Matthew - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Letters 3, Right and Wrong Spirits of Judgment

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The words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," are often employed to hinder a sound judgment as to the plain path of right and wrong. If a person is walking in that which I know by the word of God to be wrong, I must judge that he is walking wrongly, or give up my judgment of right and wrong. I may trust he may be misled, or that difficulties and temptations may have overcome him, and consider myself lest I also be tempted, think the best I can of him; but I cannot put evil for good, nor good for evil. There can be no right motive to do what is wrong to do—a thing contrary to God's will. There may be ignorance, want of light in the conscience, and I may and ought to take all this into account, but I cannot say that the person is not doing wrong. Woe be to me if for any personal consideration I enfeeble my own sense that a wrong path is a wrong one. The saint must be very careful not to allow any sophistry to modify his submission of heart and conscience to God's judgment of good and evil. As regards the church of God, the scriptures plainly declare we are to "judge them that are within, but them that are without God judgeth." This is no imputation of motives, nor habit of forming an opinion on other people's conduct, which is an evil habit; but the duty of not allowing evil in the house of God. It is positively commanded to us not to allow it.

Again, many apply this to judging whether people are Christians; but this is founded on a fundamental mistake. It is assumed that people are supposed to be Christians unless proved to be the contrary. If the faith of the soul be a personal thing, and I value Christ, this cannot be. I am not called upon to be volunteering to pass a judgment on the point whether such or such an one is a Christian; the person who blames me for saying such an one is a Christian, is judging that he is so of course, which is quite false. The apostle says "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." Believing this, it is a joy to believe that any one has passed from death unto life. That is not a judgment: it is the rejoicing of the heart that faith in that person has brought him into the blessed place of a child of God. It is a most horrible principle that we cannot know who are God's children, Christ's disciples: it destroys all godly affections. If the children of a family were told that they could not know and ought not to judge who are their brothers and sisters, what would become of family affections? The Lord has said, " By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." How can this be if I do not know who are disciples, and towards whom this love is to be exercised? We must know each other to love each other as children of God, to "love as brethren." He who objects to judging that such and such are God's children objects to the love of the brethren; he is rejecting the spiritual affections on which the Lord and scripture so much insist.

There is a wrong spirit of judgment: if I occupy myself needlessly in thinking of others, and expressing an opinion of them; if in questionable cases I ascribe, even in my mind, wrong motives; nay, if I do not hope in such cases that the right motive is at bottom, I am in the spirit of judgment, and away from God. If severity of judgment on the person, when I am bound to judge he is faulty, possesses my soul, this is not the Spirit of God. But to weaken the plain, unequivocal and avowed estimate of right and wrong under the pretense of not judging; or to deny the knowledge of one another, and mutual love among the saints, under pretense that we have not a right to judge, is of the enemy, and a mere cover to a man's conscience to avoid the conscious pressure of that judgment on himself. If I am to maintain a divine standard of right and wrong, I must judge those who do wrong to be doing so. I am not always called to occupy myself about them—then, if volunteered, the spirit of judgment comes: but if I am, I must judge according to the word of God. If I am to love the disciples of Jesus, the saints of God, "the brotherhood," I must know who they are. If there is a disposition to distrust, or to impute motives, then the spirit of judgment is at work.

Beloved brother, I have written in haste, when just about to start and half asleep, some general principles as to judgment on others. It will be seen if this may be useful. I am starting for Switzerland for three weeks, God willing....

Yours affectionately.

London, February 25th, 1859.

Letters 2, Service, Combining an Occupation With

Your letter was so long delayed by my running about the country and my letters after me (I have been up as far as Aberdeen, and in many places in the north of England) that it is very likely that your decision may have been come to before you receive this. I have been anxious about it. The Lord will take care of you.... The thing that I fear is not seeking FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is not the time only that a similar occupation takes, but its having the prior claim, which is important. It alters the whole tone of the mind. Adding, if we are able, work (like Paul) is an excellent thing, but it only came in for the gospel. If you feel increased practical experience an object, it is all well, and though preaching when I could I should then give it its own place. But your heart should see what place you are putting yourself in; it may be very desirable you should have the advantage of the practice, if so, set about it heartily. But see whether you are going to be a practitioner preaching, or a preacher practicing: it may be done, for a time, though this is slippery ground. But I have more confidence in our gracious Lord guiding you than in any counsel I could give....

Affectionately yours in the Lord.

Leeds,

November 6th, 1873.

Notes and Comments 4, Notes on Matthew 3

3. "A Voice" rather than "The Voice." But it is immaterial, it is a sudden arrest—to the voice heard.

7. Pharisees and Sadducees are here thrown together as one unrighteous class. " Generations," or " progenies," but is it not individuals, each a gennema (offspring, product)? "Generation " does not convey it.

9. Sovereignty of grace and real righteousness go together—fleshly privilege and the want of it; but " already " (v. 10).

11. “To repentance”—“To the Name of Jesus." Was baptism on ascertained faith, or on profession? Manifest hypocrisy prevented it.

12. There is a difference between the ax and the fan. “Already" (ede) the ax was at the root of the useless trees, but the good ones, it might be supposed, would be left there. But when the Lord came, He would thoroughly purge His floor. The floor was dealt with, so to speak, the wheat gathered into a garner of His own, and the chaff burned with unquenchable fire. It cleared the floor, and disposed otherwise of its contents.

16, 17. The way in which the blessed Lord, having gone with His poor humbled ones in their first right step, then is owned with an opened heaven in the accepted place which He has obtained for us, I have noted elsewhere. I add here that, on His entering into it as Man in grace, the whole Trinity is revealed in it, the Son Himself in Manhood. It is a wonderful scene, and then in our conflict overcoming for us!

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 1, Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith

Hebrews 12:2

All the witnesses for God spoken of in Hebrews 11 are for our encouragement in the path of faith; but then there is a difference between them and Jesus. Accordingly the apostle here singles Him out of all. If I see Abraham, who by faith sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, or Isaac, who blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come, or Jacob on his dying bed of blessing and worship, they have all run their race before; but in Jesus we have a far higher witness. Besides, in Him there is the grace to sustain us in the race.

Therefore in looking unto Jesus we get a motive and an unfailing source of strength. We see in Jesus the love which led Him to take this place for us, who, “when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them” (John 10:4). For, if a race is to be run, we need a forerunner. And in Jesus we have got one who did run before us, and has become the Captain and Completer of faith, in looking to whom we draw strength into our souls. While Abraham and the rest filled up, in their little measure, their several places, Christ has filled up the whole course of faith. There is no position that I can be in, no trial whatever that I can endure, but Christ has passed through all and overcome. Thus I have got One who presents Himself in that character which I need; and I find in Him one who knows what grace is wanted, and will supply it; for He has overcome, and says to me, “Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world”—not, you shall overcome; but, I have overcome. It was so in the case of the blind man (John 9:31) who was cast out of the synagogue; and why? Because Jesus had been cast out before him. And now we learn, that however rough the storm may be, it does but throw us the more thoroughly on Christ, and thus that which would have been a sore trial does but drive us closer to Him.

Whatever turns our eye away from Christ is but a hindrance to our running the race that is set before us. If Christ has become the object of the soul, let us lay aside every weight. If I am running a race, a cloak, however comfortable, would only hinder and must be got rid of; it is a weight, and would prevent my running. I do not want anything to entangle my feet. If I am looking to Jesus in the appointed race, I must throw the cloak aside: otherwise it would seem strange to throw away so useful a garment. Nay, more; however much encouragement the history of antecedent faithful witnesses in Hebrews 11 may give, our eye must be fixed on Jesus, the true and faithful One. There is not a trial or difficulty that He has not passed through before me, and found His resources in God the Father. He will supply the needed grace to my heart.

There were these two features in the life of Christ down here. First, He exercised constant dependence on His Father: as He said, “I live by the Father.” The new man is ever a dependent man. The moment we get out of dependence, we get into the flesh. It is not through our own life (for, indeed, we have but death) that we really live, but by Christ, through feeding on Him. In the highest possible sense, He walked in dependence on the Father, and for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Secondly, His affections were undivided. You never find Christ having any new object revealed to Him so as to induce Him to go on in His path of faithfulness. Paul and Stephen, on the other hand, had the glory revealed to them, which enabled them to endure. For when the heaven was opened to Stephen, the Lord appeared in glory to him, as afterward to Saul of Tarsus. But when the heavens opened on Jesus, there was no object presented to Him, but, on the contrary, He was the object of heaven; the Holy Spirit descends upon Him, and the voice of the Father declares, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). Thus the divine Person of the Lord is always being witnessed to. The apostle here gets hold of the preciousness of Christ in the lowliness into which He has come; but he never loses sight of the glory of Him who has come there. So when I get Christ at the baptism of John I see Him at the lowest point (save in another way on the cross); and, finding Him there, I find all the divine compassion of His heart.

Notes and Comments 4, Notes on Matthew 2

1. It should read, "But Jesus having been born in the days of Herod the king "; this would indeed leave the time purposely vague.

13. It is the present tense, " appears "; see also verse 19 " appears," and chapter 3:1, "comes."

21. Eis gen Israel (into the land of Israel). All the Lord's history here is as of Israel, the manner of deliverance and all, but of Israel fallen, but in verse 22 it meets the detail of ruin as well as knows the hope; gen (land) has no article here, because Israel, the proper name, is the subject. 'Israel' would be a genitive, and the sense different, if it were ten gen Israel. Ten gen ten Israel would not be sense, for separated from gen, and in apposition, Israel is a man's name.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Herod's Massacre of the Children

Why must Herod's massacre of the children be rejected? I would remark, that Mr. N.'s plan seems to have been a very useless and unphílosophical one. It would have been much more simple to have rejected the New Testament altogether, when it had lost its divine authority with him. What matter whether the details were true or not? To spend his time in disproving details, when he really did not believe any, was foolish work. It had, indeed, one natural use-to discredit the book with others. It has another-to show the utter groundlessness of what satisfied Mr. N.'s willingly convinced mind.

Now has Mr. N. any reason for rejecting the massacre of the infants? None. Josephus does not mention it: that is all. Mr. N. says it was unknown to him. But that is a mere supposition, an invention of Mr. N.'s. Is it anything extraordinary that an historian should omit a fact which another records? Has Suetonius related all that Tacitus has, or has Tacitus related all that Suetonius has? The contrary is well known. The objection has no force whatever. It is really tedious to reply to such futilities.

But in this case there is more than this. There was the strongest reason, if Josephus did know it, for not mentioning it; for he must have given some reason for the massacre-an account of what occasioned it-if he had spoken of it. That is, he must have spoken of Herod (whose jealousy as to his government was the principal source of his horrible conduct) having received the intimation, accompanied by such very remarkable circumstances, that the Messiah was born. It was not jealousy of a grown-up competitor, or of a rival son even. To slay a number of infants in a particular place, and that place David's city, where all knew that Christ was to be born, must have had some cause which pointed out an infant who claimed the throne born there at that time; and an infant's claim was not made by himself. It must have been the circumstances that marked him out -hence some extraordinary circumstances which would have designated the child with peculiar evidence as Messiah the King. Was Josephus likely to record this carefully? Roman interests and Jewish national prejudices would concur to close Josephus's mouth, parasite as he was, as to the event itself. Besides this, there is some strong reason to believe, that he has attempted to conceal it under a very obscure account of court intrigues just at that moment, which he speaks of as occasioning the jealousy and anger of Herod. The passage is obscure, and has something concealed under it of a king to be set up with miraculous power. I do not pretend to decide as to what gave occasion to it. Two passages in his works refer to it. (Antiquities, book 16, last chapter, at the end; and ibid. book 17, chapter 2, section 6.) They may be seen in Lardner.

If Matthew wrote his Gospel A.D. 38, as many suppose, living witnesses must have known the truth or falsehood of it; and even sixty years afterward it would hardly have been forgotten. Justin, Irenaeus, and Origen refer to it as a known fact; and in the fourth century a heathen author, Macrobius, speaks of it; this I mention merely as showing it was notorious. This difficulty is one for those who will have one.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Star of the Magi

MR. NEWMAN speaks (Phases, p. 130) of the star accompanying the magi. It is a common but very strange error. The scripture not only gives no hint of it, but contradicts it. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." They had seen it in the east, and after they had made inquiry of Herod, it appeared again and pointed out the birthplace of Jesus. I see nothing wonderful,1 if the Son of the Highest was born into the world, that it should be marked out by an extraordinary phenomenon, suited to the wise men's minds, and attracting the attention of all. The presence of the Son of God in the world was much more wonderful than that of the star. It was evidently a local supernatural phenomenon.

Letters 3, Baptism, The Formula of

Baptism has nothing to do with the church1 properly speaking; that is, viewed as the body of Christ. It is by one Spirit we are baptized into one body. Baptism does not, in figure, carry faith further than resurrection. For the body we must have the ascension of the Head, and the consequent sending down of the Holy Ghost to form it: of that the Lord's supper is the sacramental sign. Baptism is therefore individual, and is as a figure the bringing out of the individual from the flesh and his old life in Adam by death into a new individual position in life (but on the earth) in resurrection. Two great truths seem to me to accompany this: the revelation of the Persons of the Godhead, for the Father sent the Son, and the Son and the Father too have sent down the Spirit who reveals them. The revelation is a revelation of God. If thus born of God, even this truth enters into all my relationship. God is my Father; in Christ risen I have the form and power of sonship; and it is in the Holy Ghost the spirit of adoption is. It is, however, mainly the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost which is in question. The other

great truth brought out in Christianity is, that Jesus Christ (that glorious Man) is Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ. This, while closely connected with the glory of His Person in the name Jesus, is the anointed man, the Christ.

This revelation of the Godhead and of the Lordship of Christ forms the basis and substance of Christianity itself as a profession, along with the subjective truth that flesh—fully proved already—can have nothing to say to it. I must enter by death into this new sphere, into relationship with God, and, as risen, become the servant of Christ, as Lord. Hence, in Eph. 4, we have one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The first is the full heavenly and essential thing in connection with Christ; the second, the profession upon earth in connection with the Lordship of Christ. Hence, also Paul, who saw Christ only in heavenly glory, and to whom the ministry and revelation of the church was committed, was not sent to baptize; and in Matthew, where the commission referred to was given, we have not the ascension at all. Here Jerusalem is gone, and Christ is associated with the remnant in Galilee already around Him, and they were to disciple the nations. This does not connect itself directly with the millennium, but with the ministration of the gospel of the kingdom, which precedes it, and does go out into all nations before the end comes—the end of the age. The millennium is brought in by the coming back of the Lord in glory from heaven. This precedes it. Hence in Matthew He says, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age;" that is, the age which precedes the coming of Messiah in glory to set up the kingdom publicly. Hence, I do not see why this mission should not go on when the church is gone up. It does not directly contemplate the church, but so neither does baptism ever: it does profess Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and the Lordship of Christ, when He is not yet revealed from heaven.

Baptism, therefore, is the public testimony of reception by death and resurrection. That is, now Christ is rejected, we have the public witness that flesh has no place with God; that life is in the Son and given of God—that it is on the ground consequently of the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (the Father who has given this life in sending Jesus, in whom it is, and the Spirit's witness of it because He is truth)—all this is on earth, as the Apostle John's witness always is; and that, walking in this world, we own and are subject to Jesus as the Lord.

The formula I only so far attach importance to as being the expression of the truth. If one were bond fide baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the present Lordship of Christ, I should consider them baptized, though the words were not used. Though, in saying that, I think the maintenance and holding fast a form of sound words has its place and importance: and I need not say we have none better than those of scripture, of the Lord Himself and His apostles I only mean, if they were not used, but the person bona fide baptized in the acknowledgment of the thing, it would be real baptism. For my own part, I always use both And I believe every one rightly baptized is baptized to the Lord Jesus, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is given up to Christ, once dead, but now risen, and Lord, through death and resurrection—to Him as Lord, but according to the revelation contained in those words, "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." We do it when He is not manifested as such before the world. We do it through the knowledge of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that is God so revealed. They are not baptized to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We join the risen Christ as Lord by baptism: we are baptized to Him; but it is in the confession of this wonderful and complete revelation of God in grace, and in truth, too, through Him, but by the Holy Ghost, who is truth. Of course this involves the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ; and thus we are baptized in His name. It is the thing we are to look to, not the mere formula.

1861.

Letters 3, Baptism; Other Points on Baptism; Regeneration and the New Birth, The Subjects of

I am not a Baptist as you know, but the whole thought of baptism in the Prayer Book is equally wrong and absurd. It was not this brought me out but the presence of the Holy Ghost, and the unity of the body. But baptism is to death; no hint in scripture of giving life. The only connection with resurrection is Colossians but it is to Christ's death. Regeneration is only twice used—Matt. 19 and Titus in both it is a change of position; in Matthew, the millennium; in Titus, distinguished especially from the renewing of the Holy Ghost of which we are born by the word—the incorruptible seed of God.

It is overlooked that we are baptized to something—as to Moses, to John's baptism for the remission of sins—that is, associated with some system introduced for our blessing. Now forgiveness of sins is one grand feature of Christianity—"repentance and remission of sins." And the person by this door of entry, as an initial rite, is introduced into the divine sphere where these things are. God has been pleased to set up a system where these things are, and so when Saul became a Christian by the revelation of the Son in him, he entered by baptism into the enjoyment of this privilege. So it is said to save us in Peter, but guarding against attributing it to the mere rite. But the connection of life with it is never found in the word. But the English service is too ridiculous. It gives as a present thing by it, forgiveness of sins to an infant who has never committed any, and then has no real forgiveness by redemption at all, pretends only to governmental by absolution. They wash the infant's sins away who has not any, and when it has, has nothing for them—pretends to give life withal by it of which not a trace is to be found in scripture, but is directly attributed to other things.

Saul was baptized like others as the formal professed entrance into God's confession on earth, the institution where these things were. The twelve were sent to baptize the Gentiles who heretofore were strangers to it, a commission never carried out (Gal. 2), but not to circumcise them, and this from Galilee, not from heaven—Paul, with the things to be had, not to establish that wherein they were to be had, and from a heavenly Christ. The Baptists have lost the scriptural truth of a place instituted of God where His blessing is, as the Jews formerly and Christendom now—neither judged as heathen; and the Prayer Book, following Popery, puts the possession, as if the being in the place of it was that. Even unconverted, we are not heathen—perhaps were, but not heathen [now], and judgment (when incurred) on a different ground.

November, 1881.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 1, Closing Commissions in the Gospels, The

THERE are four different addresses or commissions in the four different Gospels, each of them distinct and consequent on the character of the Gospel. In Matt. 28 it is the exaltation of Messiah to all power in heaven and earth, from which flows the mission to disciple all the Gentiles. This was a specific commission, contrasted with that to the lost sheep of the house of Israel-" the children." Now His exaltation, on His rejection by them, took a wider scope. They were to disciple all the nations. Such was the consequence of His rejection by Israel. The baptizing of the Gentiles was not to be into John's or Messiah's baptism, but into that of which the full revelation was by His death and resurrection-into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This was the position and unfolded fellowship with God into which they were brought; and all that was brought out, on God's part, both for the display of Himself and the economy of grace. It was not Jehovah and Messiah, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost-something paramount and superior to the relationship of Messiah on the earth having followers, or Jehovah in heaven, however blessed. They were brought into distinct known relationship with or in the unfolded fullness of the Godhead. They were children of the Father, in fellowship with the glorified Son, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in them; and they knew all three. It is the most formal statement of the Christian revelation as replacing Judaism; the sphere is enlarged to embrace all nations, and the observance of what Christ commanded is substituted for the law of Moses. Those who went forth to disciple the Gentiles were messengers of the King, whose presence would be with them till the end of the age, when He Himself should appear in the glory of His kingdom.

Mark, being more especially the witness of the ministry of Christ, gives (not the outreaching principle of dispensation now opened by His death and resurrection and founded on the place of power where He was, but) the principle, the new principle, of the ministry itself and its consequences. " Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." We may compare Rom. 1, and Col. 1:23.

It is a question here, not of the kingdom, but of salvation; and hence baptism as a fact and personal confession of Christ is insisted on, not its form in contradistinction to Judaism. The unbeliever shall be condemned.

In Luke, suitable to that Gospel, we have not the economical change which went forth to reduce all the Gentiles to a recognition of Christ, or the character and universal extent of the gospel, but its moral subject and scope, involving withal Jew and Gentile alike as sinners; for he specially looks at man. Hence it runs there: " Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It is beautiful to see that while the need and ruin of man are fully met, testimony to " the Jew first " is not forgotten, even if Jerusalem were first in guilt as well as privilege.

In John, as the Sonship of Christ is the great subject (who He-the Son of God-was in Person), the authority and power of His Person in mission was the thing brought forward. " As my Father hath sent me; even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." We have here the authority of the Sender from His Person, title, and work. This was authority delegated in grace by the rejected but risen Son of God, giving peace to His own and sending forth with peace for others, in a world which knows neither Him nor it.

As to these commissions (while the spirit and principle of all remains, and so far as we have spiritual power, we can realize them), yet all, I believe, have been perverted and have fallen, like all else in man's hand. As the Jewish economy received a deadly wound by the golden calf for example, so did this very soon; and though the energy of God's grace and Spirit prerogatively might work and produce effects in sustaining and prolonging power and mercy in righteousness as such, the thing was gone; but it is the same power which originally constituted it which always lives and acts, though not in justifying the iniquity, for it is the power of the Spirit of God. And in measure as we act on this, the results are produced pro tanto.

Here is spiritual wisdom, to see, and own, and bow under the sense of the apostasy (that is, under God's judgment of man's unrighteousness-God is always abidingly righteous in all His ways), and yet still hold fast to the living power which is the energy of the Spirit of God which works prerogatively in blessing. Of this the extraordinary example and scriptural illustration is Paul-the abortion of other hopes. And God is glorified in this; for the failure of man always brings out further and better things, though it may be in trial, than that which has decayed and passed away in his hands. The death of Stephen in fact was the turning-point and formed the occasion of the bringing in the character of the dispensation as now exercised.

In the calling of the centurion by Peter (Acts 10 and 1) God showed that He never departed from His purpose of associating the Gentiles as brought in with the Jews; and that, as regards administration, they bore not the root, but the root them. And so says Paul, bowing to this in his ministry, " It was necessary that the word of God should be first preached unto you; but seeing ye count yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light to the Gentiles " (a sentence used on the Lord's rejection by Israel, " Then have I labored in vain and spent my strength for naught and in vain "; whereas Peter was the minister of the circumcision, and could not take this ground, blessed in office as he was) " and that thou shouldest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." Thus they take the spiritual interpretation of a passage significative of the dispensation, as a command which guided their conduct, though something else was first necessary. It was just following the Lord's own way, taking up His primacy and bowing to it (" it was necessary," etc.), and then His glorious mission according to the energy of the Holy Ghost. Yet were Israel and Zion still well-beloved; and so Paul showed ever.

The Christian Shepherd: 1999, Sonship: Part 4

Matthew 28

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19 JND).

This name of Father, of Son and of Holy Spirit has been proclaimed among the Gentiles. I do not think that it is here the unity of the Son with the Father... but the revelation of the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the submission of the Gentiles by faith. The knowledge which the Jews and the earth will have of the Son, for example, in His reign according to Psalm 2 is very inferior... to the knowledge which we have of Him, as being in the Father and the Father in Him, one with the Father, hidden in God. It is the same Person, undoubtedly, but we have a much deeper knowledge of what He is. We have acknowledged Him before through grace, and we know Him as one with the Father. In this Psalm it is spoken of Him as presented to the world in time: “This day have I begotten Thee.”

Luke 1

“Behold, thou shalt conceive in the womb and bear a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for the ages, and of His kingdom there shall not be an end. But Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I know not a man? And the angel answering said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God” (Luke 1:31-35 JND).

Though Christ be made Lord and Christ as man, yet through His oneness with the Father and His being the true God, it runs into a divine title; just as in the case with Son. He is in the place of Son as man, or we could not be with Him. “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,” but it cannot be separated from divine and eternal Sonship. As man He becomes and enters into is in, insofar as He is a man the relationship with the Father as divine and eternal Son. In all the works of God we find this cooperation of the Persons. The Son wrought, yet He could say, “The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works,” and, “If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”

Editor’s Note: The doctrine of the eternal Son existing as Son in the bosom of the Father from past eternity is vital to the glorious person, work and word of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. A printed or computer disk copy of Mr. Darby’s ministry concerning this subject may be obtained by contacting Bible Truth Publishers.

J. N. Darby

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Divine Sympathies - Rending of the Veil

As regards poetry, or divine sympathies, it is not difficult to see that they are foreign to Mr. N.'s habits of thought. But he is certainly unfortunate in his choice of objections to the genius of the extraordinary events mentioned in scripture. If any one have the most obvious meaning and at the same time be of the highest possible importance, and especially characteristic meaning, it is the rending of the veil. Under the Jewish system, God had conferred benefits, given laws, sanctioned them by judgments; but man had been kept at a distance. God had never revealed Himself. He dwelt "in the thick darkness;" and if He condescended to dwell amongst men, He was within the veil, where none could approach-ín a word, unseen. He governed from His throne; but direct approach was forbidden. The thick darkness and the barrier of Sinai, or the veil of an unlighted holy of holies, secluded Him from man. Had He shown Himself in light to a sinful world, it must have been utter condemnation. Darkness had no communion with light. Unseen, He might in patient grace bear much which man's ignorance committed, and govern in mercy. But in due time, when man had been fully proved in all possible ways-without law, under law, under promise, prophecy, government, and even grace in the mission of God's own Son-and proved utterly bad, the time was come for God to show Himself in grace, such as He really was. Had He done so before, man could not have been properly put to the test. This he now has been; and then in infinite grace, when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ dies for the ungodly. Now if God came forth merely as light or holiness when man was wholly wicked-his will antagonistic, as Mr. N. admits -He must, in the nature of things, have driven man out of His presence, unless holiness means allowing sin, whereas it means not allowing it. Yet God must be holy (that is, He cannot allow sin when He deals with it, or He would be morally like it, which would be a blasphemous denial of Him). How, then, does He act? In the death of Christ He manifests His holiness in the perfect taking may of sin, that His perfect love may flow out, never so shown to men as in this act. Now God can fully reveal Himself without a veil. His holiness is perfect blessing, because shining out in absolute love, sin being put away. As a sign of this wonderful all-changing change, the veil which before hid Him is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, signifying Christ's death, according to the whole figurative arrangement employed to typify these things. And so the New Testament uses this event: "Having therefore... boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath opened to us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh... let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," &c. Again: " Into the second [that within the veil] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood... the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure," &c.

Now here we have the veil and its accompaniments declared to have precisely this force in the mind of the Holy Ghost. According to the whole system of scripture, and that in its deepest moral elements, whether of man's relationship with God, or in reference to the peculiar position of Israel, which we know historically was then closing in, the rending of the veil had the most clear and weighty significance. Nothing could have had so much. It was the central expression of the whole change of the divine way of dealing with man, and of man's relationship with God by the cross. And here I would remark, that to ascertain the importance and "genius" of a fact relating to a given part of any system, I must take such system within itself. It is another question whether the whole system be right or wrong. But within itself-and the veil was a part, and a central part, of the system then established of God-nothing could have such a distinct signification as its rending. It signified, as I have said, the change of the whole relationship of God and man. If I refer to a veil and its rending, I must consider the meaning of its being there, to know the importance of its being rent. God's being concealed or revealed is not an unimportant idea; and the rending, at Christ's death, of the veil which concealed His throne and glory, is not difficult to understand. It is a figure, of course, as all these parts of the tabernacle or temple were, but a figure of the most intelligible simplicity, and pregnant with meaning. It seems to me that the end of this page of Mr. N.'s book is an unfortunate occasion to ask people, as he there does, to withdraw the charge of being "superficial."

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Doctrinal 9, Sufferings of Christ, Letter on the

I TRUST I should retract at once, if I thought I was in error, especially in what concerns the blessed Lord Himself. I am quite ready to admit, and have admitted over and over again, that doubtless expressions may be made clearer. My principal difficulty to bring my mind to bear on it is the character of the objections. I admit the objectors have succeeded in troubling some; but I find daily many of these, the moment they have read what I have written, perfectly tranquil. The attacks, begun with deliberate fraud in quotation, were followed up by low malice, most of which, when I have seen them, I have not read. I should be ready to explain to the humblest and most ignorant. But the attacks have not commanded my respect. I am aware the enemy has succeeded in troubling some, and leading others to profit by it, to hinder souls whose consciences were making progress; but the Lord has a long look out. Our faith has to wait for Him, and such I seek for myself. I only fear that it may leave some, for whom I had hoped better, in the mud they have sought to create. I only ask to be enabled to do at each moment what is right in the matter, believing, though it be the enemy's work, it will do good. I proposed to the brethren to go out of communion, and leave off ministering (not for any difficulty I had) but to leave them perfectly free; but they would not hear of it in these parts, and in many others.

I am not the least uneasy myself. I feel distinctly it is an effort of the enemy, and that he will be baffled; but I do not want to involve others in it, nor will I make it a matter of self defense, mingling that up with the Lord's glory, and raising discussions, when it ought with such a subject to be edification. As regards connecting it, or comparing it, with Mr. Newton's doctrine, were it not for the pure wickedness of what set it a-going, it would be beneath contempt. To say that being born in a state, and seeking to extricate oneself, and not being able till death, is the same thing as being born in the very opposite, and always walking in that state, and entering into the sufferings of another in grace, does not deserve to be reasoned on. The same thing! One makes the other impossible. I cannot condescend to take notice of these attacks: those who get entangled in them must count the cost for themselves. Explain my own views, or unfold the truth as far as I can, this I am ready to do; but I am in no hurry. I do not want to get defending myself, but prefer trusting the Lord who will make things clear. Some parts of it are a new kind of trial, but there is grace enough in Christ for it, and I leave all that, without great difficulty, to God. We shall find out where He is leading. May the Lord save as many as possible from Satan's power in it.

I am ready to do all I can towards it, where it is really sought. I have no doubt many expressions may be made clearer; but, if honestly examined in the context, they cannot have the sense attached to them. In substance, instead of having to retract, I believe my enemies to be in very mischievous and evil error, going far to deny the reality of Christ's sufferings, and thus depriving Him of a blessed part of His glory, and us of the deepest comfort and vital truth.

I can easily understand that what relates to the remnant of Israel may not be understood, and hence that part is difficult to enter into. That does not trouble me. But the denial of Christ's sufferings, where these are real, is another matter; and, allow me to say, though I shall reply to your questions out of the New Testament, you cannot understand that subject without referring to the Old. Nor can I consent to give up that which was able to make men wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

I am aware that Mr. Newton said his doctrine was not in the New Testament, but in the Psalms; but one of the devices of Satan is to deprive us of truth by connecting it with deadly error. This is one source of trouble to honest minds now; but it is a reason for going peacefully on in the truth itself, and having patience with people's minds. His doctrine was in neither. Nor do I admit such a principle. For the Old Testament throws infinite light on what we have often only the fact of in the New. There is sufficient in the New to connect it with the Old, as in the case of Christ's sacrifice, but far more detail in the Old. If you expect to find the details as to the remnant of Israel in the New, you will be disappointed. Mr. Newton connected the blessed Lord with sinful guilty Israel, and hence had necessarily a false Christ. I say He entered into the sorrows and sufferings of the godly remnant. It is never stated in my papers that He was in the place that brought them in. The attacks on me are founded on a deadly error; that entering into the sufferings, or suffering with them in heart and grace, supposes Himself to be in the state or place which brought them in. Christ was baptized with the baptism of repentance. Was He in the case, or state, or position to need it? Every Christian knows that He was not, yet He submitted to that, or went through it.

There cannot be a more dangerous principle than that on which the charges against my statements are founded. They are really unawares founded on Mr. Newton's principle, not what they are attacking. I have no thought on the personal or relative positions of Christ which is not that of the whole church of God.

The only thing new, and which is not so for multitudes of saints, is there being a Jewish remnant, and His entering into their sorrows. The rest is merely calling souls to, I believe, a most profitable and faith-deepening contemplation of the blessed Lord's sufferings; and that, for friends or foes, I am not going to give up. Statements may be cleared up, but not truth given up. Thank God, many studious souls had been already, and the hubbub raised has led many others since to draw great profit from it.

I will now turn directly to your question and to the New Testament. But you must feel that before God no divinely taught and God-fearing mind will leave out Psa. 22; 69; 102, or Isaiah 50 or 53, in learning God's mind on the sufferings of the Lord.

It is admitted that in Gethsemane Christ was not yet drinking the cup: we know that He could then pray that He might not. Was He suffering simply from man for righteousness' sake? I merely state this as a general principle, that there is suffering which is not from man for righteousness, nor accomplishing atonement. You ask the question, " If smiting were necessitated in the blessed Lord, except as the sin-bearer? " You have just fallen into the dangerous error I adverted to. Where have I said it was necessitated? I have stated just the contrary. And this makes all the difference. Atonement is wrought in the forsaking of God when Christ was made sin for us. No doubt death was there consequently, but much more than death, and to confine it to the act of death is fatal error-just what one form of infidelity is now doing. And it is just because minds have lost, or never had, the true sense of what atonement is, its unfathomable depth, that they have confounded other true sufferings with it. When the Lord, with strong crying and tears, made His supplication to Him that was able to save Him from death, was it only from wrath and the work of atonement? When He said, " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me," were they watching with Him undergoing atonement? The Son of man was to suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation, and be put to death, and rise again: is this a statement of atonement?

You will say, perhaps, these were His sufferings from man simply for righteousness' sake. No doubt man's hand was in it, as it was in the cross, where atonement was wrought. But Scripture teaches me that it is not simply that. The disciples had seen His sufferings from men all through. This He only began to tell them of on His last journey to Jerusalem. Not only so, the Lord's position and theirs was changed-His hour till then was not come. He was acting with Emmanuel power, and sending them forth, and disposing of every heart, so that they lacked nothing. But Messiah was to be cut off, and He tells them in Luke that all was changed in this respect; Luke 22:35-37. " But now let him that hath a purse take it. For I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors, for the things concerning me have an end." No doubt this was fulfilled in that in which atonement was wrought; but it is not atonement which is spoken of, but the rejection of Messiah, and the total change which accompanied it. When the Lord spoke of smiting, quoting from Zechariah, no doubt it was in death, or unto death, He was smitten; but He is not speaking of atonement. " All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered." Does this mean, I will make atonement, and gather into one flock Jews and Gentiles, being lifted upon the cross? Was it smiting the Shepherd as then having gathered the Jewish sheep around Him, so that they were scattered? If I am to believe the Lord, it was this latter. It was not the gathering power of atonement, but the scattering power of smiting; not the lifting up, though in the same work, but the smiting the Man on the earth, the earthly Shepherd.

You will say this went much farther. To be sure it did, blessed be God; but this does not alter the fact that there was this. Man's hand was in it, Satan's hand was 'in it. He had departed from Him for a season; now the prince of this world came. It was man's hour, and the power of darkness. The blessed Lord's soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death (and note, before drinking the cup). You will say this was only from man and Satan. It was (though His power never changed) a declared change from His spoiling his goods. And Scripture shows me that, while tried by this to the uttermost, and suffering, He looked up to His Father through it, and would only take it as a cup from Him; that His perfection was shown in bowing to it all as His will and way. And not only was atonement made, but Messiah was cut off, all the promises connected with His presence in Israel in the flesh set aside, the beloved nation and city, over which He wept as that which He would have gathered often, cast off and judged.

This was not from •man's hand merely, though through it. It was God's divorce of His people, wrought out alike because of need in the death of Messiah. It was not atonement, but judicial, and while it was because of their rejection of Christ, His heart, who wept over them, entered into it, suffered in it and by it, and in His piety did not take it from secondary causes, but from God's hand. No doubt He at the same time wrought atonement, was wounded for His people's transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities, as by His stripes they will be healed, but all this on the far deeper ground of atonement; but this does not set aside the truth of the setting aside all blessings in the living Person of Messiah, all promises connected with it, nor that the Lord felt all this, and suffered. Was it not in His cutting off the people were rejected (not saved by atonement, true as that is)? Was it God cut them off, or man (not finally, as we know, but as connected with a living Messiah)? Do you think Christ was indifferent to all this, or not? Was He not true in heart when as yet it was only in prospect that He wept over Jerusalem? I shall be told this was only sympathy. I abhor the statement. Scripture teaches me that He suffered that He might sympathize. I believe it fully, deeply.

Persons hostile to the truth have taken the statements I have made as to the different states of heart, or a tried soul, to which, consequently, this interest and sympathy of Christ might apply, and given them as the state in which Christ was. I might, no doubt, have guarded by a positive disclaimer against such an application. To an honest mind it was needless; to a dishonest one, useless. When in the general statement, I had carefully put it in, to guard against any misapprehension on the very point you take up, it was deliberately and purposely left out, and unsuspecting minds caught to be puzzled by it. With this before me, what do you feel I can think of the clamor that has been raised?

I have answered your question from the New Testament. If you, with these facts of the New Testament, take the Psalm you will soon find your mind guided into further truth and apprehension of what passed when this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him. I have no desire to give up what I have learned there. I believe both the atonement and the personal sufferings of Christ are lost by doing so, and true sufferings, in order to sympathize, turned into sympathy. I cannot enter here into more detail. The fact that Christ's sorrows ran up into atonement, the positive drinking the cup of wrath, and putting the sin away; that His sufferings merged in this, which hinders the wrath coming on them who have a part in its efficacy, has made it more difficult to estimate those dealings of God which are judicial, but have not in accepted ones even the final character of wrath. In Christ one passed on, so to speak, into the other; in us, and spared Israel, it does not, because Christ has taken that for us; but in a legal state we dread it, and so will Israel at the end. All, if at peace, separate them easily; it is not so if we are not.

Judgment begins at the house of God. They are difficultly saved. This has nothing to do with atonement. Jerusalem has received at the hand of the Lord double of all her sins. This excludes the idea of atonement. Does all this pass without any interest of the blessed Lord in it; or did He so suffer as to be able (besides atonement, which alone renders the other possible as a distinct thing) to enter into their sorrows? Read the Psalm and see. Read the New Testament, and see if you cannot find facts which are the fulfillment of them.

I am willing and bound to do anything I can to help any, the feeblest soul. I am willing to stand aloof from brethren (I do not mean to separate from them in heart or will), if they have not the courage, or are not in a condition to face the adversaries of the truth, or are so perplexed by them that the connection with it is a burden; but I am not willing to give up the faith I have in the sufferings of the blessed Lord, nor the fink of heart with Him which the apprehension of them gives me. But I believe souls are getting great blessing by the consideration of them, and Satan doing a work, as is often said, in which he deceives himself. I dare say many could not explain it thus logically, many may make crude statements; but the true of heart will be blessed in learning the sorrows of the blessed Lord. It is not the first time, alas! some have been driven back by the truth.

The one point on which there might be difficulty, is the bringing of the smiting, which in act took place on the cross, into the whole period from the supper. This might have been explained (it is at the end of my tract), but for fair minds is no ground of difficulty or objection. Scripture does so fully. " Ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." They were scattered before the time of smiting was there. " So now I say unto you, he that hath a purse, take one," and the Lord's discourse in John, " Now is the Son of man glorified." The whole tenor of the Gospels is this-to take the smiting as come, the same as the sense of the smiting.

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WE have here an example in the case of Jesus, and two warnings in Peter and in Judas. In Peter we may learn the weakness, and in Judas the dreadful wickedness, of the flesh. We get in Jesus what we should aim after. In Judas we see the mere professor, in Peter the saint sifted. All three are before us in a time of searching trial, and the result of trial is seen in each. We ought to remember that we have received the Holy Ghost, which Peter had not when he denied the Lord; yet, having the Holy Ghost, we may still learn a lesson from Peter's flesh. And is not the entire worthlessness of the flesh among the last things we learn? In Peter we see what the flesh is. There is no real living upon the hope of the glory, except in measure as the flesh is mortified and brought under subjection.

I would dwell, first, upon Judas's apostasy. He had all the appearance to men of being as the other disciples; he had companied with the Lord, he had been one of those sent forth to preach the gospel and work miracles; but his conscience never was before God. He might have truth in his understanding (and, indeed, the understanding does not generally receive truth so readily where the conscience is affected). Again, Judas could not have walked three years with Jesus, and seen His grace and love, and not have had his affections moved. But then his conscience had never been brought into exercise before God. So it is with many. If we watch the saint receiving truth, we shall often find him slow of apprehension. There is something to be judged before God; something which condemns him, and which involves sacrifice. For instance, we see most clearly that the precious blood cleanses from all sin; but only let us commit sin-and how slowly do we apprehend that blessed truth so as to get the comfort of it! In the latter case the conscience is at work. In like manner the affections of the unconverted may be moved -a great company of women followed Christ at the crucifixion, bewailing and lamenting Him! So we read of " anon with joy " receiving, and " by and by " [or anon, for it is the same word], when tribulation arises, turning away.

The natural man wants something to satisfy self before God; and, until he has done with himself, he will be looking for a certain measure of righteousness before God. He may have been, in connection with this want, instructed in the gospel, and thus the understanding may be clear, and the affections moved: but, unless the conscience be bare before God, there is no life. Here was Judas betraying his Master! After all, what was this? Nothing more, at the bottom, than what was in every heart. Judas loved money-no uncommon lust. And the love of money in a saint nowadays is as bad, or worse, as being done more in the light.

There was sin in Judas's nature: which sin showed itself in the shape of the love of money. The next thing was, Satan suggesting a way of gratifying this lust, for he loved money more than he loved Jesus. And now we find the result of outward nearness to the Lord while the conscience is unaffected-it was to make Judas reason upon circumstances. He thought, probably, the Lord would deliver Himself, as He had done before; for, when he found it not so, he threw down the money, and said, " I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." He continues in this nearness to Christ, until, thirdly, we read that " after the sop Satan entered into him." In the condition of hypocrisy he gets his heart hardened; and then Satan gets between his conscience and all hope of pardon. Many a natural man would not betray a friend with a kiss, as Judas soon after did. His nearness served to harden him; and he actually took the sop from the hand of the Lord! Even natural feeling was silenced. So it is when the unconverted man gets into a similar position. He becomes more vile than ever. His heart is hardened. Hypocrisy, and at length despair, ensues. Such is the flesh and its end. And the flesh cannot be bettered by ordinances, even where Christ Himself is. Such is the flesh-I can hardly say, when left to itself, for man is never left to himself, he is never really independent. He has the will to be so; therefore he is perfectly a sinner, but if disobedient, he is servant to his lust, " disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," and slave to Satan. A natural man has a conscience and shame. He will not do in the light what he would do in the dark. But the outward form of Christianity, where it has not touched the heart, only makes this difference, that his conscience is seared, and he is only more subtly the slave of Satan.

I turn now to the contrast afforded by what is seen in Peter with what we see in our blessed Lord. In Jesus we see the obedient, the dependent One, expressing His entire dependence by His praying. And there was seen an angel from heaven strengthening Him. He felt the weakness which He had given Himself up to bear; He was " crucified in weakness." " All my bones," He says, " are out of joint, my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels." " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me." So in the earlier temptation, we hear Him answering the devil out of the word of God. Jesus might have sent Satan away by divine power, but this would have been no example to us. So, in this chapter, we see the Lord praying!

If you compare what Peter is doing with what the Lord is doing, you learn the secret of Peter's weakness and the Lord's strength. What was the effect of trial upon the weakness of Peter's flesh? He had said, " I will go with thee to prison and to death "; but the Lord has to say to him, " could ye not watch with me one hour? " They were sleeping for sorrow. Here was neither prison nor death! " Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation " (not merely that there be no transgression). Peter entered into temptation; Jesus never did at all. Yet the trial was far greater to Jesus. Jew and Gentile were against Him, and behind them the power of Satan. " This," said He, " is your hour, and the power of darkness "; and again, " my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Where does He take all this? The Lord does not sleep and seek to forget His sorrow. He goes and prays to the Father. His eye rested not on the circumstances to think of them. He looked to His Father. Not that He did not feel; for He said, " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was weakness here as man, and that is real strength.

Remember, if we are in entire dependence, the temptation does not meet us at all. Jesus does not say, ' shall I not go through all these trials? ' but " the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? " He does not see Pilate or Judas in it; it was not Satan that had given Him the cup, but His Father. So with us; if in a frame of entire dependence, temptation does not touch us at all! Trial comes; but, like Jesus, we can say of it, " the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? " Every trial becomes a blessed occasion for perfecting obedience, if near God; if otherwise, a temptation! Jesus was walking with God. It was not that He did not feel weakness. "Tarry ye here, and watch with me," shows the weakness of human condition fully felt. As in Psa. 22:14, referring to the cross, He says, " I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint: my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels." And yet He shrank not from suffering alone when love to His disciples called for it. "If ye seek me, let these go their way." But being in an agony, He prays the more earnestly; it drives Him to His Father;

and that before the trial comes. Then what is the next thing? When the trial actually comes, it is already gone through with God! He presents Himself before them saying, "whom seek ye? " as calmly as if going to work a miracle. Whether before Caiaphas or Pontius Pilate, He makes a good confession; owns Himself Son of God before the Jews, and King before Pilate.

How comes this difference? In the first place with Peter the flesh is sleeping; he goes to sleep to get rid of the pressure of circumstances. Peter has not gone through the trial with the Father. At the moment when Jesus is going to be led away, the energy of the flesh wakes up, and Peter draws the sword. The flesh has just energy enough to carry us into the danger where it cannot stand-that energy deserts us then. How little real communion is here! When Christ was praying, Peter was sleeping; when Christ was submitting as a lamb led to the slaughter, Peter was fighting; when Christ was confessing in suffering, Peter was denying Him with cursing and swearing. This is just the flesh: sleeping when it ought to be waking; in energy when it ought to be still; and then denying the Lord when the time of trial comes. With Christ it was agony with the Father, but perfect peace when the trial came. Oh, if we knew how to go on in all circumstances in communion with the Father, there would be no temptation that would not be an occasion of glorifying Him!

The great thing was, Peter had not learned what the flesh is: he did not keep in memory the weakness of the flesh; and thus the condition of dependence was hindered. He seems to be sincere in wishing to own the Lord Jesus and not deny Him. There was more energy of natural and very true affection in Peter than in those who forsook the Lord and fled. He really loved the Lord. Peter fails, not from self-will, not from willing to sin, but through the weakness of the flesh. In Christ there was no possible moral weakness, because He always walked in the place of weakness in communion with His Father. Jesus goes-through agony itself-with the Father. Peter fails, though but the shadow of temptation comes to him. All Peter's fall began by want of dependence, and by neglecting prayer. We must be watching " unto prayer "; not merely ready to pray when temptation comes, but walking with God, and so meeting it in the power of previous communion and prayer. Without continual prayer, and constant sense of entire weakness in self, the more love to Christ, and the more good-will to serve Him are in a saint, the more certainly will he, by that very good-will, be led into the place in which he will dishonor Christ! The other disciples that fled did not so much dishonor the name of their Master as Peter did.

It was thus Peter had to learn the evil of the flesh. Jesus, on the contrary, ever walked in the confession of dependence- always praying. And what use did the Lord make of His knowledge of Satan's purpose to sift Peter? He prayed for him! The more knowledge, dear brethren, the more prayer! " I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." As the result of this intercession, Peter learned the evil of the flesh more deeply than the others, and was able to " strengthen his brethren."

We are incapable of ministering truth to our brethren unless we are conscious of weakness in ourselves. Without the prayer of Jesus, where would Peter have been? He was running nearly like Judas. Oh, what a blessed thing to be kept in entire consciousness of weakness, instead of running on like Peter into a place where we cannot stand! How good to be afraid to take a single step without the Lord's guidance! The flesh is ever playing us false-it is good for nothing. The effect of keeping it in the Lord's presence is to have done with it-to be cast on the Father. There is no wisdom that will stand us in any stead but the wisdom that is from above. The Lord knew what the flesh was, and what Paul needed, when he had been caught up into the third heaven. To be taken up to a fourth? No; but a messenger of Satan to buffet: that is, he needed to be brought down. There is the thorn in the flesh given him; there is to be the consciousness that the flesh is worth nothing.

We may notice that there are three ways of learning the powerlessness and wretchedness of the flesh: prior to peace, often in desperate struggles (for knowledge and conscience are distinct things); when we have peace, before the Lord in prayer and communion, not daring to take a step till He leads us, and then He is glorified in us in grace and obedience, whatever the trial; or in the bitter experience in which Peter learned it, when flesh is not judged in communion with God. This last will be the way, so long as we are judging of things instead of judging ourselves. When we are faithfully judging ourselves and walking with God, we shall enter into no temptation. Trial may come, but there will be full preparation to meet it; not that we may be able to say, Now I am prepared for this or that temptation. We are in no certainty from one moment to another as to what trial may be coming; but we shall have the strength of God with us in it. Therefore our only safe place is watching and prayer-yes, prayer before the assault-prayer that may amount to agony; for so Jesus prayed!

We must expect to have our souls much exercised; often, it may be, when trial is there, casting about as to why this trial is sent. It may be for a fault; it may be for some careless or hard state of soul. It may be, as Paul's, to keep down the flesh; it may be preparatory to some coming conflict. But in these exercises of soul we must keep before the Lord: then, when the trial comes for which the Father has been training us, there will be perfect peace. The Lord will make you bear in spirit with Him, when exercised, the burden which He will make you bear in strength in the battle. Do not shrink from inward exercise; settle it with Him. There is no limit to our strength for obedience when our strength is the Lord's.

" If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." None of our souls can estimate what that cup was for One who had dwelt essentially in the Father's love; but the most spiritual will most acknowledge it. Then the Holy One was made sin; no gleam of light on the soul of Jesus. At the thought of it, when pressed by Satan on His soul, we see Him sweating as it were great drops of blood. He did not think lightly of sin! The Prince of life was brought into the dust of death" all thy billows passed over me." At the cross Jesus bore what you will never be called to bear. Beware of denying Him. Many do so in detail who in the main acknowledge Him.

Our happy privilege is, not to be occupied with the trial as a trial, but to see in every trial an opportunity of obeying God, and to say of each, as Jesus did, " The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? "

" Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only God, our Savior, be glory."

Words for Women: December 2012, Devotedness of Women

The woman who anointed the Lord (Matt. 26:7) was not informed of the circumstances about to happen, nor was she a prophetess. But the approach of that hour of darkness was felt by one whose heart was fixed on Jesus. ... But the perfectness of Jesus, which drew out the enmity, drew out the affection in her, and she (so to speak) reflected the perfectness in the affection, and as the perfectness was put in action and drawn to light by the enmity, so was her affection. Thus Christ's heart could not but meet it. Jesus, by reason of this enmity, was still more the Object that occupied a heart which, doubtless led of God, instinctively apprehended what was going on.

But yet a few words more on the woman who anointed Him. The effect of having the heart fixed in affection on Jesus is shown in her in a striking manner. Occupied with Him, she is sensible of His situation. She feels what affects Him, and this causes her affection to act in accordance with the special devotedness which that situation inspires.

As hatred against Him rose up to murderous intent, the spirit of devotedness to Him grows in answer to it in her. Consequently, with the tact of devotedness, she does precisely that which was suited to His situation. The poor woman was not intelligently aware of this, yet she did the thing that was meet. Her value for the Person of Jesus, so infinitely precious to her, made her quick-sighted with respect to that which was passing in His mind. In her eyes, Christ was invested with all the interest of His circumstances, and she lavishes upon Him that which expressed her affection. Fruit of this sentiment, her action met the circumstances, and although it was but the instinct of her heart, Jesus gives it all the value which His perfect intelligence could attribute to it, embracing at once the sentiments of her heart and the coming events.

But this testimony of affection and devotedness to Christ brings out the selfishness, the want of heart, of the others. They blame the poor woman. Sad proof (to say nothing of Judas) how little the knowledge of that which concerns Jesus necessarily awakens suitable affection in our hearts! But the narrative goes on. Some poor women — to whom devotedness often gives, on God's part, more courage than to men in their more responsible and busy position — were standing near the cross, beholding what was done to Him they loved (Matt. 27:55-56).

The part that women take in all this history is very instructive, especially to them. The activity of public service, that which may be called "work," belongs naturally to men (all that appertains to what is generally termed ministry), although women share a very precious activity in private. But there is another side of Christian life which is particularly theirs, and that is personal and loving devotedness to Christ. It is a woman who anointed the Lord while the disciples murmured; women who were at the cross when all except John had forsaken Him; women who came to the sepulchre and who were sent to announce the truth to the apostles who had gone after all to their own home; women who ministered to the Lord's need. And indeed this goes further. Devotedness in service is perhaps the part of man, but the instinct of affection, that which enters more intimately into Christ's position, and is thus more intimately in connection with His sentiments, is closer communion with the sufferings of His heart — this is the part of woman — assuredly a happy part.

The activity of service for Christ puts man a little out of this position, at least if the Christian is not watchful. Everything has, however, its place. I speak of that which is characteristic, for there are women who have served much and men who have felt much. Note also here, what I believe I have remarked, that this clinging of heart to Jesus is the position where the communications of true knowledge are received. The first full gospel is announced to the poor woman that was a sinner, who washed His feet (Luke 7), the embalming for His death to Mary (John 12:3), our highest position to Mary Magdalene (John 20), and the communion Peter desired to John who was in His bosom (John 13). And here the women have a large share.

J. N. Darby

Letters 2, Capacity to Enjoy; Kingdom Sphere of Reward; Exercises to Fit for Service

As a rule, reward is in the Kingdom, ten cities, etc.: in Matt. 25, ten and four talents being alike into the joy of the Lord. Fitness for heaven is not connected with progress in scripture: "He hath made us meet." It is natural to suppose greater spirituality is more capable of enjoying; but the object is so great after all, it eclipses us, and we must remember Christ is our life, and there, all else gone. Scripture, as far as I know, never speaks of spiritual capacity, or growth in it, to enjoy more. Here surely there is such a thing. When God is all in all, there is no such thing spoken of. God may have in His eternal purpose fitted us for more or less. But, as scripture does not speak of it, I do not. Reward in the kingdom is clearly spoken of.

[1875.]

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Waiting and Working for Christ

Matthew 25:1-29

IN these two parables we see evidently the Lord dealing with the responsibility of those who have been called out for Him; some of them not only called, but called upon to act, whether in thoughts, or feelings, or outward actions, in reference to His return to them.

The coming of the Lord is not merely some special doctrine, but is what ought to, and at first did characterize the Christian; not merely the fact that He will come again (every person that calls himself a Christian believes that): the present expectation of the Lord characterizes the Christian. Here they went out to meet the bridegroom. Again the apostle says of the Thessalonians that they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven-they were converted to wait. So in Matt. 24, it was not that they denied His coming. " But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ": it ceased to be a present expectation. So with the virgins, " they all slumbered and slept ": it was not given up as a truth (though in fact it has been given up in a great measure), but it ceased to be a present expectation. Therefore when the Lord is exhorting His disciples He says (Luke 12:35), " Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto

men that wait for their Lord." Then He adds, " Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." He ministers to their blessedness. What I press, then, is, that the more you look at the scriptures, the more you see that it was constantly as a first principle before the hearts of the saints.

The Thessalonians were not converted above a month. The apostle was only a few weeks with them; a persecution arose, and he was sent away, yet there he had fully brought it before them. There is no epistle so full of the Lord's coming as the two to the Thessalonians, the first as to the joy of the saints (the Lord taking them to Himself), the second the solemnity of His coming in judgment. They were quite recently converted to God, yet they had learned all this. It was the thing brought before their souls: " Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

Two things characterized them: they went out to meet the bridegroom, and they served Him meanwhile. They were like unto men that wait for their Lord. As we all know, even unconverted men know perfectly well, if saints were waiting for Christ their whole lives would be changed. There is not a man does not know it. Do you think people would be heaping up money, or dressing themselves in finery, to meet the Lord? If this was acted upon, it would change everything in our lives; that is what the Lord gave it for. " Let your loins be girded about "-a figure for all the heart in order, the state you are always to be in-like a porter at the door, " that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." That is what the Lord looks for in the saints.

This truth is everywhere strikingly presented all through 1 Thessalonians. This characterized them there. Their faith to God-ward was spread abroad: the world was saying, What an extraordinary set of people! They have given up all their idols (and you can have idols without being heathen), and have got one true God, and expect His Son from heaven to take them up there. The world was in one sense preaching the gospel, declaring what these things were. Because they were waiting for His Son from heaven, their walk and ways in respect of that became a testimony that all the world talked about. They were persecuted for it, but that is another thing. In the second chapter he speaks of the coming in connection with joy in service, Ye are my crown and joy-I shall have it when the Lord comes, " for what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? " In the third chapter it is connected with holiness-" To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." He is looking for the practical effect in conduct. Then in the fourth chapter he explains how they will go up. " Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." As He was coming to execute judgment (I mean on the living), so when Christ comes to judge this world, we come with Him: a blessed part of it-our thorough association with Christ. He still speaks in the same way in the fifth chapter, where it is more judgment and the day of the Lord, with some remarkable signs. " For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." The elements of the thing are seen now, the full time is not yet come, but it is a solemn thing. It seems a contradiction: people are saying, Peace, peace; yet their hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth. It is just what is going on now. Progress, progress, everybody says, and yet all in confusion, and they do not know what is coming.

But my desire now is to look at it as to the saints. All the Epistles (except Galatians and Ephesians) take up this; and the Gospels. When the Lord was comforting His disciples, how does He begin? " Let not your hearts be troubled.... I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again "-the thing He first of all holds up. My object is to show the way the word of God kept it before the hearts of the saints, that they might live in that expectation. When the Lord was ascending to heaven, the angels say, " Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner." If the Lord was leaving comfort in the hearts of His disciples when going away, He says, " I will come again and receive you unto myself." If angels are comforting them, they say, " He shall so come in like manner." It is thus practically pressed on the disciples. The last word in scripture is, " Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

Accordingly, the more you look into scripture, the more you will see not merely that it is a truth taught, but a truth held up before the hearts and minds of the disciples, that they should habitually be looking for the Lord. It would change everything; it is no use saying it would not: every unconverted person knows it would. They would do their ordinary duties, of course, and be the more diligent in them. This is the special blessing in Luke 12: " Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." He ministers to them heavenly blessing. Then when He goes on to service, " Who then is that faithful and wise servant whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." When I get the state of the heart watching for Christ, it is heavenly blessedness with Him: when I get service, it is the kingdom.

Thus we see here or elsewhere, in the word of God, the coming of the Lord is kept as a present thing before the heart. If I take the unconverted person, there cannot be a more solemn thing than to be kept in constant expectation; he cannot say the Lord will not be here to-night. The Lord alone knows when He is coming. They were to wait for Him. If the saints were waiting, there would be the testimony; and do you not think the unconverted would find it out? They might hate and persecute them; but they would know that the saints had something that they had not, something which characterized them in their walk and affections. Two things are needed for this. There are two characters in which the Lord comes: He takes them to be with Himself; and then comes the question of judgment. First, then, the judgment must have no kind of fear or terror for me; but, on the other hand, to really expect Him, the coming One must be the object of my affections and my delight. If you told me some Prussian was coming, I would not care about that; but if it was my wife or my mother, how different! To have it really as our desire, then, all questions as to judgment must be settled, and we must have our affections on the Lord. We get this by the first coming of the Lord. We wait for His Son from heaven-even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come. There is wrath coming; but we know the Lord's coming is before the scene of judgment, and it is the coming of the One who has wrought salvation: we wait for the One who has delivered us. Judgment to me is not a subject of fear.

A word on this: what God has done in the coming of the Lord Jesus (I speak of His first coming) is this-all that would have to be dealt with in judgment at His second coming has been, for the believer, so dealt with on the cross: He who is to come as judge, has come as the Savior. That is what I get in the gospel. He who is to come as judge, has come in an entirely different way and character: He has come as a Savior. " God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"; "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." Suppose I believe the testimony that the Lord is coming and am not ready for it, I fear judgment; then I turn to the first coming and see He has delivered me from the wrath to

come. God has dealt with the world as to its sins in grace before He deals with it in judgment. He deals with them as sinners, as responsible and lost, but not in judgment-He came " to seek and to save that which was lost."

Suppose my heart looks, then, at Christ, I ask, and this is important, How was it He came into the world? My sins brought Him. But what was His motive in coming? What put it into God's heart to send Him? Was it any asking of mine? Any wish I had for Him? None. When He did come they rejected Him. Thus I am brought to the simple blessed truth-" God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." I get the knowledge of what was in God's heart as proved by His acts. He has thought of my state when I was a mere sinner and needed His love-" God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." I have thus the heart of God, as the spring and source of all this-that His own Son has become a man, and has put away the sin that He would have to judge me for if He had not so put it away. I get Him as a Savior before He becomes a Judge. Just see the place this sets us in. I see God occupied with my sins already on the cross. When? Long ago. I learn this as a fact, that He has been occupied with them: He knows all about me. I see Him there bearing my sins in His own body on the tree, and faith says, " The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He bore my sins; He sweat great drops of blood at the thought of it, but He has done it, and was made a curse, in the same blessed love. He has bowed His head under the weight, this terrible weight, and goes through it. All was against Him. Satan's power was there-broken by it, but still there; and all that God is against sin. Thus He goes down to death and the grave, and is risen in glory now. Where are all the sins He bore? Does He bear them in glory?

I get this truth, then, that the Savior has thus given Himself for me, and God has been occupied with my sins before Christ comes as judge. The apostle speaks of it as the " terror of the Lord," 2 Cor. 5:10, 11. But when the believer comes before the judgment-seat, he finds there the Person who has put away all his sins, and has the peaceful settled consciousness that his sins are all gone. " Having made peace through the blood of his cross," God has attested the value of it by raising Him from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand: and has given you the peace, that you might believe and know the love that God has to you. " When I see the blood I will pass over you." He has set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, and instead of fearing His coming I rejoice. I could not desire His coming if a stranger: but we see the way Christ has interested and brought back our hearts. " The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Out and out Christ has given Himself for us, not only His life-His precious blood-but Himself. Thus I find One who loved me, and purged my conscience; Heb. 9:14. And not only is my conscience perfectly purged, but my heart is free to be on Him, because I have learned the perfect love of Him who gave Himself for me.

Now I get the flow of blessed affections: the Lord Jesus is coming-now I care for it! The one whose visage was more marred than any man's, who loved us, and charged Himself to put away our sins, who drank the bitter cup, and has taken away my terror-taken it away justly too. That is where the believer is. Then I say, Oh, what I would give to see Him! the One who hung upon the cross for me, where Satan's power was and God's wrath, but with a love stronger than death! Nothing stopped Him, the love with which He loved us, going through that which no heart can fathom-the bitterness of death and the cross. It is finished and done. And the One who thus loves me becomes the object of an affection which completely commands the heart. The heart longs and desires to see Him, and He gives the blessed assurance that we shall see Him, and (what is more) be like Him. " We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

The thing, then, that is set out before the Christian is, that Christ Himself will come. He is waiting now, but He will come and receive us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. And therefore the heart waits thus; Christ is waiting, expecting till His enemies be put under His footstool. He is not slack concerning His promise. As to the desires of our hearts, I am waiting to see Christ, to be like Christ, and I have the certainty of it because I have His word-" We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him."

There are the two things that make the heart ready, to be in a condition to wait: His first coming to salvation-" The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared," and " looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us." The grace of God has brought salvation. Then we have the whole Christian life summed up: denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope: grace has appeared and brought salvation, and we look for glory. The passage sums up the whole condition, only that besides, the Holy Ghost is given us that He may be the earnest of the inheritance. A Christian is a person who stands between the first coming of Christ (the Holy Ghost dwelling in Him), and the second coming. He looks back at the perfectness of what Christ has done, and he looks forward to be with Him and like Him, while he is expecting: just as a mother would expect her child from a far country-constantly expecting because her heart is on the one that is coming. That is what forms the affections, to be waiting for Christ to take us out of the world. The friendship of the world is enmity with God; our hearts with Him, we are waiting to be taken out of it. The Christian has to wait God's time, yet knowing the value of Christ's first coming as taught of God, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, he has learned to love that One, and is waiting for Him. Salvation is accomplished, and the hope certain, because Christ has accomplished it. Thus we have seen the blessed ground upon which the Christian has his hope-that is, the value of the first coming of Christ as a Savior. We get this so distinctly that the whole object of His coming in judgment hast been met, for the believer, by His coming in grace. Now His coming again is to us all joy and blessedness; He comes, and raises or changes us, and makes us like Himself in the glory: the first coming gives the ground.

Now, when you come to apply it, first there is what we have in the parable of the virgins: there is the spiritual warning of the appearance of Christ. " While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." I press this, that you will find-so careful is the Holy Ghost to keep this thought as a present expectation-that neither in this parable nor elsewhere, does He present a circumstance, which would force a person to put it beyond his own lifetime. Thus, as to the form of the parable, the virgins that went to sleep are the virgins that awoke. Similarly in that of the servant. The Holy Ghost will never give anything beforehand, so as to weaken the present expectation. It is a moral thing affecting the condition of the soul: the evil servant says, " My Lord delayeth his coming." This is the judgment of the professing church.

But to apply the parable before us individually-" They went out to meet the bridegroom." That was their business, what characterized them. All had their torches, their profession: the foolish had no oil. " The bridegroom tarried ": now I get the fact, not what ought to be, but what was; for all slept. How is it, it is asked, that men for hundreds of years saw nothing of it? They all slept, wise as well as foolish" While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." They slept together, they woke together. What would be the meaning of separating them while asleep? But the moment they woke at the cry, " Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him," He calls them back to the place they were originally in. " Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps "-immediately they had some work to accomplish. Now comes the separation: " And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out." After the awakening cry, the

Bridegroom delayed long enough to test the heart, whether there was that real grace which kept the heart waiting for Him. Now it was the time of judgment for the foolish virgins, not of their getting oil; they were not fit to go in. Here it takes the character of warning: while they all went to sleep together, the moment they were awake to the fact of not having grace, they could not stand. There could not be a more solemn warning. " Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." Now let me ask, Is this so in your case? Are your affections enough upon Christ to be watching for Him, because you do not know the moment- still watching for Him (for " we shall not all sleep "), so that if He came you could say, This is the Lord, we have been waiting for Him? Are your hearts actively waiting, set on His coming, bowing to God's ways as to the time, but still waiting as to your hearts' affections for Christ; your lamps burning, your loins girded, so that you could open to Him immediately if He was to come this moment? It is the state of the heart 1 look to, so that if Christ were to come this moment, it would be that which you were looking for. Then will all His saints be with Him, and all glorified.

Now, the other thing is service. The twelfth chapter of Luke gives us not only watching but serving. So here (Matt. 25:14-30) it is the servant. You get more of the sovereignty of God here, than in the analogous parable in Luke, where it is more the responsibility of man. Here the Lord gives to every man according to his several ability: to one five talents, to another two, etc. Every one will be responsible for his wealth, but this is not a talent. The talents are what Christ gave when He was going away. He gave gifts-apostles, prophets, and so on. He did not give money! I quite admit the responsibility of it, but it is not the point here.

Thus, then, when Christ went away, He called His own servants and gave them according to their ability. When He comes back, He reckons with them. He that had received five talents made them other five; he that had received two had also gained two. But their lord was dealing in grace and wisdom, and says to both alike, " Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Then comes the third: what characterized him was want of trust in the character of his master. It was not a question of not having oil in his lamp, but he says, " I knew thee that thou art an hard man," etc. He did not know the blessedness of the grace that is in Christ's heart. The others had the mind of Christ; they trusted His heart, and were therefore good and faithful servants. Thus I find the responsibility of service resting upon the knowledge of the heart of Christ. One said, " I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth "; he judged by his own selfish heart; the others trusted the heart of their master and acted on it. He trusts us if it is only a cup of cold water, or the gift of an apostle; He trusts His servant and expects him to act. If you have five talents, trade with them; if a cup of cold water, trade with it. I get this blessed principle that, perfect grace having been exercised, and you see how it is so, the heart in cheerful readiness trusts the grace-trusts the Lord Himself.

Now, take the case of Peter, and you will see how it is connected with the conscience. Peter had to learn himself; he had confidence in himself, and it all broke down; he little knew Christ. And now just see how the Lord deals with him. He says, " Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," and it did not fail. He needed to be sifted: it was good for him, as it is often for us, to be sifted and humbled. If he had been left to himself, it would have been all over with him. But here was the Lord just going to be crucified, answering for Himself against His bitter enemies: but you never find Him in any place or circumstances where, if one wanted Him, His heart was not free to go out to the need. He looks at Peter, whose heart is broken down: he caught the Lord's eye just at the right moment, and weeps bitterly for his sin. Now, when He comes back to Peter, there is another lesson. He says, Well, Peter, " lovest thou me more than these? " That is what he boasted of doing. He does not say, Why did you deny Me? but " Lovest thou me? " etc. He tests Peter's heart to get it right with Him. " Thou knowest all things," says Peter, " Thou knowest what is at the bottom of my heart." And then, when thoroughly humbled in the dust about the sin, Peter is given to take care of the things dearest to Him. As soon as He had entirely broken Peter down, and taught him not to trust in himself, then He says, If you love Me, feed My sheep. In the exercise of perfect grace He trusts Peter because He had taught Peter not to trust himself. Look now how Peter stands up and says to the Jews, " Ye have denied the Holy One and the Just." Did he blush? He can bring the very things he had done himself on their conscience. Why? Because his conscience is as white as snow. He had learned to trust His love. He can charge them with the sins he had done himself; his conscience is purged. He has been thoroughly probed, but he can through the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost stand up and speak of his own terrible sin. Just as I can say to a sinner, You are lost in your sins: that is what I was myself.

It is this confidence in Christ that is the spring of all true service; that entire blessed confidence in the grace of Christ, in His heart for us, who are unworthy of anything. He has trusted us, and the heart trusts Him, and the servant goes on to serve Him and trade with his talents; with the consequent effect, that we enter into the joy of our Lord, with Him and like Him, in the sense of His love because He is love. And there will not be a soul that it will not be my delight to see there. I am sure that, after the glory of Christ Himself, it is the next best thing to see the saints with Him and like Him. What is the great desire of the heart now but to see them as like Christ as possible? Then it will be perfectly. He comes and takes us there, and brings us into His joys-" Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

If you want to go on well and brightly, then, it is resting on the perfect work of Christ at His first coming (the Holy Ghost dwelling in us), and looking for that blessed hope, with true liberty of service, and the confidence that, when He comes, it is to enter into that blessed place of joy with Him. It is His own joy that He gives. The joy of our hearts is to think that He is coming, and soon, to receive us to Himself.

The Lord give you to understand that the soul stands in the efficacy of His work at His first coming, so that with unclouded confidence you may look for His second coming, saying, " Even so come, Lord Jesus." The state of a soul in the church really hangs upon that: the simple, constant, blessed expecting of Christ to come for us.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 1, Ten Virgins, The

Matt. 25:3

THERE are just two classes of characters which we meet with in the world: first, those who have never heard the way of truth and salvation, and in consequence are not manifestly interested in it; and, secondly, those who have heard and professed to receive it. But the principles of the latter individually are very different.

The general character of the one part is summed up in the charge brought from scripture-" they profess that they know God, while in works they deny him "; while the others are really and in truth waiting for His Son from heaven and the kingdom of God. This is what they desire visibly to behold, as is declared in John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God "; and to be brought into it-as in verse 5, " Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The perception therefore of this kingdom, and the entrance therein, arise manifestly from their being "born again."

Many are inclined to look upon the new birth, which is here referred to, as a change of views, desires, and sentiments only. It is a change, if indeed that can be called a change which is an entirely new creation; as it is written, "created anew in Christ Jesus"; it is a "translation"—"hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"—a transferring, a putting into a different position, which the Gospel of Matthew strikingly brings before us.

The Lord Jesus is represented in different points of view by all the evangelists; and the reason the Holy Ghost has been thus pleased to exhibit Him is for the manifestation and furtherance of the Savior's glory; for He fills up every blessing-all the greatness, wisdom, love, and power of the eternal Godhead are unfolded in Him. In Him dwells all blessedness, and from Him it is communicated; and the believer, who has found and known Him, finds Him to be such; his delight is in setting his mind on Christ; he feels and rejoices in his identification with Him in all things, and in his oneness with Him. Christ is his center of attraction, and he is revolving round Him as the object of supreme delight.

Now the Gospel of John presents Christ to our view as the Son, and delineates all His offices and works as such, having authority, and exercising it as the Son. Luke displays Him as the last Adam-the Lord from heaven-tracing His genealogy, not downwards as Matthew, but ascending to the great original thus, " which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God," going about doing good continually and accomplishing all righteousness. And in Matthew we have Him exhibited as the Messiah, the object of the prophecies, the substance of the shadows and types of the Jewish ritual: and as He was the looked-for seed, typified of old, and promised to Abraham and David as their seed, so we have in this Gospel His descent from Abraham and David according to the flesh. But the mention of the kingdom of heaven is peculiar to this evangelist. In chapter 13 we have it much noticed: " To you it is given," said Jesus, speaking to His disciples, " to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

Now the disciples, in common with the whole Jewish nation, fully expected an earthly kingdom; but, as they had entirely overlooked those prophecies which foretold Christ's coming in humiliation, they were bewildered; and therefore this subject with which the Lord engrossed their minds just met their necessities; showing them how the kingdom in mystery would be set up during the absence of their rejected Lord.

Now the period of the kingdom here referred to must be looked upon as the time of the development of the purposes of God, from His rejection by the world in the Person of His Son, to Christ's coming again in glory, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father-a kingdom into which they are admitted, and none else. And this shows us the complete, entire disunion and dissociation of the children of God with the world.

What is the position of the world as it now stands? What is its natural positive position? It is in a state, not merely of hostility against God-not merely in its standing chargeable with alienation from all holiness, of open rebellion and outrage -but in a state of absolute exclusion from the presence of God, absolutely and definitely excluded from God's presence.

The word of God says, " He drove out the man." He had lost his innocence and purity, and was no longer fit to live in an innocent world. A plain precept had been given, and willfully, in defiance of God, broken. The matter of fact as to eating the fruit was simple, but involved momentous consequences. Even the fact of its abstract littleness heightened the culpability of the offense; the action, looked at in itself, was trivial, and yet it was the extent of every possible indignity which, under existing circumstances, could be offered to the majesty of heaven. The less the motive and inducement to sin, the greater is the guilt of it. Such however was man's depravity; and the world, as we now see it, is the result of such sin. Man sinned, and God drove out the man, because in his then state he could not dwell in His presence; " and he placed at the east of the garden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

In this excluded state is the world with which we are conversant-full of toil, sorrow, sin, and misery. But the evil was not of God, it did not originate in Him-this was not God's doing. But after this delinquency and exclusion was there no reaction-no return to purity? No!-the world was never again to be an innocent world; what had once become radically guilty could never again become radically pure; the very source of innocence, being once defiled, could not by any possibility become again holy. Innocence, once lost, is lost forever. Man could do nothing. God would indeed come to put away sin; but how? By the sacrifice of His own dear Son, bringing in a new dispensation of unbounded mercy, and setting up a kingdom, and gathering out of the world the subjects of this new dispensation.

The world had sinned, but was not left there. God manifested Himself, and made known His purposes; first, to Adam, when He called him-" Where art thou? " and brought his sin before him; then in the calling out of the world, and preserving Noah, the type of the church, after the flood; His calling of Abraham and the Jewish nation, giving laws, and exhibiting Himself in types and ceremonies as the object of the believer's faith. At length, when all these displays of superlative love had but more glaringly manifested the total enmity of man's mind, the Lord sent His Son: " I will send my beloved Son; it may be they will reverence him."

In this stage of the world we behold man, as it were, in a fresh position of more determined enmity and fiercer malignity, in league with Satan, and full of deadly animosity. The world's feeling now is, " This is the heir; come, let us kill him." And when was this foul principle exhibited? When the Lord comes in sympathetic mercy to meet the wants and bear away the sins of His people. It was then they declared they would not have Him. When He comes to reconcile, and to display the tenderness of His sympathetic love, then nothing would do but they must get rid of God. When He comes into the very midst of the sufferings and woes of a world lying in wickedness, they refuse to have Him. He was God, and therefore (as far as man could do it) they turned Him out of the world.

Now in this last act of man we do not see simply rebellion, or even defiance, but absolute rejection of God. They used the opportunity of His humiliation to heap indignity and scorn upon Him; and at length, as far as they were concerned, drove Him out of the world in which we are now dwelling. " We will not have this man to reign over use " is practically its determination.

Now believers are associated, in thought, feeling, affection, and interest, with Him who is the object of the world's determined enmity; they are subjects of another kingdom and another King; the King whom the world will not have to reign over them is the King they own and serve. They see that the world which surrounds them is a judged world; that it has been convicted of rejecting all right and truth; as our Lord Himself says, " Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The judgment was passed when Christ exclaimed, "It is finished "; in the very act of His crucifixion was their judgment sealed. The most determined and inveterate enmity of man against God was at its height on the cross of Christ; man's malice could go no farther, and God's love was there also manifested in the highest degree. Sin abounded, but love much more abounded; the very act which exhibited enmity of the deepest dye on man's part opened the highest love on God's. Here they met, as it were, in a center-at a point, each drawn to the greatest possible extent; and here love obtained the victory, triumphed over sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

And this judgment of the world is known to all believers; yea, the Holy Ghost Himself convinces them of it. "When the Comforter is come, he shall reprove [or convince] the world of sin," said Christ;" of righteousness, and of judgment... because the prince of this world is judged." So that they are convinced they lived in a judged world, a world found guilty of, and condemned for, rejecting God, but on which sentence has not as yet been executed. It is now just in the position between sentence having been passed and the final execution.

In the very act which thus displays man's rage the believer sees also his own perfect acceptance; that God, in whom he delights, and in whom he rests, has risen in mercy above man's depravity and triumphed in love over the bitterest hatred. The summit of malevolence the most abominable, when the Savior's side was pierced, was met by a tide of blood and of water, to sanctify and to purify the unclean: this is the glory, the blessedness, of the child of God.

But from the parable before us of the ten virgins we necessarily perceive that there are those who, though associated with the people of God in profession and outwardly appearing to belong to them, are not in reality alive to God. They appear to be looking for His coming, but they are not longing to behold Him or to go in with Him to the marriage. It is not the earnest desire of their hearts to behold Him as He is; their souls have not gone forth, crying, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. They more resemble those servants who exclaimed, " My Lord delayeth his coming," and then followed on in their own pleasure. But they know not the delight, the joy, the heavenly happiness of waiting in longing expectation to see His face, and dwell with Him forever!

But we have in this account of the ten virgins an evidence of the extent to which even outward profession may go. Though there were but five wise, yet they all went forth to meet the bridegroom-yes, ostensibly for the same purpose, they all " went forth." They were alike in companionship; they had all the lamps of profession. In what then did they differ? In this: they had not just the one thing, the only thing, that fitted them to receive the bridegroom. They were without the light wherewith to usher in the Lord; they wanted the very thing which alone could make them suitable companions for the Master; namely, the participation of the divine nature, the impartation of light, the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. They wanted the fixedness of the affections wrought in the soul by the oil of gladness, the unction of the Spirit, which filled the souls of the wise virgins, and which waited but for the appearance of the bridegroom to emanate in a flame of glory. This was what they wanted; this is what the believer has; and this it is that makes the mighty difference between him and the world.

" At midnight the cry came ": the heavenly virgins arose. Though conscious of much weakness in themselves, they rise at the cry of their beloved; for there is that in them which answers to the cry. The foolish virgins trimmed their lamps; but their lamps failed to burn! And is there no remedy then? None! According to the Savior's awful declaration: " He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still."

Here finishes the total distinction between the tares and the wheat. Now it is openly seen that their objects, hopes, and associations were totally different-opposite and irreconcilable. One is of the world, the other of God; one is quickened by Christ, the other is reserved to be burned. " Bind the tares in bundles, and burn them; but gather the wheat into my garner."

And why are the wheat still spared, but as witnesses of the grace of our Lord; to display to the world the image of Him, whose they are, and whom they serve; to manifest the inseparable union existing between them and their glorious Head, as He said Himself, " that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me "?

And are you, believers, thus distinguished in the midst of a world judged guilty of the crime of rejecting the Lord of glory, and turning Him out of the world? You are walking in a condemned world, on which sentence has been passed, but the execution of it is still averted, until the last of Christ's saints is gathered into the garner. Are you conscious of this, and yet are you, can you, be living in association of pursuits, feelings, desires, or appearance with them? The believer's delight is the Lord's glory. Where is the Lord's glory-in an association in any way with His enemies? No. The saint that looks with delight to his Lord's coming is one with Him in feeling and desire-the Lord's will is his. Now do you contemplate the time when He will come to receive you to Himself and when subsequently all that offends Him shall be swept away, and His own shall reign with Him? Can you contemplate with delight that period, when all that oppose the truth of God, everything that you now behold belonging to the world, shall be destroyed by the brightness of His coming, shall be consumed by the breath of His mouth? All things that offend shall no longer dwell there.

This is the saint's whole delight; this is what he is looking and longing for, and hastening unto, namely, the coming of the Lord. Is this your personal desire? Is this your habitual experience? Then are you crying, Tarry not; come, Lord Jesus: even so, Amen? Then are you aiming at greater meetness for your heavenly Master and Bridegroom? and are you trimming your lamps to have them in readiness to meet and light your Lord when He shall appear?

Let this be your desire, your joy, your delight: that you may be found watching and waiting to go in unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Luke 21 Compared With Matthew 24

As to Luke 21, it is much more historical because it opens out, as revealing the Son of man, the period in which Israel is set aside and not counted in its history, or what concerns the Gentiles. Hence the Spirit records no inquiry of " the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age," but the general history in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus, from verse 9 to verse 19 inclusive, we have the state of things from after the Lord's death until the encircling of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, and no mention made of the abomination of desolation, and verse 20 gives the reply to the question of verse 7, founded on verse 6. The statement accordingly says nothing of the tribulation such as never was, but that vengeance then comes on the people and city that all may be accomplished. This still continues, and will continue, Jerusalem being trodden down, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, in the close of the Gentile dominion begun in Nebuchadnezzar. Then the fact is revealed of the state of things at the close of the dominion of Gentile power-signs in sun, moon, and stars; on earth, distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring (the last expression showing, I think, that the words are employed figuratively, though there may be possibly portents also); men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven (the sources of the earthly state of things) shall be shaken. And then shall they (not " ye," but they, these proud rebellious Gentiles) see the Son of man coming in a cloud.

Such is the prophetical revelation, which presents, it seems to me, little difficulty. The exhortation which follows may suggest more; at the same time it offers some remarkable helps as to the use of expressions. For example, " this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled " (verse 32) proves necessarily, either that " generation " must be taken in an extended sense, as in Deut. 32:5, 20, and as in other passages, or that " all " could only apply to the establishment of the state of things at the setting aside judicially of the Jewish people, because we have the treading down of Jerusalem for a long continuous period revealed. Hence we have to seek the guidance of the Spirit for the application of the passage, there being an incipient accomplishment at the destruction or treading down of Jerusalem, its desolation, vengeance, etc., which subsists still, and a far fuller one at the close preceding the coming of the Son of man. Hence the Holy Ghost records here an expression which may apply to both: " Know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." I do not doubt that this had a certain accomplishment in the absolute suppression of the Jewish order, but no fulfillment; and that the kingdom of God will be established by the coming of the Son of man after the signs of verses 25, 26. Note also, that this passage precludes the possibility of the application of " the coming of the Son of man " to the destruction of Jerusalem, because we have already had the long treading down consequent on the encompassing with armies. The full natural application of verses 28-31, then, is to the close, when, these signs having taken place, the full deliverance of the Jewish faithful will take place. So verse 35 has a limited application to Judea or Palestine; but it is evident to me that there is the larger application of the coming of the day of the Lord on the whole earth. It is the day that is spoken of. Verse 36 seems to me also to refer absolutely to the character of a Jewish remnant (though, in a still better sense, it will be true to the Church); but in its proper application it is the escape of judgments then, and standing before the Son of man when He takes the kingdom.

In Matt. 24 the Lord passes over all the times of the Gentiles unnoticed, and speaks only of Jerusalem, as though under judgment recognized of God, so far as to be the object of His thoughts and dealings. Verse 14 only takes the broad fact that the gospel of the kingdom should be preached to all the nations (a thing not yet accomplished to the letter), and then the end should come. I judge then that, while the whole reply will have an accomplishment at the close, there was sufficient in the early part to guide the saints between the Lord's ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem; but that its fulfillment will yet take place, to the end of verse 14 being general, and from verse 15 being absolutely and exclusively the last half-week of Jewish tribulation.

There is a point which, I think, has not been duly borne in mind; it is that the unfaithful servant will, for the judgment, pass over into the time of the Son of man's judgment, so that what is called the Church may go on, in whatever apostasy of condition, into the state of things which takes place when the body of the faithful is gone. Laodicea is threatened with being vomited out of the Lord's mouth, but when it is vomited is not said, if it be taken for literal judgment. I am disposed to think Judaism will play an active part in connection with the apostate Church, and that there will be an astonishing amalgam; though, besides that, the Church form may continue until destroyed by the horns and the beast.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Matthew 24:42 to 25:30, and Daniel 12

I turn to Matthew's prophecy chapter 24.1 The Lord gives in this chapter down to the end of verse 31, the position of the testimony of His disciples, and in general of the elect remnant in Israel; their position in the exercise of their testimony down to the end of verse 14; from verses 15-28, the position of the faithful remnant during the tribulation, when testimony was useless, and they were to flee; and then, from verses 29-31, the coming of the Lord and the gathering of the scattered elect of Israel from the four winds. I beg the reader to mark, I am stating the contents of the passage, and not interpreting them. That this applies to Jews is on the face of the passage from the reference to Jerusalem, and Daniel, the holy place, the sabbath, &c.

From Matt. 24:32 to 25: 30 the Lord gives a practical comment on this solemn subject, and in these parables instructs the disciples as to their just position as Christians during His absence; verses 31 to the end take up the consequence to the Gentiles of His coming to judge the earth. Thus we have, in connection with the Lord's going away, what concerned the Jewish people, christian responsibility, and the judgment of the Gentiles in connection with their responsibility as to receiving the messengers of the kingdom, Christ's disciples (His brethren, as He calls them here), when sent to them.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Zacharias, Son of Barachias

Zacharias, son of Barachias, is the next. As to mistakes as to names, no Christian would attach any great importance to them, from the fact of their easy introduction in copying from the margin when written there by some one who supposed it to be such a one. Suppose, for instance, "from Abel to Zacharias" were in the text, some one adding "son of Barachias" in the margin as a remark, it is soon inserted as part of the text. Evidently it is not like a part of the sentence, affecting the sense. I say this as a general remark, for it is not necessary to have recourse

to such a supposition here. Supposing the name to have been simply Zacharias, nothing could have been more natural than the Lord so speaking. 2 Chronicles being the last book in the Hebrew Bible, it would have amounted to this:-The blood of all the martyrs in your history, from Genesis to 2 Chronicles (as we should say from Genesis to Revelation, without ascertaining the date even of the latter book), will be required of this generation. It imputes no error whatever to the blessed Lord. The martyrs from Genesis to Chronicles were all the martyrs whom Jewish hatred of truth had sacrificed. The Lord does not chronologize their martyrdom, saying, the last of the martyrs. Those who take this view would drop the words "son of Barachias." This is confirmed by the fact that they are not found in St. Luke; and St. Jerome informs us, that in the gospel of the Nazarenes (an impure and corrupted gospel according to Matthew, as it seems adopted by Judaizing Christians) the reading was "Zacharias, son of Jehoiada." Now I do not adopt this reading; I refer to it as tending to confirm the absence of "son of Barachias."1 Evangelaria and scholiasts give Jehoiada, and the latter affirm that Barachías had also the latter name, such a change being the commonest thing possible amongst the Jews, as is well known; and from Jerome downward this has been the thought of different learned men, the names having nearly the same signification, as in the case of Eliakim and Jehoiakím. But I see no need to rest on these details, which, though sufficient to explain it, may be thought to savor of effort. It is not proved that Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada, was slain between the temple and the altar, which is noticed as aggravating the sin in both Luke and Matthew. It is very possible, as he was addressing the people in the court: and he may have fled into the inner court2 when attacked, and been slain there. The people had no business there; but if it was a violent and riotous murder commanded by the king, breaking through the consecrated limits and profaning the inner count would not be very astonishing. The Jews attached extraordinary importance to this murder; they say that his blood bubbled up till avenged by Nebuzaradan, who slew ninety-four thousand of rabbins, of their scholars, and of the people.3 Their fables are not important, but as showing how it had impressed itself on the Jewish mind; and the Lord refers to what was notorious amongst themselves. The presence of the addition "son of Barachias" would, then, be easily accounted for, and the reference of the Lord to the case of the other Zechariah the most natural possible. The change of names, according to the notion of Jerome and the old Greek scholiasts, would, in Jewish nomenclature, take away all difficulty too.

But there is a circumstance which would tend to make me judge otherwise of this question, besides the all but uniform testimony of MSS and versions, of which the earliest have "son of Berachiah," such as the ante-Hieronymean Latin ones. It is this. The Jewish traditions state, that Zechariah, the son of Iddo, a prophet and priest, was slain. Zechariah, the son of Berachiah, of whom the text, as it stands, speaks, was grandson of Iddo, and is called twice "son of Iddo." (Ezra 5:1; 6:14.) Further, Iddo was a priest, who came up from Babylon with Zerubbabel. (Neh. 12:4.) And in verse 16 of that chapter, we have, Of Iddo, Zechariah. So that we have these facts.

The prophet Zechariah, son of Berachiah, was grandson of Iddo, and is called son of Iddo twice in Ezra. We have a priest Iddo, whose son or descendant is called Zechariah precisely at this epoch; for Zechariah, the son of Iddo, was a chief priest in the days of the son of Jeshua the priest. The Jewish Targum states, that Zechariah, the son of Iddo, a prophet and priest, was slain in the sanctuary. Further, the name of Iddo in Zechariah and Ezra is the same (the latter adding a silent aleph), and so is the priest in Neh. 12 (See Ken, and 5. 4.) I am aware some have referred the Targum on Jeremiah to Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, taking Iddo for this latter name; but there is no relationship between the two names whatever. Not only this, but the way Ezra speaks of Haggai and Zechariah is remarkable: he calls Haggai, in both the passages, Haggai the prophet. But Zechariah has, as his title, Zechariah the son of Iddo, not Zechariah the prophet, though shown to be such. The reason seems evident. This was Haggai's only distinction. Whereas, Zechariah, the son of Iddo, was a well-known personage, Iddo being a chief priest over his brethren; that is, Zechariah, though a prophet, had a distinct and well known title by which he would be designated: he was a priest, and Iddo was a well known chief priest, so that he was called his son, though really his grandson. Hence, as the Targum declares that a prophet and priest of the name of Zechariah, the son of Iddo, was slain in the sanctuary- Zechariah, the son of Iddo, being certainly son of Berachiah, and a priest and a prophet, why should I be surprised if the Lord should say, that Zechariah, the son of Berachiah, was slain in the sanctuary?

Has the infidel any proof that Zechariah, the son of Berachiah, the son of Iddo, was not slain, so as to confute the statement of Matthew? Absolutely none. It is not stated in scripture that Zechariah the prophet was so killed. How could it be? There is no subsequent historical book. Is it stated of any other prophet? Of none.4 Yet the Lord-and so does Stephen-charges them with treating all the prophets in general in this manner, so as to add, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Jeremiah, and Baruch his scribe, had their lives given them as a prey by a special deliverance on God's part. Why, then, must the Lord be wrong? Because the infidel thinks He ought to be so. There is really no other reason whatever.

The Lord makes a statement which there is nothing to confute. Say Matthew does; because he does, it is not to be believed, though, from the general conduct of the Jews, nothing can be more probable. Most generally, persons who do not accept the statement as it is, turn to the history of the son of Jehoiada in the Chronicles, which, from its similarity, they suppose to be here referred to. This is a question of criticism which humble inquirers into scripture may listen to, however it may be decided. We are certain, I think I may say, that both Zechariahs were priests as well as prophets; so that the place of their death is not a surprising one. But Mr. N. rejects all this and the Chronicles with it; yet he uses these books now to prove the inexactitude of Matthew. Now his rejection of them takes away his title to the use of them for this purpose. At any rate, he will not have this history to be the one referred to, so that he has no right to infer inexactitude from it. However, as men have doubted who it was, he will have the New Testament wrong somehow. And he chooses the most improbable, nay, I think I shall show, impossible supposition, for such only it is, to prove that Matthew, if Matthew it be, has made an undeniable mistake.

Josephus has mentioned a Zacharias, son of Baruchus, killed in the temple, and it is to be he; at least Mr. N. cannot "shake off the suspicion" (Phases, p. 109) that it is. On what ground, we are left to divine.

In the first place, Baruch and Berachiah are not the same name. Both are used; and neither in Hebrew nor in the Septuagint are they confounded.

In the next place, the Lord addresses the Jews as guilty already, referring to their previous acts, and saying, "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers, that this blood may come upon you." This would have no force at all, if it were not a past act of which they were not personally guilty. They would commit similar ones willfully and complete the dreadful series, so that the time of vengeance should arrive, and all the accumulated guilt of past ages, as to which God had exercised forbearance (if peradventure they would repent), would bring its accumulated consequences on their head. But this supposes that the Lord refers to the past acts committed by this people, but not by this generation, and

to acts of which their consciences were fully aware. If it be said, But the question is, Did the Lord say it? If it were He, of course then all objection would be set aside, for it would be a prophecy if He referred to the son of Baruchus; while Matthew saying so leaves the argument just as strong, for it arises from the internal force of the words, which he could not have put into the Lord's mouth. Their meaning, be they whose they may, cannot apply to Baruchus.

Moreover, Baruchus was no prophet; nor, for aught we know, a righteous man. Josephus says he was very rich, and a hater of evil men. But Luke, in the parallel passage, makes the Lord speak only of prophets.

Further, Zacharias, the son of Baruchus, was killed by the zealots just before the temple was besieged. Now, according to all historical evidence, Matthew was written before that-many think, long before it. The siege of Jerusalem, at which time Zacharias the son of Baruchus was killed, took place in the year 70. Some think Matthew wrote his gospel in the year 41, a date borrowed from Eusebius, that is thirty years before the siege of Jerusalem, and the death of the son of Baruchus; and the common account given in the immediately succeeding period, the first centuries, was, that he left it for the use of the Hebrews, when he went forth to preach the gospel elsewhere. Others, founding themselves on a passage in Irenaeus, think he wrote it so late as 61 or 62, and even as 64.5 But this is the latest date assigned by any who have examined the subject. That is, if historical evidence be of any weight at all, the latest period at which Matthew can be supposed to have written his gospel, was six years before the death of the son of Baruchus; so that if he put it in, he was inspired, which after all is absurd, for he could not by inspiration attribute to Christ what He did not say.

To pretend that Matthew is not the real author is to deny all historical evidence whatever.

Further, we have Matthew quoted in the Epistle of Barnabas, and quoted as scripture. The author of this latter book, it is not material to my purpose to know. Its early date cannot, I believe, be questioned.6 The epistle is considered to have been written in 71 or 72, that is a year or two after the death of Zacharias, the son of Baruchus, and in his epistle Matthew's Gospel is already quoted.

Clement of Rome, the companion of apostles, quotes Matthew about the same period. His words may be taken as Luke's, as the passage is nearly the same in both evangelists. Thus we have additional proof of the extreme improbability (I may, indeed, say impossibility), historically speaking, of Matthew's Gospel referring to the son of Baruchus, or of its having been written afterward; for it is quoted as scripture within a year or two of his death. The consideration of the testimony of St. Luke confirms this more than improbability.

If Matthew refers to the son of Baruchus, so of course must Luke. It is the same person who is alluded to, as no one, I suppose, doubts. Now Luke, in the Acts, refers to his gospel as a previous treatise which he had written: but in the Acts he closes with St. Paul's imprisonment in Rome; that is to say, the year 65. So that his gospel was already written in that year, that is, five years and more before the death of the Zachariah of whom Josephus speaks. That is, it is impossible that he can refer to him, for he speaks of an act already committed; indeed, were it not so, it would be inspired prophecy as in Matthew. But this is evidently not so; it refers to a past act.

In a word,-the supposition or suspicion of Mr. N. is the most improbable possible, and really impossible to be true; and there is no pretension to any evidence which contradicts the statement of St. Matthew's Gospel as it stands (that is, no proofs of any kind that Zacharias, the son of Barachias, was not slain). We have no scriptural evidence anywhere to look for, to confirm the fact that he was, no more than in the case of the other prophets. There is no subsequent scriptural history, nor any complete authentic history, of the times to relate it. But we have a statement of a Jewish doctor of high repute, that a Zechariah, son of Iddo, prophet and priest, which is the prophet's exact description, was killed in the sanctuary.

That is, the objection has no foundation whatever, unless the will to object, because of the divine claim on the conscience, be one. Further, if Zechariah the prophet was martyred, he was the last so martyred, as far as we have any testimony of those who shine in the authentic scriptural history of the Jewish people; for we know nothing of the sort concerning Malachi, nor indeed is he mentioned in the historical books of the Old Testament.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Doctrinal 9, Called and Chosen

Matt. 22:14 seems clearly profession, or outward calling; the chosen, those owned in the wedding. As to Matt. 20 you must connect it with chapter 19. There devotedness and self-sacrifice are made the ground of reward. Only the principles of law and grace are so different, that those great in one would be very little in the other. But lest there should be self and self-righteousness wrought by what preceded, the sovereign grace of chapter 20 is introduced, and the converse stated- many last first, and first last. Here it is grace as to service: only so much work for so much pay is utterly blown upon. The rest trusted the master for what they might get, and free grace acts consequently. God alone can judge what He should do in rewarding. Thus last are first, and first last. Many are called to serve, some chosen vessels, but all is grace.

Christian Truth: Volume 21, Taking the Lowest Place

In Matthew 20 the Lord takes occasion to explain the sentiments that become His followers, the perfection of which they had seen in Himself. In the world, authority was sought for; but the spirit of Christ was a spirit of service, leading to the choice of the lowest place, and to entire devotedness to others. Beautiful and perfect principles, the full bright perfection of which was displayed in Christ. The renunciation of all things, in order to depend confidingly on the grace of Him whom we serve, the consequent readiness to take the lowest place, and thus be the servant of all—this should be the spirit of those who have part in the kingdom as now established by the rejected Lord. It is this that becomes His followers.

Observe the way in which the sons of Zebedee and their mother come to seek the highest place, at the moment when the Lord was preparing unreservedly to take the very lowest. Alas! we see much of the same spirit! The effect was to bring out how absolutely He had stripped Himself of everything. These are the principles of the heavenly kingdom; perfect self-renunciation, to be contented in thorough devotedness; this is the fruit of love that seeks not her own—the yieldingness that flows from the absence of self-seeking; submission when despised; meekness and lowliness of heart. The spirit of service to others is that which love produces at the same time as the humility which is satisfied with this place. The Lord fulfilled this even unto death, giving His life as a ransom for many.

Notes and Jottings, Jottings

AN inward quickening is never treated as salvation in Scripture. Salvation is not, in a strict sense, the Holy Ghost's work, but Christ's work. Nor does Scripture ever confound salvation with eternal life. In the case of Israel, you distinguish at once their escape from judgment by the blood upon the doorpost, from their salvation by a Savior-God at the Red Sea.

Ques. How would you distinguish between individuals now, say, in the case of two who both declare their faith in Christ? Are you to say one is saved, and the other not?

I do not know that it would be my place to say anything about them; though, with all love to both, I might yet see that which would indicate their respective positions. For instance, one of them might kneel in prayer, and so speak to God as Father, that I should know he had the Spirit of adoption; but I might find the other in similar circumstances crying out, " Lord, have mercy on me! "

Regeneration is a word used with little apprehension of its meaning. It occurs but twice: in Matt. 19:28, where it indicates the new condition of things on the earth; and then in Titus 3:5, where " the washing of regeneration " refers, I believe, to a change of state or condition, not to life at all.

You may often see a quickened soul delighting in holiness, but dreading to be damned, because he fears he has not holiness enough.

But if a soul be saved in the New Testament use of the word—I mean really saved, not merely quickened—then, unless God give up such a one for chastisement, I believe he never gets into real uncertainty again.

Ques. What is meant by, " hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins," 2 Peter 1:9?

There, it is a question of practice; if my child is dressed to go with me to pay a visit, but runs out into the mud, " Oh," I say, " you have forgotten that you were dressed to go with me."

But let me say, I would far rather see a person in deep distress, than hear anyone saying confidently, " I am saved," who is at the same time taking things too easily.

Ques. What is meant by salvation being brought to Zacchaeus?

Why, Christ was in the house. People have mistaken this scene altogether; they fancy that Zacchaeus was showing the Lord what the effect of the word was upon himself. I believe he was just telling the Lord what his life had been up till then, saying; as it were, ‘This is what I am, will not that do?' Christ says in reply, " This day is salvation come to this house."

Letters 2, Divorce; Question on Desertion of Marriage; Translation Work

* * * My meaning in saying the tie was broken was this, that God never allowed the Christian to break the tie; but when adultery was committed the one doing so had broken the tie, and the Lord allowed the other party to hold it to be broken and act on it by formal divorce did not require it, but allowed it. The legalization of it is submission to the powers that be, for common order, just as the divorce was in Jewish law. Things are so loose in many parts of the States as in Illinois, that Christians should be very particular. A person having left and being a long time away is not sufficient, as they may come back, and the tie had not been broken—only that, as to criminality, after some seven years, in England the courts would not hold a person guilty of bigamy.

On the other hand, according to 1 Cor. 7, I cannot doubt that the Christian, deliberately deserted by the unchristian partner, was in every way free, free that is to marry; but it assumes deliberate forsaking by the one who went away. The Christian was never to do it, and if obliged to leave, to remain unmarried or return. Rom. 7:3 has nothing, I think, to do with it; the case supposed is of being (not "married") to another man while the tie subsists; then she is guilty of adultery—not, if the husband be dead. Divorce is not in question, but acts of sin while the marriage subsists. This is evident. Mark 10 does not annul Matthew mix.: a man putting away his wife is looked at as his act or will. If he puts away, he has broken a tie God formed, by his own will; then marrying another is adultery. By act of sin the tie was broken already, and judicial divorce allowed.

If all had passed before conversion, I should take it as I found it; but when a person has merely gone off now, when a person is a Christian, I should be very slow to accept a marriage as in the Lord. Have they sought them out, or proof of the unfaithfulness? If so, let them obtain a divorce, and then they are free to marry. But if not, I could not accept their doing their own will, any more than the unfaithful one doing his. The marriage is not in the Lord, and it says even of widows -"only in the Lord." Matt. 5 is to me equally clear with chapter six., but I think the person should obtain a divorce, otherwise they remain legally married, and the new connection is concubinage. In any case forgiveness is allowed.

I was aware of the state of-, but it had got a good deal better: in one family I knew there was still a feeling of rancor. It was partly baptism working on partially healed griefs. One has to work on in grace seeing the evil to be overcome, even if the more we love the less we are loved. We work for Christ, and His love was perfect. I am afraid I take it sometimes too much for granted that we are so to work on, for Paul cultivated the affections of the saints much. Here, thank God, with such trials as are incident to working where the world and temptation and flesh are, there is blessing and progress. Though we are far short of what we might be, and I look for more, still we have much to be thankful for. Here in the west, where I was somewhat downhearted, I find things much better than I thought.

As to my translation, it is all printed these two or three months, but a new edition of the French was transferring the notes and emendations, and in doing it they collected errata, and we waited till they had gone through it to publish it, but I have the last sheet of French in hand, so that it will be soon out now. But I have no satisfaction in critical labors.- wanted to publish an edition of what my translation has adopted as the reading to be accepted, but I declined. I feel no sufficient competency, though I have done the best I could, and am satisfied they have no adequate history of the text. I shall be glad, if the Lord permit, to see you all; but, at past seventy, such of course is on every ground uncertain. Kindest love to all.

Ever affectionately yours.

[July, 1871.]

Letters 2, Death to Sin; Good in the Midst of Evil; Natural Relationships; the Lord's Supper

All exclusive points are out of place at the Lord's table. It is clear Christ's death is before us; but , or does not affect the question as to whether it is a remembrance of Himself or only of His death. One way or the other, is "of me;" and whether it be or , the only difference is that putting , before makes it somewhat more emphatic and contrasted. It was not to be done in remembrance of deliverance from Egypt., as the passover was, but in remembrance of Him, "in my memory." But the simple answer to this link breaking out of the sentence is, that there is nothing about it in it. The Greek does not mean breaking every link with the creation, and says nothing about it: that is a simple fact. Should any one press it as a consequence, if led by the Spirit of God, all well—and show that Christ's death involved it; if it be so is another matter, but it is not in that sentence. I am not quite sure that I understand it, and though I am quite disposed to see a right intention in those who taught it, for it was breaking with the world, I doubt a little that they do any more. My impression is that their intention is right, and that they aim at an important truth; but I cannot go quite so fast as some.

When He comes again and takes this earth, and governs it and blesses it, it is as Himself risen: that is true; but you can hardly call this world then the new creation. ' The link of life in Him with this world was broken': but then I should be a little shy of speaking of His being linked with it at any time, though coming into it as a true man, born of a woman, for the suffering of death, and partaking () of flesh and blood. But He says, " They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And again, "Ye are of this world, I am not of this world." "Ye are from beneath, I am from above." Yet, I repeat, I believe the object to be right; that is, that we are crucified to the world, and the world to us: at least, I am quite ready to suppose so. But I affirm positively it is not in ; though it be in death He is symbolized before us, it is Him we remember, and I doubt that the form in which it is put could be made good from scripture; and scripture is wiser than we are. But, as an effect, it does imply our having died to this world; for we show forth the Lord's death till He come.

But I cannot admit with this absoluteness, that every Christian is, according to scripture, dead to the old creation, because his body is of the old creation. We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. I see it held up as desirable that a man should live absolutely in the power of the Spirit and know nothing else. Still "he that marrieth does well." Of what creation is that? And he that forbids to marry does very ill. I see two things: God's part in the old creation as yet fully recognized; marriage as "at the beginning"; children; amiable nature (the Lord loved the young man, when He looked on him); but, a power brought in wholly above and out of it. If one lives according to this—all well; it is to be desired; but to condemn the former is to condemn God. Sin has come in and spoiled it; and there is thus hindrance, care, sorrow in the flesh, that is true; but God ordered it in the beginning, and God owns what He ordered, till He brings in something new. Dead to sin, to the world, to the law—this I find in scripture; but not to the old creation. And this is the place of every Christian, and he is to hold himself so. But dead to the old creation, God does not say; for it is God's creation, and every creature of God is good. Live above it; in its present state, all well, and better, if it be given to us: but death to the first creation, and breaking every link with it, is not true, whilst we are in the body. Scripture does not say so, and scripture, I say again, is much wiser than we are. There is a new creation, and, as in Christ, we are of it -I think we may say, the firstfruits of it—" of his creatures," at any rate. : it is a very singular expression. (2 Cor. 5:17.) It is not " he is," as in English, but merely affirms its existence and character for one in Christ: but then when it goes on to say He died, it is not to the old creation; but "he who knew no sin was made sin"; and elsewhere, "In that he died, he died unto sin once."

It is wise and safe not to go beyond scripture. Fresh truths and mighty powers fill our sails, and it is well; but they may, if we trust them and the consequences we draw, carry our minds on to rocks hidden underneath the surface. The word of God checks, or keeps us rather, in the right and safe course. The first intentions may be right; but when not so kept, when one's mind is trusted, it may run into open ungodliness—the common result of the human mind being trusted with mighty truths, or rather trusting itself with them; and in these days this has to be watched....

It is a very humbling thing to think how always at the first what God has set up was spoiled. We have only the power of good in the midst of evil, till the Lord comes, 'when power is not, rest is. But Philadelphia marks our state; and as we find truth spreading, decision in walk and waiting for Christ (not the doctrine merely of His coming) will be the test. Devotedness, heavenly-mindedness—these are what we must look for. The foolish virgins were awake with the wise, but not ready. I have no doubt the doctrines we hold are penetrating widely. It is another thing to have the heart in heaven and to depart from evil on earth.

[1869.]

Letters 1, Divorce; Question on Desertion of Marriage

In general the work is going on happily, and people's hearts are in it. Souls are converted, brought to peace, added to the saints quietly, and if we would desire more spiritual power, still we cannot but thankfully see the Spirit of God working.... Here, the world even says, Christianity is put in quite a new way. It is simply that salvation is preached.

The case you mention1 has occurred before.... It is a very trying and sorrowful case, and calls for a lowly and retired walk in the person concerned. The refusal of divorce is the only additional circumstance. Did the woman refuse it, or how came it to be refused? It must be recent, as the court is. This may modify the case, because it may have been a recognition of the bond by her conscience. But this apart, I judge the church must take her as she is when converted. I suppose a heathen, who had been married and separated, and had ever such a long history, and then was married, converted and baptized-I should certainly take him as I found him. I look upon the man's act as a breach of the tie before God, namely—the tie as broken (Matt. 19:9); and that the church must take the person as it finds them when converted.

The only other question connected with it is, the state of her own conscience when she married the last time. Did she consider herself free, or as then committing a sin? This may affect the present state of her conscience. But I should take her, as before the church, as married to her present husband. But she should walk softly.

Affectionately yours.

I think the truth has come out more clearly here in Canada, in contrast with mixed law and world and gospel, than anywhere.

Toronto,

February 26th, 1863.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Washed, Sanctified

1 Cor. 6

Washing naturally applies to some one or thing that is to be cleansed. Our state may show that nothing but death to sin can cleanse us from sin; but the water points to cleansing. So it is said "in John 15, already " ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

" Regeneration," means passing from one state, that of ruin, into another and new state of things, and is used only in Matt. 19, besides Titus 3. " Born again," " born of water and the Spirit," is the actual communication of divine life. One is thus born of God. This is life. Regeneration supposes death, and is so de facto, though this can only be by life in Christ. But it supposes, when fully brought to light, an entrance into a new state, of which resurrection is the expression-life out of death, and hence leaves sin and an evil nature behind. Of this baptism is the sign. So we are baptized unto Christ's death, that we should walk in newness of life. Nor is it merely that we have got life from or through Christ, but are quickened together with Him. This of course implies death-the putting away, but judgment, of the old man.

" Sanctified," though it includes this, yet contains somewhat more. We are sanctified to, and not merely washed from. No doubt by this last we are cleansed; but an object is given to which I am attached by grace and so sanctified. A creature practically and morally is what its object is. " That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word " is not quite correct. It is -that Christ might sanctify the Church, having purified or cleansed it, etc. They go together; but the cleansing, though a positive thing from evil, is connected with the sanctifying or consecrating the affections to God. In sanctification there are holy affections; and these clearly exclude evil ones. But there are these two things, though they cannot be separated.

The word is in every respect the instrument. The washing of regeneration is typified by the flood, as Peter shows. The old world was then cleared away, and a new one begun. So it is for the baptized.

Notes and Comments 4, Notes on Matthew 18

This is a striking instruction as to the spirit which is to animate those who are to have part in the kingdom and life—lowliness—a thorough judgment of evil in itself—a horror of evil so as to avoid it at all cost—gracious appreciation of what is lowly and little, for that is what God loves—grace towards offenders—still, an unbroken will in evil rejected—and the assembly the place of within and without. But grace characterizes the kingdom. That is the mind of God.

1. This is a most clear and blessed witness that all infants are saved through Christ.

17. " Tell it to the assembly."

Letters 3, Assembly Action and Conscience; Continuing Member of Oddfellows; Dissent in Cases of Discipline; Unanimity in Discipline

If the assembly decided that this person could not be received, as refusing to give up the ‘Oddfellows,' the absence of some brethren would not be a reason for rescinding the decision; because that depends on the Lord's being there when gathered in His name, not on such and such an individual being there—assuming that they have been regularly gathered in the Lord's name. I do not know much about ‘Oddfellows,' but from what I do know I am surprised a Christian can be a member. It is a thoroughly worldly society. They could not be there in the name of the Lord. You say—'nothing against his walk;' but this was part of his walk. I could understand giving him time to think over it, if he were in before taking up the case. His refusal to give it up till he saw fit, when it was brought before him, was a proof of his state of soul, and brings in another point: that the conscience of the individual is to judge of right and wrong, not the assembly. Now there are things that we must have latitude to individual conscience; but to lay it down as a rule, that an assembly is to submit in its walk to the judgment of my conscience is a bad state of soul.

The meeting of the assembly as such is not confined to the breaking of bread: whenever they agree to meet, due notice being given of it, they are met as the assembly. If it were done so as purposely to exclude some, that would be another thing. If godly, serious, brethren have difficulty in putting out, it is better to wait till the Lord makes the case clearer. But this did not apply here, because it was the positive act of receiving which was in question: but his admission might be provisionally suspended in the same case till the matter was cleared up. But if it were merely factious opposition to the common mind of the assembly—one who identified himself with evident positive evil—he must cease or become subject to discipline himself. Such is the rule of the apostle in Corinthians.

But such rules are only carried out by grace and the power of the Spirit of God. I can speak only of general principles, for very small circumstances change a case completely, and of course I have only heard one side.

I as a rule, too, object to brethren not in the gathering meddling with its discipline, because the conscience of the gathering is in question; though of course they may be helpful if given grace by God to judge maturely of things. But we are called to peace, and even a mistake in judgment ought not to disturb it. I attach great importance to the judgment of the assembly, but it must be the assembly as such, not individuals however true and wise, because of the promise.

Your affectionate brother in Christ.

If the Lord be waited on He will give unity of mind. I trust the refusal may awaken the conscience of this Christian.

Zurich, August 1St, 1878.

Letters 3, Body of Christ; Principles of Brethren; Work on the Continent; Gift and Its Exercise; Early Blessing in Plymouth; Principles Exercised at the Beginning; Professor Tholuck, Unity of the

Since I saw you, I have been continually on the move, so that it has been difficult for me to prepare the account which you desired to receive. It seems to me that the best way will be for me simply to mention the various circumstances as they transpired, in as far as I was personally concerned, at the time when this work of God first commenced. You will easily understand that numbers of others have labored in that field, and many with much more devotedness than I, and with a far more marked result as regards the blessing of souls. But my concern now is with the work of God, and not our labors; so that you may gather from the account what will suit your purpose.

I was a lawyer; but feeling that, if the Son of God gave Himself for me I owed myself entirely to Him, and that the so-called christian world was characterized by deep ingratitude towards Him, I longed for complete devotedness to the work of the Lord; my chief thought was to get round amongst the poor Catholics of Ireland. I was induced to be ordained. I did not feel drawn to take up a regular post, but, being young in the faith and not yet knowing deliverance, I was governed by the feeling of duty towards Christ, rather than by the consciousness that He had done all and that I was redeemed and saved; consequently it was easy to follow the advice of those who were more advanced than myself in the christian world.

As soon as I was ordained, I went amongst the poor Irish mountaineers, in a wild and uncultivated district, where I remained two years and three months, working as best I could. I felt, however, that the style of work was not in agreement with what I read in the Bible concerning the church and Christianity; nor did it correspond with the effects of the action of the Spirit of God. These considerations pressed upon me from a scriptural and practical point of view; while seeking assiduously to fulfill the duties of the ministry confided to me, working day and night amongst the people, who were almost as wild as the mountains they inhabited. An accident happened which laid me aside for a time; my horse was frightened and had thrown me against a door-post. During my solitude, conflicting thoughts increased; but much exercise of soul had the effect of causing the scriptures to gain complete ascendancy over me. I had always owned them to be the word of God.

When I came to understand that I was united to Christ in heaven, and that, consequently, my place before God was represented by His own, I was forced to the conclusion that it was no longer a question with God of this wretched "I-" which had wearied me during six or seven years, in presence of the requirements of the law. It then became clear to me that the church of God, as He considers it, was composed only of those who were so united to Christ, whereas Christendom, as seen externally, was really the world, and could not be considered as "the church," save as regards the responsibility attaching to the position which it professed to occupy—a very important thing in its place. At the same time, I saw that the Christian, having his place in Christ in heaven, has nothing to wait for save the coming of the Savior, in order to be set, in fact, in the glory which is already his portion "in Christ."

The careful reading of the Acts afforded me a practical picture of the early church, which made me feel deeply the contrast with its actual present state, though still as ever, beloved by God. At that time I had to use crutches when moving about, so that I had no longer any opportunity for making known my convictions in public; moreover, as the state of my health did not allow me to attend worship, I was compelled to remain away. It seemed to me that the good hand of God had thus come to my help, hiding my spiritual weakness under physical incapacity. In the meanwhile, there grew up in my heart the conviction that what Christianity had accomplished in the world in no

way answered to the needs of a soul burdened with the sense of what God's holy governmental dealing was intended to effect. In my retreat, the 32nd chapter of Isaiah taught me clearly, on God's behalf, that there was still an economy to come, of His ordering; a state of things in no way established as yet. The consciousness of my union with Christ had given me the present heavenly portion of the glory, whereas this chapter clearly sets forth the corresponding earthly part. I was not able to put these things in their respective places or arrange them in order, as I can now; but the truths themselves were then revealed of God, through the action of His Spirit, by reading His word.

What was to be done? I saw in that word the coming of Christ to take the church to Himself in glory. I saw there the cross, the divine basis of salvation, which should impress its own character on the Christian and on the church in view of the Lord's coming; and also that meanwhile the Holy Spirit was given to be the source of the unity of the church, as well as the spring of its activity, and indeed of all christian energy.

As regards the gospel, I had no difficulty as to its received dogmas. Three persons in one God, the divinity of Jesus, His work of atonement on the cross, His resurrection, His session at the right hand of God, were truths which, understood as orthodox doctrines, had long been a living reality to my soul. They were the known and felt conditions, the actualities, of my relationship with God. Not only were they truths, but I knew God personally in that way; I had no other God but Him who had thus revealed Himself, and Him I had. He was the God of my life and of my worship, the God of my peace, the only true God.

The practical difference in my preaching, when once I began to preach again, was as follows: When a parson, I had preached that sin had created a great gulf between us and God, and that Christ alone was able to bridge it over; now, I preached that He had already finished His work. The necessity of regeneration, which was always a part of my teaching, became connected more with Christ, the last Adam, and I understood better that it was a real life, entirely new, communicated by the power of the Holy Spirit; but, as I have said, more in connection with the person of Christ and the power of His resurrection, combining the power of a life victorious over death, with a new position for man before God. This is what I understand by "deliverance." The blood of Jesus has removed every spot from the believer; every trace of sin, according to God's own purity. In virtue of His blood-shedding, the only possible propitiation, we may now invite all men to come to God, a God of love, who, for this object, has given His own Son. The presence of the Holy Ghost, sent from heaven to abide in the believer as the "unction," the "seal," and the "earnest of our inheritance," as well as being in the church, the power which unites it in one body and distributes gifts to the members according to His will; these truths developed largely and assumed great importance in my eyes. With this last truth was connected the question of ministry. From whence came this ministry? According to the Bible, it clearly came from God by the free and powerful action of the Holy Ghost.

At the time I was occupied with these things, the person with whom I was in christian relation locally, as a minister, was an excellent Christian, worthy of all respect, and one for whom I have always had a great affection. I do not know if he is still living, but since the time I speak of, he was appointed to be archdeacon. It was, however, the principles, and not the persons, which acted on my conscience; for I had already given up, out of love to the Savior, all that the world could offer. I said to myself: "If the Apostle Paul were to come here now, he would not, according to the established system, be even allowed to preach, not being legally ordained; but if a worker of Satan, who, by his doctrine, denied the Savior, came here, he could freely preach, and my christian friend would be obliged to consider him as a fellow-laborer; whereas he would be unable to recognize the most powerful instrument of the Spirit of God, however much blessed in his work of leading multitudes of souls to the Lord, if he had not been ordained according to the system." All this, said I to myself, is false. This is not mere abuse, such as may be found everywhere; it is the principle of the system that is at fault. Ministry is of the Spirit. There are some„ amongst the clergy, who are ministers by the Spirit, but the system is founded on an opposite principle; consequently it seemed impossible to remain in it any longer.

I saw in scripture that there were certain gifts which formed true ministry, in contrast to a clergy established upon another principle. Salvation, the church, and ministry, all were bound together; and all were connected with Christ, the Head of the church in heaven, with Christ who had accomplished a perfect salvation, as well as with the presence of the Spirit on earth, uniting the members to the Head, and to each other, so as to form "one body," and He acting in them according to His will.

In effect, the cross of Christ and His return should characterize the church and each one of the members. What was to be done? Where was this unity, this "body"? Where was the power of the Spirit recognized? Where was the Lord really waited for? Nationalism was associated with the world; in its bosom some believers were merged in the very world from which Jesus had separated them; they were, besides, separated from one another, whilst Jesus had united them. The Lord's supper, symbol of the unity of the body, had become a symbol of the union of this latter with the world, that is to say, exactly the contrary of what Christ had established. Dissent had, no doubt, had the effect of making the true children of God more manifest, but here they were united on principles quite different from the unity of the body of Christ. If I joined myself to these, I separated myself from others everywhere. The disunion of the body of Christ was everywhere apparent rather than its unity. What was I to do? Such was the question which presented itself to me, without any other idea than that of satisfying my conscience, according to the light of the word of God. A word in Matt. 18 furnished the solution of my trouble: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This was just what I wanted: the presence of Jesus was assured at such worship; it is there He has recorded His name, as He had done of old in the temple at Jerusalem for those who were called to resort there.

Four persons who were pretty much in the same state of soul as myself, came together to my lodging; we spoke together about these things, and I proposed to them to break bread the following Sunday, which we did. Others then joined us. I left Dublin soon after, but the work immediately began at Limerick, a town in Ireland, and then in other places.

Two years later (1830), I went to Cambridge and Oxford. In this latter place, some persons who are still engaged in the work, shared my convictions, and felt that the relation of the church to Christ ought to be that of a faithful spouse.

By invitation I went to Plymouth to preach. My habit was to preach wherever people wished, whether in buildings or in private houses. More than once, even with ministers of the national church, we have broken bread on Monday evening after meetings for christian edification, where each was free to read, to speak, to pray, or to give out a hymn. Some months afterward we began to do so on Sunday, morning, making use of the same liberty, only adding the Lord's supper, which we had, and still have, the practice of taking every Sunday. Occasionally it has been partaken of more often. About that time also some began to do the same in London.

The unity of the church, as the body of Christ, the coming of the Lord, the presence of the Holy Ghost here below, in the individual and in the church; an assiduous proclamation of the truth, as well as the preaching of the gospel on the ground of pure grace and that of an accomplished work, giving in consequence the assurance of salvation when received into the heart by the Spirit; practical separation from the world; devotedness to Christ, as to Him who has redeemed the church; a walk having Him only as the motive and rule; and other subjects in connection with these—all this has been treated of in separate publications as well as by means of periodicals; and these truths have been largely spread abroad.

A good many ministers of the national church left nationalism in order to walk according to these principles, and England became gradually covered with meetings, more or less numerous.

Plymouth being the place where most of the publications originated, the name "Plymouth brethren" became the usual appellation given to such meetings.

In 1837 I visited Switzerland, and these truths began to be known there. I returned there more than once. The second time, I remained a considerable time at Lausanne, where God worked in conversions, and gathered a number of the children of God out of the world. There were already, in Switzerland, Dissenters who had suffered faithfully for the Lord during twenty years previously. But their activity had declined considerably, and it even seemed that the movement was about to disappear. The work of the brethren has, to a certain extent, by the goodness of God, filled the country, conversions having been numerous. In German Switzerland, the work spread to a much less degree. On two occasions of my spending a protracted time in Lausanne, some young brothers who desired to devote themselves to gospel work spent nearly a year with me in order to read the Bible. We also partook of the Lord's supper together every day.

At the same time, quite independently of what wits going on in Switzerland, a brother who was laboring in France had awakened an interest in a considerable district where the people were, in general, plunged in infidelity and darkness. Some also of the young brothers of whom I have spoken, and two or three others whose acquaintance I made, but who never stayed with me, went to work in France. Other laborers, belonging to societies, believing that they would be happier working under the Lord's immediate direction, and not as subject to committees, gave up their salaries, considering such arrangements to be unknown, both in fact and in principle, to the scriptures, since their very existence attributed to the possession of money the right to direct the work of the Lord: these began to work in simple dependence upon the Lord, trusting to His faithful care. God raised up others also, though it still remains true that "the harvest is great and the laborers are few." God has blessed these laborers by conversions, numerous, thank God, especially in the south of France. From the beginning I have visited these countries and shared with joy the troubles and fatigues of these brothers; but it is they who have actually labored at the work. In some places, I had the first troubles; in others I have only visited, taken part and helped, when the work was, thank God, already begun. He gave us to be of one heart and one soul, mutually to be helpers of one another, seeking the good of all, whilst recognizing our individual weakness.

Almost about the same time, in the eastern part of France, a like work had begun, independently of this one. It has also been visited, so that at the present time the work extends from Bale to the Pyrenees, with a fairly large gap in the districts of which Toulouse forms the center. The country is more or less covered with meetings, and the work, by God's grace, is still going on.

I ought to say that I have never meddled in any way with the calling nor with the work of the brethren who studied the Bible with me. As regards some, I have the conviction that they had not been called to it, and they have, in fact, gone back into the ordinary routine of life. As to others, I only helped them in the study of the Bible, in communicating to them the light which God had given me, but leaving entirely to themselves the responsibility of their calling for the work of evangelization or teaching.

We had the custom of gathering together occasionally for some time, when God opened the way for it, to study scriptural subjects together, or books of the Bible, and to communicate to one another what God had given to each. During several years, in Ireland and England, this took place annually in large conferences which lasted for a week. On the Continent, and latterly in England, they have been less attended; and consequently, with fewer numbers, it has been possible to spend a fortnight or three weeks studying some books of the Bible.

My elder brother, who is a Christian, spent two years at Dusseldorf. He is engaged in the work of the Lord, wherever he may happen to be at the moment. He has been blessed to several souls in the neighborhood of Dusseldorf. These, in their turn, have spread the light of the gospel and the truth, and a certain number of persons have been gathered in the Rhenish provinces. Tracts and various publications of the brethren have been translated and largely distributed; and light as to the soul's deliverance, the true character of the church, the presence of the Holy Ghost here below, and the Lord's return, has been disseminated.

Two years later, helped, I believe, by the knowledge of these truths, but entirely independent of this work, a movement of the Spirit of God began at Elberfeld. There was in that town a " Brotherhood" which employed twelve laborers, if I am not mistaken, whom the clergy sought to forbid from preaching or teaching. Enlightened as to the ministry of the Spirit, and moved by love for souls, they would not submit to this interdict. Seven of these laborers, I believe, and a few members of the "Brotherhood" detached themselves from it, and certain of them, with others whom God raised up, continued their gospel work, which spread from Holland to Hesse. Conversions have been very numerous, and many hundreds assemble at the present time to break bread. More recently the work has begun to get established in Holland, as also in the south of Germany. By means of other instruments, two meetings in Wurtemberg already existed.

Gospel preaching in Switzerland and England has led to the formation of some meetings amongst emigrants to the United States and Canada; the evangelization of negroes led to others in Jamaica and Demerara, as also amongst the natives of Brazil, through a brother who went there and has since died. I am not aware of any other who knows the language sufficiently to continue this work, which has been blessed. The English colonies of Australia have also meetings; but this sketch will be sufficient for you.

Brethren do not recognize any other body but the body of Christ, that is to say, the whole church of the firstborn. Also they recognize every Christian who walks in truth and holiness, as a proved member of Christ. Their hope of final salvation is founded on the Savior's expiatory work, for whose return they look, according to His word. They believe the saints to be united to Him already, as the body of which He is the Head, and they await the accomplishment of His promise, expecting His coming to take them to Himself in the Father's house, so that where He is, there they may be also. Meanwhile, they have to bear His cross and to suffer with Him, separated from the world which has rejected

Him. His person is the object of their faith, His life the example which they have to follow in their conduct. His word, namely, the scriptures inspired of God, that is to say the Bible, is the authority which forms their faith; it is also its foundation, and they recognize it as that which should govern their conduct. The Holy Ghost alone can make it effectual both for life and practice.

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Letters 3, Ruin of the Church; Scattering Stronger Than Division

It is to know where the marks are not, not where they are, which is difficult. Compare Acts 2 and 4, and see; though I admit that did not last long. The great yet simple secret is the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body being lost as to power (for He is there), disowned. The ruin then shows itself in various ways, leaning on human wisdom; leaning on clerical importance to give decency and credit to the world; so that it can join the church without suffering or the cross; leaning on particulars, "I am of Paul," etc., for schisms in the early church were not separations. I suspect the first separation to have been a godly, though an ill-formed thing, that of Novatus; corruption drove him to it, but he had enough of corrupt principles, or habits rather, in his mind, to go wrong in the formal ground of separation; the incapacity to discern the working of the enemy; the having ceased to expect the Lord; not merely divisions but the scattering of the sheep, so that they are not in any division at all, but in the world (Satan's place) alone. Scattering I think much stronger than division: "he catcheth the sheep and scattereth them." Nay worse, the building up of immense worldly systems with perhaps some sheep in them, hidden, and starved often too, and calling these immense systems the church; setting up Satan in it as in popery, or selling what they pretend to be the bride of Christ, and where many of Christ's sheep are, to kings and princes for money; yea seeking them, as Jeremiah reproaches Judah, instead of their seeking it. Is not this ruin? Say a few of us have escaped and fled out. Why so? Because it was all ruin. The denial of the Spirit would be found in the denial of gifts, or in gifts denying the body, no matter which, for the Holy Ghost is in both. But ruin is found in this that the church, such as God formed and fashioned it, does not exist at all save as He sanctions two or three meeting in the name of Jesus When this is if it be in the spirit of the unity of the whole body (woe to them if it is not) the Lord will be there. I am not uneasy about a hundred meetings; they broke bread from house to house. If it were separating in heart from brethren, or a fleshly spirit of self-will or self-importance, or excluded any saints really walking as such, then of course it would be evil; and a spiritual person would find it out the first day; but, if in unity and love, twenty meetings in a town are all one to me. I like small gatherings provided they are really in the unity of the Spirit. The brethren may come to need them yet. Great power, I believe, would bring them; little power needs them. It is clear self-importance or chagrin may set them up without God; but that which has brought in the ruin I believe to be moral. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"; "All men forsook me." "All they which are in Asia are turned away from me"—not from Christ absolutely, but they would not go the whole path of faith with the apostle; they feared the cross, the rough and unseemly road the Spirit of God led them. The world had come in, in the shape of ease and respectability; it is the first form which the devil puts on, for it is order and comeliness for the flesh; but it is the world and Satan, hence power is wanting for the purpose of resisting the other forms, heresy (in opinion) and clericalism; and the vessel of power becomes obnoxious because his standard troubles the conscience, instead of his spiritual power acting on the heart as well (for when the former is reached in a Christian, and not the latter, he kicks against it) and the church goes its own way into the hands of Satan in a worldly clerical road. Wise was God indeed to choose not many mighty, not many noble, not many rich; they find it hard to submit their comforts and comeliness to God's. A rich body of Christians will become practically poor and simple, or practically worldly. Such is my thought said in haste.

The ruin I see how none can deny; our feelings in it are a further question because they depend on our sympathies with Christ, and that is spiritual power. Everyone would not [have] wept over Jerusalem even though not going with its guilt. I judge that dwelling on divisions marks a very feeble estimate of the state of ruin the church is in, but if it be not a name for acquiescence in evil, which is an abomination, I hail every apprehension of the truth. Whatever the door of approach, once in the truth by divine teaching, it will be perceived on every side as men grow in the conscience of what the church is. For where is the bride of Christ, His beautiful flock which He gave us? But, I judge, divisions are rather falsely apprehended, for what are called such in scripture were not separations, but divisions in spirit, etc., among those united; separation there was none but of abandoners of Christianity. I remember the text alarming me on quitting the Establishment, "They went out from us because they were not of us," till I said, To be sure, because I was not of them; that is just the truth, and I would not be.

St. Hippolyte, April 14th, 1847.

Letters 2, Breaking Bread on Irregular Occasions

I see nothing at all to hinder brethren, who find themselves together for bathing, breaking bread together, provided it be done in a spirit of unity with the meetings they belong to. In the case of a resident Christian walking uprightly in the truth, calling "on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart," he has the same title as if he desired to walk permanently with brethren. There is nothing to hinder; but it would be happy (especially if those at the bathing-place were young brethren) that the matter be communicated to the meeting they belong to, that the thing may be done seriously and with christian care. In the former case it is to preserve confidence and unity, in the latter for right christian care. The true character of the gathering is preserved, that is, two or three gathered together in Christ's name; but it is important that it should be done in unity with those already gathered. Full liberty, but liberty in hearty unity, is what we have to seek, and subjection of individual will to the action of the Holy Ghost in the whole.

As to your second question,1 it is practically answered. Provided it be done in a spirit of unity, I see nothing to hinder. It might be on purpose to act against the assembly when the single absent brother did not walk well: this would be clearly wrong; and what I say always supposes that all are walking godlily and in grace.

As to the third question,2 it is always desirable that they should do it in unity with those united in the place nearest, or whence they come. No one can hinder their doing it, but it is not done happily or godlily when it is not done in communion with those with whom they are already in

communion.

As to the last,3 the grace of God and the application of the word to the conscience can alone hinder the exercise of self-will.

Berne, July 30th.

Letters 2, Bethesda and Principles; Unity of the Body of Christ; Assembly Judgment Owned; Discipline Prima Facie

—.—'s objection is the common one of loose brethren, but the question is elsewhere than where he has put it. What does scripture say about it? Whether men carry out successfully is a grave question for their consciences, but has nothing to do with what is right. I asked myself this question years and years ago, How if all this should fail? Well, I said it would prove I was a bad workman as far as I was concerned in it: but there it is in scripture just where it was, and that is what is to govern us. 1 Cor. 12 clearly states this unity of the body on earth. Besides the whole teaching of scripture. But the answer as to circumstances is clear. The ground is not the wisdom of a set of individuals, but the promise that where they are gathered to His name He will be in the midst of them. And I have always found that respecting the action of an assembly prima facie is the way of wisdom and what God owns. And Mr.—forgets that the fact, that we are all one body, gives the title to communicate and remonstrate if called for, and in an extreme case, where evil is deliberately allowed, to disown the meeting altogether. The loose brethren have given up the truth of the unity of the body on earth and have gone back into the camp, and are mostly Independents without a regular minister, or merged in a general looseness that has spread everywhere. But this has not changed the word of God.

Yours sincerely in Him.

Leeds,

July 27th, 1877.

Letters 2, Prayer

I do not think that the promises refer to prayers offered up one for another only, though this is a large part of the cases put forward in scripture: " pray one for another," " for me also," "laboring earnestly for you in prayers," and many others; but the prayer of faith is not confined to this. There are prayers for opening the door for the gospel and for all men. If it be not the prayer of positive faith, we are told in all things to present our requests to God, but then the answer is, or may be only, that God's peace-which passes all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. For the prayer of faith, or rather the promise to it, there are certain limits as to the certainty of answer, such as "in my name," "according to his will," "if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will," "if two of you shall agree "; besides what stops prayer, as a sin unto death. But then I see no limits put to the expectation of faith if God gives it. If it be my will asking amiss to consume it on my lusts, I cannot expect an answer. But the Lord contemplates the giving of faith and certainty of answer for drying up of the fig-tree or removing a mountain, and whatever I can ask believing, I receive it. This is a very important principle.

But first, as to the limits on which formal promise of answer rests besides special faith. The first passage I may refer to is "If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us... and we know that we have the petitions." This supposes the demand according to His will, and then we can reckon on His power accomplishing it. This is the general christian confidence, a great boon to be assured of the acting of Him who is Almighty in the way of His will. Next it is said, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." Here I do not doubt there was special reference to the twelve; but in principle it applies to all Christians. Where the mind is formed by the words of Christ, when they abide in one who lives in dependence on and confidence in Him-one thus abiding in Him, having Him in spirit, and his mind guided by Christ's word, his will is (so to speak) Christ's-he asks what he will, and it will come.

Another case is where any two are agreed: here individual will is set aside. It is where Christians have a common desire and agree to present it to God. The deliberate formal agreement supposes a common christian mind, and it will be done. So, when I ask, coming for what I can attach Christ's name to, under His auspices, the Father will do it. Here, I doubt not too, the twelve are specially in view; still it is in principle every Christian. A man cannot in faith bring Christ's name attached to his lusts; and all these statements suppose the disciple and faith, as James expressly teaches us, and indeed the Lord Himself.

But there are other statements which cast us more generally on the goodness of God, His interest in us, and show that, where faith is in exercise, the answer will be there: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing ye shall receive." This supposes faith and intimacy, so to speak, with God. The heart is supposed to be in His interests, and then, if there is faith as a grain of mustard seed, a mountain goes. I do not doubt this kind of faith was much more when any, as the apostles, felt themselves interested in God's cause, identified with Him and it on the earth; but there is no limit to it. Where such faith is, such answer will be; and God is as much occupied now with the details of blessing for us as for the great deeds of those days. It might be more palpable, more concentrated too then, but not more true. Not a sparrow falls now without Him more than then; and the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availing much is ever true: only we must, so to speak, put ourselves with God, for those to whom these things were said were identified with Him in His interests on the earth. This gave their prayers of course a peculiar place; but then if faith (that is, the operation of His Spirit and grace) brings me into His interest now even in details, the promise is there, and we can reckon on God and, His power exercised in love now as then. There is no limit: only it is the working of His Spirit in us, and hence faith that reckons on the answer.

Presenting our requests, subject to His will, is always right.

Of this we have an example even in Gethsemane; so Paul for his thorn in the flesh. And the answer will be more glorious and blessed than the request, even when it does not as asked answer it. See John 12 and Psa. 132. so Psa. 21, and even Paul's request about the thorn. Let us trust His love, and this will not come short, and if He has given us faith to expect a specific answer, bless God for it. Only our will must not come in; even if it was answered (this was the case of the quails), but as a rule not, as James teaches. But where there is earnest faith, God will surely hear, though He may give us safeguards against our own will in it.

[1873.]

Letters 2, Local Responsibility of the Assembly; Guarding Against Independent Action; Remedy in Mistaken Assembly Action; Manifested Unity Maintained by Discipline; Restoration to Be Sought; Unjust Discipline; Indifference to Evil

I begin by taking for granted what is admitted to be a common basis of action; that is, that every assembly of Christians gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the unity of His body, from the time it acts as the body, does so on its own responsibility to the Lord: as, for instance, when it performs an act of discipline or when it carries out all other things of that nature, as it also does when it receives in the name of the Lord Jesus those who come among them to take part at His table. Each assembly, in such a case, acts on its own initiative, and in its sphere in deciding matters purely local, but which have a bearing which extends to the whole church.

The spiritual men, who addict themselves to this work and are occupied with its details, before the case is brought before the assembly so that the consciences of all may be exercised in the case, may doubtless thoroughly explore the details with much profit and godly care. But if it comes to deciding anything apart from the assembly of the saints, even in the most ordinary things, their action would cease to be the assembly's action and it ought to be disowned.

When such local matters are thus treated by an assembly, acting in its sphere as an assembly, all the other assemblies of the saints are bound, as being in the unity of the body, to recognize what has been done by taking for granted (unless the contrary is shown) that everything has been carried out uprightly and in the fear of God in the name of the Lord. Heaven will, I am sure, recognize and ratify that holy action, and the Lord has said that it shall be so. (Matt. 18:18.)

It has often been said and acknowledged that discipline which consists in putting away from among yourselves (1 Cor. 5:13) ought to be the last means to which we should have recourse; and only when all patience and all grace have been exhausted and when allowing the evil a longer continuance, would be nothing else but a dishonor to the name of the Lord, and would practically associate the evil with Him, and with the profession of His name. On the other hand the discipline of putting away is always done with the view of restoring the person who has been subjected to it, and never to get rid of him. So it is in God's ways with us. God has always in view the good of the soul, its restoration in fullness of joy and communion, and He never draws back His hand so long as this result remains unattained. Discipline, as God would have it, carried out in His fear, has the same thing in view, otherwise, it is not of God.

But whilst a local assembly exists actually in a personal responsibility of its own, and while its acts, if they are of God, bind the other assemblies, as in the unity of the one body, this fact does not do away with another which is of the highest importance, and which many seem to forget, namely, that the voices of brethren in other localities have liberty equally with those of the local brethren, to make themselves heard in their midst, when discussing the affairs of a meeting of the saints, although they are not locally members of that meeting. To deny this would, indeed, be a serious denial of the unity of the body of Christ.

And more than this, the conscience and moral condition of a local assembly may be such as to betray ignorance, or at least an imperfect comprehension of what is due to the glory of Christ and to Himself. All this renders the understanding so weak that there is no longer any spiritual power for discerning good and evil. Perhaps in an assembly, also, prejudices, haste, or indeed the bent of mind, and the influence of one or of many may lead the assembly's judgment astray, and cause it to punish unjustly and do a serious wrong to a brother.

When such is the case, it is a real blessing that spiritual and wise men from other meetings should step in and seek to awaken the conscience of the assembly, as also, if they come at the request of the gathering or of those to whom the matter is the chief difficulty at the time. In such a case their stepping in far from being looked upon as an intrusion ought to be received and acknowledged in the name of the Lord. To act in any other way would surely be to sanction independency and to deny the unity of the body of Christ.

Nevertheless, those who come in and act thus ought not to act without the rest of the assembly, but with the conscience of all.

When an assembly has rejected every remonstrance, and refuses to accept the help and the judgment of other brethren, when patience has been exhausted, an assembly which has been in communion with it is justified in annulling its wrong act. and in accepting the person who was put out if they were mistaken as to him. But when we are driven to this extremity, the difficulty has become a question of the refusal of fellowship, with the assembly which has acted wrongly, and which has thus of its own accord broken its fellowship with the rest of those who act in the unity of the body. Such measures can only be taken after much care and patience, in order that the conscience of all may go along with the action as being of God.

I call attention to these subjects because there might be a tendency to set up an independence of action in each local assembly by refusing to admit the intervention of those who being in fellowship might come from other places.

But all action, as I have acknowledged from the outset, primarily belongs to the local assembly.

[1872.]

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Ecclesiastical 1, Discipline, On

[It is well to note that this short paper, printed from notes of a discourse at a meeting (1841), refers to the spirit animating the individual in dealing with evil. The putting evil out is assumed; as the word of God expressly commands it. We are bound to keep God's house clean, to look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest there be amongst us such or such, to judge them that are within, and put out the wicked. But this is a proving of ourselves to be clean. God will have the place of His dwelling clean. The question of withdrawing from evildoers, a positive commandment of the word, is not touched. The object of the tract is the spirit in which discipline is to be exercised.]

WE ought to remember what we are in ourselves, when we talk about exercising discipline-it is an amazingly solemn thing. When I reflect, that I am a poor sinner, saved by mere mercy, standing only in Jesus Christ for acceptance, in myself vile, it is, evidently, an awful thing to take discipline into my own hands. Who can judge save God? This is my first thought.

Here I stand, as nothing, in the midst of persons dear to the Lord, whom I must look upon and esteem better than myself, in the consciousness of my own sinfulness and nothingness before the Lord; and to talk of exercising discipline!-it is a very solemn thought indeed to my own mind; it presses on me peculiarly. Only one thing gets me out of that feeling, and that is the prerogative of love. When love is really in exercise, it cares for nothing but the accomplishment of its object. Look at it in the Lord Jesus, no matter what stood in the way, on He went. This is the only thing that can rightly relieve the spirit from the sense of an altogether false position in the exercise of discipline. The moment I get out of that, it is a monstrous thing. Though the subject matter of conduct be righteousness, that which sets it going is love-love in exercise, to secure, at all cost of pain to itself, the blessing of holiness in the church. It is not a position of superiority in the flesh. (See Matt. 23:8-11.) The character of discipline as " master " we have not at all. Though influenced by love to maintain righteousness, and stimulated to a jealous watchful care one over another, we must ever remember that, after all, " to his own master " our brother " standeth or falleth," Rom. 14:4. Love alone guides it, and the service of love displays it. We do see that character of discipline in the Lord Jesus, when He took a scourge of small cords to drive out the desecrators of the temple (Matt. 21; John 2); but it was anticipative of another character of Christ, when He will execute judgment.

There are two or three kinds of discipline, full of comfort as showing the association of the individual with the whole body, and with God, which have been ordinarily confounded amongst Christians.

There is, in this country, a great deal more difficulty connected with the question of discipline, than elsewhere, because of certain habits of action, whereby discipline has come to be looked at merely as a deliberative and judicial act. Persons have been voluntarily associated, and there has been a habit of legislating for the credit of the voluntarily associated body. Because people must secure themselves, each society makes its own rules. Now that principle is as far from the truth as the world from the church, or light from darkness. One cannot admit of any principle of voluntary association at all, or of preservative rules of one's own. Man's will is that which brings in everlasting destruction. It may be modified, but the principle is altogether false. There is no such thing as voluntary action on man's part, in the things of God; it is acting under Christ, by the Spirit. The moment I get man's will, I get the devil's service and not Christ's. This has occasioned a mass of practical difficulty, that those abroad do not feel. When I get the notion of a judicial process going on, for the trial of crime, by certain laws, I find myself altogether off the ground of grace; I have confounded all sorts of things.

The developed statement of Matt. 18:15-17, though often cited, does not seem to touch the matter. It is a question of wrong done to a brother; and it is never said, concerning the one who has done the wrong, that the church is to put him out; but, " Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." This may have to be the case, as to the church subsequently, but it is not its character here; it is simply, " Let him be unto thee," etc.-have nothing more to do with him. It supposes a case of wrong done to an individual, as in the trespassoffering, where it is said, " If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor, etc.1 There is the sovereignty of grace to forgive, even to the " seventy times seven "; but " thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." An individual has wronged me: how am I to act? I go not to the Father's discipline, nor to the Son's discipline over His own house; but, acting towards him in the love of the brotherhood, I go and say, " Brother, thou hast done me wrong," etc. There is, first of all, this remonstrance in righteousness; yet the path is such that it may not get out of the scope of grace. Having done this, if he will not hear me, I take with me one or two more, " that in the mouth of two or three witnesses," etc. If that fails, I then tell it to the whole assembly. If he refuse to hear the church, " Let him be unto thee," etc. The thing prescribed is a course of individual conduct, and the result, individual position towards another. It may come to a case of church discipline, but not necessarily. I go hoping to gain my brother to repentance, to replace him in his right relation in fellowship with myself and God (where there is failure in brotherly love, it necessarily affects communion with the Father): if my brother is gained, it goes no farther; it ought never to pass my lips; the church knows nothing of it, or any other creature, but we two. If there is failure, I act to restore him in fellowship to all.

As to the discipline of the Father, there is a great deal more of individual prerogative of grace in this. I doubt whether it comes under the care of a body of Christians at all; it is the exercise of individual care. I do not see that the church stands in the place of the Father. The idea of superiority is true in a certain sense; there is difference of grace as well as of gift. If I have more holiness, I must go and restore my brother, Gal. 6: I. But then this individual action in grace is not church discipline. It is most important to keep these things clear and distinct, so that, while one is quite ready to be subject to the two or three, individual energy should not be at all restrained, but remain clear and untouched. The Holy Ghost must have all His liberty. I could suppose a case where an individual had to go and rebuke all round, as Timothy, " Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering," etc., 2 Tim. 4:2. That is discipline; but the church has nothing to do with it, it is individual action.

But again, the church may be forced to exercise discipline, as in the case of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 5. The Corinthians were not the least prepared to exercise discipline; but the apostle insists upon their doing so. There is that which is the individual exercise of the energy of the Spirit in the ministry of grace and truth, and the like, on the souls of others; and church action not at all involved. It is a mischief to make church discipline the only discipline. It would be a most awful thing if it were necessary to bring every evil before all. It is not the tendency of charity to bring evil into public: " Charity covereth a multitude of sins." If it sees a brother sin a sin which is not unto death, it goes and prays for him; and the sin may never come out as a question of church discipline at all. I believe there is never a case of church discipline but to the shame of the whole body. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, "Ye have not mourned," etc.: they all were identified with it. Like some sore

on a man's body, it tells of the disease of the body, of the constitutional condition. The assembly is never prepared, or in the place to exercise discipline, unless having first identified itself with the sin of the individual. If it does not do it in that way, it takes a judicial form, which will not be the ministration of the grace of Christ. Christ has not yet taken His full judicial place. The moment it comes to that, the saying-" He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," etc., the church has departed from its place altogether. Its priestly character in the present dispensation is one of grace.

What is the character of fatherly care and discipline? How does the father exercise it? Is it not because he is the father? He is not in the same place as the child. This is the principle of it. There is one superior in grace and wisdom; he sees another going wrong in judgment, and he goes and says to him, " I was once there," etc.-" do not go and do so and so." It is entreaty and exposing the circumstances in love; though, in case of hardness, rebuke may come in. The father can make all allowance for weakness and inexperience, as having passed through the same himself. Make yourself ever so much the servant, the principle of the father must be maintained; and it is a principle of individual superiority, however accompanied by grace. All the world should not stop me. It is the prerogative of individual love, to say, " Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." It flows from the father's love, and leads me to the other, not to let him go on wrong, for love's sake. It is not a case of trespass against me, but a case of walk or conduct against his place as a child. We fail, because we do not like to go through the pain and trouble of it. If a saint gets into trouble, he is Christ's sheep; and I am bound, in whatsoever way I can, to seek to get him out of it. He may say, " What business have you to come? " and the like; but I ought to go and lay myself at his feet, in order to get him out of the net which he has got into, even though he dislike me for it. This needs the spirit of grace, and the seeking to bear the whole on one's own soul.

The other kind of discipline is that of Christ, as Son " over his own house." The case of Judas is of great value here. It will always be, that, if there is spirituality in the body, evil cannot continue long; it is impossible that hypocrisy, or anything else, should continue, where there is spirituality. In the case of Judas, the Lord's personal grace overcame everything; and it will always be so, proportionably, and practically. The highest manifestation of evil was against this grace-" he that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.... He then, having received the sop " (grace thoroughly came out, when the evil was shown to be done against Himself), " went immediately out," John 13.

This discipline never acts beyond what is manifested; and, therefore, we see the disciples questioning one another what these things meant, before the evil was done; it did not touch the conscience of the assembly. The Father's discipline comes in, where there is nothing manifest, for that which is secret, or which may come out years after. If an elder brother, and seeing a younger one in danger, I ought to deal in this fatherly care, and tell him of it; but this is very distinct from church discipline. The moment I exercise fatherly discipline, it assumes a communion, in myself, with God, about the thing-a discernment of that working in another which may produce evil, that he has not-a perception which I have by my spiritual experience, which authorizes and incites me to act in faithful love toward him, though without, perhaps, any ability to explain what I am doing to a human being.

The mixing up of these three things, individual remonstrance, the Father's discipline in this fatherly care, and Christ's discipline "as Son over his own house "-ecclesiastical discipline, has led to all manner of most dreadful confusion.

The great body of discipline ought to be altogether aimed at hindering excommunication, the putting of a person out. Ninetenths of the discipline which ought to go on is individual. If it comes to the question of the exercise of the discipline of " the Son over his own house," the church ought never to take it up, but in selfidentification, in confession of common sin and shame, that it has come over to this. So it would be no court of justice at all, but a disgrace to the body. Spirituality in the church would purge out hypocrisy, defilement, and everything unworthy, without assuming a judicial aspect. Nothing should be so abhorrent, as that, in God's house, such a thing had happened. If it were in one of our houses that something dishonorable and disgraceful had happened, should we go and feel as though we were altogether unconcerned, that we had nothing to do with it? It might be that some reprobate son must be put out, for the sake of the others-he cannot be reclaimed, and he is corrupting the family-what can be done? It is necessary to say, " I cannot keep you here; I cannot corrupt the rest by your habits and manners." Would it not, nevertheless, be for weeping and mourning, for sorrow of heart, and shame and dishonor to the whole family? They would not like to talk on the subject; and others would refrain from it to spare their feelings: his name would not be mentioned. In the house of the Son, how abhorrent to be putting out! what common shame! what anguish! what sorrow! There is nothing more abhorrent to God than a judicial process.

The church is indeed plunged in corruption and weakness; but this is the very thing that would make one cling to the saints, and the more anxiously maintain the individual responsibility of those who have any gift for pastoral care. There is nothing I pray for more, than the dispensation of pastors. What I mean by a pastor is a person who can bear the whole sorrow, care, misery, and sin of another on his own soul, and go to God about it, and bring from God what will meet it, before he goes to the other.

There is another thing most clear. The result may be putting out; but if it ever comes to a corporate act in judgment, discipline ends the moment he is put out, and ends altogether" Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth," 1 Cor. 5:12.

The question whether I can sit down with this or that person who is within never arises. A person staying away from communion (because of another, of whom he does not think well, being there) is a most extraordinary thing; he is excommunicating himself for another's sake. " For we, being many, are one bread [loaf], and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread," 1 Cor. 10:17. If I stay away, I am saying, that I am not a Christian, because another has gone wrong. That is not the way to act. There may be a step to take, but it is not to commit the folly of excommunicating myself, lest a sinner should intrude.

All discipline until the last act is restorative. The act of putting outside, of excommunication, is not (properly speaking) discipline, but the saying that discipline is ineffective, and there is an end of it; the church says, " I can do no more."

As to the question of unanimity in cases of church discipline, we must remember, it is the Son exercising His discipline over His own house. In the case in Corinthians it was the direct action of Paul in apostolic power on the body, and not of the church. The body claiming a right to exercise discipline! one cannot conceive a more terrible thing; it is turning the family of God into a court of justice. Suppose the case of a father going to turn out of doors a wicked son, and the other children of the family saying, " We have a right to help our father in turning our brother out of the house," what an awful thing! We find the apostle forcing the Corinthians to exercise discipline, when they were not a bit

disposed to do so. " Here (he says) there is sin among you, and ye are not mourning, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you (he is forcing them to the conviction that the sin is theirs, as well as that of the man); and now put away from among yourselves that wicked person." The church is never in the place of exercising discipline until the sin of the individual becomes the sin of the church, recognized as such.

There is all this, " Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear " (1 Tim. 5:20), " brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such," etc.,

and the like; but, if evil has arisen of such a character as to demand excommunication, instead of the church having a right to put away, it is obliged to do it. The saints must approve themselves clear. He forces these people into the recognition of their own condition, gets them ashamed of themselves- they retire from the man-and he is left alone to the shame of his sin. (See 2 Cor. 2 and 7.) That is the way the apostle forced them to exercise discipline. The conscience of the whole church was forced into cleanness in a matter of which it was corporately guilty. And what trouble he had to do it! That is, I think, the force of, " To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the Person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage over us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." What the devil was at was this-the apostle had insisted upon the excommunication (1 Cor. 15:3-5); and the church did not like it. He compelled them to act; they did it in the judicial way, and did not want to restore him, 2 Cor. 2:6, 7. Then he makes them go along with him in the act of restoration: " to whom ye forgive," etc. The design of Satan was to introduce the wickedness, and make them careless about it, and, afterward, judicial; and then to make it an occasion of separation of feeling between the apostle and the body of saints at Corinth. Paul identifies himself with the whole body, first forcing them to clear themselves, and then taking care that they should all restore him, that there should be perfect unity between himself and them. He goes with them, and associates them with himself, in it all; and so, in both excommunication and restoration, he has them with him. If the conscience of the body is not brought up to what it acts, to the point of purging itself by the act of excommunication, I do not see what good is done: it is merely making hypocrites of them.

The house is to be kept clean. The Father's care over the family is one thing; the Son's over " his own house," another. The Son commits the disciples to the care of the Holy Father (John 17), this is distinct from having the house in order. In John 15 he says, " I am the true vine," " ye are the branches," " my Father is the husbandman," etc., it is all the Father's care. The Father purges the branches, to the end they may bear as much fruit as possible. But in the case of the Son over His own house, it is not individual, but the house kept clean. " If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged," etc.

There are then these three kinds of discipline:

(1) That of brotherly relationship. Here I go as a person wronged, but it must be with grace.

That of fatherly care-the Father exercising it with loving kindness and tenderness, as over an erring child.

Where the Son is over His own house, and where we have to act in the responsibility of keeping the house clean, that people should have their consciences according to the house in which they are-not only the individual, but the house, the body: the conscience of the body must act. The effect may be, graciously, that the individual is restored, but that is a collateral thing. When you come to that point, there is something besides restoring; there is the responsibility of keeping the house clean-the conscience of all there; and that may sometimes give a great deal of trouble.

As to the nature of all this, the spirit in which it should be conducted, it is priestly; and the priests ate the sin offering within the holy place, Leviticus to. I do not think any person or body of Christians can exercise discipline, unless as having the conscience clear, as having felt the power of the evil and sin before God, as if he had himself committed it. Then he does it as needful to purge himself. It will all be for positive mischief-the dealing with it, if not so. What character of position does Jesus hold now? That of priestly service. And we are associated with Him. If there were more of the priestly intercession implied by eating of the sin offering within the holy place, there would be no such abomination as that of the church assuming a judicial character. Suppose the case of a family, in which a brother had committed something disgraceful, would it not be for bitterness and anguish of the whole family? What common anxiety and pain of heart it would occasion! Does Christ not feed upon the sin offering? does He not feel the sorrow? does He not charge Himself with it? He is the Head of His body, the church: is He not wounded and pained in a member? Yes, it is so. If it be a case of individual remonstrance with a brother for a fault, I am not fit to rebuke him, unless my soul has been in priestly exercise and service about it, as though I had been in the sin myself. How does Christ act? He bears it on His heart and pleads about it to draw out the grace that will remedy it. So with the child of God: he carries the sin upon his own heart into the presence of God; he pleads with the Father, as a priest, that the dishonor done to Christ's body, of which he is a member, may be remedied. This I believe to be the spirit in which discipline should be exercised. But here we fail. We have not grace to eat the sin offering. I come to church action and there I find yet more: it should go and humble itself until it has cleared itself. This is the force to me of " ye have not mourned," etc.; there was not sufficient spirituality at Corinth to take and bear the sin at all; " You ought to have been bowed down there, brokenhearted, and broken in spirit at such a thing not being put out-concerned as to the cleanness of Christ's house."

It is another part of priestly service to separate between clean and unclean. The priests were not to drink wine nor strong drink, that they might keep themselves in a spiritual state, by the habits of the sanctuary, being able to discern between clean, etc. This is always true. We must take as our object, in dealing with evil, God's object. God's house is the scene and place of God's order. If it be said, that the woman must " have power [a covering] on her head because of the angels " (1 Cor. 2 Io), it is as the exhibition of God's order. Nothing should be permitted in the house that angels could not come in and approve. All is in thorough ruin; the full glory of the house will be manifested when Christ comes in glory, and not till then; but we should desire that, as far as possible, by the energy of the Holy Ghost, there should be correspondence in spirit and manner with what shall be hereafter. When Israel returned from the captivity, after Loammi had been written upon them, and the glory had departed from the house, the public manifestation was gone, but Nehemiah and Ezra could find that in which to act according to God's mind. That is our present condition. But we have now what they had not: we were always a remnant, we began at the end-" Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. 18:20. If the whole corporate system has come to naught, I get back to certain unchangeable blessed principles from which all is derived. The very thing from which all springs, to which Christ has attached, not only His name, but His discipline- the power of binding and loosing-is the gathering together of the " two or three." This is of the greatest possible comfort. The great principle remains true amidst all the failure.

If we turn to John 20 we find that when He sent forth His disciples, He breathed on them and said, " Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." There is nothing like a corporate church system here; but the energy of the Holy Ghost in spiritual discernment in the disciples, as sent from Christ, and acting on behalf of Christ. Discipline is a question of the energy of the Spirit. If that which is done is not done in the power of the Holy Ghost, it is nothing.

In principle, what was needed has been said. I do not see any difference, whether it be in the hands of a remnant, or anything else; because then we get into the structure of a judicial process at once-sinners judging sinners. It is, first of all, a question what the energy of the Spirit is for ministry in God's house. The unanimity is a unanimity of having consciences exercised and forced into discipline. It is a terrible thing to hear sinners talking about judging another sinner; but a blessed thing to see them exercised in conscience about sin come in among themselves. It must be in grace. I no more dare act, save in grace, than I could wish judgment to myself. " Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," Matt. 7:1, 2. If we go to exercise judgment, we shall get it.

As to the difficulty of saints meeting together, where there is not pastor-ship, my prayer is, that God would raise up pastors; but I believe where there were brethren meeting together, and walking together on brotherly principles, provided they kept to their real position, and did not set about making churches, they would be just as happy as others in different circumstances. One thing I would pray for, because I love the Lord's sheep, is that there might be shepherds. I know nothing next to personal communion with the Lord, so blessed as the pastor feeding the Lord's sheep, the Lord's flock; but it is the Lord's flock. I see nothing about a pastor and his flock; that changes the whole aspect of things. When it is felt to be the Lord's flock a man has to look over, what thoughts of responsibility, what care, what zeal, what watchfulness! I do not see anything so lovely. " Lovest thou me?... Feed my sheep-feed my lambs." I know nothing like it upon earth- the care of a truehearted pastor, one who can bear the whole burden of grief and care of any soul and deal with God about it. I believe it is the happiest, most blessed relationship that can subsist in this world. But we are not to suppose that the " great Shepherd " cannot take care of His own sheep because there are no under-shepherds. If there were those who met together and hung on the Lord, if they did not pretend to be what they were not, though there were no pastors among them, there would be no danger; they would infallibly have the care of that Shepherd. We must not impute our failure to God, as though He could not take care of us. The moment power in the Spirit is gone, power in the flesh comes in.

The Christian Shepherd: 1999, Importance of Humiliation, The

The Spirit does not gather saints around views, however true they may be. He always gathers around that blessed Person who is the same yesterday, today and forever. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

If any speak of separation from evil without being humiliated, take care lest their position become sectarian. There is no service at the present time worthy of Him, if it be not done in humiliation. The church of God, so dear to Christ, is dishonored, scattered, ignorant and afflicted, and he who has the true mind of Christ will always take the lowest place.

Men taught of God for His service go forth from a place of strength, where they have learned their own weakness and nothingness. They find that Jesus is everything in the presence of God, and Jesus is everything for them in all things and everywhere.

Such men, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, are real helps for the children of God. They will not contend for a place or distinction or authority among the scattered flock. The communion of a man with God about the church will show itself in his willingness to be nothing in himself and to spend and be spent.

Neither anger, prudence or the pretensions of man can do anything in the state of ruin and confusion in which the church is now. When a house is ruined in its foundations by an earthquake, it matters little how one tries to make it an agreeable dwelling-place. We shall do better to remain with our faces in the dust. Such is the place which belongs to us by right, and, after all, it is the place of blessing.

I have read of a time when several were gathered together in such sorrow of heart that for a long time they could not utter a single word, but the floor of the meeting room was wet with their tears. If the Lord would grant us such meetings again, it would be our wisdom to frequent these houses of tears. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psa. 126:5).

J. N. Darby (from Nearness to Christ, adapted)

Fragments Gathered Up, Unity of Christ's Body, The

The unity of Christ’s body being the ground assumed, all Christians have, in principle, a title to be there, the Lord’s name being maintained as to doctrine and discipline. If you insist on a certain standard of intelligence beyond Christ, before receiving them, you prove that you are not intelligent, and you abandon your own (i.e. God’s) principle. At the same time, it is all well that young converts should wait; it would do them no harm. The great requisite for receiving, is satisfaction as to membership of the body of Christ...the principle is “one body and one Spirit;” the resource, now that all is confusion and inconsistency, is Matt. 18:20. J. N. D

Notes and Comments 4, Notes on Matthew 17

Here the kingdom is essentially in substituting Christ the Son in place of Moses and the Prophets, but it belonged to resurrection testimony.

11. "Elias truly comes first and shall restore."

14. Note how admirably, from this verse to the end, the whole position of Christ in the world is brought out. We are accustomed to look at the state of this world, sickness, death, Satan's power as a natural condition, but, once the Lord who had created it came into it, its true condition necessarily came out—the opposition of its ruin to the fruits and thoughts of the divine nature. But He was power in goodness there. Sickness is there—He heals it. It was contrary to His nature and heart, who had made the world without these things, and who was in it in grace. He was there as Man, feeling thus for these sorrows. He touched her—the fever was gone—she was well. Blessed manifestation! But there was readiness, universal readiness to help. Many came possessed with devils—with a word they were gone—“And He healed all that were sick." But He felt, and took, bore, all in sorrow on His own heart—divine love in fellowship with man's sorrow!

But, for the same reason, He had no place on earth; foxes had holes, and birds of the air their nests—he Son of Man none. How could He in a world departed from God? But He called to follow—Himself, others too. They had excuses. If it were the nearest claim, they belonged to another sphere totally. The rest were dead—leave the dead to them! What a word for this world! What it expressed in Christ's mouth! But He takes them across the waves, and seems asleep. The devil, by God's permission, can raise storms, but they are in the ship with Christ. Their fear was their shame. But a word of His, awake to their cry, settled all. Then we find the world rejects Him because He casts out Satan's power. The sign that that power was there was given. Christ's presence, though it freed when His power was exercised, brought that power of evil sensibly out, and man who cannot get rid of Satan, begs the Lord to go away, to depart out of their coasts. Such is the world's history! In Luke, we have the effect on the delivered one.

24. Et seq.: I have spoken elsewhere of the tribute money; I only remark how it is connected with the Sonship brought out in chapter 16, and here, only He brings Peter into it, as indeed He did reveal the Father's Name.

Letters 3, Marriage of a Young Couple; Nearness to the Lord

I was glad to receive your kind letter, and to know that you are happily arrived and quietly established at, though it be a somewhat cold climate; but it is hardly colder for you Canadians than Canada for us English, and I liked it. But, here or there, it is where God would have us, that is our place, and where we may expect a blessing and the consciousness of His presence. He may and does keep us, in His patient and perfect goodness, everywhere, but it is in the way of His will that His presence is revealed to us, so that we walk in the light of His countenance. He kept Abraham in Egypt, but he had no altar from Bethel back to Bethel.

I trust fully that you are both in that way; I do not think it an evil that a young married couple should go through the rough of life a little together at the beginning; it binds their hearts together. Surely there is a far higher and better bond, but as to circumstances the comfort each is to the other, and the sustaining help each is to the other, bind their hearts together; for life down here is made up of small things. If it were only when a husband comes home cold and tired, finding case and a welcome and comfort, as far as may be, and the like, there is the continuous sense of one caring for the other, and that is a great point. They are thrown on one another, and where affection is, this cultivates it, and I believe this is of all importance; and then what accompanies it, entire confidence one in another.

But this is all maintained, dear brother, by Christ being all to each, for self is thus set aside, and the grace of Christ working in the heart overcomes all difficulties, and, while Christ is the motive which rises over all, makes the other the object of affectionate and considerate service. But for our own sakes too He is everything, light to the soul, but the blessed expression and communicator of the love of God; and for this there must be real diligence. All that is around us, and even real duties, are constantly soliciting us away from Him, and tending to weaken us spiritually. When we cleave to Him, all goes on smoothly in the heart, in the consciousness of His love: we know how to confide in and count on Him, nothing separates us from His love. The distractions of the world lose their power, because the heart is elsewhere: nine-tenths of our temptations would not be such at all; as a mother who thought her child was run over by a train would not see fine things in the streets on her way down. And what are really our duties we should serve Christ in. A holy intimacy with Christ is the strength and light of the soul, and He encourages us in it, for He is full of love. How near He brings Peter at the end of Matt. 17 The tribute was the tribute to the temple, to Jehovah, and while He shows He knew all and could command the creatures—the fish to bring the exact needed sum—He says to Peter, "Lest we should offend them,"—you and I are children, we do not owe the tribute, and—" that give for me and for thee." And He spoke as intimately and familiarly to His disciples about His death as He did to Moses and Elias. It is a gracious and blessed Savior we have; He delights in our being near Him, and soon will have us so forever, and like Him too. May He make you more and more like Him daily! Oh! cultivate intimacy with Him; it keeps the conscience alive and the heart happy. You may be comparatively a young Christian, and I an old one; but He is all we want, each of us, and suited to each. You can have Him to keep you in the journey before you, and I can look back and see a patience and a faithfulness, a goodness beyond all my thoughts and all my praise. It is a sweet thought that in going on I am drawing near being with Him forever. If spared, you have more of the toil of the way; with me it is almost over. You have a helpmeet, and I have trod it alone; but all is lost, so to speak, in His grace and faithfulness.

Kind remembrances to Mrs. -, whom I must learn to call by her new name—my first attempt—and thank her for her kind note: I am very glad she already bears it, for when people are engaged I do not think long delays are a good thing, though possibly sometimes inevitable. May the Lord abundantly bless you both.... I shall be very glad, dear brother, though far off, to increase my acquaintance with yourself; only may your heart be with Christ!

Your affectionate brother in Him. Ventnor, November 10th.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, For Me and Thee

Matt. 17:25-27

This chapter, when the connection is clearly seen, is of profound and touching interest. The transfiguration spoken of in the earlier part of the chapter was a turning-point in the life and ministry of the blessed Lord.

After the character of those who were suited to the kingdom had been unfolded, the divinity of His Person and character of His ministry are brought before us. His disciples are then sent out with the ministry of the kingdom to the Jews, at least the poor of His flock, in His lifetime, and then till He came as Son of man. Then we have the record of the rejection of John the Baptist's ministry, and that of His own, as come in grace: and standing on the edge, so to speak, of the world, He is witness that no dealings of God could reach where His grace found, like Noah's dove, no place there for the sole of her foot; and declares that the world has been tried, and He could find no entrance for divine goodness, and they must come to Him if they would know the Father, and have rest (for the Son revealed Him in grace), and learn of Him as the man meek and lowly of heart, and find rest to their souls in a world where evil ruled, and no rest could be found, as He knew.

In chapter 12 The Jews, as a nation, are finally rejected, under Satan's power as a people in the last days, and the Lord disowns association with them according to the flesh; relationship with Him was by the word He preached. He leaves the house, goes to the seaside, not any longer seeking fruit in His vineyard, which bore none but bad-sowing that from which fruit was to come. The kingdom of heaven in its mystery, with an absent king, takes the place of Messiah upon earth.

In chapter 14 we have the whole scene ripening historically. John the Baptist is actually put to death, and the sovereign grace of Christ continues while the coming scene is opened. He satisfies, according to Psa. 132, the " poor with bread," but there, I believe, according to the Messiah order. Then He dismisses the mass of Israel, and sends His disciples off, and goes up on high (a priest on high), and the disciples are tossed on the sea. Peter goes on the sea to meet Him: as soon as He is entered into the ship the wind ceases, and He is gladly received where once He had been rejected.

In chapter 15 the hollow and false religion of the Pharisees is rejected, while fully owning Israel's privileges, and sovereign grace goes out to awaken and meet faith in the rejected race of the Gentiles-according to Jewish standing, the accursed race. He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, but God would not be Himself if only the God of the Jews, and the Gentiles were to glorify God for His mercy. We have then the five thousand fed, the same general principle; only now, I believe, the sovereign patience of God.

In chapter 16 the church, as built by Himself, takes the place of Jewish Messiahship, and chapter 17 the kingdom in glory. Thus we have the kingdom, as it is at present, the church, as built by Christ, and the heavenly glory of the kingdom, taking the place of the earthly Messiah. This is the point I desired to reach, which, indeed, characterizes all that follows- the revelation of the heavenly glory on earth, what will be in the world to come, and was now revealed to establish the faith of the disciples; though the Father's house is yet a better portion. It is found in the description of this scene in Luke 9, where they1 enter into the cloud from which the Father's voice came. For the scene itself see 2 Peter 1:16-19, reading " the word of prophecy confirmed." I have gone through the previous chapters because they lead up to the rejection of the Jews, and the new character in which Christ's Person and work were to be displayed. Here (chap. 16: 20), they are forbidden to say to any one that He was the Christ. We find the same injunction in Luke 9:21: that ministry was over. Here He tells them the Son of man must suffer and rise again. The Son of man was about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels. So Luke 9:22-27.

In a word, the suffering Son of man and the glory that should follow, take the place of Messiah on earth, now disowned there, and even forbidden to be any more preached. Thus the beginning of Psa. 2 was now before Him, bringing about in another way the purposes there spoken of, and Psa. 8 in part accomplished as spoken of in Heb. 2 But the old things of Messiah on earth were over, redemption was about to be accomplished, and the new things of a glorified man introduced. In Matt. 17:22, 23 this rejection is pressed on the disciples, and then comes the blessed and touching way in which He shows them their association with Himself, as Son of God, in the new place into which He is introducing His people.

The tribute here spoken of is not tribute to the civil power, but the didrachma which every grown-up Jew paid for the temple service, and which they had voluntarily imposed upon themselves in Ezra's time-a tribute to Jehovah. The question which the collectors put to Peter was really whether his master was a good Jew according to the earthly system now passing away. Peter, with the zeal so often there, yet in ignorance, at once answers " Yes." The Lord then shows divine knowledge of what had been passing by anticipating Peter, to introduce in touching grace the new place He was giving to Peter and those with him " Of whom," says the Lord, " do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own children, or of strangers? " Peter replies " of strangers." " Then," says the Lord, " are the children free." We are the children, you and I, of the great king of the temple, and as such, free from the tribute. "Nevertheless that we offend not "—bringing in Peter, as one of the children of the great king with Himself free, but not willing to offend, and then shows, not divine knowledge but, divine power over creation. " Go thou to the sea, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a stater [two didrachmas] that take, and give unto them for me and thee "; showing now His divine power over creation, making the fish bring just what was wanted. And then again He puts Peter with Himself in the place of sonship by the overwhelming, but unspeakably gracious words, " Give unto them for me and thee."

Do our hearts echo these words, moved to their foundations? If Christ said " me and thee " to us, how should we feel it? Yet He does say it. It is when a rejected Messiah, His Person and the effect of His work too (but the expression of His boundless grace in it) come forth to give us our place in the purposes of God, but as His heart delights to see it and make us see it too. Oh! for the Son of God to say to such an one as me, " Me and thee." I know it is the effect of redemption, but of a redemption He has accomplished, and a redemption which gives us a place where He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied-in seeing us in a blessing which only His heart, which answers to the Father's counsels, could have thought of for us. But what a comment of Christ's heart on the ways of God unfolded in the foregoing chapter! Thinking first of us to apply it.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Tribute Money, The

The tribute-money in the fish's mouth1 again is one of the most beautiful and perfect of the New Testament incidents. Christ had just been opening to His disciples the closing of His career of ministry among the Jews-had forbidden them to speak of His being the Christ to them, for He was going to suffer as Son of man: they must suffer with Him. Then, to three who were to be pillars, He shows His glory as Son of man, to encourage their faith in seeing Him rejected by Israel and all the religious authorities, and in taking up their cross. Just after this, Peter is questioned in a way which amounted to asking whether Jesus was really a good Jew. When he enters, Christ anticipates him by showing His divine knowledge of what passed; but, while assuming the place of the Son of Jehovah of the temple, so as to be free from the tribute which kings did not take of their own children, He, with infinite grace, puts Peter, and in him all of us in principle, in the same place as Himself (just what He has done by redemption, when rejected as Messiah): "Then are the children free; nevertheless that we offend not." And this He does just when He had shown His divine knowledge of Peter's thoughts, and what had passed. He then shows, in a way particularly intelligible to Peter from his occupation, that, far from being a mere Jew debtor to the temple, He disposes of creation though subject in grace to men. And, having shown divine power and title over creation as He previously had divine knowledge, He again associates His poor disciple with Him, saying, "That give for me and for thee." Besides the touching grace of this communication to Peter, see what is brought out-His real character relative to the temple, the setting aside thereby, though submitting to, the relation in which as a Jew He stood to it; the divine glory of His person in wisdom and power; and yet the power of the redemption He was just going to accomplish to be such (and this was, as we have seen, precisely the topic in hand) that, viewed as Son of the Lord of the temple, He would set His disciples in the same relationship with God as Himself. What a touching, tender, and yet glorious way of rebuking the unbelief of Peter, and what a mass of truth is brought out exactly on the point treated of in this part of the gospels-the transition from the old things to the new! It may be clearly seen in Matthew where the establishment of the Church and the kingdom are connected with His being Son of the living God, and then His glory as Son of man brought out. Then, about to leave the faithless and perverse nation, He opens out (in the passage objected to) the full new relationship into which He was bringing those that trusted in Him, through the glory of His person and work. There is not a more beautiful and striking passage in every way than that which is here caviled at. It affords the reader an example of the capacity of infidelity to judge of the bearing and importance of scripture facts, and the moral proofs a believer has which infidelity cannot touch, and which prove that it is ignorant of the elements of judgment.

Practical Reflections on the Psalms, Psalms 55-58: Practical Reflections on the Psalms

Psalm 55

Psa. 55 is the expression of intense distress of spirit. Outward enemies were there. This was the difficulty in which he stood; but it was but the occasion of what pressed upon his spirit. This was the hatred of those who stood in the closest relationship to him. This brought him into the presence of death, and divine judgment, because as special instruments of Satan they would bring the effect of guilt upon his soul between him and God. How completely the Lord Himself (though the psalm be not properly prophetic of Him) went through this, I need not say. They sought to bring the guilt upon Him and triumphed in His being forsaken of God, did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. Directly it is the remnant in the last day, but, as we have seen, in all their affliction He was afflicted. But this bringing iniquity on the soul by wicked men as instruments of Satan (which the Lord went through deeper than anyone could, because He took our iniquity) is a very solemn thing. It is not the wrath directly that Christ bore, and we never shall; but the bringing it on the soul by the power of Satan by wicked men. The Lord may see it needed, but it is only a special case with Christians. There is confidence in God, an expectation that His ear is open to the cry of the heart that trusts Him. But till the Lord is looked to, the power of wickedness, and the wickedness itself distress and bow dawn the soul. The existence and power of evil, of what is opposed to God, weighs on it. This is united with the deepest wounding of confidence in man, for it was not an open enemy, but a friend, who had done it. What in man was to be trusted when the nearest betrayed It gives isolation of heart. Nothing can be trusted. Now the Lord went through this power of evil. We only feel it when flesh is not broken down and has to be broken down. It is there but its power is broken by Him for faith. But inasmuch as we are sinners, this kind of power of Satan brings the character of judgment with it. We may get above this by grace and confide, for this it was that Christ prayed for Peter; and he was kept, when failing under the power of Satan, from going on to doubt the Lord's love, and despair. The most terrible thing here is wickedness coming as the power of evil. But the spirit itself shrinks from the heartlessness of it and would flee; for a gracious spirit would rest in peace when evil is all around. The heart meanwhile is conscious that it has no association with it, and would only flee away and be alone in quiet, for the condition is that it has none to trust in. But this casts the mind on the Lord, for after all it has not the wings of a dove in this world. The effect of this is to bring up the wickedness before the Lord, that is, in its full light. This necessarily brings (in the aspect in which all is looked at in the Psalms, of patience under evil, and righteousness which must view evil as evil; for though Christ's sufferings under it even to wrath are brought in, and so grace, in judgment, passed, yet, in general, as to the government of God)—this necessarily brings in the thought of judgment; for the judgment of evil and the deliverance of the oppressed are in the nature of God as governing and seeing all things. The heart groaning under oppression and suffering before, while thinking of evil sought to be charged on it, and so with horror and oppression of spirit, can now, as looking to the Lord, judge all the evil more calmly as to itself in its own character, and the judgment which must follow. And full confidence in Jehovah, a known covenant God springs pp. And then, free in spirit, one can, from verse 19, look calmly at it all and see the end. The full and blessed conclusion in the deepest sense of the most pressing evil is, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Here end all the exercises giving the ground of our constant faith. And although the psalm looks for judgment, if we take the principle of this declaration, it is the blessed sustainment of faith in all trial. There are two points in this. “Cast thy burden on the Lord.” Whatever the trial or difficulty may be, cast it upon the Lord. It is not that the trial goes always—here it would not till judgment came; but “He shall sustain thee.” It is better than the trials going. It is the direct coming in of God to ourselves, to our own souls, the sense of His interest in us, His favor, His nearness, that He comes to help us in our need. It is a divine condition of the soul, which is better than any absence of evil. God is a sure help to sustain us. The second point is the infallible faithfulness of God. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Tired they may be, but He cannot suffer evil in the world to prevail, nor will He. We may learn to trust by the evil, but in trusting we know the Lord will keep, and the extreme character of the evil only shows the rather that God must come in—makes His intervention necessary.

Psalm 56

Psa. 56—The soul has got out of the depth of inward distress in which it was in psalm 55. For, though the faithful one's enemies lie in wait for him, it is not the unfaithfulness and treachery of friends. They are enemies who seek to wrong him. He is afraid, more than distressed, and looks through the difficulties to God. Faith is readily in activity. In the previous psalm his spirit was inwardly deeply depressed. Here he is only tried. Hence he soon can trust in God, and His word is the testimony of certain deliverance to him. In psalm 55 it is only at the 19th verse and at the end he can bring God in. Here God is at once before his soul. In truth outward trials are little compared with inward breaches on the spirit. The spirit [even] of a man will bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear? The saint's trust, then, is in God. But this trust in God is not without some revelation of God. Hence, when the soul can look at Him and trust, that by which He has revealed His mind, the testimony which in His love He has given to us, becomes at once the guide and confidence of the soul. It is a blessed thing to have it. God cannot but make it good. These two points are the hinges of thought in this psalm—God Himself and His word. “In God will I praise his word.” His word gives us the sure witness of what He will be, what He is for us. But if it be God, what can flesh do? This is the conclusion that the soul comes to. It has enemies, perhaps mighty and strong ones, nor is it insensible to them. They hide themselves and plot against the faithful one; and he has no resource in flesh. All this is good for him. It makes him know the world he is in and weans him from flesh. But what can he do? He can do nothing. This casts him then on God, and this is as positively blessed as it is useful. In truth, if God be for us, what can flesh do? The worldly man may have fleshly resources against flesh. The saint cannot have recourse to these. It would take him away from God, just when God is leading him wholly to Him. He cannot say “confederacy” to all to whom the people weak in faith say confederacy. But he is not to fear their fear neither, not be afraid, but sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and He shall he for a sanctuary. It is out of the occasion of fear that the faithful one looks out to God here. Then what can flesh do? God disposes of everything and has His plans, which he will certainly bring to pass. But there is another blessing accompanies this and a deep one. The soul is in trial, the wicked plotting against it. But God is with it in the sorrow and takes account of it all. He tells the wanderings of the saint, for he inhere looked at as deprived of outward privileges, with God's people and in His house; but God counts all this up, and the saint can look, as it is beautifully expressed, to His putting every tear into His bottle. Every sorrow of the saint is in His book. It is a blessed thought. So the heart confides in Him and knows that when it cries to Him all its enemies will be turned back; then, as it praised His word in faith in the midst of its fears and sorrows, looking to it, sustained by it, counting on it. Oh that saints knew how to do it! So now the soul will do it in counting on deliverance by His sure intervention. Another principle is found in this psalm (in a Jewish form of course) connected with these exercises of heart, and which are ever found in them, and indeed one great object of them as coming from God, the sense of belonging to, and being given up to, consecrated to God. “Thy vows are upon me.” It will be in the sense of praise and rendered in praise when delivered, but the heart learns in these trials what we are apt to forget, that we do not belong to ourselves. It is, in its lowest stage, connected with the want of deliverance; in the highest, with the joy that God owns us for His own. The foundation being the redemption which has made us wholly His in fact, as indeed Israel was externally as redeemed from Egypt. Hence praises are in the heart of the oppressed one already. He receives what he prays for, believing. But the soul uses mercies and deliverances to count for more. It has been delivered from death; hence it looks to be kept from falling. It was under the power and oppression of the enemy, him that has the power of death, the devil—it is set fret; but now it has to walk without stumbling and falling in the way, but it has learned its dependence in the trial and it looks to God for this. Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling? But the soul has learned more in its distress, the comfort of walking before God in the light of His favor and the safety of His presence. It looks to this as the object of its being kept. It does look for its own peace and comfort, but it looks for it before God. The light of the living was the light of divine preserving favor for Israel. It is not the highest order of joy here, but it is the soul's looking out of distress and oppression to that faithful goodness of God which shall make it walk before Him in safety and in peace.

Psalm 57

In Psa. 57 there are the same trials, but more confidence. But his eye seeing more brightly God's power and help, it sees more of the evil and wickedness of its enemies and less of its own oppression, and this is constantly true. We have to watch this, for our heart is treacherous. If it gets out of its own oppression and fear, it is apt to dwell too much on the wickedness of its enemies. Looking more at God, it must see this more. That is not the evil, but dwelling on it. It is dangerous to merge evil and go on comfortably, but it is injurious also to dwell on evil. It does not nourish the soul—how should it?—and a spirit contrary to the gospel grows up. We shall see it, if we are near God, but we shall soon be occupied with God and not with the evil. He is above it all.

Thus there is progress in these three psalms. Between psalms 56 and 57 the first verse shows the difference: the former “for man would swallow me up;” the second, “for my soul trusteth in thee.” There he was trusting God's word, here he is looking for the accomplishment of it by the hand of God, and trusts under the shadow of His wings till the tyranny be overpast. Hence he is able to look out to God's exalting Himself above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. It is not that the power of evil is not there as much as it was. It is, and the soul is bowed down through it, but the mind rests more on God. Remark, too, that there is no thought of resisting the evil and getting rid of it by one's own strength. It waits on God, and this it must do to have its own path perfect. And this Christ did. The former psalm felt more God's entering into the sorrow. This looks more to its own escape out of it, but by God's sending from heaven and accomplishing deliverance. He sees, too, the evil taken in their own plannings. There is no thought of counter planning. But casting himself wholly on God, he sees their own plans to be their ruin, and this is a striking way of judgment and confirmation of faith. He gets through faith, so to speak, praise ready; and in the Ammim and Leummim—peoples and tribes: it is not, specially among the heathen as adverse and opposed. His trials are within the people, the men he was associated with; and it is not triumph over adversaries, but deliverance where he could only bow down his heart. But the result was praise among men in a wider sphere than that he had been tried in; and so it ever is, for He who delivers is great. In fact he looks out to millennial glory, when all will be gathered together in one in Christ. But I use it now as seen here in God's ways.

Psalm 58

On Psa. 58, very few words will suffice. The force of the psalm is this: the wicked as such are hopeless as to amendment, but God will judge them; so that men will see that there is a reward for the righteous and a God that judgeth the earth. Is there upright, just judgment among men) is the question. There is wickedness in their hearts: they plan and plot in it. It is in their nature and will, and characterizes itself by falsehood. It is of the serpent, in its nature devilish; and they refuse any and every attracting power and influence, whatever it may be. God comes in and Jehovah judges, let their power and strength be as lions. They melt away to nothing when His hand comes in. Vengeance—and this explains the joy in it—does come in, vindicates the just man and shows him right, however he may have seemed helpless and been oppressed, and God righteous, and that there is a judge in spite of oppression.

Notes and Jottings, Detached Memoranda From a Reading Meeting: Christ Builds His Church

There are no keys to the church; that, is just traditional nonsense; people do not build with keys; but Christ builds His church.

If people really heeded the word of God, and took simply from Scripture what Scripture states, such things would never be said.

Nor do I talk about private judgment on such things; between man and man that is all very well, reasonable enough, but do you think if God has spoken to me, I am to talk of private judgment on what He has said?

Why, it is blasphemy.

I can understand an unbeliever not knowing what is God's mind, and reasoning about what is written; but man by reasoning never got faith at all; and man's reason is perfectly incompetent to judge about God and His words.

If my mind could judge about God, then God is the subject matter, and my mind is the master of the subject matter.

It is a mistake altogether. You want a word from God to reach conscience, that is the first thing. I grant you man's mind is the measure of all the truth he can have, but the first thing I want is a hammer upon conscience.

Suppose I knock you down, does it not make an impression upon you? You are acted upon. This is what conscience needs. But people think it must be the activity of their own minds.

I do not take a candle out to see if the sun is shining! But if I do not see the sunshine, everybody who has eyes will say to me, " You are blind."

Letters 1, Cross Characterizing the Path, The

The cross and the crown go together: and more than this, the cross and communion go together. The cross touches my natural will, and therefore it breaks down and takes away that which hinders communion. It was when Peter rejected the thought of the cross that Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me:" it is with a rejected Savior we have to walk. The whole system of the world is a stumbling-block to turn the heart from God—dress, vain show, flattery, even the commonest things which tend to elevate nature. All that puts us into the rich man's place is a stumblingblock. Heaven is open to a rejected Christ. Remember this. God's heart is set upon carrying His saints along this road to glory; He would have us walk by faith, and not by sight. Whatever tends in me to exalt the world that rejected Christ is a stumbling-block to others; in short, anything that weakens the perception of the excellency of Christ in the weakest saint.

[1865.]

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Church of Christ, The

I would re-state what I have said once before in the " Present Testimony," and used in testimony, that the difference between the Church of Christ in Matt. 16 and the Church of God elsewhere is correlative. The Church of God would have Christ for its rock: God founds it on Christ. Christ does not found His Church on Himself, or the confession of Himself, but on the Father's action-as by the revelation made to Peter. Those constitute Christ's Church who are given Him of the Father- out of the kingdom of the Son shall be taken all those that offend and work iniquity, and the rest shine forth in the kingdom of His Father.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Doctrinal 1, What Is the Church?

THIS is a question raised in many hearts by that which is passing around us-a question of the deepest interest in itself, even though circumstances did not make one feel the need of a clear and satisfactory answer. But the state of the professing world, now so much agitated on the question of the Church in every form, and in which a multiplicity of movements (in general only creating more perplexity and questions in most souls) present themselves as the reply to the need which is felt of finding the truth on this point-this state of things, I say, will render a serious examination of what the word of God says on the subject useful to many. Enlightened by that only true light, they may, by learning at the fountain of light, while putting themselves in possession of the light itself, be able to judge calmly and soundly of all that presents itself as such, and, as a consequence, claims submission, or at least adherence, to the course which is proposed, as being according to it.

But this is not all. I doubt not but that God has not only permitted, but that it has been His will, that this question should be raised, in order that His children may learn what is the extent, and what are the thoughts of His love; and that they may take morally, and with true Christian devotedness, a position practically answering to His infinite goodness. For the question of the Church, seen as presented in the Bible, is one eminently practical. The position in which the Christian is placed by the very fact that he is a member of the Church of God, governs the

affections, and forms the character. This consideration makes still more opportune a work which views the Church in the light of God's word. As a matter of fact, the question of the Church is generally presented as a question of the organization of some new body amongst Christians-a question of which the heart gets wearied. Hence it follows that many persons discard the subject altogether, as injurious to sanctification, and seek, and induce others to seek, spirituality by setting aside a point of which, after all, it is evident that the New Testament is full, and of which it treats in terms which attach to such a point great practical importance. In fine, if, as many serious Christians think, we are in the last times, although circumstances can add nothing to the essential importance of truth, the fact that we find ourselves to be near the end of the age, makes its practical importance to be more felt. The obligation under which the wise virgins were, to watch and to keep their lamps ready at all times, became an imperative duty, when the cry had gone forth at midnight, " Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

The considerations I have just presented will have clearly pointed out to the reader the object of this paper, namely, an examination of the teaching of the word of God on the subject of the Church, and of the practical results for our souls which flow thence. My aim is not to examine the basis of individual salvation, although the teaching of the word on the Church throws much light on this point. It is even of consequence to understand that they are distinct things; for God never passes by our individual responsibility, whatever privileges may be conferred upon us by being joined to an assembly. We are saved as individuals, although God may, if He sees fit, gather into one body those whom He saves. Salvation is a thing which, though complete in Christ, supposes in the heart of the person enjoying it, personal exercises, which go on necessarily and exclusively in his own conscience, and which bring his soul into immediate connection with God, and without which all relationship with Him-all happiness-the very existence of spiritual life-would be impossible. The intercourse between God and an intelligent and responsible soul, which before was in sin, necessarily supposes that consequent on the establishment of this new relationship many things pass within which are for that soul alone. The special form which the relationship takes may add much-may give special character to it; and this is the case; but this does not do away with personal relationship. This is one of the essential differences between the truth of the word and the idea of the Church as it is viewed by the Romanist; who, making ordinances a means of salvation, attaches salvation to being of the Church, instead of making the Church the assembly of those who are saved. If but one individual were saved, his salvation would be equally perfect and sure, but he would not be the Church. This (the Church) includes an additional thought, an additional relationship, to that of the saved individual. What is this thought? Let us lay aside human definitions, and cleave to the word.

The Church is something infinitely precious to Christ. He " loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." This is a revelation that makes us feel the importance which God attaches to what He calls the Church. What an object of the affections of Christ-of His care; and how glorious will be the accomplishment of the counsels of God respecting this Church! What a privilege to be part of it! This passage teaches us, moreover, that there is, in the union of Christ and the Church all the intimacy1 that exists between a husband and a wife beloved-a feeble figure after all of the reality of this great mystery-that we are thus members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones; that the Church holds to Christ the place which Eve held with regard to Adam-the figure of Him that was to come; who was associated with Adam in the enjoyment of all that had been conferred on him by God. This last thought, it is true, is only suggested here by the analogy of the position of Eve, used by the apostle to represent that of the Church; but it is taught as a doctrine elsewhere. It is natural to suppose, that what holds so prominent a place in the mind of God should be found more than once in the word; and such we shall find to be the case in passages, the bearing of which we will presently consider. At the same time, it will be easily understood, by the nature of the thing itself, that this position is quite peculiar; that such an association with Christ is a special object of the counsels and purposes of God; for the place of a bride, like that of Eve, is a very special one. She is not the inheritance; she is more than a child, however dear, as a child, she may be to the father. It is a higher thing than being God's people, though both may be true at the same time. It is difficult to imagine anything more closely linked with self than one's own wife, one's own body. " No man," says the apostle to express it, " ever yet hated his own flesh." It is one's self. It must be evident to the reader, that from such a relationship must flow immensely practical consequences; because it is connected at the same time, with the closest affections, and the most absolute duties. The Lord Himself expresses the force of the position of His Church, the first time He speaks of it in a formal manner after the commencement of its existence, when He says, " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? "

Let us notice the three chief points presented by Eph. 5 which has suggested these reflections. First, Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. It is redeemed at the cost of His blood, of His life, of Himself. Having thus purchased it exclusively for Himself, He begins, secondly, to fashion it, to sanctify it, that it may be according to His own heart's desire; that He may, in the third place, present it to Himself a glorious Church, without the least thing unbecoming the glory, or that might offend the eye or the heart of her divine Bridegroom. There is here a testimony to the divinity of Jesus, so much the more remarkable as it is only by the way; and the allusion is made as to a known truth. God, having formed Eve, presented her to the first Adam; but Christ Himself presents the Church to Himself; because if He be the Second Adam, He is at the same time the One who can present it to Himself as being the author of its existence, of its beauty, and of the perfection in which it must appear in heaven, to be worthy of such a Bridegroom, and of the glory that is there.

We will consider its history farther on: but we may already observe here, that whatever may be the circumstances through which the Church is called to pass, she is always considered as a whole, as much while she is being purified by the word upon earth, as when she is presented glorious to her Bridegroom in heaven. The redemption of this body by the blood of the cross was made upon earth. Her purification through the word, by the Spirit, also takes place on earth. The glorious result, at the return of Christ, will take place in heaven, for which place she will have been made ready. Although the marriage has not yet taken place, the relationship has always existed as to its rights. I do not speak merely as regards the eternal counsels of God, but in fact as to the knowledge and the duties of those who were called. Since Christ purchased the Church to Himself (I speak of the fact, and historically now, always allowing time for the communication of the truth as to this, by the Holy Ghost), the Church has been His, as regards the conscience of those who were called to the enjoyment of this position. The relationship exists; and as Christ has always been faithful, the Church ought to have been so also. Her purification, on the part of Christ, had necessarily reference to this relationship, as this passage formally proves. It ought to have been viewed in the same light by Christians, by those who, alas! may fail in this relationship as in all others. But their responsibility is in connection with the obligations that flow from it.

The manner in which this truth must act upon the knowledge of an accomplished salvation, and upon sanctification, as well as upon the joy of hope, is plain. For with regard to the first, the existence of the Church is based on the fact that Christ has loved it, and given Himself for it. So that its purchase, its salvation, and the gracious, perfect love of Him who redeemed it, with the end in view, which cannot fail, of presenting it

in glory to Himself, form the basis of its whole life-of its everyday relations.

It is not a people put to the test, by a rule given. The Church is the object of a perfect work, through which Christ purchased it to Himself, when it was enslaved to Satan, defiled, and guilty. It has no other responsibility, as the Church, but that which is based on its being the purchase of Christ. This tells her, no doubt, that she ought to be entirely His; but if she ought to be His, it is because she is so already. The Christian, instructed of God in this doctrine, has the peaceful assurance (an assurance which gives a calmness that is the basis of the sweetest affections) that he belongs to Christ, according to God's perfect love, and the efficacy of a work in which Christ-that His heart might have satisfaction in the object which the Father had given Him-could not fail.

The influence of this truth in the conscience is equally great as regards sanctification; for it is the purification of that which already belongs to Christ in an absolute manner, in order that it may be fit to live with Him forever, a purification which extends consequently to the thoughts, the affections, and the manner of viewing things in all respects. Being wholly His, the Church has to do with Him in each movement of the heart, in each sentiment; if not, she fails in her relationship with Him, in every circumstance in which it is not so. As to the result which He has in view, He will certainly no more fail in that, thanks be unto God, than He has with regard to the redemption. He will present the Church to Himself without spot or wrinkle. But the heart of the Christian ought to respond to that work.

The influence of the relationship of the Church with Christ upon her hope, is no less great. She is outside the judgments which the coming of the Lord will bring upon the world- outside the course of the prophetic events which will take place in a world of which she forms no longer part. She awaits the happy moment when the Lord will call her, taking her to Himself to realize the glory and the joy of the relationship which she already knows by grace.

Such is the position of the Church, and her relationship with Christ. But there is a consequence resulting from these, the figure of which we have seen in the connection in which Eve was placed with the creation, but on which I will make a few more remarks by the way. Christ says, the apostle, in Ephesians r, is the Head of the Church, " which is his body, the fullness of [or that which makes complete] him that filleth all in all "; that is to say, Christ is the Head, and the Church the body; and as the body is the complement of the head to make up a man, so it is with Christ and the Church: He as Head directing, exercising all authority over the Church, His body-but the Church, as the body, rendering complete the mystical man, according to the eternal counsels of God. For it is evident that this is no question about the divine Person of Christ, but in the counsels of God, Christ, as Head, would not have been complete without the Church.

Let us remark by the way, that it is this thought which was completely hid (hid in God) under the old covenant; and which is not found in the whole of the Old Testament. The idea of a Christ not perfect, simply in His own Person, as an individual, would have been unintelligible to the most advanced saint of the Old Testament. There was to be blessing under His government-but the being a part of the Christ, as a member of His body would have been incomprehensible. The union between Jew and Gentile, which flows from it, will come before us afterward. Now the effect of such a union of the Church with Christ, has been to associate the Church in His dominion over all things and with all His glory, such as He received it as Mediator from His Father. And such is the force even of Eph. 1:21, 22, which we have just quoted. That is why he sets forth the members of the Church as a new creation; as being the fruit of that same power which placed Christ there (chap. 1:19 to 2:7). And that is connected with the whole of chapter 1, where the apostle has revealed the fixed purpose of God, as to the administration of the fullness of times; which is, that He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance. In the meantime, God has given us, who have believed before the manifestation of Christ, His Spirit, as the earnest until the redemption of the inheritance itself. Therefore the apostle shows, that, in order that we might enjoy the inheritance with Christ, we are the objects of the exercise of the same power which placed Him above all things, when He was in grace in our state; and that in Him we are in His state. If it be asked how such things can be, chapter 2: 7 tells us the reason. But numerous declarations confirm the consequences to us of this union. We speak here only of the consequences. " The glory," says the Lord, " which thou gavest me, I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." " And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. 8. " Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). I do not speak of these things, as being all exclusively characteristic of the Church; but as of things which to us are the consequence of our belonging to it.

After this short review of the position of the Church with regard to Christ, and the whole creation which will be subjected to Him, we will consider, in a more consecutive manner, the doctrine of the word respecting the Church itself, and then the position it holds historically in those ways of God, the course of which is given to us in detail in the Bible.

The fixed purpose of God, as it is expressly revealed to us in Eph. 1, is to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth. The Church will be associated with Him as His body-His bride-at that time (Eph. 1:22, 23). But all things are not yet put under Him. God has not yet put them all, as a footstool, under His feet; nor is the Church as yet presented in glory to Christ, who as yet is sitting on the right hand of God (Heb. 2:8). It is needless to quote passages to prove that the Church is not yet glorified nor raised. We are, dear Christian reader (you and I), proofs of it2-happy to be so-waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Whilst waiting, then, for the happy moment of our meeting with Jesus, is there still a Church? Did it enter into the thoughts of God, that there should be a Church upon earth, till the final accomplishment of His magnificent designs respecting her glory in heaven? There can be no doubt about it to one that is subject to the word. Let us examine the word on this point. Christ Himself is the first to announce the commencement of the Church:3 " Upon this rock I will build my Church." The declaration, that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, shows plainly that it is not a question of the Church already presented in glory. It is upon earth.

I would notice a few important points which are revealed by this passage. The Church was yet to begin. Christ recognized as Son of the living God, was to form the foundation of a new work upon the earth. The fact that there are believers upon the earth, and even believers acknowledging Jesus to be the Christ, does not constitute the Church. It was so when Jesus spoke, and yet the Church was still to be builded. This was a work to be done as regarded the children of God; which thought is confirmed by a declaration of John respecting the involuntary prophecy of Caiaphas, that Jesus should die for the Jewish nation; " and not for that nation only," adds the apostle, " but that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." There were already children of God, but they were scattered abroad-isolated. Christ by His death was to gather them together; not merely to save them, so that they might be together in heaven (since

they were children of God, that was done already), but He was to gather them together in one. They were believers already; but the Church4 was yet to be builded by the gathering together of these believers, and that upon the earth. We know that this has now taken place as a fact, through the word of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. We may cite here the request of Jesus, that not only those already manifested, but those also who should believe through their word, might be one that the world might believe. Before passing on to the epistles, we may remark by the way, that the Lord, besides the general idea of the Church which He was about to build, gives us an insight into the practical operation of the assembly in detail (Matt. 18); attaching to it, at the same time, the efficacy of this operation, and the authority of heaven itself-though but two or three should thus form the assembly-provided it was really in His name they were thus met. How precious the light that the word affords for times of darkness!

* Remark here, that what is falsely called an invisible church, was precisely the state of Israel-a body of professing Israelites, by birth and ordinances; and a certain number of isolated believers in the midst of that, enjoying through faith the goodness of God, and their common faith when they met. (See Matt. 3:16; Luke 2:38.) It is out of this state that the Lord has brought believers by "building the Church."

But through the descent of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Church has received a much fuller development. The fact of her existence is declared in Acts 2. "All that believed were together,* and had all things common," and "the number of them was" already "three thousand." "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."5 The union and unity of the saved ones were accomplished as a fact by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. They formed one body upon the earth-a visible body owned of God, to which all whom He called to the knowledge of Himself joined themselves, and that as led of the Lord who was working in their hearts. It was the Church of God, so far composed of Jews only. The patience of God was yet waiting in Jerusalem; and if this city owed ten thousand talents, by the death of Jesus, He was still proposing repentance by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. God was remembering mercy, and declaring that, on the repentance of the nation, guilty as they were, Jesus would return. This is the subject of Acts 3. But Jerusalem turned a deaf ear to the call; and subsequently her rulers, resisting, as always, the Holy Ghost, stoned him through whom He was testifying. From that time, though the unity of the whole was preserved by the conversion of Cornelius, a new instrument of the sovereign grace of God appears on the scene. Saul, who had been himself consenting also unto the death of Stephen-Saul the persecutor, the expression of the hatred of the Jews against the Christ, becomes the zealous witness of the faith he had sought to destroy. But this sovereign grace, whilst still mindful of the Jews, no longer goes out from Jerusalem as its starting point. It was from Antioch, a city of the Gentiles, that Paul went forth to fulfill his apostolical work. But this event was accompanied by a very remarkable development of the doctrine of the Church; or rather preceded by a revelation, which made not a new gospel (for the way of salvation is ever one and the same), but a new starting point in the preaching of this gospel as regarded the Person of Christ Himself. Up to this time, although they had preached a Christ exalted, the only Savior, yet it was as a man known amongst the Jews by signs and miracles, as they knew, and whom God had raised and made both Lord and Christ I need not say, that this testimony was quite according to God, and in its proper place in the midst of the Jews. " Ye also," the Lord had said, " shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Peter and the other apostles, having accompanied Christ during the time of His ministry, followed Him up to the time that the cloud received Him out of their sight. They had received the testimony that He should return in like manner. The consequence was, that the relations of Christ with the Jews were always maintained on the ground of faith in Him- exalted to the right hand of God, no doubt-but whose scepter was to go out from Sion, and who awaited the repentance of His people. But we have seen the testimony of the Holy Ghost to a glorified Christ rejected by the blinded nation; and the death of Stephen, in making this rejection signally manifest, reveals to us the Son of man in the glory of God in heaven, receiving the spirit of His servant above, instead of returning to Israel here below. This transition from the character of the Christ or Messiah to that of Son of man (suffering, and inheriting all things in heaven and on earth) is often taught by Jesus in the Gospels. See, for instance, Luke 9. It is now being accomplished as a fact (the Lord, at the same time, not losing His rights as Christ). They are reserved for the age to come. But here Paul enters on the scene, and God, whilst continuing the work at Jerusalem, begins a new one; and that by a new revelation of His Son, to him who was not to know Him personally after the flesh. Saul sees Jesus for the first time in heavenly glory, too resplendent for human sight. It is not Jesus known upon earth made Lord,6 but the Lord of glory who, as such, declares that He is Jesus. But for Paul and his ministry, where is He found on earth? In those who are His. Seen unequivocally as Lord in heaven; Saul asks, " Who art thou, Lord? " " I am," replies the Lord, " Jesus whom thou persecutest." The saints were Himself, His body. The conversion of Paul identifies itself with the full revelation of the union of the Lord in glory with the members of His body upon earth. His starting point, his knowledge of salvation, could not be separated from these two things. They are reproduced in his epistles. Thus (2 Cor. 4) he says, " If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel7 of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This, whilst setting forth in a still more striking manner the worth of His sufferings, invested, at the same time, the preaching of the apostle with a peculiar character.

I will not enlarge on this part of the relations8 of Paul with Christ, in order that we may come to that which concerns more directly our subject-the Church. Whatever God's way upon earth may be, it is evident that all question of Jew and Gentile was at an end when the question was about the Lord of glory and the members of His body. The relations became heavenly, and in the unity of the body of Christ thus known in heaven, there was neither Jew nor Gentile. The Church was upon earth according to this revelation of her position, for she was persecuted; but she was identified with the Lord in heaven; it was He (the Lord glorified) who was persecuted in His members.

To what precious ground does not this introduce the heart! We have (and that from the mouth and the heart of the Lord Himself) the strongest expression of our union with Him-that He considers the feeblest member of His body as a part of Himself. Let us pursue, however, our subject, that we may get the doctrine as a whole.

We will examine the epistles of Paul. Of the epistle to the Romans, the Church is not the subject. Having convicted the Gentile without law and the Jew under the law of being both guilty before God, it shows the individual justified before God, not by the law but through faith, introducing resurrection as putting him in a position quite new as regards justification, as regards life (that is, a new life outside of the dominion of sin); and as to the law, by grace the believer was justified, renewed, an heir of God, had the feelings of the Spirit, and was kept for glory by a love from which nothing could separate him. This well established, the apostle reconciles (chapters 9, 10 and 11) the admission of Jew and Gentile, without distinction, to the enjoyment of these blessings with the promises made to the Jews; and he shows that the Gentiles have been grafted in to be a continuation of the line as children of Abraham in the enjoyment of the promises.

But, although the main subject of the epistle to the Romans does not afford opportunity for teaching concerning the Church, the exhortations at the end of the epistle furnish us with an element which flows naturally from the revelation made on the way to Damascus. It is that, being

members of the body of Christ, we are necessarily for that reason members one of another (chap. 12: 4). " For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing," etc.

The Church is absolutely one. It is evident here also, that the apostle speaks of what is upon earth; and even though there were members whose souls were with the Lord (thus being no longer able to glorify the Lord upon the earth, whence He had been rejected and where Satan exercised his power), he refers to those only who were still down here. The body in its practical and true sense was composed of those only.

The First Epistle to the Corinthians furnishes us with precious instructions on the point now engaging our attention. This epistle gives us details of the interior of a local and particular church, being addressed at the same time to all who call on the Lord. It teaches us that the Christians of a locality gathered in one body are the realization so far of the unity of the whole body.9 The church at Jerusalem was, at the beginning, both these two things at once; and though there were many assemblies, yet the Christians of each locality gathered together in a body, and formed the church or the assembly of God in that locality. " Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." There was but one. It was composed of those that were sanctified in Christ Jesus, of called saints who were at Corinth. The apostle reckoned on their being confirmed to the end. They were outside the world, a body known as entirely separated from it by their profession and common walk as a body. Their individual relations with the world are discussed, and go no farther than the ordinary communications of life; but even in these the most formal and complete distinction is marked between the brethren and the world. There were those without and those within; that is to say, it was not a moral difference in the individual walk alone, but a common walk as a body, and as a body formally separated from the world. (See 1 Cor. 5:7-13; ch. 10:17, 21, 22. Compare 2 Cor. 2; ch. 6: 16, 17.) The Lord's Supper was the external sign that gathered them together (1 Cor. 10:17). Now the presence of the Holy Ghost was found in the body-in the whole body of the Church; but it was realized and manifested in the local body according to its state.

This presence of the Holy Ghost in the body is distinguished from the presence of the Holy Ghost in the individual. The body of the individual is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19). But the Church was also the temple (chap. 3:16, 17), because the Spirit dwelt in it.

Having gathered this scattered information, we may examine the chapter (12) which expressly treats of our subject, introduced by that of the spiritual powers which were manifested in the assembly. The demons are many. The Spirit of God is only one Spirit, whatever may be the manifestations of His presence. These manifestations of the Spirit were found in the gifts; and these were given for common use, the Holy Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. These gifts were found very largely developed among the Corinthians. Having long been carried away by the craft of demons, they were in danger of confounding the energetic manifestations of these demons with those of the Holy Spirit, because they were looking for power rather than for grace. The apostle gives them, first, an absolute rule for discerning between the Spirit of God and the demons, in the confession that Jesus was Lord- a confession which these demons would never make. Afterward, he takes pains to make the Corinthians understand the true doctrine of the presence of the Holy Ghost; the effect of which went much farther than to produce the confession of the Lordship of Jesus; though this confession was the touchstone of it. The Holy Ghost united all Christians in one body; and Christian service, or the exercise of gifts, was nothing more than a member of the body exercising its functions for the good of the whole body. It was that one and self-same Spirit which divided to each, " For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ "10-Christ; for the Church is Himself, His body. " For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." The unity of the body being thus established, all the gifts came under the idea of members of this body; that is, all exercise of ministry was the activity of the members of the body. It is well to recall here that the consequence of this truth is that the gifts have for the sphere of their exercise all the extent of the body; it is even their duty to edify it if that be given them.

But other truths of the greatest moment are revealed to us in this chapter, and particularly the means God used to produce this unity, to form this body. " By one Spirit ye are all baptized into one body."11 Christ having fully accomplished His work, and having ascended up on high, has received the promise of the Father; that is, the Holy Ghost, and has sent Him into this world to be, on the one hand, the witness of this accomplishment, and of the personal glory of Jesus at the right hand of God; and, on the other, to unite the members of this body to Himself, and at the same time to one another, whether Jews or Gentiles; who, all distinction being lost, form but one body, united to its Head in heaven, that is, to the Lord Jesus.

Two truths clearly result from the teaching of this chapter; first, that the formation of the body is accomplished by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven; and, second, that this body is formed upon the earth. Its unity, such as it is presented in the word, takes place essentially upon earth, since the Holy Ghost has come down here to accomplish it. The accessory circumstances confirm this truth; for it is most evident that the gifts in question are exercised upon the earth. The disciples were the body of Christ, by the union produced among them by the presence of one Spirit; who being one was found in them all, and at the same time in the whole of the united body. It is well to recall the passages already quoted, which teach us the difference between these last two points. While 1 Cor. 3:16 reveals to us that the whole is the temple of the Holy Ghost, chapter 6:19 shows us that each believer individually is the temple of God.

It is evident that this unity will not be lost in heaven, when all the members of the body are reunited; and that God keeps the souls of those who sleep in Jesus for that day of glory; but the manifestation of the unity of the body of Christ is now exclusively upon earth, where the Holy Ghost has come down to establish this unity. Faith knows very well that souls are preserved with Jesus for that day; but thus disunited from the body, they do not for the present enter into the account, being in a position where communion with a body on earth is no longer a possibility, any more than manifestation of unity or service for the glory of Christ.

Where the Holy Ghost has come down, and where He abides, there is the manifestation of the Church, whilst its Head is seated on the right hand of the Father. The Spirit, in speaking to the Church, addresses Himself to Christians on the earth, and to them alone. Thus it is said: " Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing," etc.

I need not stop to prove that this applies to earth.

Here, then, we are taught by God, that the Church, which is the body of Christ, is formed in unity down here upon earth by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and manifesting Himself by gifts in the members of this body. Let me add that this presence of the Holy Ghost is to

be distinguished from the regeneration of souls, and even from His work in the hearts of the regenerate: it is His presence in the body, sent from above as truly and personally as the Son was sent of the Father, though not in the same manner. It is evident, from Acts 1:5, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the descent of the Holy Ghost.

The epistle to the Galatians treats of the question of justification, and of the right to the enjoyment of the inheritance, through promise, as contrasted with the law; and only touches the doctrine of the Church by the single declaration, that the Christians are all one in Christ Jesus (chap. 3: 28).

But the epistle to the Ephesians treats the subject at length, and requires special attention.

Chapter 1 after having laid the foundation of sovereign grace, declares (v. 10) the fixed purpose of God; which is to " gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth "; and, having pointed out the children of God as sealed with the Holy Spirit for the inheritance in the end, shows us the Church united, as His body, to Him who was constituted Head over all things.

Chapter 2 reveals the working of the power which has united the Church to Christ and the manner of this union; and showing that the Jew by nature was a child of wrath quite as much as the Gentile, and that both were dead in trespasses and sins, presents both as quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places in Christ. Thus the distinction was lost; God having made of the two one new man; reconciling them both in one body by the cross. Now that was the Church. That work had its accomplishment in the Church. The Christian was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (of the New Testament, compare chap. 3: 5), Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The Gentiles were builded together with the Jews to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. This chapter teaches us then (according to the word in Matthew), that the Church, by its union with its Head in heaven, was accounted as being there; and that its calling was absolutely heavenly. As Israel was separated from the nations, so was the Church from the world-it was no longer of it. Its formation on earth began after the breaking down, by the cross, of the middle wall of partition. It was as a new man: Jews and Gentiles being reconciled to God in one body. Besides, we find that instead of a temple made with hands, where Jehovah dwelt, this union of Jewish and Gentile believers in one body, formed the habitation of God upon earth; and that this habitation was by the Spirit. This latter truth gives us the true character of the Church upon earth-a character, it is evident, of the most important bearing-a character which involves the deepest responsibility; and, let me say it, a character most precious. For the responsibilities of Christians all flow from the grace which has been shown them. This character, in fine, thanks be unto God, in spite of its unfaithfulness to this responsibility, the Church cannot lose, because it is made to depend on the grace and the promise of God, that this other Comforter, the Spirit of truth, would not go away as Christ did, but abide forever with those that were His. It is also most plain, that it is on the earth that all this takes place; though, being on earth, our special position is to be seated in the heavenly places in our Head, and to wait for the realization of our condition when we shall be gathered unto Him.

Chapter 3, the whole of which is parenthetic, unfolds this mystery, hid through all ages, but now revealed, of which the apostle was the minister; viz., that the Gentiles should be of the same body with all saints. But I will reserve my remarks on this passage, till we come to the second part of our subject- the place which the Church holds in the ways of God.

Chapter 4 is the application of the doctrine of the second; and the apostle beseeches the saints to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called; which vocation is, to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. The sense of the presence of God always produces humility; and the apostle, in pressing this point, exhorts them to keep the unity of the Spirit (that which has been set forth, chapter 2), in the bond of peace. For the doctrine in question is this, " There is one body and one Spirit." This leads the apostle to the subject of gifts in connection with the body. Christ had gained the victory over Satan, and could confer on the Church He had redeemed the power which would be the testimony of that victory; for it was rescued from the slavery of the enemy, and could be the vessel of this power and this testimony. Christ, by means of these gifts, was nourishing and ministering to the growth of this body. The exercise of them was for the edification of the body of Christ. It is worth while quoting the verses which follow what we have just examined. " He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Thus the unsearchable riches of Christ, by which He fills all things in the power of the redemption which He has accomplished- these riches, I say, form the basis of the edification of the Church of Christ, who is no longer looked at as a mere Messiah fulfilling the prophecies and the promises, but in a greatness of which no prophet had any idea, and of which no prophecy had foretold the extent-each member supplying, according to the grace given, these riches of Christ to the body. The body itself, developed in its members, grows thereby into that fullness of which Christ is the measure (the truth which reveals this fullness being the means of making the body grow up into Him, whose fullness is revealed). Thus the perfect stature of Christ is always the object and the only recognized measure.

What infinite grace! Yet it could not be otherwise; since the revelation of Christ is the means by which the Church must grow; and Christ is such, filling all things, from the dust of death up to the throne of God. Having come down in love, and gone up in righteousness, He expels for faith, from the universe which He has made His by redemption as well as by creation, the conquered enemy; as, in fact, He will expel him from it, when He accomplishes all the effects of His power. And where is this body found? Where are these gifts exercised? Where does this growth take place? Blessed be God! down here. It is that which Christ does after the accomplishment of His work, whilst He is seated on the right hand of God. It is through the Holy Ghost. It is the body-the Church-that one body which is the vessel of this ministry, and of the Spirit which accomplishes it through the members of the body; and which causes the body to grow according to the mind of God in Christ, who is the Head of it; a body, the members of which are the members of Christ. Moreover, the apostle has before him the whole body; and " the whole body " viewed upon earth. Charity necessarily embraces all the members of it, as being the members of Christ. The connection between all this and the Church, seen in the whole extent of her privileges and of the thoughts of God, is shown in a striking manner at the end of chapter 3; where the apostle exclaims, " Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

I will not go over the infinitely precious teaching of chapter 5 again, because I have already called the attention of the reader to this portion in beginning our thesis; but it is clear that the epistle to the Ephesians treats the subject of a Church which is one body, whose Head is Christ-a body formed and developed upon earth, since the ascension of Jesus, by the Holy Ghost sent from above who makes it His habitation-a body in which the glory of God will be reflected throughout all ages-a body which is the vessel upon earth of the Spirit, which He who, having gained the victory over Satan, and established the glory of His redemption everywhere, from death up to the throne of the Father, has sent to be the testimony of the power through which He has overcome; and who associates the Church with its Head in the heavens, giving it a heavenly calling, as being seated there in Him. This body, formed in its perfection at the beginning, was to grow by the energy of the Holy Spirit which dwelt in it, just as a child, perfect in all its parts, grows through the power of the life which is in him, in order to attain to the state of manhood.

The epistle to the Colossians brings before us some precious instructions on the subject we are considering. The epistle to the Ephesians has taught us that God would gather together all things in Christ, and that the Church was united to Him as His body, associated with Him in His dominion over all things. The epistle to the Colossians teaches us the same truth under another aspect. We shall also find that the idea of Christ which is presented in chapter i contrasts with all that He was as the hope of the Jews, according to the testimony of the prophets, as much as that which is found in the epistle to the Ephesians, but in a different manner. Let us first look at what is said of the double glory of Christ-Head over all things, and Head of the Church. In verses 15 and 16 He is presented as the First-born of every creature; and the reason if it is given-He has created all things. He who had created all things, having taken His place as a man in the midst of the creation, must at all events be the Head of it. This thought is confirmed in verse 17. The second part of the glory of Christ is declared in verse 18. He is the Head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead. These are the two truths presented in Eph. 1:22, 23; only the two things are considered separately here as two diverse glories of Christ, in whom it has pleased all the fullness to dwell. The reconciliation of all things and of the Church follows. Having made peace through the blood of His cross, the thought of God is to reconcile all things through Him, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. This answers to verse 16. Then the apostle, addressing the Christians called at Colosse, says to them, " And you that were sometime alienated... yet now hath he reconciled." This answers to verse 18. They were part of the Church of which Christ was the Head, and of which the reconciliation takes place now. Verses 24 and 25 present, as following this distinction of the double glory of Christ and the double reconciliation, a double ministry-the ministry of the gospel to every creature under heaven, and the ministry of the Church, which is the body of Christ. This ministry, a complement in its doctrine of all the preceding revelations, completed the teaching of the word of God (v. 24-26). The Church was a mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations-a mystery which admitted the Gentiles into all the privileges which it revealed, and spoke of a Christ, not the crown and accomplishment of the glory of the Jews, but who, in the Gentiles, or in the midst of the Gentiles, in Spirit, was the hope of glory. The presence of Jesus amongst the Jews ought to have been, and will one day be, the accomplishment of the glory which had been promised to them. But the presence of Christ in Spirit among the Gentiles was the hope of glory-of a more excellent glory-a heavenly glory. In Ephesians, Christ is considered as exalted at the right hand of God, whence He sent the Spirit to confer upon the Church the gifts which were the testimony of His victory and the manifestation of His power as man victorious over the enemy-a glorious Head of the Church which was upon earth. In Colossians, He is considered as present in the Church, securing to the Gentiles the possession of the heavenly glory into which He has Himself entered. This chapter, then, brings the Church into prominence in a very interesting manner. Christ raised is the Head-the Church is His body; its practical reconciliation takes effect now, being founded on the peace made through the blood of the cross. Gentiles belong to it quite as much as Jews; and Christ in Spirit dwells in it, the hope of glory. This last expression teaches us, without controversy, that the Church is contemplated as exclusively upon earth, though having the sure hope of a heavenly glory. Its unity is not declared as in the epistle to the Ephesians; but it is self-evident that the body of Christ can be only one.

I confine myself to the doctrine; adding that the epistle, as a whole, shows that the Colossians were in danger of losing sight of their close union with the Head of the body-Christ, in whom everything was accomplished, and they complete in Him; and of seeking, by forgetting this truth, to add something else, which was nothing but the setting aside of Him. Consequently, the epistle brings into prominence the riches and the perfection of Christ to remind the Colossians of them; whilst the Ephesians, who held fast the faith of their union with Him, were able to profit by the teaching which revealed to them the whole extent of their own privileges. The faithfulness of the one, and the unfaithfulness of the other, have both turned, in the hand of our God, to the blessing of the Church in all ages.

The first epistle to Timothy furnishes us with some precious thoughts in a short sentence: " The house," it is said (chap. 3: 15), " of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here we stand on ground more connected with the practical character of the Church upon earth. It is the house of God-it is there that truth is found and nowhere else; there alone is it maintained in the world. Let us understand this declaration. The Church does not create the truth, but has been created by it. It adds to it neither authority nor weight. The truth is of God before it is received by the Church; but the latter possesses it. It exists because it possesses the truth, and it alone possesses it. Where, besides in the Church, is the truth found? Nowhere. The supposition that the truth is anywhere else would be the denial of the truthfulness and ways of God. The truth can be nothing but what God has said; it is the truth, independently of all church authority; of any but that of God, who is the source of it. But where the truth is, supposing a body to be constituted by its means, there is the Church; and the Church which possesses it, and subsists by possessing it, thereby manifests it to the world. The authority of the Church cannot make that which it teaches to be truth. Truth alone does not constitute the Church; that is, the meaning of the word ' Church' embraces other ideas. A single man holding the truth is not the Church; but the assembly of God is distinguished by the possession of the truth. An assembly which has not the truth, as the condition of its existence, is not the assembly of God. The passage under consideration, and the importance of this point must be my excuse for this little digression, which is but indirectly connected with the subject of the Church.

There is one more passage, which presents the Church in so complete a manner, as to its hope and its service, that I will quote it in closing this series of testimonies from the Bible. It is that of Rev. 22 " The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

In this passage we find the Spirit introduced in a very remarkable manner, somewhat analogous to Rom. 8 Both passages show how far the Holy Ghost is considered in the word of God as dwelling upon the earth since the day of Pentecost, and as identifying Himself either with the believer or with the Church. In Romans, it is " He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; because," it is added, " he maketh intercession for the saints according to God." Now it is our groanings that are spoken of there. Here in the Revelation, the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

The Spirit so takes His place with the bride, that the sentiment of the Church is that which the Spirit Himself expresses. The Spirit is upon earth and animates the Church, being the true source of its thoughts. The Church, animated by these very thoughts, expresses her own affections under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Had it been only an expression of affection, one might have questioned its legitimateness; and that also of the groans spoken of in Rom. 8; but since the Holy Spirit connects Himself with it, this desire of a feeble heart has the power and authority of a divine thought. This, then, is what characterizes the Church, in her desires and in her hope. She desires that her Bridegroom should come. It is not a question about prophecy; it is Christ, the communicator of the prophecy, who presents Himself: " I am the bright and morning star." The Church knows Him. She will be with Him before the great day of His manifestation comes—she will appear with Him in glory. But when He is thus presented in His Person, it awakens the earnest desire of the Bride that He should come. But there is also a testimony to be borne. It is what follows. She calls upon those who hear, but who have not understood their privilege of being of the bride, to join this cry, and to say, Come. In the meantime, she already possesses the river of living water, and, turning towards those who are athirst, she invites them to come and make a free use of it. How beautiful a position for the Church-for our hearts! The first affection of her heart is towards her Head-her Bridegroom, who is to come like the morning star, to receive her to Himself in heaven, before He is manifested to the world. Then she desires all believers to share this desire, and to reinforce her cry that He may come. In the meantime, she is the vessel and herald of grace, according to the heart of Him who has shown grace to her.

What more blessed position could be thought of, for such poor worms as we are, than that which sovereign and creative grace has given us? If the reader examines John 17 he will find that the object of the chief part of the chapter is to place believers, beginning in a special manner with the apostles, in the same position as Jesus was; they taking His place upon the earth. We well know, that He alone, by His Spirit, can be the strength through which they can accomplish such a task.

This truth enables us to apprehend what the true position of the Church is. Christ was upon earth, but at the same time one with His Father. He was manifesting Him upon the earth. He was a man upon earth, but He was a heavenly man, displaying upon earth the spirit and sentiments of heaven, where love and holiness reign; because God is love and holiness. He says, " The Son of man which is in heaven." He was separate from sinners and yet at the same time perfect in grace towards them. In His case, His Person was the cause of it (He being at the same time true man and acting by the power of the Holy Ghost in a dependence upon God, which constituted His perfection as man). In the case of the Church it is clear that the question is no longer of a divine person, yet she is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. United to her Head in heaven by the Holy Ghost come down from thence, dead and risen with Him and seated in Him in heavenly places, her character is purely heavenly. She is upon the earth, where the Holy Ghost has come down, to manifest there a heavenly walk-the motives and the mind of heaven. She lives above in Christ by the Spirit; her life is hid there with Christ in God; she seeks for nothing down here, declaring plainly that she is yet seeking her country. She is one, she knows it: it cannot be otherwise. Can her heart recognize that Christ has another bride as companion of His heavenly joys? The manner of her being necessitates her unity, as well as the character of her Bridegroom, and the unity of the Spirit. She is upon earth; she sighs after her country, but still more after the Bridegroom who will come to receive her unto Himself, that, where He is, there she may be with Him. In the meantime she bears testimony upon earth, as united into one body by the presence of the Holy Ghost. This is the place where God owns her, till Christ comes to take her to Himself. From that time she will bear testimony in the glory and by the glory to the love which has placed her there, and to the mighty redemption which has taken poor sinners and placed them in the same glory as the Son of God, and in the same relations with His Father, except that which is essentially divine-" that in the ages to come he [God] might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

What we have already said leads us naturally to the second part of our subject-what place the Church holds in the ways of God.

The heavenly aspect of this question finds its answer in several passages which we have just examined, which treat the subject of the nature of the Church. God has willed that His Son, Ruler of all things as Son of man, should have a bride to share His glory and His dominion Glorious position! testimony of the infinite grace of God! Such is the Church-the companion of Jesus in the heavenly glory. This will take place at the same time with the earthly glory, which will be the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. God, for the dispensation of the fullness of times, will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him, as Head; whose bride and body the Church is. The Old Testament, which gives us the history of the ways of God upon earth, and in its prophetical part announces what the result will be, does not reveal to us this mystery. The Church, as such, does not come as part of the course of the ways of God upon earth. The object of the counsels of God from before the foundation of the world, she had been hid in the depths of these counsels, till Christ, having been rejected upon the earth, might become her heavenly Head; and the testimony to this glory, having also been rejected by the Jews, who, in a certain sense, had a right to the promises, the door was fully opened for the revelation of this glorious mystery-hid in all ages.

In considering a little the facts, either with regard to man or with regard to the Jews, the suitableness of these ways of God will be understood without any difficulty. Until the rejection of Christ, man had been put to the test in every way- without law, under the law, and even under grace, presented in the Person of Christ, for God was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Now man, by the death of Christ, has proved himself an enemy of God, an enemy who hated even His mercy, which was nevertheless his only resource, because it was of God. Christ, as new man, raised, glorified, at the right hand of God, outside the world, takes as man the place where man was to be in the counsels of God. There is a man at the right hand of God, to whom the Church can be united as His body by the Holy Ghost.

Such a heavenly standing of the saints could not possibly exist before. The body could not be before the Head, to which it was to be united, had taken His place, such as it had been prepared for Him in the counsels of God. There was not a glorified man in heaven before, to whom the Church could have been united.

If we consider the Jews, the thing is still more intelligible for other reasons. They had prophecies and promises. Christ was to be presented to them. Till they had rejected Him, God ever faithful, could not set them aside to establish anything else which denied their privileges, blotting out all distinction between Jew and Gentile-a distinction which the Jew was bound carefully to maintain. The crucifixion of Jesus has put an end to all that. No one is a Jew in heaven. But man having completely failed in his responsibility, and the Jews having rejected the one in whom the fulfillment of the promises had been presented to them, God (before fulfilling them, as He will do) has revealed the hidden mystery which was connected with the heavenly glory of the Son of man; that is, with the body united to Him, gathered during the rejection of Israel-a body which was to be manifested in glory with Him, when He should in His sovereign grace resume His dealings with Israel upon earth: for "

blindness, in part, has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Israel, unfaithful as men, have lost all title to the enjoyment of the promises by the rejection of Him in whom they were to have this enjoyment. They were, after all, children of wrath as others; but that will not hinder God from fulfilling His promises. He cannot be unfaithful to His promise, whatever the unfaithfulness of man may be. His gifts and calling are without repentance, and the blindness of Israel is only temporary. This is what Romans teaches; as the Lord Himself said to them, " Your house is left unto you desolate... till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But here is the perfect wisdom of God. Israel having rejected the Christ when He came to present Himself to the nation, they are without remedy. It will be the sovereign grace of God which will reinstate them as being only poor sinners in the enjoyment of the promises, according to the word. Israel, under chastening, and kept for that day, abide without the true God, and without a false god, according to the prophecy of Hos. 2; and God, during this interval, brings in the fullness of the Gentiles, displaying His multiform wisdom12 in the calling of the Church, a heavenly people, established upon more than promises, on a perfect redemption, accomplished through the act by which Israel placed themselves under condemnation. But it was not only that man and Israel had been fully tried in the history of past ages, before the accomplishment of redemption. God had also displayed His wisdom in His ways with both. His power, His patience, His mercy, His government in the hands of man and according to the conditions of His holy law, by promises, and by miraculous interventions, by chastenings and blessings, by righteous judgments, by the most tender care and the most magnificent providences, had all been displayed. Even a world swallowed up in the mighty waters had borne witness, in disappearing before His judgments, to the ways of God with man upon earth.

Angels had seen these things; they had seen the wisdom and power of God in exercise in His ways with men on the earth. The Church was to supply them with quite a fresh manifestation of the depths of the counsels and wisdom of the infinite God whom they adore.

The demonstration of the inability in which man was found, to profit by the ways of God, furnished the occasion of it. It was no longer proofs that God was governing on earth, but the care which, leaving apparently in the hands of the wicked that which was the dearest object to God upon earth, prepared it thereby for heavenly glory and joy.

There remains yet one thing to which I would call the attention of my reader. It is, that, until Christ was glorified, the Holy Ghost could not come down to earth; for the object of His testimony, the heavenly glory of Christ and the redemption accomplished by His means, were yet wanting. " The Holy Ghost was not yet13 [given], because Jesus was not yet glorified." We shall see with what clearness the word of God presents the Church to us, as quite a new revelation of that which had no existence before, save in the eternal counsels of God, who thus predestinated for her an existence outside the course of ages.

The writings of Paul, who was chosen to bear this testimony and to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ-a ministry which was connected with these truths- are full of this doctrine; bringing into prominence this glory of Christ, which was beyond all that the prophets had spoken. Thus 1 Tim. 3:16. Having spoken of the Church, in a passage already quoted, he naturally turns to the truth of which the Church was the pillar-this mystery of godliness. A Messiah, the fulfillment of the prophecies, was not a mystery; but a Christ such as the apostle presents Him in verse 16 had never been known before: " God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Certain elements found here were connected with Messiah upon earth: because this same Messiah, ascended up on high, must come down again to fulfill the promises made to the Jews; but such things as a whole, had never been presented to faith.

As to the Church, the thing is true in a still more absolute manner. This is what the apostle says of it, Eph. 3:9-11: " And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is impossible to get anything more absolute than " hid in God." This mystery of the Church, hid in the depths of His counsels, did not get disclosed, nor did she exist in fact, till then. It is " now," that unto the principalities and powers is made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. They had seen His patience, His power, His government; but never a heavenly body upon the earth, united to His Son in heaven. Thus God could set aside, for the time, the course of His earthly government, to enter into relationship with a heavenly people. This passage is very clear on this point; that the Church neither existed nor was revealed before. Up to that time it was a mystery hid in God; who, having established it in His counsels, was testing man under His government, before creating a heavenly system, based upon an accomplished redemption, in union with the Second Adam in heaven. It is important that the reader should get very clearly in his mind the teaching of this passage. The object of the apostle is to show, that the Church is a new thing. There had been other means to show forth the wisdom and ways of God, earthly means. Now, heavenly powers saw, in the Church, a kind of wisdom quite new. Not only the Church had had, as yet, no existence; but it had not been revealed before its existence; it had been a mystery hid in God. This last point is confirmed by other passages which we will quote; but it is well to develop the first point, by the teaching of the end of chapter 2.

The truth of the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body, the Church, is established, as the consequence of the cross, in verses 14 and is, in the most formal manner. The middle wall of partition, established by God Himself and absolutely binding, had been broken down only by the cross; and by means of this, also, they were both reconciled. in one body- those who were afar off, and those who were nigh. Then, they had been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. That is, the Church could exist only after the cross had rendered possible the union of Jews and Gentiles.14 The enmity of man against God having been manifested, the enmity of his nature-Jew or Gentile-and the Jews having lost all title to the enjoyment of the promises, grace received in a sovereign manner both the one and the other, according to the eternal counsels of God, for a better inheritance. God (having been manifested in the flesh, and having set things on the footing of eternal realities outside all earthly economy or dispensation, and, received up into glory, having acquired a people which was associated to Himself according to the election of God) purposed, before the foundation of the world, that He should share this glory with His bride and His body.

To return to the revelation of this mystery. Speaking of the Church, the body of Christ (Col. 1:26), the apostle calls it " the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." For the Jew, Christ is the accomplishment of the glory; but Christ, present in Spirit, becomes the hope of heavenly glory for those in whom He dwells.

Thus, also in the epistle to the Romans-" Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest," etc.

The more the epistles of Paul, or of Peter, are examined, the more examples we shall find of the contrast between the hopes and the election of Jews and Christians (only Peter never treats the subject of the Church), and the more we shall find the eternal election of the Church brought into light. In Eph. 3 this mystery is called also the mystery of Christ; for indeed before it was Christ an individual man, and not Christ the Head of a body spiritually united to Him: and the apostle declares, that it was by a special revelation that it had been made known to him (v. 3-5)-the knowledge of a mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men (this mystery being, that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs of the same body).15

These passages show sufficiently the way in which Paul presents the Church as an essential doctrine of truth; but yet as a mystery, which had never been revealed under the Old Testament, and which never had any accomplishment before the death of Jesus had closed all those relations of God with Israel, which had reference to the prophecies and promises, so far as they depended upon the faith and faithfulness of man. They show that blindness having come upon them for a time, God, who will fulfill His promises to His earthly people, has found, in the period of their blindness, the occasion of manifesting this admirable fruit of His eternal counsels; viz., the Church which, when Israel is restored through grace to the enjoyment of the promises made to them, will shine as the bride of the Lord in the brightness in which He will Himself be manifested.

Such is her destiny! Whilst waiting, what is her place and what is her calling? We have said that the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, gathers her upon earth. If the Bridegroom delays His coming; and if souls go to wait with Him for the moment of the assembling of all that are His, raised or changed, in His presence in the air, those of the redeemed who remain gathered down here, where the Holy Ghost the Comforter abides, always form the Church. There may be ignorance, the members may be scattered here and there, the Church may have been unfaithful and stripped of her ornaments; but it remains equally true, that until Christ calls her to meet Him in heaven, she is always the Church, always the bride of Christ. She has been espoused as a chaste virgin to Him; but it is to a heavenly Christ. Israel is His people upon earth. Whilst Christ is in heaven, the Holy Ghost is gathering the Church to be His in heaven.

However, it is not merely that the Church has a heavenly calling; this is not the whole truth as to her relations with Christ. She is also His bride and His body. When all the thoughts of God have been fulfilled, she will, as a fact, be with Him. Her thoughts and her character are (or at least they ought to be) formed after her portion, according to God. Also she is already united to Christ by the Spirit. She is one and can be one only. But she is characterized by yet other traits. When the world rejected Christ, it passed judgment and condemnation upon itself. " Now," said the Lord, in referring to His cross, " is the judgment of this world."

The Church was set up in grace, when the relations of God with the world, on the footing of the responsibility of man, were ended forever by the rejection of Christ. Thus she has been called to come out of the world to be received of God. She is Christ's alone. " Come out from among them," says the word, " and I will receive you." It is a peculiar people belonging only to Him. " Ye are not of the world," says Jesus, " as I am not of the world." And this is true, not only as regards individuals; but " that they may be one," says the Lord, " that the world may believe." It is a unity perceptible to the world outside itself. " What have I to do," says the apostle, " to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? Them that are without God judgeth." The Holy Ghost was upon earth to establish the closest and most formal union between the members of the body; they were members one of another. This unity was recognized among them. All knew that a Christian was not of the world, because he was of the Church. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. This unity was truly and distinctly manifested in each locality. There was the church of each place, as the very addresses of several epistles show. But this local unity proved the universal unity. Any one member of it was thereby a member of the universal unity. Teachers, evangelists, apostles, Timothy, Titus, Paul, did not belong to one church more than another. The gifts were members of the body. The idea of a member of a church is not found in the Bible. The thought there is very different; it is that of members of the body of Christ. But these " joints and bands," which might exercise their activity in local churches, proved the unity of the whole body, and made it visible and perfectly perceptible to the world.

Christians acknowledged one another, and were acknowledged as one body-a sole, well known, and well defined body, having common interests, and the most intimate ties, as a body apart from the world. The Holy Ghost cannot unite the Church with that world out of the midst of which He has taken her. Persons might come in unawares into the formal body, but it was a distinct body, into which they come as false brethren. It is plain that if the Church be one in the midst of the world, her duty is to glorify the Lord in that unity, and by that unity, and as a whole. For this responsibility cannot be separated from any position whatsoever in which we are placed by God.

But the motives are so much the more powerful as the grace of that position is excellent. We are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city set on a hill, the epistle16 of Christ, an epistle which ought to be read and known of all men. The body of Christ ought to reproduce, by the power of the Spirit- that power which overcomes all the separative principles which selfishness and sin have introduced into the world-the character of its Head; and thus glorify Him on the earth. The bride should manifest her attachment to the Bridegroom- that she is wholly and exclusively His!

People talk about an " invisible " church. The word says nothing about this. It is a notion which quite denies the force of the passages we have just quoted. The scattering of the children of God has hid them. Would any one venture to maintain that individuals should be invisible; that is, that they should conceal their Christianity? " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is clear, then, that individuals should not be invisible. Now, if that be true, to say that the Church may be invisible means nothing short of this, that these individuals ought not to be united. Yet it is certain that the Lord says that they ought to have been one, that the world might believe.

If there be divisions, they are carnal, and walk as men. If the duty of all individuals be to let their light shine before men, and if all these individuals are closely united, and form a separate body outside the world, making everywhere a profession of their union (as it was undeniably the case at the beginning), to say that this body is invisible has no sense. " A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." But this in passing.

The question I am now treating is not, how far the Church realizes this position. I am speaking of the Church such as it is presented in the word.

But if the Church be the bride of Jesus, she ought to desire as such to glorify Him during His absence. Her heart must be given to Him-she must receive her directions from Him alone. If she be the house of God, she must seek to keep herself pure on account of the holiness of the Spirit who dwells therein. If she be the pillar and ground of the truth, she will not be able to endure anything but the truth, which is the basis of her existence; for the glorious revelation of Christ, who has accomplished her redemption (God manifested in the flesh, preached to the Gentiles, received up into glory), has given her being; and she is the witness of it.

Conscious of being the bride of the Lamb, she will have the affections proper to such a relationship; she will long for the coming of the Bridegroom to receive her to Himself. She will understand that she belongs to Him in heaven; and consequently will not mix herself up with the world, nor confound her expectation with the coming of Jesus to judge the world, while she believes it firmly.17 She knows that, when He appears, she will appear with Him in glory. Thus, separated from the world by the Spirit who is the power and earnest of this hope, she will seek to realize it as much as possible upon the earth " He that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

This is also the force of the teaching of Phil. 3, which, however, has an individual for its object. I quote it because I speak of the normal effect of this truth in the heart of the Christian. He who has learned it will have the conscience that the Church is one-can be only one. He will have the conscience that she belongs to Christ and can belong to none other. He will have the conscience that she ought to manifest this unity, and render a constant and practical testimony that she is His alone. The presence in her of the Holy Ghost, who gathers the members in one body, will be the power and life of this testimony. The path will be the path of faith; and the path of faith will be the path of sufferings, but they will be the sufferings of Christ for His body, that we may be glorified together.

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Notes and Jottings, Fragment: The Syrophenician Woman

The Syro-phoenician woman owns that she has not a title to anything; but she says there is love enough in God's heart to give to dogs. She was a dog in the presence of the One who had come to the dogs. All is out before God, and all is out in her conscience, too.

God does not say, Come to Me because you are a sinner; but, I come to you because you are a sinner.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 1, God's Grace and Man's Need

Matthew 15:1-28

HERE we have the wonderful contrast between the ways and actings of man's heart towards God, and the ways and actings of God's heart towards poor guilty man. These two things must be brought close the one to the other, and be shown as they rightly are. Men's hearts were not fully put to the test before the Lord Jesus came (John is: 22-24): " If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." It was all fully brought out then; and what man's heart was was plainly proved. When he saw God, he hated Him.

Although God was present in the midst of Israel, He was not openly revealed. He was hid within the veil, within which the high priest, shrouded in a cloud of incense, alone approached His holy throne. Neither did man's heart come up there to see the holiness of it; nor did man come down fully to man. It was not the full revelation of God. It was that which could leave man in a good deal of darkness, and God hid; and therefore that which could not clearly detect man's heart. Consequently He says, " If I had not come, they had not had sin ": not that they had not sinned; but that the Lord would not hold them finally guilty until He had manifested Himself in Him of whom He had spoken to Israel. But when God was made manifest, man hated Him. God had before revealed a great deal, but not Himself. He revealed much in the figures of the law, and which foreshadowed and veiled better things; and we find the use man made of it. I am not here speaking of the law, as trying man's conscience; though, in passing, we may notice that too, as bringing in-not sin, for that was there already-but transgression. The use God made of it was to prove man a sinner. It was used to make manifest-in fact, to create-transgression.

To turn for a moment to the use man made of the law, in contrast with God's purpose in it: God used it, as we have seen, that the offense might abound-that sin might appear exceeding sinful. Man set about to make himself righteous by the very thing by which God was proving him a sinner, and sin exceedingly sinful. This you are doing, if you are seeking to satisfy the demands of God's righteousness by your own ways. Man seeks to save himself by the righteousness of the law; but God's use was not that, for He never thought of saving any but by Jesus. When a child is forbidden by its parent, by an express law, and breaks the law, it not only makes manifest the evil disposition that is in its heart, but there is then positive disobedience, and the consciousness of sin, in that which the child does. It might have followed its inclination in many cases before, without consciousness of sin; but now not so: the conscience is affected and defiled; and by the law we are under condemnation and death.

To return to the figures and shadows of better things. Man took those very ceremonies and sacrifices, which were typical of that one sacrifice which sin had made necessary, and by them, their conscience nothing satisfied, tried to eke out their own righteousness; and they follow the same course now. We know that there were a great many sacrifices for sin under the law: for God has tried this way, that we might know its

incapacity of bringing us to Him. To employ similar means is mere superstition, and denial of Christ. Men first set about to be righteous by commands which they cannot fulfill; and then they seek to add ceremonies, to eke out a righteousness of their own. That is the sum of the religion of so many-making an attempt at keeping the law, and adding ceremonial observances thereto, and then attaching the name of Christianity to it, while all God's truth is shut out.

Further, after all, the conscience never will be satisfied; because there will be the dread of that day when God shall make manifest the secrets of the heart. The soul is not on the road to have a conscience at peace with God. Traveling on this road, the man will go on from one thing to another. He may add ceremony to ceremony, and tradition to tradition, but he has only got farther from God-he has only got more between God and his conscience, and no forgiveness after all. The conscience gets satisfied for a moment or two by man's dealing with it in this way; but there is no peace with God. When sin is brought into the presence of God's holiness, the conscience, if not despairing, gets hardened. See what a state those Jews were in who could go and buy Christ's blood for thirty pieces of silver, and yet have scruples of conscience as to where the price of blood should be put-refusing to put it into the treasury, because it was the price of blood! Anything will suit man, provided it is not his conscience in the presence of God. Where He is detecting the state of heart, and making it know complete forgiveness, so that it can be in His presence without sin, it is another thing. Nothing is more simple than this, glorious as is the grace that has wrought it; indeed, it is too simple for those who are not taught of God to love the truth. But, simple as it is, man's conscience is thus in the presence of God, and anything suits man rather than that.

Though God is infinitely high, He is very simple to man's wants, and to man's conscience. The washing the hands is not that which signifies, but that which comes from the heart. Here we have something more simple than all the intricacies of ceremony and tradition. God's light deals with realities; and God's purpose is, by the powerful light of His Spirit, to bring into the conscience of man all the different evils of his heart. When God's light shines in, that evil of which the conscience before took no notice-a vain thought or the like, that passed and was forgotten-is now made manifest. That which comes out of the heart is what defiles a man.

God is dealing with realities. He wants nothing from man. He is showing him what he is. He is bringing into man's conscience what is already in his heart. When God's light shines in, it detects what is in the heart, and thus there is a manifestation to a man's conscience of all that comes out of his heart. That light soon teaches him the vanity of washing his hands, and such things (v. 2-8). It tells him that to draw near to God with his mouth, and honor Him with his lips, while his heart is far from Him, is all in vain. It shows him that all mere ceremonial offerings and prayers are worse than useless. " This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." The light detects the evil of man's heart (v. 11-20): " Not that which goeth into the mouth, but that which cometh out of the mouth, defileth a man. For out of the mouth proceed evil thoughts, murders," etc. Thus God's light comes in and shows what comes out of the heart. Take the first index of what is there, when seen and expressed in the light-an idle word, perhaps (James 3). But farther, the Lord does not say, simply, You have done this or that, but He traces the evil to the root. He traces the conduct or the words

of man to some source-to what? to the heart! If there are idle and corrupt words, there is an idle and corrupt heart; and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. That is what man's nature is, what he is. So that, though men have the fairest conduct outwardly, God unmasks what is within, and shows the vanity of all their outward ceremonies as a means of eking out a righteousness of their own. He regards not the mere outward conduct of man, but measures the heart; and tracing all the evil to that, asks, Why is this? For out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts (v. 19), and there He closes with man. His purpose, in all these dealings and ways with man, is to show him what he is before God.

Then we turn to the other side of the picture, in which God's heart is brought out (in the case of the woman of Canaan) (v. 21-28). This woman had not the pride of human distinction in which the Jews gloried. She was neither a Jewess nor a Pharisee-quite the contrary; she belonged to a city which God had held up as a most reprobate city; Matt. 11:21. She was a Syro-Phoenician—Canaanite—of a race held in the Old Testament to be accursed (Gen. 5:25-27), whence nothing of repentance could be expected. The Lord comes into the coasts of Tire and Sidon, peopled by the descendants of Canaan (" cursed is Canaan "). That is where grace ever comes. And she was one of these outcasts in the fullest sense of the word. She had no privileges, no claims. Well, she recognizes Him here as the Lord, the Son of David, and salutes Him as such. As such she knew what mercies He had brought among the Jews; and she comes and asks for blessing. He does not answer her a word. He takes no notice of her whatever. His ear was closed to her request, at least so far as that He gave her no answer. A repentant Jew might have appealed to Him under this title. He was in the place of the promise which Messiah came to accomplish. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," v. 24. But for this there must be some claim to the promise. If you meet Christ on the ground of what He is as promised to Israel, you must have some fitness for the promise, some claim to it. If you are seeking by righteousness to get the help of grace, that is not my errand, says Christ; I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Why is there no answer? the heart may say; for she had recognized His lordship. She had, and could have no claim on or connection with Him on that ground; with the Son of David a Canaanite had nothing to do. The disciples were anxious to get rid of her by satisfying her demand, but He would not allow it; He holds to God's order. If she came to the Son of David to get help, she must come as a Jew. But here (v. 25) she gets a step farther, she ceases to address Him as the Son of David (the ground on which she supposed, giving Him the due honor, she might expect something), and her sense of want constrains her to cry out, " Lord, help."

Are there none here expecting that, because they entitle Christ aright, because they give Him His due title, and honor Him, He must answer them, and are astonished that He does not? The poor woman felt her sorrow; she wanted something, and there was the simple expression of her need; but, even then, He answers, " It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." My errand is from God; I do not go beyond that. Her owning and addressing Him as the Son of David was in the way of righteousness, which was true. Her need still makes her go forward, and she says, " Lord, help me! " But He answers, I am come to the children-to seek for fruit on the vine which God owns. You might think God would own righteous, well-conducted people, and that they might then take the fruits and blessings God attached to that. But you have no claim on that ground: you are sinners. As far as God's ways were revealed outwardly, the Jews were God's people. But she was outside everything-a dog. She is looked upon as a dog, and she now takes the place of a dog. What now, being a dog, could she hope for? Why not give up hope? Why, because she abandons all title and claim in herself, but the need which cast itself on pure bounty; and there was, she asserted, an overflowing abundance of grace, which could even give some supply to the dogs: " Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

There was bounty in the house of God for dogs themselves. Be it she was a dog; she made no pretense to take the children's place, and therefore it was no answer to her to call her that, because the Master could look beyond the children, and there was an overflowing supply of grace and fullness that did not leave even the dogs without provision (v. 27). And such was the poor woman's real state. She knew the Master of the house was infinitely rich. She knew God and Jesus ten thousand times better than the disciples around. She knew that there were bounty and plenty enough in the Master's house, and from that super-abounding supply of grace He could let the dogs eat. The vilest and the most hopeless could find food in the Master's house. The real understanding of God is according to our understanding of our total vileness and nothingness. Israel had never understood divine love as it was here exhibited to the dogs-fathomed by her need- fathomed by her wretchedness. She reached up to the source from whence even the children are fed-the fullness of the love of God Himself, which did not shut even dogs out from His bounty. She passed by all dispensation, even to what God Himself had done, seeing He had come down, not to hide His holiness, but to show what He really was; and when the sinner was brought to a confession of her own nothingness, He swept away everything between the sinner and Himself, as He did with the woman of Samaria.

She had arrived at what God was. He had done away with that which brought man a little nearer to Him, that is, ordinances, etc.; and He now comes down to show what He is, and what man is; and when man comes to his true and real standing, God is there to meet him in all His unlimited grace. Law was given by Moses, and was but a veil; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The full truth of what man's heart is is brought out by the revelation of God in Christ. Now there was not any one between God and man to veil His holiness or to conceal His love; not even any oft-repeated sacrifice; not even a Moses with a veil on his face; but man must deal with God Himself-with God in Christ. And here, you see, the Lord would not satisfy this poor woman on any other plea but on that of her own real character. He calls her really what she was, and she understood that there was in God's heart all that the Lord Jesus Christ had seen in it when He was in heaven, for He was here to show it. And, supposing she had been something more than a dog, she would not have needed so much grace. It is our vileness which brings out that wonderful grace which God gave. For, if she had been in less need, what would have been the consequence? Why, that there would have been less grace manifested in God.

And what is the great truth in Christianity that is brought out by all this? That the veil is rent from the top to the bottom; and that man, as he is, is in the presence of God- the man is there unveiled. What have we got in the cross? The first thing is, God dealing with man in His own presence? But how? Did He come to require anything? Nothing; how should He come and require it? In a certain sense He did require fruit from the vine, but there was none. What then did He come for? why did He come into a world full of sin? what did He seek there? He sought sinners! Did He come here ignorant of the extent of their sin? No, for He knew what was in man's heart full well before He came. He knew their sin well. He knew all that would come upon Him. But what stops the sinner? Not that he is to come to God- we see the Lord Jesus Christ come down to him in his sins. Is there anything between Him and the sinner? No, my friends-nothing; not even His disciples. They might quiet and get rid of importunity, but neither show God's holiness nor reveal His love. It was the prerogative of His own love to come and touch the sinner without being defiled by the sin: just as He did to the leper. The leper exclaimed, " If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The Lord puts forth His hand and touches Him, saying, " I will; be thou clean." And remember, if He came to show God's love to man in his sins, so that his heart might be won, and have confidence with God, He came to take away sin from man by taking it upon Himself.

The veil of the temple being rent from top to bottom, I see the holiness of God: but the very stroke which has thus unveiled the holiness of God has put away the sin that would have hindered my standing in the presence of that holiness. I see what God in His love has done for us in the Person of Christ. I see that the bruising of His Son has taken place. Here I get God Himself coming down to me, and I am enabled now to go back with Christ into the rest of His holiness. In the death of Christ I see the fearful vengeance of God against sin; and the rending of the veil, which displays God's holiness and love to man. And so the more the eye of God scrutinizes and searches me, the more it brings out the blessed truth, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. It shows the whiteness of the robe that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

If I hesitate to stand in His presence, I am putting in question the value of Christ's precious blood. You may say, I hope to be saved. You cannot hope that Christ will die for you! It cannot be a matter of hope whether Christ is to die! The way the heart reasons is, I am not hoping Christ will die for me, but I hope to get an interest in Him; I want a proof of His love. When you question this, you question whether Christ has become the friend of publicans and sinners; and, further, you question the power of His blood.

Suppose you had a title to demand some proof of His love, what could you demand more than what God has given? He has given His own Son. You could not ask so much as He has already given. But if I am seeking that God should tell me something else, I am seeking some other revelation than what He has given me. He rests my peace on believing the one He has given. The soul that has come to God knows that He is love, and it is to Himself we are come.

The very way in which I know God is through faith in His Son. I know His own love, that He thought of this, and did it for me. Why is it the soul does not get this wondrous simple peace, to be in His own presence without a cloud on His love? Because we are telling to God, and to our poor hearts, something short of this-that we are dogs. Grace is to the sinner, and to none other. If I can stand before God in my own righteousness, grace is not needed. He will bring down your hearts to your real contrition. There He can act in the fullness of His grace, according to the need of the heart that has discovered its need in His presence. He is manifesting that grace according to the value of the sacrifice, now that He is at the right hand of God. Not merely now that God can come to the sinner, but the cleansed sinner stands accepted in the presence of God-accepted in the Person of Jesus; and that nothing stands between us and God. The Lord give us only to own the fullness of His grace, and see the way in which we are debtors to Him, who was willing to suffer all things that He might present us spotless to God. Amen.

Miscellaneous 4, Private Conversation, Notes of

Q. Should it be, " Since ye then are risen with Christ "?

A. Yes.

Q. It does not mean any doubt, does it?

A. No; just as I should say to you, if you are a Scotchman, I hope you will honor your country.

Peter is afraid to walk on the water when he saw the storm, but had it been smooth he could not have walked any better.

To me it is a wonderful thing, far more wonderful than the glory, that the Father loves me as He loves Jesus. The Lord was constantly laboring to persuade the disciples,

that they were loved as He Himself was loved. The tribute money was an instance of this. People think it was tribute to Caesar it was the tribute for the temple. They ask Peter, Is your Master a good Jew? " Oh, yes," says Peter-he was always ready to say something, you know; but we find the Lord is beforehand with Peter. He asks, " Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute?" We are the children of the great king of the temple. Then He says, Take the fish that first comes up, you will find in it two didrachmi, that take and give unto them for me and for thee.

What amazing condescension, to put Peter along with Himself!

Q. Is chastening always on account of evil? A. No; it is often to prevent evil. Paul had a thorn in the flesh to prevent evil.

I feel sure christian life is not what it ought to be. It will be seen in the end there was nothing else worth living for but Christ.

The Lord takes care of people. The Lord's work goes on in spite of all; man's thoughts and ways cross each other, but the Lord goes through all.

Q. What does that mean, the devil disputing about the body of Moses, in Jude?

A. Well, I suppose it was lest it should prove an object of superstition to the Jews, like the brazen serpent. We do not find that in the word, it is just my mind about it. The Jews might have made pilgrimages to it. The Lord buried him, and " no man," &c.

It is impossible for a man to understand God; we are so constituted, that when we see things, we at once see that some one made it. Tell a man in the country that nobody made his wagon, he would look out an asylum for you. We know there is a cause for everything, we cannot understand anything to exist that was not made. It is impossible for us to know God, we are only finite, He is infinite. If I can know God, He is not God, and I am not a man.

Q. What does that mean, that the disciples should not go over the cities of Judah till the Son of man come?

A. They have not gone over them yet. They were prevented by judgment.

The destruction of Jerusalem, you know, came in.

Bible Treasury: Volume 9, Matthew 13:36-58, Notes on

Then the Lord enters the house; and there, speaking to the disciples alone, He enters more into the inner principles of the kingdom of which He speaks, communicating not the effect in the world, but the thoughts of God, the great result which would explain all in judgment and glory manifested on earth, and the real aim of what the Lord had done as well as the action of those who enter with intelligence into His ways.

First He explains the parable of the tares. We have already spoken of the chief features, but the Lord adds here what concerns the manifestation of the result in this world. In the parable we have left the wheat in the garner and the tares in bundles on the field, the wicked gathered by the angels or by the providence of God. But here appears on the scene the Son of man to remove every scandal from His kingdom (which He does), and He casts the wicked into a furnace of fire where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is the judgment executed. The servants were to let the tares grow. Then after the judgment the righteous shine in the kingdom like the sun—in effect like Jesus Himself. This is the result and this the divine explanation of what was a mystery before, for the judgment manifests what faith discerns. Remark that all that is revealed is in the world, first the kingdom before, then after, the judgment. The fact is stated that the corn is hidden; but nothing is said of the garner nor of the state of the corn when it is there.

In the parables which follow we have, as it has been said, the thoughts of God, the aim of the Lord in the kingdom, but still those thoughts, without speaking of a result in judgment, as we have seen in that of the mustard seed and that of the leaven. The first shows us the kingdom as the discovery of a treasure formerly unknown, hidden in a field; and he who had found it renounces all that he has to have it, and for this buys the field. This is what Christ did. All that He had as Messiah on earth He left to have the treasure of His people by taking the field where they were found, the world, to have them. They were hidden in this world; but Christ knew about them, taught of the Father as Man on the earth, and gave up all up to His life to have us. If in fact we renounce all to have Christ, nevertheless it is no question (as people too much forget) of an individual, but of the kingdom; and, further, we buy no field to have it.

The second case is a little different. The point is not a discovery. The merchant was in search of good pearls. He knew what a good pearl was, he could appreciate them, he wanted good ones. Now Christ has found in the church the object of His search, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. I do not think of the church as a body or system, but of its moral beauty. The merchant had taste for beauty in pearls, Christ for what was beautiful in the eyes of God, and, to have it, He left His Messianic glory and His life. What happiness to think that He satisfies His heart in us, and what perfection of beauty in God's eyes is the thing wrought out'. Zion is called the perfection of beauty, but there it was earthly; here it is heavenly according to the heart of God.

The last parable demands the most serious attention. For my part I do not doubt that it applies particularly to these days. The net of the gospel is cast into the sea of people and gathers fish of every sort. The effect of the gospel is not that all the fish enter into its meshes, but that a quantity of all sorts, good and bad, are gathered within the net. This is the result. Then those who drew the net sit down there, on the shore, and engage in what they have at heart, in the aim for which they have drawn the net—to get good fish; and they choose, separate them from the bad, and put them apart in vessels, rejecting the bad and leaving them there. It is the fishermen who do that, and occupy themselves with the good. That is to say, when Christianity has gathered, as it has done, a certain mass of people who are placed all together in the net of Christendom, at the end of the days the servants of Christ occupy themselves with the mass and gather the good into vessels. They are the servants of Christ who have intelligence and can distinguish them—know what they want. When the public government shall arrive, there will be the inverse. The angels, ministers of the providence and the government of God, take not the good but the wicked on the earth and cast them into the fire. The principle, I believe, applies always when the gospel in a district has gathered many persons: the aim of the Lord is to put His own together in companies apart. But the parable seems to speak directly of the result of the operation of the gospel in gathering many persons as having part in the Christian name; then, as a second operation, on the shore they sort them and engage in putting the good apart. The execution of judgment is another thing. In this parable as in the two preceding we find spiritual discernment with respect to the aim of God. In the second this characterizes the action of the merchant; in the first and the third the field is bought, the net filled, but in the two cases the treasure and the good fish are distinguished from what is taken outwardly and govern the action both of the merchant and of the fishermen.

It is to be remarked that four of these similitudes do not speak of judgment, but of the outward appearance or of the aim of God in the kingdom, and of the result whether in the world or with God. The great tree and the leaven—such is the result in the" world; the treasure and the pearl—such is what is acquired for God. In the first and the last we have the judgment; but the difference is sensible. In the first, naturally, we see the Lord begin the work; and He has done so, of course, without mixture of evil, the good corn being all good. The enemy makes a distinct work—cannot do otherwise. There is a harvest; but the word has produced individual plants: the mixture is found in the harvest. But there are two works distinct, and the two things remain such till the end, and the preparation for judgment is the action of God in the world, and He is occupied first with the wicked to prepare them for the judgment. Men do not act; they are forbidden to act. What is produced is the effect of the action of the Lord and of the enemy. The servants slept: that is all. Wheat and tares were always wheat and tares, fruit of a distinct work.

In the net the mixture was the result of the work of man, the kind of fish distinct, doubtless, but all gathered into the net by a single toil, and that on the part of men, the fishermen. This is not here a work of the enemy, but the imperfect work of man. It is only the fact however which is stated. The net is full, then drawn on shore, and those who have the intelligence of what is a good fish, those whose aim (and it is that of God) is to have good fish, sort them and put the good into vessels. The explanation, as previously, is the judgment which draws publicly what was true and understood spiritually before. But the angels occupy themselves only with the bad. In the first parable it is a question of rooting out of the world the bad, which was not allowed to the servants. In the last it is a question of putting the good together into vessels, which was their intelligent work. We must not forget that the last times were already come in the days of the apostle.

Bible Treasury: Volume 9, Matthew 13:1-35, Notes on

The chapter to which we are now come has been so often handled that I shall have no need to dwell much on the details. Only we shall need a general glance at the position it holds in the Gospel, and some words on the last parable.

We have seen the Lord pronounce on the Jewish people a judgment, which extends even to the last days, breaking, as come in flesh, all His relations with them. The heads of the people had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit and brought this judgment on the entire system, although the patience of God still sought all those who had ears to hear. The Lord sought no more fruit in His vineyard. There was only verjuice after all His pains. Such really was man; for Israel was only man placed under law with all the advantages God could lavish on him. In the trial to which man had been subjected, two things had been proved: that he could not attain to righteousness according to the law; and that he would not receive God come in grace, manifested in humanity to gain man and exercising a power to heal all the evils to which man had been subjected by sin.

He quits the house, a sign (I doubt not) of the immense change in the ways of God, and sits in a ship on the sea, and presents Himself as a sower, that is, as no more seeking fruit but carrying with Him in this world what was to produce it. The Lord goes no farther than the word of the kingdom. The verses 10-17 state the judgment of "the people according to the prophecy of Isaiah, of which the Lord in His patience had so long put off the accomplishment, and the separation of a remnant owned of the Lord—a remnant whose ears and eyes were opened by grace.

It is well to recall that there are seven parables: the first is not a similitude of the kingdom, the others are. Of these the first three present to us the form the kingdom took in the world: the last three, the thoughts of God in establishing in this manner the kingdom, and then the result of all at the end of the age. The first is occupied with individuals and the visible effect of the word. There is no question of the work of the Holy Spirit, which is found elsewhere doubtless; but here it is the exterior work of Christ in sowing, and in effect the consequence as far as manifested on the earth. We have just the word of the kingdom, but neither the kingdom nor the end of the age. Christ sows and there is the result in this world, in man on the earth: the seed produces fruit in one case out of four. In the first the seed does not penetrate at all: Satan takes it away as soon as it is sown. There is levity of heart, an indifference which receives nothing; the word is not understood, the heart is occupied with something else. However it is a word adapted to man and sown in his heart. In the second case, on the contrary, the heart is gained as to its feelings for a moment, but the conscience is not reached. There is no rest: the doctrine has been received for the joy that the message brings; and when the word brought sufferings instead of joy, the heart wished no more of it. There was not a true want. The Holy Spirit always produces wants. It was not as with the apostles: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" In the third case the world has choked the good seed. Alas! there is no need to explain it: we see it every day. However, it is a subtler thing: the world, business, has not the evil look of gross sin; but the word is choked and produces nothing.

The danger and the tendency of these things are found in the Christian: according to the measure the world exercises empire over him, his life suffers from it. Be it he is not dead but he sleeps, he does not understand spiritual things; he does not see or even enjoy them. Unhappy in the presence of spiritual Christians he enjoys not the things they enjoy, and suffers even from reproofs of his conscience. And if he goes with the world, he suffers also in reflecting on it, his conscience reproaching him with want of faithfulness; like a sick man who suffers, he is not dead: otherwise he would not suffer; but it is a sad means of knowing that life is there.

In the fourth case the word is understood; it penetrates, grows, and produces fruit in different degrees in different persons. In the first case it is said that the word was not understood, in this ease it is said that it was; in the other cases the point is not touched. In the first case it was seen that nothing had penetrated. In the two following there was the appearance of it, but there was nothing: the plant perished without fruit. In the last case the seed is developed in the interior of the heart and fruit is produced: precious effect according to the nature of what was sown, fruit for Him who had sown the seed and for him who had received it! There is no judgment, but the patent facts stated by the Lord in contrast with the vineyard and His fig-tree where He was seeking fruit, and in contrast also with the kingdom or state of things in the world, and their result in the judgment at the end.

The first of the following parables shows the effect of the sowing in the world up to the end of the age, but does not take in the execution of judgment: this is found, as well as the manifestation of glory, in the explanation made to the disciples in the house. It should be remarked that, in the parable of the sower, he is not named. It is the effect of the word in the heart of man, whoever may have sown. Here, on the contrary, we have a similitude of the kingdom, and he who sows takes the character (not of Christ—we have seen His work closed in His rejection, the Messiah seeking fruit was come to be received in Israel, but) of Son of man. He who sows is the Son of man, and the field is the world; but I anticipate.

We have always the general character of the work that the Lord wrought: He sowed; but not the personal result in the world. He has sown good seed in His field, but the responsibility of man is in question in the result produced; and whilst they slept, the enemy came and sowed tares. That did not hinder the good grain from being in the garner, but spoiled the whole of the crop in the field, and the evil which had been done was without remedy. It is forbidden the servants to root up the tares for fear of rooting up the good grain with them, precisely what happened when they would do so: the two were to grow together till the harvest. The kingdom of the heavens presented in this world a spoiled crop, fruit, on one side of the Lord's work, on the other of the enemy's work. Now in the parable we have only what happens in the kingdom before the manifestation of the King and the execution of judgment by Him. When He shall be manifested and the public judgment come, there will be no more parables, the mystery of God will be closed. In the parables we have mysteries, that which demands a revelation to know them; the execution of judgment is in itself the most striking revelation. In the parable we have then at the end in general the time of the harvest; and the tares are gathered first in bundles to burn them. The tares are there in bundles on the field of this world, and the good grain is hid in the Lord.

Afterward, before explaining the parable of the tares, the Lord gives two other similitudes of the kingdom; and remember that it is a question here of the kingdom. It is well to remark that the word for likeness is not the same in these parables and that of the tares. Here it is only the character the kingdom will take; it is “like” to, &c. In the parable of the tares, “it is become,” has been made, “like.” It is a character that it has taken in actual circumstances considering the rejection of the King.

It is worth while also to remark in these parables those in which the thing in itself is the subject of comparison, and those where it is the individual or those who form the essential part of the parable. The kingdom itself is like a little grain of mustard seed becoming a great tree, symbol in the Old Testament of a thing elevated in the world, of a political power. We know well that that is come—that the birds nestling in its branches signifies the protection it affords. (Cf. Dan. 4:12.) It is the public appearance of the kingdom system such as it has been for ages: here is no judgment.

Next comes the parable of the leaven. The likeness is the leaven. The woman is not a sower. It is not the Lord who sows what is designated as the good seed, it is not a great tree in the world. It is a doctrine which insinuates itself everywhere in certain limits, and forms the entire lump according to its own nature. The whole is leavened: it is Christendom. But in neither of these two parables do we arrive at judgment. It is the kingdom such as it is when the grain of mustard seed or the leaven has fully acted and produced its effect. It is true that leaven is always employed in an evil sense; yet I do not think this is the aim of the parable, but the doctrine which forms all in one sole lump where it penetrates. If it was purely the evil as evil, we should have had some exception. This is marked in the tares, but on another side. It is not the good that is sown, nor the Lord who sows; so that the notion of positive good is carefully avoided as well as of him who does so. The point is not the word of God but the fact of the general profession of Christians and in a form where no idea of good is presented; for certainly leaven is not, in the word, an image of good. No more is the parable the description of an individual. There is hardly need to discuss this point, because it is a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens, and in no case is an individual the kingdom of the heavens. Besides, the result in an individual is not that which is depicted here.

These then are the three descriptions of the kingdom on the earth during the absence of the King, such as the kingdom is presented to the eyes of all: a mixture of good and bad, the harvest thus spoiled as a whole; afterward a great human and political power on the earth; and a general profession of doctrine without question of the individual state of anyone whatever. Afterward the good corn is hid in the garner; and providence prepares the seed of the enemy to be burnt in binding them together in bundles on earth.

Letters 3, Great Tribulation; Christ Before Church Questions, The

That the saints are caught away before vengeance1 bursts upon professors is quite certain, because it is when Christ appears that He executes vengeance. (2 Thess. 1:8-10 and a multitude of passages.) Now when Christ appears, we appear with Him. (Col. 3:4.)
Matt. 13:41, 43 only proves that, when the wicked are judged, the righteous shine forth; but they had been previously gathered into the garner, in order to do so. In verse 49 the judgment severs the wicked from among the just. This is not the rapture. Judgment leaves the just where they were; one is taken and the other left, as in Matt. 24 In this last case the sphere is narrower, but the principle is the same. It is well

to remark that the explanation does not refer to the same event as the parable explained, but gives further particulars. This is a general rule of interpretation. The public visible judgment of God explains what has to be understood when it is not visible. Privilege is a matter of faith.

Or will the saints be suffered, except those fallen asleep, to go through all the tribulation, and then delivered and blessed, after the tares have been taken in hand, at the revelation of Christ? If so, how are Rev. 19:14 and Col. 3:4 to be explained?

Or will some of the saints be taken before the others, one class being abundantly, the other scarcely, saved; one receiving a reward, the other saved so as by fire; one consisting of those who will open to Him immediately, and the other of those whom that day will more or less take by surprise? See, too, Rev. 3:10. If so, how are 1 Cor. 15:51, Matt. 24:22, and generally those passages which declare that Christ will come with all His saints—how are such to be explained?')

As regards suffering and death for His name, it is a privilege compared with those left on earth; but it is only in this case for righteousness and the prophetic knowledge of the name of Jesus, for "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." They did not confess and know Him as Son of God, as the members of the church did. When forced by growing wickedness, through grace they would not deny divine hopes, and they will have their reward. They would have done better to have owned Him in peace, when not so forced; but God is wise and perfect in all things.

The tares are declared to be taken in hand before the wheat is gathered into the garner; but, as we have seen, when the tares are burnt, the wheat is already in the garner and then shines forth. As regards the unparalleled tribulation in Matt. 24, and the passages from which that is taken, it is exclusively Jewish. There is no passage to prove there is such a tribulation but those which prove it is Jewish. As to the more general tribulation mentioned in Rev. 3, it is only mentioned to declare that the saints shall be kept from that hour. Then, again, a countless multitude come out of the great tribulation in Rev. 7 Rev. 19:14 and Col. 3:4, of course, agree with and confirm all other scriptures on the subject. These only go, however, to prove distinctly that the saints are with Christ before He appears; but not how long they have been so.

`Some of the saints' is vague. It speaks as if they were one common category. The day will not take any by surprise that go to heaven. They will be gone before the day which comes at Christ's appearing. But there is a difference. The saints who have fallen asleep, and those belonging to the church alive, will be caught up to meet Christ in the air when He descends then from His Father's throne. But neither 1 Peter 4:17, 18 nor 1 Cor. 3, applies to this. One applies to laborers even in the apostle's days; the other to the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly. Those who are not manifested as members of Christ when He receives the church to Himself will either remain on earth as God's people during the millennium, or if killed, as we have seen, have part in the kingdom on high. 1 Cor. 15:51 applies, as is there seen, to the manifested members of the church of God. Matt. 24:22 has nothing to do with the matter. It is the sparing the Jewish saints or remnant, saving flesh, in the time of their peculiar trouble. When Christ appears, all the saints, conformed to His risen image, will appear with Him in glory. He will "be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe, in that day." He will also come attended with all His holy angels. It is evident that He can come with only those who are with Him. The people spared on earth, when He comes and judges, do not come with Him.

[1861.]

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 1, Parable of the Sower

Matt. 13

WE have here three reasons why the seed of God's testimony concerning Christ is unproductive, described in the character and circumstances; first, of those who hear by the wayside, the hard rock, and the beaten path in which Satan ever watches to catch away that which is sown in the heart. In this he is compared to the fowls of the air, which immediately devour the scattered seed that remains on the surface of the earth.

Dear friends, what do we learn from this? That there is nothing in the natural heart of man to afford root for divine truth. No, everything within us is entirely dissimilar to God, and therefore to everything that is like Him; and hence we must naturally hate and reject that testimony concerning Himself, which He has given in His word. The Word signifies Christ, through whom alone God is seen and known by sinful man. I say, dear friends, there is nothing whatever in the natural heart of man to receive God's revelation of Christ as a Savior; therefore he ever must and will reject it, till God Himself imparts that vivifying power through which alone Christ is seen and valued. Everything in our hearts (I now speak of what we are naturally) is unlike God, as much unlike Him as sin is to holiness; and therefore we cannot admit Christ into our hearts any more than the Jews could abide Him in the world.

Dear friends, I say, By nature we are nothing but sin. Man might consider us amiable, but everything that is not exactly like God He rejects and abhors; and, dear friends, when He looks into our hearts, what does He see there? Everything, I say, that is the very opposite to Himself. Can a revelation from Him, can anything of which He approves, be received for a while in this state? No, everything within us must dislike it, and therefore I say, until God Himself imparts power to receive Christ, our hearts will still remain the hard beaten path trodden by the devil, who will always destroy the seed which is there sown (as described in verse 19 of this chapter), " when any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." From this, dear friends, we learn that God alone can give the seed of the word root within us, which, as the power of God, Satan cannot destroy. Observe, it is true and real seed that perishes after it was sown, not a false testimony, not something like it, which yet differs from it. It is truth, God's testimony concerning Christ, that is received in the natural heart and mind; but unless God Himself give it root there, it lies like seed scattered on the surface of the earth, and is immediately caught away by Satan.

A second reason for the destruction of this seed is given us in the description of those who received it as on " stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and

because they had no root they withered away." Nothing whatever to afford root for it in the natural heart. Here the seed is not immediately destroyed by Satan, it dureth for a while. Natural feelings and dispositions give it influence: but observe, dear friends, it is nature still- that which is unlike God-what is entirely opposed to Him; and therefore the seed sown in such a heart cannot take root, and must wither away. Seed on stony ground might have some earth, grow, and produce a flower as beautiful as any that has root. But let a scorching sun or unfavorable weather affect it, and it will soon wither. Thus, dear friends, can the natural man receive the word by the exercise of his intellect, and have his natural affections so influenced by it as for a while to resemble those in whom the seed has a divine root.

I say, dear friends, the intellect and affections of the natural man, according to his particular disposition, whether more influenced by his understanding or feelings, may, for a while, be so moved by divine truth as to cause him to resemble those who receive the seed into good ground-no apparent difference between them. I speak of what they are in our sight. They rejoice in Christ; they profess to love Him, and are outwardly separated from the world; they present fruits so like those of God's planting, that I say to human observation there appears no difference between them, but they have no root, and soon wither away. The seed forthwith sprung up: why? Because it had no deepness of earth, no solemn views, no serious sense of their past alienation from God and present distance from fellowship with Him. God can, and in some does, enable His people to rejoice in Christ with exceeding great joy, when they first see and receive Him. But these instances are few, and usually not followed by such good fruit as is seen in those who receive the word with strong affections of heart and mind at a sense of their past transgressions, the dissimilarity of their past lives to everything that was like God, and therefore to everything that He liked, and at their present distance from that fellowship with God, to which they are admitted through Christ.

Those who receive the seed, as in stony places, know nothing of this; they have no apprehension of the glory of Christ; no fellowship with Him through the Spirit; no communion with God: the seed has no root whatever within them, and therefore, though it dureth for a while, it must and will wither away. Why? It is declared in verse 21 of this chapter, " When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-by he is offended." All is well with such as receive the word with joy, but have no root, while they live at ease in the world. They produce fruit as fair and promising as any that is seen in the church; but when they are exposed to worldly loss and persecution for their profession of Christ, when trials and afflictions and the cross meet them in their path, they are offended. These are the scorching sun which withers the seed and all its fruits. It has no root which could assimilate the heart and mind to the mind and will of God, and hence they must prefer all that nature loves and God hates, to a knowledge of Him through Christ, and all the glories of His kingdom. This seed was soon received, had no root, and when tribulation and persecution arose, soon perished. This, I say, dear friends, ever must and will be the case where the seed is not planted and rooted by divine power-a power entirely opposed to everything which is naturally within us. Unless God Himself give us deepness of earth, by leading us into a knowledge of what we are, and what He is, and an apprehension of the glory of Christ, the seed sown in our hearts will wither away; there are things which are too deep for the sun of the world to reach and affect; without them we cannot endure. In obeying Christ, He may require us to act as though we hated father, and mother, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and our own life also; and unless prepared for the sacrifice, He declares we cannot be His disciples. How can he be prepared for this, who loves nothing but sin and the present world? and therefore, dear friends, I again say, that unless God Himself plant and root the word of His truth within us by a power that assimilates us to Himself, we cannot endure or forsake all that He requires of us as followers of Christ, and as His children called to communion and fellowship with Himself.

We proceed to the third cause, why the seed is unfruitful. " And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them." What are these thorns? They are particularly described in Mark 4:19: " And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Observe, dear friends, the lusts of other things, not only the cares of this world, but the lusts of other things, are equally effectual in destroying it. What are these other things? " Other " is here contrasted with everything of which the word testifies: it signifies everything but the word, all that is not the word- to be plainer, all that is not Christ. Yes, dear friends, the word, when described as choked, signifies the testimony concerning Christ; but Christ Himself is the word presented to us in this testimony. To reveal Christ, to bring us into fellowship with Him, to form Him within us, is God's purpose when He plants in us the seed of divine truth; and therefore, dear friends, I again say, the lusts of other things signify anything and everything but Christ. No matter what it is, if the natural heart loves it, desires it, finds pleasure in it, it is a lust that chokes the seed.

" All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father." To human sight it may assume a very pleasing appearance, what is called amiable, or it may assume the form of lawful duties; but if these proceed from nature, if nature feels ease and satisfaction in them, they are not Christ, they are opposed to Him, and as certainly choke the seed and prevent any fruit from it, as the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the most evil dispositions which we condemn. Everything that is not the fruit of the Spirit is flesh. The Spirit reveals Christ, and forms Him in the heart, and therefore everything but Christ is among the lusts of the flesh. All but Christ are the lusts described in Gal. 5, in which it is said, " the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." Christ and nature are entirely contrary to each other, for nature is the flesh and its lusts, and it is declared in Rom. 8, " If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." I. again say, that what the natural man calls his lawful duties are among his lusts which choke the seed of the word; they proceed from nature, they serve and please it, a nature which is unlike God and Christ, and therefore what they must hate.

The Christian has lawful duties to perform, duties to parents and children, and other relations, and the Spirit of God will teach him to discover and fulfill them. These duties may then be called Christ, for they proceed from Christ living in him, are done in obedience to Him, and are the effects of His wisdom and power. I again say, everything but Christ is the thorns that choke the seed and render it unfruitful. It may assume the appearance of what is called amiable, or it might appear unamiable, it is seen in both forms, but I again say; everything within us and done by us which is not Christ, are the lusts of other things described in Mark 4; and are the thorns which choke the seed and prevent its fruitfulness, as much as any outward wickedness that is generally condemned. Here, dear friends, are the three reasons why the seed of the word is unfruitful: Satan's power; the natural enmity of our heart to God, to all that He loves and is like Him; and the influence of things seen and temporal-usually and justly described as the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We shall now notice the seed falling into good ground, in which it brings forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirtyfold. If all that is in the natural heart hates and rejects the word, why is it thus fruitful? Our Lord Himself informs us, as declared in the beginning of John 15, " I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman." Here, dear friends, is the reason why the seed has a root in any heart and produces fruit. Such is God's value and love for all the branches of the true vine, that He Himself condescends to be their husbandman, first,

to impart to them that power by which the seed has root and grows, and when it becomes a branch in Christ to purge it that it may bring forth more fruit. This power, as proceeding from Himself, is like God, and loves everything that He approves; hence it is the very opposite of all that is in the natural heart-it brings into fellowship with Christ. Christ lives in and through those who experience this power, for, as we read in 1 Cor. 6, " He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit "; and according to their fellowship with Christ, and their separation from everything that is not Him, they bring forth fruit, thirty, sixty, or an hundredfold.

That the vivifying power of the Father is engaged, when the seed takes root in the heart, is declared in two passages of Scripture, to which I shall direct your attention: James 1:18, " Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures "; and also in 1 Peter 1:23: " Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Here, you perceive that it is the creating vivifying power of God that provides a root in the heart of man through which the seed abides there. " Begotten," " born again "; a new birth by almighty power is needful, and effected in every heart where the seed has root. The resurrection life that is in Christ is imparted to all for whom He died. With Him they live again, arise, ascend, and sit in heavenly places; they are rooted and built up in Him; He dwelleth in their hearts; because He lives, they shall live also. The seed must remain in them, but He Himself declared, " Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

I again direct your attention to His words in John 15. " Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Dear brethren, though we have fellowship with Christ, and sit with Him in heavenly places, our earthly nature is still in a defiling world. The world and Satan act on this nature; these and its own sin (for it is still enmity to God and all that He loves) are continually drawing the believer to dispositions and objects that defile the conscience, hide from him the glory of Christ, and hinder the blessedness of fellowship with Him and communion with the Father. How is their influence prevented? The Father purges every branch in the true vine. While the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit acts against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other. The Spirit Himself directs the believer to everything opposed to the flesh, it fills him with communion and earnest desires to enjoy his fellowship with Christ and the Father: Satan, the world, and nature work against this. How is the flesh subdued that God's children may enjoy their precious liberty? Precisely in this way: the Father purgeth them that they may bring forth more fruit. He sends afflictions and trials, to increase their separation from the present world, and to weaken the sin that works in their members; then that word within them, which is Christ, has dominion, and by Him they bring forth more fruit. Thus does the Father purge every branch in the vine. He plows up their hearts to remove from them everything that prevents their fruitfulness; He suits the affliction to the particular need for it, that it might root out of their hearts the lust of other things which tends to choke the seed. The other things, as I have said, are all and everything which is not Christ. Everything but Christ prevents our fruitfulness, the least contact with the world (for who can touch pitch and not be deified?) everything nature desires and loves. These causes destroy not the seed where God has given it root, for it is the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever; but, dear friends, they are the reason why we bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty fold, instead of that hundredfold which affords such blessedness.

I say again, the Father purgeth every branch in the true vine, that it may bring forth more fruit. Dear friends, let us notice His love and condescension in this; just think what we are, and what He is; we, such guilty, weak, miserable sinners, and He so exalted and glorious, and yet He condescends to serve us! Yes, to serve us, for surely He does this when He undertakes and fulfills a service so important as purging us that we may bring forth more fruit. Such, I say, is His love for the vine and its branches, that He is their husbandman! Such are His purposes concerning all whom He gave to Christ, and are one in Him, that He is continually purging them from the influence of nature, and the world, and the power of Satan, who works through both; and again I notice His wonderful love and condescension in rendering them this service.

Dear friends, how are you affected by knowing that the Father will purge you, that you may bring forth more fruit? purge you from everything that nature loves?-from all that assimilates you to the world? Can you say that you desire this by whatever means He is pleased to use? Since Christ Himself was not of this world, when He chose entire dissimilarity to it, God cannot suffer His people to be assimilated to it; no, He will purge them to draw them altogether from it, and then will they bring forth more fruit. But, I say, how are your minds affected by this? Can you say that you desire to be thus purged; that you love to have your hearts plowed up, that God might remove from them everything that prevents you bringing forth fruit an hundredfold, everything that is not Christ and fellowship with Him? Are you pleased with every trial and affliction, however painful to nature, that subdues nature, draws you from the world, assimilates you to God and to Christ, and raises you to the glory and blessedness of fellowship with them? I inquire not, does nature love it? This cannot be, because the trial is sent to mortify and subdue nature, and, therefore, must be painful. It is, and must be, as described in Heb. 12 " Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." And observe the apostle's reasoning in the preceding verses, " If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

Dear friends, does this reasoning reconcile you to everything by which the Father purges you, that you might bring forth more fruit? I say, I am not inquiring, does nature love it? but I ask, does faith approve of it? does faith desire it? does the Spirit, who is opposed to all that opposes Christ, lead you to present your hearts unto God, that He might plow them up and purge them, ready and thankful for anything and everything by which He will prepare you to bring forth fruit an hundredfold? The Father is the husbandman who waits on you, that He might thus serve you. He plows, He waters, He purges every branch in Christ. Let us, I again say, admire and adore His love and condescension in this, and yield our hearts to Him with gratitude and submission, that we may experience His power in purging us, that we might bring forth more fruit.

To you who are strangers to this power, I address a few words. To you in whom the word of God has not yet taken root, I present Christ as.a Savior. Your sins are between you and the Father. Until these are removed, you cannot have any communion with Him. Christ can remove your sins, and present His blood in their place. Believe in Him, and He will do this; then you will have fellowship with Christ and communion with God, and bring forth fruit unto Him! The Lord direct your hearts to this! May He reveal Christ to all among us who may not yet know Him! The Lord bless His word to all who have heard it! The Lord bless it to all of us, and to His name be praise and glory. Amen.

Letters 2, Assembly Judgment Owned; Remedy in Mistaken Assembly Action; Bethesda and Principles; Manifested Unity Maintained by Discipline; Basis of Union

My dear brother,

I have received your letter, but not the pamphlet, which I shall carefully read when I shall have the opportunity. In my former letter I could only speak of general principles, as I had not the correspondence. I can still only refer to' the contents of your letter, as I have not the pamphlet, which is not so easily forwarded as a letter. But your letter itself involves so many important principles that I answer in certain respects, though I have not the correspondence. I must avow to you that it does not furnish me much hope of any issue. I am sometimes surprised at the little apprehension brethren have of the bearing of their acts. You ask, Is it a bond of discipline that holds the body together? I answer, in practice undoubtedly. The unity of the body is in itself immutable. It is divinely maintained and forever. But the manifested unity of the body here below is maintained by discipline, and cannot be without, though in secret it be God's power which does so by its efficacious working. What has created Nationalism, that is, the dispersion of saints in a crowd of worldly professors, but the absence of discipline-of maintaining by it the sanctity of the Lord's table? But, to come more directly to the shape in which this question applies to you; suppose you let in deliberately the Mormons, how can other assemblies walk with you? Are you to impose the reception of wickedness on all the church of God? Suppose you deliberately admit fornicators, are we to continue in unity? You will say, You have no right to suppose such things. I have a perfect right to judge a principle by plain strong cases, but I have chosen one here which has been publicly insisted on by a meeting standing on the principle you have adopted. Suppose you receive blasphemers and heretics, are we to remain united with you?

It is anxiously insisted on, in a tract published by Yapp, that no assembly can be defiled by receiving evil, but only the individuals who accept it. But your letters, as does that tract, make independent churches, each acting for itself. If this be the case, the unity which constituted the whole being of the brethren is wholly given up; that for which I left the Establishment is wholly gone. All this I reject wholly and absolutely. The circumstances I do not pretend to know, for I was in America; but if I have rightly gathered them,... you have judged the conduct of brethren in L. without having heard what they have to say. I understood the breach arose between you and—by reason of your reception of -. With the main facts of his case I am acquainted, for I took part in what passed. And now allow me to put the case as it stands as to him; I put it merely as a principle. He (or anyone else) is rejected in L. The assembly in L. have weighed (and I with them) the case, and count him either as excommunicated or in schism. I put the two cases, for I only speak of the principle. I take part in this act, and hold him to be outside the church of God on earth, being outside (in either case) what represents it in L. I am bound by scripture to count him so. I come to -: there he breaks bread, and is-in what? Not in the church of God on earth, for he is out of it in L., and there are not two churches on earth, cannot be, so as to be in one and out of another. How can I refuse to eat with him in L., and break bread with him in -, have one conscience for L. and another for -; believe the Spirit judges one way at L., another way at -? It is confusion and disorder...

But your letter apprises me that you have already taken the ground of neutrality; but neutrality between Christ and evil is worse than anything. "He that is not for me is against me," says Christ. The evil at B. is the most unprincipled admission of blasphemers against Christ, the coldest contempt of Him I ever came across. All their efforts to excuse and hide it only make the matter worse. All who do not abhor the whole system and all connection with it are entangled and defiled. It is, I am satisfied, a mere net of Satan (though many Christians may be entangled in it). Every question of churches and of unity disappears before the question of B. It is a question of Christ. Faith governed my path as to it, but I have seen its fruits in America, the West Indies, France, Switzerland, and, in a measure, in India. I have seen it the spring and support everywhere of unprincipledness and evil, and all who were under its influence turned from uprightness and truth. I have found persons unknown to each other, and strangers to our conflicts in England, unite in testimony that they could get nothing honest from those who were connected with it, or who did not openly reject it all. Wherever the difficulty has been, persons going on badly, and in the flesh, were induced to fall in with it or follow in the line on which you have entered.

But before I go further on this point, allow me to recur to your letter. You say, Your arguments are without force if the acts of the L. brethren are not in accordance with the Lord's will; they could not in that case be by His authority; and this it is which has been the question with us. Who is the judge of whether these acts were so or not? This only means that you at consider yourselves competent to judge the brethren in L., though you were not there to know what passed, nor, allow me to think, have not in any way been fully informed of what took place. You must forgive me if I think this somewhat questionable. You will say, Are our consciences to be bound by the action of the brethren in L.? I answer, prima' facie, certainly, or there can be and is no common action. I admit remonstrances-and if it comes to an absolute necessity through deliberate wrong-breaking with a gathering, but slighting the judgment of another body in ordinary cases is denying its being competent to decide for Christ and with Christ, and asserting your own competency to judge it without being acquainted with what passed. You say, We have our own responsibilities to the Lord; others cannot measure them. What are you doing as to L.? You have set aside the judgment of L. as null and naught before the Lord. You do not say the individuals have not the Spirit, but you have rejected their corporate action. How can the two bodies get on together? You receive a person because he is in communion in L., that is, you own the body as a competent witness of Christ's mind, without saying it is infallible. You own the body, its acts; you wish to be in communion with it; you must then recognize its' other acts. I recognize the full liberty in you, as having also the Spirit as a part of Christ's body, led to act by it, in remonstrating or enlightening, but not to disown it on your own authority, and then to pretend to own it still, and speak of being in communion with it.

But what you say as to Bethesda, though only, as I have said, what I expected, shews your position far more clearly. You must not deceive yourselves, dear brother; where Christ is in question there is no middle ground. You have separated yourselves from the brethren in the course you have taken; you think yourselves wiser than they. I have seen these pretensions elsewhere: I know their result. It is in vain to say you do not. If you did not, you would not act differently from them. You cannot remain alone, though you have really taken the position of an independent church. But the question is largely before the saints now, Is union founded on truth or not? The scripture tells me it is. You have abandoned that ground with the pretension to keep it better than others. You are not the first. I do not trust you to do so. You have given up your testimony against evil, but pretend to keep it out. I do not trust your pretension to do so. Here I must speak plainly, because it is not brethren but Christ who is in question. I see the worst and most ruinous effects springing up daily from what I judged in principle sixteen years ago. In this path you will soon be the active supporters of indifference to Christ's glory, and covering and excusing the dishonor done to His name. I can easily suppose you will not believe me in this. I only answer, if you continue in it you shall see. I can only say I have seen enough to be content to be burned, with God's grace, rather than enter into it. I am quite aware too these will count what I say as to B. a

spirit of party and so forth.

I let them say it; the Lord will judge all that, but I know for myself what I say, and why I say it...

I regret and mourn that you should think it a human rule to break with those who receive and countenance blasphemers, and seek to hush and cover it all up. To me what you call a human rule is the first obligation which rests on me as a Christian. Wisdom in discipline all may call in question; fidelity to Christ is at the root of all our conduct. Your letter produces the effect in me of your having become an independent church—so called. Of course I have no such principles, but what you say as to B. is the first step, and in fact, save God's gracious hand, the whole way to the coldest contempt of Christ I ever came across.... God will judge who has been faithful to Him,- or those it condemns. Where that road leads' I have no doubt. Satan is making a great effort at present to shake brethren as to these points, but this only makes me more firm.

Your affectionate brother in Christ.]

Pau,

February 19th, 1864.

Letters 1, Jewish Computation of Three Days and Three Nights

I rejoiced to hear through Mrs.——-that God had encouraged you still.... Often patience finds its issue in blessing if a door is open, many adversaries are a reason for continuing long in a place.

As to the "three days and three nights;" it is the regular way of Jewish computation. Even in years, if a king began to reign at the end of the year, the whole year was counted to him; so if one had been a part of the same, to him too, so that this has to be taken into account in chronology. So the same period is called six days after and eight days, according to the method of computing; rising on the first day morning it was the third day, beginning at six in the evening—the whole of Saturday, and from the afternoon of Friday. It is evident that the computation is a regular one, and no mistake, for it is given with open eyes as the fulfillment of what had been said: they had no idea it was not a fulfillment.... Peace be with you, and blessing.

Ever, dear brother,

Affectionately yours in the Lord.

1863.

Letters 3, Kingdom as Presented in the Gospels; the Dispensations of Law and the Kingdom; Matthew and Luke Contrasted, The

It is important to pay attention to the place where1 these passages are found in the gospels. In Matthew, chapter 11 marks the transition from the presentation of Christ to the nation, the Gentiles being excluded. What is found in chapter 10 speaks of this presentation until the return of the Son of man, and the new order of things which took place in consequence of the rejection of Christ. Verses 20-30 of chapter 11 present this change in the most striking manner. The Savior upbraids the cities where He had labored, for their deplorable unbelief, and submits to the will of God in this dispensation. This submission opens for His heart the enigma of that grace which appears in all its simplicity, and in all its power. It is a question of knowing the Father, and the Son alone can reveal Him; but He invites "all that labor and are heavy laden" to come to Him, and He will give them rest. His Person, and not Israel, is the center of grace and of the work of grace. He alone reveals the Father. The judgment of Israel is developed in chapter 12, and the mysteries of the kingdom are brought out in chapter 13. On the occasion of this transition we see the testimony of John and that of Jesus equally rejected.

This transition is, if possible, still more clearly marked in Luke at the end of chapter 13. The rupture between Jehovah and Jerusalem is complete: the house which belonged to the children of Jerusalem, once the "house of God," is abandoned, and they will not see the Lord until Psa. 118 is accomplished in their repentance. Then in chapter 14., the change in the ways of God is clearly shown, and the sphere of the activity of His grace is no longer the now rejected Israel, but the whole world, after having gathered in the poor of the flock of His people. (Vers. 16-24.) Then the ways of God in sovereign grace towards man—towards sinners—are brought out in that treasury of grace and love, which is found in chapter 15; and in chapter 16, the Lord shows the use that man ought to make of that which he possesses according to nature, being now that which had been particularly proved in Israel—a steward who was dismissed. He should make use of it in grace, in view of the future; instead of enjoying it as a thing possessed in this world. He should think of eternal habitations. It is here that the passage relative to the kingdom and to John the Baptist is found. His mission was the pivot of the change. In this point of view the mission of Christ on the earth—His ministry—was but the complement of that of John the Baptist. Compare Matt. 4:17; 3:2. Only the latter sung the doleful dirge of judgment, and the former the joyful song of hope and of grace, just as our chapter explains it to us.

In the passages which occupy us, Matthew speaks as thinking of Israel; Luke, as thinking of all men.

Two great systems of God with respect to the earth are found included in His counsels, and revealed in the word. One depended on the faithfulness of man to the responsibility which weighed upon him, the other on the active power of God. These are the dispensations of the law and of the kingdom. But there was a moment of transition, when the kingdom was preached, and preached in the midst of Israel by John the Baptist and by Christ, without its having been established in power. The people were put to a moral test as to their use of the right of

entering in. For the rest, the Prophets and the Psalms had indeed announced beforehand the character of those who were to have a part in the blessings of the kingdom. See Psa. 15; 24; 37, and many others; Isa. 48:22; 51; 57:21; 66:2, and a multitude of other passages. The sermon on the mount has put a seal to this testimony by giving it actuality. Now the preaching of the kingdom had for its effect to separate the remnant (namely, those who had ears to hear) from the evil and hypocrisy which reigned in the midst of the people, to prepare them for the entrance of the kingdom, if it had been established in power; and in fact, Christ being rejected, that they might become the nucleus of the assembly which, according to the counsels of God, was about to be revealed. Then the kingdom took the character of sowing and other similar forms, and not that of the kingdom of a king in power, and it continued to be preached as about to come; although the salvation and the glory of the church were to occupy, from the coming down of the Holy Spirit, the principal place in the doctrine of which the Spirit is the source.

It was therefore at the moment when the relationships of Israel with God by means of the Messiah had become impossible, and when the relationships founded on the law, and maintained by the testimony of the prophets, were drawing to an end, through the publication of the kingdom ready to be established and, in a certain sense, present in the person of the King—it was at that moment that the Lord pronounced these words. Now the first thing that they state is, that "the law and the prophets were until John." Israel was placed by God on that footing until John's ministry. They had but to observe the law, and to rejoice in the hope given by the prophets, and all was well. This was no longer the case after John. The kingdom was not established; if it had been, the power of God would have settled everything. Order and peace would have reigned; the remnant would have been blessed in the kingdom where the King would have reigned in righteousness. But it was not so; it was preached, and preached by prophets—and by those who were more than prophets—and by prophets who were reviled and rejected, and for whom the wilderness and death were an abode or a reward. The hypocritical nation, a generation of vipers, would have nothing of it. It was only the energy of faith, going through sufferings, which could seize on it. Satan and the heads of the nation would do all they could to prevent people from entering, and even soil their hands with the blood of the righteous. Those who preached the kingdom suffered, and those who entered it were to have their portion with them. The kingdom was not being established in power; the King did not reign; He was preached. It was only by violence that one forced one's way into it. It was the violent ones, those who were not stopped by obstacles and opposition, but who opened to themselves a way through all, these alone it was who were securing a place for themselves.

There is only this difference between Matthew and Luke, that Matthew speaks exclusively of the character of those who seize on the kingdom, and the position of the latter, and does not therefore go beyond the application of these thoughts to the Jewish people. Luke had formally spoken of the highways and hedges, and had by his expressions opened the door to the Gentiles without formally pointing to them as the " whomsoever," so often quoted by Paul. "Every one," he says, "forces his way into it." Since it was a matter of preaching and of faith, the Gentile who would listen to the preaching and have that faith would enter in, like any other. Nevertheless, he only opens the door by a principle, according to the doctrine of that gospel from chapter 4. The parable which follows these verses in Luke goes farther. It decidedly opens heaven, and completely overturns the Jewish system, which made earthly blessings to be a proof of God's favor.

Letters 3, Nature of Christ; Separation of Plymouth; Appreciation of the Word; H. Craik; Wealth, The Danger of Discussion on the

I am at last come to England, and with the hope, the Lord willing, of working there a while, exceedingly happy in the thought that it is with the Lord's will.

My declaration at Rawstorne Street was, in general purport, that, without condemning or justifying any one, not having been here, nor even knowing what had been done, I began on my own definite ground of Christ, and the unity of the church of God; that I felt the need of being on the ground of, and occupied with Christ, and seeking the blessing of His church- not as undecided, but because the question was for me decided, and that, being on the Lord's ground, as I did not doubt I was, and a service to perform to Him, I could deal with each case individually as it arose, as His servant. I believe it relieved and set free many who were arrived there in need and desire, and this furnished the positive expression to their minds. I am very immovable on this ground, the Lord's strength helping me. I accepted the entire humiliation; and told them that I thought we should only have a blessing in proportion as we did. I believed I had failed but not in being decided, but in being so too little, or rather too late; so that I bowed, but that I believed the Lord now permitted me to resume my course-I believe with more blessing than ever, though different (less agreeable, perhaps, but more real and deeper). I feel very strongly indeed on the ground I am on, and that it is the Lord's, of and with Him, however poor an instrument I may be when there.

I have not entered into the discussions on Craik's doctrines. I dread dissecting, if I may venture so to speak, Christ; it is not the way to honor Him Very few will speak so as not to commit themselves; "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." We may know many precious things of Him which enable us to condemn error, but nice definitions of what He was, and how He was it, human language and human thoughts are not competent to, I judge. I do condemn many things I have heard said, but I have not examined into the details of the teaching objected to, having been out of the country. Most of the papers I have never read, nor have I an intention, unless for the need of some soul; that is the ground I go upon, each individual soul to whom my service applies, and I wait till the Lord brings things before me. I have seen and heard what I doubt not is very bad, and fear it is much worse. I have also looked at Bellett's paper, I see expressions liable to objection, but I have no doubt of his soundness of soul and doctrine as to Christ. I apprehend I judge what he says; but it says, I think, nothing; revelations of what Christ is, or unfolding of such, I accept-definitions, scarcely, for what is it that defines?

I had a letter from—which I answered. I do not think his conscience is adequately awake to the evil at Bethesda; but I have never thought that souls have been sufficiently individually dealt with. When one is on unquestioned ground with Christ Himself, one is able then to do so. That is the ground I take, and with God's help I shall not get off it. I act broadly as being right; we shall see whether God sanctions and justifies it. I hope to act in grace, being right.

I know nothing of how anybody has been dealt with anywhere; I am willingly ignorant of abroad: it is undesirable to meddle in the details of what you cannot be answerable for in principle, and are unable to set on any footing in which your conscience can act. I refer to your question as to Plymouth. I repeat, I begin and afresh on the broad ground of my service to Christ. If alone, I act alone; if with others, so much the happier for me. I apprehend things are opening out in a renewed and somewhat altered character of service in England -altered as to

form and machinery of work, I mean, but this is only beginning, but so it seems to me: what our need is, is spiritual energy and love to work. But God is, I believe, working to produce a new movement in work. Here they seem to me in a very gracious spirit, humble, and accepting the humiliation as of the Lord, and hence surely for good; and the meetings I have been at have been happy, serious, and godly, free too with a very godly freedom. I have been very happy at them. There is less dispersion than I supposed; I should think it had all done them a deal of good: indeed, the gracious Lord makes all things work together for good.

I close. I am working hard, having much study work, but happily; occupied somewhat with books in connection with attacks on scripture; it has at any rate enhanced it to my eyes. What a difference when you have found the universal mind of God in the word! In vain people reason-if kept by grace- there they are, blowing v ith their breath at a mountain to upset it; it remains just where it was, and the character of presumption looks like madness if it was not malice, and the total ignorance of what they are, and what the mountain is -the only thing proved; but the believer gets truth out of it, and the eternal power of the word is more clearly recognized. Peace be with you, dear brother...

Many doors were open in France, and blessing; only I felt my duty here, I should have been unwilling to leave; but I am at peace because I did. The Lord grant you to walk in love and grace towards others, serving Him, for the time is short....

Your affectionate brother.

London, July 25th, 1851.

Letters 2, Affections Supposing Relationship; Danger of Discussion on the Nature of Christ; the Place of Experience; the Person of the Lord; Humanity of Christ

Beloved brother -,

We must take care not to pretend to know all that concerns the union of humanity and divinity in the Person of the Lord. This union is inscrutable. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." Jesus grew in wisdom. What has made some Christians fall into such grave errors is, that they have wished to distinguish and explain the condition of Christ as man. We know that He was and that He is God; we know that He became man, and the witness to His true divinity is maintained, in that state of humiliation, by the inscrutability of the union. One may show that certain views detract from His glory, and from the truth of His Person; but I earnestly desire that brethren should not set to work to dogmatize as to His Person: they would assuredly fall into some error. I never saw any one do it without falling into some unintentional heresy. To show that an explanation is false, in order to preserve souls from the evil consequences of the error, and to pretend to explain the Person of the Lord, are two different things....

New York,

December 10th, 1874.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 2, Jesus the Sufferer

Matthew 26

I FEEL some difficulty in speaking of the subject before us here, not as to the doctrine itself but simply for the excellency of it; for where Christ is presented in His own perfectness all our thoughts are so inadequate. The excellency of the Lord so surpasses all our thoughts. He is sufficient to be the Father's delight: surely He ought to be ours. But it is of importance that our hearts should be occupied with Him, and this in His low estate. He is at the right hand of God now: we should look at Him in glory that we may be changed into the same image; but when we look to be the same mind as Christ, we must look at Him down here. Thus in Phil. 2, " let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus "-when was that? When He who being in the form of God in all the glory up there thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; then when He was a man, found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There are the two steps as it were as He is descending: first, when being in the form of God He came down to be a man; and then when He who so humbled Himself became obedient unto the death of the cross.

This is the way in which He came from the actual glory of God-came down: nothing stopped Him even then. But here He is before men. Putting away sin He was alone with God. It was all darkness: man had done his worst, and Satan. It was what the twenty-second Psalm brings before us when He speaks of the bulls of Bashan (v. 1-18). " But be not thou far from me "-it was an appeal to God in what I may call human trials; He was cast into that-all this wickedness; His rejection in His perfectness cast Him upon God; and then to find He was forsaken of God! There we get the efficacy of the sacrifice in putting away sin. But it is the traits of Christ's character in the path I desire to speak of.

If we come to the cross, we must come by our wants and sins; no one comes truly, unless he comes as a sinner whose sins brought him there. But when we pass through the rent veil into the presence of God in perfect peace through the efficacy of the work He accomplished, and look back at the cross by which we came, in contemplating it in a divine way we find that the cross then has in it a glory and excellency all its own, of which everything in God's ways is the result-even the new heavens and the new earth. God was perfectly glorified in it. It was the climax of good and evil: all was met there. We must come to the cross as sinners to find the good of it; but if we have found peace by it, coming into God's presence reconciled, it is everything we shall see forever. We never shall forget the Lamb that was slain. But still we can contemplate it in a divine way.

I get in the cross the perfectness of man's sin, positive enmity against God present in goodness. Nothing would do for man but to get rid of Him-" Him ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." " If I had not come and done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin," then they would have been justified in rejecting Him, " but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." There I get the extreme of man's wickedness: when God was presented in goodness, it only drew out his hatred. The power was present in Christ to meet all the effects of sin by His word: the manifestation of it drew out the enmity of man's heart against Him, and they crucified Him. There you get all that man is brought out in the presence of God. He had broken the law before; and now God had come in in perfect goodness and power (power that could remove all their distresses), but it was God's power; and they would not have it, they crucified Him. On the other hand we see there all the power of Satan: therefore it says, " Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out ": they were all led by him against Christ: " this is your hour and the power of darkness." He had overcome him in the temptation in the wilderness; it is said in Luke he departed from Him for a season. Now He says, " The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me ": he who had power over the earth (for Satan was really the prince of this world) had come back and succeeded in moving up the hatred of man's heart against Him.

But now see the absolute perfectness of the second Man" But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." I get in man (more than man) perfect love to the Father and perfect obedience, and when He had the dreadful cup to drink (mark the absolute need there was of it!) that perfect obedience and love to the Father made good in the very place where He stood as sin. On the other hand in the cross I find God's infinite love and grace abounding over sin: perfect love, giving His Son for us; and then at the same time perfect righteousness judging against sin, and God's majesty vindicated. " It became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." I see thus perfect evil in man and Satan, perfect good in man (but He was God), and perfect love in God, and righteousness in God against sin when it was met as such, all brought out in the cross; evil and good meeting there. And it is what has laid the immutable foundation in righteousness for all that will come in in goodness and blessing in the new heavens and new earth, resting not upon responsibility but upon the accomplishment of the work the value of which never can be known.

The more we think of the cross (we have come as sinners needing it, but as Christians, reconciled to God, we can sit down and contemplate it), we see it stands totally alone in the history of eternity. Divine glory, man's sin, Man's perfectness, Satan's evil, God's power and love and righteousness, all were brought out and met there. Accordingly it is the immutable foundation of man's blessing, and of everything that is good in heaven and earth. Then, when our souls are reconciled, we look at Him and learn of Him: " Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest." He sees that the world had given Him up: there was no rest upon earth. He searched with wonderful patience for a place of rest, but there was no such thing to be found. He knew it, and had tried it; the Son of man had not where to lay (not merely outwardly) His head, but to rest His heart; no more than Noah's dove found rest for the sole of her feet. " I looked for some man to take compassion, but there was none." Yet feeling this, it is just there He says, " Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke," etc., " and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I desire then that, while we rest in the blessed efficacy of the sacrifice, our thoughts should be formed by the blessed One-that is the practical secret of going through this world;

" He that eateth me shall live by me." No doubt the taste ought to grow continually in us. There are the two sides of Christian life; if it is to give courage, victory over the world, I look at His glory as in Phil. 3 There it is the energy that runs after to win Christ at the end, counting all else dross and dung. In the second chapter it is the other side, not the object, but His lowliness in coming down is set before us.

In Matthew He is specially the victim. All through in a wonderful way you get His entire submission, but along with that, what is most striking, the depths of His path of suffering. Thinking of the cup He says, " If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." In Luke we read of His sweating as it were great drops of blood; it is as a man there. But you find this extreme sense of what the terribleness of God's wrath was. In the measure in which He knew what it was to be holy, He felt what it was to be made sin before God. In the measure in which He knew the love of God, He felt what it was to be forsaken of God. His suffering was in that sense perfect, infinite, in that He was contemplating it with His Father. Looking at it with Him, He says, " If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." You find His soul going through this utter depth, so that He sweat as it were great drops of blood; but when He comes back to His disciples, there is not a trace of it. He speaks to them as graciously and tenderly, entering into their thoughts as if there was no cup at all to drink. " What! could ye not watch with me one hour? " It is wonderful to trace this, you will find it all through Christ's life, perfect sensibility to all that was around Him (except in the extreme case when He was forsaken of God), but always Himself-never governed by it though He felt it all perfectly. The instant He turns round to the disciples, He has nothing to do but manifest the greatest tenderness and kindness. You see it all through; even before Pontius Pilate He says nothing, He is as a lamb led to the slaughter; as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth; He was dumb unless kindness and good was to be done to another: then He is as if nothing was happening, perfect goodness, perfect sensibility to all. It is His perfect submission, His perfect sense of the dreadful thing He was just about to go through we see; yet, because He felt it entirely with His Father, He could turn round and be just as perfect as to it with His disciples.

Now they come to take Him. He looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters but found none. He is God over all, yet still and thoroughly a man. Yet, as another has said, He never asked them to pray for Him; but says, " Tarry ye here and watch with me." To me it is most precious to find thus, that He who was with God and was God made flesh, felt as a man in everything. When asking His disciples to watch with Him, He knew the world was against Him: He looked to those that He had been most with, that they should be with Him. But He must have nothing. He was tested and tried to the last degree of human suffering and sorrow, standing alone in this, praying in an agony and alone. Where were the people that were going to prison and death with Him? They were asleep, deceived; asleep in the presence of the glory of the kingdom on the mount, asleep in the garden! That shows what poor things we are-not sin exactly; but it shows what Christ was to have as His portion in this world; none to sympathize with Him. Mary of Bethany was the only one, but for the rest never one had sympathy with Him; never one that wanted it that He had not sympathy with. Moved by Judas they say, " To what purpose is this waste? " What kind of hearts had they? It is just there God gives testimony to Him. In John (chap. II) you have testimony borne to Him as Son of God in raising Lazarus. God would not allow Him to be rejected unless there was this testimony. Then Mary puts this ointment upon Him; and when all were against Him, the Greeks come up desiring to see Him; and the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." There is that care in which God secures a testimony to

Him; but I do not think you will ever find another instance of sympathy with the Lord's heart. How would you like that? It is dreadful! It was a dreadful world to Him. He was perfect and went through it. Here at the very moment that He asked them to watch with Him, they are asleep.

Then He goes all alone with His Father, going through it in spirit with Him. Now, that the answer to that cup might be fully drawn out, He cries, " If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt." It was not possible. " And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Now having been in this agony He comes back to His disciples and says to them in the gentlest way, " What! could ye not watch with me one hour? " What gentleness of grace-" watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." Now He is thinking only of them. Where is the cup? He had gone through it all with the Father, and therefore His heart is ready in service; even at that very moment He is ready for any service. If we in our little measure carried all our exercises, our little troubles, to God, to go fully through all with Him, our hearts would be all free and happy to turn round and care for others.

The depth of His misery He went through perfectly in His spirit with God; it was fully out with God: and for that reason being thus fully out, He could turn with perfect peace to say to others, " Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." It is the only place you get His sense of where He was-His saying, " Watch and pray." Everything that meets us is either a temptation or an occasion of obedience. It was to Him an occasion of perfect obedience: " The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it? " Everything you meet with is a case in which you serve Christ or do your own will, and this is entering into temptation. See how He speaks in grace to Peter: " The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Oh I know you love Me; your hearts are all right, but it is this poor weakness. What perfect grace! Counting on their hearts in one sense when the temptation was coming; and when they had totally failed, He thought of the danger to them and says as to it, " Watch and pray... the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak "; when the instant before His sweat was as it were great drops of blood. What perfect submission! What lowliness of heart! And therefore what perfection of service, of love to God and to others! Just what we should do. " He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest, behold the hour is at hand." You have no need to watch now; the time for it is over.

All through this is the character of Christ-He had gone through it with His Father. On the cross it is-as in all the rest-entire complete submission. He is a victim here, led as a lamb to the slaughter. Even with Judas-" he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss that same is he: hold him fast." It is terrible to think of Judas urging them to hold Him fast! In Judas you get lust of money; you see a progress of sin. He was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then Satan tempts him to betray Him, I do not doubt with the idea that He would get free. Then after supper Satan enters into him, and he was hardened against all natural feeling, for many a bad man would not betray his friend by a kiss. " And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master, and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus and took him."

Then we get simple submission on the part of Jesus, meek and lowly in heart. He might have had more than twelve legions of angels; " but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? " Mark what is most striking here: at this last wonderful moment when He was going to drink that cup of wrath, when the Word, the blessed Son of God as a man, was going into that which none of us can fathom, that there is nothing like in heaven or earth-to endure that which was due to sin-the Scriptures, the word that God had spoken, must be fulfilled. What a testimony of their being the expression of divine thoughts-of His Father's mind, even to the Lord Himself! And so they ought to be to us. When Satan came, he gets a text-" Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When Satan comes again, " It is written." Now at this last moment the Scriptures must be fulfilled. Scripture to Him sufficed as the expression of God's mind. He was in perfect infinite communion with the Father. Look at the gentle patience with which He speaks to the multitudes" I sat daily with you teaching in the temple and ye laid no hold on me."

In John we look at the divine side of it, " No man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." The time was come, " All this was done that the scriptures might be fulfilled." What a scene of obedience, of perfect submission to God's mind! The moment it comes to this point, " all the disciples forsook him and fled." He was to have no comforter. When He is brought to the chief priest, He answers nothing until the high priest adjures Him. If a soul sin and hear the voice of swearing, etc., is a witness whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. So He utters it then: " Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." On His own testimony they condemn Him. He was the truth, and was put to death for being the truth. It was the same way before Pilate, who asks, " Art thou a king? " Jesus answers, " Thou hast said." We have seen the perfectness of Christ with His Father in all the depths of that which He had to suffer; also His way-the same blessed way-before men. " It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him." In every circumstance He went through all that was most absolutely painful to man's heart, and at the same time was there the expression of divine goodness.

I will now just look at the same scenes as they are presented in John and Luke. In John it is the other side of these truths; it is all through the divine side. When they come out to meet Him, He asks, " Whom seek ye? " and they went backward and fell to the ground. Looking at it as a Man, He had only to walk away. It is the divine side of power, while we see His absolute submission as man: " therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down and power to take it again." He says the second time, " Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." He puts Himself freely forward, the divine Person giving Himself, and lets the disciples escape. There is no attachment to Himself manifest on their part; but He fills the gap, and they are safe. It is the same on the cross: there is no cry of " my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? " there; it is His divine perfectness above it all. " After this [having committed His mother to the disciple] Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." Then He said, " It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." When all that the Spirit of God had said would come was fulfilled and finished, He gave up His own spirit to His Father-it is the divine side of it all you see in John.

In Matthew we get the victim; He is the lamb going to the slaughter. But I must say a word on Luke.

In Luke we get the perfect blessedness of the Lord and His sufferings in Gethsemane more fully than anywhere else, but on the cross not one expression of sorrow; He is fulfilling Scripture. Just as in John we have seen the divine side, here I find Him still more distinctly brought out as a Man. " Being in an agony," in deep affliction of soul, He is cast as man on His Father-" he prayed more earnestly." So great was His confidence, perfect in His agony. It is there we find " his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," and an angel from heaven strengthening Him. So also in Luke you get Christ praying much more often than in the other Gospels, because the object is to present Him to us as Son of man. On the cross you do not get one expression of sorrow-He had gone through it perfectly (I speak of the cup). " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? " is not in Luke. The sorrow was there, it is true, but it is not that side. We get then the perfectness of Jesus who had gone through it all with His Father in the garden. And so entirely is He above it that at the close occur the words, " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this he expired." We have the blessed Lord thus presented in these various characters.

John gives a divine Person: " as soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground "; He could have gone away, but it was not for that He had come: " If ye seek me, let these go their way." You see divine power and the divine perfectness of love, not exercising the power, but putting Himself forward to stand in the gap that they might escape. And on the cross He gives up His own spirit. In Luke 1 find His own sorrow and suffering as man in Gethsemane, more than in the other Gospels: and on the cross above all the circumstances He commends His spirit to the Father. In Matthew He is the sheep going to the slaughter.

The more we look to follow the blessed Lord in His path here, the more our hearts are bound in right affections to Him. He stood alone, ever as a man down here perfectly alone; and there is nothing more trying. " All ye shall be offended because of me this night." Again He says, " Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone because the Father is with me "-nobody else! He looked for compassion, and got none; for some to watch with Him, and they fell asleep: to stand by Him, and they all forsook Him and fled. He is betrayed with a kiss. He felt it all: it was not an enemy, but thou, a man, my companion; " yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted which did eat of my bread has lifted up his heel against me." Follow Him all through: it puts down the pride of the heart; it sets us men very low, but it sets Him as man in a wonderful perfectness; not man in the glory, but a man going through everything that could test the heart in the purest possible way; a man tested in every possible way, bowing His head as a victim, feeling it so that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, going through it all as man so that our hearts might follow Him- going through every depth, and we poor creatures only standing by to look at Him. It is well if we are not asleep too! That is where it draws out the affections. It sifts the will. The will and affections never go together; will is self, affections rest necessarily in another. He is the perfect object-" therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." To see Him in the meekness of His path giving Himself for us, never turning Himself aside, perfect in going through all, just as quiet with Him as if nothing had happened. He suffered it so with God. We want our hearts to get right; we want our wills to be broken down; if we go and look at Christ as thus presented to us in Gethsemane, can we seek to satisfy the will now?

Thus I get what is outside myself as an object that sets my affections perfectly right, and that does not leave a possibility of my will working. Looking at One that is beyond me, I find One that does not leave the possibility of the working of my will, but that draws out the energy of the affections of my heart and sets my will aside. He could say, " Therefore doth my Father love me ": so blessed was it, so perfect was He in it, that it gave a cause to God to love Him. Only divine perfectness could give a cause for divine love. The heart knowing that He is now in glory gets filled. " I am the bread that came down from heaven," that we might abide in Him. " Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We are to be like Him in this character-He humbled Himself, He went always down till God took Him up. Are we content to follow Him? Looking at Him and seeing His perfectness, are we content to have all our affections filled with Christ, and no will at all? We are going to be with Him forever; and we can enjoy what He is in heaven, in which His perfect blessedness is before our hearts and has been tested by us. How far have our hearts tasted of that bread, and how far are we kept, our wills subdued and occupied with Christ? It is what God the Father delights in. There is the efficacy of His work as the foundation; but how far is Christ Himself the object of our souls' delight, dwelling on Him so that they are kept awake? There is nothing that forms the heart, breaking down the will in us, like the delight that we have in Christ in fellowship with the Father.

The Lord give us while resting in His precious blood to go and contemplate Him, feed upon Him and live by Him: " He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." See Him the lowly blessed patient One at God's right hand now, the One that God has given to keep our hearts right in the world of folly and pride. The Lord give us to live by Him.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 2, Come Unto Me

Matthew 11:25-30

THE Lord, though deeply and thoroughly sensible of Israel's rejection of Him, bows completely to the will and wisdom of God in it. (See Isa. 49.) " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." In this His blest supremacy was fully shown. " Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." The knowledge of God makes all necessarily good to us, for it comes from Him. It may be very contrary to our nature. To Jesus men's rejection of His message was of course painful. It threw Him on the sovereignty of God His Father whom He knew, in the fact that His Father had hid these things from the sages of the world, and revealed them to the despised and weak. He acknowledged the Father in the thing done, and in its suitableness to the whole order of God's dealings in such a world. That of course was all that the Son of God, or we taught of the Spirit, could desire; but it was in circumstances which required perfect submission of heart and will.

But this perfect submission of the Son gave rest, and brought His Person out to light. If He was thrown entirely on the Father, it was because He was Son, and because of His entire rejection in that character, in which, while perfect and showing who He was, He had not taken His glory, and would have taken but the earthly dominion. The secret was that this was but " a light thing." All things were delivered to Him of His Father, and by reason of the very glory of His Person, being Son of God, no man knew the Son but the Father. His service now was to reveal the Father in the prerogative of grace. For none knew the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. " Come unto

me," says this only patient witness of love-" Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Here I am, the rejected One, to whom in sure title all things are delivered of my Father; but One whose heart has bowed in all long-suffering of love, who has learned submission, who has felt what it is to be pained and scorned and outwardly to find no refuge but submission. Come to Me. Men may have rejected Me, but I am the Son, and none knows the Father but as I reveal Him. Whosoever is burdened and passes not on with this haughty world, whosoever labors and is heavy laden, here I exercise My love. " Come to me, and I will give you rest." I have learned how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. (Compare Isaiah 50 and the end of Rom. 8, with its full extent of blessing to us.)

It was the Lord's submission under such circumstances which brought the sense to His soul, and the revelation to others, of a much better portion than that of Messiah according to the law and the prophets. In regard to this, so to speak, He was rejected, and blessed be God for it! He had manifested patient gracious love to the nation, but they repented not even where His mighty works were done. The dispensation, although Messiah came in Person, ended in failure. " Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain." He had stretched out His hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people. When He came, there was no man. For His love He had hatred. Reproach broke His heart. His hopes for the people, the title that He had, the title of His own love, were cast aside. Still there were babes who saw what was hidden from the great. " So it seemed good in thy sight," was the hinge of the Lord's comfort. This was enough. But what follows on this rejection? " All things are delivered unto me of my Father "; a wider, fuller, and more real glory. Yet, high as He is, He bids all come and declares He will give them rest-the rest of the revealed Father's love.

There is none else to come to. All have proved faithless. Come to Me! Who could say this but the Son of God? Who could give rest to all that come but the Son, Jehovah Himself? But One will give rest freely and bountifully, the meek and lowly Son of God. He gives rest supreme, as one who knew what peace was in trouble as none ever did. He speaks the secret of it to others. " Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." It is not now " I will give." That He could do as Jehovah and God the Lord; that He would do. But the word here is, " ye shall find." I have learned the way. (" Lo! I come to do thy will, O God.") It is found in the path which Jesus has trodden. He alone trod it, or could tread it, perfectly in this world.

And yet it is not violent or laborious. In one sense it is easy, as the Lord says. Submit! Say, " Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Such is His yoke, and thus we learn of Him, who ascribed all to the Father, not to the circumstances. Hence He gave thanks to the Father always for all things, as we may and ought to do in His name. " It seemed good in thy sight." That was enough. It was perfect submission, and the Father beamed out in it. Its value hangs on the perfect knowledge of sonship. The whole is most blessed, and to be learned only in Christ. The infiniteness of the Son's divinity was kept up, in His humanity, and therefore apparent humiliation and present inferiority, by His absolute inscrutability therein thus specially and signally maintained; while His oneness with the Father was made known in His competency to reveal, and supremacy of will in revealing, the Father. Both hold their place most beautifully, maintaining the Person in the glory of communion with the Father, and the inscrutability of God thus manifested while the Father was revealed.

How wise, perfect, singularly divine, is Scripture! There is nothing at all like it. No wit of man could have framed such a sentence as that.

Letters 3, Gospel of the Kingdom, The

I allow myself to send a brief reply to your inquiry.1 Agreeing entirely with your view of the subject in general, there is, it seems to me, one mistake which embarrasses you in this interpretation. It is this: that these Gentiles are brought to the Lord under the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in a larger measure than the day of Pentecost. That comes after the full restoration and blessing of Israel. There is an action of the Holy Ghost more in the character of John Baptist, an Elias work in Israel; and, as regards the Gentiles, it is a regular part of the service of the remnant of the Jews called thereto of the Lord. This testimony is found as to Israel in Matt. 10 which to the end of verse 15 gives the three missions; from verse 16, or more generally, that which went on after the Lord's rejection, and to the end when the Son of man should come. This ground as to the Gentiles in chapter 24:14 closes the general instruction, verse 15 beginning the time of special tribulation.

It is not "our gospel" with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, but "this gospel of the kingdom" that was preached when John Baptist was there, and by the Lord Himself. Let it be remembered now that we have no date for the rapture of the church—that the dates begin with a week of Dan. 9, and half a week of great tribulation when the sacrifice is made to cease. But this does not affect the general testimony of Matt. 24 which may begin before the week, and be carried on among the Gentiles during the great tribulation at Jerusalem. Only the Church must be caught up, it seems, before the accomplishment of a renewed testimony of the kingdom apart from what has gathered the Church. The final previous testimony to the nations is found in Rev. 14:6. This takes away all date from the testimony to the nations, save the relative one that the Church is gone. But when we remember that all is done with accelerated rapidity in that day, a nation born in a day, a short work to be made on the earth, that before Zion travailed she brought forth, that for the elect's sake God has shortened the days, we may look for a more rapid accomplishment of this work of testimony among the Gentiles also. There is another mission in Isa. 66, but this is when the Lord has appeared in glory and judged all flesh, and it results in bringing up scattered Israel The dispensational value of the gospel of Matthew has not (I think) been adequately estimated by students of the word.

[1873.]

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