

## JOHN NELSON DARBY

### I. His Life

Came from good family. Born Nov. 1800 of Irish parents in London. Entered Trinity College, Dublin in at age 15. Graduated as a Classical Gold Medalist in 1819 at age 18. Note that he had Greek, Heb., Latin as part of coll ed. Admitted to bar at age 22. Converted and abandoned legal prof after 1 year. Ordained in Ch of Eng in Dublin and given a small parish. Worked vigorously. Bass p. 49. Great success among RC;s esp so that 6-800 of them becoming Xns per week. This in space of 1 year. Then ordained a clergyman. Same year Archbishop issued statement which said ch of Eng allied with if not subservient to State. The low view of ch disturbed Darby who saw in it analogy--as RC to Pope, Anglican to King. Went back to ch but private study more than public ministry. After 2 years decided couldn't get anywhere by protesting and didn't feel it right to disobey so looked for fellowship that emphasized spiritual communion and exalted conception of ch. Met with few friends for Bible study and this was beg of PB.

### II. His Ministry

- A. Its motivation. Love of X. Man of great passion. Consumed with 1 desire.
- B. Its expression. Zealous in work  
Ruthless against error. Even denounced friends of long standing if that they were perverting the faith.  
Didn't get married or have children bec that couldn't after renouncing benefits of law practice.  
Life of humble service.
- C. Its characteristics.
1. Absolutely scriptural.  
Demanded prof texts for everything. Applied Script to self.
  2. Tho active in controversy his mind was centered on X and truth of His Church. Hesitated to enter controversys but viewed it as a part of his ministry.  
Assumed prominent place of authority and may have been jealous to keep it at times.
- D. Its written form  
Began writing at age 23 for public. Lived to be 82 and produced multitude of lit. Published works number over 40 vol of 600 pp each covering eccles, doctrinal, prophetic, critical, evangelistic, apol, practical, expos, devotional, poetry, hymns. Also translated Bible. Lots of research in it tho style slightly abrupt. Read from Bible. Shows vast scholarship. Knowledge of languages and phil and eccl history. Called the Tertullian of 19th century. One of his opponents said, "J.N.D. writes with a pen in one hand and a thunderbolt in the other."

### III. The Brethren Movement

- A. Beginning. In Dublin among people who belonged to Ch of Eng but who desired more intimate fell with X. JND met with some while a student at Trinity. But not until 1827 was there any serious contact while still an Anglican clergyman. Resigned 1828 or 29. Early meetings were spontaneous not protest. Private meetings at first then finally made public in 1829. JND not leader in this Dublin group.
- B. Principles.
1. No organization of a church.
  2. Breaking of bread on Lord's day (every one)
  3. Unity of all saints in Christ.
  4. Freedom of HS in matters of ministry.
  5. Association required only faith in X and consistent walk in love.
  6. All of this, of course, based on principles in Words.
- C. Plymouth Brethren. JND from Ireland to Oxford where there was a meeting then to Plymouth where met B.W. Newton. 1831 started breaking of bread. JND objected to denominational names and emphasized practice of NT of addressing bel as brethren. That became name of group and bec by 1840 there were 800 attending in Plymouth designation inevitably became Ply. Brethren. In Ireland called Darbyism.

- D. Growth. Many groups sprang up in Britain. One of most notable at Bristol under Geo. Muller. Appealed to spiritual unity, freedom, and spirituality principles. And personal spirituality grew under movement. 1838 work began under JND in Switzerland. 7 yrs of success. JND back to Plymouth where Newton ministering. Controversy. Charged Newton with hindering freedom of HS bec he was recognized as leading brother and could be counted on to speak certain Sundays. Also diff over ch. JND pretrib and no OT saints in ch. Newton saw OT saints in ch and living saints would go thru trib. 1845 split in Plymouth and JND had 60 with him at 1st breaking of bread in his new location. Newton later repudiated his errors. Newton's assembly issued statement that it did not hold Newton's errors.
- E. Controversy. Above. Spread to Bristol. A friend of Newton got into assembly at Bristol. Darby's followers objected. Later JND himself went to Bristol and demanded they investigate the Newton errors who now repudiated. Muller refused to do. Darby excommunicated Muller's assembly and followers. Finally Muller's assembly examined Newton's views and reserved right to admit people on basis of individual exam of orthodoxy not past association or now with Newton. This didn't satisfy. So open assembly led by Muller and closed by Darby. Exclusive waned until 1865 ff. when lots of new young men came in like CHM, MadrsW Miller, Chas. Stanley. JND travelled in Ger, Italy, USA, New Zealand. JND's supremacy lessened with influx of new people. Died April 29, 1882.

#### IV. JND's Doctrinal Distinctives.

##### A. Ecclesiology

1. The Church in Ruins bec of worldliness etc.
2. The Ch distinct in this dispensation.
3. The Ch as an assembly gathering in His name.
4. The Ch as the body of X. Unity
5. X is head of Ch. Freedom of ministry of gifts as HS directs.

##### B. Eschatology

1. Literal interpretation
2. Distinction bet Jew, Gentile, and ch
3. Glories of Millennium for ch reigning and for Is restored