

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

COLPORTAGE.

Dear Bro. Selden.—

Permit me through the Messenger to acknowledge the sum of \$17.50 handed me a few days ago by a friend of Missions, for me to purchase Bibles and Testaments and such books as would be most suitable, to distribute among the French in Digby Co., when I am travelling amongst them. The above sum I shall hand over to the Home Missionary Union, for such books as I shall need for that object. During the four last years, I have spent nearly one month each year amongst them, and have sold and given them about 50 Testaments, and the same number of Bibles, and other books, also about 100 tracts, and have always been kindly treated by them.

About a year ago the donor of this sum, on learning from some of the French that they were pleased with these books and visits, concluded to lay by one tenth of the money that he made by fishing last year for that object, and no doubt he will do the same this year.

Perhaps some one would like to know the name of this generous man, but as I am not allowed to give it, perhaps they will find out by ascertaining whose fishhooks and nets will be the best filled this year, for you know the Lord loveth and will prosper the cheerful giver. Now, if a poor man can give one tenth of his earnings to spread the Bible among the Catholic French, perhaps some of our rich men will lay by one fifth or more of the income from their big apple tree, or their large ship, or their long fish net for the Home Mission Union, to purchase suitable books and Bibles for Colporteur work. I will gladly receive and acknowledge any sum for the above object as I am travelling. I have on hand Dr. Cramp's Baptist History for \$1.25; as agents are selling them for \$2.00 in Digby Co., any person wishing them will do well to wait till I call with a good assortment of books.

G. TUFTS, Kingston Station.

For the Christian Messenger.

"BAPTISED FOR THE DEAD."

Mr. Editor.—

I send a brief reply to Mr. A. Chipman's communication so far as it bears on my exposition of the above phrase.

Paul did not write, "baptized into a belief of the resurrection of the dead," but "baptized for," (in the sense of on behalf of, or on account of) "the dead." It is, therefore, useless for Mr. Chipman to add to, and alter the Apostle's words to make them accord with anybody's interpretation. That a baptism of some kind on account of the dead is referred to no one can deny. The questions to be solved are, 1. To what sort of baptism did Paul refer? 2. Who were the dead, on account of whom certain persons were being baptized?

1. As to the nature of the baptism, Doctor Adam Clarke, I believe, understood it to be a baptism of suffering; but failed to perceive the meaning of the apostle's question, not seeing that "they" applied not to christians generally, but to the apostles who suffered not on their own account, but on account of those to whom they preached the gospel, as many scriptures shew. Ephes. iii. 1, 13; 2 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

If it be contended that a baptism in water is the baptism in the passage under consideration, then there is no alternative but to understand that certain in Paul's day were immersed in water on behalf of the dead! A most extraordinary practice surely; and a strange argument for Paul to urge in maintaining that there is to be a resurrection of the dead. A view, too, of Paul's question, "why are they then baptized for the dead?"—that does not connect with his next question, "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"

2. As regards who "the dead" were, for whom "they" were baptized, I reply that no matter what the nature of the baptism, the literally dead were not referred to. A baptism whether of sufferings, spirit, or water, on account of the literally dead, is not to be thought of except as an absurdity. Men, spiritually dead, (for Mr. Chipman will have seen I do believe in spiritual death) must in any case be understood, that Paul's words may be intelligible.

When we have, then, an exposition of the Apostle's words that is sound in doctrine, in harmony with the context, and

grammatically correct, why reject it? It has puzzled the "learned Biblical interpreters," who have never, I believe, seen the meaning of the passage; but that is no reason why it should not be at length discovered by a student of God's Word.

J. R. LITWOW.

July 17.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION.

BY REV. JOHN CHASE.

"Their foot shall slide in due time."—Daniel xiii. 35.

The love of God is a delightful theme to contemplate. His word records unparalleled instances of it. The more it is studied, the greater will be our admiration of it, and the more terrible our conceptions of that retribution to which every transgression points, for love is no more an attribute of the Deity than justice, not malevolence, not vengeance, not hatred, not revenge in the ordinary import of these terms, but justice, retributive justice, the certainty of which the passage before us suggests.

This is sustained by the course of events. Our conduct is retributory. The intimate and inseparable connection between a voluntary act and its reward or punishment is not as generally considered as it ought to be. It is not as readily perceived in our present condition of hardened transgression as it would be, if we were pure and holy, but it must be remembered that the consequences of sin are not dependent on their perception. The idiot may not in any degree be aware of the consequences of the use of poison, and yet become poisoned to death. So in their ignorance of the consequences of sin multitudes may suffer its retribution. Indeed it is one of the sad effects of sin that it destroys the consciousness of its existence and of the evil it is producing. This is in itself a retributive chastisement. But this is not all, every act of transgression hardens the heart and facilitates a rapid increase in iniquity.

In mercy God has attached a penalty to all his laws. These cannot be broken or violated with impunity, is as true of moral law as it is of physical law. It is merciful and wise that he has thus done. But for this, what man, woman or child would be safe in their own hands. But for the penalty, what law of our nature would not be broken. As it is, how many precepts are disregarded. Look at the retribution that follows dissipation, debauchery, and avarice: The heart sickens as there comes up before it the witnesses that stalk abroad, from the garrets, cellars, and prisons of our cities, even our rural districts are not free, here and there we see evidence of the violation of our physical nature, and civil laws, too odious to mention, and were it not that penalties more to be dreaded than death, were attached to the laws, who could limit the bounds of infamy that would be reached. It is merciful that penalties are attached to the laws of our being.

But if such fearful retribution overtake the violator of our physical being; is it to be accounted strange, that severer punishment awaits the violator of the laws of our moral or spiritual existence, or, that they are as surely retributive?

The word of God declares a penalty for sin, and it also as clearly shows that the penalty and the sin are inseparable. Punishment is the fruit of sin." Job iv. 7-9. "They that plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same." "What fruit had ye in those things . . . the end of those things is death." "Woe unto the wicked, the reward of their hands shall be given them." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Now these passages of scripture mean something. And if they mean what such language does everywhere else, then retribution is certain. "Thy wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings reprove thee."

This truth is sustained by the regard God has for His own law. We do not read that God interposes, except in special cases for special reasons, and these are the exceptions to the rule, to prevent the effect of a violation of his law. The Saviour understood this perfectly, and would not throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, although the temptation to do so was backed up by words of scripture. He knew that it would be tempting His heavenly Father, and that he could not do so with impunity. He that dashes himself down a precipice, he that opens the jugular vein, he that strangles himself, he that swallows poison, or does any thing to draw off the life

fluid; or prevent its circulation through the system, destroys life. How seldom, if ever, God interposes, by suspending the operation of His own law to save life when thus the law of our existence has been violated. He respects His own laws. He lets the law, or in other and more proper words, He executes the penalty whenever or wherever violated, in proportion to its violation. A cold taken by exposure, is not arbitrary in its results, but legitimate in its effects. Miracles are not wrought to prevent consequences.

This truth is clearly manifest in all the moral arrangements of God. Laws in relation thereto are faithfully executed. A wilful transgression of the moral law breaks the harmony between God and the soul, as the breaking of the wire prevents the circulation of the electric current.

The question may be asked, Cannot God prevent this consequent of sin? If so, and should He do so, what but a disregard for all law would be the result. The strength of governments depends very much on their fidelity to their own laws. A disregard, a weak and partial administration of the laws of any government would destroy the most powerful of States. So the government of God, would suffer if He should suspend the penalty of His laws. Even when not speedily executed, "the heart of the children of men are fully set to do evil;" hence that regard to His own law, that allows the penalty to follow its breach.

The law of God thus seen shows clearly that it is not a freak, or caprice of the Divine mind, but an essential precept, essential to the well-being of his subjects. It is no arbitrary enactment, but one the more perfectly understood and obeyed, the more perfect and happy the condition of the governed. Hence the expression, "The law is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good." Now if this is so, and so because of its necessity to procure, and preserve the best interests of the world, and I do not see how it can be disputed, then it is equally evident that any breach of it must be retributive, and if its force in retribution, be not suspended by any interference of the Divine being, then his regard for it does more clearly show the certainty of retribution.

The force of this fact is seen in cases of extreme suffering where the sufferer has contributed nothing to the immediate cause of its suffering. Take the case of the infant, no one can alledge any voluntary known violation of law, either physical or moral, they have done nothing, because they could do nothing, they have omitted nothing because they knew nothing to omit, and yet they have from the first to their last breath, suffered more or less severely, that suffering has been hereditary. Now why this? Was it accidental, in this case does the curse causeless fall? Is their pain without a reason for it, is their deformity unproduced by pre-existing cause? True, we may not always be able to trace the suffering of infancy up to its special cause, but one thing is clear, cause precedes effect, as seed precedes the plant, that cause was not suspended, but left to its own sad result. Could not the great Lawgiver suspend his own law in such painful cases? Does he fail in goodness because he does not? Or rather, is it not a proof of Divine retribution, that he so regards his own law as not to interfere with its penalty.

Take one more case in illustration of this sentiment, that of modern warfare. War practically is a gross violation of God's law of love, as an evil it is a penalty. Here violation of law and penalty are in the relation of cause and effect, and inseparably united. Here again God allows the penalty to follow the transgression, in only one instance do I recollect of Divine interference where violence broke over the restraints of that law. The Saviour touched and healed the car that Peter in his unguided zeal cut off. When disregard, against the most blessed of all codes, most blessed because when most perfectly obeyed most fruitful in all blessedness, has arisen to an unbearable height, then God suffers war, the only alternative. I know that war is looked upon in a very different light by many, but is it not clearly the result of disobedience to, or violation of the command "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself." If God were supremely loved, and if man loved his fellowman as he loves himself, or if men did unto others as they wish men to do unto them, could war possibly arise? You must answer, No, then war becomes an awful necessity, so soon as that law is so disregarded, that nothing comes between that disregard and war. It breeds in the heart, and in despite of every res-

traint imposed by God, it breaks forth in the life, death and destruction beyond computation is the penalty.

Now if God did not respect that law, that highest law of his own nature, He might in some way, in the way already referred to in the case of Peter, interfere, and raise the slain, and prevent the destruction, and thus remit the penalty, but what reasonable soul does not see that such a course would so relax His government as to foster and stimulate increasing disregard to His law. On the maintenance of the law, or in other words of His government, hangs the hope of, nay more, rests the only foundation of eternal blessedness. Let God reign and there is a rock immutable, short of this there is nothing to cheer or save. It becomes then a necessity that God should regard His own law, and that regard gives assurance of Divine retribution.

We add one more instance of God's regard for His own law, as seen in the life and death of Christ. If Christ be the Mediator between God and man, and the substitute for all who had put their trust in Him, then He must have been without sin Himself, and a sin offering or sacrifice for His people. Looking upon Christ in this light we see the greatest tribute paid to the law of God than we can possibly conceive. Christ is eternally holy. "He knew no sin," and could therefore mediate between a holy God, and sinful man. "He was made sin," that is a sin offering. Nothing could appear before God, with acceptance, but spotless purity. Christ's manhood was such, a perfect man was He, and yet as the atoning high priest he appeared before His father laden with the sins of His people. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and as a sinner, he, by substitution was treated. "His own self bare our sins in his own body." Now although God forgives our sins, not one assumed by Christ could be forgiven Him. He must bear them all, suffer the penalty of the broken law—even to the death, the death of the cross. Christ was not the principal in this transaction, He was the security. Man had contracted the debt, and Christ became the substitute. He assumed the liability, and notwithstanding he was one person of the Godhead, in becoming our security, he became as one of us, personal sin only excepted, and on Him was rigorously inflicted the stripes by which we are healed. Now the point to be noted is, if God spared not his Son under such circumstances, although he in his agony cried out in language, in its pathos, depth, and sincerity, unparalleled in the history of suffering, then we have an expression of regard for His law that assures us of the certainty of Divine retribution.

The history of the past sustains our position. History is large and full. Our difficulty is selecting. The first record thereof is clear in proof and full of admonition and instruction. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The striking contrast between the condition of our first parents before and after their transgression most strikingly confirms the doctrine of Divine retribution. What a condition of happiness before the sin. In their innocence no blush of shame mantled their face, no sense of guilt bowed the image and glory of God, such was man. No sad remorse rankled in these souls of purity, the garden was Eden to them, a place of pleasure and delight. They had as Melancthon says "pure, good, joyous hearts towards God and all Divine things; they lived in and from God as the child lives in and from its mother." "How suddenly is the gold become dim and the most fine gold changed." Guilt has taken the place of innocence, sorrow that of pleasure, anguish that of delight, and a wasting remorse that of a conscious and ever increasing peace. There is no peace for the wicked. Now there is one thing especially to our purpose in this, it is the retributive character of their sin. How sudden and awful. Familiarized to sin, and to some extent to its retributive character, we do but see this except in a very small degree as it is.

It expands our view of it, if we look at it in its federal character, or its connection with the woes of the human family. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." From this passage it appears that the sin of our first parents is connected with the death of all men, consequently with all that relates to death, in the means of its production and the consequences that follow. On the character of that connection whether federal, seminal or otherwise different opinions are held, and

it is unnecessary that we should know more than the fact. Now when we look at the ruined condition of nature, the widespread misery of humanity here, and remember that all this, is the result spread out, from the first transgression, notwithstanding the efforts of a God of love unbounded, to prevent that first transgression, shall we not acknowledge and fear a holy retribution?

In the case of nations, how often the truth under consideration receives confirmation.

We take the scriptural history of Nineveh. It was a bloody city or a city of blood, it was full of lies, and robbery, nations were sold by her withcrafts; whoredoms and harlots were among the numbers. It was great, "of three day's journey." Its walls were we are told were 100 feet high, 1,500 towers stood upon them. Humanly speaking the securities bid defiance to assaults of men. But God's law was disregarded, when her iniquity was great God sent His servant, repentance and retrieve followed.

A relapse succeeded and Nahum minutely described her overthrow, and after another warning by Zephania she was suddenly and fearfully overthrown. The forbearance of God, His compassion for "more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, all tend to show his loving kindness in waiting to save, nevertheless retribution came where nothing else would avail. This is to nations to-day a fearful warning, and to individuals a terrible admonition.

It does not happen that the retribution always immediately follows the transgression. It is sometimes apparently long delayed, the cup of the Amorite must be filled. Nineveh was long treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, but the due time came and the retribution was made to the full. The same may be said of the antediluvian world, the cities of the plain, of Gaza, Ashdod, Askelon, Ekron, Tiro, Sidon, and a host of others, their history affords proof that Divine retribution as a certain result sooner or later becomes manifest. Remember all is not forgotten that is withheld. The result is certain.

It will be observed that the remarks made refer in general to the present world. Notwithstanding what is done and known of retribution in this life, there is beyond the present scene, a fearful one, and ever to come. Retribution in this life is to God's people reformatory. When it is not so it is but a prelude to the more terrible because eternally progressing. This is so fully certified by the word of God that we propose as our last reason to present some of its teachings.

God says, "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity." "I will punish them for their ways and reward them for their doings." Now the question arises, does this threat refer to time only, or to both time and eternity? This question is often the subject of earnest discussion. The reason assigned for the latter, is that the wicked often in this life are prospered, and in many cases are without serious affliction. Their life is a joyous day—while often the life of the good man is one of incessant suffering. In such cases we have presumptive evidence that there is to be a future reckoning. To this there comes a bright gleam of truth, removing all doubt. "Son remember that thou in thy life time hadst thy good things and Lazarus his evil things, and now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Retribution out lasts the lapse of time. But again, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Shall go away into, &c. Why go away if all ends here? This is what is called an antithetical mode of expression, comparing or contrasting one condition or state with another. The contrast here is with the condition of the righteous and the wicked. "The righteous into life eternal." The duration is expressed by the same term in both cases. If one is eternal, both are eternal, it is the condition that is contrasted not the term of duration.

We have showed previously that cause and effect are seen in transgression and retribution. Now while the cause exists the results must remain. Sin is the cause of retribution in a moral point of view, as long as sin remains or exists in the spirit of man so long retribution must follow. We have no reason to believe, because we have no knowledge of the fact that there is any provision made to put away sin after death; and therefore no ground to hope that retribution will be less than eternal. Every intimation of the Bible leads us to that conclusion. After Christ is rejected finally rejected, there remaineth no more