

Contributors and Correspondents.

MR. ANDERSON TO CANADENSIS.

DEAR SIR,—My notice of "Canadensis" in your last letter will be very brief, as far as regards myself personally.

(1) How he could imagine that his sentiments in regard to the salvation of the heathen would not be opposed, I cannot comprehend. (2) Of course, it is admitted all round that each has a right to his own opinion, and to maintain and defend it, and that equally in the case of those who differ from us, as of those who agree with us. (3) In introducing the anecdote of Dr. Chalmers, I did feel as if I were violating my own rule, and therefore I cry peccati. But I intended it as a more matter of pleasantry, to relieve the tedium of controversy. "Canadensis," however, is right; it is better to keep to the merits alone! (4) I regret, however, that he declines the continuance of the controversy; as I think it would have become more and more apparent that both he, and such great men as Dr. Christlieb, do overlook, and cannot but overlook, very plain passages of Scripture, when they maintain such opinions as those which have given rise to this correspondence. (5) I differ from "Canadensis" entirely when he says that this is "a subject with which, after all, we have nothing practically to do, except to fulfil our Lord's command, to preach the Gospel to all nations." I answer, that with everything our Lord has chosen to reveal in His Word, we have practically to do, else He would not have revealed it. And the practical bearing of my position on the diligent and earnest preaching of the Gospel to perishing men, is self-evident. But it is not so, if the position of "Canadensis" were consistently and generally noted on. (6) I have always a suspicion, when a passage is quoted, in which are to be found very objectionable statements, if no dissent is expressed, concurrence is implied. Now, Mr. Editor, my suspicion is proved to be well founded, at least as regards "Canadensis," for, in last letter, he concurs with Dr. Christlieb in the altogether unsupported statement, "that the Gospel was offered, even after death, to those who had died in ignorance of the way of salvation, I have therefore succeeded in drawing out of "Canadensis" an endorsement of Christlieb's heresy. Here are his words:—"To me, indeed, the plain and natural reading of the passage seems to justify Dr. Christlieb's cautious statement, that Scripture is not without traces of such a thought. To what, Mr. Editor, are we coming? What views may we by-and-by expect to prevail in the Presbyterian Church of the future? And to what practices, also, may such views conduct? Are "prayers for the dead," and "requiem services," and other such abominations, to be tolerated amongst us? But if these "cautious statements" are to be received, why not go the whole length, and let us have Popery in full blast? Surely the Reformation has been a great mistake! As I have a little faith in this offer of the Gospel after death, of which I find no trace in God's Word, as I have in the possible salvation of the heathen without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as necessary thereto. I might almost go the length of challenging proof. At all events, it is not to be found in the words of Peter, which Christlieb quotes, and "Canadensis" endorses. And I say this, Mr. Editor, not thinking "it either rash or presumptuous to dogmatize on a confessedly difficult and mysterious passage, in which the most learned commentators and profound theologians have found it impossible to agree." Let me just say to "Canadensis" that his language is conflicting and contradictory. He first tells us, "that the plain and natural reading of the passage seems to justify Dr. Christlieb's cautious statement;" and then he tells us "I should think it would be very rash and presumptuous to dogmatize on a confessedly difficult and mysterious passage," &c. How do these statements hang together? Are they consistent or conflicting? Permit me to say, Mr. Editor, that I believe a great part of the difficulty experienced in interpreting this, and other passages of Scripture, arises from attempting to make the Word of God teach what it emphatically condemns. And that, if you interpret the Word of God as it should be, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, the difficulties of critics would soon be resolved. But if you wish to foist in a monstrous dogma, repugnant to reason, as it is to the Word of God and the analogy of things; it can only be done by the old Popish plan, with the bodies of heretics, by puffing to the rack—to torture. And in so saying, I do not wish to be misunderstood, as if I undervalued the difficulties learned and pious men have felt in connection with this passage. Still, I think, there is a way in getting over such difficulties as critics experience with this and other passages, viz: that where there seems to be no preponderance of exegetical acumen in favour of one rendering rather than another, it is best to adopt that which, while not violating grammatical propriety, is most in harmony with the teaching of Scripture in other and plainer passages. This is the plan the humble and unlearned Protestant Christian adopts. And who will say he is wrong? This is the plan I shall adopt now.

The passage under consideration is I. Peter, iii., 18-20. What do these words of the Apostle mean? Do they mean that the Lord Jesus, personally or by representative, preached to the antediluvians, who afterwards perished by the Flood? Or do they mean that the Lord Jesus, as a disembodied spirit, went down into hell, or the invisible world, and preached to disembodied spirits, confined in the limbus patrum? Do these words mean, that the Lord Jesus descended into hell, and personally preached to dead men in the invisible world? These, as far as known to me, are the questions raised by this passage.

Now, there was lately sent me a pamphlet

of 28 pages, being an exegesis of these verses, by the Rev. Adam Welch, of Kincardine-on-Forth, whose views are at least novel, if not convincing. He treats the subject very fairly, and endeavouring, sincerely and earnestly, to do all justice to his theme, both as a matter of grammatical analysis, and in consistency with the analogy of faith. While admitting fully the difficulties felt in the right interpretation of the passage, and the mass of literature these verses alone have called forth; the disagreement of critics, and the consequent despair some have felt in regard to the complete and satisfactory understanding of the passage, he yet holds it to be sinful not to grapple with the difficulties, and heaves it not to be beyond the sanctified efforts of devout men, to come at last to some well-founded interpretation, in which the Church may very generally acquiesce. And to this important end, he desires to contribute his share—surely a very worthy endeavour. Let me now try if I can bring into as small a space as possible the salient points of his criticism.

The first thing to be noticed is the design and end the Apostle has in view, both in preceding and succeeding context. "The Apostle is exhorting his readers to patience in the endurance of suffering, as they were subjected to serious trials and persecutions. To bear them cheerfully, the Apostle reminds them of what Christ has done for men. Nothing so soon reconciles Christians to the trials laid upon them as this. No exposition can be correct which does not make the object prominent which the Apostle had in view in writing, and of which this object does not form the animating soul." Hence, the sufferings of Christ are intended by the Apostle to be the grand means of stimulating all his followers to "arm themselves with the same mind;" that as He suffered for them, the just for the unjust; they might suffer for Him, as evil-doers, though yet innocent of the things laid to their charge.

Second. As the grand, immediate design of Christ's sufferings, was "to bring us unto God, so the way and manner in which this was effected is stated in the words, "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." This is the first clause where any real difficulty is experienced. Mr. Welch says in reference to it—"The words flesh and spirit stand in the original without any preposition before them. In translating into English, it is necessary to supply one. What shall it be? The translators of the authorized version use in before flesh, and by before spirit. The two branches of this clause, which is a double one, are contrasted, as the words, indeed, but, indicate. This renders it necessary, as many expositors have observed, that whatever preposition you employ in translation before the word flesh, you must employ also in translation before the word spirit." Our authorized translators erred in using two different prepositions. Their rendering will not bear a close examination. Having been put to death in the flesh seems strangely unsuitable language to apply to Christ. It would seem to imply that something else than His body died. It does not express the death of His body at all, though those unaccustomed to the accurate use of language may think it strange that we should say so. This part of our text, as it stands in our authorized translation, strictly and grammatically means, "that Christ in some sense died while in the flesh, that is, while still living." A translation of a portion of Scripture involving such a contradiction as this cannot be accurate. "Made alive, or quickened by the Spirit," is a translation equally objectionable, but for a different reason. It makes the Holy Spirit the agent in our Lord's resurrection. Such an idea occurs nowhere else in Scripture. The Father is spoken of as raising up Christ from the dead, and He is spoken of as raising Himself; but this work is never ascribed to the Holy Spirit. I have given the quotation from Mr. Welch as full as possible, as I intend to make on it the following strictures:—(1.) Mr. Welch says, and says rightly, that in the Greek there is no preposition before flesh and spirit respectively. This is true, also, of the last verse of the 4th chapter, 1st clause, which is, "Christ, therefore, having suffered for us in the flesh—there is no preposition in the Greek. The same is again true of the 6th verse of the 4th chapter, "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." There is no preposition in the Greek in this clause either. Now, the question is, as Mr. Welch says, what preposition shall we supply, as one must be supplied to give proper expression to the Apostle's thoughts? But, as there is no necessity for departing from the authorized translation, unless exegetical difficulties compel, I am inclined to think the authorized translation right in the preposition they have supplied. And for the very good reason, that the Apostle himself, in two of these very verses we have quoted, supplies the preposition wanted, and of this our translators take advantage, while Mr. Welch strangely and unaccountably ignores it; he never so much as mentions the fact. In the last clause of the 1st verse of the 4th chapter, which is, "because he, having suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin." Here, in the Greek, the Apostle supplies the very preposition wanted. Again, in the 2nd verse of this same 4th chapter, the words occur, "that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Here, again, the Apostle has himself supplied the wanted preposition. As I have said already, it is inconceivable to me how Mr. Welch systematically ignores these, but so it is. (2.) While admitting that a preposition is thus wanted before flesh and spirit, I am not disposed at once to concede that we must, of grammatical necessity, have in before flesh, as Mr. Welch so quietly assumes, even though he be backed up by a great array of expositors. This preposition to be applied will depend on the thought

to be expressed. And when we have caught the precise thought of the writer, we may then find appropriate language to express it. Moreover, it may be perfectly proper to vary the translation even of the same preposition in two different clauses, just as our translators have done. Everybody knows how very varied are the senses attaching to prepositions. So it might be here, though it is not so actually: for "quickened in the Spirit," makes as good sense as "quickened by the Spirit," and involves the same great truth, as I shall by and by show. This leads me (3) to notice these novel, but certainly astounding words of Mr. Welch:—"Having been put to death in the flesh, seems strangely unsuitable language to apply to Christ." This seems to me the most suitable language in every way, and an exact correspondence with the whole tenor of the language of Peter, as well as of the other Apostles. Is not the death of Christ the great theme of prophets, as well as of Apostles? Is it not the great theme also of Peter? I surely do not need to stop to prove this, if it were necessary it could soon be done. Mr. Welch further says—"It would seem to imply that something else than his body died." To which I answer—"It seems to imply what Peter elsewhere affirms, even in the last verse of the preceding chapter,—that the Lord Jesus had a nature that death could not touch; it would imply that something else than his body was absolutely incapable of being affected by death, and therefore the rendering of our translators is not merely grammatically correct but true to other portions of God's word. "Being put to death in (or as to) the flesh," is therefore better retained. It expresses a quite competent and very precious truth. Mr. Welch further says—"It does not express the death of his body at all, though those unaccustomed to the accurate use of language may think it strange that we should say so. This part of our text, as it stands in our authorized translation, strictly and grammatically means, that Christ in some sense died while in the flesh, that is, while still living." There are two parts in this quotation, each containing a strong assertion, which I would like to meet with as direct a contradiction. To the first, "it does not express the death of his body at all," I answer, it would be difficult if the words here employed do not express the death of our Lord's body to get words that would. If the Greek verb, here used does not involve the putting to death of the body, it would be difficult to get a verb that does. And to the second, "that Peter's words, according to the authorized translation, seems strictly and grammatically to mean, that Christ in some sense died while in the flesh, that is, while still living." I answer, "Yes, Peter's words seem expressly constructed to imply, and the plain reader of the Bible rejoices in the implication that while over the Lord Jesus Christ death, in some sense, had power, there is a further sense in which He, dying, yet lived; death had no power over him. While his body, all that was human of Christ, passed under the power of death; there is a blessed implication brought out even in its strict grammatical sense, in which Peter's words seem further to involve, that over the person Christ Jesus death had no power; He yet lives in death, and lives evermore. I say, thanks to Mr. Welch for drawing attention to this, and making it so clearly apparent. Of course, I know that while Mr. Welch himself holds this as firmly as I do, that is not what he means here. He means that the rendering of the translators involves a simple grammatical contradiction. Yes, if you keep your eye fixed only on the human side of our Lord's nature. But this is what scripture does not always do; and, moreover, is what is not done here. I think I thus see that fine shade of pregnant thought in scriptural language, which critics do not at ways succeed in catching. Again Mr. Welch says—"Made alive, or quickened by the spirit, is a translation equally objectionable, but for a different reason, it makes the Holy Spirit the agent in our Lord's resurrection, such an idea occurs nowhere else in the scripture, to which I again reply—"That the recognition by Peter of the Agency of the Holy Ghost in the resurrection of Christ, is just what I believe, in direct opposition to Mr. Welch, is an idea that is expressly indicated in other portions of scripture." Let me try to establish this, if possible. My position is, that the resurrection of Christ is attributed to all three persons in the Godhead Mr. Welch admits, in direct terms, that the resurrection of our Lord is attributed to the Father, and the Son. It devolves upon me to show that it is also attributed to the Holy Ghost. Let us see. Mr. Welch will admit that the birth of our Lord in the womb of the Virgin, is expressly attributed to the Holy Ghost. At his baptism he was also honored with the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. His consecration to His mediatorial offices and work, is expressly attributed to the Holy Ghost in various places of the scriptures. His sacrificial work, as the Great High Priest of His people, "in offering up himself without spot to God" is expressly attributed to the Holy Ghost. Strange it thus really last, crowning act of Christ, should be altogether unaccompanied and unattested by the same Blessed and Glorious One; seeing that upon it, so stupendous issues hang. But of this, as I think, we are not left in absolute doubt. What does the Apostle Paul mean to convey, in the first chapter of Romans, and third verse when he says—"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Do these words not involve that in this declaration with power of Christ's Sonship, the Holy Ghost had to do; as He also has in that power which He exercises upon the consciences and hearts of the people of Christ? I am aware, indeed, that we must bear in mind, that as in the third verse of the first chapter of Romans, Christ is said

"to be born of the seed of David according to the flesh," and that therefore "the spirit of holiness" in the 4th verse, is contrasted with the flesh in the 3rd. Well, even so. But what then? This contrast being kept prominently in view, what are we to make of it? To keep out of view absolutely the agency of the Holy Ghost in the production of this holiness? Then, in consistency, you are bound, when rendering the term spirit, when contrasted with flesh, to confine yourself strictly to Christ's human nature, and to exclude all reference to His Divinity. But is this done? Our Translators do not so, as far as I have observed. Now, as I am unwilling to be so confined; as I desire sometimes to include the idea of our Lord's Divinity, even when flesh and spirit are contrasted, as involved in the word spirit, I am I, likewise, unwilling to exclude the idea of the operation of the Holy Ghost when reference is made to this word. The words, according to the spirit of holiness, as used by Paul, clearly teach, that the resurrection of Christ is, in some way, attributed to the Holy Ghost, even as it is to the Father and to the Son. This is only in accordance with what we might have expected from the prominent part assigned the Holy Ghost in other portions of the Blessed Redeemer's life and work. These statements are simply suggestive, not exhaustive. But let me now come (4) to the rendering Mr. Welch himself gives, and which he thinks free from all exegetical difficulty. It is—"Having been put to death indeed for the flesh, but made alive for the spirit." Our translation he says, "is exposed to no such difficulties" as I have now dwelt upon at length, and endeavoured to remove. It complies with the rules of translation, and, as we shall see, brings out a scriptural and consistent sense. The words flesh and spirit, are in the active case, in the original, and the merest tyro in the Greek language is aware that for, and to, are the prepositions commonly used when translating that case into English. We use the first in the present instance, because the other is inapplicable, it would not make sense. But the Apostle happily delivers us from all possibilities of dispute as to the proper preposition to employ. He has put on record the proof, that he uses the two words flesh and spirit as datives of purpose which every one in the slightest degree acquainted with the peculiarities of Greek Grammar is aware are correctly translated by the preposition for. The evidence that the Apostle uses the two words referred to in the way we have already mentioned, is very clear and convincing. That evidence we find in the first verse in the fourth chapter of this Epistle—"Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same purpose." These words can have no relevance, unless we supply the first clause to express a purpose. Then, we find the true key to our text. * We need not discuss the propriety of using the expression and, or any other, before the words flesh and spirit respectively. The Apostles own language settles the matter conclusively. I have again given this extract as full as I could, in order to make room for the following remarks.—(1) My objection to this translation of Mr. Welch, of the first verse of the 4th chapter,—"Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for the flesh,"—is, that it errs grossly to defect, in that it fails altogether to notice the substitutionary work of Christ, as involved in the Apostle's words, "for as;" two important Greek words, whose force and power is not given by Mr. Welch, in his proposed translation, and exegesis. And this is fatal to it. These two words are simply passed over, as if they had no existence. I suppose our friend foresaw that they would make a rather clumsy translation. Let us see. "Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for us, for the flesh," does seem to read rather harshly. Surely the "reading of our own translation is better, simply as matter of euphony. But I remark—2), that not simply does the Apostle use the words flesh and spirit as datives of purpose. If that be all the soul of the passage is enervated; it is a mere skeleton, without sinew and muscle. But consider these words as datives of manner, or instrumentality, and you have a power you can grasp with a firm hand, as consistent with most prominent, as well as plainest, scriptural teachings. "Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh," involves two points our translators have well brought out; viz: (a) substitution, as involved in the words "for us;" Christ has suffered for us; and (b) the manner of the suffering, "in the flesh;" as the instrumentality God employs "to bring men unto Him," or the way in which men are brought unto God. Any translation which fails to bring out, prominently these grand truths, however, true to the extent to which they go, is radically defective. And this is certainly the case with Mr. Welch's translation and exegesis, as far as I yet see. Again (c) I have shown already "how the Apostle's own language conclusively settles the matters;" not, as Mr. Welch affirms, by "finding the dative of purpose, as the key to the whole difficulty," that may be so far true, and even valuable; but I think the key is found in the Apostle's own words; viz: that he himself supplies the prepositions of which critics are in quest, and which are found in the very verses we are considering.

There are still some other things I would like to notice in this letter, but I fear I must be done for the present, and reserve my further remarks for another letter. I will conclude by simply quoting another paragraph from Mr. Welch's pamphlet with out very extended comment. "This double clause—that is, the two first clauses of the first verse of the 4th Chapter—the translation of which we have thus determined, contains, as we apprehend, the greatest difficulty in our text. Its interpretation once settled, all the rest of the passage will be found to be comparatively simple. Our translation puts its teaching in a differ-

ent light from that in which any previous exposition, so far as we know, has ever exhibited it. No one, accepting our translation, could ever conclude that flesh and spirit apply to Christ. They must apply to men. In this respect, certainly a vital one, our interpretation is new. Had interpreters sought to expand the clause in the direction of our translation, the whole difficulties of the passage would have disappeared long ago. But, persisting as they have done, in applying, the words flesh and spirit to Christ, it is not to be wondered at that their expositions have proved unsatisfactory. The clause bears on the face of it evidence that the words referred to were never meant to apply to Christ. It is a participial clause, added, as we have already observed, to explain how men are brought to God. It is therefore a distorting of it from its plain intention, to regard all its meaning as absorbed in a reference to Christ." Some of the quotations in this paragraph are mine, and are intended to emphasize the statements; so that when I examine them at length add in detail, it may easily be understood to what I refer. Of course, I may say at present, that in these statements I do not altogether concur; and for reasons I will now give:—Mr. Welch says, "that no one accepting his translation, could ever conclude that flesh and spirit apply to Christ. They must apply to men." He also says, "that the clause bears on the face of it evidence that the words flesh and spirit were never meant to apply to Christ." To which I answer, that, in so, then the translation bears on the very face of it, evidence of its thorough unsoundness. If flesh and spirit do not actually, and of design, directly apply to Christ; then to whom were they meant to apply? Mr. Welch says—"They must apply to men." Does he mean to men at large, or men in certain circumstances and conditions? The words are very vague and indeterminate. And if so, in what respect or in what manner? He says, "it is a participial clause, intended to explain how men are brought to God." Just so. I have already said that not mere dative of purpose explains the Apostle's words, and grasps their pregnant meaning; but dative of manner, or instrumentality does. And here, in Mr. Welch's own words, is the proof. He says, "the clause is participial to explain how men are brought to God." Surely, the how is just the way, manner, or instrumentality, by which men are brought unto God." And by what process of critical torture, Mr. Welch can possibly divide the words flesh, "in which Christ suffered," and spirit "in or by which he was quickened," from Christ himself, I cannot conceive, nor has he shown in his pamphlet. If there is any connection of the participial clause with men at all, it is with the man, Christ Jesus, who, as the Apostle in the Hebrews so well says—"For as much then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." For the suffering of death he took our natures; and in the very human nature that sinned, has he finished a work, whose design and effect is—"to bring men unto God." This translation, I suppose is new; but, I fear will fail to commend itself very generally to acceptance. Although the clause under review is participial, and explanatory of "how men are brought unto God;" surely their must be an Agent actively employed in doing the work of suffering and death here so directly assigned him. The question arises—Who is the Agent? The only answer that can possibly be given, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who took our nature, and assumed our place in law and justice before God, that he might bring us unto God. So far, therefore, from "a distorting of the clause from its plain intention, to regard all its meaning as absorbed in a reference to Christ;" that it seems to me the distortion is all the other way. The language of this last clause of Mr. Welch's, it is to be observed, puts the matter in a different form from that he has used in the three previous statements. He has thus changed ground. In the former instances he says "the words flesh and spirit were never meant to apply to Christ;" and that "those who accept his translation could never think so;" but here he says, "it is a distorting of the clause from its plain intention to regard all its meaning as absorbed in a reference to Christ." This is an entirely different statement. While I believe the words do, and can only, apply to Christ in the sense which the Apostle applies it; viz: As suffering death in or as to his body; and "being quickened, in or as to, his spirit" I do by no means intend to say, what no man of common sense would say, with the words of the Apostle before him that absolutely, "all the meaning of the clause is absorbed in a reference to Christ;" when the Apostle himself is employing it, relatively, to urge and stimulate to the discharge of certain duties, even at the risk of suffering unto death, as Jesus, then Lord and Master had done before. In so far as the work "of suffering unto death," was peculiarly, and alone, the work of Christ "and of the people there were none with him in it;" that is, meritoriously, and in the way of expiation, and so, also, in the way of example; the reference is all absorbed in Christ. But in so far as it is intended to be exemplary to his people, and relative to their interests; it is intended to overflow upon them, and powerfully to influence them in all patient suffering in well-doing, and so it has in point of fact. The history of the church is full of it. The remaining part of these interesting verses I hope to be able to overtake in my next. My only apology for the great length of this letter, is the importance of the subject matter.

Very truly yours,
DANIEL ANDERSON.