

THE HON. AND REV. BAPTIST NOEL.

Our readers may have read in the papers of the day, that this most respected minister, whose secession from the Church of England lately made so much noise, has joined the Baptists, having been re-baptized by immersion. We see it stated that he disavows the principles of close communion. An esteemed contemporary—the Editor of the *Presbyterian of the West*—in noticing the event, justly remarks: “It is not uncommon for even good men to pass rapidly from one extreme to its opposite.”

We do not, however, regard this as the whole explanation of the change of Mr. Noel's views in regard to Baptism. We think that it may, in part at least, be referred to the principle which we often see brought out in the conduct of men in regard to religious matters—that where they have held truth, whether in the profession of doctrine, or in the observance of Divine institutions in a mixed or adulterated form, the discovery of the error sometimes leads to the rejection of the truth also. Thus, the Church of England, of which Mr. Noel was so long a minister, holds many dangerous errors on the subject of Baptism, and in many ways corrupts the administration of that ordinance to infants. According to her Liturgy the outward sign and the inward grace are regarded as inseparable—so that the judges in what are called her spiritual courts, have now formally and authoritatively declared that Baptismal Regeneration is an article of her creed. In consistence with this doctrine, no unbaptized person, whether babe or adult, can have the burial service read over him; for that service assumes that the “departed” is a dear brother or sister—one of the elect.

Then, in regard to the administration of Baptism to infants, the Church of England, practically at least, overlooks the ground on which this is to be justified. She has no where given the precise, and, as we regard it, scriptural announcement of our Shorter Catechism—“The children of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized.” Nay, in one of the canons, she authoritatively requires that “No parent shall be urged to be present, nor be admitted to answer as God-father for his own child.” Now, when members or ministers of the Church of England come to have their eyes opened to these and other errors, connected with infant baptism, it does not very greatly surprise us, that they are ready to renounce, in all cases, the practice itself, as though it were unscriptural.

The Rev. Thomas Scott, the distinguished Commentator on the Bible, had been a minister of the Church of England before he was converted; and after he was converted, he well nigh made the very transition which Mr. Noel has now made. The account which Mr. Scott gives of himself is so interesting and instructive, that though somewhat lengthened, we hesitate not to quote it:—

“When I published the ‘Force of Truth,’ I had never attended to any controversies concerning church government, or any kindred subjects. I found myself a minister of the establishment, and, as I saw no sufficient reason to relinquish my station, I was satisfied that it was my duty to retain it. But, soon after, the controversy concern-

ing baptism, whether it should be administered to infants, or only to adults professing faith, “fell in my way; and, for some time, I was almost ready to conclude, that the antipedobaptists were right. This gave me great uneasiness: not because I was solicitous whether, in the search after truth, I were led among them or elsewhere; but because I feared being misled; and deprecated following my publication with a further and needless change, which might bring discredit upon it.—Many, very many prayers, accompanied with tears, did I pour out on this subject. I read books on both sides of the question, but received no satisfaction. I became even afraid of administering baptism or the Lord's Supper. But I said to myself, *He that believeth shall not make haste*: I must retain my station, till I have taken time to examine the subject fully: and I must in the mean time do what retaining that station requires.—It is remarkable that, in this instance alone, my wife appeared greatly distressed, in the prospect of my changing my sentiments.—At length I laid aside all controversial writings, and determined to seek satisfaction on this question, as I had on others, by searching the scriptures and prayer. I was no less time than three quarters of a year engaged in this investigation, before I came to a conclusion: but I was then so fully satisfied that the infant children of believers, and of all who make a credible profession of faith, are the proper subjects of baptism, that I have never since been much troubled about it.

“This was my conclusion, especially from the identity of the covenant made with Abraham, and that still made with believers; and from circumcision being the sacrament of regeneration under the old dispensation, as baptism is under the new, and the seal of the righteousness of faith.—Abraham received this seal long after he believed; Isaac, when an infant; Ishmael, when thirteen years of age. The men of Abraham's household, and Esau, though uninterested in the promises concerning Canaan, yet, as a part of Abraham's family, and of the visible church, were circumcised by the command of God himself. The circumcision of infants was enjoined, with denunciations of wrath against those who neglected it. The apostles were Israelites, accustomed to this system. Adult gentiles were admitted among the Jews by circumcision, and their male children were circumcised also. In Christ there is *neither male nor female*.—Had only adults been designed to be the subjects of Christian baptism, some prohibition of admitting infants would have been requisite; and we should never have read, as we do, of *households* being baptized, without any limitation or exception of this kind being intimated.—In short, unless it can be proved that circumcision was not the sign, or sacrament, of regeneration, even as baptism now is, I cannot see how the argument can be answered: and all the common objections against infant-baptism, as administered to subjects incapable of the professions required and the benefits intended, bear with equal force against infant-circumcision.

“The conclusion, thus drawn, rests not on this one ground alone: collateral proof was not, and is not, overlooked; but my idea always was, that not the *privilege* of the infant, but the *duty* of the parent, is the grand thing to be ascertained: and this clears away much extraneous matter from the argument.

“To the question of immersion, or sprinkling, or pouring, I never attached any great importance. Immersion is doubtless baptism: and so is sprinkling, or pouring, according to my unvaried judgment. If a few texts seem to allude to baptism by figures taken from immersion, how many speak of the baptism of the *Holy Spirit*, under the idea of pouring out upon us?”

This farther change in the views of Mr. Noel, will tend to injure the testimony against Ecclesiastical establishments, which he has borne both by his secession from the Church of England and by his book against the union of Church and State.

Though it is proper to observe, that his written testimony in that book, unanswerable as we believe it to be in many of its positions, against State-endowed Churches, omits altogether the notice of some important principles respecting the duties of Civil Rulers to Christ and his kingdom—if it does not by implication at least, teach, that they owe no homage to Zion's King at all; and in so far we regard Mr. Noel's book, with all its excellencies, as defective or erroneous.

PROPOSED RETRENCHMENT.

Our readers will find in another column, a short letter from a respected correspondent in Cornwall. It is to ourselves at least, very suggestive of reflections; but we have no space at present to give expression to them. Suffice it to say, that we approve of his censure, so far as he has expressed it, of the state of things amongst us, by which the spiritual labourer, in some cases, is left to all but penury. In any such case, there is doubtless much to be blamed, either in the particular congregation in which the minister is not duly provided for, or in the Presbytery which has the oversight of it. But we do not approve of the remedy which our correspondent recommends for the removal of the evil referred to—a retrenchment from such objects as the French Canadian Missions and the Foreign Missions of the Free Church. Ah! we much fear that the congregation that saves, as it may suppose, by not collecting for the benighted Romanists of Canada East, and the perishing millions of Hindostan, will not be very generous either to its own minister or to our Seminary for ministers. They who can retrench by extinguishing missionary feelings, will retrench also by curtailing their expenditure for the sustentation of the ministry of the Gospel amongst themselves.

Oh, no! people of our Canadian Church! by your regard to the laws of Jesus, which require you to maintain his servants, be kind and liberal to them, and devise also liberal things for the training up a succession of ministers; and yet, also, by your regard to the honour of that same blessed One—by your desire to see men rescued by Him from a coming wrath—pray, and contribute for the diffusion of the knowledge of His name, alike among Jew and Gentile; and welcome every opportunity afforded you of helping forward this great consummation.

DUNNVILLE CHURCH.

PRESENTATIONS.—On Tuesday last, the female portion of the congregation here, presented to the missionary of our Church, at present residing in this place, through Miss Millar, a handsome Palpit Bible, and Psalm Book, covered with Morocco, and bearing a suitable inscription—to be by him handed over for the use of those who may conduct the ministrations of the sanctuary, until a stated pastor is settled among them. This valuable gift was received with pleasure, and the request of the donors cheerfully attended to. It was our privilege also, a few weeks ago, to receive from a friend a pair of Salvers for collections; and, in addition to these presents, our pulpit, which has just been made, has been covered with suitable cloth, and other furnishings, by another friend.

Such gifts as these are acceptable at any time, but specially so as in the present instance, when there is no settled minister. We sincerely hope that the Lord will, in his own good time, confer upon the people here, this most precious boon.—Last week the Rev. Mr. Cheyne, of Saltfleet, organized the congregation, and on Sabbath dispensed the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper. *Dunnaville, Sept. 21, 1849—Communicated.*