

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

MARKS OF ERROR.

BY REV. CHARLES TUPPER, D. D. (Conclude.)

6 Gross misapplications of terms and texts. Numbers of these have been already presented; and my limits will not permit me to notice many more under this head.

Though the words noticed are employed in other senses, it does by no means thence follow, that they do not, both in the Old Testament and in the New, denote the rational and undying principle in man.

Our author—or rather Mr. Grew, to whom, as well as others, he is largely indebted for his criticisms—blames the Translators for rendering the word psuche both "life" and "soul" in Mar. viii. 35-37; but they did right. The word pneuma is translated "wind" and "spirit" in one verse, (John iii. 8.) with undiminished correctness.

To prove that all the dead are wholly unconscious, and consequently that the souls or spirits of none have entered a state of happiness, Mr. B. quotes, as positive proof, Acts ii. 34, "David is not ascended into the heavens."

In accordance with the account of man's creation, the prophet Zechariah speaks of it as one of the most eminent of Jehovah's works, that He "formeth spirit of man within him."

The fact that Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven, furnishes presumptive proof that the "spirits of just men made perfect" have likewise been received into that happy state.

It is manifestly in palpable contradiction to both Scripture and reason to imagine that this "spirit," which certainly is not made of dust, will turn to dust with the body.

(Deut. xxxiv. 5. Matth. xvii. 3.) Our Lord, refuting the errors of the skeptical Sadducees, and referring plainly to their denial of the existence of the spirits of the dead, and the resurrection of their bodies, remarked in effect, that what they denied "even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob," adding, "for He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him." (Luke xx. 37, 38.)

Paul speaks of "the spirits of just men made perfect in conjunction with angels." (Heb. xii. 22, 23.) In accordance with Christ's account of the rich man and Lazarus, (Luke xvi. 19-31.) Peter tells us of the antediluvians, "which sometime were disobedient," to whom by the spirit, Christ "went and preached"—evidently by the labors of "Noah, a preacher of righteousness"—that they were, when this Apostle wrote, "spirits in prison."

1 Tim. vi. 16, where it is said of Deity, "Who only hath immortality," is cited, (p. 10.) as proving to a certainty that the souls or spirits of unregenerate persons are mortal, and die with their bodies.

As the finally impenitent are not said in Scripture to have life in the future state, or "eternal life," Mr. B. infers that they will not exist. But this is a palpable error. As life is generally considered desirable, and death dreadful, these terms are often used, the former to denote happiness and the latter misery.

like manner our Lord tells us. "A man's life"—evidently his happiness or enjoyment—"consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. (Luke xii. 15. Rom. viii. 6. 1 Thes. iii. 8.) Pharaoh said respecting the plague of locusts, "Entreat the Lord that he may take away from me this death only." (Exod. x. 17.) With us it is a common saying of persons in uncomfortable circumstances, "They do not live; they only stay."

In accordance with the view now presented, it may be readily perceived, that when it is said of the unbeliever, "he shall not see life," (John iii. 36.) it does not mean that he will cease to exist, but that he will not enjoy a future state of happiness; for it is added, "The wrath of God abideth on him" (See Matth. iii. 7. 1 Thes. i. 10. Jude 13.)

Among numerous equally fallacious arguments adduced to prove the annihilation of the wicked at death, the statement of David respecting a prosperous sinner (Ps. xxxvii. 36.) "He was not," is urged as decisive. But precisely the same thing is said of Enoch. "Was he annihilated? (Gen. v. 24. Heb. xi. 5. Ps. xxxix. 13. The mention of the "end of the wicked" is also alleged as proof; but we read likewise of the "end" of "the perfect man." (Ps. xxxvii. 37. Numb. xxiii. 10.)

But, not to notice many imaginary proofs, the application of the term "destruction" to the wicked, is confidently urged as settling the question. This word, however, is obviously used to denote "reducing to a miserable condition." So Solomon says, "The destruction of the poor is their poverty." (Prov. x. 15.) Pharaoh's servants said to him, "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt—which still exists—is destroyed?" (Ex. x. 7. Gen. xli. 36.) So God said to Satan, who had not requested Him to annihilate Job, "Thou movest me to destroy him." (Job i. 11. ii. 3.) Deity is represented as destroying them which destroy the earth." (Rev. xi. 18.)

And yet in the face of all this, Mr. B. attempts to maintain—adducing as his principal proof text, Heb. ii. 14—that the devil and his angels will be annihilated. Another class of opposers of orthodoxy hold, that these apostate beings will be restored to a state of favor with God, and endless happiness; and a third absolutely deny their existence.

Assuredly such gross perversions of the word of the living God, and such manifest contradictions of its plain import, are distinct marks of error.

7. Groundless complaints of persecution. As our Lord predicted that His true disciples would suffer persecution, errors, in order to gain sympathy and adherents, often utter or publish grievous complaints against others for persecuting them. Mr. B. does this repeatedly. But how are he and those of his belief persecuted? I am not aware that any of them have suffered either pains or penalties for holding or promulgating their views.

never seen in their writings a tithe of the ridicule, bitterness, charges of dishonesty, &c., found in Mr. B.'s pamphlet. (See p. 50-55.) He says, "The whole learned Christian ministry have sinned in permitting and aiding in the change of the English word hell from its original meaning," and he charges them with "handling the word of God deceitfully." He adds, "I have been kept in darkness and gloom for forty years;" and (p. 88) "I have often been imposed upon by them." He who it is thus evident is not a learned man, represents those excellent men, whose labors have been of incalculable service, as far inferior to, and much worse than the skeptical materialists and self-styled rationalists in Germany, and the Roman Catholics, whom he grossly misrepresents, (p. 108.) as maintaining that, "their popes and priests can pray all out of hell;" and the Universalists in America, who, as he says, (p. 107.) "reject the doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of Christ, or his dying for our sins."

How, then, can one who so virulently opposes others, complain of mild refutations of his views, as if that were persecution?

8. Appeals to carnal reason and human passions. Surely Mr. B. can have no need to appeal to these, if, as he maintains, the Bible, from beginning to end, is full of plain proofs of the annihilation of the wicked. If this be so, is it not utterly unaccountable that men of thorough erudition, eminent piety, and large benevolence, who have carefully searched the Scriptures with ardent desire to find some solid ground on which they might rest the hope, that the misery of those who die in their sins will terminate, have been unable to discover it? For instance, Mr. Watts, from whom, as in other cases, a garbled quotation is given, (p. 114.) does indeed express such a desire; but he proceeds to state, that he could find no foundation for such an idea in Scripture.

By carnal and fallacious reasoning it is inferred, that because Paul in his writings,—principally addressed to Christians,—does not expressly mention hell, he did not believe there was such a place. But because neither he, nor any of the inspired writers, expressly mention God's Providence, is it to be inferred, that they did not believe in it? As in the case of Providence, Paul's language evidently contains numerous plain references to "the wrath to come," the future woe that awaits the impenitent, for whom he "had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart;" so that he "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Rom. ix. 2. Acts xx. 31. xiii. 41. xxiv. 25. Rom. i. 18. ii. 5, 8, 9, 12. iii. 5. ix. 22. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. 1 Thes. i. 10. 2 Thes. i. 6-9. Heb. x. 28-31.) In the text last cited Paul tells us plainly, that those who contemn Christ, and "do despite to the Spirit of grace," are worthy of "much sorer punishment" than "death without mercy."

Mr. B. seems to reason that Adam could have understood by the threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," no more than literal or corporeal death; and consequently that no more could be inflicted on him, or his descendants, how wicked soever they might be. How, then, can he, upon his own principles, justify the Divine conduct with reference to the sufferings—almost innumerable—to which Adam's posterity are subjected in the present life, and, as he maintains, the burning up of the reanimated bodies of the wicked dead. Were these specified in the threatenings? Adam, however, evidently did know, that by his transgression he would forfeit the Divine favor, and expose himself and his ungodly offspring to "the wrath of God." In his case literal death was deferred for hundreds of years; but "in the day" of his sinning his soul or spirit began to suffer by alienation from God, death to happiness, by shame, guilt, and fear. (Gen. ii. 17. iii. 6-19.)

The carnal reasoning that the duration of punishment must accord with the length of time spent in sinning, is refuted by the case of Adam. It is well known, also, that a crime committed in a moment may consign the culprit to solitary confinement for life, if it be fifty or sixty years; or, as a natural consequence, it may produce distress by disease as long as the body is capable of suffering.

Attempts to call Jehovah to account for His conduct, and to decide what He ought to do, as also appeals to the corrupt passions of erring and sinful men as to the desert of sin, are manifestly inconsistent, and indicate that the cause which requires such support must be that of error. (See Rom. ix. 20. xi. 33-36.)

"The judgment of God is according to truth;" but we are not capable of determining what is the just demerit of a life of persistent rebellion against God, and wilful rejection of the salvation proffered through the atoning sacrifice of the adorable Redeemer. There will be degrees of suffering endured by the impenitent. (Matth. xi. 20-24. 2 Cor. v. 10. Rev. xx. 12.) Mr. Storrs, to obviate an objection, imagines—without a shadow of proof—that persons peculiarly wicked will be longer than others in burning up; and says truly, he "does not know how long." Here it may be remarked, that literal fire, which does not, in strictness of speech, annihilate, may burn up combustible bodies; but Mr. B. and I, with most others, agree that where the term fire is used with reference to the punishment of the wicked, it is used symbolically. Hence his whole scheme of annihilation by fire, by his own shewing, falls to the ground.

It would seem to us reasonable to expect, that a Being of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, would never suffer either moral or natural evil to exist. But both have existed for thousands of years. How, then, can we determine, by our feeble reason, that they will ever wholly cease to exist?

It is my earnest desire that every human being should be holy and happy in time and in eternity. But I know they are not all so here, and I can find no proof in Scripture that they will be so hereafter; nor yet that impenitent sinners will ever cease to exist. (Matth. xiii. 41, 42. Mark ix. 43, 48. Rev. xxi. 3, 4, 8. xxii. 11, 14, 15.)

Sincere desire for the everlasting welfare of my fellow men has induced me, in compliance with urgent request, to notice briefly some of the Marks of Error in a work regarded as one of the ablest in support of the Annihilation of the Wicked; as it appears to me adapted to encourage the ungodly to hope, that nothing more than non-existence will result from a life of pleasurable sin, bold rebellion against God, continued injury to mankind, and persistent rejection of the Lord Jesus, who laid down His life to save the guilty.

May "the terror of the Lord" and the "love of Christ" constrain each of my readers to embrace and follow the gracious Redeemer, in the only way that leads to present peace, and everlasting bliss.

CHARLES TUPPER, Tremont, Aylesford.

For the Christian Messenger.

FROM NEW ZEALAND.

Martin's Bay, Mar. 18, 1871.

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS FROM REV. A. F. PORTER.

In our last we informed you of our great misfortune in being shipwrecked in coming to this place, and our loss was very heavy, so much that it will require years to recover from it, but I can never cease to be grateful to our Heavenly Father for saving our lives.

It was mid winter but not cold, no snow, the nights were slightly frosty like the 1st October with you.

We lived three months close by the scene of our sad fate, in a tent 12 feet square made of one of the sails of the ship. This was six miles from (Jamestown.) the name of this new settlement. It is on a beautiful lake 12 miles long and 1 wide surrounded by magnificent hills covered with evergreen forest.

Well, during this three months of tent life, I came up to the settlement, secured 2 town sections of half an acre, cut down the great trees, Pines, white, red, and black, some of them 100 feet high, built a house and then moved all safely up. This was another time of joy to feel that we had a comfortable home all our own—a town section, which we consider the best situation in the township, and, if the place should ever be what we hope, it will be of great value, and also we have given us by the Government 100 acres of splendid land.

I said we felt glad, and settled down to real "life in earnest;" but I must tell you that our cup of sorrow was not yet full, this state of things lasted just one month. When one evening I was felling a great black pine, near by, on a neighbour's section to get bark to cover an out house a sudden gust of wind broke it across