

A Letter to Mr. Geo. B. Gilpin,  
In Reply To His "Warning," etc.

Guernsey, Sept. 27, 1866.

My dear brother,

Your "Warning" fell into my hands last night. Bear with me if I express my sorrow at the rashness which so quickly receives and circulates an evil accusation against an honoured servant of Christ.

After the fullest consideration I could bestow on the charges, both when first uttered by unscrupulous enemies, and when lately taken up by men from whom more candour might have been expected, my judgment, as in God's sight, is that you *have utterly misconstrued J.N.D.*

Thus your title is "A Warning, with regard to the doctrine of Christ being smitten previous to the Cross." Can you have read and remembered the note at the bottom of pp. 67, 68 in the "Sufferings of Christ?" Here are the words: "The persecuting 'Him whom thou hast smitten' is literally applicable in the 69th Psalm only to what was done to Him on the cross. (See verses 20, 21.) Still surely in spirit all that passed from Gethsemane, or when He had given Himself up to the suffering of death and rejection, have this same character." So farther on in the same note it is said of *the cross*, "There we know was the true smiting. It was written, 'Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered but the moment after, in Gethsemane, He had given Himself up to this, all partook of this character, morally, though the fact of smiting had not *actually* taken place." How then could you in the fore-part of your tract accuse Mr. Darby of the doctrine that Christ was smitten previous to the cross? Not that you *meant* to accuse him falsely; but in fact so it is. Your "Warning" is founded solely on a misrepresentation; the ground of it he even pointedly disclaims. Mr. Darby affirms (and never, as far as I can speak, affirmed anything but) that *the fact of smiting had not actually taken place before the cross.*

You next quote the words of the "Synopsis" on Psalm 102, where it is said of the rejected Messiah, "He looks to Jehovah, who cast down Him whom He had called to the place of Messiah, but who now meets

INDIGNATION and WRATH"

[as you singularly print these words]. "We are far, here, beyond looking at sufferings as coming from man. They did and were felt, but men are not before Him in judgment; nor is it His expiatory work, though that which wrought it is here — the indignation and wrath." Now I declare to you, as I may to my brethren, that were I on a jury empaneled to pronounce whether, on the evidence of your "Warning," you did or did not understand Mr. Darby on Psalm 102, I could not hesitate to join in the verdict that you did *not*. Mr. Darby says nothing which warrants your very odd and oddly expressed inference — "that word on his part lying against the Lord Jesus Christ in life, 'INDIGNATION AND WRATH.'" He holds — what I think every saint does or ought to hold — that the blessed Lord had the sense of His coming rejection and cutting off before it came; that, far from being insensible, He felt all in perfect sorrow; and that He stopped not at secondary instruments, as unbelief does, but accepted all at the hand of Jehovah, His God — not expiation only, but all His sufferings, whatever their occasion, source, measure, or character. But it is wholly and groundlessly false that Mr. Darby has any such word to recall as you impute in p. 3 — "indignation and wrath lying against the Lord Jesus Christ in life;" or,

as in p. 4, that the "indignation" belongs to Christ, as taught by him. I am, therefore, as certain as I can be of anything, that "you have laid yourself open" to the charge (not merely as you suspect (p. 4), of presumption but) of unwitting false witness. Forgive me if I add that you have spoken foolishly as to not meeting Mr. Darby at the Lord's table till he recalls a word of which you are the author, not he foolishly also in challenging brethren whom you may deem implicated in a wicked absurdity, which nobody in communion would accept or allow for a moment.\*

\* I have just examined, and have now before me, a copy of what you call "a private thing" (which is really a letter from Mr. Darby in reply to an inquiring brother); and here again I am bound to say the same fatality of mistake follows you. Mr. Darby applies Zechariah 13 to Christ's death, not "to Christ in life," as you assert.

And you have rushed into print with nothing but misconception from beginning to end! If it be criminal hastily to misjudge any man in a serious business, what must it be in the present case? Most "Brethren," I trust, will be helped by grace in the long run to distinguish between godly jealousy for Christ and the truth, and the unworthy jealousy which writhes under superior power; or the temerity which sincerely scatters, hotfoot, that which blind, if not insincere, ill-will originally forged. I am sure that the weightiest men among "Brethren" reject with disdain those charges or innuendos against Mr. Darby's doctrine, which charges were long since raised, weighed, and found wanting. Their reproduction now, chiefly by men who are *unquestionably alienated otherwise*, may pain us all, but need surprise none. I am grieved that you, and not you only, should not have seen through the snare. For let me tell you, that, while one from amongst us, who formerly seemed to me only too servile to J.N.D., now indulges in high-minded acrimonious impeachment of his doctrine, as well as of his ecclesiastical conduct; another (too upright, I hope, to remain much longer within neutral ranks) wrote to me (too long ago) his indignant refusal of these very imputations. Is it not ominous that W.H.D., in the pamphlet you commend and advertise, insinuates false doctrine against Mr. Darby in the ratio that he avows the principle (if principle it can be styled) of the so-called Bethesda party? When he hesitated (as at first) about the one, his mind was only moved (not made up) about the other. When finally he decided to secede because of Mr. Darby's alleged doctrine, he equally determined to renounce that witness against neutrality which he had pursued ever since the question arose. This seems to me the *real* "warning."

W.H.D. then wrote a pamphlet\* far stronger against Bethesdaising than he has just written in its favour. W. H. D. therein not only expressed his approval of Mr. Darby's circular in reference to Bethesda, but was the only man among "Brethren" known to me who printed it *in extenso*. — *Then* he wrote, "This letter, I believe to be no more than a just expression of what the occasion required;" and, again, "it places the question in a broad, and simple, and intelligible light; and many facts have since come out to make plain, to all, the grounds the writer had for his conclusions." (Review, p. 13.) *Now*, on the contrary, he says (Close of twenty-eight years, p. 29), it is the "fiat of authority," "and the dictum of a leader;" and, again, "it is a false principle for any man to issue a human decree as to how an evil is to be dealt with in the Church of God, instead of leaving it to the direction of the divine Word." (Close, p. 57.)-*Now* (ibid.) he says a principle "is falsely applied when directed against Christians, not because they themselves hold or favour error, but simply use that liberty of association which they do not see to be interdicted of the Lord." But the fallacy is his own; for it is to favour error, even if not held, where liberty of association is claimed in presence of the allowance of a dishonoured and indeed a false Christ. *Then*, however, W.H.D. could see that *personal* separation was not enough; that *the Church* had to prove themselves clear; and that it is in vain to talk about a *negation* or that Scripture gives no warrant to punish for it. - *Then* he could declare, "I hold to the ground on which I first set out with

brethren." (Review, p. 21.) *Now* he does not scruple to say that Mr. Darby's circular inaugurated "our present position and discipline" (Close, p. 17); and, again (Close, p. 37), eighteen or nineteen years ago their polity and position were entirely remodelled on the ground of separation from 'Bethesda' on account of alleged laxity in dealing with false doctrine." *Then* W.H.D. clearly saw the working of Satan's power in the heresy which, springing up in Plymouth, found a shelter in Bethesda and with its advocates; *then* he could see the deep personal enmity against Mr. Darby and Mr. Wigram, which usually characterizes the spirit of renegades against all who are prominent in holding fast to God's will and ways. *Now!* — but I need say no more than that I never remember reading a more "malignant thrust" than *W.H.D.'s* at the writer on Psalm 22 in Part lxxv. of the "Present Testimony."

\*A REVIEW of certain evils and questions that have arisen amongst brethren, designed to help the simple-minded to a godly judgment about them. By W. H. Dorman. London: J. K. Campbell, etc. 1849."

As to a general meeting, I doubt that it promises much for dealing with the question just now. Let brethren avoid haste of judgment and speech; let them give themselves to prayer with search in, and submission to, the Scriptures. Mr. Darby is not the man to amuse any one by light promises, or to refuse help to saints who feel difficulties. But who can disabuse those who are wilful and themselves more or less in error? Do you mean, by "largeness of heart, not standing on a technicality" (p. 4), that the meeting you desire should embrace brethren while they abide in such an association as would hinder our receiving them at the Lord's table? If so, I pray the Lord that every brother in fellowship may eschew so unholy an alliance, and that no saint may be misled by its issues.

Believe me to remain, dear brother,

Ever affectionately yours, W. Kelly.