



*Recovery
and
Retention*

OF ALL DEPOTS
OR J. W. H. NICHOLS
135 SELBY LANE
ATHERTON, CALIF.

Price: 20 cents per copy

NOV. 1942

FOREWORD

Having recently been privileged to read an interesting outline of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit early in the nineteenth century, and being in possession of certain letters relative thereto, the whole collection is now put into circulation, in view of the evident feebleness of apprehension and appreciation on the part of many, who are professedly walking apart from the various organizations of Christendom, and owning Christ alone as Head of the body.

There is no desire to eulogize the men who were raised up by God, and used to recover precious truths, long lost sight of in the professing Church, but in reading these letters, one cannot help being affected by the reality and piety they breathe; and there is evident thankfulness to the Lord for having delivered them from what they felt was contrary to His mind. This is surely a striking contrast to our feeble apprehension of the truth today. Many attracted by freedom from certain trammels necessary to organization, have not appreciated the blessed liberty which the truth necessarily introduces the believer into.

Doubtless many have been influenced by relationships and friendships—consequently, we little appreciate oftentimes, what it meant for those to whom these newly recovered truths came with irresistible power; compelling them to separate from all that was inconsistent with the truth thus made known, going forth “Unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” No claim was made by these brethren to anything not

common to all believers, but they sought by grace, to walk in the truth. If subsequently, there have been those, who sought to raise ecclesiastical banners (which alas! has grievously marred the testimony), it in no wise affects the truths recovered. These, remain true to faith, and while the Church is upon earth, there never will be a time, when Philadelphian testimony (Rev. 3:8) in the midst of Laodicean lukewarmness cannot be maintained. May the Lord use the letters to give a better understanding and appreciation of these heavenly truths, and stir up His people in these closing days to realize their privileges and responsibilities.

J. W. H. Nichols.

November, 1942.
Atherton, Calif.

EARLY REMINISCENCES OF BRETHREN

It pleased the Lord to revive in many minds during the first quarter of the present century, a deep interest in the restoration of Israel to their own land, and the consequent glory of Messiah's reign. Several books were published on this subject between the years 1812 and 1825. But the one which created the greatest interest is entitled "The Coming of Messiah In Glory and Majesty" by a South American Catholic priest, Emanuel La-Cunya, who adopted the non-de-plume of Ben-Ezra, a converted Jew. This was originally written in Spanish and first published in Spain in 1812. It was translated into English and published in London in 1827, with a long preliminary discourse by Edward Irving. His powerful eloquence was now employed to arouse his congregation, his brethren in the ministry, and the whole professing church to the study of this comparatively new subject. The prophetic description of the glory of the millennial kingdom gave him ample material for his glowing eloquence and orations.

The circulation of these new books, and fresh papers constantly appearing in the magazines, awakened a fresh interest in the subject; and many, both lay and clerical, became diligent students of prophecy.

These studies led to the establishment of what were called "The Prophetic Meetings" which for some years were held in Albery, Mr. H. Drummond's seat, Surrey; and at Lady Powerscourt's, Powerscourt Castle, in Wicklow, Ireland. Clergymen and private

gentlemen came freely to those meetings at first; but afterwards they were attended, at least in Ireland, chiefly by brethren. It was then, we believe, that the midnight cry was raised: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; Go ye out to meet Him." And from that day until now, the number of those who preach the second coming of the Lord has been steadily increasing.

In the winter of 1827-28, four Christian men, who for some time had been exercised as to the condition of the entire professing church; agreed after much conference and prayer, to come together on Lord's Day morning for the breaking of bread, as the early Christians did, counting on the Lord to be with them, namely: Mr. Darby, Dr. Cronin, Mr. Bellet and Mr. Hutchinson, No. 9 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin. They had for a considerable time, along with others who attended their reading meetings, been studying the scriptures and comparing what they found in the Word of God with the existing state of things around them; but they could find no expression of the nature and character of the church of God, either in the National establishment or in the various forms of dissenting bodies. This brought them into the place of separation from all these ecclesiastical systems, and led them to come together in the Name of the Lord Jesus, owning the presence and sovereign action of the Holy Spirit in their midst, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Math. 18:20; Eph. 4:3, 4). The Brethren continued to meet for some time in Fitzwilliam Square, and others were gradually added to their number.

The circumstances which led these earnest men to

read the scriptures, and come to the decision was evidently of the Lord. One of the four, a clergyman* from County Wicklow, having met with an accident, which injured his foot, came to Dublin for care and treatment. Before this happened however, he had passed through much exercise of conscience as to his position in the establishment, and had determined to leave it. Some of his friends in Dublin and others had been similarly exercised, and were thirsting for something which could give them spiritual life, which they could not find in the denominations, and were led to study the Word together and look to the Lord for light and direction as to their future path.

Here we have to notice before going further, the existence of a small meeting with a measure of intelligence as to the Church of God being one body, previously to the meeting of the four in Fitzwilliam Square. They were independents (Congregationalists). A young man, a medical student, afterwards Dr. Cronin had come to Dublin for his health, about the year 1826. He applied for communion as a visitor and was received. When they learned that he became a resident, this was refused him unless he have special membership with them. This deeply impressed him, and his mind was turned to the truth of the one body. If all true believers are members of the body of Christ, what can that strange expression mean, "*special membership with the Independents.*" He paused, and refused to submit to their church order; which forced him outside the gates of their Zion.

He remained in this outside place several months under the charges of irreligion and antinomianism, separated from many he loved in the Lord. The

*J. N. Darby.

young student was at length *publicly excommunicated by name*, in a chapel, of which Rev. Wm. Cooper was minister. This greatly affected him; he found it no light thing to be thus publicly denounced. But the Church had gone far beyond its proper jurisdiction. She has authority only from her Head in Heaven to cut off those who have proved themselves *wicked persons* (1 Cor. 5). Edward Wilson, at that time secretary to the Bible society protested against this step, which led him to leave the Congregational Church. Also two Miss Drury's* and a Mr. Tinns, bookseller, at Grafton St. who joined with them in meeting on Lord's Day morning for breaking of bread and prayer. This little meeting never formally broke up, but they united at once with those who began to break bread in Fitzwilliam Square.

In the year 1828, Mr. Darby published his first pamphlet entitled, "The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ." We may consider this tract as a statement of what the young community believed and practiced, though not in the form of a creed or confession, and further as presenting the divine ground on which they acted. The effect of these statements, so plain, so solemn, and so scriptural, were immediate and great. They found an echo in many a Christian's heart. The effect of this pamphlet and others reached earnest men in various places who, feeling it all but impossible to go on with the existing state of things in the professing church, welcomed the truth thus brought before them, and left their respective denominations. (Mr. Parnell, after Lord Congelton, who appears to have united with Brethren in 1829, hired a large auction room in Angier St. for use on

*These two sisters I had the pleasure of meeting at Kilkeel, Ireland, many years ago.—J. W. H. N.

the Lord's Day.) In those days of virgin freshness and simplicity, souls grew rapidly in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and His truth. Many wondered "where unto all this would grow" (Acts 5:24). But the Lord was working, and numbers followed His leading. "Amongst those (says Mr. Macintosh in a letter to a friend), who separated from the various organizations, were some men of considerable gift, moral weight, intellectual power, and intelligence; clergymen, barristers, solicitors, military and naval officers, physicians, and men of high position and property."

Their secession, as you may suppose, caused a considerable stir, and drew forth much opposition. Many a link of friendship was snapped; many a fondly cherished companionship was broken up; many sacrifices were made; much sorrow and trial were encountered; much reproach, obloquy, and persecution had to be endured. "All who will live godly"—all who are determined to follow the Lord; all who will keep a good conscience; all who with firm purpose of heart will act on the authority of Holy Scriptures, must make up their minds to endure trial and persecution. Our Lord has said, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay, but rather division" (Luke 12:51-53). "For a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:36).

Reading Meetings

Mr. Darby, who seems from the very first to have a great love of travelling, or rather carrying the truth of God from place to place, soon after the formation of the meeting at Fitzwilliam Square,

found his way to Limerick. This was the first place he visited; and in a true apostolic spirit he has steadily gone on for fifty years, and never more so than the last ten or fifteen years.*

In the good providence of God he had a most interesting visit to Limerick, the Lord opening the way for the ministry of the Word. He held meetings to which many of the gentry and clergy came, and the truth found its way amongst them by the blessing of God.

From their earliest history it is evident that reading meetings (so called) have been a mode of teaching which has been greatly used of the Lord for giving accurate and extensive knowledge of the divine Word. The Archbishop of Canterbury would find no advantage from his official dignity in such a meeting; he would have to take his place according to his knowledge of the divine Word of God. Speaking generally, this is necessarily and always the result. The spiritual discernment of a meeting (through the presence of the Holy Spirit) is so sensitive, that mere human opinions or reasonings are most offensive and carry no conviction; but the moment that the true meaning of the Word is given, a cord is struck which vibrates through the Meeting.

Origin of the Name "Plymouth Brethren"

Amongst the many meetings which sprang up all over the country in the early days of Brethren, the one at Plymouth became the most prominent. "About the year 1831," says Mr. Darby in a letter to a friend: "I went to Oxford where many doors were open, and

*J. N. D. departed to be with Christ in 1882.

where I found Mr. Wigram and Mr. Jarrett. Subsequently in calling on Mr. H. Newman, I met Mr. B. W. Newton, who asked me to go down to Plymouth, which I did. On arriving I found in the house, Captain Hall, who was already preaching in the villages. We had reading meetings, and ere long began to break bread. Though Mr. Wigram began the work in London, he was a good deal at Plymouth." The first meeting place was called "Providence Chapel," and as they refused to give themselves any name, they were called in the town, "Providence people." When the brothers began to preach the Gospel in the open air in the villages around, no small curiosity was awakened to know who they were; there was something new in their preaching and in their way of going to work. But as they belonged to *none of the denominations*, they were spoken of as "Brethren from Plymouth." This naturally resulted in the designation, "The Plymouth Brethren," which has been applied to them—sometimes in derision—ever since. "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23:8) is enough. Here we have the title which the Lord Himself gives his disciples. A strong opposition was soon manifested against the new movement, especially on the part of the clergy and ministers of all denominations. Nor need we wonder; the ground occupied by Brethren was felt to be a standing testimony against their whole state and practice, and many were stirred up to say hard and untrue things against them, with a view to neutralize the blessed work which God was doing by their means. But these efforts of the enemy—as they usually are—were overruled to increase the general interest in the new preachers and to attract members

to their various meetings. The blessing of God evidently rested on the labours of Brethren at that time.

Many were led to separate from the different denominations and gather around the new Center, the name of the Lord Jesus; though on the part of some, it may have been with very little intelligence or exercise of conscience, compared with those who originally took that ground; and many who united had very undefined thoughts as to the nature of the step they were taking. But all was new. Christ was owned as their only Center, and the Holy Spirit as their only Teacher. They gave themselves to the study of the Word of God, and experienced the sweetness of Christian communion, and found the Bible, as they said—"to be a new book." It was, no doubt, in those days a most distinct and blessed work of God's Spirit, the influence of which was felt not only here, but in distant lands.

The Effect of Separation from the World

It was no uncommon thing at this time to find valuable jewelry in the collection boxes, which was soon turned into money and given to the deacons for the poor. But this quiet way of disposing of a little finery did not satisfy the devoted spirits at Plymouth. They parted with all that was considered worldly in dress, books, and furniture. These free will offerings were collected, and when the stripping time seemed nearly at an end, the accumulation was so great that it was necessary to sell them at auction. We have now a catalogue before us, of date 1838, which contains a description of each article to be sold, viz., "Silver plates, silver mounted plated articles, about

700 volumes of books, handsomely bound; paintings and prints, valuable jewelry; table linen, glass, china, wearing apparel; household furniture, etc.”

After classifying the articles and selling a number of the smaller things in lots, the whole extended to six hundred lots and were three days in selling.

Many will now be disposed to inquire, what were the motives which led this young community—scarce nine years old—to make such a surrender of their worldly goods? As the printer of the catalogue, Mr. Rowe, and others then in communion, are still alive, and we have made every possible inquiry as to the origin and object of this remarkable instance of devotedness. The following quotation is from the last letter received, given by more than one witness: “Respecting the quantity of goods; jewels, books, furniture, etc., given up and sold during early days at Plymouth, there was no call of any particular kind, no special appeal made. It was quite simply and freely done, as desiring to express their indifference to the world, their separation to the Lord, and their waiting for His coming from heaven.”

Although we have no wish to make more of this instance of indifference to the world than Christian prudence would suggest, yet we would desire to speak of it as an illustration of the power of the Spirit, when the heart is separated to Christ and waiting for His coming from heaven. It would be difficult to find its parallel in the history of the Church since the days of the apostles. There have been many instances, no doubt, of great liberality on the part of Christian people; but these have been generally under pressure, and for some object of the Church and its

operations. This was purely voluntary, uncalled for, as expressive of their indifference to the world, of their devotedness to Christ, and of their longing for His return. Anon.

**A Letter from Travancore, South India, to
J. W. H. N.**

Having been in correspondence with an Indian brother in the Lord for some years, to whom I have been privileged, from time to time to send helpful written ministry, it was deeply interesting to receive the following letter, which plainly shows how saints, subject to the scriptures and without oral ministry, find the path of faith, and obedience to the word, leads "outside the camp." The writer says:

"We are only a small group of believers, not being in touch with any denomination, and go on as the Lord guides."

"We came to know, that believers should worship, minister, and serve according to the scriptures. It shows that this truth was lost sight of for many years, but thank God, HIS PRINCIPLES NEVER CHANGE. The practice of the Church from Pentecost, from its formation on the day of Pentecost (according to the purpose of God) until complete, and the Lord comes to claim His bride, should be manifested still, in all who are gathered to His Name. Acts 2:42 practically includes everything. "They continued in the Apostles doctrine" (that is holding fast all the fundamentals of the faith. 1 Cor. 15:1). "Fellowship," they were gathered together in His Name, enjoying together the same ministry of Christ. "Breaking bread" (that is remembering the Lord in His death as He asked) "This do in remembrance of

me." Luke 22. Then later Paul in 1 Cor. 11 tells us "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death UNTIL HE COME." The loaf expresses a two-fold truth (1) "We being many are one loaf, one body (1 Cor. 10). (2) 1 Cor. 11, especially speaks to our hearts of HIS body in which He bore our sins on the cross, the cup of His blood shed.

We gather from Acts 20, that the practice definitely, was to remember the Lord in His death, on the first day of the week . . . so, we gather every first day, for worship and praise, generally in our temporary shed at 10 a. m. and disperse at 3 p. m.

Other days we go out spreading the gospel in various ways, preaching, visiting, giving out Testaments, tracts, portions, Bibles, according to the need, also visiting Hospitals and other Institutions.

Wednesday night we come together for prayer, some three hours are spent in prayer and reading the word. Our sisters come together on Thursdays, especially for prayer.

Ours is not to attack any person, authority, religious body, or any other, but to "live peaceably with all men."

We seek to live as our Saviour enables us, and to yield to Him, obedience to His word, walking in the Spirit, to speak faithfully, courteously, lovingly, of man's need and God's provision to meet that need in the Person and work of His beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

To suffer all things according to the will of God, looking for that blessed hope of the Lord's return.

May it fill our hearts with blest anticipation.

By the above, you will understand the belief of this small group of believers. We go on according to scripture and need your vast help in prayer."

Yours in the blessed hope of His soon coming.

N. C. E ———.

ADDENDA

Remarks by Mr. Stoney, Dated 1871

I first knew the "brethren" in 1833. I had an anxiety to serve the Lord, and had given up going to the bar, in order to take orders, thinking it the only true way of doing so. I at first very reluctantly went to hear at Angier Street, taken by my chum in college, a Mr. Clarke, who was a constant attendant (since gone over to Irvingism). I eventually was much interested in the teaching there. I particularly remember Mr. Darby, on "being accepted in the Beloved," and Mr. Bellett, on Mark 7, but I did not think of joining them. I was expecting great things from Mr. Irving, and Mr. Bellett brought in B. Newton to see me in my rooms in College, in order to disabuse my mind of Irvingism. I was constantly hearing J. N. D., and at length heard him on Joshua 7th, "Wherefore liest thou on thy face—up sanctify the people," etc. Get rid of the evil first. God can not be with us until we are separated from evil. I was broken down. I felt for the first time the immense step of leaving the established order for the unsightly few in Angier Street. This was in June, 1834. I asked Mr. Darby to let me come until I saw something better, for I was not quite sure he was

right, but I was convinced the Church of England was wrong. At that time Mr. Stokes used to read regularly some portion of Scripture every Lord's Day, and in Plymouth, where I was in 1838, it used to be arranged beforehand who should break the bread and do official acts. I was at the meeting at Lady Powerscourt's in September. Mr. John Synge was in the chair. Mr. Synge called on each to speak in rotation on a given subject; Mr. Darby spoke last, often for hours, touching on all that had previously been said. Mr. Wigram sat next him, Captain Hall, Mr. Geo. Curzon, Sir Alex. Campbell, Mr. Bellett, Mr. Thos. Maunsell, Mr. Mahon, Mr. Ed. Synge were there. There were clergymen present and Irvingites. The prayer meetings in the morning at seven o'clock were particularly striking to me. Every one praying that God would give them light, and grace to act on it. There was great feeling against J. N. D. when I came out because of the secessions at Oxford at that time, so much so that it was notified to me that both Dr. Sadler and Dr. Singer (?) had conferred on the propriety of taking my rooms from me, because I had asked Mr. Darby to lecture in them. Those with Irvingite tendencies gradually drew away from us, and their society was avoided.

Signed, James Butler Stoney.

Letter from J. N. D., Dated 1868

Beloved Brother:

We began in Dublin. . . . It was not dissatisfaction with Apostolic Succession of the English National Episcopal body. I had found peace to my own soul by finding my oneness in Christ, that it was no longer

myself as in the flesh before God, but that I was in Christ, accepted in the Beloved, and sitting in heavenly places. This led me directly to the apprehension of what the true Church was; those who were united to Christ in heaven. I at once felt that all the parish was not that. The tract I then published was not an attack on any one but upon the *unity* of the Church of God. When I looked around to find this unity, I found it nowhere; if I joined one set of Christians I did not belong to another. The Church of God was broken up and scattered among various *self-formed* bodies. I found membership in Scripture was not membership of a voluntary association on earth, but membership of Christ, a hand, a foot, etc. And as the Holy Ghost had formed *one* body on descending on the day of Pentecost (1 Cor. 12), so *ministry* was those whom He qualified for such and such service.

. . . At the same time Acts 2 and 4 made me feel how dreadfully far we had all got from the true effect of His presence. I found, however, that wherever two or three were met in Christ's Name, He would be in the midst of them, and acted upon the promise with three other brethren, and the wife of one of them, and never thought of going beyond meeting the need of our consciences and hearts according to the Word. God was doing a work I had no thought of, and it has spread over the world. *It did not commence at Plymouth* till 1832, where I went at Mr. Newton's request, then a fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. It began in London about the same time through one I met in Oxford. It was in no way opposition which led me to Switzerland in 1837, but a report of a brother who had been there, and stated there were meetings like ours.

After that I began to work there, then in France, then Germany, where the work had begun by another, then in Holland.

The coming of the Lord was the other truth that was brought to my mind from the Word, as that which, if sitting in heavenly places *in* Christ, was alone to be waited for, that I might sit in heavenly places *with* Him. Isaiah 32 brought me the earthly consequences of the same truth, though other passages might seem perhaps more striking to me now; but I saw an evident change of dispensation in that chapter, when the Spirit would be poured out on the Jewish nation and a King reign in righteousness. I have merely stated facts and dates as they occurred. Mr. Newton has now a Chapel of his own in London, and has nothing to do with "brethren." *He was among them, but for years set aside their principles, and since 1845 has had no connection with them.* In 1846 teaching as to relationship of the Lord Jesus to God became a ground of total separation.

Mr. Muller's was a close Baptist church when "brethren" began to make progress in Bristol; he gave this up and took in measure the form of "brethren." This was transferred—I think unadvisedly—though with the best intentions, to his meetings. Since 1848 he has returned to, not close Baptist principles, *but open Baptist principles, and his is a regular dissenting church with slightly modified forms.*

There never was any seminary for training missionaries. I had a dozen young men staying with me at Lausanne for a year. I was there at their own request, studying Scripture with them. Most of them are now working as evangelists in France, two in

Switzerland. I am not aware of any other material fact to state or correct, which is the only object I have now.

What I judge to be essential, is the Holy Ghost on earth, as come down on the day of Pentecost, and His forming the saints into one body. We also wait for God's Son from heaven according to the Word.

J. N. D.

late
Copy of Letter from Mr. Bellett to M. J. Macallister

When I call to mind some of the early facts connected with the history of so-called "brethren," as for distinction I will call them, I am impressed with the sense of there having been at that time a very independent and original teaching of the Spirit of God. I do not doubt that, however they may have aided one another afterwards, or grown together in the understanding and enjoyment of much common truth, earlier impressions had been abroad in the minds of many without conference or suggestion, which, however, led them readily to run together once they did confer. I believe the earliest time of our history, both in England and Ireland, might exhibit this. I may fail in accuracy of recollection, and, of course, I may mistake when I was not so personally engaged, but I will follow on just as my memory suggests to me, bethinking myself, of course, as I proceed, praying the Lord to guide in all simplicity and truth.

It was in the year 1827 that the late Archbishop of Dublin, in a charge delivered to the clergy of his diocese, recommended that a petition should go up to the legislature seeking increased protection for them in the discharge of their ministerial duties, as the

teachers of religion in these lands. John Darby was then a curate in the County of Wicklow, and often did I visit him in his mountain parish. This charge of his diocesan greatly moved him; he could not understand the common Christianity of such a principle, as it assumed that ministers of Christ in doing their business as witnesses against the world for a rejected Jesus, should—on meeting the resistance of the enemy—turn round and seek security from the world. This greatly offended him. He printed his objections to such a principle in a pretty large pamphlet, and without publishing it or putting it on sale, sent copies of it to all the clergy of the diocese. All this had a very decided influence on his mind, for I remember him at one time a very exact Churchman (as I may speak), but it was evident his mind had now received a shock, and it was never again what it had been. However, he continued in his mountain curacy, at times, as a clergyman, visiting different parts of the country, either to preach sermons or to speak at some meeting of the religious societies. In the beginning of 1828 I had occasion to go to London, and there I met in private, and heard in public, those who were warm and alive on prophetic truth, having had their minds freshly illuminated by it.

In my letter to J. N. D. at that time, I told him I had been hearing things that he and I had never talked about, and I further told him on my return to Dublin what they were. Full of this subject as I was then, I found him quite prepared for it also, and his mind and soul had traveled rapidly in the direction which had thus been given to it. I continued, however, in Dublin, and he was more generally in the County of Wicklow, but he had introduced me to dear H. Hut-

chinson, whose memory is very dear to me and much honored by me. He and I found we had much in common, dear Francis! Dissatisfied as I was, we went occasionally together to the dissenting chapels, but we had not much sympathy with the tone prevalent; the sermons we heard had generally, perhaps, less of the simplicity of Christ in them than what might be heard in the pulpits of the Established Church, and the things of God were dealt with more as for the intellect and by the intellect than, as we judged, suited the proper cravings of the renewed and spiritual mind. I believe I may say this for him as well as for myself, so we held on, loosely as it was, by the Established Church still. Mr. Groves, a dentist in Devonshire, some short time before this, had offered himself to the C. M. S., and in order to fit himself for its service had entered our college (Dublin). I knew him soon after, and he occasionally stayed with us, on coming here to pass his quarterly examinations. In a way perfectly independent of all that had been pressing in the minds of others, he had been taught to see that college education for the work of the ministry was not the thing, and that he was wasting time in Dublin attending his examinations, and by the entrance of these thoughts the whole question was raised in his mind, so that he not only abandoned his connection with college, but viewed as he had never done before the whole matter of the Established Church, and the claims of dissenting bodies. At the close of 1828 he visited Dublin; though he had seceded from the college he preached at Poolbeg Street at the request of dear Mr. Egan, then in connection with the little company found there, of which Mr. R. Pope, well known in Ireland at that time, was one. Talking

one day with him as we were walking down Lower Pembroke Street, he said to me, "This I doubt not is the mind of the Lord concerning us: we should come together in all simplicity, as disciples not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting the Lord would edify us together by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves." At the moment he spoke these words, I was assured my soul had got the right idea, and that moment I remember as if it were but yesterday, and could point you out the very place. 'Twas the birthday of my mind, dear James; may I so speak as to "brethren?" Edward Cronin had been by profession an Independent and a member of York Street, but his mind at the same time was under a like influence, I may say that of us all. In a private room we had the Lord's Supper with, I believe, three others, while I was still going to Sandford Chapel, and J. Darby was still in the County Wicklow, as a clergyman. In the summer of 1829 our family was at Kingstown, and dear H. Hutchinson at Bray; we saw each other occasionally and spoke of the things of the Lord, but where he went on Sunday at that time I cannot tell. I attended the Scotch Church at Kingstown, where all who were understood to be new born were welcome. But on returning to Dublin in November of that year, H. Hutchinson was quite prepared for Communion in the name of the Lord, with all, whoever they might be, that loved Him in sincerity, and proposed to have a room in Fitzwilliam Square (at his house) for that purpose. We did so, designing, however, so to have it, that if any were disposed to attend the services in the parish churches and dissenting chapels they might not be hindered, and he also prescribed a cer-

tain line of things, as the services of prayer, singing and teaching that should be found amongst us each day. E. Cronin was prepared for this fully; I joined, but not at all, I think, with the same liberty and decision of mind, and several others also were ready, and just at this time we first knew Mr. Stokes. Thus we continued from November, 1829. Some time before this I had become acquainted with J. Parnel (now Lord Congleton), and in that month, November, 1829, and through the spring of 1830, he was occasionally in Dublin, and frequently amongst us. He became very familiar with E. Cronin, and in the month of May, purposing to let the Lord's table in the midst of us become somewhat more of a witness, he took a large room in Angier Street belonging to a cabinet-maker, then the meeting was transferred during that month; this tried me still more, the publicity of it was too much for me, I instinctively shrank. H. Hutchinson, as I remember, would also rather have continued in the private house, so that I believe I did not join them for two or three Sundays, and I am not sure that he did, but the others were there at once. J. Parnel, W. Stokes, E. Cronin and a few sisters, and shortly several were added. In the summer of 1830 the mission party to Bagdad was formed. Mr. Groves had been there some months previously, and E. Cronin and his sister and J. Parnel, with one or two more, were desirous of joining him. It was in the month of September they left us, sailing for France, and purposing to reach Bagdad across the desert from Syria. J. Hamilton, whom some of us had known for two or three years, was also of the party. He had with many others become dissatisfied with the existing order of things, and was very much of one mind with us all,

and giving up other occupation, was ready to join the mission party to the East, and I rather think he was another witness to the independent energy of the Spirit of God which was abroad, as I have said, at that time. They sailed, and we continued in our room in Angier Street. It was poor material we had, dear James, and we had one or two solemn and awful cases of backsliding; there was but little spiritual energy, and much that was poor treasure for a living temple, but we held together in the Lord's mercy and care, I believe advancing in the knowledge of His mind. The settled order of worship which we had in Fitzwilliam Square gave place gradually, teaching and exhorting being first made common duties and services, while prayer was restricted to two or three who were regarded as elders, *but gradually all this yielded, and in a little time, no appointed or recognized eldership was understood to be in the midst of us*, and all service was of a free character, the presence of God through the Spirit being more simply believed and used. In the year 1834 many were added, and that year J. Darby being in Dublin, it was a question with him whether he should come and help us in Angier Street, as God might give him grace, or preach as he had been invited at the Asylum in Lessor Street, but he was all but detached from the Church of England.* He visited several places either that year or the next, and amongst them Oxford, Plymouth, Cork and Limerick, ministering wherever he might the truth that God had given him from His Word, and I do not doubt, from what I remember, he found in all those places other evidences of the *independent work of the Spirit of God* on the

*This makes it clear that beloved J. N. D. was not with the first who were separated to the Lord, therefore was not, as is generally supposed, the originator of this remarkable movement.
—J. W. H. N.

hearts and consciences of the saints of whom I have spoken. In Limerick and Cork occasionally preaching in the pulpit of the Established Churches, he also met Christians in private houses, and his ministry was greatly blessed; light and refreshment visited many a soul, and that too of an order to which before they had been strangers. And going by invitation from Oxford to Plymouth he found the same there, so that in those distant places, which perhaps had never been combined before in one kindred influence, this grace was magnified, and happy, promising little groups of saints who sought relief from their weariness were joined in those places.

Much about the same time, dear Lady Powerscourt had begun some prophetic meetings; her mind also had taken the same direction as that which was among us all; some of us were invited by her and some from England, and these occasions greatly helped us. It was then I first knew George Wigram, Percy Hall and others. The meetings were truly precious to the soul, and night after night did I return to my room at Powerscourt House with a deep sense of how little an one I was in Christ, in the presence of so much grace and devotedness as I judged I had been seeing around me during the day. Thus it was in those days, dear James, and in Angier Street we were pursuing our way, many being admitted to us, and some who are to this hour in Brunswick Street among the many who are to be loved and cherished there. We were occasionally hearing from the party that went to Bagdad, and occasionally were visited by brethren from Cork, Limerick and other places, where the same influence had by this time been known. But I might mention dear and honored J. Mahon as another instance of the

independent work of the Spirit of God of which I have spoken. I remember E. Cronin visiting him at Ennis, it might be, I think, in 1828, and on his return telling me about him, and I have reason to believe that even before we had any table in H. Hutchinson's house, there had been Breaking of Bread somewhere in the town of Ennis by means of one of his family, if not by himself. This was altogether independent of any doings amongst us, and so I might say was it in England, as I might prove to you. Having occasion to visit Somerset in 1831 or 1832, and being at Sir E. Denny's, he asked me to give him an idea of the principles of "brethren." We were sitting around the fire, and the daughter of a clergyman was present. As I stated our thoughts she said they had been hers for the last twelve months, and that she had no idea that anyone had them but herself. So also being at — shortly afterwards, a dear brother, now departed in the Lord, told me that he and his wife and his wife's mother were meeting in the simplicity of "brethren's" ways for some time before he ever heard of such a people. His brother and the lady I mentioned at Sir E. Denny's as soon as occasion allowed them, were in full fellowship with us, and she continues to this day in County Down. I like to trace these circumstances, for they help to assure us that the *Lord's hand was independently at work*, designing to revive another testimony in the midst of His saints. I feel that I have great evidence at command of the existence of this *independent energy of His Spirit*. Among other instances of this, nearer home, I mention that dear Groves revisited Ireland after an absence of two or three years, and I remember well his telling us of a very important movement in the *southern part of the*

Indian Peninsular which indicated a mind quite in harmony with that which had been leading us in our position in England and Ireland. The English brethren year after year visited Ireland, not only Dublin, but the country places. J. Harris, once a clergyman near Plymouth, was among them. G. Wigram for a long continued time was in Cork, and all the time J. Darby was in the two countries by turns, occasionally with us in Dublin, but more generally either in Plymouth or Cork, and the gathering multiplying in England to a very great number, became known by the name of Plymouth Brethren, and in this country were called Darbyites. I do not know that I need follow the history beyond this, dear James, as your enquiry was rather about the beginning. I could not doubt but a fresh purpose of God, and a fresh work of the Spirit were put forth in the call of the "brethren"; such things have been from time to time and under various characters, though with a kindred spirit, during the dispensation. The dispensation almost suggests such a thing, or makes it necessary; this is not the ordered system of things linked with the earth, or with flesh and blood, as was the former thing in Israel. The call of the Church to be apart from the world, to do service in the light and strength of the Holy Ghost, and to maintain, in living spiritual grace, testimony to a heavenly and rejected Jesus. All current within us and around us is contrary to such a call; such a dispensation can be upheld and maintained only in the direct grace of the Spirit ministered to elect vessels, and filling them with the freshness and apprehension of truth. No ordered service or course of fleshly ordinances can at all answer this end, no *transmitted* or cessational office can at all fill out and discharge its

duties, no such authority, is owned by it. In man there is ever a tendency to the mere warp of nature and to the course of the world, and in order to sustain a thing spiritual and living like the Church, the natural way, yea necessary way, save that God is sovereign, is by a fresh putting forth of light and power to revive it again and again, that there may still be a testimony to the power of God, and to the ways and services of a living House, so that the coal may not be quenched. Such revivals may each of them have their peculiarity, while partaking of the kindred Spirit, or of the common witness that the same Holy Ghost is working. The Reformation is always acknowledged as marked by a clear and fervent witness of justification by faith, the very truth then needful for the deliverance of souls long held in deep captivity. Other energies and revivals had their character in like manner, and whether they have ever, or not, become the subjects of history, faith knew of them, and the souls of the elect were edified and thankful. I do not doubt that the work of God by, and with, "brethren" had its special purpose also; it seems with certainty to present the separatedness of the Church from the world and a distinct witness to the heavenly calling and high, peculiar dignity, as also to assert the precious truth that nothing else is worthy the House of God, though the House be in ruins, as surely it was known and felt to be in a dispensational sense, and further, the "brethren" aided the testimony, which was first rising again, to the coming and Kingdom of the Lord, with some heavenly apprehensions connected with that great mystery which were consistent with their separated and heavenly position, and with that only. For there are prophetic truths which must be ever

felt to be more or less at variance with any church system that links itself with the world. Thus, in simplicity, as my mind led me, I have done as you wished, dear James. I will not speak as to the result of this call of the "brethren." It would be painful, and it is needless; each heart among us knows many and many secret cause of humiliation, which the present distracted condition in which we are found tells of itself. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble"; may such experience be more deeply and richly felt to be ours.

Believe me, dear James,

Ever your affectionate brother,

J. G. Bellett.

M. R. JOHNSTON COMPANY
PRINTERS
709 PINE STREET, ST. LOUIS, MO.
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Gospel Tracts — by J. W. H. N.

A Lieutenant General's Testimony

A Dual Testimony
(Confessions of King George of England)
and
(Gen. Chiang Kai-Shek of China)

The Wordless Book

St. Patrick

From Skepticism to Christ

A Queen's Question

A Convict's Conversion

A Child's Song

Have You Heard — Poetry

Other Good Tracts

Can You Tell Me the Way to Heaven
(What happened in Traverse Trench, First
World War)

Who Made It
(A happening in the life of Isaac Newton,
the Scientist)

The Hymn for "Passing Souls"

A Child's Prayer — Poetry

The above from
M. R. Johnston—St. Louis, Mo.
or
Erie Bible Depot—Erie, Pa.