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A BRIEF NOTICE
OF THE
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OF
MR. J. N. DARBY'S PAPERS
ON THE
Sufferings of Christ, &c.

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MR. J. N. DARBY

ON THE

SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST,

ETC.

EVERY real Christian who engages in a doctrinal controversy believes himself to be contending for the truth ; he is entitled therefore to a patient hearing, as well as to a courteous and kindly consideration at the hands of his opponents. His motives are not to be judged, but for his *statements* there is one conclusive test of quality by which they must be tried. On the Scriptures of truth we are cast as our common standard of reference, and upon Him whose words they are as our final Judge. I need scarcely add that this applies not less to the moral than the purely spiritual aspects of the matters in dispute.

The pamphlet which I am about to notice is one which claims the serious attention of Christians generally, but especially of those who are walking in practical fellowship with Mr. D. ; inasmuch as it comes forth, after an intentional delay of several months, as a definitive though informal reply to the strictures of those who have commented unfavourably on his teaching, and whom he seems bent on regarding as his personal adversaries.

The task which I have undertaken is both difficult and invidious, but a sense of the real importance of the doctrinal questions involved induces me to attempt it, in the hope that what I write may, by Divine mercy, be helpful to some at least of the very

ERRATUM.

At page 9, second line; for "There is sin and smiting from God,"
read "There is *sorrow* and smiting from God."

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many whose hearts have long been wearied by this mournful strife.

I shall deal chiefly with the "Introduction"; as the body of the pamphlet is substantially a re-production of the papers which have already been reviewed at large; and for the sake of clearness I shall notice separately—

1. Mr. D.'s estimate of his own relative position in this controversy.

2. His manner of dealing with those who have questioned his peculiar views, and

3. What those doctrines are for which Mr. D. may be now considered responsible, either on his own distinct avowal or by his silence in regard to allegations clearly and distinctly made.

Of these the last is surely by far the most important, but I choose the order mainly followed in the paper now before me.

1. In a shorter Preface to the first edition of this pamphlet, Mr. D. had, in a tone partly apologetic and partly minatory,* distinctly claimed for his teaching on the controverted points the place and acceptance (at least among the more spiritual and discerning of his readers) of a divine doctrine. What was in question was, in his estimation, "*the truth*;" and in perfect consistency with that assumption, he now presents himself to his readers as a suffering and much-maligned *witness* for the truth. Comparing himself boldly in this respect to his Master, he finds comfort in the conviction that he has not unsuccessfully followed in His path. Having propounded in his writings views which, as he supposes, only ignor-

* From this Preface (reprinted in the New Edition,) the following extract is here given in justification of the above description. "If," says Mr. D. "I have to take my adversaries up, because they still carry on their warfare, and Satan is using them for mischief, *I here declare I will not spare them*, nor fail, with God's help, to make plain the tenets and doctrines which are at the bottom of all this." The sentence in italics is an echo of Paul's solemn words to the Corinthians, (2 Cor. xiii. 2); but in his case Divine authority stood ready to sanction in righteousness the declarations of inspired truth.

ance or wickedness could contradict, he has endured without complaining the effects of both. Accused on many sides, he has been, in the presence of his accusers, as one that heard not and in whose mouth were no reproofs. He has borne in this matter the reproach of Christ, and is content, if need be, to endure it still; only deprecating all unfair deductions from his words, and admonishing his readers against what he considers unscrupulous misrepresentations on the part of his opponents.

But while claiming for himself this (if justly taken) truly enviable place, he acknowledges a difference between his own distinctive tenets and the common faith of Christians; for although he loudly insists that they are, to the initiated, of the highest spiritual value, he admits that they are unessential to life and godliness. Speaking of those (and they are many) of his followers who have stumbled at his words, he has no wish, he says, to press on them his peculiar views as a condition of fellowship on *their* parts, though it must ever be on *his*. "It may be," he says, "a truth they have not got hold of. The testimony of the Church of God,"* he adds, "is to be maintained independent of it." Indeed at p. 99 of his pamphlet he carries his concessions much further, since he there allows, with reference to his third class of Christ's sufferings, that they lie outside the range of proper Christian doctrine. The first and second classes, we are there assured "give all we have to say to as Christians, and hence the difficulty many Christians find in entering into anything further:" language which, whatever its intent, seems to cast praise rather than blame on those who are its objects. Yet for the sake of a theory so characterized by himself Mr. D. is prepared, if needful, to live and die alone!

Taking the place of an authentic and final ex-

* It is under this high and exclusive designation that Mr. D. is now accustomed to speak of those who accept him as their chief spiritual guide.

pounder of the Spirit's mind, he resolves the opposition of those of his "adversaries" who are uninfluenced by malicious motives, into a mere ignorance of what is written in the word of God. The Devil is at the bottom of all the opposition, but it is through "their unacquaintedness with Scripture" that he has imposed upon them his delusions. Such, on the other hand, is his own entire subjection to the Spirit's teaching that his statements owe their strangeness to this fact, and it is in an almost apologetic tone that he says, when trying to account to his readers for the blindness of those who demur to some of his conclusions, "I daresay I may have followed the Scripture mode of speaking without always accounting for it to myself." Finally, his course is clear, and his resolution fixed; while affectionately desirous of those who hitherto have walked with him, their continued association must depend on his unfettered liberty to hold and teach among them his peculiar views. Rather than surrender them, he will remain alone, although we have it on his own admission, that they form no part of that apostolic doctrine which is the common heritage and safeguard of the Church.

2. Respecting those who have questioned the soundness of his views, while ignorance of divine teaching is relatively their common difference from himself, they are in his estimation, morally distinguished from each other; some being regarded as having erred through an honest misapprehension of his teaching, while on others he has charged a wilful perversion of his words. Leaving aside for the present those numerous "favourers of Bethesda," who he says "inundated the country with all sorts of publications to prove my doctrine was the same as Mr. Newton's," it should be known by the reader that when writing this Introduction Mr. D. had before him three pamphlets* (the last of which

* "Close of Twenty-eight Years Association," &c., by W. H. D. "Grief upon Grief," by P. F. H. And, "Divers and Strange Doctrines," &c., by TERTIUS. They are quoted in the order of their publication. HOULSTON & WRIGHT, London.

appeared towards the close of December, 1866,) whose authors, as is manifest from the tone of their remarks, cannot justly be included in that category, and in which not only are the particular views of Mr. D. on the Lord's sufferings controverted, but grave allegations also of erroneous doctrines upon other points are made, both against certain writings of his which are not included in the republication of "the Sufferings," and some statements of a similar character since put forth by two of his adherents.* Of these papers one only receives distinct notice in this Introduction, that of P. F. H., though besides remote allusions, there appears to be a more pointed reference to the last of the three at p. 117 of Mr. D.'s pamphlet, and of this more will be said presently.

That Mr. D., who takes for his own theories so high a ground, should regard, as he does, all opposition to them as an effort of the enemy against the truth, is not perhaps surprising; but I grieve to say that feelings both of indignation and distress have been excited in my mind by the discovery that not courtesy only, but simple and notorious *truth*, has been neglected by him in his anxiety to prove his "adversaries" in the wrong. To pass by the broader but oft repeated insinuation, that all who are opposing him must be either openly or covertly favourers of "Bethesda," and therefore remotely also of Mr. Newton's doctrines—a conclusion contradicted by notorious facts—he endeavours to nullify the objections of P. F. H. in particular, by representing him as himself fatally unsound in doctrine. Because Mr. H. declines to accept the views of Mr. D. with reference to a certain class of non-atoning but divinely inflicted sufferings which he has attributed to Christ, he is boldly charged with an absolute denial, or ignoring, of all the Scripture doctrine of the Lord's personal endurance as the Man of Sorrows; so that such passages as "Reproach hath

* This applies more especially to the last of the three papers named in the foregoing note.

broken my heart and I am full of heaviness," and "Who in the days of His flesh with strong crying and tears offered up prayers," &c. are quoted with warning emphasis to guard the reader against one who, as he would imply, denies them both in their application to the Lord.

Now, not to mention the incidental refutation of this charge, which appears on the pages of Mr. H.'s pamphlet, to those who are at all accustomed to his ministry such an imputation must needs seem glaringly opposed to facts. Allowance may be made for a strong mental preoccupation natural to ardent theorists, and which, if it cannot excuse, will often account for such misrepresentations, but so serious a statement, unsupported by a single valid reference in proof, comes with remarkably ill grace from one who in the same paper repeatedly implores his reader "not to take any statement but his *own*" for his views. Nor is this all that he objects to Mr. H. Strange as it may seem to himself and others, he is, Mr. D. affirms, "on Mr. Newton's ground." He does not indeed charge him with the statements of Mr. N., nor with the consequences of his doctrine, but he is, though unconscious of it, on *that ground*. Nay, he goes further and places *all* his opponents under the same imputation; it is, he says, "the ground upon which my present accusers have openly placed themselves." Whether sobriety or recklessness be the true character of such assertions I shall not stop to enquire. As to the nature and quality of the opposition made to his views, it is summarily expressed as follows:—"The cavils of my adversaries, while I admit of course human imperfection in my words, are cavils against Scripture. It speaks as I have spoken; and any alleged contradiction and confusion is that of Scripture. A rationalist would accuse Scripture as I have been accused," etc. Returning again to Mr. H., he allows that there may be better thoughts in his mind, but his doctrine is fatally bad: he rejects it with horror, as a denial of Christ's true sufferings. As to

his private letters, to which reference is also made, "Everything almost, if not everything, was mis-stated," says Mr. D., "through his own want of apprehension of the truth and preconceived notions."

This, and much more to the same effect, is lavished upon those who question Mr. D.'s theory of Christ's non-atoning sufferings at the hand of God; while of the assailants of his other controverted doctrines—with the exception of a single note, to which reference has been already made, and in which such vituperative epithets as "low," "contemptible," "false," "miserable," and "paltry," are liberally applied to a "quibble," the nature of which the reader will have presently to consider—no specific notice has been taken. Mr. D., however, stands aghast at the "awful chasm" into which all alike have been precipitated by the artifices of the enemy; who, it would seem, has beguiled them to a denial of the true doctrine of Christ's sufferings, by the singular means of leading them to question a certain theory, with which he avows that, as Christians, we have in strictness no concern.

3. To determine with precision the doctrines for which Mr. D. may now be justly held responsible, is a task of some difficulty, owing to the contradictory nature of many of his statements. Those who have watched attentively the progress of this controversy have noticed that unacknowledged but important changes have from time to time befallen the language of Mr. D.; and this may have arisen from the unsettled state of his mind upon a subject which he has admitted to be not only "difficult," but "new" also, in some of its bearings, to himself. He now, however, confines the actual "smiting" of Christ to the cross. I shall cite, therefore, a descriptive specimen of that *mortal, yet unatoning*, smiting which, according to his theory, was inflicted at the epoch of the crucifixion by the Father on the Son.

I quote from pp. 71, 72 of the reprint: "They take advantage of God's hand upon the sorrowing One, to

add to His burden and grief. This is not atonement,* but there is 'sin,' and smiting from God. Hence we find the *sense of sin* also † (ver. 5); though, of course, in the case of Christ, they were not His own personally, but the nation's—in a certain sense we may say ours, but specially the nation's sin. But we have clear proof that they are *not atoning sufferings*," etc. ‡

God, then, according to this theory, smites one who has a "sense of sins" not His own, and yet not as an atoning sacrifice; or, in other words, God, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, had a further question with Him, connected indeed with sin, but by no means with atonement, which *also* separately involved His being smitten unto death. Mr. D. surely has done well to acknowledge that this peculiar class of suffering is not the proper subject of our meditation as Christians; for surely most who answer that description would be disposed to regard what Mr. D. styles "the sense of sins" expressed in ver. 5 ("O God, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from Thee") as the confession, on our behalf, of our own ever blessed Substitute. "But it is clearly otherwise," says Mr. D. "When men are smitten too, when Christ is the *companion* with them, *not a substitute* for them, then atonement is not wrought, nor the wrath of condemnation endured. Yet God has smitten and wounded," etc. Yet somehow we have, "in a certain sense," a participative interest in those dying, yet unatoning, sufferings of Jesus, though it is hard to see in what *Christian* sense we or our sins either can stand connected with a nonatoning dying of the Lord.

* On this word Mr. D. adds a note, in which the following sentence occurs: "To make death in itself, or mere cutting off, atonement, is ruinous, unless that death be viewed as the expression of wrath from God." Surely no spiritual mind separates these things; but this language is open to serious objection, since it makes atonement consist rather in Christ's living endurance than in His personal value as the Lamb once slain,—a view of the doctrine of the cross asserted with dogmatic precision by some of Mr. D.'s followers.

† He is commenting on Ps. lxix.

‡ On this and some other passages Mr. D. offers "various readings," which leave, however, his doctrine as it was.

One thing at least is clear, that, according to this view, Christ was visited upon the cross with a mortal infliction *from the hand of God*, quite irrespectively of His atoning work. There was associative suffering; others (certainly not in this connection the two thieves, since it would be hard to extract even from the words of the dying penitent, anything resembling the special confessions ascribed by Mr. D. to the Remnant) were wounded with Him. In other words, Christ on the cross means, for the disciple of this school of teaching, much more than the mystery of our redemption; since the Lord, besides being, as we have just seen, death-smitten in company with others, was also, according to this theory, cut off by the hand of God "for Himself, as Messiah, as a man." Were the unbelieving Jews then right, as another has well asked, in esteeming Him smitten of God, and afflicted? Of this text, more anon. Let the reader meanwhile distinctly notice that in place of the single view of Christ's obedience unto death which the apostles set before us, who see God in the cross only as the smiter of His own foreordained Lamb, the sufferer is, by this teaching, placed under a *triple* necessity of dying under the *hand of God*. He kills Him as Messiah; He smites Him as the companion of others on the cross, and apart from atonement; and He makes Him *also* an atoning substitute. I cannot but agree with Mr. D. that, to such a view of the Lord's passion, we can have, as *Christians*, "nothing to say."

As brevity is one of my objects, I pass without notice the elaborate, but, I regret to say, most unsatisfactory explanation offered by Mr. D. as to what Christ passed through subjectively and to learn for others; but a question is boldly put at page 10, which seems to call for a reply. "Is it meant to be alleged," asks Mr. D., "that Christ did not taste death, death in itself, not in sympathy, nor in atonement, but death, when He said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?'" This inquiry seems remarkably ill suited to the mouth of one who founds his claim to

our attention on his scrupulous fidelity to Scriptural thought and language. For although to use such an expression with reference to the Lord's anticipative agony may be sometimes allowable, in the spirit of that sound-hearted and therefore harmless inaccuracy often noticeable in ordinary Christian speech, it becomes *false* when stated as a doctrinal position. In Hebrews ii. 9, we read, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the *suffering of death*, crowned . . . that He by the grace of God should *taste death for every man*." Here it is manifest that "tasting death" means "suffering death," and that as the work of atonement; *i.e.* Mr. D. finds in Gethsemane what Paul finds only in the cross.

It would be tiresome to enumerate the instances of apparent self-contradiction to be found in these writings; but as these, according to Mr. D., exist only in the minds of those who reject his peculiar views, and as he makes Scripture itself responsible for any apparent ambiguities which may perplex his readers, it is unnecessary to pursue this part of the subject. All that we have to remember is, that his original theory of Christ's sufferings is by Mr. D. emphatically *confirmed* in the reprint; and the particular passages which have long been the subject of private remonstrance, and more recently also of public controversy, are not only defended, but retained.

One remark, however, of a critical nature, seems to call for notice, since, with a certain class of readers, confident assertions as to the meaning of words are apt to carry a decisive weight. At page 20, Mr. D. ventures on the assertion that "smiting" in the Bible never means atonement, and challenges disproof from Scripture. In reply, I refer, without a moment's hesitation to Isaiah liii. 4. This chapter, Mr. D. will admit, expresses, among other things, the sentiments of those who, when the vail has been taken from their hearts, look in brokenness of spirit upon Him whom they had pierced. In the verse before us we find their penitential retrospect expressed as follows: "We did

esteem Him stricken, *smitten** of God, and afflicted. *But He was wounded for our transgressions,*" etc. Here, if words mean anything, their thoughts are occupied with the facts of the Christ's expiatory work. They did not see when they referred His sufferings to *God*; He *was* stricken of God, but why? The eyes of their hearts are now opened to perceive the *reason* of that stroke. What, in their ignorance, they called "a curse,"† they now adore as their redemption and the propitiation or atonement for their sins. I will not, after Mr. D.'s manner, denounce his assertion as "a quibble," nor can I predict its effect upon my readers; but I freely confess that, of the many instances of sophisticated reasoning-discoverable in these papers, I have met with none that has more painfully impressed my mind.

The statement made at page 20, that "forsaking of His God is that which in Scripture expresses that work which stands entirely alone," *i.e.* atonement, taken in connection with what is said in the note already quoted,‡ makes it evident that the bold declaration of his followers, that the essence of atonement lies not in the *death* of Christ, but in His living endurance of the wrath of God, is fully justified by Mr. D.

It must be presumed further that the objectionable statements reviewed in the paper of "TERTIUS" are still chargeable on Mr. D. and those who share his views; since the solitary notice of those objections is confined to one only of the points there enumerated, and that too in a note on a paper not specifically mentioned in that pamphlet. As however an attempt is made to justify the position that "sin is gone with the life to which it was attached, in which he bore it," and as in the absence of any reference to the pamphlet

* The word employed both here and in Zechariah xiii. 7, occurs nearly five hundred times in Scripture. *Always* it means positive striking, and nearly always striking mortally, or killing.

† Gal. iii. 13.

‡ Page 9, note. See further as to this "A Solemn Appeal," by W. H. D.

in question the reader may imagine that this is all that Mr. D. has written upon the point, it is necessary to say that in the fuller exposition of his view Mr. D. declares "that *very nature*" of our Lord to be gone "in which He was responsible and bore our sins." *

And now it is right to see how Mr. D. endeavours to dispose of what he calls "the low and contemptible quibble" of those who, in view of the Lord's own words in John x. 17, 18, object to any teaching which implies that the life which the Good Shepherd laid down came *unresumably* to an end. These are his words: "As to saying Christ took the same life He laid down, it is all a blunder, because in the true essential life of Christ, He—and this is true even of our own souls—He nor we ever laid down any life at all." Now the logic of this statement is as bad as its doctrine. The Lord never ceased to live in the power of His essential life, *therefore* he did not take again what He *did* lay down! such is the logic. Then for the doctrine: first let us remember that the Lord's words state expressly that He laid down His life *in order that He might* take it again. It is of this life, or soul (for the word for both is the same in the original) that it is written that it was not left in Hades. But, says Mr. D., to say that He took again the same life is a blunder! Presently he qualifies his language as follows: the life which "He had in this world as such He laid down, and never took it again as such. This is what laying down life means: it means the life in which we live here. Hence Scripture speaks of 'the days of His flesh.' Our life as life in our souls never ceases, much less Christ's. But life in its status, living condition, down here, we do not take up again, nor did Christ."

I feel strongly the necessity of exposing the dangerous fallacy involved in this comparative language. Of *us* it is certainly true that we do not take again our former natural life; for we die in Adam, and rise in Christ: but such an assertion when applied to Christ

* Divers and strange Doctrines, p. 8.

is exactly contrary to the truth. We are changed ; but He abideth ever, and can never change. But again it must be observed, that while undertaking to declare the Lord's *meaning* he contradicts His *words*. "That which He had here Christ really, truly laid down," he continues ; "His life, who dares deny it ?" No Christian surely ; but the Lord says that He laid his life down that He might take it again ; which last, in *explaining*, Mr. D. *denies*. If Mr. D. meant only that the Lord was not going to live over again his earthly days, he would be echoing a truism rather than seeking to establish a scriptural truth ; but such an idea is dispelled by what follows. After again repeating his false reasoning from mortality to life—*i.e.* from ourselves to Christ—he proceeds, "It is a mean, low quibble on the word life, and false, because the life in which Christ is the same always, He never laid down, and never took *again*. He took life again, but not the life He lived here in the flesh, to which, I still rightly say, sin was attached." I look on this passage as *entirely unsound*. First, the point of the apostle's doctrine is, that "JESUS CHRIST is the same," etc., a declaration which preserves the vital identity of the *Man* before and after death,* a doctrine quite inconsistent with the assertion of Mr. D. Secondly, by saying that Christ did not take again "the life He *lived* here in the flesh," he avoids, indeed, by a change of expression, the blame of directly contradicting the Lord, while he does so by implication, since the only *life* mentioned by the Saviour He certainly did take again. The man who alters the plain sense of Scripture incurs a serious responsibility. Now we have seen that what the Lord (in our Bible) calls His "life" in John x., He calls His "soul" in Psalm xvi. The laying down of the one was the pouring out of the other unto death. But what the Master speaks of as

* This point, and that which follows, is more fully treated, and the consequences of such teaching shown, in the tract of Tertius, already quoted.

His life, the disciple would limit in its meaning to a certain time and mode of living only. The least of many evils inevitably resulting from such a method of interpretation is, that it introduces confusion and ambiguity into the plainest testimonies of the Spirit, and has an obvious tendency to make human thought the measure of the truth of God. Lastly, in repeating his assertion that sin was attached to what the Lord laid down, but did not take again, he employs language both unscriptural in its terms, and incapable of conveying a just Scriptural idea. For the doctrine of the gospel is, that God made *Him* to be sin (not a certain life only which He lived), and that *Himself* bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Sin was "laid upon Him" as the Victim, but was "attached" to neither His nature nor His life; and by dying He shook off the burden thus imposed. He gave His life for our redemption; He resumed it to prove that what He gave for sin was not *due* to sin, and could in no wise be abidingly relinquished. It will, I trust, be acknowledged by my readers that we are not here in the region of "quibbles," but in that of a divine and impenetrable mystery, where we can be preserved from hurtful aberrations only by a strict adhesion to the letter of God's Word.

Mr. D. closes his note by an apology for having spent so many words "on this miserable and paltry objection." Of the propriety or otherwise of this description the reader must be left to judge. I, on the other hand, lament the necessity of so diffusely commenting on what I believe to be a grave doctrinal error of Mr. D. I feel that in the presence of this note (not to speak now more generally of his pamphlet) Mr. D. has, by his loud assertion of superior precision of thought and exactness of scriptural expression, placed himself in a position of which an "adversary" might take a very damaging advantage; but as both my heart and conscience equally reject that designation, I refrain. For the same reason I withhold my name. I am not attacking a person, but

resisting doctrinal innovations which are, to my own apprehension at least, of a highly dangerous kind.

There are other statements in this reprint not less directly opposed to the words of Scripture, than that just noticed ; as when at page 9 it is affirmed that "the power of death as that of the enemy, was *gone*" before the Lord left the garden of Gethsemane, in exact contradiction of the Spirit's testimony that by means of *death* he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, (Heb. ii. 14) but I have no desire to analyse these papers in detail. It is enough to warn the reader that the importance of this controversy, which originated in an attempt to substantiate what its author has confessed to be an extra-Christian theory, consists in the solemn fact that (to omit minor topics) the teaching presented in these and the other controverted papers does certainly deface, if it does not destroy, both the true doctrine of the Atonement and the sacred Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V.

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