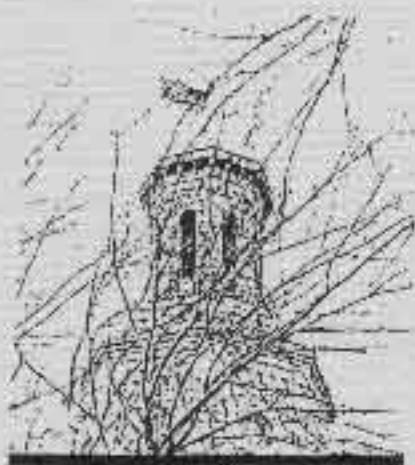


AN  
OPEN LETTER  
TO  
DR. MARK A.  
NOLL



MILES J. STANFORD

MILES J. STANFORD  
Christian Correspondence  
Colorado Springs, CO

23 October 1995

Dr. Mark A. Noll  
Wheaton College  
Wheaton, Illinois

Dear brother Mark

I am glad to say that I think a lot of you; not only that you and your extensive work are often thought of, but that you are highly thought of as a friend and brother in the Lord.

While not actually having time to do so, I have for the second time carefully gone through your The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind. You have certainly expressed clearly and forcefully your heart-burden for Evangelicalism.

Recognizing your Synoptics theological orientation, I can understand your insistence upon the development of the mind in both the secular and spiritual realms. I can also appreciate your being scandalized by Evangelicalism's lack of same. I am aware, too, of your placing much of the blame for this secular and spiritual lack upon Fundamentalism in general, and Dispensationalism in particular.

Mark, I would appreciate your consideration of my brief brief of **Pauline Dispensationalism**, which, unlike Synoptic-centered Traditional and Progressive Dispensationalism, is heaven-positioned.

Realizing your admirable penchant for historicity, I would share some facts concerning Mr. Darby, as formulator and systematizer of Pauline Dispensationalism.

**JOHN NELSON DARBY** (1800-1882) -- If it is mind you want--highly developed intellect--I consider John Darby to have possessed the greatest theological mind since the Apostle Paul, without exception. Sir Robert Anderson had a mind, and knew one when he encountered it:

The late Sir Robert Anderson, whose duties as head of Scotland Yard and association with successive statesmen at the Home Office between 1876 and 1901 brought him into contact with many of the great ones of the land in Church and State--Lord Rosebery, Gladstone, Balfour, Asquith, Chamberlin, Salisbury, et al--remarked to me in 1906, that "John Darby was the greatest man he ever met."

--A. Reese

Dr. J. Gordon Melton, an anti-dispensationalist, stated:

Probably no Christian thinker in the last hundred years has so affected the way in which English-speaking Christians view the faith, and yet has received so little recognition of his contributions, as John Nelson Darby.

Some of the vital doctrines that were reinstated and clarified by Mr. Darby are:

Our full assurance of Salvation, and unconditional eternal security; our complete acceptance by the Father in His Beloved and Eternal Son; the Church as the Body of Christ, with her Head in heaven; the distinction between Israel and the Church, and therefore between Law and Grace.

Also the basic dispensations of the rightly-divided Word; the pre-tribulational, premillennial Rapture of the Church; much light on prophecy; our identification with Christ in His death unto sin, His burial, resurrection and ascension; our deliverance from the reign of sin and the old man, in Romans Six through

Eight; our heavenly position in the glorified Lord at the Father's right hand; and God's purpose of conforming us to the image of His Son.

These doctrines, and others, are made available in his over 50 published volumes which average nearly 400 pages--all of which have been in print for more than 125 years.

Over and above this he accomplished scholarly and deeply spiritual work in translating the Bible into English, French, German; and the NT in Italian. His "Darby Bible" is considered by theologians to be on a par with the American Standard Version 1901, published several years later.

John Nelson Darby was of aristocratic heritage. Lord Nelson was his godfather. He forsook his fortune, and would have dispensed with his valuable library, but for 2 Timothy 4:13.

He released Lady Powerscourt from their engagement because of his pioneering ministrations, which, for 50 years, covered not only Great Britain, but included such countries as France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Jamaica, Canada, America, Australia, and New Zealand. He traversed these vast areas on veritable missionary journeys, not once, but a number of times.

And there was no ivory tower involved in the life and work of this incomparable scholar. He graduated from Dublin University at 18, as a Classic Medalist. He studied for the bar, and became a lawyer, only to resign almost immediately. He became a rector in the Irish Anglican State Church, resigning after two very fruitful years, before entering upon his life-ministry as founder of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

Mr. Darby loved the poor folk of this world, and always sought to share their lowly abodes and rough fare.

I love the poor, I have no distrust of them; I live by far most of my time amongst them, and gladly. When first I began such a life, I as to nature felt a certain satisfaction in the intercourse of educated persons; it was only natural.

The poor want as much of Christ as they can get to comfort them in their sorrow; the rich want as much of the world as they can enjoy with a good conscience. (The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby, 10:277).

Mr. Darby moved through this world on its lowest earthly level, as did the Lord Jesus, and Paul. And he profoundly affected it; not by means of intellect, nor politic, but by means of his spiritual influence upon the Church. That he accomplished from a heavenly perspective, as did Paul under the ministry of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider, Mark, the heavenly position from which he and all of his brilliant, spiritually minded co-workers, emulated Paul:

**THE APOSTLE PAUL** -- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:3; 2:6).

"If [since] ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things [in Christ] which are above, where Christ [and you] sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above [in Christ], not on things on the earth. For ye died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3: 1-3).

**JOHN NELSON DARBY** -- To abide in heaven in the Lord Jesus is my present place. My faith is exercised here, and my suffering may be prolonged; but I abide there, and while abiding in Him I engage myself with everything connected with my Father, and with reference to the position He has set me in.

In that blessed region where He has placed me, and where He alone can keep me, and where I am simply dependent upon Him, it is His interests alone which occupy me, and thus it is that I minister to the saints.

**WILLIAM KELLY** -- All depends upon this--the simplicity with which I receive the great truth that, as to all that I am, it was judged on the Cross; and now there is a new man before the Father, and a new Man before me--Christ risen from among the dead; and I am entitled to say, that is the One in whom I stand before the Father. We are now by grace in Another, even the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ, in order to give us our place in the very presence of our Father.

**C.H. MACKINTOSH** -- We are to look down from our place in heaven upon the ruins of earth. To realize our position in Christ above, and to be occupied in heart and soul with Him, is the true secret of power to carry ourselves here as men of God.

To have Christ ever before us--His work for the conscience, His person for the heart, His Word for the path, is the one grand, sovereign, divine remedy for a ruined self, a ruined world, and a ruined Church.

**C.A. COATES** -- It is a great thing to have the consciousness that we are bound up with the Lord Jesus there at the Father's right hand, and to know that we can participate in all that constitutes His life in that blessed circle of love and glory where He lives unto the Father. If we apprehend this we should not be deceived and influenced by what goes on here in this dark world.

**G.V. WIGRAM** -- Have you ever thought of the Father dealing with you not as to what you are in yourself, but as to where He has positioned you in His Son? What we were in the old man is not the thing to scan, but what we are, and where we are, in the Son where He is; and what there is in the living affections of the Father, who has raised us up together with His Beloved and given us all spiritual blessings in Him.

**J.B. STONEY** -- If we were more attached in heart to the Lord Jesus, we should long to be with Him where He is. We often look for Him to help us in our circumstances down here; but having learned His help down here, we should seek Him in His own place--dwelling in heart and spirit with Him there. Do not be too ready to lend yourself to the sorrows around you without entering into the joys which are yours in His presence there.

In pondering over my life [from his death-bed], I can now see how much happier a time I should have had, and how many sorrows I should have been spared, if heaven had been more definitely my resting place. One is apt to look for something in this place on earth while passing through it. I feel now that it is marvelous grace that I am as much entitled to be with the Lord Jesus in the heavenlies, as I am to be saved by the work on His Cross.

**J.G. BELLETT** -- Where do we see victory over the world? In those who are happiest in Christ. Why are so many miserable down in the traffic of the world? Because they are not as happy in Christ as they ought to be. Give me a soul that has boldness to joy in the Father's presence, and I will show you one that has victory over the world.

We are never called outside the camp till we are inside the veil. We have title to our home in the Father's presence; and we are to come forth from that Home to let the world know that we are servants to it, and strangers in it.

**H.F. WITHERBY** -- Being perfectly cleansed by the Blood of Christ, the Holiest of All is the believer's place before the Father, and it is simply upon the ground of what the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus has effected. It is the believer's position by virtue of His work on the Cross.

Our dwelling place is in the light in the Holiest of All, not by reason of our subjective condition of soul, but because the Lord Jesus has made the position ours by the putting away of our sins, and by bringing us to the Father. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood

of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10:19,20).

**F.W. GRANT** -- "In Christ" is the language of complete identification. Henceforth the eye of the Father sees us ever in His Son alone. We are reckoned, and are to reckon ourselves, as with Him dead, buried, quickened, risen, and in Him seated in the heavenly places before the Father.

Think of the fast embrace with which I find myself held, right to the heart of the Father Himself, when I discern my position in Christ. He is a heavenly Man, the Last Adam--Head of a new race; beginning of a new creation--and you and I who believe are "in Him," seen and accepted before the Father in His Beloved.

**F.G. PATTERSON** -- There is no place for learning the tender sympathy of the Lord Jesus, and the blessings of the Father's love and patience and care, as in the wilderness journey.

But we must first have reached by faith the Canaan to which we have already come in Christ. Then we find that this world is not the sphere in which our Father blesses us fully.

We have been introduced into a life on the other side of death and judgment. He has introduced us into a position on high with the Father--a fitting sphere for the life to grow and flourish.

**F. G. BURKITT** -- The Lord Jesus did not merely die to put away my sins, but to give me the infinite privilege of being positioned before the Father in all His own acceptance and loveliness.

If we are to be in heaven at all, the Father must have us there, lovely in all the loveliness of His own Beloved Son; and that, as far as the new man is concerned, He communicates to us here and now.

Pauline Dispensationalism, as exemplified by these leaders, understands and cares for this world from its heavenly, Christ-centered perspective; and it is in no way detrimental to its earthly concerns and ministry, but rather the opposite. "Not I, but Christ."

I sympathize with your call for Evangelical balance in intellectual development in the secular and the spiritual. In this equipoise I know that you realize that the spiritual must be primary--upon which the secular development depends.

The basic reason for this letter to you, Mark, is to encourage and possibly influence you to offer a higher platform upon which the Evangelical may develop the spiritual. On the last page but one of your book you say:

The great truth of the Incarnation is that the Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us. In this foundational truth we may emphasize the nature of the Son of Man himself, or we may emphasize his taking on flesh and dwelling among us.

The condemning scandal for evangelicals is that they have neglected the second emphasis and all that it implies about the possibility of thinking about the realm of flesh. Their redeeming scandal is that they have not yet forgotten the first (p. 252).

The foundation must give place to the "building not made with hands," which its purpose is to support. Christianity is a heavenly Body, positioned in heaven. The Incarnation upholds the Ascension. Hence the scriptural and Pauline admonition to the Evangelical, as well as the entire Body of Christ is:

"If ye, then, be risen [ascended] with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection [and mind] on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye have died, and your [Christian] life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3: 1-3).

Surely, Mark, one cannot be faulted for heeding the Scriptures in the development of the Christian life and intellect, and that for the sake of a judged and condemned world, "and the works that are in it, [which] shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10-12).

When the Evangelical is spiritually established from the heavenly perspective, he will be qualified for his earthly ministrations in this dying world.

Resting in Him,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial letter.