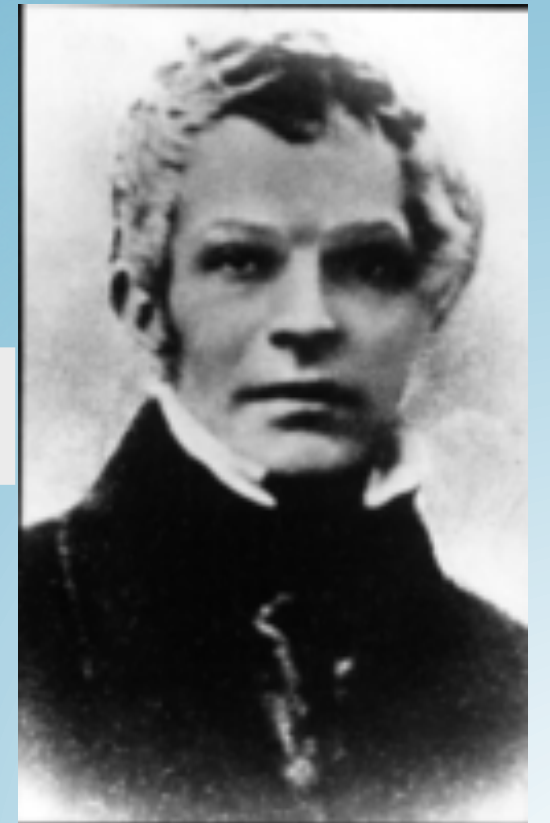


# Our Approach: J. N. Darby and Theological Method



# Outline

- ▶ Overview: Materials, History, and Theological Method
- ▶ Sources for Darby
- ▶ Darby's Life
- ▶ On Theological Method

# Sources for Studying Darby

- ▶ *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*
- ▶ *Collected Writings in 34 Volumes*
- ▶ *Collected Letters in 3 Volumes*
- ▶ *Notes and Comments in 7 Volumes*
- ▶ *Notes and Jottings*
- ▶ All available from Bibletruthpublishers.com in pdf format
- ▶ Please Go to [logos.com/communitypricing](https://logos.com/communitypricing) and



## The Collected Writings of John Nelson Darby (47 vols.)

By Miller, Andrew; Darby, John Nelson  
G. Mowbray, Dublin | 1875-1882

★★★★☆ 3 ratings

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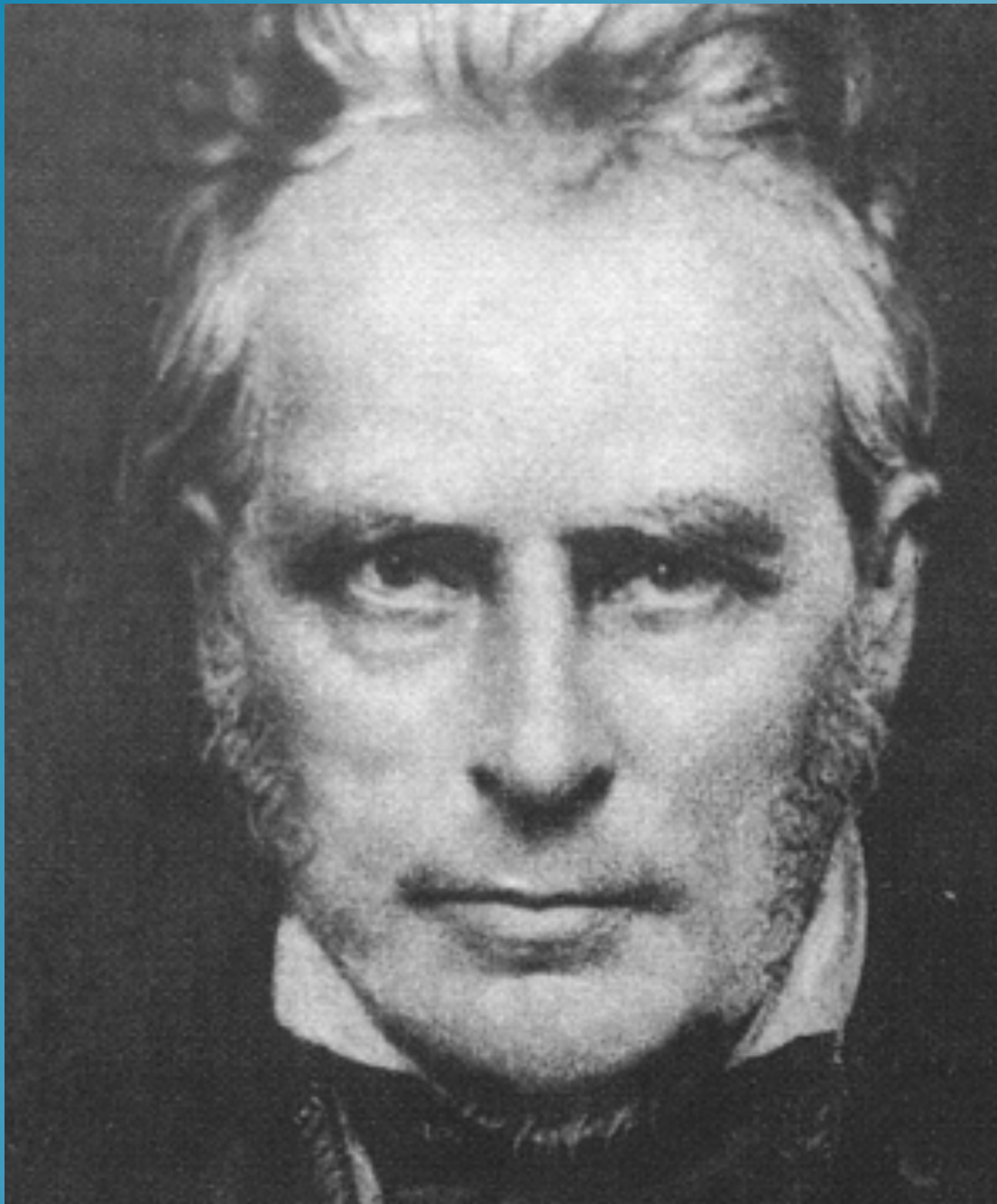
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# Some Helpful Secondary Sources

- ▶ **W. G. Turner**, *John Nelson Darby*, a biography, 1944
- ▶ **Larry V. Crutchfield**, *The Doctrine of the Ages and Dispensations as Found in the Published Writings of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)*. PhD Dissertation at Drew University, 1985
- ▶ **Larry E. Dixon**, *The Pneumatology of John Nelson Darby*, PhD Dissertation, 1985 at Drew University by Larry E. Dixon
- ▶ **Floyd S. Elmore**, *A Critical Examination of the Doctrine of the Two Peoples of God in John Nelson Darby* –PhD Dissertation at DTS in 1991
- ▶ **Shin-An Deng**, *Ideas of the Church in an Age of Reform: The Ecclesiological Thoughts of John Nelson Darby and John Henry Newman, 1824-1850*, PhD Dissertation at University of Minnesota, 1994.
- ▶ **Paul Wilkinson**, *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby*, 2007



# Historical Background

# Family

- ▶ Born: London, 18 Nov 1800
- ▶ Father: Irishman with title to Leap Castle in Offaly, Ireland.
- ▶ Mother: Daughter of **Philadelphia** sugar plantation owner named Vaughn. Extremely successful family.
- ▶ Christened in St. Martin's Church, Westminster 3 March 1801. Named after godfather Lord Horatio Nelson

# Education

- ▶ 1812 enrolled in Westminster public school.
- ▶ 1815 matriculated at Trinity College in Dublin as a S.C. (*fellow commoner*)
- ▶ 1819 Graduated as a Classical Gold Medalist and entered King's Inn to study law, then Lincoln's Inn in London
- ▶ 1822 called to Irish bar



# The Seven-Year Darkness



# The Call To Ministry: Darby's “Devotional Center”

“I was a lawyer; but, feeling that if the Son of God gave Himself for me, I owed myself entirely to Him and that the so-called Christian world was characterized by deep ingratitude towards Him, I longed for complete devotedness to the work of the Lord; my chief thought was to get round amongst the poor Catholics of Ireland.”

*--Letters, 3:297*

# Darby's Controversial Theological Life

# Darby's Theological System In Summary

- ▶ Not different from Reformed Theology on Soteriology; Heavily Depended on Total Depravity
- ▶ Emphasized Revision in Ecclesiology and Eschatology
- ▶ Three Distinct Actors:
  - ▶ GOD
  - ▶ ISRAEL
  - ▶ THE CHURCH

# On Theological Method

# Proposal: Systematic Theology as a Task

- ▶ The body of authoritative truth for building a Christian systematic theology is the Bible.
- ▶ We would all agree that our theological statements are not on par with the authority of the Scriptures.
- ▶ Yet we would also agree that the Bible speaks consistently within itself and addresses all of life.
- ▶ These axiomatic convictions render a view of systematic theology as an ongoing process, a task, and not a creed.

# A View of Systematic Theology in “Levels of Theology”

- ▶ Michael Stallard’s “Level” Approach to the Task of ST is a helpful way of arranging our thoughts in terms of authority and priority.
- ▶ Level 1: **“Biblical Theology”**—From Exegesis to Biblical Theology
- ▶ Level 2: **Whole-Bible Integration**
- ▶ Level 3: **Categorization or Systematization**
- ▶ Level 4: **Interaction for Validation/Invalidation of Extra-Biblical Truth Claims**
- ▶ Level 5: **Application**

# On Target

Exegesis

Biblical Theology

Whole-Bible Integration

Extra-Biblical Interaction

Application





# Darby on Method

# An Example of the Good and Bad in Darby

“Deeply convinced of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, given to us of God, and confirmed in this conviction by daily and growing discoveries of their fullness, depth, and perfectness, ever more sensible, through grace, of the admirable perfection of the parts and the wonderful connection of the whole, the writer only hopes to help the reader in the study of them.” --

*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Vol1 p8*

# Let's Break that Down

Deeply convinced of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, given to us of God,  
and

**Summary Statement**

confirmed in this conviction **by** daily and growing **discoveries** of their fullness, depth, and perfectness,

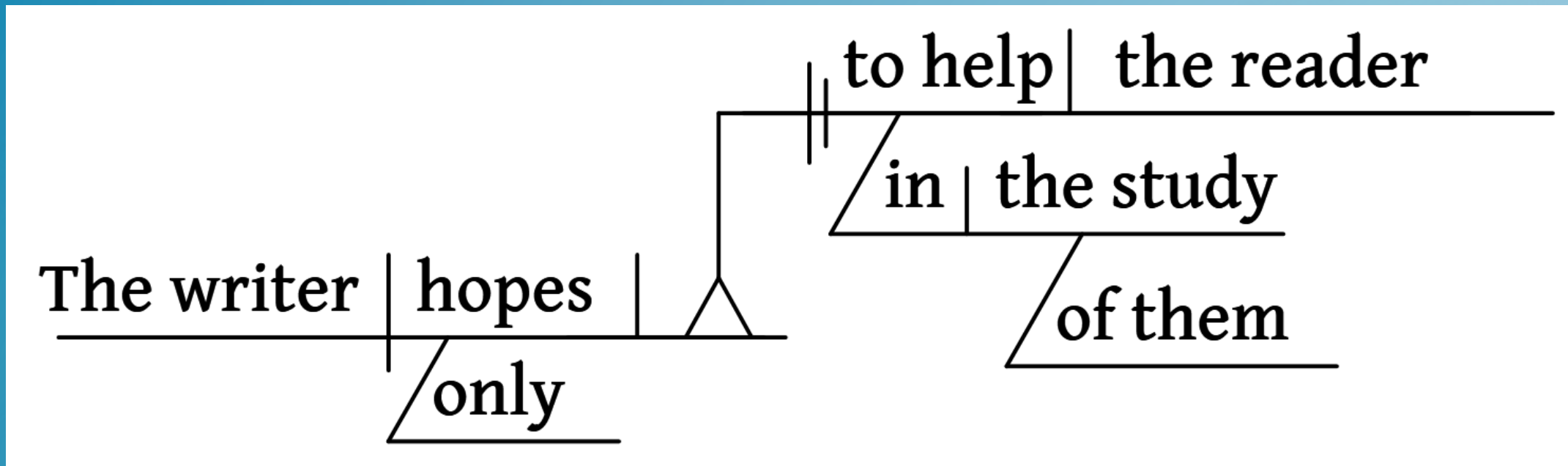
**Hands-on Experience**

ever more sensible, **through grace**, of the admirable perfection of the parts and the wonderful connection of the whole,

**Illumination**

the writer only hopes to help the reader in the study of

# The Main Clause



# The Message in the Adjuncts

Deeply convinced

1. of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures,
2. given to us of God, (restatement/definition)

and

confirmed in this conviction **by** daily and growing

**discoveries**

3. of their fullness,
4. depth,
5. and perfectness,

ever more sensible, **through grace**,

6. of the admirable perfection of the parts
7. and the wonderful connection of the whole

The Scriptures have a living source,  
and living power has pervaded their composition:

Continuity

hence their infiniteness of bearing,  
and the impossibility of separating any one part from its connection  
with the whole,

because **one God** is the living centre from which all flows; **Source**  
**one Christ**, the living centre round which all its truth circles,

and to which it refers,  
though in various glory;

Focus

and **one Spirit**, the divine sap which carries its power from its  
source in God to the minutest branches of the all-  
united truth,

testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him [Christ]

whom God sets forth as the object and centre and head of all that is  
in connection with Himself, of Him who is, withal, God over all,

blessed for evermore  
Medium

# Summary of Darby's Hermeneutics

- ▶ Literal (authorial-intent) interpretation of the Bible
- ▶ Literal fulfillment of OT prophecy
- ▶ Non-contradiction
- ▶ Typological meaning of OT narratives and poetry in light of NT revelation

# Reading the Bible With Darby

- ▶ OT Interpretation: Genesis 2
- ▶ NT Interpretation: John  
13:5-17



# The Concept of the “Central Interpretive Motif”

- ▶ Millard Erickson, Baptist Evangelical Theologian in *Christian Theology*
- ▶ That doctrinal category which enables the reader to interpret his system.
- ▶ An unfortunate name, since we reserve *interpretation* for “the meaning of a text.”
- ▶ Proposal: “Central Integrative Motif”

# Darby's Central Integrative Motif and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture

- ▶ Convalescence after a horse-riding accident
- ▶ Intense time of Bible reading, where “the Scriptures gained full ascendancy”
- ▶ Reading in Isaiah 32

**Darby's Central Integrative Motif  
Was the CHURCH**

# From the great Letter to Prof Tholuck (Vol III)

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

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

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