

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Elder Donald Crawford's Address on Christian Baptism.

Dear Brother,—

There lies before me a pamphlet bearing on its title-page as follows:—"CHRISTIAN BAPTISM. An Address delivered in the Drill Shed, Summerside, March 24th, 1868, by D. CRAWFORD." In pursuance of a friendly understanding with its author, I now address you in relation to its contents. He will reply to me, as I expect through your columns. I write in the interest of truth and charity; and not without hope that that interest, by the blessing of Him who delights in both, may be promoted by the communication which I now forward.

In the above pamphlet there is much that must command the assent of every believer in the New Testament baptism. It maintains, with considerable ability, and in a Christian temper, our distinguishing denominational views. As a plea for those views, its wide circulation will do good. In perusing it my thoughts naturally turned to points discussed in your columns between its author and myself, in the year 1859. And I now proceed, through you, to suggest certain inquiries in regard to those points, and points connected with them.

1. There is the efficacy of baptism.

I would like to ask here, Is it saving, or is it not? Does it lie, in any way, at the basis of the great Gospel hope of salvation? In Mr. Crawford's "Conversations on the Christian Religion," published in the year 1858, it was laid down that men are "made free from the state of sin by baptism" p. 18. In that same pamphlet there occur, moreover, these sentences:—"To say that God cannot save in any way he pleases is proud presumption. And it is still worse for those who can, and will not be baptized, to expect salvation without it; as there is neither a promise nor a case in God's Word, since Christian baptism was instituted, to encourage such an expectation. The apostles so far as the New Testament records their acts, told none that they were saved without baptism." p. 28. Language which certainly seemed to imply, that baptism was regarded as being, in some way, essential to salvation. But I meet with nothing of this kind in Mr. Crawford's late publication; that is, with nothing explicit in this line of thought. Nay, some things seem to say the contrary. Thus, in "Christian Baptism," p. 11, we have the following:—"In the commission Jesus says, 'He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved;' meaning of course, that all this salvation was in Him, and not in water; and that he would save, by virtue of his death, all that trusted in him, and did exactly what he commanded them." And again, p. 12, "Some are carried away with the idea, that we believe that water has virtue to take away sin. This is a great and grave mistake.—We believe that there is efficacy in Jesus' death, and in nothing else, to take away sin." The Italics in the above citations are mine. Other passages to a similar effect might be adduced.

Now I beg to ask, What does Mr. Crawford mean by these passages? Are we to understand, that he has abandoned his former position as to a man's being "saved from a state of sin by baptism?"—that he has come decidedly to what seems to be the ground of John, in the famous passage, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" 1 John i. 7—so that he that relies upon that blood, baptized, or unbaptized, may find acceptance with the Father now, and admission to heaven at last? Some things in his late pamphlet read doubtfully here. There is the passage at p. 12, in quoting which I am again responsible for the Italics. "Well, what virtue do you believe there is in Christian Baptism? Whatever virtue the Lord Jesus is pleased to attach to it; neither more nor less. Our duty is to believe and obey Jesus Christ; and our high privilege to enjoy the great salvation which he is pleased to bestow on his own appointed terms, without any merit on our part. But it is not our duty nor privilege to sit in judgment, or speculate on how much or how little virtue he may attach to his own positive institutions." And again, at p. 13 "If a man refuses to obey Jesus Christ in any thing he has commanded, we cannot—we dare not—hold out any encouragement to him in that course." What are we to understand here? Has Mr. Crawford really retired from the strong ground heretofore taken by him with regard to the efficacy of baptism? Or has he only become more reserved in the expression of his views as to the relation existing between baptism and the salvation of the soul?

2. There is the work of the Spirit.

I find nothing directly on this topic in Mr. Crawford's "Conversations," &c. In his late publication, however, at p. 13, he says, "We firmly believe and teach, that no sinner is converted to God without the influence of the Holy Spirit of the eternal God convincing him of his sins, and changing his heart so thoroughly as to cause him to hate his sins, and turn from them with all his heart—to love Jesus Christ, and by the help of God serve him in newness of life." Then, elsewhere on the same page, he teaches, that the sinner's mind is . . . enlightened by the Spirit of God through the Gospel of Jesus; and that, when this is the case, "his heart," is "truly changed to love God, and he is determined to walk in his ways." Again, in an Appendix, at p. 45, he quotes Acts ii. 38, and blazons in capital letters, the words "GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST."

Now I should find it hard to object to Mr. Crawford's phraseology in these places. Still I am haunted by doubts. I hold with all my heart, that "when the sinner's mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God," it is, and it must be, "through the Gospel of Jesus." I am deeply persuaded, that wherever there is "sanctification of the Spirit," there is also "belief of the truth;" and that, if there were no "belief of the truth," there would be, and could be no "sanctification of the Spirit." But then I ask, whence this spiritual enlightenment—this "sanctification of the Spirit?" Have we here the movement of the human heart towards the things of God, or the opening of the human heart by the hand of God? Is it that the man, self-determined, improves certain spiritual endowments to the salvation of his soul; doing this by an act of choice which has its birth in his own bosom rather than in the bosom of God? Or is it, that the Spirit of God moves first upon the heart of the man, awakening within his bosom a holy determination, and making him "willing in the day of [God's] power?" Is it that the man begins with God, and chooses him to be his, and so comes to be chosen by God; elected because he believes, and not believing because he is elected? Or is it that God begins with the man, and chooses the man, and so inclines the man to choose him for his God, and thus to make a choice which otherwise would never have been made at all—even as Paul seems to put it, 2 Thes. ii. 13: "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Or as the same Paul seems to put it, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Or, as Dr. Watts versifies the thought,—

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

3. Farther, What does Mr. Crawford understand by the "gift of the Holy Ghost," in Acts ii. 38?

The miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, or his sanctifying ones?—the power to speak with tongues, &c., or the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit? And if the latter, is its bestowment somehow connected with baptism; so that a man cannot attain to it until he has been baptized? His recent pamphlet does not instruct us, directly or clearly, on points like these. But the references therein made to the work of the Spirit prompt the above inquiries. He is energetic in his announcements as to a work of the Spirit upon the human heart; but all his energy leaves his readers in the dark as to the important questions here suggested.

Lastly, there is the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God.

This point is involved in some things contained in a former part of my letter. Its vital importance justifies me in thus recurring to it. Mr. Crawford speaks of the brazen serpent. I beg to ask, then, is the perishing sinner saved by "looking to Jesus," as the dying Israelites were saved from death by looking at the brazen serpent; being "justified by faith," and by faith alone? or must he be baptized before he actually passes into the state of justification? If Mr. Crawford says "Aye!" to the former alternative of my question as here proposed, he would then seem to be of one mind with Paul, as he expresses that mind in Phil. iii. 7—11. I refer here especially to the emphatic language,—"I count all things but loss," yea "dung," that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the

law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." But does he hesitate here? Would he assign any sort or amount of efficacy, though that amount be but infinitesimal, to the baptismal act, in its bearing upon the justification of a sinner?—making it no more, for instance, than a certificate of "the remission of sins?" Does there underlie in his mind some such thought as this, when he says, that he "believes there is in Christian baptism whatever virtue the Lord Jesus is pleased to attach to it; neither more nor less?"—and again, "We believe that the man who . . . loves Jesus, and obeys his commands, will have and enjoy whatever blessings the Lord has promised to such?" (See "Address," pp. 12, 13. The Italics in the above quotations, again, are mine.) Then, refine and explain as he will, he mixes together the blood of Christ, and the water of baptism; and makes the efficacy of the obedience of Christ, in its aspect upon a sinner's acceptance before God, somehow to depend upon the obedience and baptism of the poor sinner himself. And so the doctrine of his former pamphlet is not, after all, retracted here: only it is not so openly avowed.

I hope Mr. Crawford will not think my questionings here impertinent. I am not here placing him upon a Procrustean bed, as though I would bring him to my measure of orthodoxy. I am not his Master; and God forbid I should seek to lord it over his faith, or that of any other man. I am told, however, that his teachings are not at all points what they once were. The tone and style of his recent pamphlet would seem to give countenance to the reports which have herein reached me. Whenever he may reply to the inquiries on which I have here ventured his answers may indeed, as were to be expected, reveal certain differences in religious matters as still remaining between us. But they may also indicate a nearer approach on his part to the doctrines of the cross, as I understand them, than I had previously supposed to exist. In which case it were sorely un-Christian in me not to hail him in making that approach, or to withhold from him such recognition as might seem to be his due "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Your fellow labourer,

J. DAVIS.

Charlottetown, P. E. I., Dec. 5, 1868.

ERRATA.—P. 397, col. 3, line 14 from top, for "already" read "clearly." Same p. and col. line 51 from top, for "privileges" read "priceless."

For the Christian Messenger.

Acadia Athenæum.

It is always the highest aim of the gentlemen of this society, while endeavoring to instruct and mutually improve themselves in their literary gatherings; to select competent and talented men to fill their list of Lecturers for the season. In doing so their efforts have been hitherto attended with marked success.

The lectures delivered before the Athenæum are generally of a purely literary character, and well adapted to the tastes of persons pursuing a literary course of instruction. Although it is oftentimes with some difficulty that they have procured the services of some distinguished gentlemen, yet the instruction given and benefit received have repaid any extra exertions on their part.

The first lecture of this season was delivered by the Rev. W. S. Mackenzie, A. M., of St. John, N. B. Subject:—"The Progressiveness of Human History."

The remarkable manner in which the Rev. gentleman treated his subject was well worthy of the admiration and due regard of every true lover of knowledge. His elegant and classical expressions evinced great clearness of thought. "A grand leading principle" to which all his efforts were referable and subsidiary; ran through the whole of his address, governing and elucidating every part.

For the lecture for December, the Athenæum were happy to avail themselves of a change in the course of subjects. They were successful in obtaining the services for the 4th Inst., of the Rev. Arthur R. R. Crawley, lately returned missionary from Burmah, to give an address, the subject of which was "Sketches and Reminiscences of a Missionary life in Burmah."

The evening proving very favorable for the occasion a large and respectable audience assembled in the Baptist Chapel to hear the discourse of the Rev. gentleman on rather a novel and interesting subject.

Mr. C. B. Daniels, President of the society, occupied the chair and introduced the lecturer.

who entertained his auditors in a very pleasing manner by giving striking and graphic sketches of the manners and customs of the Burmese.—He vividly portrayed the many difficulties which the Missionary has to encounter in conveying the blessings of Christianity to a people sunk in heathenism and idolatry. The fifteen years of constant Missionary labor by the lecturer, accustomed to the toils and privations of a Missionary life, fully enabled him to give an instructive and pleasing address. He enlisted the undivided attention of his audience. A highly complimentary vote of thanks, proposed by Prof. D. F. Higgins, which was seconded by the Rev. D. Freeman, was adopted by acclamation and conveyed to the lecturer.

The well selected pieces of music furnished by Mr. Rand and his choir added vastly to the pleasure of the occasion.—Com.
Wolfville, Dec. 5th.

Missionary Intelligence.

Baptisms at Maulmain.

LETTER FROM MR. HANCOCK.—RANGOON, Aug. 1868.—The last Lord's day I spent in Maulmain, I witnessed a scene such as I have never before witnessed in this country; but I hope it is the beginning of a new era. It was universally believed by the members of the church that children of the ages of ten and twelve were too young to be admitted as members of the church. Five of the pupils of Miss Haswell's school of the age mentioned, had signified their wish to be baptized. The custom of asking three times (introduced by Dr. Judson) before their cases are voted upon, was adhered to, and the matter became quite generally known. When the cases were presented, about seven out of fifty voted against them, and as we never heard any other reason assigned, we supposed their youth was the reason. The matter was freely talked over by the church, and in two months they applied again, and received every vote but one. They became satisfied, either from personal examination, or from the testimony of those who had examined, that the children were converted. The parents of one of the five could not for a time give their consent, though the mother gave her consent finally, and she was advised to wait a little, which she did cheerfully. It was a pleasant sight. Perfect harmony prevailed. I could not avoid the conviction that they were thoroughly and spiritually changed. May this be the beginning of days with them.

The Mission to Karens.

LETTER FROM MR. NORRIS.

Maulmain, June 28, 1868.—From this village we walked on through the pouring rain to the Taling village of Ko Ma Wet. I made the distance, twenty miles, on foot in one day; swimming some unbridged streams, too deep and too swift to be forded, with my clothing on my head. I took as usual no supplies of food, no mosquito netting, no blanket, and no coolies, and slept well at night. I lumber myself with less "traps" than the Burmese assistants take for themselves. I had three of these along with me and one Karen preacher.

The Burman Assistants. The willingness of these Burmese preachers to follow me in hard jungle-work is growing. The energy and cheerfulness which they showed on this trip, and their growing activity in some other duties which formerly they performed with the utmost reluctance, is very encouraging. The last day of this trip they followed full thirty miles,—there were mile posts, so we were not mistaken in the distance,—without a murmur, and the next day they were at other work in town. A Burmese can do something, if only he can be set at it.

Special Providences.—A circumstance occurred on this trip, and several in former ones, which I call "special providences." We went down the river to Amberst at the most tempestuous time of the rainy monsoon. The river was considered dangerous; ships had just before been blown back dismantled, and many parties had found it impossible to find native boatmen who dared to go down. I made my preparations and took my party to the river as if I was sure of a boat. I found one of the preachers had partly engaged one. This I refused to take without going to see it. For no definite purpose I immediately took another one at a higher price. We went down rapidly with fine starlight, no wind, or rain, or waves. The disciples wondered to see us, saying that it blew a fearful gale all the day before; and no boat had had such a passage for many days. Soon after we were nicely quartered, the winds began to blow fearfully, and in the morning we found that the other boat, which started a little later than ours, had been capsized, and two of the passengers drowned.

In my trip to Zimmar last dry season, we experienced the special care of God so constantly and so unmistakably, that it came to be the habit of our party to rely upon it implicitly. I fancy even Müller himself might have got some new life if he had been with us. We traversed a distance of some three hundred miles, over and among the widest mountains, following the narrow and hourly intersecting Karen footpath, and then a hundred miles more in the Shan valley bordering the Mepeng river, winding about from one betel garden to another, or across roadless paddy plains; and yet we did not have a guide for an hour in either going or returning, and we lost scarcely an hour by going astray. There were no guides that could be