

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER. SPECIAL PROVIDENCES.

"Be careful—careful—for nothing, but in EVERY THING by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. 4: 6. "Casting ALL YOUR CARE upon him, for he careth for you." 1 Pet. 5: 7.

What exceedingly great and precious promises are these! No matter what the causes of our anxieties are, no matter what our wants may be, whether large or little, whether relating to soul or body, to this world or the next, we may go and tell them to Jesus, with the sweet assurance that he will be interested in them, and either remove them, or support us under them, and turn their endurance into a greater blessing than their removal would be.

But "if God governs the world by the special and local exercise of his almightiness, and has power to effect all things other than through the course of natural law, why does he not displace sin with good, slavery with justice, poverty with plenty? Why does the Deity permit famine, disease, sin and woe?" So reasons what would faint be deemed very sound philosophy, and what assumes to be if not the "higher christianity" itself, at least "consistent" with it. And again, "There is every reason to believe Infinite Power changes the course of the winds and the clouds just as the pilot his ship, viz by the employment of means." And pray will these writers tell us "why the Deity does not displace slavery with justice, &c" if he has power to do it, through natural law? One would suppose that the question as to how a favor is conferred by the Almighty, whether through a natural or a supernatural law, would be a matter of small moment. The believer in "special providences" believes all means, and all laws, and all powers, are under the control and guidance of Infinite Power, and Infinite Wisdom, and Infinite Goodness. The pilot does not reverse any law of nature when he puts his ship about, he simply reverses the wheel. The "engineer" reverses no natural law when he "backs the train"—he simply reverses his engine. We are quite willing to waive all questions of "miracles," of the "suspension" or reversal of "natural law;" we only claim that God acts FREELY, UNTRAMMELED—that all things, all creatures, all means, all laws, are absolutely under his control, that he created all things, controls all things, upholds all things, and is himself absolutely independent, and uncontrolled.

To affirm that he always works in a given way, and according to one uniform rule, and that this is such a feeble man can scan, and that consequently he as the Omnipotent One, cannot do as he chooses, at any moment, and with reference to any matter, whether great or small, but that he must wait the motions of a ponderous machine which he had power to build, and to set in motion to stop, or to back, or to "switch off the main track"—is to make bold affirmations that cannot be proved, affirmations as derogatory to the character of the Supreme Ruler of the universe, as they are subversive of all confidence in God and all christian peace and hope.

We can easily answer the question quoted above. The Lord does not as yet remove all the evils that exist—displacing slavery with justice. Poverty with plenty, and does permit "famine, disease, sin and woe" to exist for a season because "so it seemeth good in his sight," until the proper time shall have arrived for the establishment of the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." And in the meantime he is saying to us all, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." If a more satisfactory answer can be given, pray what is it? Can any pompous, ponderous law-scheme, give us a better solution?

THE LATE DR. MCGREGOR OF PICTOU.

But, Mr. Editor, when I took up my pen I had no intention of writing a "dissertation." My design was simply to relate a few homely facts calculated to encourage the children of God to go to him in all times of trouble, large and little. So pray for a pin when one needs a pin, and cannot find one conveniently, might seem to some like "egregious trifling." And yet how much worrying and fretfulness and unchristian temper will sometimes be occasioned by as trifling a matter as a pin! Were it not better to spend one's breath in prayer! were it not better—after the example of the late Mrs. Gosse, a devoted christian lady of England, under such circumstances to "tell Jesus!" A horse, a cow, a yoke of oxen, lost in the woods, or strayed away, and requiring days or even

hours of anxious and laborious searching to recover them, would be allowed, I imagine, by most persons who believe in prayer at all, to be a fitting subject for prayer. I can scarcely conceive of a truly devout person going out to such a search who would not deem it proper to seek aid from the Lord. Nor do I think that true piety would trouble itself relative to the kind of 'means' which the Hearer of Prayer might deign to use, in order to help his child who called upon Him in trouble for help.

Let me give a few illustrations. The memory of the late Dr. McGregor of Pictou, is as "fragrant" among the Presbyterians of that county, as is that of the Mannings, the Hardings, the Dimocks, among the Baptists of these Provinces. He was pre-eminently a man of faith and prayer.

He once lost his horse in the midst of a long piece of woods. He was travelling the lonely rough road on horse back. The horse had been hitched, and while left to himself had broken loose and was nowhere to be found. Mr. McG. concluded he had gone back towards home, and retraced his steps hoping to overtake him. But he could find no traces of this horse, and finally coming to a soft place where the animal could not have passed without making tracks, he saw plainly that he had not gone back. He then concluded he had gone the other way, and pursued on until from a similar place in the road he ascertained that the horse had not passed there. He then went back to the place where he had hitched him, and searched around in all directions. But the search was in vain—he could find no traces of the horse.

Now the loss of a horse and especially under such circumstances could be no trifling matter. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," was a promise every way worthy of being believed by the "afflicted saint." So the man of God reverently uncovered his head, kneeled down, closed his eyes, and prayed. He asked the Lord to help him in his trouble—to bring the horse to him, or him to the horse. Having committed his way unto the Lord, and cast his burden upon him, the good man opened his eyes, and there in full view stood the horse. He sought the Lord and he heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles.

This beautiful story I had from James McGregor, Esq., a worthy elder, residing in New Glasgow, the eldest son of the excellent minister mentioned in the anecdote. It came to my mind with great freshness and power a short time afterwards. I was travelling on an unknown road on Cape Breton. I had been belated at Plaister Cove, and it was near sundown when I started to go on to Port Hood. I had promised to call at a friend's house and pass the night there, who lived four or five miles from Mr. McKeen's where I had been stopping; but I was unacquainted with the way would have to turn off from the main road, and was warned by a friend that it would be somewhat difficult to find my way. Not getting quite so definite an idea of the crossings, turns, and twists, in the road, at the place where I was to turn off as would have been desirable, I missed my way, got away back into a pasture, among cradle hills and bushes, the blind road becoming more and more blind in its windings and turnings, so that just as it was becoming quite dark I lost all traces of the path, and could form no definite idea which way to go in search of it. But there was no time to be lost. In ten minutes more the search for it would be hopeless and I must pass the night in the woods. Could I find the path I could at least get back to the high way, and push on towards Port Hood, and put up at the first inn I reached. I remembered Dr. McGregor's case. I had searched for the path, but could not find it. But God can help, I said, and he will, and I knelt at his feet in the sward in the gathering darkness, and, in the fullness of my heart, asked him to lead me to the road. And He did, I found the blind path instantly, which in a few minutes became so plain that I could follow it even in the dark to the main road. I gave up going to the friend's house who had invited me, and pushed on for Port Hood. But just then a carriage overtook me, and I made enquiries. I learned to my surprise that there were no inns on the road before me, and no place where I could obtain accommodations for many miles. There were two persons in the wagon, a young man and his sister, who lived near the place where I had wished to stop; but on another road. The young woman immediately volunteered to drive their own wagon home, and allow her brother to go back with me and guide me to my friend's house, and then to cross the fields to his own home. Thus was I brought out

of all my troubles, and guided to the "desired haven." I saw the hand of my Heavenly Father in it all; and I blessed him.

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

S. T. RAND.

For the Christian Messenger.

A PROTEST AGAINST CAMPBELLISM.

PART II.

III. I protest against Mr. Crawford's views of christian experience.

He presents an elaborate contrast, in regard to experience, between some who reject his baptismal theories, and such as accept them. On the one side he finds uncertainty and gloom. On the other certainty and repose. These rely upon their feelings. Those rest upon the assurances of the written Word. The experience on the one side is thus variable and fluctuating as are the feelings out of which it springs; while on the other it is firm and steady as the Word on which it is built. Such are the important differences between the experience of those who, with the Baptists, put baptism after salvation, and those who, with the Campbellites, put it before salvation. Such, in substance, are Mr. Crawford's representations on this point; against which I here beg to protest. In doing which I remark.

1. That his contrast is most unfairly drawn.

It is scarcely necessary here to do more than transcribe the terms in which he describes the experience that he condemns. He speaks of some who are "looking for some great thing in themselves instead of trusting to what Jesus has done for them in his death, and committing themselves with childlike confidence to his blessed hands"—who "rely on something they feel as proof of their pardon, instead of the sure word of Christ that can never pass away"—who "make their happy feelings instead of the words of Jesus the testimony of their pardon"—who "often say, they are afraid they never were saved at all. Again," he proceeds, "they feel pretty sure they have been saved: that is, when they are in a good frame of mind they have little doubt that they have been saved; but when gloom envelopes the mind they are afraid they have not been saved at all."

Now what have we here again better than caricature? Too many there are, no doubt, among Baptists as among others, who, in religious matters, build too much upon their feelings, and too little upon Christ. Yet, as a general rule, it may safely be affirmed, that this is their own fault rather than that of their teachers; while certainly it does not spring from the system in which they are reared. They are exhorted, indeed, to look well to their faith before they enter the baptismal stream. But what does such exhortation import? Faith in themselves, or faith in their glorious Lord? The latter assuredly, rather than the former. They are indoctrinated in the grand cardinal position, that "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." The well-known hymn,

"Rock of ages cleft for me," &c.,

or that other later and admirable composition, "Just as I am, without one plea," &c., strikingly exemplifies the teaching with which our young converts are worst to be familiarized. We have here, in fact, the current faith of evangelical Christendom—the faith never more current than now since the days of the apostles. Nay, it is at this moment insinuating itself into the heart even of apostate churches, and preparing them, in God's good time, to return from their apostasy. In this faith the great Baptist body, as a whole, boasts and glories. While it does so, it reaps the precious harvest of peace to which Paul so touchingly refers in his famous passage, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And so we are delivered from those fluctuations and uncertainties which Mr. Crawford seems to regard as the common lot of such as reject his baptismal theories. No! his representations here, I repeat it, are little better than mere caricature. Christ alone—not fancies, nor feelings, nor ordinances—not even the ordinances of his own appointment;—Christ alone—not even the work of the Spirit within us, but the work of Christ for us,—Christ ALONE is the foundation on which we build. And building here, we taste habitually, notwithstanding Mr. Crawford's vain surmises to the contrary, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." We "believe." We "enter into" the "rest"

which faith brings with it, even before we have bowed to the baptismal rite. And ever afterwards we derive our consolation, and strength, and joy, not from that rite, but from Him whom it so gloriously exhibits; while, in the exercise of a simple and growing faith, we wait for "the rest that remaineth for the people of God." So vanishes the unfair representation in which Mr. Crawford has here chosen to indulge. But now

2. There lurks in this whole contrast a tremendous fallacy.

Again I quote from Mr. Crawford's own utterances. "It is painful to believe," he says, "many as honest souls as live on that earth who sincerely desire to be saved, are kept in the dark, and taught to believe it dangerous ritualism to trust in the word of Jesus, and do what he tells them: thus looking for some great thing in themselves, instead of trusting to what Jesus has done for them in his death, and committing themselves with childlike confidence to his blessed hands. Why will ministers keep sinners in the dark, and persuade them that it is unsafe to do what Jesus has commanded them to do? Why will they, in the face of the Lord's commission, and the Holy Spirit's testimony through the apostles, insist upon their feeling that they are saved from their sins, before they give themselves to Christ in his appointed way? thus keeping them in their sins, and teaching them to rely on something they feel as proof of their pardon, instead of the sure word of Christ that can never pass away." Again he says, "On the day of Pentecost, when those who were pierced to the heart heard the apostle telling them how they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were glad; not because they were saved, but because they saw and believed that they could come to the name of Jesus Christ so easily, and be saved, and were determined to come. They immediately did what they were told; came to the name of the Lord, and enjoyed pardon. When they heard and believed, they had the joy of anticipation. When they complied with all the terms, they had the joy of possession,—the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now what have we here? Doubtless there is an evangelical cast in the language which Mr. Crawford here employs. But we must not allow ourselves to be beguiled by his "good words, and fine speeches." I pass by some expressions in the above extracts on which I might fairly animadvert. But what does Mr. Crawford mean when he speaks of "ministers" who "keep men in their sins?" How is this? Why we do not baptize them until we have some credible evidence that, in the exercise of a living faith in a living Saviour, they have passed from sin to righteousness, from death to life. And this is what Mr. Crawford calls "keeping men in their sins." Again he tells us of the Pentecostal converts, that "they were glad, . . . because they saw and believed that they could come to the name of Jesus Christ so easily, and be saved." (The emphasis on this last expression is mine.) And how "so easily?" Simply by being baptized. Thus too, by this easy method, do men come into possession of that great gift, "the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Again, we have a Campbellite exposition of Rom. viii. 17. "The Spirit itself bear th witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Speaking of a convinced and believing sinner. Mr. Crawford says, "he believes what Jesus says, and does it. His own spirit tells him, he does this as a lost sinner having no merit in himself, but humbly trusting all on the merits of Jesus; and the Holy Spirit of God bears witness along with his spirit, that this is right, and that he is born of God." (Again the italics here are mine.) Oh! the amazing virtue of this baptismal rite! But I will quote a little further. "This man feels his shortcomings, and daily prayers and strives for more conformity to the Divine mind. But he never doubts that he was saved. He has the word of the Lord Jesus always telling him that he was saved; and he can turn and read that word, not only to himself, but can give it to every one that asks him as a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear." What is this "reason," if it be not the fact that this man has been baptized? And what is the whole of this, in all these various but closely harmonized forms of speech, but what I long ago called RELIGION MADE EASY? "Easy" indeed. It is thus, by the easy process of infant baptism, that the English Church makes each recipient of the sacred sprinkling "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." So too the Romish Church, with its dogmas of apostolic succession and priestly power, and their well-known con-