

OPEN LETTERS ON BAPTISM.

LETTER NO. VI.

MONCTON, N. B., May 1, 1878.

REV. JOHN BROWN, Baptist Minister:

Dear Sir and Brother,—

VIII. PAUL AND THE INDISPENSABLE BAPTISM.

In our efforts to understand Paul's references to baptism, in his epistles, we must allow Paul to explain himself. There always has been, in the church, and probably always will be, a class of persons who rigidly, concerning religious things, adhere with great intellectual acumen and force of will to the letter, while there is always another class, who exhibit greater breadth and depth of spirit and sentiment—Paul belonged to the latter class, and may be considered a representative man of that class. He affirms concerning himself that he was made a minister, "not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life," (2 Cor. iii. 6.) In all his epistles he gives prominence to the spirit above the letter.

When Paul speaks of the great work that baptism does for us, it is clear that he speaks of what Christ does for us. His aim is to show how essential is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He knew the tendency of some minds to over-estimate the value of outward forms, and to underestimate the inward and spiritual grace. Hence, he prefers that others shall attend to the comparatively unimportant work of water baptism. Paul thanked God that he baptized none in Corinth, except Crispus, Gaius, and Stephanus and his children. "For Christ sent me," he says, "not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel," (1 Cor. i. 17.)

"THERE IS ONE BAPTISM."

Paul tells us there is "one baptism," (Eph. iv. 5.) There is one Lord—our Lord Jesus Christ; there is one faith—the faith of Christ; there is one baptism, the baptism of Christ. This is the baptism of which Christ spake when he said: "I will baptize you with the Holy Ghost." This is the baptism that cleanses and washes "whiter than the snow." This is the baptism which "doth now save us," and which is different from that symbolical baptism with water, which can not renew the heart, but symbolizes the "putting away the filth of the flesh." Paul speaks of this "one baptism" when he says: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," that is into Jesus Christ, (1 Cor. xii. 13.) Man's baptism never yet converted a soul, or washed away one's guilt. The indispensable baptism is the "one baptism" of the Holy Ghost, which is given by Christ Jesus our Lord. "In this 'one baptism,' the administrator is Christ; the element is the Holy Ghost; and the subject is the individual. In the less important symbolical baptism, the administrator is Christ's minister; the element is water; and the subject is the human person.

Ezekiel, in looking into the future, saw Christ's day, and was glad; and told his generation of the double baptism—the "one baptism" of Christ, and the symbolical baptism with water, with which the people of the new dispensation would be blessed, (xxxvi. 25-27.) "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean. . . . And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes."

"BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST."

Let us analyze what Paul says about baptism, in the sixth chapter of Romans, and see what points are suggested there:

1. This can not be water baptism because it implies a change from death unto life. One becomes dead, buried and alive again, that is, he becomes a new creature. Water baptism can not make a new creature. We are made new creatures through Christ Jesus, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

2. The terms "death," "dead," "buried," "raised up from the dead," "walk," "planted," and "crucified," which Paul here uses, are manifestly not to be interpreted as having to do with the "outward man" which is the body, but rather with the "inner man"—the hidden man of the heart." Hence, this must be Christ's baptism of the Holy Ghost renewing the "inner man."

3. This baptism must have been Christ's baptism with the Holy Ghost, because the persons baptized, were "baptized into Jesus Christ." And it is only by Christ's baptism of the Holy Spirit that we are baptized into Jesus Christ.

4. The best interpreter of Paul, is Paul himself. He shows clearly that it is not by the baptism of water, that we are baptized into one body, that is, into Jesus Christ.

5. There is no mention of water in the passage under consideration.

6. Paul distinctly says that the regeneration wrought through this baptism (v. 11) was "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, it was not a regeneration wrought through water, but by the Holy Ghost.

7. Immersionists assume that "burial" in the Scriptures meant placing the body beneath the surface, as is now generally done when the dead are buried. Their assumption is incorrect and misleading. They erroneously assume that our Saviour, having died, was buried beneath the surface, and then they build an unsound theory upon an unsound basis. Jeremiah says (xxii. 19) concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah: "Tell the king he shall be drawn forth outside the gates of the city, and buried with the burial of an ass." He was left on the surface of the earth without any covering whatever—left to decay, where the beasts of the field might prey upon him."

PUTTING ON CHRIST.

What points are suggested in Paul's reference to putting on Christ in Gal. iii. 27?

1. We may put on Christ. Paul shows, in Romans xiii. 14, that this does not mean "making provision for the flesh." Manifestly this does not mean a physical act, but rather a spiritual work.

2. Men do not put on Christ by receiving water baptism. Many have received water baptism, and yet have not put on Christ.

3. There is a "baptism into Christ," which involves a putting on of Christ, and is a different thing from baptism into water.

4. Some persons have put on Christ, who never were immersed, or dipped, or plunged in water, as a religious ordinance; and some persons put on Christ, who never received water baptism, by sprinkling, or otherwise.

5. Paul, in 1 Cor. xiii. 13, explains what he means by being baptized into Jesus Christ: "For by one Spirit," not by water, "are we all baptized into one body."

COMPLETE BY BAPTISM.

What points are suggested by Paul, in his reference to baptism, in the second chapter of Colossians?

1. Some persons had been made complete. This completeness includes more than baptismal waters can do for us. It includes the regeneration of the soul, which is a spiritual work. Simon Magus received water baptism, and unquestionably he received it by the orthodox mode, but his water baptism did not make him complete.

2. If Paul, in this passage, speaks of water baptism making a man complete, then he teaches baptismal regeneration by water.

3. If water baptism makes a man complete, then water baptism creates the fact, instead of being the symbol,—declaration,—or sign and seal, of that completeness which is the great work of Christ.

4. If water baptism makes a man complete, then there is nothing left for Christ, by his baptism of the Holy Ghost to do, in order to make men complete.

5. Paul is speaking of spiritual things, not of the body, when he says, ye are "rooted" and "built," and "circumcised," and "dead," and "buried," and "risen," and "complete." He is speaking of a change so comprehensive and radical that it is a "complete" change, not a change that affects the body merely, but a change of heart.

6. Paul uses the term circumcision, and baptism interchangeably; and what he attributes in one place to circumcision, he attributes in another place to baptism; indicating that one takes the place of the other.

7. This change of nature, whereby one is made a new creature—made "complete," could never be effected by man, nor by man's baptism, nor by water. Neither dipping, nor plunging, nor immersing into water, nor sprinkling, nor pouring with water, can make a man "complete." This is a regeneration that water baptism can never accomplish.

8. We are made "complete in him," that is in Christ. This is a regeneration that Christ works in us, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Paul, writing to Titus, speaks of the great work wrought in the believer, (Titus iii. 5-7): "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, (not with man's baptism with water), but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

9. This baptism Paul calls "the circumcision made without hands." Hence, not water baptism, which can never be accomplished without hands.

10. Paul says this baptism is "the operation of God"—the work of God the Saviour, who said: "I will baptize you with the Holy Ghost," and who makes us "complete" by this baptism.

11. Paul distinctly affirms, in the following chapter, that in this renewal of the nature: "Christ is all, and in all."

12. There is no mention of water in this Epistle.

13. If water baptism makes us com-

plete in Christ, then without water baptism we are not complete in Christ. How then is it with those children who die in infancy without water baptism? Have they gone hence without being complete in Christ?

14. If by water baptism we are made complete in Christ, how important that our infants should early receive water baptism.

15. Paul calls this baptism "the circumcision of Christ," the circumcision not made with hands, but made by Christ, showing that Paul uses the words "circumcision" and "baptism" as synonymous terms; and that this is not man's baptism with water, but Christ's which is with the Holy Ghost.

16. Simon Magus, the sorcerer, it may be assumed, was baptized with water, by Philip, by the most orthodox mode, (Acts viii. 13.) If Paul, in Romans 6, and Gal. 3, and Col. 2, is speaking of man's baptism with water, then Simon Magus must have been "baptized into Jesus Christ—baptized into his death—buried with Christ by baptism." If Paul, in those passages meant water, then Simon Magus must have "walked in newness of life," and must have had his old man "crucified with Christ;" and being dead in Christ he must have been "freed from sin." If such blessings could be had by water baptism there would be nothing left for Christ, or for the Holy Spirit to do for us, in order to the renewing of our nature. But it is evident that we do not receive those benefits by water baptism, by the fact that Simon Magus was baptized with water by the apostolic mode, but was nevertheless, "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Simon was in a most extraordinary predicament for a man who had received water baptism and, therefore, according to the Baptist theory, had been "baptized into Jesus Christ," and "buried with Christ," and been "freed from sin."

17. The error of the Baptist interpretation of the passages under consideration arises from assuming that the word baptism applies to the external ordinance administered by man; whereas it refers to the gift of the Spirit as dispensed by Christ. Paul explains the sense in which he uses the term, in 1 Cor. xii. 13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free." It is the baptism of the Spirit that introduces a sinner into the body of Christ. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we become united to Christ, and are sealed unto the day of redemption, (Eph. iv. 30,) and are made members of his body, of his flesh, of his bones, (Eph. v. 30.) Being thus members of his own body, we are one with Christ our head in his death, burial and resurrection, and glory. Though a man were immersed in the Jordan itself, or sprinkled with the waters of the Jordan, it could never truly be said of him, unless he is baptized with the Holy Spirit, that he is crucified with Christ, or buried with Christ, or that he sits in heavenly places with Christ.

I am, dear brother,
Yours truly,
D. D. CURRIE.

FUNERAL OF THE LATE HON. L. A. WILMOT.

The funeral of the late Hon. L. A. Wilmot, who died suddenly of heart disease, at his residence, Evelyn Grove, on Monday, May 20th, took place on Thursday, May 23rd, at the Methodist Cemetery, Fredericton.

The funeral cortege left the residence of the deceased at 4 o'clock. The pallbearers were—His Honor Lieut-Gov. Tilley, Chief Justice Allen, Judge Fisher, Judge Weldon, L. Chipman, Esq., St. Stephen: L. S. D. McPherson, Esq., Assistant Superintendent of our Sabbath School. There was a very large attendance, not only of our own congregation, but people of every creed and nation, so that our large church, in which the funeral service took place, was crowded to the doors.

The service was opened by the Chairman of the Fredericton District, the Rev. R. Duncan, giving out Hymn 41—"O God our help in ages past," which was sung with deep feeling by the choir and congregation. Mr. Duncan then offered an exceedingly impressive and appropriate prayer. After the reading of the usual lessons by the Rev. G. W. Fisher and the writer, the Rev. H. Daniel delivered an eloquent address, in which he briefly reviewed the life of our lamented brother.

The service closed with the Rev. T. Marshall giving out Hymn 732, and Rev. R. Duncan pronouncing the benediction. Before leaving the church, the casket was opened, and the officers,

teachers and children took a last farewell of their beloved superintendent. The order of the procession you will learn from the daily papers.

One of the most affecting sights connected with the funeral was the part taken by the school at the cemetery. Under the management of a very efficient committee, the children formed a line on either side of the main walk, and while the hearse and the mourner passed on to the grave, sang, as teachers and scholars whose hearts are full of love and sorrow could sing—"Good night until the morning."

After the reading of the burial service, each member of the school, from the youngest in the infant class, to the eldest teacher, filed past the grave, each casting a flower upon the casket as a last token of respect and love. The whole multitude then slowly dispersed, the mourners and the church to more fully realize their great loss, and our citizens to speak of the death and burial of New Brunswick's most gifted son. The memory of our late brother is no private inheritance. It belongs to this community, to this Province, to our Dominion—to the Church of God. Among the Methodist people, at least, there will be no name sent down to posterity which will carry with it more associations of combined greatness, reverence, admiration and love, than that of Lemuel Allen Wilmot.

The death of our beloved father, brother, and friend, so sudden and unexpected, with no wasting sickness beforehand foreboding its approach—a death which, without warning or sign, at once separated us from him who last week was living, acting and speaking among us, is an event which, in its associations, exceeds what is usually solemn and impressive, even in connection with death itself. This sudden event has shaken us all, and has made us tremble with awe and almost with terror. It has stunned us, and bowed us down with sorrow. We feel at once how utterly powerless we are in the presence of this event. We cannot alter it. We could not prevent it. We cannot repair the loss it has occasioned. In submission we bow to the divine will. Judge Wilmot was in his 70th year, yet his form was so erect, his intellect so clear, and his heart so young, that we had no thought of his dying for years to come. On the Monday, the day of his death, he was cheerful, I will not say unusually cheerful, for cheerfulness was the habit of his life, and was almost unmixed and unruffled by a cloud. While driving he was seized with a violent spasm near the heart, from which, shortly after he reached his home, he became unconscious. On the arrival of Dr. Atherton, scarcely any signs of life were apparent, and in less than ten minutes he had probably breathed his last.

Absence from the body, and presence with the Lord, consciousness on earth and consciousness in heaven, were in his case blended in the same moment. He did "not see death," or, if he did, he saw it only in the light which flashed upon him the victory. He literally "fell asleep in Jesus." "He was not, for God took him." "Night dew falls not more gently on the ground, nor weary, worn out winds expire so soft." A calm sunset, an evening gently gliding into night. A veteran falling asleep amid the memories of many victories, and with the stars and orders of his well deserved renown; these are the images suggested at the death of L. A. Wilmot.

God said to our brother,—"It is time." Yes, it was the time appointed by heaven, and though it may seem premature to us repining and shortsighted mortals, we dare not murmur, we dare not complain. The wisdom that cannot err, the goodness that never fails, rebuke every rebellious thought, and humble us into unquestioning submission.

May the prayers of the Methodist Church rise up before God, and bring down blessings of consolation upon the widow, and blessings of comfort upon the hundreds of hearts which, in all parts of the country, mourn his loss, and the stimulus of a high and holy inspiration to all of your readers to be baptized for the dead.

At the request of Mrs. Wilmot, the Rev. J. Lathern will prepare an "Obituary" for insertion in the WESLEYAN.

P. S.—The Revs. H. Sprague, Jos. Hart, D. D. Currie, and M. C. Campbell, would have attended the funeral, but were unavoidably detained.

DEATH OF REV. JOHN GIBSON CURRIE.

DEAR BRO. NICOLSON,—I did not think when I wrote you last mail about Brother Penny's death that I should so soon have to tell you of the decease of dear Brother Currie. This very sad event took place on Tuesday morning the 7th inst., at Island Cove. Our dear Bro. was taken first in January last by that disease which has proved fatal. He caught cold in going down to his circuit from this place. His child had been taken seriously ill and he came up to procure medical advice. On his way home it rained incessantly and he caught a severe cold, which entirely laid him aside from his much loved toil. It was evident to all who saw him that his days were numbered, that he was consumptive, and that his stay on earth was only a question of time. From the first he became so weak that it was with difficulty he could move about. Very shortly after he gave up he was confined to his bed, which he never again left until the Master called him home. It was a pleasure to Him to find his brethren in the ministry rally round him to supply his pulpit from Sabbath to Sabbath. It also delighted his heart when he was laid aside to know that the Lord had graciously owned his labors among the people of his charge by pouring out upon them His Holy Spirit and converting them by scores. From every part of the Island men were interested in his welfare, and many vied with others in trying to show by little acts of kindness how he had endeared himself to those to whom he had ministered the word of life. At one time during his illness he wanted some grapes. His mouth and throat were very sore. The writer of this did his best to procure some for him, but could not succeed. He wrote to St. John's to a kind brother there who tried everywhere to get some for him but could not, and then, instead, by a special messenger, he sent him some of the best fruit available. The fact is everyone loved the dear brother, his disposition was such as made him a general favorite. Then he was such able expositor of the word of life. It was indeed a great treat to hear him descend upon the love of Christ. His face would literally shine whilst dwelling upon this glorious theme. It was evident to all he felt what he spake. His congregation could not but perceive that his own heart was filled with that divine principle. Had he been spared he would have been an able minister of the New Testament. During his illness he often spake of his relatives in Scotland. He has a father and brother now living in Glasgow. One of his last efforts was to write a letter to his brother Willie, and there is no doubt but this, as other epistles sent, testified to that grace which God has graciously bestowed upon his servant. It was Bro. Currie's desire to die in Carbonear, and several efforts were made to bring him up to this place, but he became so weak that any attempt it was seen, would only prove to hurry him off, so he never got here until several young men belonging to his congregation rowed up with his corpse aboard, a distance of 26 miles, thus showing their love to their deceased pastor. It was indeed hard to witness the taking away from the Mission house at Island Cove of his remains. His wife felt severely and the people thronged to catch a last look at the coffin which contained all that was mortal of him who had ministered the word of life to them.

We buried him on the Saturday following. He was carried to the grave by six young men from Scotland. Twelve of his brethren, besides scores of the people followed his remains to their last resting place. In the church brethren Goodson, Embree, Boyd and Bryant gave short addresses touching the character, usefulness and death of our dear brother. A sacred influence filled the sanctuary. Many were moved to tears, and all felt that a prince had fallen in our Israel. On the Sabbath evening following the Rev. James Dove, Ex-President, improved his death by preaching a funeral sermon founded upon the text St. Paul 2 Cor. v. 1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." I had not the pleasure of hearing the discourse, but learned from competent judges that the subject was dealt with in a masterly style and that God's presence was eminently felt. After the sermon Bro. Dove gave a short outline of Bro. Currie's ministerial career from the time of his landing in St. John's to the closing scene in Island Cove. And what a closing scene that was! How calmly and peacefully (after bidding good by to his wife and child, and other members of the household) he passed away to the better land, aged 27 years. Those who were watching him scarce knew he was dead. But he was, and his happy spirit had gone to swell the chorus of that Redeemer he had loved and so faithfully served in his day and generation. May God sanctify his death to our good and to His glory. Amen.

JOHN GOODSON.

Carbonear, May 15, 1878.