Philippians - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Letters 1, Switzerland, Work in

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A mouthful of English, and thoughts of the dear brethren, of whom I am almost obliged to deny myself the recollection, or I begin to hanker after them, and to be discontented with this part at least of the desert, for it is always this part that is disagreeable to us-but I check this as unbelief and murmuring, which really is not in my heart, against the Lord; for it was not against Moses that Israel murmured.

In truth, there is an evident march of blessing here, though I have been kept to the wheel most painfully excessively painful in its progress, in order that my joy might be in it and in the Lord, and not in myself.

The Spirit of the Lord has put many dear brethren in movement, out of their cramped position towards better things, two or three ministers among others. Two have given their demission, but all is in transition, though truly if feeble, yet real progress, so that it is difficult to speak of detail. There needs some one of a faith and energy that I have not, to act positively. I have served negatively in some measure, for Satan would have seized this moment of crisis by the means of Wesleyanism, and that as a system or generality, has not taken place. There are merely here and there a few Wesleyans, much less than I supposed. Probably, in the actual state of the church, it will make its proselytes, and those predisposed by their nature to a certain extent; but in general, it has failed, and though it has very much troubled by its want of integrity, and want of honest firmness of those who differed- for independence of conduct is comparatively unknown in these countries-it, when known, rather retrogrades than advances. The weak state of Christians and the existence of worldly Christianity and Nationalism always leave room for these energies, in which vast evil is mingled with some necessary good. God cannot leave them without the good, and the church is too corrupt to give the good pure, too enfeebled to separate it. The Lord will do His own work: the brethren who were on higher and simpler principles, were not, humanly speaking, of qualities calculated to spread and sanction it. The Lord works Himself What was in the eye of man steady and of influence, was opposed, but God chooses the weak things, to show that the truth and strength are His.

I, dear brother, am in a very critical position here, and desire much the prayers of the brethren for me for the Lord's glory. The brethren who labored among the Dissenters here, feared the Wesleyanism, and could not come to their defense, standing in the gap. While they feared almost the determination with which it was opposed, they were yet glad that the battle was fought; but when necessarily this conflict produced other effects, many Nationals came more or less out, and united. They feared again; for the conflict which had hindered in a measure the progress of Wesleyanism, had produced effects of which they felt afraid to judge, and yet more held aloof. In the meanwhile, the jealousy of the Nationals was natural enough; many many Dissenters in heart desire the union of God's children; others are excessively irritated, and hence, most of the others, or many at least, are timid as to committing themselves with their brethren who are opposed at Lausanne. Then there are now the old Dissenters, partly Wesleyans, among the women, though having protested as a body against it, some saying the pastor who introduced it, but who now denounces it, is their pastor, and some not-and in the meanwhile the principle of leaving their churches, placing the others in a dilemma how to recognize this body: meanwhile they look on. In one place the dissident body is dissolved, or consists of five discontented Wesleyans, and there is a meeting where all the Christians can, and mostly do, unite to break bread with one of the ministers, also whom I mentioned-very happy. At Vevey, Nationals, ex-nationals and Dissenters meet the last Monday of the month to break bread-very happy. It is a beginning. There, also, another National minister has left; a third has quitted elsewhere, but the Conseil d'Etat has begged him to wait awhile till they see what they have to do, which he does for the moment gratuitously-a faithful, upright man, but hitherto buried in scholastic learning, Fathers, &c., but I believe he makes progress out of this lore, and to him that hath shall more be given. Here the old Dissenters, and some who thought to seize the occasion to establish themselves, hate me cordially, at least, the leaders. You will understand by all this what has detained me here, though my judgment is, by more faith I might have got off sooner, for I am very weak in faith.

Adieu, dear brother. Pray all for me, that having done the will of God, I may also, when He sees good, see you in peace.... You will see from what I have said, it is difficult to give much account of what passes here-all is so in transition. There needs, I feel, some one more faithful a great deal than I; but yet I doubt sometimes if others of you would have borne with the inconsistencies with many true and precious principles which accompany this state of transition; perhaps you would have been thus more blessed in your fidelity than in thus bearing with what I have supported here in these things. The Lord turn all I trust to good. Again I say, pray for me. Salute cordially all the beloved brethren, whom I remember with all my heart in the Lord....

Yours, ever affectionately.

Lausanne,

January 11Th, 1841.

Letters 1, Coming of the Lord; Taking Part in Elections; the 1848 Revolution in France; the World and the Christian, The

Very Dear Brother,—I write a line in haste, having at heart the course of the brethren with regard to these elections which are about to take place. I found that the brothers at V. had scarcely reflected at all on the bearing of an act which was making them take part in the course of the world. Thanks be to God, from the moment when that was presented to them they saw the thing, and, I hope, clearly. This has led me to think that perhaps the brothers near you may not have reflected upon it either. It seems to me so simple that the Christian, not being at all of this world, but united to Him who died and rose again, has no business to mix himself up with the most declared activity of the world, by an

act which affirms his existence as belonging to the world, and his identification with the entire system which the Lord is about to judge; that I think the truth has only to be presented in order to be acknowledged by those who have understood their position; so much the more that these events1 place the world more manifestly (not more really) on its own ground, but more really near the great catastrophe which is about to fall upon those who rise up against God. Oh how my soul longs that His people should be separated to Him, and even with understanding of what is awaiting the world, and still more of what they ought continually to await themselves! May God give the grace to be faithful in bearing this testimony, and everywhere, according to the door that He will open, in season and out of season; for His own, so dear to Him, need it.

Events are hastening on, dear brother, and yet as to us we are waiting for but one, that our Beloved, our Savior should come. His coming becomes a resource, as it has long been a joy to us, and a reality still more precious, and more near. May we expect it continually; God alone knows the moment. The Christian takes cognizance of the events which are taking place, as a testimony to the one who understands; but his thought, his desire, his portion, is much more within the sanctuary than all that. But is it not true that this voting, as an act of identification with the world (in the very forms which it assumes in the last days), ought to be avoided as a snare by all Christians who understood the will of God and their position in Christ? Always true (I have been acting upon it for twenty years), it is doubly true now. May peace, grace and mercy be with you, dear brother, and be multiplied to you, and may the presence and the joy of the Lord be with all the brethren who surround you. Probably I shall set out immediately for England, but in the hope of returning. Salute affectionately all the brethren.

Your very affectionate.

I think that at the end of Phil. 3, the way in which we wait for Jesus Christ as Savior, is to deliver us finally from the whole course of this world, such as it is.

Montpellier,

March 24th, 1848.

Letters 2, Last Days, The

We have to remember that we are in the last days, and hold fast the truth in simplicity of heart, and trusting the Lord, and looking to Him; but 1 believe, if faithful, they are happy times. At any rate the rest is near, and soon we shall meet Him, and see Him as He is, and that will be worth all the trouble. In general the brethren are getting on happily here, and in a good spirit. There are restless ones, who seem formed to exercise one's patience; this is very useful, if it is there to be exercised, and not overcome. But patience must have its perfect work, and in due time we shall reap, if we faint not. How simple it is that God alone does any good; and now that the machine is out of order, few can come in with authority, and, when attempted, it only makes confusion. I do trust the brethren in the A., and all in France, will walk faithfully. The eyes of men are more on them everywhere than ever they were, and if this witness were to fail, I do not believe there could be any other as to the truth witnessed for until the Lord comes. He might set us aside, and raise up other witnesses to the same truths, but I have not a doubt that the truths are final and full ones for the saints.... Paul says, "I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ;" and, alas! he had to say to the Philippians, "All seek their own." He can awaken us to live more to Him: may He give this to us!

It is a blessed thing to serve Christ in the present course of service, though we have laid up all our happiness with Him for that day.

December, 1877.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Expository 6, Philippians 4:8: The Superiority of Christ Over Circumstances

IT is a great thing to have the spirit so free from everything else, as to be able to be thus occupied with " these things." It is not a healthy thing to be occupied with evil, though of course we must be sometimes.

In Num. 19, if anyone touched the unclean person, whoever had anything to do with it was unclean till even. You cannot have to say to evil, without getting, in a certain sense, away from God. It may not be like the man who had to be cleansed, and wait seven days; but the mind cannot touch sin without a certain removal from direct communion with God.

It may be necessary to go to a brother or sister who is in evil. I do not mean now temptation: there you get positive evil ' • but the man who touches is " unclean till even "-a kind of warning against having to say to it. One sees persons who like to pry into evil; but, if in the power of the Spirit, I am occupied with " these things," which are pure, lovely, etc. I may have to come down, and be occupied for a time, as a duty, with that which God hates.

The principle of Num. 19 remains the same. It was grace, and to restore communion. There a man was actually defiled. Sin is sin in God's sight, whatever way I have to do with it; and sin is hateful to God. Even if a man did not know, still he had to bring an offering. It was not a question of imputation here; the ashes of the red heifer were there, the testimony that the sin had all been consumed when the heifer was burned; but something had come in to destroy communion. The ashes put into the water gave the consciousness there was no imputation: that question was not raised; but the man could not go in to God for worship till he were clean. The very putting the ashes in gave the character that sin was judged for the saint, all done away; but then he may have been doing a thing that Christ had to die for. It is a question of holiness and my state, just because there is no imputation.

What he looks for here (Phil. 4) is, that their souls should be in the peaceful enjoyment of these things, what God likes and loves; and the God of peace should be with them. Now, when we meet in intercourse, are these the kind of things that occupy the mind? It may be mischievous talking-that will not do you any good; or it may be idleness, vanity-that is no good either; or it may be talking about people; but how far can God say, I can go there, for they are talking about things I like? " My heart is inditing a good matter, I will speak of the things I have made touching the king." If the heart is inditing a good matter, we get fellowship and communion; the heart is full, and it comes out.

It is a lovely picture in Luke 1; 2 a despised remnant nobody knew or cared about; yet there they were speaking of Christ.

Verse to. The apostle let slip something here-" now at the last." He thought it rather a long time coming, and then, to correct it, immediately adds, " but ye lacked opportunity." He let out that he had really been in need, and it had come at the last. It is beautiful to see the delicacy of intercourse in that way: we get it amongst ourselves. Like everything else, he just took it up for Christ. At Corinth, where they were rich, and fond of money, he would take nothing; but here he is very glad to have it.

But, going back to what was said about our intercourse when we come together, we find " these things " are not uppermost. There are two things: in the first place, if we are full of the Lord, it will come out; but if there is watchfulness, it will come in. It is just our ordinary intercourse I mean. I may have to go and speak about special things, but that is not the point here.

Paul was the expression of the power of divine grace in that which was committed to him. Here were Gentiles who had to learn everything, and he was sent in their way, the expression of divine life, that they might learn what it was: he could say, " Walk as ye have us for an example."

Truth came only " by Jesus Christ ": that which is " true " characterizes the whole thing. " He has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." " Whom I love in the truth." But it is remarkable what the apostle says in verse 12. It characterizes all the epistle. He is above circumstances, and experimentally he had found Christ sufficient in all things. He had been in hunger, cold, and nakedness, and found Him a wonderful source of content. It was not a general principle, but what he had actually learned; " I am instructed." It is more difficult to abound than to be abased. You are cast on God when you are abased; but when all is comfortable around, then is the tendency to be independent of Him. " I can do all things ": not I go on well, but the presence of positive power; not that I get into a better state, not that the circumstance is changed, or the state of my mind; but power has come in, and put, those things away which were pressing upon me. It is " all things " -you cannot get anything for which Christ is not sufficient as a present thing. If we have to die, He is sufficient for us; if we have to live, He is sufficient for us.

These are things to be learned, not known in a moment; but if he had not known what Christ was, he could not have said this. He says, I have learned that all through. It is true Christian experience.

We get the power of the Spirit in all the epistle. Here you have it shown in entire superiority over circumstances. It is not merely known, but " I have learned." Then it is Christ strengthening us, strength made perfect in weakness. That is its nature, the character and kind of strength. " My strength" is not made perfect in people who think they are strong. We must be brought down to nothing as to strength, in order to know where real strength is; that is what people are rather slow to learn.

You have this in 2 Cor. 12 Paul wanted to get rid of the thorn, But the Lord says, No, I must have you incapacitated: and then evidently it is My work and power, not yours. You get the two sides of Christian life in that chapter. One was, " I know a man in Christ "; the other, that Christ's power was known in him. When I come down here, I find myself made nothing of, and then it is Christ in me. You must have weakness: " When I am weak, then am I strong." We may know we can do nothing without Him; but it is a different thing when one comes to say, I can do nothing without Him.

In Col. 1 we get strengthened with all might... unto all patience, etc. Here he is speaking of his circumstances. But it is a very great thing, and one we are slow to learn, that without Him we can do nothing. We all know it as a truth- all Christians do. It is connected with abiding in Christ.

It is not actual service, though true of it; but you get that more in 2 Cor. 12 I do not feel the want of Him so much in joy; we do, but we do not so feel it.

Hence, often a Christian, after a great deal of joy-even spiritual joy, will get a trip. I must have all the armor on before I can take the sword.

" My God shall supply all." A very strong expression, which means a great deal. As I know Him, who has been through all these things, and know what He is to a person in every case. It is not " God," but " my God," the God I know, who taught me to abound, and to be hungry. It could not come down lower than that. I see my need, and He is rich. No matter what need I get into, He is sufficient for me. Paul was in a most trying position, not only kept a prisoner, but all his activity totally stopped-a terrible trial to Paul.

" His riches in glory " meet the need. As in Ephesians, when he speaks of all the thought and purposes of God, he speaks of the glory of His grace; when He speaks of my sins, it is the riches of His grace. All the dealings of God are according to what He is in glory, having taken us up in grace. It is all through Christ Jesus, whatever it is; it all comes down, and all goes up, through Christ.

It is a simple thing, but not simple for us-at least we are not simple enough for it. (See Psa. 23) Jehovah is my shepherd. In Psalm 30 he says, " I shall never be moved. Thou, Jehovah, by thy favor hast made my mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide thy face "-and where was this fine mountain then? But in Psa. 23 he cannot say, Jehovah is my shepherd, till he has been through all the power of evil. Not Jehovah has given me abundance of green pastures (though He does give them), but He is my shepherd, and then come the green pastures and still waters, but he is not looking at that only. " He restoreth my soul," if he had got into trouble. Then he goes on to death: " I will fear no evil "; Jehovah is the shepherd. If he meets enemies, Jehovah spreads a table for him in their presence, as Joshua did when they went into Canaan. Then he says, " He anointeth my head with oil." He reckoned on Jehovah, and learned to reckon through all the difficulties of the way. For His name's sake He leads in the paths of righteousness, and goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life; but he did not say that till he had been through all the power of evil. The point is, Jehovah is my shepherd, not, having good things.

When Christ says, " sufficient for thee," it is clear there was something He had to be sufficient for. We need strength made perfect in weakness. God hath chosen the weak things of the world, " that no flesh should glory in His presence." He pulls down all human competency. He makes vessels, it is true, but they are mere vessels. It is weakness here; not failure, but infirmity. What a blessed thing to have Him to go with us, to take care of us, to lift us up, and keep us up!

Restoring the soul is not necessarily after failure, but takes it in. " For his name's sake " He makes good what He is in all His dealings. If I set up to have any strength, that is not according to what He is; and He has to pull me down. He must make the vessel nothing, so that the work shall be His.

It is a great deal to keep self nothing in the heart; we know it is so; but still.... Even a heathen writer said, " You may drive nature out with a pitch-fork, but it will ever slip in." The thorn was not strength, but it made nothing of Paul, and Christ could act, because Paul was put down.

A person gets on, and the flesh takes subtler forms; but I ask the question, Am I just as happy if others are blessed in their service as if I am? All these things are so dreadfully subtle. There might be room for self-judgment if there was no blessing, and quite rightly; but am I content if I know I am doing His will, and there are no results? There is no standard but what becomes Christ and His revelation.

Self can come in everywhere. In 1 Cor. 14 it was the shutting out self to covet the best gifts. They were fond of tongues which made a show, and they were told to covet prophecy.

Anything can puff up the flesh; a man would rather be the best thief in the country than nobody at all! Self is so very subtle, that, unless in God's presence, we do not detect it.

Letters 2, Diligence in Business; Christ Being All; Unworldliness; the Path of His Will

Though my days go so quietly by that I have little to tell, and my work is one which gives little room for anything in the shape of news, I write a line to give some account of myself and keep up my intercourse with brethren. I am hard at work with the translation. I feel I have the Lord with me, and that I had His will in coming here, and that is always a great comfort—comfort in present service, and comfort as to that which elsewhere you have to leave to God. I know well we have all to leave to Him always and everywhere, and that He alone does all that is good; but the heart can do so when we are in the path of His will.

The question raised as to -, is the pressing one as to brethren now—Christ being all, and the spirit of the world getting in amongst brethren. I believe God is working; for particular difficulties, such as this, though they may be humbling, have ever been in the church. In speaking of—also, I speak only of the principle that has come up in connection with him, not at all personally. I dread the world for us all, and everything that would grieve the Spirit of God. God can continue to bless, though in others there may be what undermines: and I trust Him—whom else should we And His love and grace never fail. Were we alone in the world, His grace would be sufficient, and blessed be His name, perpetual company. I know all is of His grace, but I feel the things that are not seen daily nearer, and confidence in Christ suffices for the things through which we pass. I was noticing awhile back how perfect the words, "Rejoice in the Lord always"—there is the positive portion. "Be careful for nothing" then, as to all that is down here; and in laying our burdens on His throne and heart, it is peace—for He is not troubled and knows the end from the beginning—the peace of God keeps our hearts. What a sanctuary to have in going through!...

The Lord be with you and all His beloved people. I often think what joy to see them all exactly what Christ would have them, so that He too should be satisfied!

Pau,

1879.

Notes and Comments 2, Humiliation of Christ, The

THE humiliation of Christ opens out to my mind in a very full and blessed character. The essential being of Godhead cannot change, as is evident-the Absolute, as men speak- and whatever His humiliation, all the fullness of the Godhead (theotetos) dwelt in Him bodily. His emptying Himself (ekenose) applied to the morphe (form). He was in the status, condition of Godhead, of which, not to speak of outward glory, will and acting from His own will (though one with the Father, see John 5) was proper and essential. But the full purpose of His will in free devotedness, and always so, was to give up His own will, and this according to eternal counsels; Psalm 40.

It was not a lowly being, to whom it is evil to have a will of its own, who had none—that would have been nothing; nothingness was the place of nothingness. But He who in His essence could will, gives up His place, or condition as such, and says "Lo, I come to do thy will." It was a divine act, always so, but a divine act of kenosis (making empty). He was thus relative to the Father, not only as Son but as Servant-an immense truth! He gave up, not Godhead—that could not be—but the status and position of it, and came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

Man answered to this place according to the counsels and glory of God, as the angels, the obedient administrators of power, witnesses of a sustained creation, but he who had been made in God's image, and now fallen, was in the condition to be the sphere of the display of all God's moral glory, mercy, grace, righteousness, above all, love, for God is Love; in a word-redemption. Christ was a Man. And now, in the same perfectness, He takes no will, not even. of man, not even to eat when He was hungry-He lives by every word out of the mouth of God. He humbles Himself and is obedient even unto death, and that of the Cross-no resistance—no escape, though legions of angels would be ready at His call. He perseveres in submitting to all-a tested obedience, even to death. Not merely obedience in peace, as Adam innocent might, or an Angel (though doubtless they must feel the ruin) but tested by unvarying giving up of self and where evil was.

The Absolute in nature becomes Relative as a Servant in place—and "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father"—but this is revealed; and in this character exalted as Lord above all now. We adore Him as God; we see Him gone down under death as man, yet kenon (emptying) Himself, humbling Himself, laying down His own life what belonged to, what was divine all through. Now the center of all the sphere of display of the divine glory and of all in which it is displayed; but this is an outward consequence, Phil. 2 But the place of Man and Servant never given up-wondrous truth! Only He rules over all the sphere of His humiliation-heaven and earth are subjected to Him as Man while such subjection is called for- He reigns till all things are put under His feet.

But in His own personal place, in which He is in connection with us, or rather we with Him, He never gives up the serving place-He takes it now; John 13. In Luke 12, He takes it in glory, but in the heavenly blessedness connected with us—those His Father has given Him. And finally,

when the reigning and subjecting process is complete, and He gives up the kingdom whose power was needed for that, He takes the simple subject place as Man in the eternal blessedness of God—still " God over all, blessed forever more," One with the Father-but His place as the subject Man perfect, and we with Him. Wondrous thought! The Firstborn among many brethren, metochoi (companions), not, note, koinonoi (common equal sharers) we could not be that, compare Heb. 2:14, consequent on verse God—and no mediatorial kingdom and power—being all in all—His kenosis (emptying) is no more undone than His Godhead. He always was and is Son with the Father-was and is always God; and now is and ever will be Man kenosas heauton (who emptied Himself), it was, and so ever is, His own divine act; only He has a temporary kingdom according to eternal counsels in this character, a kingdom which He gives up. The apostle John enters largely into this; his Gospel is the expression of it, but it comes out elsewhere in connection with the names of God, Light and Love, both of them essential names of God, yet with some difference, for Light has something of quality in it belonging to a person—Love is more absolutely personal. God is purity and manifests all things. But we are light in the Lord; as partakers of the divine nature, we partake of this quality. In 2 Peter 1:4, we are theias koinonoi phuseos (partakers of divine nature), not us (of the), and it is by promise our own state. But we are not love, for Love is sovereign goodness—that we cannot be; we love as partaking of the divine nature too, but we cannot be sovereign goodness.

But in Christ's kenosis (emptying) of Himself; and the course of His humiliation unto death, we find this love exercised—it is divine love expressed-we have seen the Father in Him—love brought to need—love active; " Hereby know we love, because He laid down his life for us." So that the revelation of God, that in which His Being acts, according to what He is, was in this way kenosis and self humbling of Christ; only we add " He gave his only-begotten Son," when we speak of it historically in its external action. And Christ, thus the expression of Love, i.e., of God, in the world, God manifest in the flesh, was also necessarily Light in the world—purity, and showing what all was, but showing sovereign goodness to it when thus manifested.

Formally, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ-He was the love of God in the world, and light in it. The darkness comprehended it not. But it was in Man, and it became thus impartitive, the Word of life, “He that hath the Son hath life," they that received Him being born of God; and being cleansed, the Holy Ghost could dwell in them in order to power of realization. Thus the Apostle prays that they "may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith," not merely be life and righteousness, but dwell there in the power of the realization of faith—He who is the expression and revelation of love—that we may be rooted and grounded in it. We dwell in love and in God, or rather here He in us, and thus are at the center of the display of glory; the more external thing, and so far finite that it is in that which is created, but the display of God's glory in it, though not without love as its source and sustaining, for it is in redemption. Christ thus takes in all—first descended then ascended that He might fill all things—but then the Saints, and this is their wondrous place, are associated with Him personally here, and we "comprehend with all saints"; for they are indeed His metochoi, loved as He is loved, however personally infinitely above them.

Christ has taken this place in the same divine, perfect love, self being gone, that He might put us in the same place with Himself—whom the Father had given Him—and even now, His peace, His joy, the Father's words, the Father's love, and the glory given to them—gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God—to be with Him where He is; for in emptying Himself and becoming a Man, it was to associate us, the joint heirs in the same place, though ever Firstborn. Hence the Apostle adds "and to know the love of Christ"—not abstract here, "rooted and grounded in love," through His dwelling in our hearts, who is the divine fullness of this love—Himself; but now He has entered into the counsels of actual glory, length, depth, etc.—it is the love of Christ, the actual manifested, exercised love, yet still divine, " it passes knowledge," that we may be thus filled into all the fullness of God Himself, which indeed dwelt in Him bodily; compare 1 John 5:20.

Colossians does not enter on this ground, only touching it in "Christ in you, the hope of Glory.” It is blessed to see how the highest being of God is exercised in grace towards any poor sinner. It is there it is, though afterward perfected in us, see 1 John 4:12, 13. This has partly led us in this inquiry into the counter part, that “as he is, so are we," because—it is thus we enter into and understand it; " we are in him that is true, i.e., in his Son—he is the true God and eternal life."

But the gospel of John gives us large communications on this humiliation of Christ. His Godhead shines in every page of all the gospels, but John, as every one knows, in a peculiar way gives us the Person of Christ—the Word made flesh. Now I have remarked elsewhere the fact of the way in which He is everywhere One with the Father, yet receives all. But it is the direct expression of the truth we are studying-He is God, He is one with the Father, He is I Am. Everywhere He speaks to His Father on a divine footing of unity; " I have glorified thee, now glorify me." But He has taken the form of a Servant, never " now I will glorify Myself." "My Father is greater than I"; "The glory thou hast given me"-yet it was a glory He had—"with the Father before the world was," "Thou hast given him power over all flesh"—"I receive whoever comes, for I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." He finishes the work the Father gave Him to do—it is the Father that sent Him; so chapter 8: 26. But it is in this chapter the Lord says: "Before Abraham was, I am," which the Jews well understood.

In a word His path was "that the world may know I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." His divine nature and Godhead shine throughout, but He receives everything—is sent-and has taken the relative place of recipiency and subjection. John 5 has a peculiar character in this respect, and presented at first some difficulty to my mind. "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; so the Son quickeneth whom he will"; "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," as the Apostle notes, from the Jewish consciousness, making Himself equal with God. But in verse 19 he at once takes the place He is come into. "The Son can do nothing of himself (aph heautou) but what he seeth the Father do." "Whatsoever he doeth, these doeth the Son likewise," and quickening comes as part of this—"The Father loves the Son and shews him all." But He, though He acts with the same divine power as the Father, yet is shown all—does nothing aph heautou; and in verse 26 He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself, i.e., the Son in the form of a Servant down here, and given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is Son of Man. So that we know that it is in this humbled state that this applies.

Thus it becomes the clearest exposition of this unspeakable truth, the result of that, when in the form of God ekenose heauton—His own act—divine all through, at every moment. How true it remains "No man knows the Son but the Father"; but we adore Him. He is not ashamed to call us brethren, for now we are ez enos (of one).

But the point my mind rests on is, the kenosis of Himself; the rest is consequence, however blessed; Psa. 45:6, 7; Hebrews: 8, 9. Christ ekenose heauton, and took upon Hill; the form of a Servant. Our best delight will be to be hidden behind Him and see Him have all the glory. It is interesting to see that whatever depth the Person of the Lord may give to this, the blessing itself, which has its very character from its adaptation to our state, is enjoyed by the simplest faith, and the more simple the more it is enjoyed. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith is enjoyed by him in whom He dwells, not by him who can explain it, though it be true it must be enjoyed in order to be able to explain it.

But this humbling of Christ by Himself is divine love, and in exercise—we know God by it. It is Himself in activity, yet in giving Himself up in this unspeakable way. In the Father He remains in essential Godhead, in the Son one with Him in the exercise of it, coming down to serve, the object in which we know God and see the Father. God is objectively before us in the Spirit's power, operative power in us to be able to apprehend, and have the love shed abroad in our hearts so that we dwell in God and God in us.

Letters 3, Annihilation; Dealing With False Doctrine, Doctrine of

These cases of discipline are always difficult, and test the state of the assembly. I do not pretend to have much gift for them, and it depends on the spiritual discernment of those who deal with it. I have no doubt an annihilationist should be put away: it always really denies the atonement, responsibility, the immortality of the soul, and every just sense of sin. The main question is, Does he hold it now? I would say that dear -, whose devotedness I know, is apt to deal rapidly and harshly in discipline, yet I cannot think it an evil that the assembly has given thereby a plain testimony, that it will not accept those who hold such doctrine: but this testimony it has given, and I am very thankful for it. The question, whether he held it then, does not affect this one way or another. The only thing that affects my mind is the subtle infecting poison of these doctrines; and hence the getting assured that not only the open holding of the doctrine, but the infection of the doctrine, does not remain, for it chimes in with the flesh and human nature. But if he be perfectly clear now, the assembly did clear themselves, for which as to it I am very thankful; and I see no reason why he should not be received. It is a good sign that he justifies the assembly, but I may say, that we have no right to keep out God's children if they are sound in doctrine and godly in practice. The point is, Is he really clear, and does he judge the doctrine as evil, and really the denial [of what is] fundamental for souls; for, I repeat, if we have only animal-living souls, responsibility and atonement are gone. If God gave a dog eternal life he would not have to answer for what he had done, nor [need] a Savior either; and I never met one who had not lost atonement: even if Christians their minds had lost it, and I have had to say to plenty of them. Besides, if death is ceasing to exist, as they hold, Christ ceased to exist, and the foundations of faith are gone; and this was admitted to me by two of the most respectable of them at Boston. Does he, then, clearly judge the evil? Only seek [that there should not be] any breach of unity, for questions of discipline always tend to that. But our trust is, as you say, the Lord is above it all....

Kindest love to all the brethren. I am eighty if I live a few months, and I can hardly hope to see them—a sorrow to my spirit, but it is a going home to them as to me, and not an unwelcome one, though as long as He has work for me here, I am content to stay, and would rather have His will, whatever it be. I shall be always glad to hear from you and of all the brethren.

Affectionately yours in the Lord.

Dublin, June.

Letters 3, Abbott's Hill and Principles; Christ in Glory and Humiliation

You will have received much later news than I can send you how beloved Mr. Wigram is gone home, and since then tile trouble they have had in London. But God makes this, as all else, work together for good to those who love Him. With the details I have had little or nothing to do, being absent in France; with the root and ground of it everything.... The result is in God's hands, so that I go no further. I have long felt the state of things; and that the Lord will sift the brethren, or is doing so, cannot be doubted. What struck me was, not the evil, I see as much in the apostles' days, but powerlessness to meet the evil. I was most thankful to get the news of brethren in Australia, New Zealand, etc. God, I think, is working here in spite of all. There are conversions, and He is binding saints together where there was division and evil.... On the whole in England there is much to thank God for. We are not out of the place of patient waiting on the Lord, but the mass of evil which seemed insurmountable is wasting to its own real dimensions, and people's consciences, I trust, are awakening to God's presence, and realities; and when we are in God's presence all goes right. I have the Lord greatly with me in it all, though deeply tried. When people were tried with circumstances, I was comparatively at peace, had gone through it with the Lord.

I think I see that Christ is presented in glory as one who leads us on in energy, conforming us to what He is according to the glory; and that when the question is of nourishing the inward life, and the affections and character, it is the humbled Christ on whom we have to feed. This is partly the case in Phil. 2 and iii.: the former the inward state and character, Christ coming down; the latter, a glorified Christ, the Object after which we run. But it is taught in many passages. I have been struck also latterly, in connection with a controversy on certain teaching whose soundness was in question, that while Romans gives us death to sin, the old man or flesh, and Colossians death and resurrection, just touching Ephesian ground, this last has nothing to do with dying to the old man. The object of grace is owned as dead in sins, and then a wholly new creation in Christ; so that we have the contrast of the two things, what by the Holy Ghost we are put into, and what we were in the flesh. Colossians is life, not the Holy Ghost; estate, not place. But I must close. We have nearly done the bulk of our work.

Pau. 1879.

Letters 3, False Doctrine of Sleep of the Soul

As regards the sleep of the soul, it is a miserable doctrine that comes simply from Satan acting on man's reason. It is generally connected with annihilation, but not always in this country; but it is a heartless doctrine. The Lord tells the thief he shall not wait till the kingdom, but that he should that day be with Him in paradise. Was he to be fast asleep, knowing nothing of Him, or anything else? It is monstrous! We are "absent from the body, and present with the Lord;" but if that means being fast asleep, we might as well be at the other end of the universe! "To depart and be with Christ is far better;" that is, being fast asleep and unconscious is better than serving Christ and ministering to His glory! The apostle did not know which to choose, to live, which was Christ, or—be fast asleep! It was gain, that is to be unconscious, compared with serving Christ faithfully here!

But not only do these passages show the moral absurdity of this notion to every spiritually-intelligent Christian, but there is no such thought in scripture as the soul's sleeping. It is a beautiful expression, signifying that death was only falling asleep to awake again; but it is the man always that falls asleep, never the soul. Thus in the case of Lazarus. Then 'said He "plainly, Lazarus is dead [or has died]." That is, falling asleep means, plainly expressed, dying. So when Stephen was killed, he fell asleep—Stephen did, not his soul: so "some are fallen asleep;" it is in contrast with, "some remain unto this present." "All live to him." Were the souls of the rich man and Lazarus fallen asleep? They tell me it is a Jewish figure. I agree with them: but it is not a figure of the soul being asleep. The falling asleep is always attributed to the man, never to the soul, and always means the Christian's dying; and is a beautiful expression for his not being, as we say, 'dead and gone.'

Another thing to remark is, that it is never said of the wicked that they will not be raised, or that their souls are asleep, for they will be raised; but it shows the true and lovely force of the expression as to the saints; they have fallen asleep to the day they lived in, but that is all.

But there is no such statement in scripture as the soul sleeping; nor is there such a thought any more than such a statement. It is the living saint who falls asleep, and, according to scripture, it means dying.

Letters 3, Experience in View of the End

I have leen very low—so low that I did not know whether I should get up again. I had no sense of death, for God—and, if we have not judged ourselves, Satan—is especially engaged at such a moment. But, quite uncertain whether I should get up again, I found myself within sight of my end, and I was surprised at the little difference which it made to me: Christ, the precious Savior, with me for the journey; then, I through grace, with Him forever—there was no change as to this.... Christ is all, beloved: everything else will pass out of sight; but He, blessed be His name, never. He who is not ashamed to call us brethren is, nevertheless, seated upon the Father's throne. It is a wonderful redemption, and He who accomplished it is infinitely precious.

Let us keep close to the Lord, for He would have us there, and let us recognize our own nothingness. The true christian condition is this, that there should not be a thought nor a feeling in the heart of which He is not the source. This is the realization of the word: "To live is Christ." But what grace, what watchfulness, is needed, for us to come near itl London, September 2nd.

Letters 1, What Christianity Is; Good in the Midst of Evil; Lot; Self

* * * Personally, I am glad to hear that our dear friend D has found, I trust, a refuge. I hope that our gracious God and Father will grant him quietness of spirit. He has some very fine qualities, if he knew how to use them in that spirit. But how much, with us all, the "myself" at the bottom, finds its way through certain points of our character. If it is of a disagreeable or tiresome stamp, we are such to others; if it is of an amiable stamp, we are amiable to others; but there is no difference really; and we find difficulty in judging this "I," when it presents itself with certain characteristics, under certain features. By looking at Christ all is right, because the bottom is reached.

How beautiful is Christianity—beautiful in itself, beautiful in its perfect adaptation to all that we are, and in a Christ who has participated in all, except the sin which would have spoiled all. What a sight for angels, to behold God, an infant in a manger, and no room for Him in the inn! I admire that inextricable confusion, those exercises of man's heart in the midst of good and evil, knowing not what is good and what is bad; the good corrupted, or corrupting; evil, the means of good; the world in the heart, to know what there is of good under the sun, what is the truth, the end of these researches; an ardor which would fathom everything, let loose in infinitude without ability to comprehend it; a being, the more miserable from knowing more of good; his best affections the source of his griefs; his heart swelling against God and against man, selfish, condemning himself, and, however hating himself, no possibility of getting out of it nor of continuing in it; a will which would mount up even to God, and which is a slave of the devil and sin.

Perfect good appears; it appears on the scene, in the circumstances, in the nature (but without sin), where this struggle takes place—where all the moral elements of a creature who knows good and evil, without being God, and far from God, are engaged in battle, without head or center. Immediately all is light. Evil is manifested as evil, because good is there. The will? It is discovered, laid bare, it is willful evil. Is it a question of misery, of conflict? Perfect answer to all: good in this misery, and all the more good that it is there; good in itself, but the perfect answer to every need, to every misery, that which takes us out of it by giving us perfect good, and by binding our hearts to God.

Yes; the more absolute and infinite the confusion, the more Christ is Christ. What infinite power is that which, in a moment, sets everything in its place, because it is good in itself, and perfect. He is the truth: He declares all about everything. Everything is known, and finds its place according to the truth of what He is. God be praised! it is grace: without that, even though God be love, there could not be truth. But I allow myself to rim on.

Poor-; there are times when everything must find its level. They are times, in my judgment painful and necessary, but not seasons of power. The power and energy of the Spirit raise us to a point where we are not found really in personal faith. A moment comes when each walks in his own faith, when the Lots (I do not mean that this dear brother is such) will go away to the well-watered plain, to those scenes where the outward appearance of blessing, as far as flesh can judge of it, hides the elements which are preparing for judgment. The power of grace had brought out Lot with Abraham. The plain of Jordan receives him who had not, for himself, laid hold of the call of Abraham. He was a righteous soul. I doubt that our dear brother-can now be happy where he is gone. He will vex his soul. God grant that he may return by his own faith.

Look at the leading seceders around you: where is there a single one remaining? But it is not a proof of power, of power that gathers, and which in the abundance of water hides the shallows where the current of the river of God has not its proper course. But God is full of grace. Is it fresh light which has detached them from brethren? Is there more energy, more personal grace? What has caused this?

March 15th, 1858.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 1, Will of the Father*, How to Know the

If a child habitually neglected its father, and did not take the trouble of knowing his mind and will, it is easy to foresee that, when a difficulty presented itself this child would not be in circumstances to understand what would please its parent. There are certain things which God leaves in generalities, in order that the state of the individual's soul may be proved. If, instead of the case I have supposed of a child, it were a question of a wife towards her husband, it is probable that, if she had the feelings and mind of a wife, she would not hesitate a moment as to knowing what would be agreeable to him; and this where he had expressed no positive will about the matter. Now you cannot escape this trial: God will not allow His children to escape it. “If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. 6:22).

People would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will, as one might get a receipt for anything; but there exists no means of ascertaining it without reference to the state of our own soul. Moreover, we are often of too much importance in our own eyes; and we deceive ourselves in supposing some will of God in such or such a case. God perhaps has nothing to tell us thereon, the evil being altogether in the stir we give ourselves. The will of God is perhaps that we should take quietly an insignificant place.

Further, we sometimes seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which His only will is that we should not be found at all; and where, if conscience were really in activity, its first effect would be to make us leave them. It is our own will which sets us there, and we should like nevertheless to enjoy the comfort of being guided of God in a path which we ourselves have chosen. Such is a very common case.

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will. In a long and active life it may happen, that God, in His love, may not always at once reveal His will to us, that we may feel our dependence, particularly where the individual has a tendency to act according to his own will. However, “if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light”; whence it is certain that, if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, That is poor consolation. I answer it is rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single and to walk with God—not, so to speak, to avoid this trouble in learning His will objectively, but whose desire is to walk with God. “If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him” (John 11:9-10). It is always the same principle. “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). You cannot exempt yourself from this moral law of Christianity. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9-10). The mutual connection of these things is of immense importance for the soul. The Lord must be known intimately if one would walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God's will. “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:9-10). Finally, it is written that the spiritual man “judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

It is then the will of God, and a precious will, that we should be able to discern it only according to our own spiritual state. In general, when we think that we are judging circumstances, it is God who is judging us—who is judging our state. Our business is to keep close to Him. God would not be good to us, if He permitted us to discover His will without that. It might be convenient just to have a director of consciences; and we should thus be spared the discovery and the chastisement of our moral condition. Thus, if you seek how you may discover the will of God without that, you are seeking evil; and it is what we see every day. One Christian is in doubt, in perplexity; another, more spiritual, sees as clear as the day, and he is surprised, sees no difficulty, and ends by understanding that it lies only in the other's state of soul. “He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off” (2 Peter 1:9).

As regards circumstances, I believe that a person may be guided by them: Scripture has decided that. It is what is meant by being “held in with bit and bridle,” whereas the promise and privilege of him who has faith is, “I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa. 32:8-9). God who is faithful has given the promise of directing us thus—near enough to God to understand by a single glance from Him. He warns us not to be as the horse and the mule which have no understanding of the will, thoughts, or desires of their master. It is needful to hold them in with bit and bridle. Doubtless even that is better than to stumble, fall and run counter to Him who holds us in; but it is a sad state, and such it is to be guided by circumstances. Undoubtedly, too, it is merciful on God's part so to act, but very sad on ours.

Here, however, there must be a distinction drawn between judging what one has to do in certain circumstances, and being guided by them. He who allows himself to be guided by them always acts in the dark as to knowing the will of God. There is absolutely nothing moral in it; it is an external force that constrains. Now it is very possible that I may have no judgment beforehand of what I shall do: I know not what circumstances may arise, and consequently I can make no resolutions. But the instant the circumstances are there, I judge with a full and divine conviction what is the path of God's will, and of the Spirit's intention and power. That demands the highest degree of spirituality. It is not to be directed by circumstances, but to be directed by God in them, being near enough to God to be able to judge immediately what one ought to do, as soon as the circumstances are there.

As to impressions, God can suggest them, and it is certain that in fact He does suggest a thing to the mind; but, in that case, the propriety of the thing and its moral character will be as clear as the sun at noonday. In prayer God can remove from our heart certain carnal influences, which, being destroyed, leave room for certain other spiritual influences taking all their place in the soul. Thus He makes us feel the importance of some duty, which had been perhaps entirely obscured by preoccupation caused by some desired object. This may be even between two individuals. One person may not have enough spiritual discernment to discover what is right; but the moment another shows it to him, he understands that it is the truth. All are not engineers, but a simple wagoner knows a good road when it is made. Thus the impressions which come from God do not always remain simple impressions. But they are ordinarily clear when God produces them. I do not doubt, however, that He often makes them on our minds, when we walk with Him and listen to His voice.

When obstacles raised up of Satan are spoken of, it is not said that God Himself may not have allowed these obstacles to some good desire—obstacles caused by an accumulation of evil in the circumstances which surround us.

Again the case should never exist of a person acting without knowing the will of God. The only rule that can be given is, never to act when we do not know what is the Lord's will. The will of God ought to be the motive as well as the rule of our conduct; and until His will is in activity,

there is an absence of any true motive for ours. If you act in ignorance in this respect, you are at the mercy of circumstances; however God may turn all to the good of His children. But why act when we are ignorant what His will is? Is the necessity of acting always so extremely pressing? If I do something with the full certainty that I am doing the will of God, it is clear that an obstacle is no more than a test of my faith, and it ought not to stop me. It stops us perhaps through our lack of faith; because, if we do not walk sufficiently near to God in the sense of our nothingness, we shall lack faith to accomplish what we have faith enough to discern. When we are doing our own will or are negligent in our walk, God in His mercy may warn us by a hindrance which arrests us if we pay attention to it, whilst “the simple pass on and are punished” (Pro. 22:3). God may permit, where there is much activity and labor, that Satan should raise up hindrances, in order that we may be kept in dependence on the Lord; but God never permits Satan to act otherwise than on the flesh. If we leave the door open, if we get away from God, Satan does us harm; but otherwise it is a mere trial of faith to warn us of a danger or snare—of something that would tend to exalt us in our own eyes. It is an instrument for our correction. That is, God allows Satan to trouble the mind, and make the flesh suffer outwardly, in order that the inner man may be kept from evil. If it is a question of anything else, probably it is only our “buts” and “ifs” that stop us, or possibly the effects of our carelessness, which has opened a door to Satan to trouble us by doubts and apparent difficulties between God and us, because we do not see more clearly. For “he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). In a word, the question is wholly moral. If any particular question is raised which at the first blush we cannot solve, we shall find that often there would be no such question there at all, if our position were not false—if we had previously been in a good state of soul, and a true spirituality had guarded and kept us. In that case, all we have to do is to humble ourselves for the whole affair.

Now let us examine whether Scripture does not present some principle suitable to direct us. Here evidently spirituality is the essential thing—is everything. The rule that we should do what Jesus would have done in such and such a circumstance is excellent, where and when it can be applied. But are we often in the circumstances where the Lord was found?

In the next place, it is often useful to ask myself whence comes such a desire of mine, or such a thought of doing this or that. I have found that this alone decides more than half of the difficulties that Christians meet with. The rest of those which remain are the result of our haste and of our former sins. If a thought comes from God and not from the flesh, then we have only to address ourselves to God as to the manner and means of executing it, and we shall soon be directed. There are cases where one has need of being guided, not always without motives; as suppose, when I hesitate about a visit to make, or some such other case. A life of more ardent love, or love exercised in a more intelligent way, or set in activity in drawing near to God, will clear the motives on one side or another: and often, perhaps, we shall see that our part in the thing was but selfishness.

If it be asked, But if it is no question either of love or of obedience? then I answer, that you ought to show me a reason for acting. For if it is nothing but your own will, you cannot make the wisdom of God bend to your will. Therein also is the source of another numerous class of difficulties that God will never solve. In these cases, He will in His grace teach obedience, and will show us how much time we have lost in our own activity. Finally “the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa. 25:9).

I have communicated to you on this subject all that my mind can furnish you with at this moment. For the rest, remember only that the wisdom of God conducts us in the way of God's will: if our own will is in activity, God cannot bend to that. That is the essential thing to discover. It is the secret of the life of Christ. I know no other principle that God can make use of, however He may pardon and cause all to work for our good. If there still be a query as to His direction, He directs the new man which has no other will than Christ. He mortifies and puts to death the old man, and in that way purifies us that we may bear fruit. Lo, I come to do thy will, O God...“I delight to do thy will” (Psa. 40:8). It is the place of a porter to wait at the gate; but, in doing so, he does the will of his master. Be assured that God does more in us than we for Him; and that what we do is only for Him in proportion as it is He Himself who works it in us.

I add with regard to a principle expressed above, that we are sanctified to the “obedience... of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Now He came to do the will of His Father, without which He did nothing. Thus, in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan tried to make Him act according to His own will, in things where there was not even an appearance of evil. The Father had just owned Him as His Son: Satan tempted Him, saying, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Matt. 4:3). But Jesus was a servant, and His answer consists in doing nothing, because there was wholly no will of His Father in the matter: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” As there was no word from God for the actual circumstances, Jesus did nothing. Satan could do nothing more. Although ever active to do good, He did not stir, when Mary and Martha sent to tell Him “he whom thou lovest is sick.” His Father had not sent Him there. When He goes later, the wisdom of God is thus manifested, in that a testimony to the divine power of Jesus as Son of God was rendered by the resurrection of Lazarus. So then, when the will of God is not manifested, our wisdom often consists in waiting until it should be. It is the will of God that, zealous of good works, we should do good always, but we cannot go before the time, and the work of God is done perfectly when it is He who does it.

Christian Truth: Volume 25, Apostle's Prayer for the Philippians

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Phil. 1:9-11.

The Apostle prays that they might have all kinds of knowledge and spiritual judgment, so that they might do things just fit to be done-that they might know in what one thing differs from another-that they might be connoisseurs in the Christian path; not only not fall into sin, but have the knowledge of just the right thing to do in the circumstances, for the standard is the satisfying of the heart of Christ, not, Where is the harm? The Apostle desires that they might discern things now as they will be when brought into the light in that day of Christ. It is as if he said, I want you to think of the Lord Jesus, and know what will please the heart of Christ. There is the delight of pleasing Christ, and also the delighting in the thing that pleases Him, by the active energy of the Spirit of God.

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