

"Weary not, heaven is near." This is beautifully wrought in straw, each letter being braided separately, and then tacked on blue silk. Those who have seen it pronounced it a great curiosity, and I shall cherish it as a most valued keepsake. But my object in dropping you this note is chiefly to say that Mrs. Betsey Baker is a dear old Baptist—one who has spent her days and employed her rare gifts in efforts to promote the cause in the town of Denham, Mass. Among out worthies I think this woman deserves to be mentioned; and, as we claim the credit of being leaders, we may as well take what belongs to us, even if it be in the manufacture of straw bonnets.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger

THE BAPTISMAL QUESTION.

No. III.

BAPTISM NOT A SEAL.

Part 3.

The New Testament Seals.

Although, however, baptism is not a seal, nor the Lord's Supper, (as has been assumed without being proved.) The New Testament leaves us not without our seals. That is, a gracious God not only speaks peace to the outward ear of his people, but signs and seals it to their inward experience. He answers their cry, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation!" He gives them to enter into the experience of good John Bunyan, as thus described in his own words:—"Now I had an evidence, as I thought, of my salvation, from heaven, with many golden seals thereon, all hanging in my sight."

The blood of Christ.

There is the blood of Christ, as applied to the conscience of believers. That blood, indeed, is no where expressly called a seal. Yet it is of the nature of a seal, and is possessed of a sealing efficacy. I would here recall the covenant of peace between heaven and earth. I would then point to its ratification by the blood of the cross; to which the Saviour refers when at the institution of the Sacred Supper, he says, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." And again, I would speak of the application of that blood to the conscience of every believer; taking away the very sense of sin, and sealing the love of heaven towards the guilty sons of earth. It is to this application that Paul alludes in his memorable exhortation,—“Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” Here is a sealing indeed—a something which the New Testament never attributes to the baptismal rite. When this is realized, it is as if the hand of our reconciled God, dipped anew in the blood of Calvary, fresh and warm as when it first flowed from the newly opened veins of Jesus, were laid upon our trembling consciences, while his voice thrills upon the ear as he says, "Son! daughter! go in peace! thy sins are forgiven thee!"

The Sealing of the Spirit.

Besides this, there is the sealing of the Spirit. Paul speaks of believers as "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; who," he proceeds, "is the earnest of our inheritance." And again he says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And what is this sealing? It is a something which essentially coincides with that general notion of sealing expounded as above. It is a special attestation of the love of God to his believing children. So of the "earnest of the Spirit;" it is that which God gives to his people beforehand, and in part, as an assurance and foretaste of their final inheritance. So likewise of the witness of the Spirit. It involves the same general idea, though presented again under a different form. It is thus wrought out by Paul:—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." A redeeming God thus heaps us up and multiplies the privileges of his ransomed ones. Once, indeed, sin intercepted the flow of his favour towards them. But now, that one great and fatal obstacle removed by the interposition of Christ, rivers of grace are poured all around them. As it is written, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Or, as Dr. Doddridge renders the apostolic thought,—

"When dreadful guilt is done away,
No other fears we know;
That hand which scatters pardon down
Shall crown us of life bestow."

In this region of lofty and peculiar privilege it is that we meet with the sealing of the Spirit. It is the impression of the image of Christ upon the soul of the believer by the hand of the Spirit. Thus the believer "receives the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries—Abba! Father!" Here, too, is his security. Once sealed, he is sealed for ever—"sealed unto the day of redemption," wherein he shall enter upon the inheritance of the "purchased possession" of which he already enjoys the "earnest."

Application of the preceding Statements.

But now is there any thing in baptism, according to New Testament representations, which at all resembles that heavenly sealing which has just been illustrated? Again, there is the blood of Christ. We find a general contrast between this and baptism. Baptism is for earth and time. The influence of the blood of Christ reaches to heaven, and lasts through eternity. Baptism is outward, in the flesh. The blood of Christ is applied inwardly, to the conscience and heart. Especially it "cleanseth from all sin;" while baptism is but the external emblem of that cleansing. Thus the blood of Christ, brought home to the human spirit, works a real and happy change in its condition and prospects; while baptism, though it symbolizes such a change, does not produce it. And yet once more, with direct reference to the matter of sealing, the blood of Christ is a real and absolute security to those to whom it is applied. "I lay down my life for the sheep," says the Son of man; and again, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." What a sealing, what a security is there here! such as baptism cannot impart, and was never intended to impart. Nay, let a man receive baptism without having first exercised faith, he receives that which seals nothing to him but a deeper ruin at last; unless indeed he repent of his very baptism at the foot of the cross, and purge out its stains in the blood of the Lamb. But besides these, there are the myriads who have received in their infancy a so-called baptism; who have been christened, but not christianized; who have so trusted to their christening as never to attain to christianity; and who at last have gone down to hell with "a lie in their right hand." Alas! what can we do for these, but weep over them as Christ over the lost ones of Jerusalem? mingling our prayers with our tears, that the lies which have wrought their ruin may speedily cease to deform the church, and destroy the world.

Then, as to the sealing of the Spirit, similar contrasts present themselves. Spurgeon has done well, though in some minor points he may have erred, in denouncing those teachings which speak of baptism as making its subject "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Could it do this, it were, indeed, a "sealing ordinance." But that which is thus falsely and injuriously ascribed to baptism does really belong to the agency of the Holy Spirit. Thus, again, we have the contrast between the earthly and the heavenly; the outward and the inward; the bodily and the spiritual; that which attests and secures nothing, and that which attests and secures every thing; that which one may receive, and yet perish, and that which once received as certain and assures the "salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." yea, that which received under a mistaken idea of its efficacy, is fraught with deepest spiritual danger, and that which conveys all true blessedness into the souls of men.

Conclusion.

If now I have succeeded in my present object, and satisfactorily shown that baptism ought not to be described as a seal, I have removed the corner-stone on which Dr. Williams builds up his "Practical Reflections." And what then becomes of his whole superstructure? Certainly it will not be needful for me to say much more about it in the way of direct argument. I propose, however, as already intimated, to point out some of the tendencies of the doctor's baptismal theories, deriving my illustrations largely from the pamphlet before me. Such will be the object of my next week's paper.

In showing that baptism is not a seal, I have been opposing such views of baptism as lift it out of its place, and assign to it a value not assigned to it by the Word of God. Still, in its place in the Divine economy, and that an important one, great is the value which pertains to it. That place, and that value I shall endeavour hereafter to indicate; rendering to the precious ordinance of baptism thus the honour which Christ would have it receive, while I refuse to render to it any which he rather reserves to himself.

J. DAVIS

Charlottesville, P. E. I.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letterings at Parrsboro.

No. 4.

Let us visit the old church yard at Mill Village, and spend an hour among the tombs, read the inscriptions on the grave stones, and meditate on the brevity of human life. Here sleeps the infant, and the grey haired patriarch; here is the grave of the young lady, stricken down in the midst of health and beauty; of the young man, in all the strength and pride of maturity; here rests the poor despised pauper;—there the man of wealth and influence all sleeping together on a perfect equality, until the morning of the resurrection. What a humiliating thought, that the noblest, the fairest, the most gifted and beautiful, must one day lie down in the cold and narrow tomb.

"Wherefore should man, frail child of clay—
Who from the cradle, to the shroud,
Whose life is but a winter's day,
O why should mortal man be proud!"

Let us examine the device, and inscription on this stone:—here is a hand with the finger pointing upwards, resting on an open Bible, with the words "Christ my hope." How impressive and appropriate! The finger pointing upwards—intimates, that, "there is another, and a better world." The open Bible—

"Hast thou ever heard
Of such a book? The author God himself,
The subject God, and man; salvation, life
And death—eternal life, eternal death!
Most wondrous book! the bright candle of the Lord!
Star of eternity! the only star
By which the bark of man could navigate
The sea of life, and gain the port of life securely."

Without Revelation the grave would indeed be dark and gloomy—the future all uncertainty and despair: Cold and proud philosophy never conceived the idea of a resurrection—infidelity represents death as an eternal sleep;—but Revelation teaches the glorious and cheering truth, that "Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel." "Christ my hope"—Christ is the only sure hope for poor helpless fallen humanity: the church cannot save—good works cannot save—Christ alone can shelter the sinner from that tremendous storm, which will one day burst upon a sin-stained world; when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens be rolled together like a parchment scroll.

Passing on we come to another inscription, which shows the inhabitant below, was a native of "Auld Scotia"—it reads thus,—Scotland gave me birth, Nova Scotia a grave."

"From the bright home that gave her birth,
A pilgrim 'o'er the ocean wave,
She came to find in other earth,
A stranger's grave."

Here is the grave of a little child, once the joy of the household with her laughing eyes and flowing locks, making all merry with her own gladness; but "the spoiler" came, and in spite of love and affection, she went down to darkness and the worm.

"Shed not for her the bitter tear,
Nor give the heart to vain regret;
'Tis but the casket that lies here,
The gem that filled it sparkles yet."

That grave yonder, alone and isolated, without a monument or stone of any kind to distinguish it, is probably the grave of some stranger, who went down to his tomb without a mourner, without a friend to bend over his remains: but his head will not rest less softly, nor his slumber be less sweet, because he was uncare for and unknown. Sleep on stranger! There is one who marks thy resting place, and will keep thy dust in safety, until he bids it rise in new and immortal beauty. It perhaps matters little, where we shake off this "mortal coil";—whether the green sod wraps our grave, or we have the ocean for a winding sheet—whether we lie under a marble Mausoleum, or sink into an obscure tomb—whether we slumber on the banks of the Mississippi, or the Danube, the Ganges, or the Nile—whether in the frigid, or torrid zone;—the shrill blast of the Archangel's trumpet, will equally reach us, and awake us to instant vitality.

"The Lord shall come, the earth shall quake,
The mountains to their centre shake
And, withering from the vault of night,
The stars shall pale their feeble light.
Can this be He, who, wont to stray,
A pilgrim on the world's highway,
Oppressed by power, and mocked by pride,
The Nazarene! The Crucified?
While sinners in despair shall call,
Rocks hide us—mountains, on us fall!
The saints, ascending from the tomb,
Shall joyful sing, the Lord is come."

See that gay young man, how carelessly he treads o'er yonder graves, utterly regardless of the generation buried beneath his feet. Yet so it is, we die and are soon forgotten, the living trample on our graves,—others occupy the places we left behind us;—the gay will laugh,

and each one as before will chase his favorite phantom;—and the world jog on, as though we had never been. Then let us determine so to live—

"That we may dread
Our graves as little as our bed."

Here is the venerable old church, with its obsolete finish, and weather-beaten exterior, nearly a century old; but much more interesting to me, than the more modern, more showy churches. I love old churches, old monuments, old friends, and old associations. We have no buildings in this country which in reality have any claims to antiquity; an old house here, would be called modern in Europe. In the old Country, every thing has the stamp of age upon it;—the cottage roofs are green with the mosses of centuries;—Churches that can date back to the time of William the Conqueror;—grim hoary castles, frowning from the hills and beetling cliffs, where in the olden time—

"When the banner broad from the eastern tower
Hung streaming 'er the wall,
And armed knights, with the baron bold,
Were feasting in the hall."

—ruined monasteries, with legends of monks, and friars black, white, and grey, and associations reaching back a thousand years. But in this country, the case is widely different, here every thing is new, so that a building a century old, is considered antiquated, and looked upon as a relic of the olden days. Well old Church, the dust of three generations sleeps beneath the shadow of thy steeple! The ancestors of the Township lie buried here;—probably, many of them were united in matrimony at thy altar;—sang in thy choir, the noble old tunes of the early composers;—and listened to the words of eternal life, dispensed from thy pulpit;—but they have all gone, and thou too, art fast falling to ruins. How true is the language of the inspired Apostle, "the fashion of this world passeth away."

I perceive one fine old Birch tree, ornamenting the yard, and a number of spruces scattered about among the green hillocks; but not much care taken to beautify this home of the dead. And during my perambulations through the Province, I have frequently observed, a great deal of carelessness as regards the Church yard and burial places. Now this is not commendable, a little care and attention on the part of the people, by planting trees, and flowers, and otherwise ornamenting the grave yards, might render them very interesting and beautiful localities. In the East, the grave yards, shaded by noble trees, are the general promenades for the people. Stephens says, that "few things strike a traveller more forcibly than this. We seldom visit the tombs, except to pay the last office to a departed friend; not so in Turkey, to day they bury a friend, to morrow they plant flowers over his grave, and the next day they tend and water them, and as often as they walk out for health, or pleasure, they habitually turn their steps to the burial place; and sometimes they scoop out little niches in the tomb stones, to hold water, with the beautiful idea to induce the birds to come there and drink, and sing among the trees. Now we who profess a purer and better faith than those Mahometans, might take a lesson from them as regards the care bestowed upon their grave yards; and thus our own become (instead of the neglected and desolate places they so frequently are,) attractive, and cheerful places of resort. I must now bring my soliloquy to an end,—leave this village of the dead, and go forth and mingle again with the breathing bustling masses, who compose the village of the living.

SYLVANUS OBED SMITH.

October, 1864.

For the Christian Messenger.

United States Correspondence.

LETTER FROM REV. J. M. HARRIS.

Since I last wrote our church has had the pleasure of enjoying the Association. It convened with us at the commencement of the month. The letters from the churches showed that each was in sympathy with the Government, possessed the deepest devotion to the Union, and was ready to sacrifice and suffer until it was restored. In fact, the church at the North, with its sacred ministry, gives its firmest support to "the powers that be." It is only now and then that a professor of religion is among the opposition. And such as are do not belong to that number who live and labor for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom, so far as my acquaintance extends. The spirit of patriotism exhibited in the letters by no means excluded the nobler manifestation of that christian earnestness which would secure above all things, the spread of the