

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

There is a special blessing pronounced on the "reading," "hearing" and "keeping," of the words of the prophecy contained in the Book of Revelation, see Chap. i. 3. And again near the close it reads: "Behold I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." (Chap. xxii. 7.) How far these statements are from countenancing the idea that we are to pass this Book lightly over, and not attempt to understand or to explain it.

It is a book of symbols, pictures and figures. But it is not wholly so. Every now and then an explanation of a symbol occurs, and also statements that are to be taken in their simple literal sense. Let us cite a few such cases. Evidently nearly the whole of chap. i. is the record of literal facts. Verses 1, 2, 3, give as the title of the Book, and its history, and pronounce a special blessing on the reading, hearing, and keeping, of the words of the prophecy, and of the things which are written therein. The writer's name was John, and he was in the Isle called Patmos, and was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and had a wonderful vision. In verse 14th he is told to "write down what he has seen," &c., &c. Then the mystery of the seven stars, and the seven golden candlesticks, is explained. Here we have evidently, first, the symbols, then, we have the explanation of the symbols. Verses 17, 18, 19, 20, are statements of literal facts. In the two chapters following it is generally agreed that much of the language is to be understood in its plainest literal sense. Church, for instance, means church, to write means to write, and is no symbol; Ephesus, Smyrna, Laodicea, &c., are real names of places. These chapters abound in figurative language, and in symbolic language too, but there is also much that is literal, and there is no clashing, and no one needs to be misled in the meaning by confounding these different kinds of language, viz: literal, figurative, and symbolic.

But let us glance along through the Book. It abounds with statements that are to be understood as plain facts, in the most literal sense of the words. Thus when the writer tells us he saw a vision, "a Lamb standing upon Mount Zion"—"an angel come down from heaven," "a beast rise up out of the sea," &c., &c., we are evidently expected to take these terms in their usual sense. He did see a representation or vision, of each and all these things. In chapter x. 4, we read, "And when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." Will any one pretend to say this is not the literal history of a fact? that John did not after all hear it thunder? and did not hear a voice from heaven? and that by the words "being about to write," he meant to say something very different? Surely the words are here all to be taken in their most obvious meaning. The Book of Revelation is not wholly made up of figurative language, nor is it all mere symbol. Chapter x. is remarkable for the distinctness of the symbol and the literal plainness of the language in which it is recorded. And the reader needs scarcely to be told that in order to be able to gather the meaning of the symbol, it is of the utmost importance that we have a clear and distinct perception of that which the seer saw—the picture must be clearly before the mind before we can gather what it means. In chapter xvii. we have a symbolic representation, vs. 1-6. In v. 6, the prophet tells us "he wondered with great admiration." Here he states evidently a literal fact. From verse 7 to the end of the chapter, we have an explanation of the symbolical representation. Verse 15 is exceedingly plain and so is verse 16. And he saith unto me, "the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes and nations, and tongues." And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth."—Rome unquestionably. On two occasions John says, "he fell down to worship at the feet of the angel, and that the angel would not suffer him to do so. Chap. xix. 10 and xxii. 9. Here we have statements of literal facts. In chapters xii. and xx. we have applied to the resurrection the

epithets, "dragon" and "old serpent;" but to avoid all possibility of mistake as to who is meant it is added by way of explanation, "the devil and Satan."

Now, in endeavoring to understand what is meant by the expressions in chap. xx. 5, viz: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years,"—it is essential to examine what the prophet really saw,—what is added by himself, if anything—by way of explanation or comment, and laying aside all ideas of our own, and those of other uninspired men, but looking to the Holy Spirit, and to other portions of the scriptures, and of course, for light and help, we should endeavour to ascertain what is really here taught. That a "first" and a second resurrection, is spoken of—two resurrections, with a period of time intervening of more than a thousand years, is undeniable. I have been told of a learned doctor of divinity, one of the most sincere and candid of men, who lately made the assertion publicly, that he had read the Bible through again and again in Hebrew, (telling the exact number of times), and that he had read it in several different languages, (stating again the number exactly), but that "he had never read in it of two resurrections." I questioned the statement, however, believing that, as generally happens in such cases, there were some explanatory words added, not noticed or remembered by the reporters. The man who has never read of two resurrections in the Bible, has certainly never read either the 27th chap. of Mathew, or the 20th of Revelation. In each of these chapters there is a distinct record of two resurrections.

That the second resurrection spoken of in Rev. xx. is a resurrection of persons, and not a symbolical resurrection, is not to be questioned, and can here be taken for granted. But what about the first resurrection? Is that a resurrection of the soul? or of the body? of the soul, that had never died, and that the persecutor "had no power to kill,"? (Luke xii. 4.) and which had never been "beheaded"? or is it a resurrection of the body and of the person, that had been killed, and had been "beheaded"? Let us examine the passage, and see what that says. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them: and judgment was given unto them, and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God; and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Read it over, dear reader, a second and third time; (you need not be afraid of repetition when the living words of the living God are in question) and see if you can discover any thing about the "resurrection of souls," as separate and apart from their bodies, for this is the question. This question can only be decided by the grammatical construction of the passage. Is the noun *psukas*, souls, the direct antecedent to which the pronoun *they* in the word, *they lived*, refers? Why not refer it to the words that stand much nearer to it? to THEM THAT WERE BEHEADED, for instance? or to "WHICH," (in Greek *hoitines*, those who)—in the clause, "WHICH HAD NOT WORSHIPPED THE BEAST," &c. Here in the original there is a change in the construction of the sentence. It is not said "the souls of those which had not worshipped the beast," as the English might be naturally enough construed. But those who, &c. It is not *ten ou proskunesanton*, participle in the genitive plural, but it is, *hoitines ou proskunesan*, "those who had not worshipped," &c. There seems to have been three distinct companies before the eye of the prophet: 1. thrones, with persons sitting on them. 2. the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God; 3. those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, &c. Or the last clause may be a farther description of the parties before referred to. But on either interpretation it may be asked in all candor, upon what principle of Greek or English Grammar, can you make *psukas*, souls the direct

"antecedent" to the pronoun *they*, implied, not expressed, in *they lived*? Where is the necessity, or even the propriety of passing over all the intervening nouns and clauses of the sentence in order to refer it to the most distant noun, *souls*? Let any intelligent reader examine the sentence, aside from all bias of theory, and then answer the question, "who lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years? and see if the answer will not be, "Why, THOSE WHO HAD BEEN BEHEADED, &c., and THOSE WHO HAD NOT WORSHIPPED THE BEAST, &c., lived and reigned." Would the theory of disembodied spirits in a resurrection state, ever have been conceived of, had it not been to escape from an apparent difficulty?

This question has nothing to do with any particular theological theory. Prof. Stewart, late of Andover, in his commentary on Revelation, has a long article on this passage. He was not an "Adventist," nor a "Premillennarian," nor a believer in the "Personal Reign" of Christ, but a very sober congregationalist divine. But he unhesitatingly infers from the passage in question, that the martyrs will be honored with a literal resurrection from the dead at the commencement of the Millennium. While meeting and refuting several erroneous interpretations of the passage, he does not seem to have deemed the notion of disembodied spirits in a resurrection state—or the "resurrection of souls," deserving of even a passing notice. To say the least, and with all deference to the honored and venerable names who advocate it, it is a very strained and far-fetched interpretation. What can it mean as a symbol? "That during the Millennium," we are told, "there will be a race of men of like spirit with the ancient martyrs" there are now, and always have been, wherever there are devoted followers of the Lamb. The Saviour will not own that man for a disciple at all, who is not prepared to die for him, should he be called to it. See Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." But there can be no martyrs during the Millennium, because there will be then no murderers; and martyrs in all ages and places there have been—as lately in Madagascar—where the opportunity for the honor was granted.

Let us examine a parallel passage in Rev. vi. 9 we read: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice saying, 'How long O Lord holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellow servants also and their brethren should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Here manifestly the "souls" spoken of as seen and heard in the symbol, are disembodied spirits. But they are spoken of as having been killed, and their blood shed. Now what would we think of a commentator who would insist that these spirits in the disembodied state had been killed while in that state, and that in that state their blood had been shed, and then should gravely undertake to explain the symbol on this principle, and to show what will transpire on the earth or what has transpired that bears a resemblance to it, "as if" disembodied spirits should be "killed," and their "blood shed"?

"Swedenborgians" believe that the resurrection takes place immediately after death, and that in all cases it is the soul that rises and that alone. "Materialists" believe that the soul dies with the body. But the great body of Christian commentators believe, and I think they are right, and that the judgement is not a harsh one, and that no amount of torturing can compel the scriptures themselves to alter any such testimony. "And the scriptures cannot be broken."

S. T. R.

IN MEMORIAM.

MR. JOHN ISRAEL.

of Freeport, N. S., was born in 1808. At the early age of twelve years he happily obtained, what those most intimately acquainted with him believed to be, a "good hope through grace." He subsequently united with the Baptist church in the place where he resided; and, by Divine assistance, continued to be an exemplary member of it till called to join "the gen-

eral assembly and church of the first-born." For a number of years brother Israel held the office of clerk of the Church, and discharged the duties of it with diligence and faithfulness.

Our dear brother's last sickness, in the early part of the year 1874, was general debility, without much pain, but towards the close of it his sufferings were distressing. They were, however, borne with Christian submission, and constant trust in God. On the 24th day of June, 1874, this faithful disciple passed away, triumphing in his Saviour.

The bereaved widow does, indeed, as might be expected, express a sense of loneliness; but she is sustained by the cheering hope of arriving in safety on the same happy shore of blest eternity. "Blest are the dead who die in the Lord."—Prepared by Rev. C. Tupper.

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

LETTER FROM REV. W. B. BOGGS.

Official communications from Rev. W. B. Boggs to the Foreign Missionary Board or its officers, have not yet arrived, but a letter from him to the Visitor appears in that paper. The following extracts are taken from it:

THE RED SEA.

The southern end of the canal is near the town of Suez, and there we enter the Red Sea. Suez is the terminus of the railway from Alexandria and Cairo, which has formed part of the great passenger and mail route to India for many years.

Probably one of the first questions which interests most European and American voyagers when they enter upon the waters of the Red Sea, is concerning the place of Israel's miraculous deliverance and Egypt's terrible overthrow. Unfortunately, most of my books being packed up, I could not have access to those which would have given me the results of the latest and most thorough investigations by Biblical scholars and travellers, concerning the exact point when the passage of the sea took place. It is likely that it was not very far down the Gulf of Suez. In looking upon the precipitous mountain ranges that run to the water's edge, I could readily imagine how the people, followed by a warlike host, were shut off from all possibility of escape, except by miraculous means.

The Red Sea is about thirteen hundred miles in length, and two hundred in width at the broadest part. The passage from Suez to Aden usually occupies six or seven days. The one thing especially remarkable about the Red Sea is the intense heat, experienced at almost all seasons of the year by those who have to pass over it. It is considered by far the worst part of the journey to the East. Many a debilitated traveller has here sunk under the unendurable heat, and even strong men have been known to die in their berths from heat apoplexy. Nor is this to be wondered at, when the situation of the Red Sea is considered. A glance at the map will show that it is bounded on one side by the burning deserts of Arabia and by those of Africa on the other, and the air coming from either side is heated almost to scorching.

October and November are called comparatively cool months, but at any time of the year this part of the voyage is a trying ordeal. You enter on it bravely, preparing for it by putting on the very lightest clothing, but six days pass slowly under such circumstances, and long before they have gone, your bravery is likely to be very much abated by the most insufferable heat. Your whole occupation is an endeavor to find relief from it. You can do but little reading or writing while panting for a breath of cool air, and the thermometer standing at 90 deg. in the shade, day and night. If it is calm you long for a breeze, and when the wind comes it blows from deserts of burning sand, and feels like the hot air from the mouth of a furnace. Passengers usually sleep on deck, while on the Red Sea, and even then it is almost impossible to be cool enough to ensure a comfortable night's rest.

We have been wondering why it was called the Red Sea, as there is nothing in the appearance of its waters to account for the name. A humorous officer of the ship suggested that it was perhaps an abbreviation for Red hot Sea.

After passing the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, the outlet of the Red Sea, and especially after getting well out into the Indian Ocean, we experienced a sense of relief. Though the thermometer did not fall much, yet the air seemed refreshing, and the heat had not that prostrating and sickening effect which it had in the Red Sea. We did not see anything of Aden, as

these steamers do not touch there on the outward voyage.

We have been favored with remarkably fine weather. For more than a fortnight after leaving Port Said we had scarcely a breeze, and the sea was as calm as a lake, so that the ship moved on steadily day after day without the slightest unpleasant motion. During the last week we had a south-west wind, which lasted for three days. It commenced when we were in the vicinity of Ceylon, and when we changed our course to the north-east towards Rangoon, it was fair, and with the sails, in addition to the steam power, we moved along at a rapid rate.

We are now nearing the shores of Burmah, and expect in a day or two to look upon that land which possesses such an undying interest for American Baptists—on account of the apostolic labors, heroic sufferings, and wonderful success of those faithful ones who have here proclaimed Christ's gospel to the proud, idolatrous Burman, and the degraded Karen.

RANGOON, BURMAH, Nov. 6, 1874.

In Burmah at last! Amid the scenes of Judson's toils and trials—where the first Burmese convert confessed Christ—in the land that is doubtless destined to see yet greater triumphs of the gospel!

We arrived here on Monday, 2d inst., two days later than we expected, owing to a strong head wind which we encountered in the Gulf of Martaban. We hoped to have arrived in time to send letters by the English mail which left here on Sunday, 1st inst., but the mail steamer passed us out in the Gulf, and so our letters must lie over till next mail. It leaves here weekly for Calcutta.

I also hoped to reach Rangoon before the friends left for Henthada to attend the Convention, but most of them had gone two days before our arrival. Bro. Sanford and wife, Bro. Armstrong, and Miss Armstrong have gone, but I expect to see them at the Convention as I intend to go up by the next steamer, in company with Bro. Colburn and several other missionaries. We will miss the opening exercises and the Sunday services, but as the meetings will probably last several days, we will be able to attend some of them.

A day or two ago, Bro. Haswell, one of the American brethren, and I visited the great, far-famed Shway Dagon Pagoda. It is the largest in all farther India. I do not know the dimension, except that it is between three and four hundred feet high. The enclosed area around the base is very extensive, giving room for an immense number of idol-houses, and shrines of different kinds. The pagoda is entirely covered with gold leaf from base to summit, and can be seen glistening in the sun many miles. While we were there, all the approaches were thronged with worshippers, bearing their offerings up, and prostrating themselves before hideous and ridiculous images, the work of their own hands. As I witnessed these things I thought of the account of Paul at Athens—Acts xvii: 16—"his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." It is certainly a sight calculated to awaken the deepest commiseration in the hearts of those who know that none but Christ can save men.

Yesterday I witnessed a scene of a very different character, and one which awakened in my heart a thrill of joy and gratitude, and led me inwardly to say, "What hath God wrought!" In company with Bro. Carpenter I visited the Karen Theological Seminary, of which Dr. Binney is the venerable President.

There are fifty-three names on the roll, and they are all candidates for the ministry, receiving such instruction as will enable them intelligently and effectively to instruct the churches and proclaim the gospel to their heathen countrymen. The course of study extends over five years. While we were present the different classes were questioned by the native professor, on various subjects. I was particularly interested in their answers (interpreted by Bro. C.) to questions on the subject of "preaching," and on "the life of Christ." It was evident that they comprehended these things clearly. They are remarkably bright and intelligent looking young men.

The exercises closed with singing, and I came away feeling thankful to God for what the gospel has accomplished in Burmah. O that we, by his guidance and grace, may be made the means of accomplishing similar results in Siam!

Ever yours sincerely,  
W. B. Boggs.

The Baptist church in Raleigh, N. C., has elected four deacons.