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TRANSLATION

OF

A Letter

FROM

M. GUINAND, OF LAUSANNE,

TO

MR. J. N. DARBY..

A Letter in which one sees—

1st.—THAT RESPECTING CERTAIN DIRECT TEXTS, MR. D. HOLDS A VERY WIDE DOCTRINE, DIFFERING MUCH FROM THAT OF MR. G., AND BUT LITTLE FROM THAT OF THE POPE.

2nd.—THAT IN RELATION TO THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST AND HIS DEATH, MR. D. HOLDS A DOCTRINE WHICH SINGULARLY DIFFERS FROM THE CHURCH'S FAITH.

3rd.—THAT MR. D. IS INVITED TO A CONFERENCE.

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Price



LETTER TO MR. DARBY.

MY DEAR SIR,

Vevay is four leagues from Lausanne—40 minutes by rail : know, then, (for you would scarcely suspect it) that two and a-half years elapsed before your Pamphlet, printed at Vevay early in 1864, had, by devions routes, overleaped the distance from Vevey to Lausanne, and reached my knowledge.

“*What is Mr. Darby’s Doctrine on the subject of direct Texts, and of the Sufferings of Christ?*”—such is the title of this pamphlet, in the pages of which the frequent repetition of my name indicates the intention on your part of refuting me as well as of making known *your own doctrine*.

According to the Dictionary of the French Academy, “To refute, is to destroy by sound reasoning, what another has advanced—“to prove that what an opponent has advanced is unfounded “and untrue.” In spite of that definition, your Pamphlet is perpetually refuting not what I have said, but what you have been pleased to make me say. If you really believe that you have quoted what I have written on the subject of direct texts, you can lay your finger upon your mistake.

First:—

In my “Lettre à l’Echo du Temoignage,” from which you have quoted (or think that you have quoted), I said “I doubt *the authority* which I ought to accord to such or such an assertion * * “I demand a direct text which *justifies* it:” and (p. 6) “I demand, “then, that a person renounces a questionable maxim, or that he “*justifies* it by scripture.”

In my “Lettre aux Frères,” I said, (p. 2) “What! is it that “in reply to an assertion which I find questionable, we are to

“designate it a bad principle to demand a direct text which
“justifies it?”

In my “Lettre à l’Echo” I ask a Baptist for a direct text which shows to me, who in my infancy had already received baptism, that, in order to obey God and to be really of the Church, it is necessary to be baptised afresh by his hand, and in the manner in which he understands it. You, without keeping to the point, write, “M. Guinand says that ‘infants are holy,’ and he quotes Matt. xviii., &c.” Not one word of it in my “Letter.” I have nowhere touched on these points, which are foreign to my argument—I merely ask the Baptist to show me a direct text to prove that people should be baptized a second time.

I wrote, “Nowhere is there a direct text *authorizing* the plurality of wives.” You, as if quoting my words, say of me, “He asks for a direct text which *forbids* him to have two regularly married wives.”

No—I have neither written nor asked for that. In a questionable matter I never ask for a direct text which *forbids*, I ask for one which *authorizes*, because I hold as completely divested of authority, every pretension, every doctrine, which no direct text of Scripture at all justifies.

Further on you say, “I have no wish for relics, nor for pilgrimages, nor for transubstantiation, nor for the five false sacraments, nor for indulgences, but where is the text which *forbids* them?” Once more: I claim, not one which *forbids* these things, but one which *authorizes* them; and the Reformers have, before us, rejected all these things, precisely because there nowhere exists in Scripture one text which *authorizes* them. I am happy in following the example which in this respect they have left us.

You will now understand, I hope, even if you do not approve it, my rule of conduct, and the unquestionable meaning of what I have written.

Let us look at your doctrine respecting direct texts.

You say (p. 4) "Let us come to the root of the matter:—is it a bad principle to demand a direct text? I believe it is. Assuredly it is a happy thing to have one, but it seems to me clear that if I am able to seize the thought and to comprehend the will of God, I ought to do His will and follow His thought without being able always to find a direct text." * * "If only a direct text is to bind, no room whatever is left for progress in spirituality. It is perfectly clear to me that if I see what is the will of God, I am bound to do it without having a direct text which commands it."

A thought suddenly enters your mind—it lays hold of you. It has presented itself to you in a seductive light. You believe it so spiritual, that, questions of modesty aside, you take it for *the thought of God*—you see in it *the will of God*. Is it a certainty? In your estimation, perhaps, but in yours only. If you limit yourself to conform your individual conduct to *that*, I ought to respect you for it, even if, in the absence of any direct text, I have some reason for thinking you in error. The Lord alone is your Judge.

Suffer me to tell you how out of place, how rash it is, how dangerous it may become, to call that *a thought of God* respecting which the word of God observes a complete silence. God has said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts," and whoever forgets this declaration, utterly forgets humility, as far as he gives *his own* thoughts for *God's* thought. This is exactly the essence of Mysticism in whatever measure it presents itself, whether it limits itself to language full of spiritual accents, or whether it openly gives a divine authority to a pretended *inward light*, or whether it rashly plunges into the most obscure questions.

Who is it that dwells in the real thought of God? Is it he who

in the fear of going astray, wishes to discover it only in a text of Scripture? or will it be he who flattering himself with his "progress in spirituality," ventures to give to the product of his imagination the pretentious title of *a thought of God*?

Who would not see the danger of this? When one forgets that *God's* thoughts are not our thoughts, and consequently that our thoughts have no claim at all to usurp the title of *a thought of God*, when a person is in the habit of seeing *the thought of God* in the movements of his own imagination, he is fatally led to ascribe to them an authority which belongs only to Scripture. Soon he is no longer content with following them himself: he desires that other Christians should follow them; he invites them to do so: then, encouraged by their support, he next exacts obedience, as if it would be a violation of the will of God, as if it would be sin not to submit to them. And since that passes for attractive "progress in spirituality" which tickles any thing but the humility of spiritual disciples, he obtains their obedience—better than that, he obtains their admiration. Then he takes the last step—he excommunicates, and causes those everywhere to be excommunicated who resist the torrent.

Such are the fruits of this tree.

My dear Mr. Darby, these are not suppositions—they are facts. See what has been the result ever since 1848, wherever your authority has prevailed. I am myself, for the crime of resistance, of the number of your 100,000 excommunicated ones. Ever since 1848, this pretended thought of God, which is to be read nowhere but under your pen, which has for its sanction neither the example of the apostles nor any text of Scripture, leads you to discords, to separations, to excommunications which cease not to multiply themselves. It has induced you to exercise, in a matter of discipline, the most absolute despotism. When speaking of it re-

specting any one, this fatal sentence flows from your pen or falls from your mouth, "*He is a Bethesdite!*" That is enough. Without any other enquiry, the accused person is declared guilty, and your adherents are constrained to excommunicate him with the whole assembly of which he is a member; and more than that, every assembly where that sentence would not be put in execution; so that the only liberty which remains to your adherents is to bear the yoke in silence, and in order to conceal from themselves how much their conscience is smothered under this pressure, they attempt to see in it *God's thought*—a light refused to their blind victims, a "progress in spirituality," a zeal necessary for the maintenance of *the Unity of the Body!*

It is not easy to see in this state of things a Biblical picture; impossible not to see in it a picture worthy of the Vatican. The Pope would laugh in his sleeve at your proceedings, whilst recognising his own in them: he founds his edifice upon tradition, whilst your aerial scaffolding rests suspended in space, where, making up for the silence of Scripture, *the thought of God* recommends tradition under a name made for the purpose of avoiding offence.

If in your eyes it is not "justifiable" (p. 9) "to demand of the Mormonites a direct text for their conduct," would it be less *unjustifiable* to require it of the Pope, as the Reformers did? and would it be less unjustifiable to demand it of you? If we must have the sanction of direct texts, adieu to relics, to false sacraments, to the mass, to indulgences, to the celibacy of priests, to the Immaculate Conception, adieu to the Pontifical, and adieu to your omnipotence and to certain new doctrines, which we shall take under consideration presently.

It is clear, that, if the absence of direct texts, which *condemn* these excesses is sufficient to sanction them, you are quite right with God and men. Thus you exclaim (p. 8) with genuine satis-

faction, "One can now comprehend why, for my part, I reject a principle which sanctions the demand for a direct text, and which declares that *without such a text one is not bound to obey.*"

Yes, yes, we understand; no one could have told it us more clearly, nor in a more amiable, free-and-easy way. It would require mighty efforts not to understand. Beyond the uncommon clearness of your language, what contributes to render it so intelligible to us, are the edifying results obtained every day by the unrestrainedness with which you take your full swing in the absence of direct texts.

Secondly:—

Proceeding thus gaily in your unfettered course, why may you not arrive at surprising discoveries? We are living in an age fertile in new dogmas. Has not the Pope twelve years ago proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception? His Holiness (every one knows it) takes good elbow room,—why should you cramp yourself more than he?

That which follows will shew you that, in practice, you cramp yourself but little.

In 1858 you published in England (I had the good fortune to be ignorant of it for four years) that towards the close of His life, the Lord Jesus was subjected to the wrath of God, and endured the rage of Satan, as the Jews will endure them under Antichrist.

This was, by a dash of the pen, to embellish the Gospel account with an event of which neither the Apostles nor the whole Church have ever had the least suspicion. The date, even, of this event does not escape you. Without hesitation you place it *after* the Transfiguration. One guesses *why*;—the Transfiguration of the Lord, and "the voice which was addressed to Him from the midst of the excellent glory," scarcely denote that until that moment

God had turned His wrath against the Beloved Son of whom He says, "Hear ye Him!"

You urge very particularly that this wrath of God against Christ had no connexion at all with atonement.

In 1852 you had, in your "Observations on the 88th Psalm," already spoken of "a governmental wrath of God to which Israel was subjected," and into which the soul of Jesus entered, according to the full force of that which *this wrath was from God*.

In London, before printing, I took the liberty of personally presenting to you some observations, which have remained without result. It was at that time but a sentence risked in a whole volume. From that moment you made progress, and this "leaven" has had time to "leaven the whole lump."

In England, the Brethren have not all seen therein a "progress in spirituality." Objections, protests, have made themselves heard. It has been written, "This is B. W. Newton's doctrine."

The case was perplexing; for when B. W. N. had taught that Christ had been the object of the wrath of God, apart from atonement, anteriorly to the Cross, you cried out, and not without reason,— "Heresy! Blasphemy!" You excommunicated and caused persons to excommunicate—God knows how much.

When it is *yourself* that teaches that Christ had been the object of the wrath of God, apart from atonement, anteriorly to the cross, is it to be a truth, a *precious* truth? Or else, to be consistent, ought you not to exclaim, "Heresy! Blasphemy!" and excommunicate *yourself*?

If, in this respect, your language is similar to that of B. W. N., you arrived at it, I know, by a different path. The one places this fabulous wrath of God *before the baptism of John*—the other, *after the Transfiguration*: a question of *time*. The one sees Jesus exposed to it from his birth; the other assures us that Jesus exposed himself to it by *sympathy* for Israel—a question of *mode*. But, in

the issue, it is, either way, the wrath of God against Jesus, anteriorly to the Cross, and apart from all atonement.

Is it enough that that which is heresy and blasphemy in the mouth of one should be truth, precious truth in the mouth of another? What! circumstances excepted, a mere question of whose mouth it is! How are you to get out of that? Hearken—this language never proceeded at all out of the mouth of God: who, then, suggested it to a human mouth?

Besides the objections to the authenticity of the fact, there are also some to the authenticity of the date you have assigned to it.

In the Gospels, between the Transfiguration and the last entrance of the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem, there is no trace of the wrath of God. The day in which Jesus cried, "Father, glorify thy name," a voice from heaven answers, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." This utterance is the very contrary of the wrath of God.

You were, then, reduced to the necessity of abandoning your history, and of postponing its date to the last limits of the life of the Lord. It is then you stammered out, "Gethsemane!" Ingenious expedient, which by one word has fixed the place and the date of the apochryphal history whose discovery is due to you!

It is, then, in Gethsemane that, if we are to believe you, Jesus was, anteriorly to the Cross most assuredly, and apart from atonement, exposed to the wrath of God.

Alas! Gethsemane had until now called up other thoughts: but you, being too much pre-occupied with a silly history, have succeeded in striking, in Gethsemane, on a new shoal; for Luke teaches us that while Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, an angel appeared to him and strengthened him. Still the contrary of the wrath of God.

Driven again from this last refuge, what remained? The death itself of the Lord, the Cross, the act of Redemption, the precious

Blood of Christ, as a Lamb without fault and without blemish. You were compelled either finally to abandon your theory, or to put your hand upon the Cross—you have not shrunk from this desperate effort.

In your book upon the Psalms, printed at Vevay in 1862, we read at p. 12, that which to my great regret I am going to transcribe. "It is *in the act of death* that the sufferings of Christ for "the sake of righteousness, and that to which He exposed Himself in order to be able to sympathize with the faithful remnant, "when it suffers under the governmental hand of God and expiation for sin, meet. Christ suffered unto death. Then He made "ALSO atonement for sin." (J. N. D.)

Have I been able to reproduce these lines without the pen falling from my hands?

What! in order to save this fable of the wrath of God against Christ apart from atonement—a fable which you at first transferred from the Transfiguration to Gethsemane (assuredly *before* the Cross) you have yet had the hardihood to dissect the death of Christ—to separate from it a non-expiatory part, (let us utter the sentence as your disciples have uttered it) a non-expiatory death, and ALSO an expiatory part, an expiatory death. In order that no one may possibly be mistaken, you have written, "Christ has suffered unto death: He then ALSO made atonement for sin."

This "ALSO"—did it proceed from the mouth of God? If not, who placed it under your pen and in your mouth?

That which I transcribe is not (you know it well) a solitary phrase, maliciously extracted from a volume. No: it is the favorite subject of the whole book. The Psalms never lead any one astray, but we may be led astray in the Psalms.

That which astonishes me is not that Christians reject these novelties; it is that, making all allowances for the infatuation for

depths, for the vaunt of progress in spirituality, for the care with which persons have succeeded in powdering this bitter pill with the sugar of *the sympathies of Jesus*, for the irresistible impulse of party-spirit, for even the fear which you inspire—there should be found men capable of overcoming *their repugnance* (I know what I am saying) to such an extent as at length to admit them, and, perhaps, to admire them.

If they admire them, let them admire yet further this : viz., that by His death, Jesus has become capable of *sympathizing*. Was He not, then, capable before ? Was there, then, a blank in Him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ? My dear Mr. Darby, if you have discovered that the Lord Jesus has had any progress to make in spirituality, do not hide it from us.

At the foot of the Cross, the soldiers of Pilate, who had just crucified Jesus—Romans—Idolaters—avoided rending the robe of the Lord to distribute the fragments. They drew lots for it ; and you, Mr. Darby, paying less respect to His death than these idolaters did to His robe, by one stroke—I was going to say with a sacriligious hand—you rend the death of our Lord into a fragment *non-expiatory* and also into a fragment *expiatory*.

It may be possible, in the peculiar sense in which you use the word, it has seemed to you *unjustifiable* that I should venture to ask you what text of Scripture authorizes you to speak thus.

Repeat, then, once more, “ One can understand now, why, for “ my part, I reject the principle which sanctions the demand of a “ direct text, and which declares that without any such text a “ person is not bound to obey,” and you should have added, “ *to believe what I teach.*”

Yes, yes, we understand it, we understand it only too well. We understand it so well as to groan at the sight of the fruit of the tree which you cultivate with so much assiduity.

If, in the second part of your Pamphlet, your reader imagines that you have really set forth your doctrine upon the sufferings of Christ and upon His death, it will be a mistake into which he will fall in some little measure by his own fault, for you have been careful to say, (p. 19) "I have endeavoured to present my thoughts " so as not to wound any person * * I aim, and that at the "request of others, to allay all inquietude, which might possibly "produce the idea of serious errors." This is at least a proof that there are inquietudes, and that you have been entreated to allay them; a proof, moreover, that in order to allay them, you ought to abstain from setting forth your teaching *upon the death of Christ*, and upon the wrath of God against Jesus *apart from atonement*. But you leave *that* in oblivion. The candour which you have manifested upon the subject of direct texts abandons you; for, far from allaying these fears, this candour must have considerably increased them. You find it more convenient to reap a charming advantage from a phrase of my "Letter to the Brethren," which, out of regard for you I avoided repeating, viz. "wrath of God, non-expiatory wrath of God, wrath of God, before the Cross." Finally you say (p. 19) "One will find what I have said of the sufferings of Christ, unfolded at pages 21 and 22 of 'Studies of the Psalms.'" Why forget p. 12, from which I have quoted the portion cited above?

I would not at all blame you for having covered, and not set forth your doctrines, if I could believe in your coming back to theological modesty. Would to God that you had not only veiled them, but buried them for ever! This is what would have allayed fears once for all, and would have done you honour in the sight of God.

Alas! we are not yet come to that. If you condescend to admit that you have possibly "expressed yourself wrong upon similar subjects," it is for the purpose of affirming so much the

more categorically,—“I do not see *any thing at all to withdraw from the teachings themselves*,”—you wish to say, “nothing whatever to *retract*,” otherwise we shall agree upon this point, viz.: That there is nothing at all, no good especially, to be *reaped* from them.*

And since there is nothing to retract, will you tell me if it is in Gethsemane, *i. e.*, before the Cross, that Jesus was exposed to the wrath of God, apart from atonement, or whether upon the Cross? For the one of necessity shuts out the other.

My dear Mr. Darby, how critical is your position! Besides the necessity of allaying just fears, you have a cogent reason for veiling your new doctrines, viz.—the danger of seeing your own thunderbolts fall back upon yourself, or of witnessing the crumbling to pieces of that fatal discipline, to whose triumph you are incessantly immolating fresh victims.

Will the day ever arrive, when, the veil being rent, your partizans will be obliged to confess to themselves that, as to the point of the wrath of God against Christ apart from atonement, you have fallen into the same error as B. W. Newton, and that if it be a heresy, a blasphemy, in the mouth of the one, it is a heresy, a blasphemy, in the mouth of the other?

Then comes one of two things:—

Either, finding yourself guilty of the same delinquency as B. W. N., people will judge you as worthy of suffering the same penalty, and the blows of your inexorable discipline will fall violently on your own head:—

Or else, in order to spare you so humiliating a shipwreck, they will throw overboard this discipline as an invidious freight which sinks the ship into an inevitable abyss.

When in November, 1862, (I was quite ignorant up to that

* NOTE. *Retirer* means either *to withdraw* or *to reap*.

moment) on reading your English work upon "The Sufferings of Christ," having tried to convince myself that you were contending against B. W. N., from an anxiety to keep one of his more revolting errors from finding an entrance amongst your adherents, when, by correspondence and conversation, I made the withering discovery that (thanks to your teachings) a certain number of leaders of meetings were infatuated about this wrath of God against Christ apart from atonement; when at last I read in your volume upon the Psalms, published as a sort of New Year's gift for 1862, that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ was for *this* and *that* and ALSO for atonement—it remained with me, as a mere matter of duty, to warn the Brethren against it, and to induce them to reflect.

This is the duty which I discharged in writing my "Letter to the Brethren." and by a consequence which will astonish no one, I have, as it deserves, rejected this discipline against which I have for a long time, but in vain, made representations to you.

You are, then, under the necessity of covering with a veil the essential points of your doctrine, and of exacting a blind obedience without allowing either hope or means of coming back to Scripture, or to the rules which it marks out for us; or else, you are in danger of seeing the rigours of your discipline fall upon your own self, or, (a vexation not less great, perhaps, in your eyes) you will see this discipline, for the support of which you have to this moment sacrificed everything, fall to pieces.

When the veil shall drop . . . what confusion!

Thirdly:—

I asked for a Conference in which, Bible in hand, we might examine your discipline and your novel doctrines.

In order to grant something to me, or in order to deliver the Brethren from my troublesome opposition, you then, for the

purpose of chastising my disrespect for your discipline, caused a sentence of excommunication to be passed upon me.

Excommunication is your summary proceeding. It is the *thought of God*, smiting whoever protests against your discipline and against your doctrines.

It is written, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye who tremble at His word: Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my Name's sake, said, 'Let the Lord be glorified;' but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." (Is. lxvi. 5.)

Now that you have, by means of your Pamphlet, entered the lists, I no more *ask for* a Conference—I *propose* one to you, and I invite you to it.

We will discuss at it the points which form the subject of this letter, and any others besides, if it may be agreeable to you, but anything which may be advanced which has not the sanction of a direct text of Scripture shall be considered as going for nothing.

This is a weapon which you will do well to procure for yourself. If the Bible is on your side, it will be very easy for you to reduce me to silence.

I propose to you this Conference at Lausanne, for Tuesday, the 18th of next September. It shall be, at your option, either limited or public.

By a limited Conference, I mean a meeting of persons whom, on either side, we will request to be present. In order to fix a number, let us say 50 persons—25 of your choosing, 25 mine. Let us invite to it some individuals to whom the Hebrew and Greek text are familiar.

If you prefer a Conference entirely public, we will hire at our common expense, a room sufficiently large for admitting some hundreds of persons.

I beg you to let me know, before the end of the month, if possible, whether you consent to this Conference.

Believe me, it should be time to cast a glance into the future. Our heads are growing grey. You are a few years short of 70; the term of life is at hand. Soon you will be in Heaven. Will you magnify yourself there in the presence of that multitude of brethren, who, less happy than I, will have scarcely known you but by your anathemas and your excommunications? Think you that in Heaven the Lord ratifies them, and that He would make for you there a title of glory for this noxious zeal displayed here below, at the expense of peace, of love, of truth? at the cost even of the full efficacy of the death of the Saviour?

May not the Conference which I propose to you, lead you to acknowledge, through the power and mercy of God, who inclines the heart, that he who invites you to it is, even in this very act, if not the most agreeable of your flatterers, perhaps the most faithful of your friends.

God grant it may prove so!

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U. GUINAND.

LAUSANNE: *August 15th, 1866.*

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