

Communications.

To be Damned.

Jesus said, when he commissioned his disciples to go preach the Gospel to every creature: "He that believeth not shall be damned."

A zealous brother was once arguing with a German the necessity of believing on Christ, and concluded the argument by saying, "If you don't, you will be damned." The dutchman replied, "Vel, vot ov it?" Sure enough, what of it? One would naturally conclude there was not much of it, judging from the large number of men on this coast who have been pronounced "damned" by somebody, and yet seem to be getting along about as well as the average. The fact is, but very few of us escape this sentence from the lips of some body, and it is not to be wondered at, that a man unacquainted with the Bible, should conclude there was nothing of it. It is worth while to inquire what Jesus meant by that word "damned," which stands as the antithesis to "saved," in the great commission?

First, let us strip the word of its fire jacket, put on by the old Spanish Inquisition. The torments of that Roguish institution have associated the Devil with his cloven hoofs, forked tail, and huge frying pan, with the word. This physical torture was carried forward into the other world, and people made to believe the Devil and his minions were but the fiery executioners of an offended God. A reaction from this extreme has landed us on the opposite of cool indifference, and now we hear flippant talk about hell and damnation as though it were a light thing.

Perhaps profanity prevails more generally here on the coast than farther east, but it is fearfully prevalent everywhere.

But to go back to the word the Savior used, it is equivalent to the word "condemned." Strip the word of all that has been added since the days of Christ, and we have men condemned. But why condemn them? Suppose an army officer is sent out to buy horses for the service. He is instructed to buy only bays, 16 hands high, of sound limb, &c. He buys one hundred and brings them up to be received. Fifty of them are pronounced by the judges to be sound and according to the instructions, but fifty are condemned; what does that mean. They are pronounced unfit for the service. What is to be done with them after this is no part of the condemnation. They may be disposed of by another order, but whatever disposition is made of them can only be regarded as a consequence of the condemnation and not a part of it. Now, if we use horses to represent men, we may say all who do not believe the Gospel are condemned as unfit for the service of God. The Gospel of Christ takes out a people for the Lord, and this act of taking out a people, leaves a people not taken. These people not taken are said to be condemned, for condemnation has passed on the whole world.

There is a certain standard of manhood which the law of the Lord makes necessary in order to be received into the kingdom of heaven here on earth. This condemnation spoken of in the great commission has reference to this first separation. If this first salvation and damnation was all, then indeed the matter would not be so serious; for then the difference would be what we see in this present life only.

But the teaching of Jesus does not stop here, for in another place He says, "All that are in their graves shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John v. 29.

Here is another separation, at which one class enters into life eternal, and a higher service; the other

class are pronounced unfit; the class rejected have not the qualifications; they were failures here on a lower plane, not having done good; how much greater the failure on the higher plane.

A soldier who fights well in the common ranks may be promoted grade after grade, till he gets to be a general; but the poor coward and bungler can never go higher.

A boy at school can be promoted from class to class till he gets his diploma, if he is studious and well behaved, but the vicious idler is refused this honor; he is condemned on the day of examination.

So we, if we do not fight the good fight of faith, will not be received into heaven. If we are ignorant and remain ignorant of the Bible, the primer of heaven's great library, we shall not get the diploma in the judgment day when the books are opened, and all, great and small, are judged according to their deeds and the things written in the books.

It is this, being left behind at the gate of the city of God, when those who have a right to the tree of life are permitted to enter in, which will constitute the eternal damnation; the despair, the anguish of love, the woe that will follow is the consequence of the damnation. It is these consequences that are portrayed by the fearful figures we find in the teaching of Jesus and his apostles.

When Jesus comes again there shall be two men in one bed, one shall be taken, the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together, one shall be taken, the other left. Two men shall be in the field, one shall be taken, the other left.

Oh, to be found worthy of that world, to be equal unto the angels, and to be the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, how great a blessing.

J. H. McCOLLORD.

Our Troubles.

NUMBER IV.

I hope, you and the readers of the P. C. MESSENGER, will not look upon me as a faultfinder, nor class me among those who look upon the dark side of the picture only. That is not my character, as those who have known me for many years can testify. But I would be justly classed among the hopeful; especially with reference to the cause we advocate, or Christianity, as taught in the New Testament. For of all the religions on earth, from Judaism to Roman Catholicism, and down through all the Protestant religions from the time Phocas crowned the Bishop of Rome universal bishop, or Pope, until now, there has no society equalled our prosperity in the past, or has as bright a prospect of prosperity in the future as ours.

In 1832 I planted a church of six members in the town of Fayette, in the state of Missouri, upon the Bible and the Bible only, not knowing at the time that there was another man or woman in the state who would be willing to officiate with us; then we had to pass through trials, surmount difficulties and remove obstacles in every step we made, but they were such as were thrown in our way by enemies, not by friends. We were then compassed about by a very small cloud of witnesses; but with faith and hope conspicuously written upon our banner, we went forth, and success has crowned our efforts, until now in Missouri and in other states, we are stronger than any other church. Now, in 1877, being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and success must crown our efforts.

But we must not forget our fourth trouble, it stands conspicuous in the

CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR PAPERS.

Some good brethren (and the good only are to be feared, as the bad will not be followed) have opined that they can teach more than has been revealed and enlighten us upon subjects that have never been presented to us in this school, but may be taught in the higher college. They opine that they can tell when the Christ will come to reign personally over his saints on earth, where the departed spirits both good and bad are located, what will be the decision of the Great Judge upon characters never hinted at in the Bible, and many other untaught questions, and presenting these untaught questions as contributors to newspapers may produce strife and draw away disciples after them, thus causing division.

It is difficult for a conductor of a paper to say to a good brother, "I cannot insert your production," but difficult as it may be, I think the advice of all who love our Lord and his kingdom would be, publish nothing that would mar the peace and happiness of the church; come from whomsoever it may, stand firm and be faithful and the Lord will bless.

HENRY THOMAS.

San Jose, Cal., Nov. 23, 1877.

Preachers' Meeting, Conventions, Committees for Settlement of Church Difficulties, and Evangelists.

These meetings are very dangerous. They are extremely useful, if their action is confined to legitimate subjects. But this is the difficulty. It is almost impossible to do it.

PREACHERS.

As a class, preachers are very influential with the church; and especially when, as now, the body has relinquished to them almost wholly the faith, practice and discipline. They know and feel their power. Thus situated, they are inclined to meet and prescribe for every trouble. They are encouraged, and almost forced, by the general apathy of the church, to exercise, at least, all right power. They understand that almost any action, taken by them as a body, will be sustained or acquiesced in by the church. Good men know that much needs to be done; they see the preachers must do it; hence they call a preachers' meeting or convention. But now that they are met, what must they do? Every good man says: "All they can rightfully do?" Here is the difficulty; for the line is not always definitely marked.

POWER.

Now it is in the nature of power to aggrandize itself. This disposition is manifested on almost every page of church history, as well in the faith, as the practice and discipline of the church. And this disposition to usurp power, and transcend the Divine teaching is especially strong when the end is, or is supposed to be, a very desirable one; and although expressly condemned by an apostle, we are yet much inclined to think, or to act, as if we thought, "the end justified the means."

DEPARTURES.

And then men are so apt to depart from the faith, (and of this we have express warning) that it requires great watchfulness to avoid overstepping the limits of the Divine teaching. Some of these departures are doubtless intentionally made; but many of them pass good men unnoticed. They are usually, in their beginning, small, and not palpable; and would be opposed by many, if seen. But although, each is small it is a departure—it is one step, and is like crossing the Rubicon by Cæsar; the fall of Rome was the consequence. The crossing the line unfenced between two landed proprietors is a small thing; but by so doing, the party leaves his own and stands upon his neighbor's soil; and although going but an inch beyond, he is as much a trespasser as if he had

gone a mile. When once the horse passes the inclosure surrounding his pasture, he is then out side and can and may go where he pleases; and he is as completely out side, as if he were a thousand miles away. And this is doubtless what the apostle meant when he said: "Whoever keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all." For he that said: Do not commit adultery, said also: Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. James ii. 10, 10;—And so every "transgression" or "going beyond," is to be punished, as well as every disobedience.

AMBITION.

And again, ambitious and influential men will have a place in these meetings. They will have personal ends to gratify. And remember, ambition is generally made of "stern stuff," and is too strong for friendship. They will seek to use such meetings to gratify their ambition, or their malice; and before many are aware of it, the whole meeting may be perverted from the original purpose; and made to subserve private ends. In such meetings therefore every proposition, coming from no matter whom, should be closely scrutinized. Each good man should ask himself these questions: Is it prompted by ambition or malice? Has the proposition been sufficiently matured; and is it clearly within the Divine teaching?

ASSUME POWERS.

As these Conventions become strong and popular, they will almost certainly assume powers and subjects beyond their jurisdiction. Transcending their proper bounds, such bodies have issued decrees, established rules, published bulls of excommunication, and made creeds. Each one of these steps, taken separately, may not be long; but all of them together, takes a people outside of the Bible; and thus they reject God's law, and establish their own.

ONLY SAFETY.

It is not safe for such bodies even to express an opinion on subjects beyond their jurisdiction.

The only safety from these numerous dangers, is, to keep clearly within the expressly written, or the necessarily implied teaching; to keep off of doubtful ground; to steer clear of doubtful disputations; and to avoid untaught questions.

EVIL, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE.

There is scarcely any danger that an assembly, strong and popular, will not exercise all their rightful powers; and if they should not, it is a negative, and not a positive evil;—it is simply the absence of right, and not the presence of wrong; and may probably, be easily remedied. But if they should exceed their powers, here is a positive evil, and one very difficult, if not impossible to remedy.

RELINQUISH POWER.

Excess of authority and usurpation are revolutionary acts, and revolutions it is said "never turn back." Strength may, and almost certainly will usurp, but scarcely ever relinquishes power. After transcending rightful authority, the body is much more likely to take two more steps forward, than one backward.

Now this is reason, it is history, which is accumulated experience; and is equally true of both civil and religious government.

ACT OR NOT.

It is certainly safer not to do what you might possibly rightfully do, than to do what, with equal possibility, may be wrongfully done. For the man that eats, or, it may be, acts, religiously, doubting, is damned, because he does it not in faith; "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Rom. xiv. 23. If we are not in duty bound to act; and if it be doubtful whether the Divine Law permits it, then it is safer not to act; for if, in

such case, we do not act, we do no wrong; but if we do act, we may do wrong. The doubt should result in non-action; and for the additional reason that the good Lord has thoroughly furnished us unto every good word and work; and has given us a perfect rule of faith and practice. Where this does not lead us, we cannot safely go.

RULE OF ACTION.

It is often a point of great difficulty to determine whether in a given case, to act, religiously. The apostle Paul, in I Cor. viii. 8, has given us a rule, which, in principle I think applicable in this connection. If we are not better by acting, nor worse by not acting then we should not act.

EVANGELISTS.

And here I must mention the theory that every preacher is an evangelist, with all the powers of Timothy or Titus. I consider this an assumption; not warranted by the Bible, and exceedingly productive of evil. On this theory the church does not make the preacher; but the preacher makes the church; it does not regulate him, but he regulates it. He disciplines the church, instead of being disciplined by it. And, in case of withdrawal for bad conduct, he declares the church guilty of disorder, or something else, and withdraws from it; instead of its withdrawing from him.

If this is not lording it over God's heritage, it would be difficult to tell what is.

SUPREME TRIBUNAL.

I have supposed that the congregation, and, not the preacher, is God's Supreme Court on earth, and that its rightful action will be ratified in heaven.

The Savior says: "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church or congregation; but if he neglect to hear the church or congregation, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily, or indeed, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. xviii. 17, 18.

On this theory, every preacher is wholly irresponsible, and complete anarchy follows.

Almost all our church troubles come from bad preachers; and this immunity from punishment encourages licentiousness and vice of every kind. This theory may do for denominationalism, where the preacher may exclude all the members; and many of such bodies have a Pope, greater or less; but it will not do for Christianity, where the Lord of all washes the saints' feet.

Titus was especially charged with the duty of setting things in order in the churches, and this by an inspired apostle; but no preacher now has any more such power than a private member.

It may be said he is sent out by the church, and that hence he has more power. This fact only shows he is their creature, and not their creator; and that his powers, thus obtained, are only such as they can give; but they cannot give what they have not. One congregation has no power to regulate or interfere with another. If he is sent, it is to preach the Gospel; and is not, and could not now be, to discipline churches.

There is no safety for the cause of Christ, except in strict accountability to the congregation, of both preachers and private members. And even under such accountability, bad preachers have almost ruined the cause in many localities.

I cannot adequately express my fears, of this doctrine of the irresponsibility of preachers. I think it will result in great evil, and should be strenuously opposed. It is a new doctrine. The fathers of this restoration neither knew nor taught any such thing. It is a departure from