

OPEN LETTERS ON BAPTISM.

REV. JOHN BROWN, Baptist Minister: Dear Sir and Brother.

XI. THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

The baptism of Christ was different, in its design, from that baptism which John administered to others. John's baptism implied, on the part of those who received it, the act of repentance. It was for the remission of sins. Those who received it confessed that they were sinners. It involved a profession of faith in him of whom John was the forerunner. It was supposed to be followed by the bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance, and a fleeing from the wrath to come. It is obvious that Christ never submitted to a baptism involving those peculiarities.

Christ's baptism was not "Christian baptism." "Christian baptism" had not then been instituted, and was not instituted until after the resurrection, and when the commission was given: "Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them," etc. "Christian baptism" is into "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," (Matt. xxviii. 19-20.) Christ could not have been baptized into his own name.

Christ's baptism was not intended as an example for us. There is not one word in the Scriptures which says that we are to follow Christ in this ordinance. His baptism was an official act, and we are not required to follow him in his official acts.

The baptism of Christ was a fulfillment of some kind of righteousness. There was some righteous requirement, or command, or ordinance that demanded his baptism. To "fulfill" implies a compliance with, or obedience to, some rule, or ordinance or command. Christ could only "fulfill righteousness," therefore, by obedience to law. Christ went to John who was an executor of the law, and a preacher of righteousness according to the terms of the law, and requested John to baptize him; that, thereby, the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled. John at first declined to do so, but upon understanding the grounds upon which Jesus came to him for baptism, he dismissed his objections.

It was not the moral law that required the baptism of Christ, for its provisions do not require anything of a ritualistic or ceremonial character.

It must have been the ceremonial law that required this baptism, for it was a law that required an outward rite. Christ was under obligations to keep the ceremonial law. He did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. He was the end of the law for righteousness to all believers.

The ceremonial law required the consecration and anointing of all the high priests. This is sometimes, in the Scriptures called their ordination. Every high priest, whether of the tribe of Levi, or of some other tribe, was consecrated, and anointed, or ordained, (Hebrews viii. 3.) This ordination involved the "washing with water," (Exodus xxix. 4;) and anointing with oil. According to Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and others this custom continued among the Jews until the time of Christ. The law prescribed the mode of both the washing and the anointing. In both there was the application of the element to the person: "Thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse (sanctify—consecrate) them; sprinkle water of purifying (cleansing—sanctifying) upon them," (Numb. viii. 7); "And the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto the priests... thou shalt sanctify him... and he that is high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated," etc., (Lev. xxi. 1-10.) The law never required the high priest, in order to his consecration, to be immersed in water, nor in order to his anointing, to be immersed in oil.

The attempt is sometimes made to show that the ceremonial law only required this sprinkling of those high priests, at thirty years of age, who were of the tribe of Levi. It is affirmed, by some, that as our Saviour was of the tribe of Judah, he was not even though he was an high priest, required to fulfill this law. It is urged by the objector, that "Christ could be a law unto himself," and need not, in all these things, submit to the requirements of the ceremonial law, like his brethren in the office of the high priesthood. But the law does not limit this requirement to the tribe of Levi. The high priests were sometimes selected from the other tribes. Our Lord came spiritually into that office, and yet he did not belong to the tribe of Levi, Paul says: "For every priest taken from among men (not necessarily from the tribe of Levi) is ordained," (Heb. v. 1.)

It was important that Christ should be a perfect high priest. In him should be found, in every particular, all that was required, by the Levitical law, of any high priest. He was to be greater than any of the Levitical priests. He was to be "a

chiselec," (Heb. vi. 6.) He was to be "a priest for ever." The Levitical priests "were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man because he continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Heb. vii. 23-25. He was a priest "after the order of Melchisedec." He was of the rank of Melchisedec—both a priest and a king. "None of the kings of the Jews were priests, nor were any of the priests ever elevated to the office of king. In Melchisedec those offices were united and this fact constituted a striking resemblance between him and the Lord Jesus," (Barne in loc). The Jewish priests were made such "without an oath," but Jesus "with an oath." "For such an high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 24-26.

Christ's superiority to the Jewish high priest did not exempt him from the necessity of fulfilling the requirements of the law. In the epistle to the Hebrews he is called a high priest ten times. In his mediatorial work he is continually performing the functions of the "high priest of our profession."

It was required of Christ in order that he should "fulfill all righteousness" that he should be consecrated to the office of high priest as the other high priests for centuries had been. There was no alternative if he would magnify the law and make it honorable. John, than whom a greater prophet had not been born of woman, was the properly qualified person to perform this work. He was of the priestly order, on the side of both his father and his mother. He was the messenger sent to prepare the way for the great high priest.

As the ordination of Christ required the anointing oil, as well as the sprinkled water, he must either have had that oil poured upon his head, or the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, of which the oil was the symbol, was his anointing with "the oil of gladness above his fellows."

As the high priests had been, for fifteen hundred years, ordained at thirty years of age, so Christ at that age was also ordained, according to the ceremonial law. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful high priest in things pertaining to God," Heb. ii. 17.

If Christ did not receive the sprinkling of water, at the age of thirty, as his symbolical consecration to the office of high priesthood and ministry, then he did not "fulfill all righteousness." But, it is manifest, that he did fulfill all righteousness, therefore he must have been sprinkled with water when he went to John to be baptized by him.

We have sometimes been asked for an "express command" for the baptism of infants. We may with as much emphasis, ask for an "express command," or one word of the ceremonial law, or one word of the Scriptures, that required our Saviour to be either dipped, or plunged, or immersed. Where, in the Old Testament or in the New Testament is there any such obligation? What "righteousness," expressly commanded, or directly or indirectly required, for its fulfillment the dipping, or plunging, or immersion of Christ at thirty years of age, or at any other age?

Our points, or some of them, may be indicated in the following syllogisms:

- 1. Every high priest was ordained.
2. Christ was an high priest.
Therefore Christ was ordained.
1. The fulfillment of all righteousness by an high priest, required ordination at thirty years of age.
2. Christ as an high priest, was ordained at thirty years of age.
Therefore Christ our high priest, was ordained at thirty years of age.
1. Every high priest was sprinkled with water at the time of his ordination, at thirty years of age, in order to fulfill all righteousness.
2. Christ, as a faithful high priest was made like unto his brethren, in all things and thereby fulfilled all righteousness.
Therefore Christ, at thirty years of age, was sprinkled with water.

- 1. Those symbolic sprinklings with water were called baptisms.
2. Christ received the symbolic sprinkling with water.
Therefore Christ, in being sprinkled with water, as the law required, was baptized.

Yours very truly, D. D. CURRIE.

LETTER NO. IX.

XII. BAPTIZING BEFORE EATING. In Mark vii. 3, 4, we read: "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." In the Greek these washings are called baptisms. A custom prevailed among "all the

they come from their daily avocations to their meals. It was with them a religious duty not to eat, without previous baptism. Their articles of household furniture, including beds and couches as the original Greek shows, must necessarily, among "all the Jews," be subjected to baptism several times daily, all the year round.

If those baptisms were immersions, as is, of course, claimed by Baptists, then those articles of furniture must have been, inevitably, always saturated with water. The suggestion is irresistible that the condition of the household of "all the Jews" must have been watery in the extreme.

If those baptisms were immersions how peculiar must the performance of the act have appeared to a guest who had come from a Gentile country. Let us look upon the operation. The dinner bell has been rung. The table is spread, and well laden with an abundant supply to satisfy the demands of appetite. Rebecca, and Rachel, and Reuben, and Judah, each take a corner of the table, and down goes everything—table, cups, meats, all, somehow or other, beneath the water. When they have brought the table and its contents up from their "watery grave," Rachel says, Brother Reuben, you did not immerse your corner thoroughly, we must immerse everything again, and again down goes all into the "liquid tomb." They then take the chairs; then the beds; then the couches; then the rest of the furniture. For when they came down from their daily avocations they never eat without having baptized all those articles of furniture. How interesting to sit at a table and try to eat, after the table and its contents have been so thoroughly drenched! And, inasmuch as all the beds of "all the Jews" were daily subjected to such immersions, is it not strange that it never occurred to them, when about retiring to bed, that their baptisms partook rather too largely of the watery element?

Dr. Cramp in his pamphlet on Christian Baptism, p. 78, speaks of these baptisms, and says, of "the Pharisees and all the Jews," "they immersed themselves when they returned home, and were extremely careful to make the immersion complete; no part of the body was to be left uncovered by the water. As to the 'pots and cups, brazen vessels, and tables,' I can only say that Mark affirms they were immersed—and I believe Mark. I have no right to interpose my difficulties, and doubts, and reasonings, in order to dilute the meaning of an inspired writer. . . . The word rendered 'tables' means also beds or couches."

Dr. Cramp is somewhat inaccurate when he affirms: "Mark says they were immersed." What Mark says is: "The tables, beds, couches, basins, etc., were 'baptized.'" The Dr. shows a devotion to his immersionist theory that is worthy of a better cause, in so bravely standing by so conspicuous an absurdity.

We may well inquire if those Pharisees and "all the Jews" did not know of a more excellent way of performing the religious rite of baptism than by immersion. Moses had been accustomed to sprinkle the vessels and the people, to secure the result that "the Pharisees and all the Jews" desired to accomplish by their daily baptisms. If we assume, as we well may, that those baptisms were intended as religious washings, then there is no difficulty apparent. Those baptisms being observed as religious washings should be performed according to the divinely appointed mode: "Thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse (baptize) them, sprinkle water of purifying (of baptizing) upon them."

According to the requirements of the Scriptures, and according to the law of the nature of things, it is manifest that "the Pharisees and all the Jews" did not daily immerse themselves, and their household furniture, as immersionists claim they did. Hence, it is certain that the daily baptisms of "the Pharisees and all the Jews," and of their tables, beds, couches, brazen vessels, etc., were performed by sprinkling.

XIII. THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.

Paul tells us (2 Cor. iii. 6) that sometimes "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." It is well when there is such a combination of circumstances that there need come no conflict between the letter and the spirit; but, occasionally, in the nature of things, there inevitably will be such a conflict. When such conflicts do come the letter should yield, and the spirit take precedence.

The Baptist churches in the United States owe their origin to Roger Williams. In the year 1639 he was immersed by Ezekiel Holliman, who had never been himself immersed; and in turn Holliman was immersed by Williams. They then organized a Baptist Church. This was in Providence, Rhode Island. The letter of Baptist ecclesiastical law provides that baptism should be performed by a person who has himself been baptized. According to the letter of this law, the Baptist Churches in the United States have been founded by a person who was not baptized at all, or baptized contrary to the letter of their law. It is assumed by Baptists,

the United States are well established, notwithstanding that, in their origin there was an irregularity, and a violation of the letter of their law. The letter would kill; but, it may be assumed, the spirit actuating Roger Williams, and his brethren, was right, and, therefore, the spirit giveth life.

Are we asked if, in our judgment, Baptists who have been immersed, with the impression that their immersion was baptism, are baptized? We reply in the affirmative. Not, however, because their baptism was according to the letter, for the letter is against them, and killeth; but, because they have complied with the spirit, and the spirit giveth life. And herein do we stand on the broad platform of Scriptural and Christian charity.

But, upon what ground do our Baptist brethren stand in reference to this point? If Whitfield, Wesley, Luther, Knox, Poley-carp, and Paul, receive baptism by sprinkling, in a good conscience, and put on Christ, and adorned the doctrines of the Bible, do Baptists put on charity, and accept the spirit in which they acquiesced in their baptism as sufficient, even though, in their judgment, there may have been a deficiency in the outward form? Can our Baptist brethren say that though such men of God were, in their opinion, not scripturally baptized, as regards the letter, yet the spirit in which they acquiesced in their supposed baptism, made it acceptable in the sight of God?

It is not, by any Christian Church, supposed to be essential that in receiving the Lord's Supper, we should, as regards outward forms and the time of night, do precisely as Christ and His apostles did. In the one sacrament as in the other it is the spirit that giveth life. Why should it be thought, even from a Baptist standpoint, that in the sacrament of baptism the spirit can not give life? It is a too great leaning towards the letter that makes some persons attach unnecessary importance to forms, and ceremonies, and dress, and vestments, and meats, and holy days. Those things are the shadows of better things, whereof "the body is Christ." It is not well to chase the shadow too far, but rather seek after the body which is Christ, and the spirit which Christ doth give.

Yours very truly, D. D. CURRIE.

LINCOLN'S PRAYERS.

Once more the admirable "Life of Abraham Lincoln," by Dr. Holland, would have been seriously defective without that chapter which delineates his private life at the White House, especially those paragraphs that refer to his religious habits. Thus we are told that in all the great emergencies of his closing years, his reliance upon divine guidance and assistance was often extremely touching. "I have been driven many times to my knees," he once remarked, "by the overwhelming conviction that I had no elsewhere to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for that day." On another occasion, when he was told that he was daily remembered in the prayers of those who prayed, "he had been a good deal helped by the thought," and then added with much solemnity, "I should be the most presumptuous blockhead on this footstool, if I for one day thought I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place without the aid and enlightenment of One who is wiser and stronger than all others!" On another occasion having been made acquainted with the fact that a great battle was in progress at a distant but important point, he came into the room where a lady was engaged in nursing a member of his family, looking worn and haggard, and saying that he was so anxious he could eat nothing. The possibility of defeat depressed him greatly, but the lady told him he must trust, and that he could at least pray. "Yes," said he, and taking his Bible he started for his room. "Could all the people of the nation," says Dr. Holland, "have overheard the earnest petition that went up from that inner chamber, as it reached the ears of the nurse, they would have fallen upon their knees with tearful and reverential sympathy." At another time President Lincoln said: "If it were not for my belief in an overruling Providence, it would be difficult for me in the midst of such complications of affairs, to keep my reason on its seat. I have always taken counsel of Him, and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of his approbation." Nor must we suppose that prayer with Mr. Lincoln was limited to special emergencies. It is stated on good authority that he was in the habit of spending an early hour each day in prayer.

If space permitted, we should like to enlarge on other traits of Mr. Lincoln's character, such as his humility, his sympathy with suffering humanity, his patience under insult, his rebukes of profanity, his zeal for the observance of the Sabbath, and his love for Christian consistency—as, for instance, when

the release of her rebel husband, then a prisoner of war, on the ground that he was a religious man: "Tell your husband that I am not much of a judge of religion that sets men to rebel and fight against their Government because, as sufficiently help some men to eat their bread in the sweat of other men's faces, is not the sort of religion upon which people get to heaven." But we must not enlarge. Nor is it necessary; for these moral excellencies which so admirably fitted him for his responsible position at the juncture were doubtless in no small degree, the "open reward" of his secret communion with God.

the release of her rebel husband, then a prisoner of war, on the ground that he was a religious man: "Tell your husband that I am not much of a judge of religion that sets men to rebel and fight against their Government because, as sufficiently help some men to eat their bread in the sweat of other men's faces, is not the sort of religion upon which people get to heaven." But we must not enlarge. Nor is it necessary; for these moral excellencies which so admirably fitted him for his responsible position at the juncture were doubtless in no small degree, the "open reward" of his secret communion with God.

OBITUARY.

JANE BENN.

Died at South Richmond, Carleton Co., N. B., March 30, 1873, Jane Benn, in the 80th year of her age. Sister Benn was a native of Cornagill, Donegal County, Ireland. During her youth she became a regular attendant at the Methodist services, and in her 20th year became the subject of deep and powerful conviction. After a thorough, Scriptural repentance she was enabled, with an unbroken confidence, to rest upon Christ for a free, full and immediate salvation.

The peace and joys of the pardoned soul became her glad possession. It was about this time (1818) when she went to hear the Rev. Matthew Richey, then a boy of years, preach his first sermon in a small primitive dwelling. The boy preacher took for his text on that occasion—"Awake thou that sleepest," &c., and with wonderful power applied this Scripture to the hearts of the people. So deep was the impression made on the mind of sister Benn by this first effort of one, who was destined for such a distinguished career, that she went home, retired to her room, and with all the emotion and energy of a soul densely moved, made a complete consecration of herself to God. The gift then laid on the altar was never withdrawn through all the subsequent years of her long and checkered life.

Having thus entered upon the blessed conditions and experiences of the Christian life, she was anxious to do something for her Lord and the good of souls. She did not wait for some great opportunity in which she might possibly do famous things for Christ, but embracing the common openings presented in every day life, this devoted disciple in the spirit of a holy and consecrated enthusiasm went forth and in ways most unpretentious achieved much for the good of the souls around her. Some are still living who attribute their conversion to God in early life, to the faithful, personal efforts and appeals of this now sainted woman. In thus accepting the ordinary opportunities for usefulness, she found a sweet and blessed compensation in her own heart, for whatever measure of consecrated endeavor she put forth in the service of her Lord and Master.

In order to retain and increase her spiritual quality of mind and keep the holy fire burning in her soul it was her custom for many years to spend a large portion of her time in retirement for meditation and prayer. Being blessed with a wonderfully retentive memory, she was able to treasure up large portions of the Word of God, upon which she could draw in hours of trial and need. So familiar was she with our hymns and the Presbyterian paraphrases that both collections seemed to be at her command. This blessed possession, acquired when the mind was fresh and vigorous, brought to her an unfulfilling wealth of comfort when the infirmities of age prevented her from using her long-loved books.

In 1834 sister Benn emigrated to this country, and during her 44 years residence in the land of her adoption, the same unbroken consistency which had characterized her at home, was maintained with an ever increasing beauty until earth's long journey was ended. This devoted follower of Christ was not a stranger to sore trial and long personal affliction, for years she was unable to attend the house of God she so much loved. No complaint, however, fell from her lips. With an unshaken trust in her Redeemer, she patiently endured the heavenly discipline, and with a calm and peaceful anticipation awaited the time when the frail and dying things of earth would be exchanged for the imperishable inheritance and companionships of the skies.

Well does the writer remember the first visit he made to the home of this Christian woman. The first feeling as he looked upon the aged pilgrim, bent almost double, and almost unable to move, was one of pity, but in a few moments it seemed as if the scene was transfigured. Behind that poor frail body, bending beneath its burden of infirmities, he beheld that thickly furrowed and wrinkled face it appeared as if one of God's sweet angels spoke and sang of things divine. Such words of assurance, resignation, and of hope, it has been the privilege of few to hear. For some little time before the end came, her mind was much occupied with thoughts of heaven; its glad surprises, re-unions, &c., and very frequently she would repeat, with deep and tender emotion—

They are waiting for my coming, They are waiting at the portals, All the loved ones gone before. The hour of dissolution came somehow suddenly; one rude shock was sufficient to snap the delicate threads asunder, and set her ransomed spirit free. In the hour of fearful parting, the heavenly benediction fell with surprising sweetness on the stricken hearts of surviving friends. Thank God, his faithful children have the victory in life and the victory for ever. W. H.