

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

ELDER DONALD CRAWFORD ON BAPTISM, &c.

Part II.

Dear Brother.—

I propose now to complete my remarks upon Mr. Crawford's recent letters. I come to

8. THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Mr. Crawford explains the phrase, Acts ii. 38, "the gift of the Holy Ghost," as if it referred to the spiritual endowments of the Holy Spirit rather than to his miraculous ones. I see not, however, what Scripture he has for his interpretation. I recall here the promise of our Lord, John xvi. 7, 8. "If I depart, I will send him [the Comforter] unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove, or convince, 'the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.'" In the opening history of Acts ii. I see that promise as it begins to take effect. The Spirit descends in his gifts, vv. 1—12. Then, as Peter proceeds with his great Pentecostal sermon, that same Spirit is dispensed in his graces; bestowing the conviction of sin promised by our Lord, and extorting the anguished cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" v. 37. Then follows Peter's memorable direction, at v. 38, closing with the assurance "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." What he more immediately meant by that assurance is clear from his quotation from Joel, iii. 17, 18. And when he pronounced this assurance, it is as if he had said, ye see what the Holy Spirit has done for us—how marvelously, by these cloven tongues, and these inspired utterances, he bears witness to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth, now become most manifestly both Lord and Christ. Repent, therefore, believe in this glorious Lord. Obey him. Perform the great primal act of obedience. Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of that very Jesus Christ whom you so lately rejected and crucified. Then ye too, like us, shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; and speak with tongues, as we do; and become a great cloud of new witnesses to the power and grace of the risen and glorified Christ." (See here Joel ii. 28, 29. Mark xvi. 17—20. Acts viii. 14—17. x. 44—48. xix. 1—7. 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. Gal. iii. 2—5.) So do I interpret here. Nor do I thus unduly limit the application of the passage before me. Since, first, though the miraculous endowments to which Peter more directly referred were peculiar to the apostolic age, yet believers in all ages have an interest in them; conforming and sealing God's truth as they do down to the end of time. Then, farther, there is, doubtless, a wide scope in the phrase, "the gift of the Holy Spirit." Spiritual endowments as well as miraculous ones seem to be ultimately contemplated here. Hence the terms in which the apostle immediately proceeds with his exhortation, v. 39. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Hence also the language of Paul in writing to the Romans, ch. i. 11, 12. "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established: that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me." Thus, on the one hand, I would include in the expression here all that may be fairly supposed to be contained in it; while, on the other hand, I would guard against any unscriptural gloss upon it: as though, in every age, the enjoyment of "the gift of the Holy Spirit" were a something contingent upon baptism, and an efficacy were thus ascribed to baptism which does not really belong to it.

9. EXPLANATORY.

In my letter of December last I had proposed certain inquiries as to Mr. Crawford's views on the work of the Holy Spirit. In so doing I did not mean to ask, whether he interpreted the passage, 2 Thes. ii. 13, in a Calvinistic or Arminian sense. I will once more recite the passage:—"We are bound to give thanks alway 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." Now there are many persons, I need scarcely say, who interpret the above passage, together with the class of passages to which it belongs, as Mr. Crawford does. In his recent letter, who yet acknowledge, with all their hearts, with the celebrated Wesleyan theologian, Richard Watson, that God is *always* beforehand with man—and that if He do not begin with the sinner, the sinner will *never* begin with Him. In writing as I did, therefore, I wished to learn whether, in this respect, apart from all special interpretations, Mr. Crawford was here

in sympathy with thinkers like Richard Watson—prepared to give all glory to God, from first to last, as the one only Saviour of lost sinners: even as all truly pious men do in their devotions, and in their inmost souls; though their theology does not at all points, as some of us think, harmonize with their prayers and experience. That is to say, I did not put my questions here inquisitorially and controversially; neither here, I may say, nor in any other portion of my letter. I was casting about, not for occasion of debate with my neighbour, but for ground for sympathy and fellowship. Perhaps I did not bring out my purpose in this respect with sufficient clearness. Yet this was really what I meant; though I am sorry to find that my efforts herein have not been so prosperous as I could have desired. So much by way of explanation.

10. EVANGELICAL PROFESSIONS.

In reply to the questions to which I here refer: Mr. Crawford says, "It is certain that man of himself would never choose God, or seek his favour. He is so depraved as to render this impossible." He adds much more to the same effect; citing, with great unction, that famous passage from the beloved John, "We love Him because he first loved us." So far well. There is much here to which my heart gladly responds.

11. SOMETHING IRREVERENT.

I could have wished, however, that Mr. Crawford had stopped here. I gather from his remarks on 2 Thes. ii. 13, that he places election after faith, and not before it; making the election to flow from the faith, and not the faith from the election. Well, I shall not controvert his position here, though of course I do not accept it. Nor do I complain that he has chosen to argue in support of that position. Two things, however, I deeply regret. The one, that his reasoning here is marked by so much of irreverence and levity. He remarks, that "the word 'BEGINNING' is at once the boast and puzzle of the mystic." And then he trips lightly on, through several sentences, as if there were really no mystery here to puzzle any one. As for him in the abundance of his perspicacity, he sees through it all; even as any one else might who had a grain of common sense, and would descend to use it. Such, I am sorry to say, is the spirit in which Mr. Crawford here writes. So different from that of Richard Watson, whose name I have mentioned above; who once candidly and modestly remarked, in conversation with a Baptist minister, that he chose his side in theology, not because he saw *no* difficulties on that side, but because it appeared to him to be encumbered with fewer difficulties than he found elsewhere. So different from that of the holy and inspired Paul, when, in dealing with great and mysterious things, he stands, as it were, upon the borders of the abyss to which his argument has conducted him, explaining, with profoundest veneration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" So different from the spirit of the seraphim, who as they worship Him whose name is WONDERFUL, veil their faces and their feet with their wings, dazzled and awestruck with the "light inaccessible" in which he dwells. Nay, in such utter contrast with the spirit of the Great Master himself, when he looks up, and exclaims, "Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight." If Mr. Crawford had but once adverted to such edifying and elevated examples as these, he could never have permitted himself to write in the flippant style, in speaking of sacred mysteries, in which he has here seen fit to indulge.

12. SOMETHING SCARCELY HONORABLE TO CHRIST.

But there is something even more to be lamented than this. It is, I think, generally held, among evangelical interpreters, that the expression at John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word," is an unequivocal testimony to the proper divinity of the Son of God. True, there is here a reference to the commencement of the works of God. The evangelist therefore takes up the thought suggested in his opening sentence, when he says, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." But what then? "It is self-evident," says Dr. Pye Smith, in his "Scripture Testimony to the Messiah,"—"It is self-evident that what existed at the actual commencement of creation must have existed before the creation; and whatever was before the creation must have been from eternity. It was the custom of the Hebrew writers to express a prior eternity by such phrases. For example,—'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.—Yea, before the day was, I am HE.—He hath chosen us . . . before the founda-

tion of the world. Psalm xc. 2. Isa. xlii. 13. Eph. i. 4.'" It is thus that we have here what I have styled as above an unequivocal testimony to the proper divinity of the Son of God. Yet how does Mr. Crawford choose to interpret here? "Let it be borne in mind," he says, "that wherever the *beginning* is mentioned in the Bible, there is a point of time expressed; and the passage or context indicates that point." He then proceeds, "Thus, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'—In the beginning was the Word: that is, when God began to create, the Word [was] with him." Thus he seems to overlook the Scripture usage, illustrated as above, in referring to time for the purpose of throwing the thought back upon eternity. In doing which he robs the phrase "in the beginning" of its force, as a testimony to the eternity of God, as in Moses, and as a testimony to the eternity of the Son of God, as in John. He does not indeed resort to the Socinian subterfuge, which makes "the beginning" in John to be the commencement of the Gospel dispensation, or of the ministers of Christ. But he certainly limits our thoughts to time, the period in which, as he says, "God began to create," instead of permitting them, according to the manifest design of inspiration, to travel back into the eternity which was before all creation, and in which the Eternal Word had his eternal dwelling place. It is easy to perceive how he has been betrayed into this. He wants to show, that Paul's expression in 2 Thes. ii. 13, "from the beginning," does not necessarily mean from eternity. In order to this, he tries to prove, that the term "*beginning*," as employed in Scripture, *never* points to eternity. It is in the following out of this purpose that he ventures to wrest the Scriptures in Genesis and John in the manner above indicated. Perhaps he did not perceive, in his headlong zeal for his own theories, how he was thus dishonouring both the Father and the Son; and yet his argument certainly has the effect which, I hope not uncharitably, I here attribute to it. I should be glad to learn, that it is by inadvertence that Mr. Crawford has erred in this instance—especially that, after all, he is of one heart with John in the honour which he would ascribe to Jesus. Meanwhile it is deplorable to see how here, in support of a theological dogma, he dares to tamper with one of the most solemn and emphatic testimonies in all the Word of God to the grand and vital truth, that Jesus of Nazareth is verily "the Son of the living God."

13. CONCLUSION.

Thus, dear brother, I close. I am sorry to have troubled you at so great length. In view of the course which Mr. Crawford has taken in replying to my letter of December last, it seemed necessary that I should once more, in your columns, expose his errors, as I must needs count them, and protest against them. Indeed, in the perilous times on which we have fallen, wherein, on every hand, a mere ritualistic, outside religion, is seeking, with renewed energy and determination, to supplant the inward, spiritual, and vital religion of the New Testament—the only religion that can save souls—it becomes the friends of evangelical truth to stand on their watch-tower, and to sound the alarm against the approaching foe; whether he come upon us more openly, as in the guise of Romanism and Puseyism, or more insidiously, as in those teachings of Mr. Crawford which I here call in question. But now, having performed the duty, imperfectly as it must be, to which I here seemed to be summoned, I lay down my pen. Mr. Crawford will do as he pleases in regard to my poor strictures. I think, however, that it will be scarcely necessary for me to reply to his farther communications as at this time; although he may say things which may demand at my hand some brief notice. Yet on the whole you and your readers may comfort yourselves with the hope, that I am not likely to intrude upon you at any great length, at least for some time to come, on the topics with which I have here been occupied. And so I commend my present effort to the candour of my brethren, and to the blessing of Heaven.

Mr. Crawford, in his recent communications, uses me courteously. I desire still to reciprocate courtesies with him. Let me hope that hereafter, how much soever we may differ in our interpretations of Scripture, or how much soever our differences may hold us apart, that we shall neither of us violate the proprieties of gentlemanly intercourse. Michael, in dispute with the devil, would not "bring a railing accusation" even against him. Here is a model for controversialists in all ages. It were well for us all if it were better studied, and more closely imitated.

Your fellow-helper in the truth,

J. DAVIS.

Charlottesville, P. E. I., July 21st, 1869.

For the Christian Messenger.

IN MEMORIAM.

MR. HENRY H. MURDOCK.

At Bridgewater, at the residence of his Father-in-law, Robert West, Esq., on the 7th inst., at 2 o'clock, A. M., Mr. Henry H. Murdock, late of Pictou. The deceased retired to rest on the evening previous to his departure in his usual state of health, and never apparently stirred from his quiet slumber. Paralysis set in and terminated his earthly existence, without a moments warning. His companion who slumbered by his side, being aroused by the motion of her boy, observed that her husband breathed unusually loud, and sought to awaken him; but sought in vain. She called her brother, and father, and medical aid was brought in, but the lamp of life ebbed out even without unsealing the eyelids which had been so securely closed when he laid down to rest. Thus ended his mortal career at the early age of 28 years, leaving a sadly stricken widow, and an only son, to mourn his loss, beside a numerous circle of friends at a distance. The occasion of his funeral was improved by a very appropriate discourse from Rev. W. Hall from 1 Sam. xx. 3. "There is but a step between me and death." May this sudden bereavement be sanctified to the sorrowing friends and the community at large.—Communicated by Rev. S. March.

(Pictou papers please copy.)

MR. JAMES M. LEARY.

Also at Chelsea, on the same day, 7th inst., Mr. James M. Leary, of Chelsea, aged 33 years. His death was also sudden and unlooked for. On the Sabbath previous to his dissolution he filled his place in the Sabbath School and offered prayer, and took a part in the prayer meeting held in the afternoon of that day. At 9 o'clock, P. M., he was seized with the disease, which terminated his life at 3 o'clock, A. M., the following Wednesday. He was a consistent member the Baptist Church for 13 years, and his decease is deplored by a large circle of acquaintances and friends. May these solemn events be the means of arousing to earnestness and prayer those who are careless and be rendered useful under God in leading sinners to seek salvation before it shall be for ever too late.

Bro. Cohoon, of Acadia College, improved the occasion by delivering a solemn and fitting discourse at the funeral.—Com.

MARY DELANEY.

Died at Londonderry, on the 28th ult., aged 27 years, Mary, daughter of T. Delaney, Esq. Our Sister after a few weeks of intense suffering, was, on the above date, released from the earthly to join the company of the redeemed above. When quite a child, her mind was seriously impressed. On one occasion a minister, Rev. S. Thompson, visiting at her father's, our young friend felt a desire that he would personally converse with her, with relation to her spiritual state, thinking he might say something that would give her the instruction she needed. She therefore followed him, as she left, to the door. In parting he said "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Though not what she expected, for she had often heard and read the passage, it was the word in season, "fitly spoken and as apples of Gold in pictures of silver." She at once retired to her chamber, with the words pressing upon her heart, "Seek the Lord while he may be found" and bowing down by her bed side in earnest pleadings, sought for her soul the mercy of the Lord. Nor did she plead in vain—the light of hope dawned upon her; and in that chamber, a new life she thought she had experienced.

It was several years after this that she publicly professed religion. She was then residing in Truro, when with several others she professed her faith in Christ, and was buried with him in baptism.

For ten or eleven years our sister maintained her christian profession. The company of God's people were the companions of her choice, and in the public worship of God, she found evident delight. But the Master, in the days of her youth, summoned her away. Through intense sufferings, she passed to her rest on high. And though clouds occasionally passed before her, her faith was fixed on Christ. In his atoning merits she relied. And sometimes, even in the severest paroxysms of pain, she felt Christ to cheering presence, and longed to be with him. And "God took her to go no more out forever."—Com.

MARIOLATRY.—A Correspondent of the Boston Watchman & Reflector says: I thank you for your protest against Mariolatry at the National Peace Jubilee. I too, sincerely regret its introduction, and that there was not sufficient Protestant or Christian feeling in exercise to prevent it. I say *Christian* for it was the Master Himself who said, when about to enter on His holy mission, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" So let us say, when invited to join in *Ave Maria* at the Nation's Festival. True, the festival is for all, but Catholic surely can unite with Protestant in praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, while Protestant cannot unite with Catholic in prayer to Mary, or in ascribing Divine honor to any but to Him who has said "My glory will I not give to another."

PROGRESS IN TURKEY.—The *Levant Herald* says the Princess of Wales has overturned one of the most rigid barriers of Oriental life, and asserted the right of her sex to the highest social recognition that Mahomedan manners can give to it, by obtaining a place for herself and three other ladies at the table of the Sultan. The same paper adds:—"Polygamy is fast going out, and