

W.H.D.'s "Appeal."

W. Kelly.

(B.T. Vol. 6, p. 252-254.)

Dear brother,

This "Appeal," which I had not seen when your letter reached me, was brought me by a brother to whom it was sent unsought. Brethren must change woefully from what I have known them, if its perusal affect them otherwise than with real grief for the writer, his companions, and any Christians who may be credulous enough to receive statements which I refrain from characterizing as they deserve.

Nothing can be simpler than the doctrine for which I am responsible, which seems to me unquestionable. No doubt W. H. Dorman holds the same at bottom, though he may prefer his own way of putting it and I beg leave to cleave to my own. But I have no wish to impute to him what he hates. I have never taught or implied that Christ's death was unatoning; I have nowhere explained away or denied the intrinsic character of anything previously stated. I assert openly and decidedly that the blood or death of Christ is viewed in some scriptures as through man's sinful deed, and consequently as bringing judgment on him, in others as the fruit of God's grace in judgment of sin, and so the basis of all blessing to the believer. "His blood be on us and on our children," and "a propitiation through faith in His blood" may illustrate both points, for which many proofs might be produced from Scripture. I believe too that God's smiting, &c., in every scripture in which it is used of Christ (Psalm 69: 26; Daniel 9: 26, and Zech. 13: 7), can be demonstrated to be on the side of judgment rather than of grace, the contextual connection proving it to be no question of atonement. But while unwavering in this conviction, I treat no man as unsound who does not see it. Is it a new thing for such as are wrong in their views to be violent in their denunciation of those who are more right than themselves? Is nobody else to see more than they see? They are not asked to see or to say they see, if they cannot; but do they want to hinder others? This is what it comes to.

This "Appeal" will not convince any fair-minded Christian that the dignity of Christ's person is lost sight of by those it attacks; nor do I think that Crantz's Greenland or Brainerd's Journal will help the writer much to understand the point in dispute. No one doubts that it is not a matter for preaching to the unconverted: are we as Christians never to go beyond the good news? The editor of *Present Testimony* needs no defence of mine. But for myself, I do hold to the proposition that God's word connects having *nothing* with the Messiah cut off in Daniel 9. Is this the effect of atonement? It is of His cutting off.* Does any one then cavil at the antithesis, that cutting off is the loss, as atonement is the gain, of all? W. H. D. is silent on Psalm 69: 26: had he been equally reserved on Zechariah 13: 7,† it would have been no' damage to his new tract or his old one. He may think it only proper spirit to allow himself the license he takes in page 19 and elsewhere; but to me it is as clear as light whose intelligence is at fault. Compare John 11: 52. Does not this verse speak of Christ's death, His atoning death, that He should gather to-ether in one the children of God that were scattered abroad? Compare also John 10: 15, 16 with the passage in Zechariah 13: 7. On the other hand, who can see people *gathered* to eternal life in John 5: 24? This is to interpolate, not to interpret. It is scripture which makes scattering the effect of smiting, and treats death in atonement as the forerunner of gathering. Israel too will be gathered when the Lord applies that atoning death to them. The scattering of the disciples when Jesus was smitten was a sample, the beginning of that which befell the Jews at large not long after. The gathering of the Church was based on the same death viewed in grace, as that of Israel will follow by

and by. The argument which essays to weaken this is mere wrangling and beneath notice; but it is instructive as indicating the writer's state and tone, as well as his feeling toward those he does not (perhaps, cannot now) comprehend.

*"And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing" (as in margin). Such seems unequivocally the true rendering: literally, "and there shall not be to him." The common version (*i.e.*, the text of the English Bible) "but not for himself" is an error from a violent effort to make it speak about the atonement.

† The learned reader may see, if he pleases, that the able Venema (Comment. ad. lib. proph. Zach. in loc. cit.) treats the smiting of the Messiah as the broad fact of His being given up to the power of man, substantially as I have done, and not according to the narrow modern view to which some would shut us up. C. B. C. may see more to the same effect in the "Critici Sacri."

But there is another statement of mine which has been attacked with sufficient heat and din of words to stun those who can be alarmed by sound. Now I believe that atonement demanded that Christ should suffer the judgment of our sins, and that God should forsake Him when thus made sin on the cross. Where all was marvellous, this is the great marvel which bows our hearts before that suffering One, the mighty God, yet crucified in weakness. Do they want scripture for it? This infinite fact is what I sought to convey in the incriminated sentence: "That which was properly expiation or atonement was not the pure, however precious, act of Christ's death." I used, as I was entitled to use, the word "pure," in its idiomatic sense of *mere, nothing but*; and I meant then, as I am bold to repeat now, that even the precious blood of Christ, the Word made flesh, is atoning because He bore our sins and their judgment on the cross. The whole force of my remark was levelled *against* severing His death from that stupendous expression of sin-bearing and infinite suffering at God's hand. Alas! it seems that these men would *like* to think us guilty of treason against Christ and His cross.

Here I go farther than as to "the smiting." Many servants of God, probably Brainerd and the Moravians, have interpreted smiting of the atonement. I may think them mistaken as an exact exposition of scripture; but as they are substantially right, I should not in such a case notice a flaw of phrase. For in the smiting of Christ atonement *was* wrought. But the man who denies the judgment of our sins and God's consequent abandonment of Christ on the cross, separating these from the act of death and His blood that was shed (the good Lord pardon any sounds of discussion on so holy a theme!), seems to me most seriously wrong, and evidences how meagre is his own perception of the hatefulness of sin before God, because he thereby slights the true revealed character and consequence of Christ's suffering for us.

"The *pure* act of Christ's death," in my sentence, does *not* mean His death (p. 11). When scripture speaks of His death as reconciling us to God, or of His blood cleansing us from all sin (to refer to the various scriptures this tract cites), *it never* means what I called the *pure* act of His death (*i.e.*, His death *apart from* the judgment of our sins by God); but, on the contrary, His death efficacious according to the perfection of God's moral dealing with our evil on the cross. This, therefore, gives in one sentence the simple and conclusive answer to all the noisy declamation, and, I must add, the groundless slander, of W. H. D.'s new tract. I hurl back the shameless taunt of holding or teaching the unatoning death of Christ. What I declared and do affirm, is that His atoning death is not merely because He died, but because God made Him to be sin, and that so He died and shed His blood for us. He who hesitates about this truth appears to me a man to hesitate about. Does not W. H. D. believe it? I trust and believe he does; yet his rash and alienated spirit dared to say over and over that "atonement is the bare (*pure*) act of Christ's death." Now either he used my words in my sense, or he did not. If he did

not, it was a fraud; if he did, he said over and over what he does not believe (namely, that atonement consists in Christ's death without our sins being judged by God's forsaking Him on the cross). This indeed would be to mutilate His cross and to divorce atonement from His death. But no! I will vindicate W. H. D. from this at least, against his own "too strong" feelings, and against his own unguarded and unwarrantable words. He did not mean, any more than I meant, what he says. But oh! is this a brother's love? Is this jealousy for the truth, or for what?

As to the statement that to interpret the Psalms of the Jewish remnant and of Christ's special connection with them is a fifth gospel and a development, the writer had better have let it sleep. The apostles had the Psalms as we, and they had the Holy Ghost too. There was no need of a fresh interpretation; but that they knew nothing of their bearing on the Jewish remnant is what no man is warranted to say. All the talk about authoritative, or the New Testament only, is nothing to the purpose, or a mistake. Who makes J. N. D.'s exposition of authority? All this is the language of ill-will, no less than confusion.

I have not thought it worth while to speak of the uncommon preoccupation of the writer, who seems to deem his own opinions indisputable, and the worst possible construction of those he reviews (save B. W. N.) absolutely settled. Is this righteous or decent? I am content to have shown briefly that the gist of the pamphlet is a mere blunder, which is in no way relieved by entitling it "A solemn appeal," or by calling on his brethren to judge as heretical that which it is all but a heresy to deny.

But I must point out ere I conclude, that even plain matters of alleged fact cannot here be safely taken on trust. Thus the writer says (p. 11) that Christ's smiting from God "is now allowed by Mr. Darby to have been only on the cross, though formerly contended against." Is this the truth? When and where was it contended against? I have always heard the same statement and never understood what is insinuated here. In the "Sufferings of Christ," which raised the question, Mr. D. stated exactly what he states now—that the act of smiting took place only on the cross, though the spirit of it was realised before, especially from the last Passover. The same mis-statement occurs again in page 21. It is untrue, therefore, that it is a concession now, for it was always so explained.

Let me add that the writer goes much too far in his notion of "an impossible mental conception." Had he said impossible to himself, it might be true. Is his mind the measure of the possible? I am satisfied that there are many Christian men and women who find the conception in question perfectly intelligible to them.

Possibly the writer never had faith in God as to the path he followed his leader in for eighteen years: such at least is the melancholy portrait he presents of himself, though I see no sign of humiliation and self-distrust, but, on the contrary, morbid suspiciousness of others and no small acrimony now. Is this the temper to enter on the consideration of stale calumnies against his brethren, which in a happier mood he used to despise? He ought to know what "second-hand" means; and the new regime some will think a change for the worse. As he reminds us, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." What a painful comment on the text is his own tract! Happier they, in my opinion, who by grace have known how to walk across difficulties and in face of dangers, with loving respect for the worthy but with none the less independence of judgment before God.

The moral I gather from this fresh sorrow is, that the spirit of unbelief works, first, in giving up all uncompromising judgment of all allowance of heresy; secondly, in calumniating Is heresy that which is real and important truth. It was reserved for the present "Appeal" to fall into the absurdity of trying to fasten the semblance of heresy on a truth which, I cannot doubt, its writer himself holds. The issue for the assailed I for one can happily leave in the Lord's hands; and I can ask my brethren to join

me in beseeching His pitiful mercy on the assailants.

I am, dear Brother, yours faithfully,

THE WRITER OF "REMARKS ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK"