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ANTI-ANNIHILATION.—TRACT I.

WERE CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES ANNihilationISTS, AND DID THEY TEACH MATERIALISM?

BY REV. N. D. GEORGE.

Question. What was the current belief of the Jews when Christ and his apostles taught among them?

Answer. The dominant sect, "the Pharisees, held to a future life by means of a distinct and immortal entity in man; the Sadducees denied any future life."—G. STORRS, Des., p. 87. Endless punishment was also a doctrine of the Pharisees.

Q. As teacher, what was Christ's work among the Jews?
A. He came to propagate truth and overthrow error, to give clear and correct views of the future state. 2 Tim. i, 10.

Q. Materialism being true, what must he have taught?

A. He must have taught that the soul dies with the body; that the righteous and the wicked are in a state of non-being between death and the resurrection; that the latter will be annihilated; and that endless punishment, in the sense of suffering, is false.

Q. What are the views and practices of the materialists of our time concerning the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and eternal punishment?

A. They deem them the greatest of errors, and exert all their ingenuity to pour contempt upon them by artfully written tracts, books, discussions, with clap-trap and ridicule, as all know who are acquainted with their operations.

No. 8.
Q. Have we any evidence that Christ, in all his ministry among the Jews and controversies with them, ever rebuked them for holding these doctrines, or came in collision in any way with them upon these themes?

A. We have no account whatever of any such rebuke or collision.

Q. Did the Saviour come in collision with the Sadducees concerning their doctrine of no future life?

A. He did; and so conducted the controversy, exposing the fallacy of their doctrine of materialism by quoting and explaining a portion of one of the books of Moses, showing that, although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died physically ages before, yet they still had a conscious existence; that it called forth the hearty approbation of the Pharisees, who believed in the separability and endless existence of the soul, and they exclaimed, “Master, thou hast well said!” Luke xx, 37–39.
Q. If Christ was a preacher of annihilation, ought we not to expect something very explicit and pointed from him condemnatory of the opposing doctrines?

A. We certainly should, especially as we find him correcting other doctrines and practices which dwindle almost to nothing compared with the great alleged error of the soul’s immortality. Speaking of this, Mr. STORRS says: “It is at the root of all the corruption of the Scriptures and the truth of God.”—Sermon, p. 144. This indicates the tone and sentiments of all the authors and preachers of the materialistic school of annihilationists. Now here is the Great Teacher: he has come from heaven to teach that the soul dies with the body—that there is no conscious existence, no personality, between death and the resurrection, and that the wicked are to be blotted out of existence; he and his apostles commence and exercise their ministry among a people who
hold and teach doctrines diametrically opposed to these, yet there is not a word of controversy between them upon these antagonistical views. Is not this marvelous? They came in collision with each other upon minor points, and the differences are recorded for our instruction, while there is no intimation that there was any difference between them concerning the great fact of the soul's existence after death! It is nowhere to be found that Christ or his apostles ever spent a moment's time in exposing these alleged errors of the religious world! Would preachers of materialism in our day be thus silent? The only scripture we have ever seen presented to break the force of this is Matt. xvi, 6, "Beware of the leaven [doctrine, v. 12] of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Upon this we submit the following: 1. The disciples were not only warned against the doctrine of the Pharisees, but of the Sadducees as well. But the latter were
materialists, and the Saviour, rebuked them and confuted their doctrine most effectually, as we have shown. 2. The doctrine of a future life was not in question to call forth this caution. Both of the sects named agreed in rejecting Christ as the Messiah, and in teaching the people to watch for the signs of his advent, when, in fact, he had already come. It was this doctrine the disciples were to beware of, as the context abundantly shows. 3. With the license taken with this text by our opponents a Deist might assume that the Saviour's warning was against the doctrine of a written revelation, and the Atheist that he warned them against the being of God, for the Jews held both of these doctrines. What authority is there for selecting the doctrines of the soul's immortality and endless punishment, and asserting that the Saviour in this text warned his followers against these? It is a most glaring perversion. Truth demands
no such effort. Their false teaching concerning the Messiah is the interdicted doctrine, as all may see by the context. It remains a fact, then, that our Lord never made one direct attack upon the so-called "monstrous errors" of the soul's immortality and endless punishment. How unlike the annihilationists of the present day, who cease not to expose these doctrines and rebuke those who teach them! Furthermore, the Pharisees, while they were constantly accusing the Saviour, never charged him with teaching annihilation.

Christ and the Pharisees never came in collision upon these antagonistical doctrines we have named. Is it replied that this is but a negative argument? Yes, but it is such a negative as will show the thoughtful reader that our Lord was either a cowardly or unskilful teacher of annihilation, especially so as compared with the brave men of our day. But we have something more than
this forcible negative. The Saviour not only failed to confute the doctrines in question, but he used language which must have been understood as teaching the separability of the soul and endless punishment, and thus to have confirmed them in their errors, if they were such. Hear him: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” Matt. xxv, 46. It is admitted by those of the other side that everlasting, (aionios,) as used by the Saviour, “means strictly everlasting,” (Man’s Des., p. 71,) that is, endless, but that when applied to punishment it means endless non-being; and we are told that “punishment does not begin till they are dead.”—GRANT, What is Man, p. 25. Did those who listened to these words so understand the Saviour? They were Jews by birth, but no Jew believed in a penalty of non-being. The Sadducees denied a future life to all, and consistently confined all rewards and pun
ishments to this life. The Pharisees held to the endless bliss of the righteous and the endless suffering of the wicked. Neither sect taught that non-being was the punishment of the wicked.

The words of the Saviour form a perfect antithesis; and if everlasting punishment means being dead without suffering, then, by the law of antithesis, everlasting life means a mere living existence without happiness. Is this all that is included in the "eternal life" promised as a reward to Christ's devoted followers? The truth is, the applying the word punishment to a non-entity does violence to common sense, to the common and accepted use of language, and to the Word of God. Truth presses hard when men are driven to such definitions. How can that be punishment which is never felt, or even known, by him upon whom it is inflicted? The Saviour must have been understood as sanctioning the
doctrine of the separability of the soul in
the following, as well as other, Scriptures. Hear him: “Verily, verily, I say unto you,
If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see
death.” John viii, 51. Here is a plain prom-
ise of continuance of life to his faithful dis-
ciples. As all must meet physical death,
this must be a life in holiness, or spirit-
ual life. This being so, consciousness must continue, which is a fact fatal to material-
ism. “Fear not them which kill the body,
but are not able to kill the soul.” Matt. x,
28. Materialism says the soul dies with the body, but the Saviour asserts its existence after the body is dead, and this was in har-
mony with the general belief, and in direct opposition of the Sadducees—a minor sect among the Jews—who were materialists. “But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.” Luke xxiv, 37. The disciples were mistaken in this case in regard to fact, but not in regard to
theory. Does the Saviour undeceive them and thus set the Church right, if materialism is true, for all time to come? Does he expose their mistaken theory and tell them, as a modern materialist surely would, that there is no spirit in man which can exist separate from the body? Nothing like it. So far from this is he that he sanctioned the doctrine by saying, "a spirit [pneuma] hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Verse 39.) This shows the Saviour to be, at least, very deficient as a teacher of materialism. It must be patent to all that the Saviour never taught the doctrine. To break the force of these stubborn texts it has been said that "our Lord was talking to his disciples alone." But was this instruction given them for their own benefit merely? Why are these teachings handed down to us if not for our instruction in doctrine? And it will be seen by Matt. x, 27, that they were commanded by the Saviour to publish No. 8.
to the world the lessons which he gave them. What does Paul say concerning this matter? Does he teach that the soul dies with the body? What does he mean when he talks about living "in the flesh"—abiding "in the flesh"—on the one hand, and departing "to be with Christ, which is far better," on the other? Phil. i, 21–24. Paul could have labored for the good of his brethren and remained in the flesh a hundred, or even eighteen hundred, years longer, and then have been with Christ just as soon. Paul is no more with Christ to-day than the cold earth of which his dust forms a part, if materialism is true. Again Paul says: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." 2 Cor. iv, 16. "The inward man," says one, "is Christ; yes, the immaculate, changeless [Heb. xiii, 8] Redeemer is renewed day by day!" Does the man who said this believe it? "It is the mind," says another. What is the mind?
"An attribute of living, organized dust," we are told, "and, of course, entirely dependent upon that dust for its existence and operations; as much so as the sound is dependent upon the bell." If the bell sustains an injury the sound is impaired, yet this outward man is decaying, while the mind, which is its attribute, is growing stronger and stronger day by day! There is certainly a hard pressure of truth when men are driven to such positions. Admit the compound nature of man, and the text is easily understood, otherwise it is reduced to nonsense. Once more: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell." 2 Cor. xii, 2. This teaches most forcibly that there is a conscious entity which can exist in the body or out of the body. If Christianity teaches that there is no personality that can possibly exist out of the body, Paul must have been
either insane or demented not to have known his whereabouts. We will hear Paul again: "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved," etc. 2 Cor. v, 1-9. To turn the force of this passage, one will have it that Paul is talking about his Church relation! Who, but a materialist would ever learn this either from the text or context? Another twist is, that he desired to be present with the Lord in spirit, as in Col. ii, 5, as though Paul, whose whole theme and life were devoted to Christ and his gospel, was not already, in this sense, with the Lord in spirit! And then, as there is no entity but the body, what body would he be "absent from" to be present with the Lord in feeling or sympathy? Another says the sense of the passage is that Paul "earnestly desired the arrival of the resurrection." But if the same body is to be raised that was put into the grave, as the Scriptures assert,
(1 Cor. xv, 42-44,) and there is no entity separate from the body, how could Paul be "absent from the body" when "present with the Lord" in the resurrection? Can materialists inform us? This resort to different methods shows us that the force of Paul's words against materialism is hard to meet. Paul speaks of being "at home in the body" and "absent from the body," and says, "we in this tabernacle do groan." Now, what is the we dwelling and groaning in the tabernacle? What is the we which can be absent from the body and present with the Lord? the we who know that if our house of this tabernacle? etc. Paul should have known that there was nothing but the tabernacle to groan, that there was no personality to groan in it, or to leave it and be present anywhere. Peter uses the same figure of a tabernacle when speaking of his death. See 2 Pet. i, 13-15. Peter was in the tabernacle, not the organized...
dust itself; and at his death he is to put off the tabernacle, not go into the grave with it.

These are but a small number of the texts which refute the materialism advocated by annihilationists. Who so blind as not to see that, if annihilationists have the truth, Christ and his apostles were sadly deficient as teachers of their doctrine? Or rather, who cannot see that their doctrine is glaringly false, and that Christ and the apostles taught no such opinions; but, on the other hand, were teachers of the compound nature of man and the endless suffering of the ungodly? Were the materialists of the present age to adopt the same method of instruction that the Saviour did, would they ever propagate their doctrine? Never!

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TRACT DEPARTMENT.

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