

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. MARKS OF ERROR.

BY REV. CHARLES TUPPER, D. D.

All error is pernicious. In some cases it is ruinous. It is especially so when it tends to encourage the ungodly to sin with the hope of impunity, or of only slight punishment.

Among these may be suggested:—

1. The assuming of false colors. A man who is advocating the truth has no occasion to call himself by a designation that does not belong to him.

2. Prophesying smooth things. This the ungodly Israelites and Jews wished the prophets to do: and they who did so were thereby shewn to be false prophets.

3. Palpable inconsistencies. Mr. B. alleges, (p. 25.) that if sinners are exposed to endless woe, Christ cannot save any of them.

4. The founding of a theory on obscure texts. Obviously Mr. B.'s arguments to prove 'the unconscious state of the dead,' and to sustain his system, are principally drawn from the Old Testament; which undeniably is, in general, much more obscure with reference to the future state of man than the New.

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One of the passages on which Mr. B. like his brethren in general, specially relies, is Malachi iv. 1. "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

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Acts iii. 21. "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of institution of all things." is cited, (p. 21.) as proof of annihilation. Our Lord said of John the Baptist, "Elias verily cometh . . . and restoreth all things."

Our author adduces Col. i. 19, 20, which speaks of God as "reconciling all things unto himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven."

It is obvious that if any being were annihilated, though another might be made like it, that same being would never exist again. But our author adduces numerous words, phrases, and texts, (p. 10-20,) to prove, that the wicked are annihilated at the dissolution of the body, and says, (p. 20.) "The final doom of the wicked is death"; and yet he maintains that these same persons will be burnt up, and so annihilated, at the day of judgment.

5. The founding of a theory on obscure texts. Obviously Mr. B.'s arguments to prove 'the unconscious state of the dead,' and to sustain his system, are principally drawn from the Old Testament; which undeniably is, in general, much more obscure with reference to the future state of man than the New.

whole family in heaven and earth is named." This error of applying to the wicked those portions of Scripture which relate only to the pious, is quite common, and exceedingly dangerous. It should be carefully avoided.

Because Solomon acknowledges that he had been tempted to think, (See Eccles. ii. 1-3, and Ps. lxxiii.) from external appearances, that "a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast," Mr. B. alleges this as proof, (p. 11.) that it is really so. But Solomon presently adds, "Who knoweth [duly considers the difference between] the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth." (Eccles. iii. 18-21)

5. Attempts to evade the obvious meaning of plain texts. It is an inexcusable rule in exegesis, that plain texts should guide us in the interpretation of such as are obscure. The reversing, therefore, of this course is an evident indication of error.

Our Lord Jesus Christ—"the faithful and true Witness"—has unquestionably revealed the future states of men with peculiar plainness. The people to whom He spake were in general either Pharisees or Sadducees. Josephus says, "The Sadducees take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and of the punishments and rewards in Hades; maintain that the souls die with the bodies."

Many . . . shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mat. vii. 11, 12.)

Our author adduces Col. i. 19, 20, which speaks of God as "reconciling all things unto himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven."

It is surely can not be reasonably imagined, that those who heard these and similar solemn and alarming declarations uttered by Christ—in compassion warning them to "flee from the wrath to come"—would understand them otherwise than as teaching, that man has a soul, or spirit, which does not die with the body; and that there is a place, or state, in which impenitent and unbelieving sinners will suffer "everlasting punishment."

How does Mr. B. attempt to evade the evident meaning of the statement of our Lord respecting the rich man and Lazarus? (Luke xvi. 19-31.) He alleges, (p. 49, 61.) that it is a parable. But it unquestionably has a meaning; and that must be consonant with the plain instructions given by Christ elsewhere. It obviously presents a contrast between two characters: the one living in luxury and worldly pleasure, regardless of God and His needy and afflicted people, and the other a pious sufferer; but after their deaths the scene is reversed. The godly man is comforted, while the impious is tormented. This view is corroborated by the proposal to

send one "from the dead," ver. 30. It exactly accords with the tenor of Scripture. (See Ps. xvii. 9-15. xxxiv. 19, 21. lxxiii. 2-18, 24. Zeph. iii. 12. Matth. xxv. 41, 43. Luke vi. 20-25. James v. 1-11. Rev. vii. 14-17.) Mr. B. says, "The rich man denotes the Jewish nation. . . the poor man . . . the Gentiles, &c. Here, then, we have the strange anomaly of unbelieving Jews, who are almost frantic if any of their brethren embrace the gospel, praying that the gospel may be sent to their unbelieving brethren! And is there, indeed, "a great gulf fixed" between Christians of other nations and the Jews, which none of the Jews can ever pass over to come to the Christians? (Eph. ii. 13-18.)

But how does Mr. B. strive to evade the plain meaning of the passages now quoted, and others of similar import? He alleges, (p. 48.) that "Gehenna" the word rendered "hell" in the text cited above—"ought never to be translated, any more than Babylon," &c. This way of objecting to the translating of words is a measure often employed to conceal the truth. Thus a Mr. Millard, opposing the doctrine of Christ's deity, maintained that where we read, (Isa. ix. 6.) "He shall be called . . . The Mighty God," the Hebrew ought not to be translated; but it should be read, "He shall be called . . . Elgibbor. So likewise Abner Kneeland, when professedly making a translation of the New Testament, while he was a Universalist, to evade Christ's plain declaration of the everlasting punishment of the finally impenitent, would have the word *aiōnios* untransliterated, and so gives us Matt. xxv. 46. "These shall go away into *aiōnios* punishment: but the righteous into *aiōnios* life."

Conclusion in our next.

For the Christian Messenger. THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW AND THE BAPTISTS.

The October number of the Westminster Review contains two articles of a quasi-theological cast, both of some value, though neither of them is entirely trustworthy. The conductors of that Review are tinged with scepticism, which fact their readers should always bear in mind, since the knowledge of it serves to account for many remarks and decisions which would otherwise afford occasion of stumbling.

One of the articles is on "the Pilgrim Fathers," to whose singular merits the writer accords praise somewhat lavishly, yet without extravagance, for truly they were wonderful men. The other article is entitled "The Baptists." It is destitute of the misrepresentation and calumny which figure so largely in many works that aspire to be called histories; but it is clearly the product of a mind under the influence of prejudice, and hostile to what is considered as evangelical religion. Doubt is orthodoxy in his esteem, and the further a man deviates from the beaten path the more likely he is to be regarded as a first-rate minister.

"The evil of dogmatism," he says, "is clearly seen and felt by most Baptist ministers who have not had a collegiate training, and by some who have not had this advantage. They are always felt when the man is leaving college. By some they are felt all their lives, while others, removed from the intellectual atmosphere of the lecture-room, soon lose all doubt; and revert to their old creed, so full of contradictions, but yet for many, in some inexplicable way, so full of comfort."

The man's head was in a sad muddle when he wrote that paragraph. It is unfair and misleading. Sceptics, like the persons of whom the apostle Peter wrote, "speak evil of the things that they understand not."

The Review speaks of Dr. Landels, Mr. George Dawson, and Mr. Arthur Mursell as "men who early broke away from the strict orthodox standard," by which, it is supposed, he means that they chose to clothe their religious exercises in a style of their own; not that their thoughts, differed materially from those of their ministerial brethren in general, but that they avoided common and stereotyped phrases, and abominated the language of cant. I do not see that they are blamable for this. It is not fair, however, to class those three gentlemen together, Mr. Dawson's name is not found in the authorized list of Baptist Ministers. Mr. Mursell was at one time excessively crotchety, more remarkable for oddities than for anything else. The reviewer says—"Arthur Mursell and George Dawson have become more prominent as lecturers than as preachers, and both occupy a position which it is impossible to define as to comprehend."

Dr. Landels is a man of different type. Here is his portraiture:—"Dr. Landels' teaching is very broad. As a preacher he is in many respects not unlike Dr. Guthrie, whose countryman he is—that is to say, the amount of gold in his sermons is beaten out very thin indeed. He has read Thomas Carlyle well, and the poets. We should greatly doubt if he had busied himself much with theology, properly so called. His mode of presenting religion to his audience is rhetorical and practical. In another place he says, "The desire for rest makes Dr. Landels yield to the somewhat hazy views of Mr. Maurice." It is to be hoped that this is incorrect.

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