

## On "Hopes of the Church" J.N.D.

W. Kelly.

(B.T. Vol. 8, p. 240, 255-256.)

To Correspondents.

More than one draw attention to Mr. E. White's extracts from the second edition of Mr. J. N. Darby's "Hopes of the Church," which I here reproduce:-

"With the immortality of the soul man can still connect the idea of self — of power in the body; but where the leading truth is the resurrection of the body, and not the immortality of the soul, man's impotency becomes glaring." p. 30. "Before coming to direct proofs, we would express our conviction that the idea of *the immortality of the soul* has no source in the gospel; that it comes, on the contrary, from the Platonists; and that it was just when the coming of Christ was denied in the Church, or at least began to be lost sight of, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul came in to replace that of the *resurrection*." p. 32. "And finally (says Mr. W.), there is this note on p. 66, commenting on Matthew 25: 46, in order to show that that passage does not refer to the judgment of the dead, but of the living: 'That which has given rise to the supposition that it is the judgment of the dead are these words — These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal; but this only means that the punishment of the living will be *final*, like that of the dead.'"

\* "As to that expression (2 Tim. 1: 10), 'brought life and immortality to light,' immortality signifies the incorruptibility of the body, and not the immortality of the soul."

It is plain that it is the second extract (from p. 32) which most suits Mr. W.'s object. But would it not have been more candid if he had extracted the next few words which contra. dict, not Mr. D.'s previous statement, but his own object? "This was about the time of Origen. It is hardly needful to say that we do not doubt the immortality of the soul; we only assert that this view has taken the place of the doctrine of the resurrection of the Church, as the epoch of its joy and glory." I quote the same paragraph from the same second edition; and I appeal to Mr. E. W. whether it was upright, by omitting words, bearing on the point immediately after, to give the appearance to the readers of the "Christian World" (who are very unlikely to know or to take the trouble of examining Mr. D.'s writings) that he ever held the mortality of the soul, when in fact he has invariably maintained its immortality. Nor is it correct that these paragraphs have been quietly dropped, or any one of them, out of later editions. I have before me now the latest form in which the work stands in his "Collected Writings," and I find that all three appear, the first and third unchanged, and the second only so modified as to render such an effort as Mr. W.'s no longer practicable: "The idea of the immortality of the soul, although recognized in Luke 12: 5; 20: 38, is not in general a gospel topic." Otherwise all remain as before; and this, which was always the author's conviction, he no doubt put in to cut off a phrase misused by others, whether consciously or not, so as to insinuate or commend a notion which he from the first abhorred, and more than ever now that its frightful accompaniments and consequences cannot be hid.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *BIBLE TREASURY*.

Sir, — You "Appeal" to me whether my course, in using quotations, from Darby in a letter to the *Christian World*, has been consistent with "uprightness." I presume that in making this "appeal" to me directly, you be willing to print an answer, and that answer is as follows. In noticing my letter to the *Christian World* you have omitted to quote the very words which decisively prove the absence of any intention on my part to misrepresent Mr. Darby. I have no desire to retort the charge of dishonesty on

you in this suppression. Probably your friends would as little believe it respecting you as mine will believe it respecting me. It suffices me to say that in the warmth of zeal against a doctrine which you think "frightful in its consequences," you have allowed yourself to commit an injustice unworthy of your well-earned character as a honest scholar and a sincere servant of Christ.

The words to which I refer are these, and they immediately, followed the quotations from Mr. Darby. "Now these statements of Mr. Darby, though strangely contradicted by others, contain the essence of the doctrine of life in Christ only, whether he intended it or not." The words in italics supply a full and direct reply to your allegations. I was well aware that Mr. Darby's declaration, that "the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has no source in the gospel," had been often cited by others, and to his great discontent, because unaccompanied by any reference to the notorious fact that he holds and has always held that doctrine, and professes it explicitly even in the very same page which contains the quoted sentence. I was therefore resolved that at least this complaint should not be made against me, and therefore added the words which intimate that Mr. Darby's "statements" so quoted were strangely contradicted by other statements, obviously intending the very sentences which follow, and which you cite as evidence of my dishonesty. The word "strangely" as introduced for the very purpose of showing that the seeming "contradiction" supplied by the passages not quoted by me was very remarkable, he holding firmly the truth of the doctrine of the soul's immortality, yet affirming that it had "no source in the gospel." Moreover, the "contradiction" was admitted to be so striking as to leave it open to question whether Mr. Darby could have really "intended" his words to be taken in the absolute sense which they seem to suggest.

But this is not all. You wholly misrepresent the *object* of my quotations from Mr. Darby. That object, most evidently, was not to show that he did not hold the doctrine of the soul's immortality, but to show that he did not hold it *on the ground of scripture authority*; in his own words, that it "has no source in the gospel," an expression than which none can be stronger. I was not called on then, with this object alone in view, to enlarge upon the fact that Mr. Darby held the doctrine for reasons extracted from his own head. My point was in his confession that it was "not in the gospel," and my practical inference was that tenderness should be shown to those who thence conclude that it is not a doctrine with divine authority.

The object of the citation of the note on Matthew 25: 46 was, in the same way, not to show that Mr. Darby ever agreed with me on the general doctrine (a folly and a misrepresentation of which I feel wholly incapable); but to show that the word "ternal," as occurring in the phrase, "everlasting punishment," was even in that crucial passage explained by Mr. Darby to "mean only" *final*, a criticism sometimes made by persons who agree with me, but severely denounced whenever it is offered to your religious associates.

To conclude, Mr. Darby himself has felt that his language was remarkably liable to be quoted against him, for he, as you tell us, has now altered the clause chiefly in question to this — that "the idea of the immortality of the *soul is recognized* in Luke 12: 5; 25: 38." You call this a "modification" of the former expression ("as *no source* in the gospel"). I call it an express retractation; and gentlemen who have placed themselves under the necessity of so materially altering their words should be somewhat slower in charging respectable opponents with direct "dishonesty" in quoting them. For Mr. Darby, notwithstanding (ling many differences of judgment, I cannot but feel on several accounts a true admiration; and the last thing which I should wish to do would be to misrepresent him, or to act as if truth could be advanced by dishonour.

I am, sir,

Yours faithfully,

EDWARD WHITE.

[The simplest course in answer to any question of fair dealing toward Mr. W. is to insert his letter. He and our readers will judge for themselves. Otherwise a mere abstract would have been given of his reply, as before of the complaints made against his use of "Hopes of the Church."

Let him be assured that there was not the slightest wish to suppress a word which might plead in his favour or in explanation; and that the motive for not citing more from his letter was simply to avoid further discussion, though even as it stands the substance of what he thinks of importance has been already given and answered, though not inserted as a quotation. I trust that it will be satisfactory to Mr. W. and to those who complained to know that, though quite mistaken in his notion of Mr. D.'s meaning, he has in my opinion shown himself guiltless on the question of fair dealing or the want of it. I will now try to convince him of the misapprehension which lay at the bottom of his wrong use of Mr. D.'s words and of the insinuation of a shift or change in the thoughts of the latter. If Mr. W.'s point and object are thus mistaken, his inferences must of course fall to the ground.

Mr. W. considers that there is a strange contradiction between the two statements, "that the idea of the immortality of the soul has no source *in the gospel*," and "that we do not doubt the immortality of the soul." If Mr. D. had denied the soul's immortality to be a truth *of the scriptures*, there would be just ground for the charge of so strangely contradicting himself. But it is not so. I have no doubt that its frequent citation is due to the fact that most people, like Mr. W., unconsciously confound "the gospel" with the word of God, and think Mr. D. did not hold the soul's immortality on the ground of scripture authority because he denied it to have its source in the gospel. It is well known that the primary basis of that truth is not the gospel but Genesis 2: 7, where Adam is said to become a living soul (not, as other animals did, without but) by the inbreathing of Jehovah Elohim. Not a natural fact like this, however important in itself, but resurrection is a truth of the gospel. Hence this was no question among orthodox Jews, who held, save the materialist Sadducees, the immortality of the soul. But the resurrection of the body, exemplified in Christ risen from the dead, is the fundamental truth of the gospel, which got completely displaced by the Platonizing of the early Fathers. This is the true meaning and intent of Mr. D.'s words, which Mr. W. entirely mistook, as is plain from his present letter. For he supposes even now Mr. D., by denying "the gospel" to be the source of the doctrine of the soul's immortality, to mean that it had no source in scripture and that he himself held it for reasons extracted from his own head. The fact is that Mr. D.'s language was precise, Mr. W.'s construction is loose and erroneous. To prove a doctrine by reason is the last thought that would occur to Mr. D. He will now understand also that there is no change whatever in the author's thoughts, but only a modification of phrase in order to hinder the misunderstanding of others. There is not nor ever was the least ground for the charge of contradiction. The truth is that Mr. W. gravely misinterpreted the main sentence quoted, though I give him credit for believing that he meant no wrong to Mr. D. The "express retractation," as Mr. W. calls it, falls with the rest. Lastly, I can assure Mr. W. that Mr. D. by the expression "final" did not mean to impair the force of "eternal" in Matthew 25, whatever may be the idea of others who employ that term for a different purpose. — Ed. B. T.]