them; but happily in this, as in every other case, truth is the best antidote to error; and if we preach Christ to every creature within our reach, declaring to all that there is through him a free, full, immediate, and eternal salvation, to those who by faith receive Him as their Saviour, those who believe our doctrine will be delivered by a trust in Him from trusting in anything beside.

Our success in opposing error must depend upon our use of the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. If that is shivered in our hands by our denying or doubting its divine character, we can do little as the soldiers of Christ; our strength lies in urging solemn truths upon men's minds with the authority of God. Those truths are contained in Scripture. If we do not know Jesus our Lord, the prophets who predicted Him, and the Apostles who followed

Him, spoke or wrote inspired truth, we shall falter in our preaching; but if we know, remember, and feel that their words are the Word of God, then we can wield them with a resistless power. A complete belief in the Divine authority and exact truth of all that has been taught by prophets and apostles, as well as by our Lord himself, is not only essential to our success as evangelists, but to a great extent secures it.

In upholding, however, the authority of the Word of God, and in maintaining the truths and principles which it contains, not according to any expositions of priests, or prelates, or synods, or churches, but according to the plain meaning of the Word, we may probably expose ourselves to the contempt or dislike which our brethren of other days have had to bear.

If we are compelled to be Dissenters, Congregationalists, and Baptists, by a regard to our Lord's authority, it is very probable we may appear to some, on that account, obstinate heretics and schismatics. Indeed, we need not flatter ourselves that we can escape that obloquy, for already Roman Catholic Ritualists and Sacerdotalists regard us in that light.

Many clergymen so view us, and not only exclude us from their pulpits, and deny our claims to be ministers of Christ, but also refuse all friendly relations with us, and will not unite with us in prayer to God, or in any object of simple benevolence. Evangelical clergymen sometimes manifest this feeling, and occasionally the dislike of those who are not Evangelical takes a more active form.

In all such instances we have one grand rule to guide us. It is not without use to remember the maxim of Solomon, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." But there is a loftier law of the New Testament, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." If we give ourselves to convert the unconverted, by preaching Christ, and then to perfect the saints, recommending by blameless lives the truths which we teach in a pacific spirit, we can obtain our Lord's approbation, if we cannot dissipate the prejudice of our opponents.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Observer," and the Fredericton Council.

Mr. Editor,—

"Observer," whose communication appeared in your issue of the 30th ult., affects great surprise at the amount of work performed, in a short time, by the late Fredericton Council. How long does our very wise friend imagine that it is really necessary for a Council to be occupied in forming a new Church, and ordaining a minister, especially when in possession of all necessary information, the case is perfectly clear,—there being no objections to answer, no opposition to overcome, no difficulties to remove, and they are without exception convinced that it is both "expedient" and "necessary" to proceed? The brethren who composed the late Council at Fredericton perfectly understood the case before them,—saw what was to be done, and did it, and they are not at all alarmed at the consequences likely to follow from their acts.

"Observer" heard some time ago, "that it was quite difficult to sustain one Baptist Church in Fredericton." I wonder if he heard also, why it was so "difficult"? It certainly is not because the congregation is too small, or too poor, or too mean. There are Baptists enough, wealth enough, and liberality enough to sustain a far more flourishing Baptist Church in Fredericton than ever has existed there. Where then is the difficulty? Perhaps "Observer" will enlighten us.

It is not easy to see what he means by his "Presbyterian wedge," which seems to have frightened him out of his propriety. The Western Association did not ordain Brother Hopper, or command anybody else to do it. A resolution was passed recommending his Ordination, which for reasons sufficiently obvious, was considered advisable and necessary. Where in all this could the most acute observer descry even the "thin edge of the wedge of Presbyterianism"? Or what is there in the whole affair to call for "stern protests," or to excite alarm?

"Observer's" remarks altogether are as silly and meaningless, as impertinent and uncalled for; and when he ventures to obtrude himself upon the notice of your readers again, he had better select a subject he understands, and possibly he may know what he is talking about.

Yours truly,
J. C. HURD.

Fredericton, 5th Nov., 1867.

Be shy of jesting with your friends. Many a lasting breach has been produced by a wit-schism.