

Querist's Column.

[All matter intended for this column should be addressed to E. C. Ford, Port Williams, Kings County, N. S. Questions touching the meaning of scriptures will be gladly received.]

A CRITICISM AND REPLY.

Dear Bro. Ford,—Permit me to offer a few remarks on your answer to my first question in the November CHRISTIAN, which question was, "Did God threaten Adam with natural or spiritual death when He told him, 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die?'" Certainly we would say God's decree must be carried out. But let us examine one or two similar facts. Jonah preached to Nineveh the preaching that God bid him; "yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed or overthrown." Nineveh was not overthrown, because she repented. (Jonah iii.) Again, when Aaron made the golden calf for the Israelites to worship, the Lord said, "Let Me alone that My wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." Nevertheless when Moses brought God and reminded Him of the oath He had sworn to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." (Ex. xxxii.) These two examples show the mercy of God to man, and that He will give him whom He created in His own image every possible chance consistent with His attributes and the maintenance of His laws, and He does so without being untrue to His word or decree. Now you say that had natural death been meant, Adam would not have lived nine hundred years afterward. Charles J. Guiteau said to James A. Garfield, "To-day thou shalt die," and he gave him his death wound, yes, killed him on the 2nd of July. Yet Garfield lived till the 19th of November. Should anyone ask you when Garfield was killed you would reply, "On the 2nd of July, 1881." Adam felt the doom of death upon him on that day, though he did live for nine hundred years. He felt himself to be, as indeed he was, a dying man. The correct rendering, as of course you know, is, "In the day thou eatest thereof, *dying thou shalt die.*"

Now it seems to me your answer smacks strongly of infant regeneration or infant damnation, either one, and both are abhorrent. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Natural death coming by Adam is plainly meant in this chapter, the 15th of first Corinthians, "For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead." Christ is the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. "Then cometh the end when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed (before He delivers up to the Father) is death." Natural death, certainly, for spiritual death is never destroyed, but lasts forever.

Now, then, for infant damnation. If all die a spiritual death in Adam, then infants are spiritually dead, for they are never made alive by putting on Christ; and if spiritually dead they cannot inherit eternal life. "Now, as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." So if you repudiate infant damnation you will find yourself in for infant regeneration or being born again. How, then, except by being born of water and of the Spirit? Have you not afforded an argument for the promulgation of error by this reasoning? Now, Bro. Ford, my letter is getting too long and I must draw to a close. Please take this letter in the spirit in which it is sent—that of earnest enquiry after truth, and answer accordingly. Perhaps the

discussion of this question is unnecessary; it is probable I am wrong, if so, I am anxious to be righted. Your brother in Christ,

ERNEST CRAWFORD.

Tyron, P. E. I., Nov. 14th, 1891.

Replying to the above "earnest" and kind strictures on my answer to your question, permit me to suggest that the cases of the threatened destruction of Nineveh and of the children of Israel are hardly "similar facts." In both of those cases reasons are given why God changed His purpose, in the one case, because the people repented; in the other, because Moses interceded for Israel. But in the case under consideration we have no intimation whatever that there was any change on the part of God, but rather a plain account of the execution of the threatened penalty, and that, too, the same day that Adam eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Why not take God's own action in this case as the correct interpretation of His own words? He said: "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and immediately, upon the transgression of Adam, proceeded to execute this sentence, without so much as a hint that the time was to be extended for nine hundred years.

Assuming that you make no objection to the definition of spiritual and physical death, as given in my answer to your question in the November CHRISTIAN, I would ask, Was not Adam separated, alienated from God, the same day he disobeyed? Again, is not this a result of disobedience? "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." Rom. vii. 9. This death is spiritual and because of the transgression of God's commandments. "Sin is the transgression of law." You cannot fail to see that whatever other evils may have been involved in this penalty, a separation from God, or spiritual death, was the first and immediate result of Adam's transgression. Following this disobedience Adam was not only driven from the presence of the Lord, but was also banished from the tree of life, lest he should "eat and live forever." In this banishment the race is necessarily involved; for if Adam could not eat thereof and live, neither could his descendants. Hence, physical death must be more immediately connected with the banishment from the tree of life, and is thus the remote and not the direct consequence of Adam's sin. Had he gained access to the tree of life he would have lived forever, notwithstanding his sin.

Nor is the death of Garfield a "similar" case. His wound was in the flesh, a physical wound. Adam's was that of the soul, a spiritual wound. Again, Garfield's wound was inflicted by another; Adam's, by himself. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Nor would any historian date the death of Garfield the day he was shot, but rather the day he died. Here are two distinct acts, the one when the assassin struck the fatal blow, the other when the victim actually died. The one was on the 2nd of July, 1881, and the other the 19th of November of the same year. History will always keep those two events separate.

So with Adam. The day he ate of the forbidden fruit he was driven from the presence of God and banished from the tree of life, and in consequence of this banishment from the tree of life he died a physical death some nine hundred years afterward.

Sin, of itself, could not kill the body; but it could, and did, poison the soul; the result of which is spiritual death. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she lives" can only be understood as spiritual death, or "being dead in trespasses and sins." Again, "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," can only be predicted of spiritual death; for the believer in Jesus dies a physical death as well as the unbeliever; but

Since, then, there is such a thing as spiritual death while still in the possession of physical life, and this death is the result of sin, which "is the transgression of law," the conclusion is very easy that Adam died this death the day he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and thus transgressed the law of God.

But you say this "smack" strongly of infant regeneration, or infant damnation." Not at all, my dear brother. When Paul said, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," he was certainly speaking of the death of the body, which, as already been shown, was "occasioned, not caused, by the first transgression." But from all the consequences of this death of the body Christ restores us by His resurrection from the dead. But while physical death has been entailed upon the human family without His knowledge or consent, it cannot thus be said of spiritual death. This death every man dies for himself, just as Adam did when he transgressed the law of God. "Sin is the transgression of law," and "where there is no law there is no transgression." Hence, it follows that the infants are incapable of dying a spiritual death as they are not under spiritual law; hence, cannot transgress law, and, therefore, cannot sin.

From all of which it will be seen that we have no place for infant damnation, nor any use for infant regeneration. The words of our Lord, "For of such are the kingdom of heaven," will never grow old.

Whether men shall die the second death, which is an everlasting separation from the presence of God, after they shall have been released from all consequences of physical death, depends on the character they have borne while in this life. Such as have done well will come forth to the resurrection of life, while those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.

Hoping I have at least made myself understood, I am, as ever, your brother in Christ,

E. C. FORD.

Port Williams, N. S., Dec. 15th, 1891.

News of the Churches.

ST. JOHN, N. B.

One addition by confession and obedience during the month.

Our meetings are being well attended and a splendid interest is shown in the work of the church. Last Lord's day evening Bro. Stewart preached a fine sermon from the text "What lack I yet" to a large and attentive audience.

The teachers and scholars of the Sunday-school were kindly remembered by Bro. Stewart. All received a handsome card appropriate to the holiday season, on the back of which was printed a list of the lessons for the coming year.

Elder Peters, of Westport, has been visiting our city lately. We gladly listened to his good words of encouragement.

SOUTHVILLE, N. S.

We made our November visit to Southville in company with Bro. Cooke and resigned this important point as our regular preaching station. I felt that I should do this in order that some one else might take up the work. During the two years which I have been preaching at Southville, I have been treated with the greatest of Christian kindness by the brethren, but have not been able to give them the time and labor that the place and people need. There is a grand work to be done there in the cause of Christ and truth. Bro. Cooke did the preaching, or the most of it, during our visit, and was well liked by all who heard him. I trust he will take hold of the work and that the church will take hold of him so that he may be able to devote a portion of his time and strength to this harvest field and reap abundantly for the Master.

U. A. DEVOE.