

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES.

An inspired writer speaking of those who "wrest . . . the Scriptures to their own destruction." When such persons attempt to teach, there is, of course, reason to fear that, by perverting the language of inspiration from its true import, they will lead others astray to their ruin. The Apostle, therefore, adds a caution against being led away with error. (2 Pet. iii. 16, 17.)

Those who advocate sentiments repugnant to the plain teaching of the Bible, are accustomed to quote numerous texts which may seem to the unwary to substantiate their views: but a careful examination of the texts cited, with their respective contexts, and other portions of sacred writ connected with the subject under consideration, may enable discerning persons to perceive, that they are perverted from their real meaning.

While recently perusing an article designed to prove that people have no conscious existence between death and the resurrection, among numerous instances of wresting the Scriptures, I noticed an attempt to evade the irrefragable proof of such existence contained in Phil. i. 21, 22, 24, where Paul says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better," namely, than "to abide in the flesh." The writer, instead of attempting the impracticable task of putting any plausible construction on this passage that would make it seem to harmonize with his system, labors to paralyze it by a reference to what the same Apostle has said when treating of the resurrection. After remarking: "From the desire which Paul expressed to depart and be with Christ, it is by some inferred, that the soul lives in the body and at death goes to Christ to live with him, and consequently the soul must be immortal," he adds, "Now Paul said, 'If the dead rise not, then those who sleep in Jesus are perished, or lost;' but if he could have been present with the Lord whilst dead, how could perishing be possible, in case there should be no resurrection?"

No person endowed with common sense, who attentively and impartially reads 1 Cor. xv. 1-23, can fail to see, that the Apostle is establishing the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, and hence the resurrection of the bodies of believers in him; and he remarks, in effect, that if Christ did not rise from the dead, there was no truth in the gospel; and consequently those who were trusting in Him were yet in their sins, and such as had died relying on Him had perished.—The writer's citation from Paul, by which he represents him as contradicting himself, is pervertingly garbled, and made to convey an idea entirely different from that which was obviously intended by him. His words are, "For if the dead arise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (Ver. 16-18.)" This plain statement is perfectly consistent with the one equally plain in which the Apostle expresses assurance, that when he should no longer "abide in the flesh," he would "be with Christ;" and that in which he says (2 Cor. v. 8.) "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord;" as also with the language of Peter who says, (2 Pet. i. 13, 14.) "I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle."

Undoubtedly the felicity of believers will be increased by the resurrection; but these passages, with many others confirmatory of the same doctrine, teach us with the utmost plainness, that when the children of God by their decease put off their earthly tabernacle, they will be with Christ. All texts, therefore, which are adduced to prove the contrary, must, as in the case now noticed, be perverted.

Another instance of the wresting of Scripture by the same writer may be here presented, as a specimen. He says, "One of the strongest passages from which the immortality of the soul is inferred, is Mat. x. 28, where Christ said, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.'" The writer endeavours to evade this decisive proof from the closing part of the verse, "But rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. On this he remarks, 'A soul that for certain reasons can and will be destroyed, can not be immortal;' and adds, 'One

thing is certain, that destruction means destruction."

But the question is. Does destruction necessarily mean annihilation, or the termination of existence? Egypt is spoken of as being "destroyed." (Exod. x. 7.) when it obviously was not annihilated, but reduced to a state of wretchedness. God says (Hos. xiii. 9.) "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," where it evidently means, 'plunged thyself by sin into a miserable condition, (xiv. 1.) not annihilated thyself; for it is added, 'In me is thy help.' Where it is said, (Prov. x. 15) — "The destruction of the poor is their poverty," it surely does not denote the termination of their existence, but a state of distress, (also Prov. xiii. 23.) When Jesus was ejecting evil spirits, we are informed in one instance that they said to him, "Art thou come to destroy us," and in another that they said, "Art thou come hither to torment us?" (Mar. i. 24. Math. viii. 29.) These instances, without enumerating more, clearly demonstrate, that the terms *destroy* and *destruction* are not unfrequently used to denote 'reducing to a state of wretchedness.' *Destroy* is evidently so used in Mat. x. 28. This is put beyond all reasonable doubt by the express language of Christ, as recorded by the several Evangelists. (Mat. viii. 11. 12. xiii. 49, 50. xxiii. 33. xxv. 41, 46. Mar. iii. 29. ix. 43-48. Luke xvi. 22-26. John v. 28, 29.)

My design in briefly noticing these two samples of wresting the Scriptures by those who maintain that impenitent and unbelieving sinners cannot suffer between death and the resurrection, and that at it they will be annihilated, has been to put people upon their guard against embracing such unscriptural views, adapted to embolden the ungodly to persevere in their sinful courses, impenitence, and unbelief. Sentiments that compel their abettors so grossly to pervert the plain language of the sacred Oracles, assuredly are not to be regarded as taught in the Bible, even if some specious arguments may be adduced in their favor.

May each of my readers have grace to avoid error, "receive the love of truth," and "believe to the saving of the soul!"

CHARLES TUPPER.

Aylesford, Jan. 26, 1871.

For the Christian Messenger.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

"God hath made man upright" Ec. vii. 29. Whether we regard this passage as referring to man's physical, mental, or moral nature, or to the whole, the purity of man as he came from the hand of his Maker must be indisputable, so far as his nature was developed, for nothing impure could come from the hand of the Almighty. The powers and faculties bestowed upon him had never been employed but in harmony with the Divine. A perfect sympathy, confidence and oneness in every desire, purpose and act, had as yet, existed in the mind of man in relation to his Creator. The sublimity of a happiness thus founded is not readily conceived.

The continuance of this unmingled happiness was put to the test of voluntary obedience. The liberty of man to partake of all that God had placed him in the midst of was limited only by the restriction of one tree, "the tree of good and evil." All else was at his service. The prohibition was rendered awfully significant by the threatened penalty of disobedience. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" or as otherwise rendered, "Dying thou shalt die."

To regard only the act of partaking of the forbidden tree, is to lose sight of that which gives force and character to the transgression. It, the prohibition, was a test of loving obedience,—the transgression was an act of cool rebellion from the heart, voluntarily committed against God, thereby dethroning him from the affections,—a deliberate choice of disobeying, in preference to that of obeying,—of submission to the evil one, under a deceitful promise, and selfish expectation of personal benefit. The immediate result was, death, death instantly, death ever prospectively.

If asked what that death is I am ready to plead my ignorance, and so if asked what death literally is, I cannot tell. I see its effects and I know its reality. Now death, the penalty of the transgression of our first parents manifests itself, and is known by its effects. By these, limited as our knowledge must be of their full existence and extent, we know that the penalty was executed according to the Divine word.

An immediate result of that death was, the conscious loss of fellowship with God,—of innocence, that inseparable accompan-

ment of true happiness,—of spiritual-mindedness the soul's only power of living to God, or of enjoying the manifest presence of God. It extended to the will, the will became perverted, the affections were alienated, the conscience defiled, the understanding darkened, thus man was turned entirely out of the right way.

The entire race of man became subject to this death. In what way the Bible does not inform us, while the fact itself is clearly revealed. "By one man sin entered with the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," or "in whom all have sinned." "By man came death." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." "The wages of sin is death." These with kindred passages teach us that the entire race of man became involved in the effects of the first transgression, and further that these effects find their synthesis in total depravity, "God is not in all his thoughts." They are all gone out of the way * * * there is none that doeth good, no not one." "Jehovah saw that the evil of man was great in the earth; and every device of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, all the day." (Revised Bible Union.)

This is a depravity that is as helpless as it is sinful. Its very nature is in a predominant hatred to God, a voluntary disinclination to be controlled by his will or to be saved by his grace. There is no remnant of primeval goodness on which to build a reformation. There is no shattered godliness to be reconstructed, nor is there any latent power to be developed into life. All is death. Now in this description of human depravity, we do not assert that man, though totally depraved, is practically as bad as he might be, but there is an entire absence of all sympathy with, love for, or enjoyment of God, however enlightened or cultivated, and hence the necessity of the new birth. But this, the new birth, must be reserved for another letter.

FIDELEITAS.

For the Christian Messenger.

ADVENTISM; ITS CREED AND CONTRADICTIONS.

Dear Brother,—

I wish to express my high gratification on the appearance in the *Messenger* of articles from the pen of Dr. Angus on "Future Punishment." I hope all your readers will preserve those articles, they are worthy of being kept.

Again I am induced to offer a few remarks on this subject, from the fact that our community has been visited a short time ago by an Advent preacher, who has distributed a number of their tracts among those who could be induced to take them. Some of these I have since read. It appears to me that their two most prominent features are barrenness of gospel and perversion of truth.

Upon a careful perusal I find the great central doctrines of the gospel are left out. The sufferings of Christ, and the atonement which he made for sin, are not there. His first advent is entirely left out, and the fact of his coming into the world to save sinners, no where referred to. Repentance towards God is not named. The doctrine of the new birth not hinted. It is in short, a creed without a Christ. This explains why their dogmas take chiefly with either the unconverted or disaffected persons. Those who are on the high way to skepticism, struggling between unbelief and faith, not liking to stop at the one, or able to reach the other, but wishing for a half-way place between the two, will find very good accommodations in the doctrines taught in "Our Creed," but there is poor fare there for a Christian.

Again, their own contradictions prove their system to be human.

A pamphlet on "Future Punishment," published by their society, I also have in possession. On its second page the writer maintains that annihilation itself will be the punishment and quotes in proof, 2 Thes. i. 9. On the 10th page he says: "The scriptural and rational doctrine of degrees in punishment is perfectly reconcilable with final destruction of being; as it will be preceded by such different degrees of suffering as Divine Justice shall inflict." Now which statement he would have us believe as true I know not. But it is certain if the annihilation is in itself the punishment, there can be no degrees in suffering after the punishment takes effect. If the punishment precedes the annihilation, then the annihilation is not the punishment but the glorious release from it.

Again the same writer says, "It is admitted that if the plain testimony of the

Bible does not contradict the literal import of the term *forever* as applied to the torment of the wicked, we ought to understand it in its literal import, as we do when applied to the happiness of the righteous." He then proceeds to state that when applied to the wicked it means a limited.—The proof is given in Gen. xvii. 8, 13.—Isa. xxx. 8. Eccles. i. 4. Jonah ii. 6.—Now leaving out the fact that not one of passages apply to the wicked; let us see how the writer uses the word himself. On his last page he says, "The overwhelming conviction that God and heaven and immortality are lost, all *forever*, lost will be the bitterest ingredient in the last cup of agony of the expiring soul." What does he mean by *forever*? According to his showing they will not lose it long.

Yours, &c.,

WM. E. HALL.

For the Christian Messenger.

MEETING HOUSE BURNED.

Dear Bro. Selden,—

Undoubtedly you and many others will be grieved to learn, that the Baptist Meeting House in Tremont, Aylesford, called "Bethel," has been consumed by fire. To us, short-sighted and erring mortals, it seems peculiarly trying and unpropitious, this disaster should have occurred at the present time, and under existing circumstances. The Week of Prayer had been observed in this House, and subsequently evening meetings had been constantly held in it till January 29th. Much good had evidently been effected, in the quickening of steadfast believers, the reclaiming of back-sliders, and the awakening of unconverted sinners, of whom numbers appeared to be seriously impressed, and some were beginning to express hope in the gracious Redeemer. On the evening of the 27th a large number of persons attended, and the prospect appeared highly encouraging. But, alas! before the morning light of the next day appeared, the House was seen to be in flames.

The means by which this disaster occurred can not be certainly determined; and no person can be reasonably blamed.

A heavy loss has been sustained by the burning of this commodious and valuable House of worship, which had been opened not quite 20 years before, in which also were the Bible, some Hymn books and the Sabbath School Library. Our brethren, however, instead of repining, or sitting down in discouragement, are putting forth immediate efforts to provide temporary accommodation for public worship, till a new House can be built. In the mean time a brother—G. L. Stronach—kindly furnishes a hall, in which a considerable number of people can assemble for worship.

May the gracious Lord overrule this trial and loss for good!

Yours fraternally,

CHARLES TUPPER.

For the Christian Messenger.

TEMPERANCE WORK.

Mr. Editor,—

At a temperance meeting held in the meeting house in our village a short time since, the question was asked and frequently repeated—What must or can be done, to stay the evil of intemperance in our land? I asked, what is being done? It was stated that "temperance is the twin-sister of religion." The commandment is, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Do the ministers of the gospel go into all the world and preach temperance to every creature, or do they join organizations with closed doors? Do not the public need instruction? How are they to get it, when they are debarred from attending temperance meetings held by the different organizations? Is it not strange that professing Christians and temperance men, when they send a man to represent them before the highest tribunal of which they have any control—the Legislature—that they should send a rummy and sometimes a skeptic?

And yet they will stand and ask, What shall we do to stem the tide of intemperance? Oh, how consistent!

If a man should travel through our province, murdering a man at Annapolis, one at Windsor, and another at Halifax, every voice and hand would be raised against him; and he would be executed for his crime. Is not Intemperance a monster of greater magnitude? Who raises his voice against it?

Does the minister as much as he ought? Do the Deacons and church members? Do the Magistrates? Are they a terror to evil

doers? If crime is committed the magistrates bristle up a little; but many of our officers of the law will continue to suck down the very cause of crime as a sweet morsel. Many professed Christians will not only drink themselves, but will invite young men to do so, knowing that by doing this they may be led down to a drunkard's grave, and No drunkard shall inherit the "kingdom of God." This is very unlike Paul, who would not eat flesh nor drink wine, while the world stands, if it cause his brother to stumble, or offend. Every man knows that the use of strong drink is the greatest curse in the land; yet many well disposed men think it no sin to drink habitually. It may not be unlawful in itself, but by a respectable man—perhaps a member of a church,—using intoxicating drink, the unwary youth may be induced to follow the example, and so take what will create an appetite, which if indulged will lead to ruin.

Would it not be better for every well wisher of our race to make the small sacrifice, and say with Paul, I will do nothing whereby my brother is offended or is made weak? Would it not be well for the churches and temperance men—and the ministers, to aid,—to hold public meetings, and train the public mind, and the youth, to virtue and total abstinence, which is the only safe ground for a sound morality?—The public mind needs enlightening; and there is no way to do that but by public labour. Let total abstinence be taught in the week-day and Sabbath schools, and much good may be done here. If we really want to stop the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drink in our land, we must begin,—not only at home,—but also at the fountain head. We would say to Christians what Paul said; "Know ye not that as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ?" Do you think he would have chosen a wine-bibber? The Priests were not allowed to drink wine in the temple. Neither Samson; nor his mother, John the Baptist, nor his mother were allowed to drink wine.

Temperance men: Let our works correspond with our words; Let all throughout the Province be united in sending total abstinence men to represent us, and if all say,—stop the traffic, stop it must—then drunkenness will cease.

RUSTICUS.

Scott's Bay, Jan. 20, 1871.

Another friend writes, "I send you a piece of Poetry, if worthy of insertion please publish:—

THE DRUNKARD'S WIFE.

The deepest anguish ever found,
Through all the changing scenes of life;
By searching earth's remotest bound,
Dwells with the lonely drunkard's wife.

No peaceful hour of sweet repose,
Can shed its balm around her heart;
She lives where pleasure never flows,
Where friends can ne'er their aid impart.

The man who pledged himself to be,
Her sure support in trial's hour;
Has plunged in depths of misery,
Where storms of darkness ever lower.

When first he took her by the hand,
A handsome charming graceful bride;
He says you're now at my command,
Through life I'll be your constant guide.

Those vows alas, how soon forgot!
An awful tyrant bears the sway;
The tempter finds a fiendish plot
To turn his footsteps far astray.

His wife like some transplanted flower,
Stands drooping by herself alone;
She often thinks of that sweet bower,
Her father's house, her youthful home.

She thinks of all her kindred there,
Her sister's voice her brothers dear;
Her spirit sinks in deep despair,
While swiftly falls the flowing tear.

She rival'd once the fragrant flower,
The tinted rose, the lily fair;
Now crushed beneath a tyrant's power,
She has a drunkard's fate to share.

Her days of pleasure here are past,
Deep anguish fills her inmost soul;
On her ademon's frowns are cast,
Till Death dread monster claims its own.

She hears her children cry for bread,
Her ear can hear the faintest cry;
And prays to God they may be fed,
"O Father, leave them not to die."

Wearied with care her spirit faints,
She looks beyond the starlit sky;
The eye of faith then takes a glance,
To those bright mansions built on high.

For that bright world she heaves a sigh,
Then bids her offspring all farewell;
I leave for joys prepared on high,
On Heaven's blest shores I soon shall dwell.