

# THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE..... Eph. 2 c. 20 v.

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From "Memory's Tribute."

## THE BAPTISM.

### Chap. III.

"— In his duty prompt at every call,  
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all,  
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt its new fledged offspring to the skies;  
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

Goldsmith.

When it was perceived that the immortal spirit had indeed left its clay tenement, all efforts to recall life were suspended; and we stood awhile, and gazed in the deep silence of intense feeling upon the venerable and unbreathing form of this departed Christian. There was even in death, a calmness and serenity that rested upon the fixed and motionless features of Mr. Northend which spoke of the exalted and everlasting peace he had gone to enjoy. Tears were silently stealing down many a cheek in the solemn group that stood around the bed. But as if there had just been enforced by a voice from Heaven, the injunction, "*Be still and know that I am God,*" the stillness of deep and undisturbed solitude reigned through the whole house. After some little interval, prayer was proposed, in which all joined with great devotion.

As Mr. Heyden and myself left this dwelling of sorrow, the truth of the sentiment most forcibly occurred to me, that "*it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.*"

I was so absorbed in the scene that I had witnessed, that I was scarcely conscious where I was, until I found myself in the open air, and beneath one of the most brilliantly illuminated Heavens that I had ever witnessed. It was nearly midnight. The sky was cloudless. The moon moved on through the resplendent vault of Heaven most gloriously; around it twinkled ten thousand bright stars. The waters of the Ontario stretched before us like a sea of glory, beautifully irradiated beneath the soft and mellow rays of the orb of night. Not a sound was heard save the gentle ripple that played over the surface of the lake. We had left the house of death. The scene around us was calculated to perpetuate the deep and solemn feeling that had been already excited.

At length as we passed on, Mr. Heyden pointing to the heavens, said, "Henry Northend has gone to yonder bright world, and will shine like one of those stars in the kingdom of his master for ever and ever." I felt too deeply to make any reply and so we passed on several yards in silence. As we ascended a small rise of ground, Mr. H. slackened his pace and turned a little out of the path: I followed him, and soon saw before us at a short distance, a plain white marble stone, which seemed to mark the spot where the ashes of some departed fellow mortal rested. As we drew near, I perceived that we were in the neighbourhood of a small burying ground, which I afterwards learnt belonged exclusively to the two families of Northend and Heyden. Mr. H. went up to the stone just alluded to, and for a moment fixed his eyes upon the spot in deep silence. I read with some surprise on this stone, for it was almost as light as day, "Sacred to the memory of the Rev. D. P., who departed this life, &c.—"*He being dead, yet speaketh.*" "Do you know any thing," said I to Mr. H., "of the history of this clergyman?" "Yes," replied he, "I knew him well, and have great reason to remember him." "You know," continued Mr. Heyden, "that just as we arrived at Mr. Northend's I was remarking, that recollections of a peculiar character were connected in his mind with the baptism of his children, and you yourself must have observed with what deep feeling, he spoke of '*the baptism.*'"

If the hour was not so far advanced I think you would be interested in the narrative of the baptism and incidents he alluded to; and that narrative would

tend to illustrate the history and character of him whose ashes rest beneath this sod."

I assured Mr. Heyden that nothing could give me so much pleasure as the narration of which he spoke; and that with my present feelings it would be impossible for me to sleep. I, therefore proposed that we should linger around this spot, when he narrated the incidents just alluded to.

A short distance from where we stood, there had shot up, within ten feet of each other, two elm trees, which had attained about half their growth. Between these trees there had been fixed a rude seat, from which, in the heat of the day, there might be viewed in shaded retirement, the hallowed resting-place of the dead, and the wide-spreading waters of Ontario. Here we sat down, and Mr. Heyden proceeded with his narration as follows:

"It is full twenty years since the Rev. Mr. P. first visited these parts. The country was then new, and we were entirely destitute of religious privileges. The want of religious privileges was attended with great, and almost universal looseness of morals. Little respect was paid to the Lord's day; when it was not spent in work, it was usually devoted to amusement. Profane swearing was almost universal, and many were addicted to deep and dangerous drinking.

"It was owing entirely to the restraining grace of God that I did not go all these lengths; for at that time, I was far from being under the influence of a practical and heartfelt religion, the only security for sound morality. The news of the Rev. Mr. P.'s arrival among us was soon spread abroad, and made the subject of much conversation through the whole settlement. At this time it might have been truly said, '*We have heard a rumor from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the Heathen.*' All that could, went to hear the missionary preach; and some carried their children, that they might receive baptism. It was intimated to Mr. P., the first time he preached among us, that there were several families in various parts of the settlement, that were desirous to have their children baptized, and among others, Mr. Northend's name was mentioned. Following this suggestion, he visited those families whose names had been mentioned to him, and where it was desired, administered baptism to their children, and exhorted the parents '*to cleave unto the Lord.*'"

"As I had had a previous introduction to Mr. P., he called upon me, and requested me to accompany him on this same errand to Mr. Northend's."

"Mr. N. was at this time among the most careless in the neighbourhood, in relation to spiritual things; but being an Englishman by birth, and very much attached to the customs of his fathers, he was desirous of improving the present opportunity of having his children baptized."

"I conducted the missionary to his house, which was then a small log dwelling, standing at one side of a clearing of about ten acres. This was, at that time, all the land he cultivated. Mr. P. soon apprized Mr. Northend of the errand on which he had come. Mrs. Northend, regretted that she had not some previous notice, so that she might have better clothes for the children."

"The missionary remarked, 'that this, he hoped, would not prevent her embracing the present opportunity of having her offspring '*grafted into the body of Christ's church;*' and he trusted it would hereafter be her constant aim and unceasing effort, to see that her children were clothed in the garments of righteousness."

"Go," said her husband, "and get the children together, we must not miss this opportunity of having them christened."

"Mrs. N. retired to collect the group.  
"Mr. P. asked Mr. Northend if he had a Prayer Book. He answered, 'He believed that his father used to have one.' After much search, an old English Prayer Book was at length found under a collec-

tion of dingy-looking papers and pamphlets that were lodged upon a shelf or board, nailed to the logs that ran transversely across the house and supported the chamber floor.

"The children were now present, except the two oldest boys. They having heard what was intended, had hid themselves in the corn field. While a search was going on for them, the missionary took occasion to speak upon the importance and exalted privilege of Christian baptism."

"Yes," said Mr. Northend, not understanding the spiritual sense in which Mr. P. spoke, any more than the woman of Samaria understood the meaning of the Saviour when he discoursed about the '*living water,*' at Jacob's well. 'Yes, I have always thought I would have my children christened. I have known persons to lose a fortune on account of their not having been christened, or their not having had their names properly registered at the time.'

"While Mr. N. was making this remark, the mother returned with one of the absentees, reporting that the other, the oldest son, a boy about twelve, was nowhere to be found. After some consultation it was determined, that those that were present should be baptized at all events.

"Perhaps they who object to infant baptism, or to the baptism of children whose parents are not pious, would think that all the circumstances I have related go to show, most conclusively, the validity of their objections; but the termination of our story will lead to a different conclusion."

"Perhaps you may think, for I did, that it would have been well for Mr. P., before proceeding to the baptismal service, to have explained the nature and spiritual intent of the holy rite he was about to administer. And in most instances this would undoubtedly have been the true course. But, in this instance, he thought another course preferable, and the result showed that he judged correctly. It was his opinion that no explanations could so luminously or impressively set forth the nature and design of this sacrament as the baptismal service. Without adding one word, therefore, in reply to Mr. Northend's singular remark, he began the service. This service I have always admired, and in point of sublimity and feeling, it is certainly equal to any other part of our invaluable liturgy. I have heard it pronounced, with great solemnity, on numerous occasions; but never did I hear that sublime service uttered in tones so solemn and deeply impressive, as at that time. We all felt its meaning. The missionary had not proceeded three sentences, before the utmost gravity and seriousness were visible upon every countenance. It seemed as though the words he uttered, exerted at the time an instantaneous and almost irresistible influence upon our minds. After the questions had been proposed, just as the minister lifted up his eye to Heaven, uttering these words, '*grant that the old Adam in these children may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them,*' I looked at Henry Northend. The big tear stood on his cheek; and his wife had covered her face, agitated by deep emotion, with her hands. Each part of the service seemed very affecting, and that peculiarly so, when the minister, holding the little one in his arms, after having poured the water upon him 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' repeated these words—'*We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him, with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.*' And there also seemed much meaning and force in the concluding exhortation, and I saw it went home to their hearts; ye must remember it is your parts and duties to see that these infants be taught, so soon as they shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession they have here made by you."