

Sufferings of Christ

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(B.T. Vol. 6, p. 205-206.)

Cannot "One still distressed" understand the statement that our Lord both anticipated the smiting, and that it actually came on the cross ; and that neither one nor other is in Scripture used for atonement, but rather for His humiliation and rejection in which atonement was wrought? There was anticipation in spirit before the cross, and there was actual smiting on the cross; but how does this prove that smiting is atonement? Of course the smiting was present, and not anticipation, and, as all admit, actual atonement was there; but where is smiting said to be atonement, save in traditional phraseology? Nor is it that those who prefer to speak with Scripture wish to force their convictions on their brethren; but why should others who are in this merely led by custom denounce those who cleave to God's word till it can be shown they have mistaken it? Page 36, to which reference is made, *does not teach that the actual smiting of Christ was before the cross*. The correspondent is mistaken: why persist in so evident an error, acted on by others? Ought any one to lay so serious an insinuation without proof? The alleged proofs are to my mind evidence of nothing but mistake and ill-will. Not many readers are aware that Mr. B. W. N. has just written on this subject (14th Nov. last). Does he then hail as his allies the men who, as calumny pretends, have adopted doctrine so similar to his own? If Mr. D.'s doctrine were in the least like that of Mr.N's tract which was condemned in 1847, he might well triumph that old foes were now (unwittingly perhaps) his friends. But mark the solemn fact. Mr. N., instead of the smallest agreement with those he calls. "Darbyites," evidently feels that, of all men living, they are the most opposed to his views. But, further, he adopts the same line of argument which is common to all the attacks on Mr. D.'s pamphlet. He does not admit more than they do, that there was anything but atonement in the cross. He certainly betrays a treacherous memory (in the face of what he has written and what we too well know) when he denies that he "ever maintained that the Lord Jesus suffered either in life or in death except sacrificially and expiatorily as the Redeemer;" but assuredly he now takes up the same argument as the other detractors of Mr. Darby. In *the sight of God Mr. N. and they are thus together*, though they may have other reasons and motives which keep them apart. I entreat them to pause, and all brethren to weigh the fact well.

As to an attempt at criticism on Psalm 69: 26, to reason from a blunder in the Septuagint and the Vulgate against the certain force of the Hebrew original shows only bad logic, bad scholarship, and bad divinity.

But what will the reader think when informed that the statement as to the Septuagint and the Vulgate (of no real weight against the Hebrew, even if correct), is not warranted by fact? No doubt most known copies of the Septuagint have that strange version, τῶν τραυμάτων μου ("my wounds"), which has influenced many. But in accordance with the Hebrew, another reading is known (τραυματιῶν), in a manuscript marked 115 in the ponderous edition of Holmes and Parsons. Of course, editors vary, as they lean to one or other of these texts. But I cannot, with the Hebrew before me, hesitate myself which to consider correct, and which an error; particularly as it may have been only a slip of the scribe. For the difference consists of a single letter, — the most diminutive to a proverb, — an iota! As one here agrees with, and the other differs from, the Hebrew, what fair mind can doubt which of the two in this has the best claim to represent the truth? "My wounds" has no right to be put forth as a just translation of *chalaleka* "thy wounded ones." The Vat. and Sin. are copies of the Septuagint of great value generally, but in this instance preposterously wrong. The Portuguese (115) is

another copy of the Septuagint and here commends itself as being exactly in accord with the original, and so with some probability represents what the translators really gave out. At any rate, if the Seventy originally gave king Ptolemy the ordinary Greek text, they did not ("Y.Z," may be assured) represent the Hebrew as it is. The Hebrew MS. variation in the singular, as far as I can see, has no weight. It seems due to assimilation.

Haste and want of knowledge, once more, are equally apparent in the appeal to the Vulgate. For it happens that there are *three* well-known Latin versions of the Psalter in the works of Jerome. The Roman and the Gallican profess to be merely versions, less or more corrected, of the Septuagintal translation of the Psalms, and naturally reflect here the mistake we have seen in the common copies of the LXX. But the true Hieronymian version from the Hebrew exhibits "vulneratos tuos" ("thy wounded ones"), faithful to the original and substantially what we have in our common English Bible. The Roman and Gallican Psalteries were not true translations, but only versions of a version: Jerome's direct work from the Hebrew confirms, instead of unsettling, our Authorised Version.

But if the verse certainly speaks of the association of others with Christ in being smitten and wounded, it is beyond a doubt that atonement is not in question, or that others have a part in atoning (which no Christian can allow). Why then hold out against God's word?

The context of Zechariah 13 is just as decisive, that smiting is not atonement; though He who was smitten on the cross did also, as forsaken of God for our sins, shed His blood for them, suffer for them, die for them, and so make atonement. But gathering His sheep was the effect of atonement, as scattering was the effect of smiting, which was rather the general outward fact; while the forsaking of God is a far deeper thing, yea, unfathomable. It is dulness of apprehension as to the atonement, and want of faith in the power and precision of Scripture, which makes men anxious to press such scriptures as Psalm 69 and Zechariah 13 into the service of a truth still more profound, and abundantly asserted elsewhere in both Testaments. But what can be expected from any who could think that to believe the Psalms, or Old Testament, is a development of the New Testament?

"Y. Z." has more reason for his difficulty in comparing pp. 36 and 59. But it is evident to a fair mind that, in p. 59, suffering from God is spoken of as direct infliction from God; and the doctrine of the writer is and has always been, that this is atoning. Whereas His shame and rejection as Messiah are only taken from God by piety and faith, but were in fact the doing of wicked men. Hence in p. 36 Christ is not said to have "suffered from God" as in p. 59. They are called "the suffering under the government of God," which can only be objected to, I think, by those who do not understand what it means.