

## Baptism of the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel.

The Rev. Mr. Shepherd, Mr. Evan's co-pastor, read the latter part of the 8th chapter of the Acts, beginning at the 25th verse.

Prayer was then offered by the Rev. Mr. Morris.

Mr. Shepherd delivered an introductory address; and another hymn having been sung,

Mr. Noel entered the pulpit and said:—Having been asked, my brethren, to address a few words to you on this occasion, I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of speaking a few words on this particular point: why a person who is unbaptised should be baptised, after having made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ in other ways, and perhaps for many years. I have not come to the resolution to obey what I believe to be Christ's command, without having fully weighed the grounds upon which that step is to be taken. Without having read anything whatever in favour of the exclusive right of believers to Christian baptism, I have read all the strongest arguments that I could meet with upon the other side. I believe I have weighed well every considerable argument that has ever been adduced in the maintenance of infant baptism, as an addition to, and which evidently becomes a substitution for, the baptism of believers in Christian Churches; and I have come distinctly to those two conclusions, which appear to me, at least, to be certain. I will not speak of the convictions of others, but I speak of the conviction of my own mind, after much examination. It appears to me to be distinctly proved, first, that baptism, as ordained by Christ, is an immersion in water, a being buried in the water; and, secondly, that immersion is meant to be a profession of faith in Christ. If those two conclusions are correct (and I believe they will completely prevail with the Christian world eventually,) then it follows that a person, who like myself, has only been sprinkled in infancy, is unbaptised; because such a person has neither been immersed, nor has he made a baptismal profession of faith; and these two things constitute Christian baptism. So that, if these conclusions are correct, then I, and others, who have been only sprinkled in infancy, are in neither sense baptised. Should we, then, after having professed our faith in Christ at the Lord's table, at many times, come to this, which is the initiatory rite of Christianity, and begin again a profession of faith in him? There are these reasons which have led me to conclude so for myself, and which have led, I believe, some of my brethren and sisters, who are about to be baptised, to the same conclusion. In the first place, there is no instance in the New Testament of any person unbaptised, after the institution of Christian baptism by our Lord, coming to the Lord's table; and therefore, if we should continue to attend the Lord's table without being baptised, knowing that Pædobaptism is not the baptism appointed by Christ, we should be doing contrary to all the precedents of the New Testament. In the next place, Christ has required a baptismal profession of faith. It does not appear to me to be sufficient to say that we have confessed Christ in other ways. That may be true; but there is no reason why one confession of Christ, appointed by him, should be taken as the substitute of an other confession, appointed likewise by him; and, therefore, as he said to us, as well as to others, "Repent and be baptised for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost;" "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved;" therefore, he requires from us a baptismal profession of faith, as well as a profession of faith in other ways. This has been so clearly seen by the Churches of Christ in general, that it is not only those which are called Baptist Churches, but all the Churches, who refuse to admit to the Lord's Supper, or into Church membership, any whom they consider to be unbaptised. If a man—for instance, one of the Society of Friends—has been a consistent Christian for years, has followed the Lord diligently and zealously, has done good by his pen and by his preaching, and is welcomed by all persons who rejoice in seeing the work of the Spirit as a thorough Christian,—if that person should come to recognise that the sacraments are still obligatory, and that he should come to the table of the Lord, there is no Church that would receive him unbaptised. Neither the Roman Catholic, nor the Anglican, nor the Presbyterian, nor the Independent Churches, would receive such an one, unbaptised. And, therefore, the fact of his having made a profession of faith in other ways has not appeared to any of the Churches of Christ as a reason why an

unbaptised person should not, at any point in his heavenward course, be baptised, when he comes to recognise his error. Our blessed Saviour has set us an example in this matter. At the age of thirty, when he was known by all who knew him to be devoted to God—when his whole life was a profession of devotedness, not in the least requiring baptism, as an expression either of repentance or of faith—when John was baptizing converts, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand, summoning men to believe in Christ as the Saviour about to appear—then it was that Jesus, not certainly needing to be baptised unto faith in himself, and needing no repentance, was yet at that age baptised, after long years of piety. This he did, because he would honor the ordinance of God, not needing it himself, but with a view to the welfare of others and the honour of God. He was therefore baptised. Is there not much analogy between the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, and the baptism of any disciple, if his soul, after some years of faith, perceive that he has been ignorant in this matter, and has not understood the doctrine of Christian baptism? When we add to this the reason which Christ assigned why he was baptised, we see that his authority directly recommends, sanctions, and (as I think) commands, that those who find out that they are unbaptised, because only sprinkled in infancy, should, like Jesus, be afterwards baptised. He said, when John remonstrated with Him as His inferior, and therefore not needing to be baptised by him, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He did not mean that there was anything especially righteous, especially great, especially devoted, in being baptised; but that it was comparatively a trivial thing, as it seems to me, that it was a light duty compared with many, as compared with faith and devotedness. It was but the external profession. Nevertheless, he says, "It becometh us to fulfil the least command as well as the greatest!"—When, therefore, our Lord assigned this as a reason, why he, not needing it, should yet be baptised, he said in effect to all his followers: "You may think that having made a profession in other ways, you need it not,—that you have confessed Christ at the table of the Lord, or in your intercourse with the world; nevertheless, it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness, to keep all the commands of Christ, to honour every ordinance that God has given; and if you need it not for yourselves, at least in respect to his authority be baptised, that you may express your willingness to be obedient to him in all things." In looking, too, at the example of our Saviour, I have seen that he regarded the influence of his act on others, for we never stand alone in our conduct. Others may be influenced by us for good or evil, and we have, as Christians, to recommend our fellow-sinners—those who have as yet not turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God"—to believe, and to be baptised, as a profession of that faith. Now, if we were ourselves unbaptised, they would naturally evade the command of Christ, and say, "You do not submit to this publicity, you do not acknowledge this ordinance, you have escaped this pain, and therefore why should not we?" And they would be disposed to evade a command of Christ under the sanction of our example. And this is especially true of ministers, whose business it is to preach Christ to the unconverted, and to preach baptism to those who may turn to him in truth. But how can a minister urge his fellow-sinners to be baptised, if he is himself an unbaptised person? Besides, it being a minister's duty to administer this ordinance to those who are prepared for it and desire it, a scruple and doubt might arise in the minds of many, perhaps perplexing them with many troubles in long years, if they should be baptised by an unbaptised minister. It seemed to me, therefore, necessary for others, no less than expedient for myself, that I should fulfil this command of Christ.

## Trials, the Proof of God's Love.

It is very remarkable that the Apostle fixes upon affliction as a mark of true sonship.—Truly, he makes it the family badge. Nay, he makes it a test of our legitimacy. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?—But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." Strong language this! Had any but an inspired apostle used it, there would have been an outcry against it as absurd and extravagant. Let us, however, take it as it is, for we know that it speaks the mind of God.—

Chastisement, is, then, really one of the chief marks of our lawful and honourable birth.—Were this characteristic not to be found on us, we should be lacking in one of the proofs of our sonship. Our legitimacy might be called in question. It might be said that He was not recognizing us as true-born sons, and that either he had never received us as such, or had rejected us. There must be the family badge to establish our claim of birth, and to be a pledge of paternal recognition on the part of God our Father.

It is a solemn thought. Flesh and blood shrink from it. We look around us to see if there be no way of escaping, and ask if it must be so?—Yes, it must be, as we shall shortly see, and the attempt to shun it is vain. Yes it is also a blessed thought. It cheers us under trial to remember that this is the Father's seal set upon his true-born sons. Oh! how it lightens the load to think that it is really the pledge of our divine adoption.

We need not then count upon bright days below, nor think to pass lightly over the pleasant earth, as if our life "were but the shadow of a dream." Joy *within* we may expect—"joy unspeakable and full of glory, for that is the family-portion. But joy from without, the joy of earth's sunshine, the joy of the world's ease and abundance, the joy of unsevered bonds and unweeping eyes, is not our lot in this vale of tears.

Still, in the midst of the ever wakeful storms through which we are passing to the Kingdom, there is peace—deep peace—too deep for any storm of earth to reach. In the world we have tribulation, but in Jesus we have peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you." And it is this which gives the peculiar aspect to the saints, the aspect of mingled joy and grief. The eye is dim with tears, yet behold it glistens with joy. There is the brow of shaded thought, yet peace is playing round it. Clouds overshadow them, but on every cloud we see calm sunshine resting.

Their "peace is like a river." It is not stagnant as the lake, nor tumultuous as the sea, but ever in calm motion, ever flowing on in its deep channel, like a river. The course may sometimes be through rocks, sometimes through tangled brakes, sometimes along the corn-field or "hill of vines," yet still it moves unhindered on. It may be night or day, it may be winter or summer, it may be storm or calm, but it is there—flowing on till the embrace of ocean receive it. Such is our peace! Let us hold fast.

Nor need we hide our peace any more than we should our cross. Let the world see both, and learn how well they agree together. For it is the cross that makes this peace feel so sweet and suitable. Amid the tears of grief, peace keeps her silent place, like the rainbow upon the spray of the cataract; nor can it be driven hence so long as Jehovah's sunshine rests upon the soul. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.—*Night of Weeping.*"

## Sin and Hope.

What can sin offer to human hope? In one direction it makes the noblest promises. It offers largely for *this world*. It has something bright and alluring, adapted to their particular tastes, for every class of its deluded victims. The proud, the covetous, the ambitious, the sensual, all have offers to their hopes—and so bright and dazzling, so exalting and powerful, that reason, conscience, and the voice of God, are all alike unheeded. Great is promise, but even as respects this world, how inadequate the performance! What servant of sin ever found a thousandth part of hope realized!

But whatever there may be of hope as awakened by sin, in reference to this life, it can never utter a word in regard to eternity.—*Eternity!* Bring that glorious, and yet portentous idea, and sin together. How do they look side by side! How often do you hear a sinner using the word Eternity? How strange and rare that word in his vocabulary! He cannot speak of it. He dares not think of it. He must have nothing to do with it.

Hope and Eternity! Sin cannot bring the first to have anything to do with the last.—The one cannot pleasantly suggest the other. Sin had kept the character of God out of sight, had used a thousand treacherous arts to keep thought from going forth on such a momentous theme. The fool through this power hath said in his heart, There is no God. He must be kept invisible.

But he will come in sight in Eternity! The gleams of his glory, that at times sends terror into the sinner's bosom here, will become there the awful and overpowering splendor of the perfect day. What can sin then have to do with hope beyond the grave.

In Eternity there is to be the full disclosure and the full reward of guilt. So conscience often intimates. What, then, can Hope, in such a bosom, have to do with Eternity! The sinner dares not to meet his own character now. He shuts out the light that would reveal it to himself. He cometh not now to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But what a brightness will fall upon his character in Eternity! Into its lowest depths will the light shine, and upon every point, to the most minute. Infinite justice will not suffer, nor it ought not, the smallest item of guilt to remain undisclosed and unpunished. Who wonders that sin keeps its victims from looking that way?—Who wonders that sin keeps just as thick a mantle of darkness as possible over Eternity? And what can Hope have to do with that world? What has a sinner to hope for?

Hope! That sweet word—so bright, cheering and animating a word—what has it to do with Satan's kingdom? What concern have the lovers of sin with such an idea? *ETERNAL HOPE!* What an angel of light and glory! But no smile beams on her face for the Christless soul; no music in her voice for the evil-doer.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*

## The Gateway to Eternity.

There is a solemn mystery which hangs like an impenetrable cloud around the dread entrance to eternity. We travel with our friends, neighbours and fellow-men, up to this mysterious spot, and there the immortal spirit, dislodged from its frail tenement of clay, is ushered in a moment through this iron gateway—but we cannot follow them. Our intensest vision cannot penetrate one inch beyond this adamant wall, which conceals the spirit-land and its wonderful mysteries from our view. But our time will come to pass this iron gateway. We shall enter it alone.—Each man for himself in his own dread experience must pass the solemn boundary.—He knows not—he cannot know the hour till it arrives. And yet how unconcerned—how negligent—how careless of all preparation for this dread hour are the multitudes which crowd and flutter for a day on life's brief stage. Says an eminent writer: "Our imaginations are intercepted, in their flight to eternity, by a dark and cloudy envelopment. Ere we can realize that distant world of souls, we must pierce our way beyond the curtain of the grave; we must scale this awful barricade which separates the visible from the invisible; we must make our escape from all the close and warns and besetting urgencies which in this land of human bodies are ever plying us with constant and powerful solicitation, and force our spirits across the boundaries of sense. We know not, if there be another tribe of beings in the universe who have such a task to perform. Angels have no death to undergo.—There is no such affair of unnatural violence between them and their final destiny. It is for man, and for aught that appears, it is for man alone, to fetch from the other side of a material panorama that hems and incloses him, the great and abiding realities with which he has everlastingly to do. It is for him, so locked in an imprisonment of clay, and with no other loop-holes of communication between himself and all that is around him than the eye and the ear—it is for him to light up, in his bosom a lively and realizing sense of things which eye hath never seen, and ear hath never heard. It is for man, and perhaps for man alone, to travel in thought over the ruins of a mighty dissolution; and, beyond the wreck of that present world by which he is encompassed, to conceive that future world in which he is to expiate forever.—*N. Y. Evan.*"

## On Making a Profession of Religion.

*Obj.* I know it is my duty, but I have many fears that my hope is not well founded, and what shall I do?

*Ans.* It is your duty so to live, that you will not doubt. Your difficulty is a common one. We know how to feel for you, but we must be plain. Your difficulty, is occasioned by your sin.

*Obj.* I am afraid that I shall do wrong; that I shall eat and drink unworthily.

*Ans.* It may be so. But is it not strange that any one should have conscientious scruples against obeying a plain command of