

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

The following communication appeared in the Canadian Baptist a short time since. It has been thought desirable to have it republished here. We intended to give it insertion in our pages several weeks ago, but it was accidentally overlooked.

Mr. Editor:—Under the caption above, I find the question proposed in your issue of Jan. 20th. "Whether it would be unscriptural and wrong for a church to set apart one of its members to administer the Lord's Supper in the absence of an ordained minister?" On this you remark, "We would like to hear the opinion of others on this point."

It is by no means my desire to enter into any controversy on this subject; but it seems to me the part of duty, for the preservation of due order, and the prevention of results unfavorable to the peace and welfare of Zion, to notice some circumstances that have fallen under my personal observation in relation to this matter.

Your inquirer seems in accordance with the general view of the different bodies of evangelical Christians, to regard the administration of the Lord's Supper, as being appropriately the work of "an ordained minister;" but he queries whether it may not be properly done by a private brother in a case of emergency, or supposed necessity. It is well known, however, that what is at first so introduced as an exception in some special case, is very liable to become subsequently the usual practice.

As a notorious instance of this it may be noticed that the early records of Church History clearly show immersion to have been long the only act recognized as baptism; but in the case of Novatian, in the third century, as he was confined to his bed by sickness, it was deemed allowable to profess to baptize him by pouring water on him. This evidently tended to prepare the way for the general adoption of sprinkling—the Greek Church expected. So in the Rubric of the Church of England it is manifestly admitted that immersion is the original mode; and the priest is accordingly required, if it be certified that the child may well endure it, to dip it in the water, but, as an exception, if it be certified "that the child is weak, it shall suffice to pour water on it."

Hence sprinkling has now become almost the universal practice in that denomination.

A similar result, at least to a great extent, might be reasonably anticipated from the adoption of the measure proposed. It is not, however, merely hypothetical. An instance occurred in the circle of my acquaintance in which a church adopted it. One of our ministers expressed his approval. He was invited to spend some weeks with that church. For several successive Sabbaths he administered the Supper. The member of the church who had previously done this, then suggested to him, that in some cases it might be well for a man to merge his official character for the general good; and proposed that, to show his approval of their order, he should sit with the other members, and allow him to officiate. The minister did so. This, however, showed him the impropriety, and the evil tendency, of their course; and he returned home, as he could no longer uphold it.

In another case, a number of the members of a Baptist church in N. B., deeming it indispensable to partake of the Supper on every Lord's Day, withdrew from their brethren, and appointed one of themselves to administer it. Besides the adoption of other errors, under the pretext of extolling the Scriptures, they denied the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence to give men a full knowledge of spiritual things. When I referred one of them to 1 Cor. ii. 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," he maintained that "this related to those who never heard the gospel." As might have been naturally expected, they differed among themselves, and this rope of sand did not long cohere.

In a case somewhat similar in N. S., a number of persons became convinced that immersion is the only scriptural mode of baptism, and united professedly in forming a church, with the Scriptures for their only confession of Faith and Practice. They deemed it accordant with these for a man not set apart to the gospel ministry, to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and proceeded accordingly. One of their principal men called on me, and strove to convince me that they were doing right. He stated that they did not consider it needful to support ministers. I replied that he could not name any other duty

more distinctly enjoined in Scripture. The cause of our Zion here has every element of success. That veteran Missionary, Rev. Dr. N. Brown, a veteran Evangelist in India, is here, and rapidly acquiring this language, for which he has the facility of one already deeply versed in Sanscrit and other oriental tongues. The Rev. C. Goble, who has for twenty years labored in this field, is about completing the first Baptist church building ever erected in this Empire. The Rev. Mr. Arthur is here, also acquiring the language; and ere long he, too, will be preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to the benighted people. An organized Baptist church exists here, one member (Ishikawa) is a native of Japan, and there are several others looking forward to Christianity as their only hope of a blessed immortality. So we have every reason to take courage and press forward in the good work. Great changes have been wrought here, since the days of Commodore Perry, (with whom Bro. Goble first visited this country.) Then, the Emperor was a God; only the other day, (16th Dec., 1873,) he came down here from his palace in Yedo, dressed in European costume, and amidst crowds of foreigners and natives, visited the navy yard, just as our own president would have done. Such a change has so confounded the Japs, that they hide their confusion by pretending to think that his majesty is a mere man of straw put forward in place of the real micado, who still lives in his sacred seclusion of Osaka, the old capital.

You must not suppose that the great body of the people are opposed to our civilization or religion. On the contrary they fully understand that their bad land tenure (at the will of the sovereign) their utterly undeveloped mineral resources and want of internal communication, are the nurses of their poverty and backwardness in material civilization, and they are finding out that the trade, commerce and sciences of the West may benefit them. Many, too, have heard that the religion of Christ is one full of benevolence and charity, and all feel that Bhudisha is a sham, unworthy of an enlightened people, so they treat us with kindness, and would be glad to see us allowed to penetrate into the country.

On the other hand, the official or governing classes have experienced a sad change from the "good old times" when they could live in idleness from the toil of the producing classes. Stripped of their revenues, obliged to give up their privileges of caste, they really form a source of danger to the nation. There are thousands of these "Somenroi," as they are called, who are bitterly opposed to Europeans, and who clamor for war, that in the confusion they may gain at the expense of anybody or everybody. The Prime Minister, San-jo, has only a few days ago been assassinated, for being liberal towards the foreigners, by several of the "Somenroi" class, and Iwakura, who is at the head of affairs now, dares not, perhaps, show a liberal spirit, lest he share the fate of his predecessor. The treaties that were to be revised are simply shelved for the present, as the Premier demands that foreigners here resident be placed under Japanese law, and the foreign troops here stationed to protect us, be withdrawn. To this the great powers will not listen; they reply that there is no Japanese law worthy of the name, and that they fear the Micado is utterly unable to protect foreigners from the malice of the "Somenroi" class, and the discontented clans still more or less governed by the old Daimios and Princes. In the meantime, we dare not put foot beyond the treaty limits, a few miles around the foreign settlement; not that we fear the people, but because we should be instantly arrested by the guards that form a chain around us. Some time ago, indeed, a pretended toleration was published, but the truth is, it amounts to nothing; only the other day Bro. Goble entreated the Governor's permission to preach in a hall, to be hired in the Japanese quarter of this city, the hall being neither more nor less than a concert or theatre room. The request was peremptorily refused so that we are cooped up in a foreign quarter quite away from the natives, who, of course being heathen, will not risk the least thing to hear religious instruction, though there are a few attracted to the services in spite of the frowns of the officials. One of them let out the secret the other day, of the official hatred to Christianity. He said to me that Christianity was essentially republicanism, and that, if once introduced into Japan, good bye to the Micado and his legions of blood-suckers, who live by plundering the people.

Yours fraternally,  
CHARLES TUPPER.  
Aylesford, N. S., Feb. 10, 1870.

THE TESTIMONY OF A WASTED LIFE

Down the dim aisles of bygone years I gaze,  
Remembrance sad awakes within my soul;  
Extinguished now are Life's alluring rays,  
And broken now of Hope the golden bowl.

How true the saddened and embittered mind,  
Views all things in a dark and son'bre light;  
That not one joy in all the world it finds,  
But all is clouded with a gloomy night.

In early youth my life was warped and blighted,  
As is the floweret in a burning sand,  
For Alcohol will doom a soul most lighted,  
Broken, to wander o'er a desert strand.

Oh the sad memories of that bitter time!  
The wild wild throbbing of a bleeding heart!  
When darkness gathered o'er my manhood prime,  
And demons winged the deadly vengeful dart.

Oh! withered are the heart's warm passion flowers;  
While hate and wan despair usurp their throne;  
And now forsaken are the Elysian bowers,  
Where once rary music does the soul out-moan.

Now down the avenues of murdered years,  
The wild winds sweep in sad and solemn dirge;  
And o'er the burning lacerated heart,  
Tempests of soulful sorrow agonizing surge.

For in the dark and dimly curtained past,  
A widowed mother prematurely sleeps;  
How conscience writhes! while memory travels back,  
To her lone grave, and unavailing weeps.

There is an inland sea of dark, dank water  
Surrounded by a desert bleak and drear,  
While overhead the ravens soar and hover,  
Ever its turbid current keeping near.

At times a midnight pall the sky o'er shadows,  
And tempests howl around the caverned deep,  
While the wild waves dash high in giant billows,  
And lash the rugged rocks with sullen sweep.

My soul's that inland sea. The world  
The desert. On that barren lonely shore,  
My fondest hopes, my manhood's noblest intents,  
Are like the lost years—gone forevermore.

[From the San Francisco Evangelist.]  
FROM JAPAN.

REV. AND DEAR BROTHER:—Well knowing your deep interest in the cause of our blessed Master's kingdom, not only at home but abroad, it seemed good to me to send you greeting from this heathen land, next door to the Golden Gate—only fifteen

days off, but alas, so far removed from the

Judging by the home newspapers, our people are completely hoodwinked by the after-dinner speeches of the Japs that visit you. You show them everything in our country. Instead of making them pay for the outrages which they have committed on our flag, you remit the penalty, and finally, you have decided to make us pay a frightfully exorbitant postage for our letters, to please them, in direct opposition to the progressive ideas of the age. Per contra, American influence here is nil. American commerce here the great subsidised monopoly - the P. M. Co.—consists of two or three houses of commerce. England is here supreme; Germany next, as influencing the army, the French are third, the Dutch fourth, and the Americans last. Such is our position here to-day, and this is the result of America's public policy. Thank God we are not last in the cause of missions, and it will be the future glory of our enterprise in opening up this wonderful empire.

JAPLAND.  
Yokohama, Japan, Dec. 24, 1873.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.  
BAPTISM.

Mr. Editor,— Let Baptists be censured and ridiculed—let our Pedo-baptist brethren boast superiority, claim victories, be elated, and have ecstasies,—not, however, at a sacrifice of candor, honesty, and truthfulness. Professed christians—ministers of the gospel—who can trifle with things sacred, wrest the Scriptures, assail truth, teach error, and seem to love it,—such we fear there are, and of such we stand in doubt. I once had a pretty high opinion of a certain Methodist preacher, and might still esteem him, but in the summer of 1872, I heard him preach a Sermon on Baptism. Knowing that "men love darkness rather than light";—I can understand how that sermon would afford the hundreds of Methodists of Lunenburg and Mahone Bay who heard it, so much satisfaction and delight; and the bluster, bombast, and sophistry, elicit their applause and admiration. A few of the most triumphant passages will serve as specimens, and I think will fully justify this last remark. I quote from memory:—

"There are some instances of immersion recorded in the bible. In the first, we see the anti-diluvians destroyed by the Deluge. The wicked were immersed, and they perished; Noah and his family were sprinkled (as the ark leaked), and they were saved. In the next instance, we see the Egyptians immersed in the Red Sea—the Israelites sprinkled by water from the clouds. Those who were immersed, perished; those who were sprinkled, were saved."

"If there were no other reference to Baptism in the Bible, there would be enough in the account of Paul's baptism to convince me fully that sprinkling was the primitive mode. From the command 'Arise, and be baptized,' we learn that the erect, or perpendicular, position is the proper one."

"We have shown that there is not a passage in the Bible in which 'Baptizo' must mean to immerse, and can mean nothing else. We shall now show that in one passage at least 'Baptizo' must mean to sprinkle, and can mean only to sprinkle. In 2nd Kings, iv. 14, we read that Naaman dipped himself seven times in Jordan. But this is clearly a wrong translation of a word that has also been translated 'Baptizo.' The Israelites had but one law for the stranger and one born in the land. Though Naaman was a great man, captain of the Syrian host, the law of God could not 'bend' to him. Elisha feared God; he new the law, and would he dare to break it? No, not he! Now, the law for the cleansing of lepers required sprinkling; so, of course, Elisha commanded Naaman to be sprinkled—and sprinkled he was."

On the above, I may remark— "Those who were immersed, perished,"—and, therefore, Baptists will perish—is an insinuation which, however charitable it may be! is certainly not very obscure. "Those who were sprinkled, were saved,"—we see the point," but we can't admire the logic; and we would just remind those who say, that, in the first place, neither case was fairly or impartially stated. The ante-diluvians were not plunged into the water, but the water poured down upon them. We do not read that "the ark leaked"; but, if it did leak, must its inmates, therefore, certainly, have been sprinkled? The Egyptians were not plunged into the sea, for the waters "came upon" them [Ex. xiv, 26] But the Israelites "passed through the sea," "under the cloud," in such a way that it is true to say, "they were baptized . . . in the cloud and in the sea."

In Romans v. 6, we read that "Christ

died for the ungodly; and we might believe that He died a natural death—were there not other passages which plainly tell us that He was crucified. From the bible, account of Paul's Baptism, we learn comparatively little as to the mode—too little, perhaps, to establish either view; and there might be room for doubt or difference of opinion—did the bible contain no other references to Baptism. Unfortunately for our Pedo-baptist brethren, it does; it contains many others, much more explicit and circumstantial—none of them unfavorable to the immersionist view, but, on the contrary, all tending to establish it. But even from what we read about Paul's Baptism, we learn something important,—we learn that "the erect, or perpendicular, position is the proper one." And should Baptists be ridiculed because they prefer what is proper, to anything more convenient? Of every Baptist it can be said—"He arose and was baptized."

Was the law for the cleansing of lepers observed in the case of Naaman's cleansing? No; it was not. Israel had "forsaken God's covenant, thrown down His altars, and slain His prophets" [1 Kings, xix, 14]; the priests were "of the lowest of the people, and not of the sons of Levi." [1 Kings, xii. 31; xiii. 33. 2 Kings, iii. 3]; the king and the people had forsaken the true God, to serve idols, [1 Kings, xxi. 26; 2 Kings, iii. 13; Is. ii. 26, 27.] Were lepers cleansed in those days? "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." [2 Kings, vii. 3; Luke iv. 27.] Was there a law for the healing of lepers? There was not. But a man might be "recovered of a plague"—physically healthy, clean,—and yet be ceremonially unclean: there was a law for the cleansing of lepers;—but they could not be cleansed by it, unless they were first healed [Lev. xiv. 3] Naaman could be "recovered of his leprosy." [2 Kings, v. 6.] by miracle—not by ceremony: so, "according to the saying of Elisha, the man of God,"—who by this and several other miracles proved an idolatrous people, showing that there was still a prophet in Israel, and a God in Heaven,— "according to the saying of the man of God," Naaman "went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan"; "and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" [2 Kings, v. 14.]

J. J. PARKER.  
Chester, N. S., Feb. 12, 1874.

ELUCIDATION OF SCRIPTURE.

For the Christian Messenger.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."—Matth. xxii. 11, 12.

Obscurity arises in some instances from ignorance of certain customs, not in use among us, to which allusions are made in Scripture. Every one should be aware, that the Judge of all the earth can never fail to do right, though the consistency of His conduct may not in all cases be apparent to us. It may, however, seem strange to some, that the man spoke of in this text should be "speechless," when, according to our customs, he certainly appeared to have a reasonable excuse. Why did he not reply, 'I was brought in hither unexpectedly, from the highways, and had no opportunity to obtain a wedding garment?' It is ascertained, however, that in the East great men, and especially kings, were accustomed to keep large supplies of raiment with which guests invited by them were provided, in accordance with the nature of the feast: and that the neglect to accept the proffered apparel, and be clothed with it immediately, particularly at the monarch's feast, subjected the offender to great wrath, and severe punishment. (See Drs. Hammond, Doddridge, and A. C. Clark on this text.)

In the Scriptures there are plain references to this custom of furnishing raiment for invited guests. When Jehu had given command to "proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal . . . he said unto him that was over the vestry. Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal: and he brought forth vestments." (2 Kings. x. 20-22.) So we are informed that "Huldah the prophetess was the wife of Shalum," and that he was the "keeper of the wardrobe . . . in Jerusalem, in the college." (2 Chron. xxxiv. 22.) He obviously had the charge of the raiment provided for guests on festive and other public occasions.—With manifest reference to the same custom, it was predicted that when the Jewish

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