

A scenic landscape featuring a vibrant green field in the foreground. A small, rustic stone building with a dark roof is situated on the left. A large, full-canopied green tree stands prominently on the right. In the background, rolling hills are visible under a clear, deep blue sky. The text "Lesson 50 The Powerscourt Conferences" is overlaid in the center in a bold, black font.

Lesson 50 The Powerscourt Conferences

Edward Irving and the Pentecostal Gifts

- In lessons 44 and 45 we discussed Edward Irving, an early leader within the British Millenarian movement. Irving's melodramatic sermons gained notoriety as crowds packed into Caledonian Chapel in Hatton Garden, London in 1822. Irving spent the summer of 1826 on leave of his parish duties to translate a millenarian treatise by a Chilean Jesuit Manuel Lacunza titled, *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* into English. In January of 1827, just before the manuscript went to the printer, Irving added a short postscript to his very long introduction describing the first Albury prophetic conference. About twenty interested laymen and clergy were invited by the Honorable Henry Drummond to spend the first week of Advent, 1826, at his Albury Park estate in an extended discussion of prophetic truth. The same kind of meetings were repeated in 1827 and 1828. (Sandeem, 14-18)
- Edward Irving was the first millenarian voice in Scotland. He preached on the second coming of Christ to a crowded congregation in Saint Cuthbert's Church in 1828. (Sandeem, 23-26)

Edward Irving and the Pentecostal Gifts

- “During October 1831, much of London was excited and alarmed by an apparently sudden recovery of the apostolic gift of tongues in Edward Irving’s church. Carlyle’s attitude, though strongly antagonistic, reflects the varying reactions of Londoners.
 - The “Gift of Tongues” had fairly broken out among the crazed and weakest of his wholly rather dim and weakly flock. . . Once or twice poor Eliza Miles (a servant) came running home from some evening sermon there was, all in a tremor of tears over these same “Tongues,” and a riot from the dissenting majority opposing them. . . One night in one of our walks we did make a call, and actually heard what they called the Tongues. It was in a neighboring room. . . Mrs. Irving had retired thither with the devotees. Irving for our sake had stayed, . . . when there burst forth a shriek hysterical “Lall lall lall!” . . . to which Irving, with singular calmness said only, “There, hear you, there are the Tongues!” (Sandeel, 26)
- “This outbreak of tongues in Irving’s congregation neither dismayed nor surprised the leader. . . Irving, along with many other evangelicals, had been praying and preaching for a restoration of the apostolic gifts—healing and tongues in particular. Many millenarians felt that the Scriptures predicted a restitution of Pentecostal charisma in the last days, and this hope for a revival of apostolic fervor found a more generalized expression in other parts of the church as well.” (Sandeel, 26-27)

Edward Irving and the Pentecostal Gifts

- “When a number of apparently miraculous healings and utterances in tongues occurred in 1830 in western Scotland, Irving was not alone in believing that the expected outpouring of the Holy Spirit had begun. But although much interest was aroused, most of those who sought to discover whether this was indeed the anticipated renewal of the gifts of the Spirit went away disappointed, convinced that there was too much enthusiasm and too little adherence to strict scriptural principles for this little group of Scots to be considered the recipients of Pentecostal grace. Irving, however, was convinced and began to hold special meetings in which his small group of disciples prayed for the gift of tongues. When the utterances came, Irving—who, to his chagrin, never received the gift—found himself in the hands of charismatic prophets, though he did make a feeble effort to “try the spirits.” Moreover, for several weeks he discouraged the utterances in his Sunday services until he was warned by one of the prophets not to quench the Spirit. Impressionable as ever and only too ready to believe that the Spirit of God spoke most forcefully and immediately through the mystical and incomprehensible, Irving agreed that God alone had a right to decide whether or not there would be an outburst of tongues in the regular service.” (Sandeem, 27-28)

Edward Irving and the Pentecostal Gifts

- On 26 October 1831 the London Times described the following scene in Irving's Church:
 - “Immediately after the Rev. Mr. Irving had finished his “oration” he rose and informed his congregation that this Church was destined to be greater than the Church of Corinth; that he would yield up his Church to no one except a woman and a prophetess; . . . that she was now within these very walls, but that she never spoke but when the gift of prophecy was on her; and that if she prophesied on the present occasion he hoped that no one would be alarmed, but that every person should listen to her with the most profound attention.
 - No sooner had the Rev. Divine concluded this extraordinary announcement that the ears of the congregation were assailed with the most discordant yells proceeding from the prophetess, who only wanted the hint to be inspired with the aforesaid gift, when she roared and bellowed in such a manner that the whole of the congregation were thrown into a state of the greatest confusion. Some rushed forward to have a nearer view of the frantic bedlamite, while not a few amused themselves amidst shouts of laughter by indulging in the coarsest of jokes. Here was to be seen ladies fainting—there ladies calling for help—while the more sober-minded part of the congregated assembly made for the outer door with all imaginable haste, anxious to escape the contagion of such a scene of sacrilege and profanation. In this state of chaos and alarm Parson Irving stood up in his pulpit, and with eyes fixed towards Heaven, as if in a state of mental aberration, and seemingly unconscious of the scene which was acting around him, he looked, or pretended to look, as if he were in deep converse with his God.” (quoted in Sandeen, 28)

Edward Irving and the Pentecostal Gifts

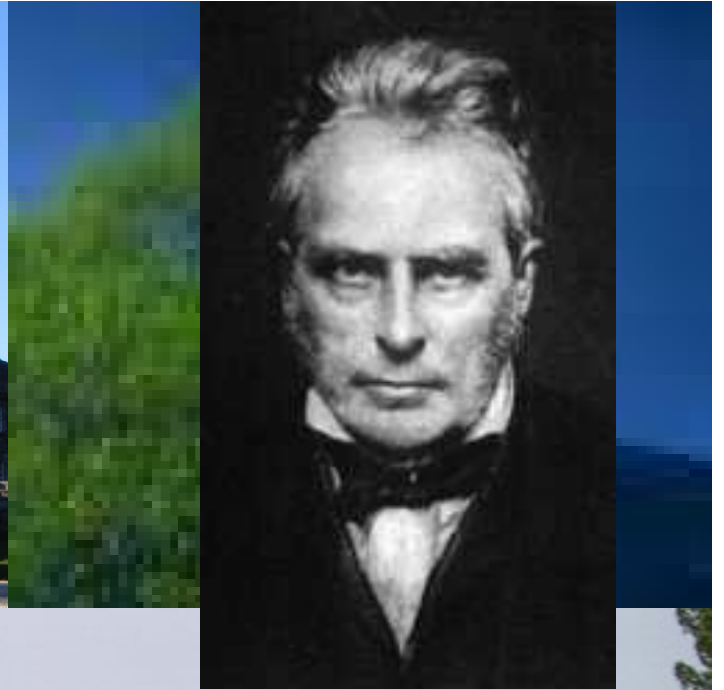
- “The notoriety of these events was detrimental to the cause of the millenarianism but was fatal for Irving himself. He was able to hold the allegiance of influential friends like Henry Drummond and willing workers like John Bayford and John Tudor, but most of the evangelicals and millenarians abandoned him. When he was tried for heresy, he found he could not count on friends even in Annan, his home presbytery. Defrocked by the Scottish church, rejected by most of his former friends, not even given much honor within the new Catholic Apostolic Church which he helped to found, Irving gradually lost his strength, though not suffering from any disease that doctors of that day could identify. He died while on a preaching tour of Scotland in 1834, in disgrace with all but a few in the world. Irvingism, however, was not dead to the “angels” of the Catholic Apostolic Church who were quite visible during the next decades. But even had there been no Catholic Apostolic Church, opponents of millenarianism would have kept Irving’s memory alive.” (Sandeem, 29)

Edward Irving and the Pentecostal Gifts

- “Edward Irving's impact upon the millenarian movement had been dramatic and brief. After his death the Catholic Apostolic Church won some converts but, other than that, played an insignificant role among millenarians and evangelicals. By contrast, the Plymouth Brethren, who also withdrew from the established church in an effort to revive apostolic Christianity, cooperated with other millenarians and eventually almost captured the movement.” (Sandeen, 29-30)

Lady Powerscourt

- “Theodosia Anne Powerscourt, known by all as Lady Powerscourt, was the daughter of the Honorable Hugh Howard of Bushy Park, County Wicklow. She was born in the year 1800. Her cousin, Francis Theodosia Bligh, was married to Richard Wingfield, the fifth Viscount Powerscourt.” (Weremchuk, 113-115)
- “Powerscourt is one of the greatest gardens of Europe, and lies just south of Dublin. It has a one-thousand-year history, and was originally church land. This land was the site of a royal castle in the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) and was held by a Norman knight, from whose name Powerscourt was derived.” (Weremchuk, 115)
- “Francis Powerscourt died in May 1820. During Francis's last illness her cousin Theodosia Howard was converted to God in 1819. . . On June 29, 1822, Theodosia married Richard Wingfield, and thus became Lady Powerscourt. . . But their earthly joy and happiness were to be short, for Viscount Powerscourt died on August 9, 1823, just over a year after their marriage.” (Weremchuk, 116)



Lady Powerscourt

- “Lady Powerscourt was interested in prophecy and she attended the prophetic meetings first held in 1826 at Albury Park in Surrey, England, in the residence of the well-known banker and member of Parliament, Henry Drummond. She was so impressed by these meetings that she began to hold some of her own at Powerscourt House. Previously every other Tuesday evening had been set aside for the study of prophecy at Powerscourt, where all who were interested were invited to come, and where Lady Powerscourt “proved” Darby with hard questions. Now she invited men from all over England, Scotland, and Ireland to her house and entertained them for a week, during which time meetings were held morning and evening, and everyone in the neighborhood was invited to attend. Daly (Reverend, Robert Daly, rector of Powerscourt) presided over these meetings, which turned into the annual Powerscourt conferences starting in 1831.” (Weremchuk, 117)

Lady Powerscourt

- R.A. Huebner concurs with Max Weremchuk regarding Lady Powerscourt's presence at the Albury Conferences. Huebner writes, "It seems that Lady Powerscourt attended some of these conferences and she had a small conference at Powerscourt in Ireland, in 1829 and 1830. In 1831, 1832, and 1833, there were larger conferences held at Powerscourt and the designation "Powerscourt Conferences" has been used regarding these three more public conferences. The happy thing about having the conferences at Powerscourt is that it removed the Irvingite influence and domination." (Huebner, 75)
- Before we consider what was discussed at these conferences we must touch upon the nature of the relationship between JND and Lady Powerscourt. Weremchuk suggests at the beginning of Chapter 3 of his biography of JND, that he had once been engaged to Lady Powerscourt. (Weremchuk, 113)

Lady Powerscourt

- “When she first met Mr. Darby is not at all certain, but it is very probable that it was before the Powerscourt conferences which Darby attended. Two facts point to a meeting earlier than the conferences. First, Daly was a close friend of Darby’s, and Daly was also the man through whom Lady Powerscourt was led to the Lord; through this connection an acquaintance was possible. Secondly, as was mentioned, the schoolhouse in which Darby held his services while still in the established church in all probability belonged to the Powerscourt estate; this connection could also have served as a point of contact. In any case we do know that they did meet each other, and they fell in love and became engaged.” (Weremchuk, 133)
- “The story goes that when the Brethren in Dublin heard of Darby’s engagement they prayed that the Lord might dissolve it and hinder a marriage; they felt that the Lord was using Darby mightily for His work and they feared that a wife would only hinder him in his service. When Darby heard of this reaction, he no longer felt at liberty to go on with the engagement.” (Weremchuk, 133)

Lady Powerscourt

- Huebner quotes the following from G.H. Lang's *The Disciple, Volume I* regarding JND's engagement to Lady Powerscourt:
 - “It was understood that J.N. Darby had thoughts of marrying her. His family, though not titled, moved in the same social circle, his father being John Darby of Markley, Sussex, the Leap Castle, King's County, Ireland. I am informed that this castle was destroyed in the 1922 disturbances. My father, who knew J.N. Darby well, told me that he did not carry through with this desire because his brethren advised him that it was more needful that he should travel among the assemblies.”
(quoted in Huebner, 75)
- Weremchuk implies that Lady Powerscourt took the initiative in ending the engagement. Though it broke her heart, “Lady Powerscourt believed she saw the way in which the Lord would be more honored, and she went this way at a very high price to herself. She died at the age of thirty-six on December 30, 1836. It is said she died of grief and a broken heart.”
(Weremchuk, 134)

The Powerscourt Conferences

- *The First Powerscourt Conference: Oct. 4-7, 1831*—the first of the three more public meetings began in 1831. This fact is noted by the editors of JND's *Letters* with the following citation, "The first Powerscourt meeting was held on October 4th to 7th, 1831." (*Letters*, 1:4)
- "Early autumn conferences were held beginning in 1831 at the county Wicklow home of Lady Powerscourt, presided over by the rector of Powerscourt, Robert Daly. Thirty-five clergymen, fifteen laymen and twenty ladies attended the 1831 conference, which was conducted in the same format as those at Albury." (Sandeen, 34-35)
- "In 1831 those gathered at Powerscourt discussed the interpretation of the 1,260 days, the corrupt state of contemporary Christendom, the imminent return of Christ, and clues by which the Antichrist might be identified." (Sandeen, 35)
- *The Second Powerscourt Conference: Sept. 24-28, 1832*—the second Powerscourt meeting was held from Sept. 24 to 28, 1832. As in 1831, "the Rev. Robert Daly, Anglican Rector of Powerscourt, presided." (*Letters*, 1:5)

The Powerscourt Conferences

- “Mrs. Madden, the biographer of R. Daly, who presided at the 1832 meeting, wrote that he was quite upset by the subject of the Irvingite gifts; and that “The Plymouth Brethren also gave expression to their peculiar views on religious subjects.” (quoted in Huebner, 76)
- JND stated the following regarding this meeting:
 - “There was, of course, variety of view in so large an assemblage, but scarce anything which did not positively add to the information of all - subject, of course, to the correction which interchange of views ever brings, where there is unity in the general scope. There was but one individual who introduced anything which could have given pain to any on these subjects; and that was a reference to the reception of “the gifts” and the principles connected with it. Little, however, was said upon it; and while the principles were calmly inquired into by a few, it did not, I think, affect the meeting, otherwise than to direct the earnest desires and prayers of many, for the more abundant presence of that Holy Ghost, by which alone, error can be brought to light, and the believer guided into all truth. On the whole, this part of the meeting was, perhaps, the most practically profitable, from the elucidation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit casually drawn out by it; and the presiding presence of the Holy Spirit most marked, by a careful observer; and several defective and erroneous views prevalent (to the writer's knowledge) in England, met by what appeared to be scriptural light.

The Powerscourt Conferences

- The belief in the coming of a personal Antichrist was common, and that amongst many who, at a former meeting, had not received it at all; in this there was a very distinct and avowed change of opinion on the part of some. The discussion of the subject of Antichrist led to an extensive development of scripture, and to much very profitable detection of the spirit by which he might work in the nations; though no definite conclusion was come to upon this; while the recognition of his actings amongst the Jews, in Jerusalem, was more definitely recognised by those more conversant with the subject.” (*Letters*, 1:5)
- Huebner points out “it is likely that the introduction of the subject of the Irvingite gifts gave an opportunity to JND and those like-minded to give ‘expression of their peculiar views on religious subjects,’ as said by Mrs. Madden.” (Huebner, 76)

The Powerscourt Conferences

- A brief sketch of what was taken up each day was given by JND.
 - *“Monday Evening, Six o'clock, September 24th, 1832.* - An examination into the quotations given in the New Testament from the Old, with their connections and explanations, viz.: - Matt. 1: 23, Is. 7: 14; Matt. 2: 15, Hosea 11: 1; Matt. 2: 18, Jer. 31: 15; Matt. 11: 10, 14, Mal. 3: 1, 4: 5; Matt. 21: 16, Heb. 2: 6, Ps. 8: 2; Matt. 24: 15, Dan. 9: 27; Matt. 27: 9, Zech. 11: 12, 13; Eph. 4: 8, Ps. 68: 18; Heb. 2: 13, Isa. 8: 18; Heb. 8: 8, Jer. 31: 31-34; Heb. 10: 16, Jer. 31: 33; Luke 1: 73, Gen. 22: 16; John 10: 34, Ps. 82: 6; John 19: 37, Zech. 12: 10; Acts 2: 17, Isa. 44: 3, Joel 2: 25; Acts 15: 16, Amos 9: 11, 12; Rom. 9: 25, Hosea 2: 23, 1: 10; Rom. 10: 5, 6, Lev. 18: 5, Deut. 30: 13; 1 Cor. 9: 9, 1 Tim. 5: 18, Deut. 25: 4; 1 Cor. 15: 55, Hosea 13: 14; Gal. 4: 27, Isa. 54: 1; 2 Pet. 3: 13, Isa. 65: 17, 66: 22.
 - *Tuesday.* - The Prophetical character of each book in the Bible; including the three great feasts of the Jews, the blessings pronounced on Jacob's sons, the Parables in the Gospel, and the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Revelation.
 - *Wednesday.* - Should we expect a personal Antichrist? If so, to whom will he be revealed? Are there to be one or two great evil powers in the world at that time? Is there any uniform sense for the word *Saint* in the Prophetic, or New Testament scripture? By what covenant did the Jews, and shall the Jews, hold the land?
 - *Thursday.* - An inquiry into, and a connection between Daniel and the Apocalypse.
 - *Friday.* - What light does scripture throw on present events, and their moral character? What is next to be looked for and expected? Is there a prospect of a revival of Apostolic churches before the coming of Christ? What the duties arising out of present events? To what time, and to what class of persons do 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3; Jude; Matt. 24: 23, 24; and 2 Peter 3 refer?}” (*Letters*, 1:5-6)

The Powerscourt Conferences

- After making an abbreviated presentation of Darby's notes presented above, Sandeen offers the following analysis:
 - "In the first place, the note of despair over the present condition of the church, common enough millenarians had become, in the hands of Darby and his followers, a strong if not violent attack upon the established church. In closing the second conference, the Reverend Robert Daly, evidently deeply disturbed by what he had heard, delivered a plea for understanding, forgiveness, and unity, noting that 'there have been great differences of opinion upon what appear to be fundamental points of doctrine. . . I see before us the prospect of divisions in the church.'"

The Powerscourt Conferences

- “Secondly, Darby and almost all the Plymouth Brethren advocated a futurist rather than historicist interpretation of the book of Revelation. This issue would have been discussed at Powerscourt on 27 September 1832, when the topic announced was “An Inquiry into, and connection between Daniel and the Apocalypse.” Daniel and Revelation contain independent but related chronologies of future events—this point was assumed by all millenarians. But how much do the two prophecies overlap? . . . The historicist party, . . . judged that much of Daniel was recapitulated in the book of Revelation and that the two accounts could and should be used to interpret each other. They believed that the events described in the Apocalypse were being fulfilled in the European history. Henry Drummond went so far as to state that all of the first fifteen chapters of Revelation had already been fulfilled and that in 1827 European history was hovering somewhere between the twelfth and seventeenth verses of Revelation 16. The futurists believed that none of the events predicted in Revelation (following the first three introductory chapters) had yet occurred and that they would not occur until the end of this dispensation. Associated with this rejection of the historicist harmonizing of Daniel and Revelation was the futurists’ attack upon the year-day theory, so vital to the dating of the 1,260 years to 1798. At the first Powerscourt conference the announced topic for Wednesday was ‘proof if 1260 days means days or years’ . . . futurism did not become a real threat to the historicists and an attractive alternative prophetic position until accepted by believers. This occurred when Darby, Newton, and the Plymouth Brethren adopted futurism.” (Sandeen, 36-38)

The Powerscourt Conferences

- *The Third Powerscourt Conference: Sept. 23-28*—"It appears that John Synge of Glanmore Castle presided, not Robert Daly. That it was not R. Daly is no surprise considering both his distress at things that were expressed at the 1832 conference, over which he had presided, and it appears that before the 1833 conference Lady Powerscourt had withdrawn from the Church of England." (Huebner, 77)
- H. Craik recorded the following regarding the topics discussed at these meetings:
 - "Monday, 23 September—Arrived at Powerscourt, from Glanmore about 1, and met thoughts for the breaking of bread. Felt united to Lady Powerscourt, who seems a dear, humble saint. In the evening, we considered the difference between the Everlasting Covenant and the Covenant of the Lord.
 - Tuesday, 24 September, 1833—Is the visible Christian church founded on the basis of the Jewish? What is the nature of the ministry and ordinances of the former? Are the promises to either, or both conditional?
 - Wednesday, 25 September, 1833—the analogy between the close of this dispensation and the former. What is Mystic Babylon? Is the call out of her to be a Divine call at a set period, or is it a perpetual call?
 - Thursday, 26 September, 1833—What is the connection between the present and future dispensation?
 - Friday, 27 September, 1833—The Temptations of Satan.
 - Saturday, 28 September, 1833—Heard brother Muller expound in the morning, after which we had the Lord's Supper at Lady Powerscourt's. Took leave, and came to Dublin, where the Lord, through Brother B., provided a lodging for us at his sister's in Bagot Street." (Tyler, 168-169)

The Powerscourt Conferences

- Sandeen states the following regarding the third Powerscourt Conference:
 - “Darby used the third Powerscourt conference in September 1833 to continue his attack upon the apostasy of the churches and to stress the need for all true believers to gather in the name of the Lord alone. In a sense this was the first assembly of the new sect, but it was also the first occasion of disagreement between Darby and Newton. Darby introduced into discussions at Powerscourt the ideas of a secret rapture of the church and of a parenthesis in prophetic fulfillment between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel. These two concepts constituted the basic tenants of the system of theology since referred to as dispensationalism.” (Sandeen, 38)
- It would seem, then, that after 1833 the meetings again were not as public. This may have been due, among other things, to a change in location. R.F. Coad stated that:
 - “Lady Powerscourt was not able to use Powerscourt Castle after 1833 (apparently because her stepson, the heir to the title, had come of age), but she held later conferences in Dublin until her death in 1836, and these seem to have been largely controlled by the Brethren.” (quoted in Huebner, 78)

The Powerscourt Conferences

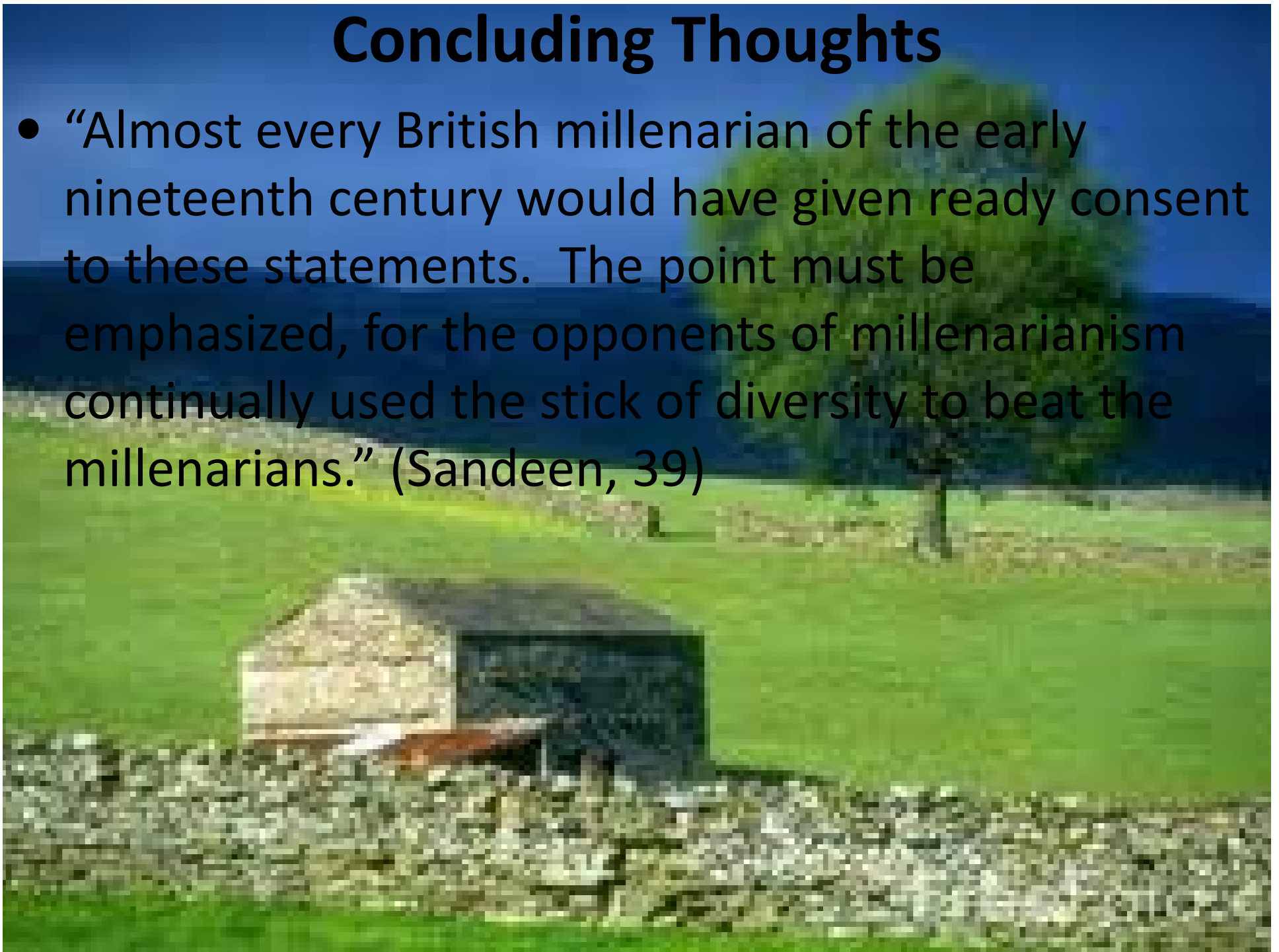
- In addition, it seems that B.W. Newton hosted a rival meeting in Plymouth in 1834. Newton held that there were intermediate events before Christ could come. JND records the fact that Newton was not at their meetings in 1834 and 1835.
 - “I have what I believe to be a correct statement of the meetings Mr. Newton attended. He did not attend 1834, 1835, but he was at 1836; that is, I believe, the last Irish meeting. He did not attend London or Liverpool, that is, the two last English.” (*Collected Writings*, 20:13)
- See the Appendix for the details of other meetings that were held after the 1833 Powerscourt Meeting.

Concluding Thoughts

- “In summary, we observe that the Powerscourt meetings were an instrument whereby the teachings recovered through JND were disseminated.” (Huebner, 78)
- The futurism advocated at the Powerscourt Conferences represented a clear departure from the historicism advocated at the earlier Albury Conferences. This difference was a serious source of dissent among millenarians during the first generation of the movement. Despite their differences both groups still held to the following basic points of the Millenarian Creed:
 - Belief that acceptance of the divine authority of Scripture required that the believer expect a literal rather than a spiritual fulfillment of prophecy.
 - Belief that the gospel was not intended nor was it going to accomplish the salvation of the world, but that, instead, the world was growing increasingly corrupt and rushing toward imminent judgment.
 - Belief that Christ would literally return to this earth and the Jews be restored to Palestine before the commencement of the millennial age.
 - Belief that this whole panorama of coming glory and judgment was explicitly foretold in the prophecies where one could, if taught by the Spirit, discover the truth and be ready for the coming of the bridegroom. (Sandeem, 39)

Concluding Thoughts

- “Almost every British millenarian of the early nineteenth century would have given ready consent to these statements. The point must be emphasized, for the opponents of millenarianism continually used the stick of diversity to beat the millenarians.” (Sandeen, 39)



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