

In The London Baptist of Nov. 7th, we find a letter from Rev. Dr. Cramp, which will interest many of our readers, as it refers to matters relating to our churches and people:—

THE BAPTISTS OF NOVA SCOTIA.

To the Editor of The Baptist:—

DEAR SIR,—I observe that my esteemed brother, the Rev. Dr. Day, of Yarmouth, has written to you requesting that twenty or thirty ministers may be sent out to Nova Scotia.

It is true that we are greatly in need of good ministers, i. e., of ministers of the right sort. But it is equally true that we do not want mere surplus men, who remain over and above after the regular demand is supplied. The country is full of schools, and the people are everywhere demanding an educated ministry.

The Rev. Timothy Harley, of the Metropolitan College, who laboured several years at St. John, New Brunswick, and is now at Savannah, Georgia, wrote a letter some months ago which places this matter in a just point of view. He says that these three qualifications are necessary for ministers who desire to emigrate to the United States: 1, earnestness; 2, education. "It is notorious," he continues, "many men in England, almost immediately upon their conversion, abandon their secular pursuits, and with little or no preparatory education, enter a college, and in one year, or at most two years, imagine themselves fitted, without any further training, for a life-long ministry. Well, these may be of great service in some agricultural districts, but they had better not think of emigration, for their going abroad would only be an expensive failure."

Mr. Harley advises "students" who contemplate emigration to spend at least four years in the best college to which they can obtain access in the British Isles. 3, experience. He advises that five years be spent in "a pastorate at home." He further advises emigrating ministers to be "in sympathy with the Baptist body of this continent on the communion question."

I have no doubt that Dr. Day will endorse Brother Harley's views and recommendations. Send us earnest, educated, experienced men, who will not be frightened at work.

Yours truly,

J. M. CRAMP.

Wolfville, N. S., Oct. 20, 1873.

RITUALISM.

DR. LANDELS' ADDRESS AT NOTTINGHAM.

Perhaps there has nothing appeared so much to the point on the subject of Ritualism as the address recently delivered by Dr. Landels before the Autumn Session of the Baptist Union at Nottingham. We gave a liberal extract therefrom a week or two since. A correspondence has arisen upon the statements of Dr. Landels, which will be read with interest.

The following is a copy of a letter addressed to Dr. Landels by the Rev. Eustace R. Conder, M. A., chairman of the Congregational Union, as it appeared in the Nonconformist:—

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—Your position and abilities give such deserved weight to your public utterances that anything in them unjust or ungenerous, and calculated needlessly to imbricate controversy, is likely to do extensive mischief. On this ground I take the freedom, as a brother Christian and fellow Free Churchman and Independent, to address to you a friendly but earnest remonstrance on the reference to infant baptism contained in your eloquent speech at Nottingham, as reported in the public prints. You are reported to have said that "if infant sprinkling is not Ritualism, it is nothing"; and to have supported this sweeping assertion by two arguments, to the effect, first, that people will persist in thinking that the ceremony must do some good to the child; and secondly, that the administration to an infant, unconscious of the meaning of a rite of which it retains no permanent mark, has no precedent in the Old or New Testament.

As to the second argument, besides that it assumes the whole question in debate, can you have forgotten that the Holy Child Jesus, when about a month old, was brought by His parents into the Temple, to present Him to the Lord; and to do for Him after the custom of the law? Was this a useless or unmeaning ceremony, because the infant took no conscious part in it, and retained neither mark nor memory of it?

As to the first argument, what people say is a very poor criterion of what a wise man ought to say. You must have met with Baptists (unless your acquaintance with your own body be much less extensive than I suppose) who think and speak as though a person were scarcely a Christian, or in a state of salvation, unless he had undergone immersion. But you would resent as most unfair the inference that Baptist views necessarily tend to sacramentalism because in some ill-instructed minds they do so.

"But suppose we say that certainly, if the child is taught as well as baptized (baptism being, as we both hold, inseparably connected with teaching), baptism will do him some good; and that the good will consist in the impression produced on his mind in after years by the knowledge that he was thus early dedicated to God, and enrolled among the disciples of Him who said, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,'—what trace is there in this of Ritualism? I presume that adult baptism is supposed to do some good to the person baptized; and that this good lies not in the momentary consciousness of the act, and certainly not in any permanent mark, but in the influence on the mind of having gone through this act of faith and obedience. The difference is, that what the adult learns from his own memory, the child learns from the memory of others. The general spiritual significance of the rite is the same in both cases; for infants need regeneration as much as adults.

The essence of Ritualism is the claim of a priestly character for the Christian ministry; and of a power, such as no Old Testament priests possessed, of so celebrating the sacrament as to make them the means of imparting regeneration and forgiveness of sins. Inseparable from these claims is the assumption that practically the clergy, not the people, are the Church. And the head and front of the whole offence, and backbone of 'the apostasy,' whether you call it Popery, the Greek Church, Anglicanism, or by any other name, is just this—the putting the Church in the place of Christ.

Is not this so? And if so, what link of connection is there between these claims and the doctrine (whether true or erroneous) that Christ has commanded us to give our children the outward sign of discipleship, as well as to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Surely, my brother, these are not times for Protestant Englishmen to be bringing railing accusations against each other, charging one another with complicity in errors which they reject with abhorrence and contempt, and putting weapons into the hands of Ritualists which they will not be slow to use.

If we cannot see alike on a question in which there are weighty arguments on both sides, let us at least be just to one another, and refrain from claiming infallibility.

I remain, with much respect,  
Faithfully yours,  
EUSTACE R. CONDER.

Leeds, Oct. 27, 1873.

The following is Dr. Landels' reply, as published in the London Baptist:—

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—Your letter, which has never reached me, but of which I presume the Nonconformist contains a correct copy, demands from me a few words of reply, which I proceed respectfully to offer through the same medium.

The courteous and brotherly tone of your letter I very gratefully acknowledge, and shall endeavour to reciprocate, feeling as I do that differences of opinion, even on important matters, need not and ought not to excite bitterness of feeling among brethren.

Like others, you have evidently read only a very imperfect report of my speech, and as the consequence have partially misunderstood what I said. My utterance on the question of Infant Baptism was as follows:—

"In contending against the principle of Ritualism, we must not look for much help from any external power. With the exception of the Society of Friends, the hands of other denominations are not clean, nor is their testimony clear in this matter. They must pardon my saying that their position is compromised and their testimony weakened by their practice of infant sprinkling. They are so far Ritualistic in practice that their arguments against Ritualism may fairly be met by the retort, 'Physician, cure thyself.' If the sprinkling of a child be not a Ritualistic act, it is nothing, hence the difficulty they have in explaining it, while denying its degenerating efficacy."

"There are probably," says the Congregationalist, "very few subjects on which the common thought of intelligent Congregationalists is so vague, indefinite, and incoherent." This is attributed to the fact that "they have given much more thought to the defence of the practice than to the illustration of its meaning." But we are greatly mistaken if the cause does not lie deeper than that—if it be not the impossibility of explaining a ceremony which has no efficacy in itself, when it is administered to an unintelligent and unconscious subject, whose senses can never discern that the thing has been done. We venture to say that, in the whole history of religious ceremonial, whether in the New Testament or the Old, they can find for that neither parallel nor precedent. Being applied to the unconscious child, if it be not efficacious as a mere mechanical act—that is, apart from the faith and feeling of the recipient—it occupies the anomalous and unexampled position of a religious ordinance which is designed to be of no benefit to him to whom it is administered. No wonder that, denying its ceremonial efficacy, their views of its meaning are vague, indefinite, and incoherent." And alas! their failing to find a satisfactory meaning for a practice which they nevertheless maintain, renders their denial of its ceremonial efficacy of small value. It ties their hands, paralyzes their efforts, undermines their position, and renders them comparatively useless as our allies in this great controversy. "Would that those who hold with us the necessity of conversion as a qualification for church membership could but see the duty of renouncing a practice so much at variance

with the spirituality of religion, and would unite with us in testifying, by practice as well as speech, that every religious act should be personally, voluntarily, and intelligently performed; and that in religion, if not in intention yet in result, 'whatever is not of faith is sin.' Such a testimony consistently borne by all the Congregationalists of England, would present a more effectual barrier to the encroachments of Ritualism than all the arguments and efforts they can use, so long as by their practice they place the key of their position in the hand of the foe."

Whatever you may think of the sentiments here expressed, I venture to hope that you will not charge me with showing any want of respect for the Congregational body. While I felt it incumbent on me to state my convictions, I certainly desired to do so in the least offensive manner.

The first argument you attributed to me I did not use, and need not therefore justify. Nevertheless, I may now, in all honesty, state my conviction that the administration of an ordinance to an unconscious recipient is fitted to produce on the public mind an impression favourable to Ritualism. It teaches nothing to the child, and men are apt, therefore, to conclude that if it were not deemed ceremonially efficacious it would not be administered. This, let me say in reply to the retort you and others have addressed to me, is not true of believers' baptism, for the simple reason that that ordinance is fraught with significance to him who receives it.

In reply to the argument which I did use, and which you call my second, you tell me that I assume the whole question in debate. Will you pardon me if I say that you again misapprehend my position? The question I am considering there, is not whether 'infant baptism' is or is not of Divine authority, but whether as 'applied to an unintelligent and unconscious subject, whose senses can never discern that the thing has been done, it has any parallel or precedent in the whole history of religious ceremonial in the Old Testament or the New.' This, without saying anything about its being Scriptural or unscriptural, I affirm that it has not—implying that it is scriptural it stands alone. You will not, I presume, expect me to prove a negative, and I must be content, therefore, to abide by my affirmation until evidence to the contrary has been produced.

The one case you adduce as evidence, I confess surprises me. You are, of course, sufficiently familiar with the law in question to know that no ordinance was administered either on or to the child—that there was no reference whatever to the child's religious feeling or spiritual condition or future conduct that it only, as a memorial of the passover, asserted the Divine claim to the firstlings of all the people possessed, and required them, if clean, to be offered in sacrifice, if unclean, to be redeemed by the offering of a clean animal as a substitute—and that it applied to the 'first-born of an ass' as much as to the first-born of a woman. How then you can find a parallel in this to, or a precedent for, what is done in infant sprinkling, I am at a loss to imagine. If this is all the evidence which is forthcoming, I must abide by my affirmation—that in the whole history of Divinely appointed religious ceremonial, the application of an ordinance, not ceremonially efficacious, to one whose senses can never discern that the thing has been done, is without either parallel or precedent.

I must add frankly, that I think the reference an exceedingly unhappy one for you; for not only does it fail to serve the purpose for which it is adduced, but whatever bearing it may have upon it, is decidedly hostile to your practice. If, as I understand from the drift of your letter, you regard the custom as meaning the dedication of the child, and as forming a precedent for the practice which you so designate, you occupy the exceedingly unfortunate position of applying to all your children a custom which by Divine appointment, was to be confined to the 'male that opened the matrix.' If, on the other hand, you say it is not an example of the dedication which you observe, then I ask what bearing it can possibly have upon, or how it can form a precedent for the baptism of infants? In either case, it is an unhappy reference; for it necessarily leaves on one's mind the impression of the straits to which you are driven in your attempts to find even the semblance of a warrant for your practice. We may, I presume, fairly regard this as your strongest example, for the purpose for which it is adduced; how then can we avoid being confirmed in the conviction, that the practice of infant sprinkling, as a whole, and not simply in the point mentioned, is without precedent or parallel in the whole history of Divinely appointed religious ceremonial?

I am bound to say that I do not think you any more successful in your attempted parallel between infant and adult baptism. I quote the paragraph in extenso:—

"But suppose we say that certainly, if the child is taught as well as baptized (baptism being, as we both hold, inseparably connected with teaching), baptism will do him some good; and that the good will consist in the impression produced on his mind in after years by the knowledge that he was thus early dedicated to God, and enrolled among the disciples of Him who said, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,'—what trace is there in this of Ritualism? I presume that adult baptism is supposed to do some good to the person baptized; and that this good lies not in the momentary consciousness of the act, and certainly not in any permanent mark, but in the influence on the mind of having gone through this act of faith and obedience.

The difference is, that what the adult learns from his own memory, the child learns from the memory of others. The general spiritual significance of the rite is the same in both cases; for infants need regeneration as much as adults."

This elaborate explanation seems to me to prove as conclusively as words can, the truth of my statement which has given so much offence—that "if infant sprinkling be not a ritualistic act it is nothing." The symbolic nature of baptism as regards its recipient is entirely ignored, for a symbol which cannot be discerned by the senses is a solecism in language as well as an absurdity in thought. Apparently feeling this, when you attempt to find some reasons for your practice as regards your child, you rush, unwittingly, I admit, at least to the verge of what I call the grossest Ritualism. The good it does the child, you say, "consists in the impression produced on his mind in after years by the knowledge that he was thus early dedicated to God."

Here I must ask what you mean by "dedicated to God"? If you refer only to the intention and desire and prayers of the parents that he may be the Lord's, how is it possible that his baptism can increase the good he derives from the knowledge that he was so dedicated? If the dedication refers to his baptism, I have to ask, does the baptism affect his relation to God? If it does not, where is the good of telling him about it in after years? His being told that that act was performed on him cannot in any way increase his obligation or capability to serve God, and, as in his case, it has no symbolical significance, it is simply meaningless or misapplied ceremony, in other words it is nothing. The truths which it is supposed to represent have to be made known to him afterwards, and can be made known as well, whether he is baptized or unbaptized. Thus the good which it does the child my mental analysis has been enough or searching enough to detect. My judgment tells me that in such a case, as regards the child, it is nothing. Your child who receives it is in no better position than mine, from whom it is withheld. It, on the other hand, this baptism does affect his relation to God, so that he may get good from his knowledge of it in after years, then it follows that his baptism is ritualistic. The Church puts itself through its ministers in God's place. It performs on the child an act which affects his relation to God, and that, according to your own showing in the next paragraph of your letter, is Ritualism. Your words are—and I willingly endorse them—"And the head and front of the whole offence, and backbone of the apostasy, whether you call it Popery, the Greek Church, Anglicanism [and I venture to add infant baptism], or by any other name, is just this, the putting the Church in the place of Christ."

In the paragraph quoted, you proceed to say that the good of adult baptism "lies in the influence on the mind of having gone through this act of faith and obedience"; and you add that the difference between the adult and the child is, "that what the adult learns from his own memory, the child learns from the memory of others."

It is gratifying to find you and others trying to make out that infant and adult baptism are very much the same, as we take it to be a tacit admission that our practice is right. Nevertheless I must ask you, with all respect, whether you really think that the difference stated above is the only difference between the two things? And whether you are not trying to make two things appear very much alike in sound, which are entirely different in sense? You will not wonder at my questions, perhaps, when I say that to me they seem to differ in the following particulars:—

1. The believer is conscious that the act has taken place, the child has to take it on trust when informed of it by others.

2. The child does not go through the act in the sense in which the believer does. It is in no sense his act. He is put through it by others.

3. In his case therefore, there is not, as there is in the case of the believer, either faith or obedience.

Even in what you say of the "spiritual significance" of the act you seem to me to confound things that differ. "The child needs regeneration." I admit, but in the case of the believer, baptism is administered in the belief that he is already regenerated.

I have now touched, I think, on all the points in your letter which require to be noticed, and I hope without violating the courtesy which it was my desire to maintain. I have had no wish, either in writing or in speaking, to bring a railing accusation "against a body of Christians whom I very highly esteem, and among whom I have the honour to number some of my most intimate friends. Infallibility brother, is no more claimed on our side than on yours, when you and the Union over which you preside, differ from us, or pass resolutions expressing or implying disapproval of the position or practice of Evangelical Churchmen who seek your aid.

I venture to suggest that it might be well to refrain from hinting at claims to infallibility on either side because the other feels that it must be faithful to its convictions. The charge of laying claim to infallibility has often been made, and generally means little, except conscious weakness on the part of those who utter it. It is being as a reproach at men of clear and strong conviction, by those who are hazy and uncertain as to the grounds of their own belief and practice. To feel assured that we are right in our religious observations is not a very deadly sin, nor is it any want of charity which leads us to conclude that on your side such assurance is sadly lacking. We read your publications and cannot blind ourselves to the fact that

most of the arguments used in favour of infant baptism have been refuted by Pædo-baptist writers. Even the current number of the Congregationalist sweeps away entirely the views advanced in your letter. Is it surprising that, in view of such conflicting utterances, we receive the impression that there is among you no very generally recognised definite principle on which your procedure is based? Our firmness of conviction as compared with your uncertainty, is an element of strength from which we hope to derive advantage in the coming conflict between Popish superstition and New Testament Christianity—between a substitutionary and materialistic religion on the one hand, and a personal and spiritual religion on the other. But, be this as it may, whether we are said to think ourselves infallible or not, we cannot and dare not keep silence in reference to a practice which we solemnly believe to be at variance with the spirituality of religion, conducive to the ritualistic tendencies of the age, and subversive of an ordinance of Christ. And if our friendship can only be maintained at the expense of our silence, we must, however sadly, consent to its dissolution. I am unwilling, however, to believe in this necessity. I am persuaded that you would not value our friendship, had you reason to question our fidelity. And although it must be regretted that our difference may "put weapons into the hands of Ritualists which they will not be slow to use," we cannot let the fear of consequences deter us from the performance of recognised duty, the more especially when we cannot blind our eyes to the fact that infant baptism has been productive of this evil consequence already, and has strengthened the hands of Ritualists to an extent which we deeply deplore.

Yours faithfully,  
WM. LANDELS.

Regents' Park, Nov. 3, 1873.

THE RELIGIOUS CONDITION OF MADAGASCAR.

From a deeply interesting letter sent by the Rev. James Sibree, jun., to the English Independent, we regret to learn that there is much at present to cause anxiety in the religious condition of Madagascar. "For a considerable time past," says Mr. Sibree, "there has been a decided retrogression in many respects. Our congregations, especially those in the country, have diminished. Classes are less numerously attended; contributions for the support of

missionaries and schools have diminished with difficulty, and interest in learning and in school instruction has in many instances declined. There are doubtless bright exceptions to these statements in many places, but the general state of things is undoubtedly as above given."

We concur with Mr. Sibree in the opinion that this need occasion little, if any, surprise. The great excitement of three or four years ago, caused by the profession of Christianity, by the Queen and Government had in it very much that was only superficial, and that could not last, for it had no root of conviction on the part of the great majority of those who suddenly called themselves Christians, and pressed forward to be baptized and become church members. In addition to this, the brethren from England have been unable to cope with the mass of work suddenly thrown upon them, districts comprising eighty, ninety, and one hundred congregations being placed under the superintendence of one European missionary. It remains to be noted that there has been a rising against the Central Government by the Sakalavas, tribes of the Western and Southern divisions of the island, and to quell this 5,000 troops were dispatched from the capital, these including many of the native pastors, deacons and students. This event naturally exercised a disturbing influence on the churches. But it also brought into relief the gratifying fact that the merciful spirit of the Gospel is exerting power, and doing away with many of the cruel customs formerly practiced in Madagascar. Officers who had suffered defeat in a minor engagement with the Sakalaves, instead of being burnt alive, which used to be the penalty for running away from the enemy, have simply been deprived of their military honours and status; and when the army set out en masse they were reminded by the Prime Minister that this war was not to be carried on according to the custom of former times, that they must remember that they had become Christians now, and that there was to be no wanton cruelty, nor even fighting, unless it was really necessary. In the camp, each morning, the soldiers say a hymn and engaged in prayer before starting on their day's march; and in the evening a similar service was held. The rebels made unconditional submission without any actual fighting. The mission in Madagascar is now one of the strongest in connection with the London Missionary Society; but, more men are needed, and more prayers by English Christians on behalf of their brethren in that interesting island. For the latter Mr. Sibree makes a touching appeal; and we doubt not that it will be responded to by Christians of every Evangelical communion in England. We ask our brethren to remember the needs of Madagascar. —Freeman.