

***THE RECOVERY AND  
MAINTENANCE OF THE  
TRUTH***

*by*

**A. J. Gardiner (1884 - c. 1972)**



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## BBM Editor's Introduction

The history of the Plymouth Brethren is one of brilliant scholarship, deep spirituality—and brutal self-destruction. Many are familiar with their wonderful written exposition, but few are aware of their record of judgmental behavior and unbiblical over-reaction that began to fragment the movement in the mid 1800's. That knowledge is vital for anyone today who has or seeks fellowship with a Brethren assembly—"Open" or "Exclusive"—because the same mindset continues to define them today. The lives of countless godly men, their families, and associates have been irreparably damaged by distortion, exaggeration and vindictive action taken against faithful servants of the Lord—whatever one may think of their views—because of what are often little more than personality conflicts, misunderstandings, or simple differences of opinion.

**"The Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth,"** written in 1951 by A. J. Gardiner, replaces and extends the earlier work of G. W. Ware, entitled **"A Review of Certain Contentions for the Faith"** through 1920. In 1997, a third book, entitled **"A Further Review of Recovery to the Truth and its Maintenance (1827-1997)"** was written by B. W. Burton to document, from the "Exclusive" perspective, the primary divisions of the Brethren, and extend the record beyond that of its two predecessors. Burton's book is still available but deliberately excludes certain information found in "Recovery" because it was considered unnecessary by the author.

Here is the *Preface* from Burton's book:

The material for this book has been drawn from several sources, but principally from two earlier histories. The first of these was by G. W. Ware, entitled *A Review of Certain Contentions for the Faith*. This book was published privately, had only a limited circulation and took the history as far as 1920.

The second book was by A. J. Gardiner, entitled *The Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth*. This took the history as far as 1951, the date of publication. Neither book is now generally available. In attempting to fill the gap left by the non-availability of these books and to bring the history up to the present date, the principles followed by the earlier writers have been adhered to.

The stated intention of the two former authors was to concentrate on the moral issues of each conflict for the truth, rather than to dwell on the personalities involved. Much use was made of letters written by persons used of the Lord in those times of conflict. Mr. Ware, in particular, drew attention to the fact that, in every attack of the enemy since Pentecost, his intention has been to displace the presence of the Holy Spirit amongst the Lord's people. On the other hand, the Lord, in allowing each sifting, has been calling attention to the state amongst His people. Mr. Ware also reminded his readers that the seed of every departure from the truth is in their own hearts. It is thought well to restate these points in introducing the present volume.

BWB  
Taunton, January 1997

We have been fortunate enough to obtain one of the few remaining copies of "Recovery" by AJG, and we are not aware of anyone who has published it on the Internet, so we are posting it, not because we are necessarily sympathetic with the author's perspective, but because we feel it is an important document that should be available to everyone who wishes to refer to it in their research.

For a parallel record from a non-Exclusive perspective, we also recommend reading Neatby's **"A History of the Plymouth Brethren"** (1901).

**Alfred John Gardiner** was born in London in 1884—about the time of the Raven division—and was affiliated with the Raven/Taylor Brethren in his early years. He was personally acquainted with James Taylor and spoke at the funeral of C. A. Coates. Some of his ministry was published, and he also wrote some hymns, one of which was included in the hymn book used by that branch of the Brethren. In 1948 he became a trustee of Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot—later, Kingston Bible Trust—which published his book, "The Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth" in 1951.

As those who are familiar with the the ruthless history of the Brethren might expect, in 1971, according to information posted on the web site of Gordon Rainbow, at the age of 87, dear Brother Gardiner was "withdrawn from" (a euphemism for *excommunication*), probably for his alleged criticism of G. R. Cowell during the Aberdeen division. An unconfirmed report states [that AJG] was buried with the burial of an ass, his coffin being dragged over the ground in the cemetery to his grave (Jer. 22:19). Such is the perspective of grace among those who, more than others, should know far better.

RO  
2004

*"They shall put you out of the synagogues... whosoever kills you will think that he does  
God service."  
John 16:2*

*"Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence...casts them out of the church."  
"Beloved, follow not that which is evil..."  
3 John 9-11*

\* \* \*

## FOREWORD

IN this book an attempt has been made to meet a desire, often expressed, for an account of the way the Lord has taken, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, to recover the truth of the assembly given to the apostle Paul—which was so soon lost in accordance with the Spirit's express warning as given us in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Timothy 3:1-5—and to maintain it against successive efforts of Satan to overthrow it. A very useful book on these lines was issued by the late Mr. G. W. Ware, but it had only a private and limited circulation, and is not now generally available, besides which the course of time since it was issued has brought further recovery of truth, and further opposition to it, which have been treated of in the following pages.

The object in view has been, as far as possible, to emphasise the particular truth that was involved in each conflict, rather than to dwell unnecessarily on history and personalities, and the method adopted has been to draw largely on letters written by those who were alive at the time of the occurrences in question, or who were well acquainted with them. In the process of compiling this history, much assistance has been derived from the book by Mr. Ware above referred to.

It is hoped that the perusal of this history will have the effect of stimulating faithfulness to the truth of God on the part of all who read it, the history itself affording the most encouraging evidence of the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, through all the years of conflict, in maintaining the truth in its purity notwithstanding every attack upon it.

A.J.G.  
1951

## INTRODUCTION

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It was in 1827 and the years immediately following that there first came into evidence the existence in many different places of a work of God, very small in its beginnings, which shewed itself in saints who were feeling dissatisfied with the state of things in the Established Church and dissenting bodies standing apart from the same, and meeting in private houses for the breaking of bread. At first the companies so doing often only numbered three or four, and were ignorant that similar companies in other places were doing the same.

In this work of God, no servant of the Lord can be identified as being specially used; the Spirit of God was operating sovereignly in the hearts of many saints, widely separated from one another, apart from the instrumentality of any one particular servant.

In 1827 Mr. J. N. Darby was a curate in County Wicklow, Ireland, but was much disturbed in mind by the action of the then Archbishop of Dublin, who charged his clergy to petition the Government for protection from molestation by Roman Catholics in carrying out their parochial duties. In the exercise of soul which this occasioned, the Lord shewed him that He was Head of the assembly, which was His body, united to Him by the Holy Spirit, and that each believer was a member of that body. This truth laid hold of him, and as **the sovereign right of the Spirit in the assembly to use whom He would** (*em. ours-BBM Ed.*) became clear to him from Scripture, the error of the clerical principle became apparent to him, and he left the Established Church in 1828, about the same time writing the paper, "The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ." The equally important paper,

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"The Notion of a Clergyman—Dispensationally the Sin against the Holy Ghost," was written about that time also, though not published till some years later.

In the years immediately following 1827 the work of God above referred to spread rapidly, and Mr. Darby soon became recognised as one whom the Lord was using in an outstanding way to open up His mind regarding the assembly. Besides Mr. J. N. Darby, Mr. J. G. Bellett, Mr. G. V. Wigram, Capt. Hall, Dr. E. Cronin, Mr. F. Hutchinson and Sir Edward Denny, among others, were identified with the movement, and also from 1833, though then only eighteen years of age, Mr. J. B. Stoney. Mr. B. W. Newton was also identified with it in its early beginnings.

It has always been the case that Satan has sought to oppose and spoil what God is doing, and never has it been more apparent, save in his unceasing opposition to the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, than in his opposition to the operations of the Holy Spirit in forming the assembly down here as a heavenly vessel, the body of Christ, united to Him, and taking character only from Him. The *Acts* of the Apostles shews how unceasingly the labours of the apostles, and especially the apostle Paul, to whom the ministry of the

assembly was committed, were opposed by Satan, either by violence or by sedulously introducing elements of corruption, and the condition into which the assembly fell, even while the apostles were still alive, as clearly indicated in the second epistle to *Timothy*, the second epistle of *Peter*, the epistle of *Jude*, and the first three chapters of *Revelation*, shews how successful that opposition ultimately became. At the time of the Reformation God intervened in power to establish the truth of justification by faith, and to bring in deliverance, over an extended area, from much of the pernicious influence of Rome, but the Reformers

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never accorded to the Holy Spirit practically the place that was His due, and as a consequence the clerical principle was never overthrown, and the state of Protestantism has long since been that described by the Lord in His address to Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead," Revelation 3:1. In these circumstances it is not surprising that when God again intervened, in the first half of the nineteenth century, to recover the truth of the assembly in its distinctiveness and heavenly character, and to establish it in power among His saints, the devil should renew his opposition, and maintain it ceaselessly, and the pages that follow are intended to give a broad account of the way that such opposition has been met by the Lord, and of the truth that has been established as a result of each successive conflict.

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# **Plymouth and Bethesda, 1844 to 1849**

## **EVENTS AT PLYMOUTH, AND SUBSEQUENTLY AT THE BETHESDA MEETING IN BRISTOL, 1844 to 1849.**

### **Part 1**

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The facts relating to these matters, and the principles involved, are clearly set forth in the following:—

(a) Letter by Mr. W. Trotter, dated July 15th, 1849.

BELOVED BROTHER,—In your favour of the 26th ult., you say you have received Mr. Juke's printed letter to the Leeds and Otley gatherings, from which you learn that something has occurred at Bethesda, rendering it in your judgment needful for us to separate therefrom, and you wish me to furnish you with all that has been printed on all sides. The fact is, however, that the present question arises out of others which have exercised the souls of brethren for years; and it would be impossible for you to understand the one without some acquaintance with the others. My object, therefore, is to give you a brief and general statement of the whole case, referring you throughout to such of the principal publications on all sides as may enable you to form a judgment for yourself as to whether or not my statements are borne out by the facts. All I desire is that with the facts fairly before them, brethren should seek light and grace from God to judge of them in His presence. Were He thus simply sought, with nothing to desire or maintain but His glory, I doubt not He would make a plain path before His people (indeed I believe He has done so) however difficult and intricate it may appear to anything but the eye of faith.

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It is now nearly twenty years since it pleased God to awaken many of His children to the importance, and solemnity, as well as to the exceeding blessedness of what He has revealed in His word respecting HIS CHURCH. Its union with Christ as one body (of which He is the glorified Head) quickened, indwelt, and governed by the Holy Ghost come down from Heaven, along with the proper hope of the Church, which is the coming of God's Son from Heaven, formed the substance of what the Christians I speak of were led to discern as the teachings of God's word on this subject. I speak not of God's previous dealings with the souls of many of them. They held of course the common faith of Christians with regard to foundation truths, and there was doubtless a great measure of personal devotedness, self-denial, and separation from the world, before they received clear light from God's word as to what the calling, glory, position, and hopes of

the Church are. What I speak of is the effect this light from God's word had upon their souls, and how it manifested itself in their course.

The first effect was necessarily a deep sense of the entire contrast between all that man and the world calls "the Church," and what "the Church" really is as seen in the light of God's thoughts. Deep humiliation and sorrow of heart, with unfeigned confession of the Church's low and sorrowful estate were the fruit of this. Then came the exercise of conscience as to whether they could maintain their individual connections with the great professing body in any of its several sections—whether, in short, this was not the practical denial of what the Church is, as the one holy elect bride of Christ separated from the world to wait on Him as her only hope, and knowing now the presence of the Comforter as her only joy.

Many and painful and deep were the searchings of heart through which these brethren passed; issuing, however, in the secession of many individuals from

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the various bodies of professing Christians, and in their coming together for worship and communion on ground entirely distinct from that taken by any of the denominations around. It was not that they attempted to re-constitute the Church as God (not man) had constituted it at first. To attempt this they (at least most of them) saw would be presumption, and end in something worse than that from which they had withdrawn. Having got a higher standard than before by which to judge themselves and things around, I mean God's own thoughts concerning "His Church," they had been forced by the contrariety to these thoughts of everything which bore the name of "the Church" to go "outside the camp." Just as Moses went outside God's camp of Israel because a calf was worshipped there instead of God, so did these brethren go outside the camp of the professing Church, because of the virtual and practical denial there of the holiness, the unity, and the heavenly calling and hopes of the Church; and finding one another thus outside, they were cast upon the living God for His guidance how to act.

They formed no system, they made no plan. Their hope was the speedy return of Jesus, and they desired to be found of Him, yea, and that as many of His saints as possible might be found of Him in such a position that they might not "be ashamed before him at his coming." The will of God and the end for which Christ died they saw to be "that he might gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad." The very instincts of the divine life too, made them desire and feel their need of the fellowship of saints. And it pleased God to show them that they neither needed to re-constitute the Church themselves (which was plainly impossible), nor wait till He should re-constitute it upon earth (which He has nowhere promised to do), but that at once they had the warrant of His word for meeting together for

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worship and communion, with the assurance of the Lord's presence to bless them and guide them onward in their path. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." In the faith of this they began to meet together,

and they found the Lord faithful to His word. His presence was manifested among them, and His strength made perfect in their felt and acknowledged weakness.

There were two things clearly involved in the ground on which they were thus gathered together. The name of Christ being the centre of their union, that which they looked for in any who sought their fellowship was the saving knowledge of that name by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. But then, as it was really the perception God had given them of His holiness and the holiness that became His house, which had separated them individually from the bodies with which they had been connected, so was there full provision in the blessed promise of our Lord above cited for maintaining that holiness even where but two or three are gathered together in His name. *"There am I in the midst of them."* More effectual provision for godly discipline there could not be, and solemn indeed is the sanction declared in the context as attaching to any act of discipline flowing thus from the presence of the Holy One in the midst of His twos or threes.

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The following extract from the *Christian Witness* of April, 1835, pp. 137-8, will show what were brethren's views on this subject then.

"Thus, in the worst possible circumstances, two things are secured to the Lord's people, their strength and comfort in His presence, and their right to regard as a heathen man and a publican, anyone who brings a scandal on his profession, and blasphemes that holy name by which he is called. The people of the Lord can always *act*; if they be His, they have

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His Spirit, and in that Spirit can meet together, and with that Spirit they can judge and withdraw themselves from any brother, who, after remonstrance, still continues to walk disorderly. So that the comfort of His worshippers, and the purity of His worship, is secured, by this charter of the ever gracious and loving Lord, to His very feeble remnant. The simple principle is, that the Lord would never oblige His people to sin."

I feel this extract to be an important testimony at this moment, as many are denying that brethren ever acknowledged any power or capacity for the exercise of discipline in the position they occupy.

For a length of time the blessing of God evidently rested on the brethren who thus began to meet together. Evangelising testimony went forth, and many in different places were brought to know the Lord. The attention of Christians too was awakened very widely, and in both ways the number of those meeting together in the name of Jesus was greatly increased. Much opposition was made by leading men in the several denominations, but this seemed only to increase the attention of Christians to what God was doing, and to confirm in their position of separateness to Him and simple dependence upon Him, those who had been brought there by His grace.

But in process of time it became very evident that many had been attracted to the position by other motives than those which swayed the brethren who originally took it.

Attracted by the manifestation of love and union which they witnessed, or finding more joy and refreshment under the ministry which God raised up among brethren than elsewhere, they assumed a position outwardly, the grounds and nature of which they had never really understood by the teaching of God's Spirit. They preferred to be among Brethren, not because they had gone through the exercises of soul which originally brought brethren out of the different sects to meet simply in the name of Jesus, and in dependence upon the Spirit of God

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alone, but just as people would prefer one denomination to another, choosing that one where all were happy and united, and the ministry such as they approved, never troubling themselves about other matters. Besides, as at the first introduction of the Kingdom of Heaven, "when men slept the enemy sowed tares" where the good seed had been deposited, so in the case before us.

It now appears that almost from the very first there were elements of evil introduced by the enemy, very slowly and gradually manifesting themselves for a time, but in the end assuming a distinctness and working with an energy which left no room for doubt as to whence they came and to what they tended. One person, Mr. Newton, of Plymouth, who if not one of the earliest labourers there, was there soon after the commencement, began at a very early period to pursue a course distinct from that of the other brethren. This you may see traced from the beginning in "The Narrative of Facts," by J. N. Darby. Suffice it to say here that Mr. N.'s course was such as issued in all the other brethren who laboured there at the first leaving Plymouth to work elsewhere. Mr. Darby went abroad, Captain Hall to Hereford, Mr. Wigram to London, and Mr. N. was left almost alone at Plymouth. A beloved brother, Mr. Harris, who was not identified with the movement at first, became associated in labour with Mr. N. at Plymouth, and his presence there for several years was the only hope that brethren elsewhere had of any check being put to Mr. N.'s course. He, however, at a very early period of the present trouble withdrew from association with Mr. N. and those identified with him. The system introduced by Mr. N., and most speciously disguised for a time, was directed to the undermining of all the truth by which God had acted on the souls of brethren, and thus to the setting up afresh in another form of all that had been renounced.

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The coming of the Lord as any object of present hope or expectation was denied, and there was substituted for it the expectation of a train of events, many of them nowhere foretold in Scripture, and only existing in Mr. N.'s imagination. The real unity of the church as one body indwelt and governed by the Holy Ghost was denied; and instead of it the doctrine was asserted of a kind of independent churches—so independent indeed, that when division took place at Plymouth, and godly experienced brethren from Exeter, London, and elsewhere went down to aid by their prayers and counsel, Mr. N. and his party peremptorily rejected their aid on the ground that they were not of Plymouth, and had no right to interfere. For the presence and sovereign rule of the Holy Ghost in the church was substituted the authority of teachers, and the authority claimed *for them* and *by them* was so absolute, that when Mr. Newton was charged with untruthfulness, and it was sought by one and another that the charge should be investigated before the

whole body of believers, this was steadily refused on the ground that he could not be tried but by those who with him were the teachers and rulers there, and as *they* acquitted him there was no further appeal and no remedy. Besides this there was the steady systematic absorbing of all ministry in the word or even participation audibly in public worship into the hands of one or two, with the effectual exclusion by one means or another of all others. See as to this Mr. Hill's letter, entitled "Remarks," etc. There was also the zealous unwearied endeavour to form a party distinguished by Mr. Newton's views of prophecy and church order, to which the appellation, "the truth," was arrogated, and means were found to keep away from Plymouth any brethren whose views were known to be adverse to those.

Such were the leading features of the system which silently grew up at Plymouth, and I was quite aware

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of its existence and of the concern felt by many brethren respecting it from the time that I became acquainted with the brethren between six and seven years ago. There were worse features to be developed than any of those, but the time did not arrive for their manifestation "till the energy of the Spirit of God was introduced into the scene in the ministry of Mr. Darby." Long had he and others watched the progress of things at Plymouth with sorrow and apprehension; still no hand was lifted to arrest the progress of the evil. At last Mr. D. came over from the continent, and after spending several months in Plymouth, labouring within the gathering there, and using what means he could to awaken the consciences of brethren, he was obliged, in order to keep a clear conscience himself, to withdraw from the assembly. He did so on the ground that God was practically displaced and man set up in His stead, and also that there was evil allowed in the assembly without any means of bringing it before the saints for judgment. Being called upon by many to explain the grounds upon which he had seceded, he consented, and in doing so he charged Mr. Newton in two distinct instances with having acted untruthfully.

The result of all this was, that a number of brethren from different parts went down to Plymouth, some of them zealous partisans of Mr. N., and others with no judgment formed on the matters they went to inquire into. As already stated their interference was sternly refused by Mr. N. and his friends, and he would consent to no investigation of the charges against him except on the worldly principle of arbitration, he appointing four of his friends and Mr. Darby four of his. This Mr. D. felt would be taking the case out of the hands of God and His church, as well as making himself the head of a party. This proposal he accordingly refused, offering at the same time to meet Mr. N. before the whole assembly, or, if it was preferred,

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before a number of the most grave and experienced brethren, or before certain brethren, fifteen in number, who had met together previously, and in whose presence that had occurred on which two of the charges were founded. To none of these would Mr. Newton consent. His fellow-rulers at Plymouth acquitted him, though one of them was distinctly implicated in one of the charges, and they were all identified with him and zealously



aiding him in the course he pursued. To no other tribunal would he or they allow the case to be referred (the proposal to arbitration having been, of course, rejected by Mr. Darby) and hence a separation became unavoidable. Mr. Harris had ceased ministering among them for some time, and he eventually withdrew from communion. Some hundreds withdrew and began to break bread in Raleigh-street, and thus the division was completed at Plymouth.

At first Mr. Darby's act was judged by brethren almost everywhere to be rash and premature. They had not been inside the scene, and so knew but little of the system that had been introduced. Several of those who went down to Plymouth to inquire, found things so much worse than they had any conception of, that they also separated from Mr. Newton and his party. One thing which seems to have weighed greatly with these brethren was the corruption of moral integrity, and the system of intrigue and deception which attended the evil. In April, 1846, a meeting of brethren from all parts was held in London for common humiliation and prayer, where the tokens of the Lord's presence were graciously vouchsafed to us, and from that time the eyes of brethren seemed to open to the evil. Mr. Newton and his friends were invited to that meeting but refused to attend. They printed their reasons for refusing, which were widely circulated.

Mr. Darby's "Narrative of Facts" was printed soon

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after, and in the autumn of that year a series of meetings was held in Rawstorne-street, London, very important in their origin, character, and results. They originated in a visit of Mr. N.'s to certain brethren in the neighbourhood of Rawstorne-street and breaking bread there. He held some Scripture readings at the house of one of them, after which he stated that his errand to town partly was to meet any brethren who were wishful of information as to the charges brought against him in the "Narrative of Facts." Most providentially Mr. Darby was at the time in London. He had come to town on his way to France and had got his passports, changed his money, and was ready to depart, when brethren waited on him to detain him till efforts were made to bring about an open investigation of the whole case, with accused and accuser face to face. The brethren to whom Mr. Newton had offered to give information, proposed to him this open investigation. It was proposed to him again and again by others, but steadily and invariably refused. The brethren meeting at Rawstorne-street then assembled, and after united prayer and consultation concluded that Mr. Newton could not be admitted to the Lord's Table there, so long as he refused to satisfy their consciences as to the grave charges alleged against him.

In connection with these events there were three documents issued by Mr. Newton and his party. One, a paper by Mr. Newton himself in answer to the charges of untruthfulness. Another, by his four co-rulers at Plymouth, assigning reasons for his non-attendance at Rawstorne-street to satisfy the consciences of the saints meeting there. Also a remonstrance addressed by the Plymouth rulers to the brethren meeting at Rawstorne-street on their exclusion of Mr. N. from the Lord's Table. All these were examined at large in four tracts entitled "Accounts of the proceedings at Rawstorne-street in November

and December, 1846.” These four tracts are very important as showing the dishonesty connected with the system of which the three papers before named were a defence. The proceedings at Rawstorne-street, and the publications growing out of them, cleared the souls of many; and in February, 1847, a meeting was held in the same place, attended by many brethren from the country, in which *nearly all those who had been at all looked up to amongst brethren* gave their solemn testimony as to the evil system which had grown up at Plymouth, and as to the need of absolute and entire separation from it. The testimonies of Messrs. M’Adam, Harris, Lean, Hall, Young, and others, were most solemn and decisive. There was scarcely a brother, whose name was well-known amongst brethren as labouring in the word and watching for souls, who did not at that time acquiesce in the sorrowful necessity for separation from this evil and demoralising system.

And now we come to a new era in this mournful history. Thus far the evil had been confined to the undermining of all the truths of which there had been a special revival, through the Lord’s mercy, among brethren—the setting up of clerical power and pretension to an alarming extent, and the effort to form a party for these purposes, by means indicating the total loss of integrity on the part of those who used them, and most corrupting in their effects on others. Now we are to find the foundations of the faith assailed by the introduction of false doctrines concerning the blessed Lord Himself. Strange things were known to have been taught previously. In his “Thoughts on the Apocalypse,” Mr. N. had taught the astounding doctrine that in the future glory the saints will participate in the omniscience and omnipresent power of the Lord Himself. Other statements, equally strange, had been made on other subjects; but it was not till after the London meeting, in February, 1847, that

there was brought to light a systematic and diligent inculcation of doctrines which undermine all that is essential to Christianity. These doctrines were first brought to light by Mr. Harris. He published a tract, entitled, “The Sufferings of Christ, as set forth in a Lecture on Psalm 6, considered, by J. L. Harris.” The lecture, notes of which were thus printed and examined by Mr. H., was by Mr. Newton. The following is Mr. Harris’s account of the way in which he became possessed of those notes, and of what induced him to publish them, with his remarks upon them:—

“I desire explicitly to state how the MS. came under my notice. About three weeks since one of our sisters in Exeter very kindly lent the notes to my wife, as being Mr. Newton’s teaching, from which she had found much interest and profit. When my wife first told me what she had brought home, I did not pay much attention to it; but shortly after I felt it was not right in me to sanction in my house this system of private circulation, and I determined to return the MS. unread. Accordingly I wrote a note to the sister who had lent the MS., thanking her for her kindness, and explaining my reason for returning it unread. It was late at night when I had finished writing, and I found in the meantime my wife had looked into the MS. so as to get an outline of its contents, which she mentioned to me, especially the expression that ‘the cross was only the closing incident in the life of Christ.’ She thought she did not understand the meaning of the author, and referred to

me for explanation. I then looked into the MS. myself, and on perusing it felt surprised and shocked at finding such unscriptural statements and doctrine, which appeared to me to touch the integrity of the doctrine of the cross...

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**EVENTS AT PLYMOUTH, AND  
SUBSEQUENTLY AT  
THE BETHESDA MEETING IN BRISTOL,  
1844 to 1849.**

**Part 2**

“In the law of the land there is such a thing as misprision of treason, involving heavy penalties when

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any one who has been acquainted with treasonable practices does not give information. In this case I believe the doctrines taught to undermine the glory of the cross of Christ, and to subvert souls; and it seems to me a duty to Christ and to His saints to make the doctrine openly known. The MS. professes to be notes of a lecture—I suppose a public lecture. With these notes on Psalm 6 there was given, as accompanying it, notes on Isaiah 13, 14, if I recollect aright, with this notice, ‘This to go with Psalm 6,’ or something to that effect; so that it appears from this title that these MSS. are as regularly circulated among a select few, in various parts of England, as books in a reading society,” etc.

The doctrines of this lecture on Psalm 6 by Mr. N., it will be best to state in his own words. Speaking of Christ, he says, page 7, “For a person to be suffering here because he serves God, is one thing; but the relation of that person to God, and what he is immediately receiving from His hand while serving Him, is another; and it is this which the sixth Psalm, and many others, open to us. *They describe the hand of God stretched out, as rebuking in anger, and chastening in hot displeasure: and remember, this is not the scene on the cross.*” He says, on the same page, that this—the scene on the cross—*“was only one incident in the life of Christ... It was only the closing incident of His long life of suffering and sorrow; so that to fix our eye simply on that would be to know little what the character of His real sufferings were.”*

After saying, “I do not refer to what were called His vicarious sufferings, but to His partaking of the circumstances of the woe and sorrow of the human family; and not only of the human family generally, but of a particular part of it, of Israel,” he goes on to speak of the curse having fallen on them; and then adds, *“So Jesus became part of an accursed people—a people who had earned God’s wrath by transgression*

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*after transgression.”* Again: *“So Jesus became obnoxious to the wrath of God the moment He came into the world.”* Again: “Observe, this is chastening in displeasure; not that which comes now on the child of God, which is never in wrath, *but this rebuking in wrath, to which He was amenable, because He was part of an accursed people;* so the hand of God was continually stretched out against Him in various ways.” From this dreadful condition he represents our Lord as getting partially delivered at His

baptism by John. I say partially; for elsewhere he distinctly affirms that He only emerged from it entirely by death: “His life, through all the thirty years, was made up, more or less, of experiences of this kind; so it must have been a great relief to Him to hear the voice of John the Baptist, saying, ‘Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Here was a door opened to Israel at once. They might come, and be forgiven; so He was glad to hear that word. He heard it with a wise and attentive ear, and came to be baptised, because He was one with Israel—*was in their condition, one of wrath from God*: consequently, *when He was baptised, He took new ground*: but Israel would not take it,” etc. Such were the doctrines promulgated by Mr. Newton.

The exposure of them by Mr. Harris excited general alarm among those who had been associated with their author; and he, finding it needful that something should be done, issued two pamphlets, in neither of which did he disclaim the lecture, or the doctrines asserted in it; but first stated it more at large, though in a less palpable and offensive form, and then defended and supported it.

It appears that, long before this, a paper of his containing the germ of this doctrine had been inserted in the *Christian Witness*. This was pleaded by Mr. N. and others in palliation of his subsequent course. It was said that he had avowed the doctrine openly in

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a publication read by brethren generally, and edited by Mr. Harris, and that neither he nor they had detected in it any error, till altered circumstances made them adopt a different standard of judgment. But the facts, alas! while quite showing how long Mr. N. had held, or been inclined to hold, his present views, formed no real palliation of the evil. In the first place, he had carefully guarded what he said in the *Witness* against what constitutes the chief evil of his present views. In the *Witness* he strongly asserts that the sufferings of Christ he speaks of were “*vicariously incurred*”; in his tract—“Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus”—he defines the sufferings he specially writes of to be “sufferings which pertained to Him, *because He was a man, and because He was an Israelite*; sufferings *therefore* which cannot be *restricted* to the years of His public service, but which must be extended over the whole of that period during which He was made sensible, under the hand of God, of the condition into which man had sunk, and yet more into which Israel had sunk in His sight.”\* These sufferings he carefully distinguishes in a note (page 2) from “those which were vicarious,” and “which latter,” he says, began at the cross.” Now this makes all the difference possible. I should regret to hear any one say that our blessed Lord endured God’s displeasure, even *vicariously*, all His lifetime. It would be an error, and a serious one, to assert even this. Still, it does not so entirely overturn the foundations of our faith. But to assert that the hot displeasure of God rested on Jesus throughout His life, *not vicariously*, but “because He was a man, and because He was an Israelite,” does subvert the faith; because if *as a man* and *as an Israelite* He was obnoxious to this, how could He voluntarily endure it on the cross instead

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of others? But, secondly, the remarks in question were not inserted in the first edition of

the *Christian Witness*, edited by Mr. Harris, and generally read by brethren, but added to the paper in a second edition, issued from the tract depot at Plymouth, under Mr. N.'s control. But I must proceed with my narrative.

\* The italics in the above sentence are Mr. Newton's own.

The two tracts issued by Mr. N. were answered by Mr. Darby. His pamphlet entitled "Observations, by J.N.D., on a tract entitled 'Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus'" is most valuable, and well deserving the study of any one anxious to know the bearings of this solemn question. He printed another, likewise presenting proofs in copious extracts from Mr. N.'s writings, of what his doctrines on this subject really are. The effect of all this, through God's great mercy, was, that many of Mr. N.'s friends, who had adhered to him till now, began to have their eyes opened to the frightful precipice to the brink of which they had followed him. By them Mr. N. was pressed to make confession of his error, and he so far consented to this as to put forth a paper, dated "Plymouth, Nov. 26th, 1847," entitled "A Statement and Acknowledgment respecting certain Doctrinal Errors."

I well remember the effect produced on my mind by an extract from this paper, which was sent me, and which was as follows:—

I would not wish it to be supposed that what I have now said is intended to extenuate the error which I have confessed. I desire to acknowledge it fully, and to acknowledge it as sin; it is my desire thus to confess it before God and His Church; and I desire that this may be considered as an expression of my deep and unfeigned grief and sorrow, especially by those who may have been grieved or injured by the false statement, or by any consequences thence resulting. I trust the Lord will not only pardon, but will graciously counteract any evil effects which may have arisen to any therefrom.—B. W. NEWTON.

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Supposing, of course, that the error confessed was the error contained in his recent tracts, my soul was bowed before God in thanksgiving for such evidence as this extract seemed to afford of a humbled and penitent state of soul in the writer. Judge of my surprise and sorrow, when I received the paper itself, to find that the above is almost the only word of confession contained in the seven pages of which the paper consists. And the error confessed is not that of the doctrine already described, the doctrine taught in the Notes of his Lectures and in the two subsequent pamphlets. No; he only withdraws these for reconsideration; and the error he confesses is one contained in his paper in the *Christian Witness*, viz., the attributing our Lord's endurance of the sufferings in question to His connection with Adam as federal head. This is the error retracted, and except the paragraph above cited, the tract is little but extenuation and excuse.

Those of Mr. N.'s friends, however, whose consciences were really awakened by the Spirit of God, could not be content with such confession as this. A meeting was held in Ebrington-street, in which Messrs. Soltau and Batten made full confession; and as many were more disposed for self-justification than confession, they withdrew from the assembly, and shortly after issued printed confessions, which now lie before me; and I

am sure these beloved brethren will excuse me in giving extracts from those papers to show, what none could show like those who have been involved in them, what the doctrines in question are. The following are Mr. Batten's words:—

These doctrines, or this system of teaching, may be stated as comprising:

1. That the Lord Jesus at His birth, and because born of a woman, partook of certain consequences of the fall—*mortality* being one,—and because of this association by nature, He became an heir of death—born under death as a penalty.

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2. That the Lord Jesus at His birth stood in such relation to Adam as a federal head; that guilt was imputed to Him; and that He was exposed to certain consequences of such imputation, as stated in Romans 5.

3. That the Lord Jesus was also born as a Jew under the broken law, and was regarded by God as standing in that relation to Him; and that God pressed upon His soul the terrors of Sinai, as due to one in that relation.

4. That the Lord Jesus took the place of distance from God, which such a person so born and so related must take; and that He had to find His way back to God by some path in which God might at last own and meet Him.

5. That so fearful was the distance, and so real were these relations by birth, and so actual were their attendant penalties of death, wrath, and the curse, that until His deliverance God is said to have rebuked Him, to have chastened Him, and that in anger and hot displeasure.

6. That because of these dealings from God, and Christ's sufferings under them, the language of Lamentations 3, and Psalms 6, 38 and 88, etc., has been stated to be the utterance of the Lord Jesus while under this heavy pressure from God's hand.

7. That the Lord Jesus extricated Himself from these inflictions by keeping the law; and that at John's baptism the consequent difference in Christ's feelings and experience was so great, as to have been illustrated by a comparison of the difference between Mount Sinai and Mount Sion, or between law and grace.

8. That beside all these relations which Christ took by birth, and their attendant penalties and inflictions, and His sufferings under the heavy hand of God, it has been further stated that He had the experience of an unconverted, though elect Jew.

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After giving this summary of the doctrines which had been held and taught by himself and others, Mr. B. thus proceeds: "I feel, beloved brethren and sisters, whilst writing this outline of doctrine, that it ought to be enough of itself to arouse and alarm you; that it ought to give you at once a sufficient insight into this system of teaching to lead you to ask what spell could have been so firmly bound around us as to make all contented

under it; to induce many not only to feed upon it themselves, but to circulate and commend it to others; and to lead some to defend and re-affirm it whenever assailed or threatened. This, I repeat, might be a very proper question for each to put to his own conscience before God; and I do not doubt that a ready answer would be supplied, according to our individual faith and acquaintance with God; at all events, I do not hesitate to declare that my own mind is satisfied to say—*delusion*, and that I am as free to own my conviction as to the *source* of this delusive power, however painful and humbling to *me* to do so.”

The evil effects of the system of doctrine from which he had thus been graciously delivered, Mr. B. solemnly points out in the following paragraphs:—

“I would say, then—1. That if Christ took at birth, and by birth, certain consequences of Adam’s sin, such as mortality; and that if He stood by birth in the relation to God of Israel under the broken law; and that if He took correspondingly the place of distance from God, and had the experiences of an unconverted man, there was surely need enough that He should work his way back to God, and find some point where God could meet Him. 2. That if the accompanying inflictions, rebukes, and chastisements from God, due to a person in that position, were really allowed to fall upon Christ, and were moreover pressed upon His soul according to God’s power and holiness, there was surely need enough that He

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should seek to extricate Himself, and find the door of deliverance.”

“This summary of Christ’s standing before God at birth, and the awful experiences and sufferings of His soul and body under God’s inflictions on this account, I solemnly present to you as containing Christ’s *disqualifications* for becoming *our* surety, *our* sacrifice, *our* Saviour! For He had to extricate *Himself*! He had to be delivered *Himself* out of this horrible distance, and from these fearful judgments. However free from taint His person might be, and is declared to have been, yet because of these relations, which, it has been said, He took at birth, it was even a question, as to fact, whether He could deliver Himself and be owned of God. This was, however, settled as regards His own acceptance by His keeping the law, and by His obedience *unto death*; but then, alas! all this was due from Him to God—due to the law, as having been born under its curse—due for Himself and for His own extrication: all that He could render *to the last moment of His life*, all that He could offer up in *death*, was needed by Him for Himself, and for His own deliverance!... But then what becomes of the blessed doctrines of grace? What becomes of the glorious gospel of God’s salvation? What becomes of the Church? What becomes of us individually? *We have lost Christ.*”

Mr. Soltau’s printed confession was more brief, but equally explicit and humble. So was Mr. Dyer’s: and it would be well for any one anxious to understand fully the nature of the question now before brethren, to read and ponder seriously and prayerfully those remarkable documents. They were not without their effect at the time, as a number more withdrew from Ebrington-street, and were in a while received afresh to



communion with brethren at Raleigh-street and elsewhere; and some time after Ebrington-street ceased to be occupied by Mr. Newton and his party,

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a smaller room in Compton-street being the place in which they have since assembled.

Some months after the withdrawal by Mr. N. of his heretical tracts for reconsideration, he published another, entitled, "A Letter on Subjects connected with the Lord's Humanity." This tract reaffirms the doctrines of those which he had withdrawn, and all the confession now made is of "carelessness," and "a wrong use of theological terms." Brethren must excuse me when I say, that to refer to this tract as an adequate exposition of Mr. N.'s doctrines seems to me either the height of folly, or something worse. First of all, notes of a lecture appear, in which the doctrine flows out freely from the author's lips without reserve and without disguise. Finding the indignation excited by it so very great, he publishes one tract expository of his views, more carefully worded than the lecture, but still plain enough; and another, vindicating those views against the charges of his opponents. Finding his own friends ready to desert him, he confesses his error on one point, and withdraws the tracts for reconsideration. The fruit of this reconsideration is a republication of the doctrine; but, after months of study bestowed on the subject, who can wonder that the form in which it appears is made as unobjectionable as possible? An acute mind, spending months of study on the stating of the obnoxious doctrine in as harmless and apparently unobjectionable terms as possible, while it is still maintained and asserted as firmly as ever, might be expected to produce just such a tract as this of Mr. N's. But who would trust it? Does he hold the doctrines he did when he wrote his former tracts? Yes, unquestionably. Then let us look to *them* to know what those doctrines are; or rather to the notes of his lecture prior to any of them, in which, without a thought of reservation or disguise, he speaks out what was in his soul.

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But there is another point I must advert to before Bethesda's connection with all this comes in view. In the month of May, 1848, a meeting was held at Bath, attended by about 100 brethren from all parts, the leading features of which were 1. That in it the brethren who had been rescued from the doctrinal errors of Mr. N., and whose confessions have been noticed, made further confession, full and ample, as to their implication in the charges made against the untruthful, immoral system of Ebrington-street, as brought to light in the "Narrative of Facts," and "Account of Proceedings in Rawstorne-street." *They acknowledged that these charges were just.* One, at least, of those who signed their names to "the Plymouth documents," referred to on page 8, confessed that these documents were justly chargeable with trickery and falsehood.\* It is not as delighting in evil, or feeling any pleasure in publishing my brethren's sins, the Lord knoweth, that I mention this. I am only astonished at the grace bestowed on them thus humbly to acknowledge wherein they had fallen; but I mention it because it is of all importance to remember that the false doctrine is not the only thing in question. There was a separation, and solemn necessity for it, before the evil doctrine came to light. And what was made clear to the simplest by the confessions of beloved brethren at the Bath meeting was this, not only that the doctrines must be repudiated, but the system of trickery and deceit guarded against, which preceded the open avowal of the doctrines.

Both system and doctrines, however, blessed be God, were distinctly confessed, and as distinctly renounced, by beloved brethren who had been most deeply entangled in both. Let this triumph of the restoring grace of our God and Father be our

\* My authority for this statement is Mr. Robert Howard, who was present at the meeting, and assured me of what is above stated.

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comfort now, and our encouragement to look for further displays of His almighty arm of love.

2. The other remarkable feature of the Bath meeting was this, that the “Narrative of Facts,” and other publications of Mr. Darby on these mournful occurrences, were subjected at that meeting to the strictest scrutiny; Lord Congleton endeavouring for five hours to prove them false, and Mr. Nelson, of Edinburgh, aiding him in his efforts. The result was, that the statements contained in these pamphlets were so fully established that some, who had always mistrusted them till then, exclaimed that they never knew anything so demonstrated. Mr. Robert Howard, of Tottenham, and Mr. Jukes, of Hull, who were present at the meeting, both assured me that nothing could exceed the triumphant manner in which these publications were vindicated from every attempt to call their statements in question; every endeavour to shake their testimony recoiling on the heads of those who made them.

It was immediately after this that the rulers at Bethesda\* admitted to communion there several of Mr. Newton’s devoted friends and partisans, and this in spite of all the remonstrances of godly brethren among themselves, and of others at a distance, who warned them of the character and views of the persons in question. The brethren on the spot who had protested against this step were now obliged, in order to avoid fellowship with what they knew to be soul-defiling and Christ-dishonouring doctrines and ways, to withdraw from fellowship with Bethesda. This they did; one of them printing, for private circulation, a letter to the leading brethren there, explanatory of his reasons for seceding. Ten chief persons at Bethesda then drew up and signed a paper vindicating their conduct in receiving Mr. N.’s followers, and rejecting

\* A meeting at Bristol.

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all the warnings and remonstrances which had been addressed to them. This paper you may see at full length in “The Present Question, 1848-9, by G. V. Wigram.” As to this document, I have only a remark or two to make. You may see it fully examined in the pamphlet just named.

1. The object of the paper is to vindicate the conduct of those who signed it in taking a *neutral* position with regard to the solemn questions which have now been hastily reviewed. They say, “We were well aware that the great body of believers amongst us were in happy ignorance of the Plymouth controversy, and we did not feel it well to be considered as identifying ourselves with either party.”

2. They do, nevertheless, at the beginning of the paper, disclaim the doctrines taught by Mr. N. They do not mention his name; but say, “We add, for the further satisfaction of any who may have had their minds disturbed, that we utterly disclaim the assertion that the blessed Son of God was involved in the guilt of the first Adam; or that He was born under the curse of the broken law, because of His connection with Israel. We hold Him to have been always the Holy One of God, in whom the Father was ever well pleased.

“We know of no curse which the Saviour bore, except that which He endured as the surety for sinners—according to that Scripture, ‘He was made a curse for us.’

We utterly reject the thought of His ever having had the experiences of an unconverted person; but maintain, that while He suffered *outwardly* the trials connected with His being a man and an Israelite, still, in His feelings and experience, as well as in His external character, He was entirely separate from sinners.” That is, they severally and jointly disclaim Mr. Newton’s published views on these subjects. And yet it is well known that one of those who signed

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the paper agrees with Mr. Newton on these points; and in the very last tract I have seen, written by Mr. Groves, brother-in-law to Mr. Müller, and an active agent and zealous advocate of Bethesda, Mr. and Mrs. Aitchison are named as among the known friends of Mr. Newton, and Mr. Aitchison is one of the ten who signed the paper. The simplest saint can see the want of uprightness in a course like this. Ten men sign a paper, in which they disclaim views held, and known to be held, by at least one of those who signed it.

3. The reasons assigned in this paper of the ten for not judging the error in question are most unsatisfactory, some of them being, in fact, the strongest possible reasons for their investigating it thoroughly. Hear their words: “The practical reason alleged why we should enter upon the investigation of certain tracts issued from Plymouth was, that thus we might be able to know how to act with reference to those who might visit us from thence (rather, who had already come), or who are supposed to be adherents of the author of the said publications. In reply to this, we have to state, that the views of the writer alluded to, could only be *fairly learned* from the examination of his own acknowledged writings... Now there has been such variableness in the views held by the writer in question, that it is difficult to ascertain what he would now acknowledge as his.” So, because the author of a heresy is inconsistent with himself, and knows how to puzzle and confuse his readers by apparently contradictory statements, the poor of the flock are to have his disciples let in among them, to scatter the poison of his sentiments, and the pastors plead as their vindication that very tortuousness of error which makes it doubly dangerous, and the necessity for a barrier against it doubly imperative!

4. There is a most dangerous principle asserted in this document. “Even supposing that those who

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inquired into the matter had come to the same conclusion, touching the amount of



positive error therein contained, this would not have guided us in our decision respecting individuals coming from Plymouth. For, supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came from under his teaching, until we were satisfied that they had understood and imbibed views essentially subversive of foundation truth; especially as those meeting at Ebrington-street, Plymouth, last January, put forth a statement disclaiming the errors charged against the tracts.” That is, a man may for years teach doctrines admitted to be fundamentally heretical (say Socinian); the congregation which allows him thus to teach (say Socinianism), puts forth a statement disclaiming the doctrines which are still, nevertheless, known to be taught amongst them, and thus accredited by them; members of the congregation apply for communion elsewhere, and unless they can be individually convicted of having “understood and imbibed” Socinian doctrines, this Bethesda principle would require their reception. They are members of a congregation which allows amongst them a Socinian preacher, and boasts of him as deeply taught in the Word, etc.; but unless we can prove that they themselves have intelligently embraced Socinian errors, we have no warrant, Bethesda says, for rejecting them. Do saints need more than this to open their eyes as to the ground Bethesda has taken? And this is no “fable,” no “exaggeration!” it is Bethesda’s recorded judgment of what the fellowship of God’s house is. The words above cited, to which “the ten” subscribed their names, and which were adopted by the vote of the congregation, tell a louder and more solemn tale in the ear of conscience than anything which has been advanced by those whom Bethesda looks upon as her adversaries.

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5. The manner in which the congregation at Bethesda were ensnared into the adoption of this paper of “the ten” is what no one could approve whose judgment was not previously warped. “Mr. Craik stated,” at the meeting held July 3rd, 1848, “what would be the *order* of the meeting, viz., the perusal, first, of Mr. Alexander’s letter, then of their reply. After which the church would give judgment upon it. But that they (the ten, I suppose) stated deliberately and advisedly, that they were firmly resolved not to allow any extracts to be read, or any comments made on the tracts, until the meeting had first come to a decision upon their paper.”\* Think of this: ten persons come forward with a paper committing the church, if they adopt it, to a neutral course between the author of those tracts and his friends on the one hand, and those who reject them entirely as unsound and heretical on the other. If this paper be adopted Bethesda becomes neutral between Mr. Newton and those who have disowned him; and yet, till this paper is adopted the authors of it will not allow any extracts to be read from Mr. N.’s writings, or remarks to be made on Mr. N.’s doctrines. And, when some objected to the congregation thus giving a decision in the dark, Mr. Müller said, “The first thing the Church had to do was to clear the signers of the paper; and that, if this was not done, they could not continue to labour among them; that the worse the errors were, the more reason they should not be brought out,” etc. Thus were Bethesda people required, under pain of losing the labours of their beloved and honoured pastors, to assume a position of neutrality with regard to doctrines on which there was not a word to be spoken till they had assumed the position And the majority acquiesced in this: by standing up they declared their approbation of this paper of “the ten,” and assumed the position which

\* See “The Present Question,” pages 53-4.

they were required to take. But while, on the one hand, the course taken in this matter by the rulers was most sad, let no individual in the congregation think to shift on to their shoulders the responsibility of the body in adopting their paper. Be it that they did it in the dark; be it that they were not allowed to have a ray of light shed on the subject, they did still rise up in approbation of the paper, and they had been informed previously by Mr. A. that the errors in question were errors affecting the person and work of our blessed Lord. Solemn was the responsibility assumed by the congregation in their vote of that evening; tenfold more solemn the responsibility of those who influenced them to come to it.

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**EVENTS AT PLYMOUTH, AND  
SUBSEQUENTLY AT  
THE BETHESDA MEETING IN BRISTOL,  
1844 to 1849.**

**Part 3**

It was soon after Bethesda had thus assumed a professedly neutral position by the reception of Mr. Newton's agents, and the adoption of this paper, explanatory of the ground on which they were received, that Mr. Darby presented the whole case to brethren in a circular, which has been reprinted lately in W. H. Dorman's "Review of certain Questions and Evils," etc. Soon after the circular was issued Mr. Darby went abroad. All the notice that was taken of it was in a hostile letter from Mr. Wakefield of Kendal, of the spirit of which I will not trust myself to speak, and all the arguments of which you have seen in Mr. Jukes's letter to the Leeds and Otley gatherings. It was by local circumstances that our brother Willans and myself were led, reluctantly enough on our part, to take any share in these proceedings. You must understand that by means of Mr. Müller's Orphan houses, Bethesda has links of connection with almost every gathering throughout the country. With one in Yorkshire we knew that there was a link of great strength. Two other gatherings in Yorkshire we knew to have very strong and tender ties to a brother who had been greatly blessed to them in former days,

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but who, alas! had been instrumental in part in placing Bethesda in the position she now occupies, and we knew that his policy had always been to keep the saints in ignorance of the Plymouth controversy, and that he had been on a visit to those gatherings since these troubles began.

A brother had removed from Otley to Bethesda, and by returning, or even coming on a visit, might at any time have forced the question on saints here. Efforts had been made, moreover, by some to prejudice the minds of saints here and at Leeds by altogether inaccurate representations of Bethesda's position, and of Mr. Darby's conduct towards it; and what weighed with us more than all the rest, Mr. Jukes, of Hull, came down from Bath, where he had been in intercourse with the friends of Bethesda's neutral position, resolved to take part with it himself, and this he could not of course do without either the silent acquiescence of brethren everywhere in these parts, or, on the other hand, the consideration by brethren of the whole case. We had anxiously looked for some persons of note amongst brethren to summon a general meeting to take Bethesda's case and Mr. Darby's circular into consideration. A step of this magnitude it was clearly out of the question for us to take. The question for our consciences was whether to stand by and see the Yorkshire gatherings quietly drawn into a neutral position between the Newtonian heresy and the receivers of it on the one side, and those who had faithfully protested against it and separated from it on the other—these gatherings all the while, save a few brethren in Leeds and Otley, being profoundly ignorant of what the questions

were on which they were to be thus neutral. This we could not with a clear conscience allow. We looked to the Lord, and had, I believe, His guidance in sending out the circular which you have seen. It makes known what the evil is, how by Bethesda's reception of it all the gatherings

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were threatened; and then states the course which, as we believed, the word of God required of us in these circumstances, leaving it, of course, to brethren everywhere to form their own judgment of the whole in the fear of God. I have no doubt that very many of God's dear people would have acted in the case better than we did, had they acted at all. But when none would act, and the evil was at our doors, we had no choice left us but to act as the Lord might enable us. He knows whether we sought His guidance, and what our motives were in the step we took. Results, too, have shown whether there was not the most imperative need for some such step. Sorrowful and humbling indeed was the state of things which made it needful; but God never fails His people in the worst of times; and I suppose there are very many now who feel that His blessing can be expected on no course in the present emergency but one of unyielding firmness and uncompromising decision.

It has been alleged, however, that Bethesda has cleared itself of all charges of fellowship with Mr. Newton's false doctrines, or the holders of them; and it may be well first to state what has been done at Bethesda, and then to examine whether by all this it is really cleared, so as to be again entitled to the confidence of saints.

A meeting was held in Bethesda, October 31st, 1848, in which Mr. Müller gave his own individual judgment of Mr. Newton's tracts, stating that they contained a system of insidious error, not here and there, but throughout; and that if the doctrines taught in them were followed out to their legitimate consequences, they would destroy the foundations of the gospel, and overthrow the Christian faith. The legitimate consequences of these doctrines he stated to be "to make the Lord need a Saviour as well as others." Still, while recording so strong an individual judgment as this, Mr. Müller said that he could not

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say Mr. N. was a heretic, that he could not refuse to call him brother. And he was most careful in maintaining that what he said was not the judgment of the church, but his own individual judgment, for which he and he alone was responsible. As to the paper of "the ten," and all the steps connected with it, he justified them entirely, and said that were they again in the circumstances they would pursue the same course. And what, I ask, is the natural effect of such a proceeding as this? On the one hand the individual judgment against the evil lulls to sleep consciences that are beginning to awake. People say, surely there can be no danger of unsoundness where such a judgment against evil is recorded as this. While on the other hand the door is left as wide open to the evil as ever; and Satan is quite satisfied if you will only let it in, whatever strong things you may say against it.

But it is now asserted that there has been a public investigation at Bethesda, issuing in a united judgment of the whole body there on the subject. This is said to have taken place in November and December, 1848; but the first word of it that has openly seen the light is in a tract which has only reached me since I began to write this letter, and which bears date June 16th, 1849. Before examining it, I would solemnly put to the consciences of brethren this question, *When Bethesda knew that her conduct had stumbled so many, and was giving occasion to so much division and controversy—if she looked on the decision come to last December as one that ought to satisfy the consciences of godly brethren who complain of her previous course, where was her regard for Christ's glory, the love of the brethren, or the peace of the church, in keeping this decision a secret from December to June?* But such as it is, now that it is out, let it be examined, and the Lord give to saints everywhere to weigh it in His fear.

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It is presented to the saints in a tract by Mr. A. N. Groves, in which he publishes a letter from Mr. J. E. Howard to Mr. Dorman. In this letter Mr. Howard says, The following statement was given me on the authority of Lord Congleton: "Seven church meetings were held at Bethesda between November 27th and December 11th, 1848. Mr. Newton's tracts were considered.

"CONCLUSION—That no one defending, maintaining, or upholding Mr. Newton's views or tracts should be received into communion.

"Written down by Lord Congleton from Mr. Müller's lips, in Mr. Müller's presence, Mr. Wakefield, of Kendal, being also present. January 30th, 1849.

"Result—By the 12th of February, 1849, all Mr. Newton's friends at Bethesda had sent in resignations—Capt. Woodfall, Mr. Woodfall, Mrs. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Aitchison, two Miss Farmers and two Miss Percivals. (Signed) C—."

Before noticing the statements contained in this remarkable document, one word may be allowed as to its author. It was Lord Congleton who for five hours endeavoured at the Bath meeting, in May, 1849, to fix the charge of falsehood on the "Narrative of Facts." Mr. Robert Howard assured me that his efforts were so weak and so absurd, that the only effect of them was to make the charge recoil on his own head. His conduct at that meeting was so sad, that when he afterwards sought admission to Rawstorne-street the brethren there declined receiving him until satisfied of his contrition for the course which he there pursued. And this is the brother whose name and testimony are put forward by Mr. J. E. Howard to satisfy the consciences of saints that Bethesda has purged itself from the evil!

It is with reference to the meetings Lord C. speaks of that Mr. Groves indignantly asks, "What! six weeks' anxious enquiry, during which every other

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meeting and business was suspended, to consider the question, and inform every member of Bethesda, in order to obtain a right and instructed judgment on this difficult

and perplexing question—*doing nothing!* What! disallowing *Mr. Newton as a teacher*, and refusing communion to all who defended, maintained, or upheld his doctrine or his tracts, after the most prolonged deliberation and prayerful enquiries—*doing nothing!*” It is a sorrowful thing when the only answer one can give to such an appeal as this is, “*Nothing to satisfy the consciences of any who value the honour of Christ, and the purity of the fellowship of His house, more than saving appearances and propping up the interests of a party.*” But let us turn to the document itself, and examine its allegations.

1. Seven church meetings were held, and Mr. Newton’s tracts were considered. The refusal to do this before had forced out from Bethesda some 50 or 60 godly brethren, and plunged numbers elsewhere into sorrow and strife, and is there no word of confession now that seven meetings are held to consider what might not be considered at all but a short time before? In the paper of “the ten” I read, “We considered from the beginning that it would not be for the comfort or edification of the saints here—nor for the glory of God—that we in Bristol should get entangled in controversy connected with the doctrines referred to. We do not feel that because errors may be taught at Plymouth or elsewhere, therefore we as a body are bound to investigate and judge them.” Again, I read, “The requirement that we should investigate and judge Mr. Newton’s tracts, appeared to some of us like the introduction of a fresh test of communion.” Now, how is it that what was so wrong in June and July has become right and needful in “November and December? How is it that what is refused in summer, at the cost of forcing out a number of godly, conscientious brethren on the spot, and

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plunging brethren everywhere into sorrow and division, is done in autumn *without a word of acknowledgment that wrong had been done before!* Nay, if we are to believe Mr. Groves himself, they still think they did quite right.

2. The conclusion come to was, “That no one defending, maintaining or upholding Mr. Newton’s views or tracts, should be received into communion.” Now this to a person who knew nothing of the controversy, and nothing of the tracts, would sound very fair and straightforward, and it is intensely painful to have at every step to call in question whether documents and declarations do really mean what at first glance a stranger would suppose they mean. But what are the facts of the case before us? First, there is no judgment given as to those who had already been received, received too at the solemn cost of the division which immediately ensued at Bristol, as well as all the rest which have followed elsewhere. It is a judgment as to who “*should* be received into communion,” not as to what should be done *with those who had already been received*. Secondly, the conclusion arrived at still leaves the door quite open to those who are in avowed fellowship with Mr. Newton, provided they do not “defend, maintain, or uphold his views or tracts.” There is nothing here that goes beyond the principle laid down in the paper of “the ten.” “For, supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came from under his teaching, until we were satisfied that *they* had *understood* and *imbibed* views essentially subversive of foundation-truth.” If a person comes from Compton-street, and has frankness to say, *I understand and hold*, and am resolved to *propagate* as I can, Mr.



Newton's views on the points now in question, he would not be received by Bethesda. But a dozen persons might come at once from Compton-street and be admitted

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into the heart of the assembly at Bethesda, provided they were so far under the influence of the immoral, deceitful system of the place they came from as to conceal the fact that they sympathise with Mr. Newton's views. They must "*defend, maintain, or uphold*" Mr. Newton's views or tracts to be excluded by this conclusion arrived at in Bethesda. Should they say that they do not understand Mr. Newton to teach what others attribute to him, and they themselves entirely repudiate the doctrines charged upon him, there is no hindrance here to their admission at Bethesda. And when admitted, they may speak highly of Mr. N., they may express their sympathy for him as an injured, calumniated, and mercilessly treated man, and so enlist the sympathies of Bethesda people in his favour. And is not all this doing Satan's work, and paving the way for their reception of the doctrines of the tracts themselves, when in some other way these fall into their hands? Nor are the means for this far distant. This we shall now see.

3. The result of this judgment of Bethesda is said to be that "By the 12th of February, 1849, all Mr. Newton's friends at Bethesda had sent in their resignations—Captain Woodfall, Mr. Woodfall, Mrs. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Aitchison, two Miss Farmers, and two Miss Percivals." And this is clearly put forth in Bethesda's defence by one of Bethesda's chief leaders! From the time that these questions arose, the uniform and oft reiterated defence put forth by Bethesda and her advocates was *that there were none in Bethesda* who held Mr. Newton's views, or promoted his designs. Now we are assured by Lord C. in a tract put forth by Mr. Groves, that all Mr. Newton's friends at Bethesda have sent in resignations! A list of their names is given us, consisting of the very persons who had been received by Bethesda in spite of every warning and remonstrance from within and from without; including also one name which was appended to the paper

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of "the ten." So that one of "the ten" who committed Bethesda to a neutral course is now ranked by Bethesda herself and her zealous advocates, amongst Mr. Newton's friends. And is there *no* confession on Bethesda's part of having despised the warnings and counsels of grave and sober brethren, whose testimony they have at last found but too true? Is there no expression of sorrow for having forced out from her fellowship those whose conduct has thus been justified in the sight of all? No, not the least. Bethesda, by her own account, has done right from first to last. Right, in assuming a neutral position, right in abandoning it, if indeed she had abandoned it. Right in receiving Mr. Newton's friends; and right in pursuing a line of conduct, the "result" of which she states to be the retirement of them all! Right in maintaining she had none within her pale tainted with the Newtonian heresy; and right in proving herself clear, by alleging that all such have resigned! But it is not a course of self-justification like this that either meets with the approval of God or commends itself to the consciences of saints.

The worst, however, remains to be told. So far from the six weeks' meetings, and the conclusion arrived at, and the result of both, having cleared Bethesda of the evil, or made it more worthy of the confidence of brethren, its actual present position is such as

to be less entitled to confidence than before. We are not left to learn the value and grounds of the resignations of Mr. Newton's friends from Lord C.'s statement, as two of them, Captain and Mr. Woodfall, have circulated a paper in which the grounds of their resignation are plainly stated. Two sentences from that paper are enough to make manifest the character of the whole proceeding. "This step of ours," they say, "has been finally determined on from a conversation with one of your pastors, who seems to think this would relieve *them* from some of their difficulties."

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"In taking this step we do not at all waive our claim, as brethren in Christ, to a seat at the Lord's table here."

Only think of an amicable arrangement between one of the pastors of Bethesda and two of Mr. Newton's friends who are in communion there, the issue of which is the withdrawal of the latter, *to relieve the former from some of their difficulties*, these voluntary seceders maintaining meanwhile their right to communion whenever they may think proper to return! And this is set forth as a proof that Bethesda has cleared herself of the evil, and as enough to satisfy the consciences of brethren that there is nothing now requiring separation from Bethesda.

The fact is, if I am correctly informed, and the truthfulness and accuracy of my informant I have every reason to trust, that there is an open communication between those "friends of Mr. Newton" who have withdrawn from Bethesda, and others remaining in Bethesda still. Bethesda has not professed to shut the door against those who are in avowed fellowship with Mr. N. and his adherents, unless they uphold, defend, or maintain his doctrines or his tracts. Sympathisers with him there are unquestionably in Bethesda still. They have the work to do inside; while those who have withdrawn can do work of another kind outside more effectually than they could have done it within. I say not that Messrs. Groves and Müller intended it should be so; far from it; but when expediency becomes our guide, and to maintain our own consistency our object, we become the dupes and tools of an unseen agent, who seeks to accomplish his own purposes by means of us and our ways. I state it subject to correction; and the moment there is a fair and open meeting, where everything can be gone into, I am willing to give up my author, and have the following statement, with every other I have made, thoroughly sifted and weighed. I have been

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assured of the fact, that *one person remaining in Bethesda claimed his right, or stated his determination, not to forgo fellowship with Mr. Newton's friends who have withdrawn*. And I have been credibly informed again and again that the meetings held by Mr. Newton's friends have been attended by several still in Bethesda. If these things are not so, let the matter be investigated openly and fairly; and if they should be proved untrue, I know who would be one of the first, by God's grace, to confess the wrong done to Bethesda brethren, and to entreat their forgiveness. But if these things be true, let no saints be persuaded that mutual arrangements, as matters of expediency, for some to withdraw while others remain, can clear Bethesda of that wherewith she stands charged,



or vindicate the holiness of God's house, which has been practically denied by her doctrines and her deeds.

Were I asked my reasons as an individual, for being entirely separate from Compton-street congregation, Plymouth, my answer would be twofold:

1. The sectarian, clerical, and demoralising system there set up, as unfolded in the "Narrative of Facts" and account of proceedings in Rawstorne-street.
2. The awful doctrines since promulgated by Mr. Newton on the subject of the sufferings of our blessed Lord.

Were I asked the same question with regard to Bethesda, my answer would be:

1. The declared assumption of a neutral position towards the evil system and evil doctrines of Mr. Newton.
2. The latitudinarian principle laid down in the paper of "the ten," and adopted by the body, that those who are in avowed fellowship with heretics cannot be refused admission to the Lord's table, unless they themselves have understood and imbibed heretical sentiments.

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3. The attempt to make the impression on people's minds that the neutral position has been exchanged for one of separation from Mr. Newton and his tracts, without any confession of error or sin in having taken a neutral position at first.
4. That the neutral position has not really been abandoned; that sympathisers with the heresy are yet allowed to be within, and no barrier presented to their free communication with avowed adherents of the heresy without.
5. The statements made by Mr. H. Craik in his letter to T.M., in answer to G. V. Wigram's Appeal. What he says there of the Lord's humanity, leaves no room for doubt that he does to a great extent sympathise with Mr. N.'s unsound views.

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**EVENTS AT PLYMOUTH, AND  
SUBSEQUENTLY AT  
THE BETHESDA MEETING IN BRISTOL,  
1844 to 1849.**

**Part 4**

A number of brethren at Rawstorne-street, London, and elsewhere, have addressed to Bethesda the following appeal:

*June, 1849.*

“To Saints who meet in Bethesda, Salem, etc., Bristol.

“In consequence of the late republication of J. N. Darby’s letter of last autumn (by W. H. Dorman), and of the ten co-labouring brethren of Bethesda, with extracts subjoined from G. Alexander’s letters, etc. (by G. V. Wigram) our souls have been exercised before the Lord in humiliation and prayer. This has led to the conviction that without compromising the holiness becoming the house of God, we could have no further interchange of communion with saints of Bethesda, under existing circumstances. Under this sad conviction, as we most anxiously desire to stand in fellowship with all saints, we earnestly wish to remove the apparent hindrances. We therefore, as separate individuals do earnestly entreat and beseech that the only thing which seems to us as a means to this end (viz., a meeting open to all parties concerned,

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who plead conscience as the reason for being present), may be accorded by you either in Bristol or elsewhere.

Let any evil which has to be corrected in any be shown there. If it be in brethren meeting in York-street, Bristol—in G. Alexander, J. N. Darby, G. V. Wigram, or W. H. Dorman—we desire in no sense to screen them any more than to condemn any among yourselves. Let the Lord’s honour and the unity and holiness of the church only be thought of.

Our hope is, that if such a meeting were held, the Lord Jesus Christ would, for His name sake, so overrule by His Spirit, that some results in common humiliation and blessing from His hand would follow.

Misunderstandings might be corrected, evil judged, while holiness and brotherly fellowship were still preserved to His glory and the comfort of our hearts.

This step is also urged on us more especially by first, Certain public acts of Tottenham, viz., its publication of the memorandum and reception from Bethesda; and secondly, A secession of brethren from Orchard-street on the grounds connected therewith.

The answer is requested to be sent (for us) addressed to M.N., at 1, Angel Terrace, St. Peter's-street, Islington, London.

For the congregation of Bethesda, etc., to the care of G. Miller, J. H. Hale and C. Brown.”\*

\* The above was signed by fourteen brethren, and copies of it by several others.

Mr. Müller's reply is as follows:

*Bristol, July 18th, 1849.*

“In reply to a communication addressed to the care of Mr. Hale, Mr. C. H. Brown, and myself, requesting a meeting of brethren to consider certain charges that have been made against Bethesda, I have to state on the part of myself and my fellow-labourers,

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that we are ready to afford full explanation of the course that has been adopted at Bethesda to any godly enquirers who have not committed themselves as partisans of Mr. Darby and Mr. Wigram, but that we do not feel warranted in consenting to meet with those *who have first judged and condemned us*, and now profess to be desirous of making enquiry. We think it well plainly to state, that were such brethren even to profess themselves satisfied with us, we could not without hypocrisy accord to them the right hand of brotherly fellowship. If they agree with the course followed by Mr. Wigram and others, then there can be no fellowship between us and them; if they disapprove of that course, we feel that they are bound first to call to account those who have been manifestly guilty of following a course tending to division, and of grossly slandering their brethren. Should, however, any godly persons *who have not committed themselves to the upholding of such persons* desire explanation of the course we have pursued, we are not only most ready to answer their enquiries (either by verbal intercourse in private, or by means of a meeting called for that purpose), but it would also give us real joy to satisfy the minds of such.

(Signed)

GEORGE Müller.”\*

\* See note on next page.

I pray brethren to ponder this letter. The glory of Christ may be assailed, and the foundations of the faith, as well as the moral integrity of the saints, be sapped and undermined; Bethesda stands quietly by, and assumes a neutral place. George Müller, Henry Craik, and others, are in their own estimation roughly and badly used; *but there can be no neutrality as to that*. Brethren propose to them a general meeting, as much to investigate their charges against J. N.

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Darby, G. V. Wigram, and others, as to investigate the charges these brethren made against Bethesda. They wish to screen none, to condemn none, but to hear all in each other's presence, and in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ; but no—Mr. Müller and

his co-labourers will consent to nothing of the kind. They would admit to the Lord's table the friends and partisans of those who had slandered *the blessed Lord*; but they will not meet *for enquiry even* with those who approve of the course pursued by brethren supposed to have slandered them. Surely this may safely be left for the judgment of the saints.\*

\* The letter from Mr. Müller and the comments made thereon were added subsequently by Mr. Trotter.

It only remains for me to notice two or three points much urged by those who object to a decided course of action in this solemn matter. It is often said that in declining fellowship with those who come from Bethesda in its present state, we treat them worse than we do Christians in the denominations generally. It has been asked again and again, whether we would not receive a godly clergyman remaining in the Church of England, where all indiscriminately are received to communion. I answer, unhesitatingly, yes, we should, as always, receive a brother in the Lord who is in the Establishment or among the Dissenters, without requiring him beforehand to separate from the body of which he is a member. But what has this to say to the case in hand? Does a clergyman's reception of unconverted people at the table of the Establishment accredit them to us as Christians? Not in the least. But is this the case with Bethesda? The profession is, that none but Christians are received there; and any one coming thence heretofore, has come fully accredited as a Christian. If, then, Bethesda admits those who are unsound in the faith, the result is, that all confidence is destroyed, and we should never

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know, in admitting persons thence, whether we were not receiving under the guise of a "dear brother or sister" an enemy of the faith, and a subverter of souls. This is the position in which Bethesda has placed itself; a position altogether unlike that of the Establishment, or of any evangelical Dissenting body. If I knew of a Dissenting congregation which, on principle, and to maintain a neutral place, received Socinians as well as Orthodox believers to communion, I should no more receive persons from that congregation than from Bethesda. I should have no confidence in their confessions of faith, however sound, till they had renounced their unholy association with the deniers of the Lord that bought them. And I regard Mr. Newton's doctrine as a more dangerous, because more insidious and artfully disguised heresy than Socinianism itself.

Men may subvert the faith without denying *in terms* the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. The Judaizing teachers in Galatia had not laid aside the name of Christ, or ceased to acknowledge Him in word as the Saviour. But they taught doctrines which, if true, made His death unnecessary and vain. And both Peter and Barnabas were for a little season drawn into the snare. But what said Paul of those subverters of the faith? "I would they were cut off that trouble you." "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The assertion that "the resurrection is passed already"\* was not the denial *in terms* of what our faith rests upon; but it was the assertion of that which, if believed, took away from the soul the only resting place for faith. "If the dead rise not, then is not

\* The assertion that "the resurrection is past already" appears in 2 Timothy 2:18. The writer of the letter probably intended to allude to the assertion that "there is no resurrection of the dead," which we have in 1 Corinthians 15:12.

Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” Paul knew nothing of the false charity of the present day. He delivered Hymeneus to Satan that he might learn not to blaspheme. And though there may be no one in the present day to exercise discipline in that form, the obligation of saints to be separate from such blasphemy, and from all those who practise and allow it, is as solemn now as then. Indeed, separation from evil is not a question of power, but of obligation. A saint always has power to keep a clean conscience. It is not to a large and ordered church, but to “the elect lady and her children” that John writes, “If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

But are you not introducing a fresh test of communion, and so setting up a sect? is a question that is often asked. Let us look to Scripture for the answer. All must allow that in the earliest days of the church it was *as Christians* that God’s people met together. They received one another as the Lord Jesus Christ had received them, to the glory of God the Father. But when Satan had sown his tares and they began to grow up, when grievous wolves had entered in, not sparing the sheep, and when from among themselves men had arisen speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them; when for instance, the doctrine was taught that “the resurrection was past already,” and Paul had delivered the teachers of it to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme; was such an act of holy discipline setting up some new term of communion? Suppose a thousand people, and among them many Christians, had sympathised with those heretics and refused to renounce their fellowship, thereby taking sides with them against the apostle and against the Holy Spirit

by whose power the apostle acted, can we suppose that such persons would have been received to communion by the apostle, or by any who regarded the apostle’s authority? And would the rejection of such be setting up any new term of communion? Did the beloved disciple set up a new term of communion in warning the elect lady not to receive the false teachers of that day? Suppose some one who had received these deniers of the faith had come to the elect lady and her children expecting to be received as before; and suppose she, feeble sister as she was, had said, meekly, but firmly—No: the Holy Ghost by the Apostle says that he who biddeth them God-speed is partaker of their evil deeds. You have received those enemies of the faith, and have thus become partakers of their evil deeds. You now stand in the same place as they do, I dare not receive you lest I become partaker with you of your and their evil deeds. Would such a testimony have been setting up some new term of communion? Multiply the receptions *ad infinitum*, the principle remains the same. Many a plea of ignorance and unguardedness may come in and have to be considered, and such pleas would be more admissible the further off the case was removed from the origin of the evil. But rejecting heretics and the receivers of them is not setting up any new term of communion; it was not in the apostle’s days, nor is it now.

If any ask then, Do you not meet as Christians, and if so, how can you think of refusing so many who are undoubtedly such? my answer is, Assuredly we meet as Christians, and

it is *because we do* that we can receive none among us who either by their sentiments or their conduct undermine the foundations of Christianity.

I would not close this communication without expressing my deep and unfeigned sorrow that any necessity should have arisen for speaking as I have

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had to do of brethren at whose feet I feel unworthy to sit. With brethren Müller and Craik I have never had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance; but often have I had to thank God for the refreshment ministered to my soul through the writings of the one, and often have I been humbled at the thought of the faith and devotedness of both the one and the other. However, I may have had in faithfulness to our common Master and love to His sheep, to canvass the course pursued in this matter by these beloved brethren, and however sorrowful my impressions as to the line of conduct into which they have been betrayed, I know of no unkindly feeling towards them in my heart, much less could I think of despising their “grey hairs,” or forget the injunction, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder.” But where God’s glory and the honour of His Christ is the question at issue, all lesser considerations must stand aside. The Lord look upon us and pity us, and send us restoration and blessing, as, if He tarries, He assuredly will in His own time and way. May we have grace to bow to His hand who smites us in love! In patience may we possess our souls; and may the chastenings of His love work in us by the power of the Holy Ghost all that repentance, that vehement desire, that revenge upon ourselves, that will prove us at least clear in this matter. The Lord grant it, and send health and healing, for His blessed name’s sake!

Ever, dear brother,  
Affectionately yours,  
W. TROTTER.

*To Thomas Grundy.*

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## APPENDIX

### LETTER OF THE TEN

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“DEAR BRETHREN,—Our brother, Mr. George Alexander, having printed and circulated a statement expressive of his reasons for withdrawing from visible fellowship with us at the table of the Lord; and these reasons being grounded on the fact that those who labour among you have not complied with his request relative to the judging of certain errors which have been taught at Plymouth; it becomes needful that those of us who have incurred any responsibility in this matter should lay before you a brief explanation of the way in which we have acted.

“And first, it may be well to mention, that we had no intimation whatever of our brother’s intention to act as he has done, nor any knowledge of his intention to circulate any letter, until it was put into our hands in print.

“Some weeks ago, he expressed his determination to bring his views before a meeting of the body, and he was told that he was quite at liberty to do so. He afterwards declared that he would waive this, but never intimated, in the slightest way, his intention to act as he has done, without first affording the church an opportunity of hearing his reasons for separation. Under these circumstances, we feel, it of the deepest importance, for relieving the disquietude of mind naturally occasioned by our brother’s letter, explicitly to state that the views relative to the Person of our blessed Lord, held by those who for sixteen years have been occupied in teaching the word among you, *are unchanged*.

“The truths relative to the divinity of His Person—the sinlessness of His nature—and the perfection of His sacrifice, which have been taught both in public

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teaching and in writing, for these many years past, are, through the grace of God, those which we still maintain. We feel it most important to make this avowal, inasmuch as the letter referred to is calculated, we trust unintentionally, to convey a different impression to the minds of such as cherish a godly jealousy for the faith once delivered to the saints.

“We add, for the further satisfaction of any who may have had their minds disturbed, that we utterly disclaim the assertion that the blessed Son of God was involved in the guilt of the first Adam; or that He was born under the curse of the broken law, because of His connection with Israel. We hold Him to have been always the Holy One of God, in whom the Father was ever well pleased. We know of no curse which the Saviour bore, except that which He endured as the surety for sinners—according to that scripture, ‘He was made a curse for us.’ We utterly reject the thought of His ever having had the experiences of an unconverted person; but maintain that while He suffered *outwardly* the trials connected with His being a man and an Israelite—still in His feelings and experiences, as well as in His external character, He was entirely ‘separate from sinners.’

“We now proceed to state the grounds on which we have felt a difficulty in complying with the request of our brother, Mr. Alexander, that we should formally investigate and give judgment on certain errors which have been taught among Christians meeting at Plymouth.

“1. We considered from the beginning that it would not be for the comfort or edification of the saints here—nor for the glory of God—that we, in Bristol, should get entangled in the controversy connected with the doctrines referred to. We do not feel that, because errors may be taught at Plymouth or elsewhere, therefore we, as a body, are bound to investigate them.

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“2. The practical reason alleged why we should enter upon the investigation of certain tracts issued at Plymouth was, that thus we might be able to know how to act with reference to those who might visit us from thence, or who are supposed to be adherents of the author of the said publications. In reply to this, we have to state, that the views of the writer alluded to could only be *fairly learned* from the examination of his own acknowledged writings. We did not feel that we should be warranted in taking our impression of the views actually held by him from any other source than from some treatise written by himself, and professedly explanatory of the doctrines advocated. Now there has been such variableness in the views held by the writer in question, that it is difficult to ascertain what he would now acknowledge as his.

“3. In regard to these writings, Christian brethren, hitherto of unblemished reputation for soundness in the faith, have come to different conclusions as to the actual amount of error contained in them. The tracts some of us knew to be written in such an ambiguous style, that we greatly shrunk from the responsibility of giving any formal judgment on the matter.

“4. As approved brethren, in different places, have come to such different conclusions in reference to the amount of error contained in these tracts, we could neither desire nor expect that the saints here would be satisfied with the decision of one or two leading brethren. Those who felt desirous to satisfy their own minds, would naturally be led to wish to peruse the writings for themselves. For this, many among us have no leisure time; many would not be able to understand what the tracts contained, because of the mode of expression employed; and the result, there is much reason to fear, would be such perverse

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disputations and strifes of words, as minister questions rather than godly edifying.

“5. Even some of those who now condemn the tracts as containing doctrine essentially unsound, did not so understand them on the first perusal. Those of us who were specially requested to investigate and judge the errors contained in them, felt that, under such circumstances, there was but little probability of our coming to unity of judgment touching the nature of the doctrines therein embodied.



“6. *Even supposing that those who inquired into the matter had come to the same conclusion, touching the amount of positive error therein contained, this would not have guided us in our decision respecting individuals coming from Plymouth. For supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came from under his teaching, until we were satisfied that they had understood and imbibed views essentially subversive of foundation truth; especially as those meeting at Ebrington-street, Plymouth, last January, put forth a statement, disclaiming the errors charged against the tracts.*

“7. The requirement that we should investigate and judge Mr. Newton’s tracts, appeared to some of us like the introduction of a fresh test of communion. It was demanded of us that, in addition to a sound confession and a corresponding walk, we should, as a body, come to a formal decision about what many of us might be quite unable to understand.

“8. We remembered the word of the Lord, that ‘the beginning of strife is as the letting out of water.’ We were well aware that the great body of believers amongst us were in happy ignorance of the Plymouth controversy, and we did not feel it well to be considered as identifying ourselves with either party. We judge that this controversy had been so carried

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on as to cause the truth to be evil spoken of; and we do not desire to be considered as identifying ourselves with that which has caused the opposer to reproach the way of the Lord. At the same time we wish distinctly to be understood that we would seek to maintain fellowship with all believers, and consider ourselves as particularly associated with those who meet as we do, simply in the name of the Lord Jesus.

“9. We felt that the compliance with Mr. Alexander’s request would be the introduction of an evil precedent. *If a brother has a right to demand our examining a work of fifty pages, he may require our investigating error said to be contained in one of much larger dimensions; so that all our time might be wasted in the examination of other people’s errors, instead of more important service.*

“It only remains to notice the three reasons specially assigned by Mr. Alexander in [justification] of his course of action. To the first, viz., ‘that by our not judging this matter, many of the Lord’s people will be excluded from communion with us’—we reply, that unless our brethren can prove, either that error is held and taught amongst us, or *that individuals are received into communion who ought not to be admitted, they can have no scriptural warrant for withdrawing from our fellowship.* We would affectionately entreat such brethren as may be disposed to withdraw from communion for the reason assigned, to consider that, except they can prove allowed evil in life or doctrine, they cannot, without violating the principles on which we meet, treat us as if we had renounced the faith of the Gospel.

“In reply to the second reason, viz., ‘that persons may be received from Plymouth holding evil doctrines’—we are happy in being able to state, that ever since the matter was agitated, we have maintained that persons coming from thence—if suspected

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of any error—*would be liable to be examined on the point*; that in the case of one individual who had fallen under the suspicion of certain brethren amongst us, not only was there private intercourse with him relative to his views, as soon as it was known that he was objected to, but the individual referred to—known to some of us for several years as a consistent Christian—actually came to a meeting of labouring brethren for the very purpose that any question might be asked him by any brother who should have any difficulty on his mind. Mr. Alexander himself was the principal party in declining the presence of the brother referred to, on that occasion, such inquiry being no longer demanded, inasmuch as the difficulties relative to the views of the individual in question, had been removed by private intercourse. We leave Mr. Alexander to reconcile this fact, which he cannot have forgotten, with the assertion contained under his second special reason for withdrawing.

“In regard to the third ground alleged by Mr. Alexander, viz., that by not judging the matter, we lie under the suspicion of supporting false doctrine, we have only to refer to the statement already made at the commencement of this paper.

“In conclusion, we would seek to impress upon all present the evil of treating the subject of our Lord’s humanity as a matter of speculative or angry controversy. One of those who have been ministering among you from the beginning, feels it a matter of deep thankfulness to God, that so long ago as in the year 1835,\* he committed to writing, and subsequently printed, what he had learned from the Scriptures of truth relative to the meaning of that inspired declaration, ‘The Word was made flesh.’ He would affectionately refer any whose minds may be now disquieted, to what he then wrote, and was afterwards led to

\* “Pastoral Letters,” by H. Craik.

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publish. If there be heresy in the simple statements contained in the letters alluded to, let it be pointed out; if not, let all who are interested in the matter know that we continue unto the present day, ‘speaking the same things.’

“(Signed)

HENRY CRAIK,

EDMUND FELTHAM,

GEORGE MÜLLER,

JOHN WITHY,

JACOB HENRY HALE,

SAMUEL BUTLER,

CHARLES BROWN,

JOHN MEREDITH,

ELIJAH STANLEY,        ROBERT AITCHISON.”

The above paper was read at meetings of brethren at [Bethesda] Chapel, on Thursday, June 29th, and on Monday, July 3rd, 1848.

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## JND Letters

### JND Letter 1

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(b) Six letters by Mr. J. N. Darby, two written in 1845 and the others in 1846, 1849, 1851 and 1864 respectively.

*Plymouth, November 12th, 1845.*

BELOVED BROTHER,—I answer, of course, your letter without delay. You probably do not know that Mr. J. L. Harris has declined further ministry here (though he has not left communion) and proposes to leave the place, and this on two points out of three on which I have acted; he is ignorant of the third. This, of course, modifies naturally the surprise which my step might occasion, though it is neither reason nor justification; but it is so far a proof that there was nothing hasty, and that there were serious grounds for it.

I now proceed to tell you why I did so. I felt that God was practically displaced, and so I told them,

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and then stated the three following points: the subverting the principles on which we meet—this, I think I may say, is not denied now by any (unless the doers of it on principle); at least, it is admitted that brethren (teachers) were intentionally kept away, and Soltau urges Mr. Harris to stay and resume his place in order to help him to resist. Some say that they were only tendencies, and not a purpose, but the fact is not denied. I cannot here enter into all the facts, but I am perfectly convinced there were purpose, doctrine, and fact; and you have no idea of the extent to which it had gone. It was, to my mind, as bad as bad could be in other aspects. Secondly, there was actual evil and unrighteousness unconfessed and unjudged: this Harris does not enter upon. And that thirdly, a meeting which has worked in the guidance of the details of the body and service of the saints, has been not only set aside, but refused to be reinstated. This last was what finally decided Harris before his return here to decline further ministry. I had proposed publicly, as he had laboured in private (and I had also spoken of it) at the re-establishment of this meeting; and the rejection of it occasioned a stay of all moral discipline, unless on the summary judgment of two or three who took it on themselves. This deprived of remedy, for the existence of evil would not in itself be a reason for leaving, but evil unjudged and really sanctioned would, when it could not be remedied. I have only to add, that I have felt the unclouded approbation of God since I have done it. I had not before an idea of the mass of evil, and how many knew it. Yet I believe the great body wholly ignorant of it, and so I stated when I announced my withdrawal. But they almost all felt that there was something which had destroyed spirituality and love. In my judgment it was very bad indeed. I waited eight or nine months before I did this, and till every step was taken to remedy the evil; and I should

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have felt the Lord against me had I waited longer. I believe it has done very much good; the conscience of a vast number has been awakened, evil acknowledged by some who were immersed in it fast, I believe, with evil intention, and I hope more blessing may thus come from above. When I say it, I believe the withdrawal of Harris from ministering had as much, and perhaps more effect, than my withdrawal from communion, from his having been much more here latterly, and the only one who visited, and whom the poor really knew and loved. All the poor, I think I may say, have felt the evil. I told them that I did it with unmingled grief and sorrow, and only wished it might be remedied; that I loved all and valued many very much, that I believed the great body quite innocent of it, but that there was one Table and one bread, and they were all responsible, and that my feeling was that—as evil was not remedied—I could not identify myself with evil that I knew.

It seemed to me you acted quite wisely, having no information as to the sister coming here. I trust the Lord may restore you all, and it is all I desire for this gathering too. I thank you, dear brother, very much for your prayers, and feel that I need them, as I trust you may be enabled to continue them. It has been, I need not say, a time of great trial to me. Still, I have felt the Lord with me, and have been with Him, however feeble; and I am quite in peace since I left the gathering. Already many have separated between good and evil, and graciously; up to this, people had gone away, or held their tongues hopeless.

Kind love to all the saints. Very affectionately yours, dear brother, and praying God that light and peace and strength may be with you and all His beloved ones.

I have no desire but that all should be restored in peace here, and it would be much greater joy to return than even to have cleared my conscience in leaving;

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I wait upon the Lord, and in the enjoyment of the light of His countenance about it. I have avoided everything which would have the appearance of party or lead to it. I do not believe even that the enemy has ventured to charge me with it. I have no feeling of the kind—God forbid I should. You are not aware that many brethren elsewhere feel as strongly, or more so than I do about it. I do not pretend to say they would therefore necessarily (have) taken the same method, but of that I have no regret. I may just add, that I have refrained from breaking bread apart, though many have stayed away, hoping they may come through grace to set all right.

J.N.D.

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## JND Letter 2

1845.

I write rather because of the importance of the point than for any immediate occasion of circumstances: I mean leaving an assembly, or setting up, as it is called, another table. I am not so *afraid* of it as some other brethren, but I must explain my reasons. If such or such a meeting were the church here, leaving it would be severing oneself from the assembly of God. But, though wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name He is in the midst, and the blessing and responsibility of the church is in a certain sense also, if any Christians now set up to be the church, or did any formal act which pretended to it, I should leave them, as being a false pretension, and denying the very testimony to the state of ruin which God has called us to render. It would have ceased to be the table of the people and testimony of God, at least intelligently. It might be evil pretension or ignorance; it might call for patience if it was in ignorance, or for remedy, if that was possible: but such a pretension I believe false, and I could not abide in what is false. I think it is of the

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last importance that this pretension of any body should be kept down: I could not own it a moment, because it is not the truth.

But, then, on the other hand, united testimony to the truth is the greatest possible blessing from on high. And I think that if any one, through the flesh, separated from two or three walking godly before God in the unity of the whole body of Christ, it would not merely be an act of schism, but he would necessarily deprive himself of the blessing of God's presence. It resolves itself, like all else, into a question of flesh and Spirit. If the Spirit of God is in and sanctions the body, he who leaves in the flesh deprives himself of the blessing, and sins. If, on the contrary, the Spirit of God does not sanction the body, he who leaves it will get into the power and liberty of the Spirit by following Him. That is the real way to look at it. There may be evil, and yet the Spirit of God sanction the body (not, of course, its then state), or at least act with the body in putting it away. But if the Spirit of God, by any faithful person, moves in this, and the evil is not put away, but persisted in; is the Spirit of God with those who continue in the evil, or with him who will not? Or is the doctrine of the unity of the body to be made a cover for evil? That is precisely the delusion of Satan in Popery, and the worst form of evil under the sun. If the matter, instead of being brought to the conscience of the body, is maintained by the authority of a few, and the body of believers despised, it is the additional concomitant evil of the clergy, which is the element also of Popery. Now, I believe myself, the elements of this have been distinctly brought out at Plymouth; and I cannot stay in evil to preserve unity. I do not want unity in evil, but separation from it. God's unity is always founded on separation, since sin came into the world. "Get thee out" is the first word of God's call: it is to *Himself*. If one get out alone, it may require more

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faith, but that is all; one will be with Him, and that, dear brother, is what I care most about, though overjoyed to be with my brethren *on that ground*. I do not say that some



more spiritual person might not have done more or better than I: God must judge of that. I am sure I am a poor creature; but at all cost I must walk with God for myself...

Suppose clericalism so strong that the conscience of the body does not act at all, even when appealed to, is a simple saint who has perhaps no influence to set anything right, because of this very evil, therefore to stay with it? What resource has he? I suppose another case. Evil goes on, fleshly pretension, a low state of things on all sides. Some get hold of a particular evil which galls their flesh, and they leave. Do you think that the plea of unity will heal? Never. All are in the wrong. Now this often happens. Now the Lord in these cases is always over all. He chastens what was not of Him by such a separation, and shews the flesh in detail even where, in the main, His name was sought. If the seceders act in the flesh, they will not find blessing. God governs in these things, and will own righteousness where it is, if only in certain points. They would not prosper if it were so; but they might remain a shame and sorrow to those they left. If it be merely pride of flesh, it will soon come to nothing. "There must needs be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest." If occasion has been given in any way, the Lord, *because He loves*, will not let go till the evil be purged out. If I do not act with Him, He will (and I should thank Him for it) put me down in the matter too. He loves the church, and has all power in heaven and earth, and *never* lets slip the reins.

I have not broken bread, nor should do it, till the last extremity: and if I did, it would be in the fullest, openest testimony, that I did not own the others then to be the table of the Lord at all. I should think

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worse of them than of sectarian bodies, because having more pretension to light. "Now ye say we see." But I should not (God forbid) cease to pray continually, and so much the more earnestly, for them, that they might prosper through the fulness of the grace that is in Christ for them....

J.N.D.

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### JND Letter 3

*Plymouth, January 20th, 1846.*

DEAREST BROTHER,—I take up my pen at last to answer your letter. As to the facts connecting themselves with Scripture I had no difficulty as to myself, the difficulty was as to demonstration to others. In the first place, Mr. Newton's statement in April was to have union in testimony here, against the teaching of the other brethren, and that he trusted to have at least Devon and Somerset under his influence for the purpose. And this was done most assiduously and perseveringly, so that at last in some places, they had to tell Mr. N. they would bear it no longer; but the saints *here* had no present proof of this. No person who moved in the sphere of the teachers but knew that they were by calumnies, reproaches, and letters, keeping away other brethren. Nor do those that are honest now deny it. But the body of the brethren here had not seen these letters, and in the (what I must call) audacious state of conscience the leaders were in, I should have been challenged to produce them. Here their case broke down in April, because McA. had seen them and put them to silence. Each Sunday was as regularly N. and H. as in the establishment, and everybody knew it; there was no arrangement written—nothing to be proved. A poor man gave out a hymn, no one would raise it; whose fault was that? At length the facts were not denied, but they were said to be accidents; though N. had told

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me at the Bristol meeting that his principles were changed, and B. had been reasoning with me on the ground of it, and declaring the brethren elsewhere who sought to serve the saints cyphers, and five cyphers never could make one unless they were regularly recognised. The persons in authority had been named by Mr. N. here as those he recognised and none else. The Friday meeting had been broken up, and Mr. S., owning there ought to be one, said he could not move in it because Mr. N. would have only those he chose, and it would produce a rupture with him. It had been openly taught by N. and B., that the Lord did not now use poor uneducated men, as those He chose before His resurrection, but after that, such as Paul, Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Whitfield, and myself now. It came to such a point, preventing people speaking in the room, that S. called it jockeyship; now I confess to you in what professes to be a meeting where. the blessed God is, I do not like going on with jockeyship. But what could be proved here? Someone got up too quick—that was all—and perhaps did it in a case where the majority would go with him as to the effect, keeping down some speaker they did not like; and in the particular case the sisters had already tried to silence him by making a noise with their feet. The Holy Ghost was totally disowned, the body of the poor miserable, and utterly despised and rejected. But I did not leave for all this. It was when all remedy for this was rejected with scorn, that I then said I could not stay. Every attempt by —, —, etc., and others to investigate the evil before the brethren has been rejected. You may well suppose the difficulty of dealing with facts before the body, that it was constantly denied *in toto*, in the face of a settled arrangement (not in words but in fact) to speak alternate Sundays, that anybody was hindered—and at least three cases of prevention by the authority of Mr. N.

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and those he employed. And as to those without, when S. pressed their having kept away Bellett, and that he felt they had sinned, Mr. N. said—on his asking could he acquiesce in his coming now—he thought he could, because all were sufficiently made up now to resist his teaching. But on the avowed principle of clericalism it was peremptorily refused to let the brethren judge anything about the matter.

If Scripture warrants me to separate from the worst evil as to corporate action I ever met, then I am sanctioned in separating from this. If the unity of the church is to be the sanction of evil, we are landed in Rome at once. It was taught (not here) that in reference to the noble Bereans, that was Jews searching the Jewish scriptures, and that now God has raised up gifts and teaching, it was quite otherwise. Besides there are things that sicken one, which you cannot say much about. I never, in all my experience in and out of the church, really met so little truth and straightforwardness, and nothing could be proved which had been said and done twenty times over, unless you had witnesses by, and then others were ready to say it was something else. I would not have stayed in it, my dear —, if I were to walk alone and have no church at all to the end of my days. But God has ordered it otherwise, and given exceeding peace and quietness to those who have through grace delivered their souls from it. I have no doubt a direct power and delusion of the enemy was there, from which we have been rescued by the Lord's goodness, and are in the blessing and liberty of the Spirit of God, though poor and feeble. The visit of the brethren has, I think, to any heedful mind, left no doubt as to the standing of Ebrington Street. Romans 16:17, is just what I acted upon, on coming to Plymouth. The denouncing of godly brethren as subverting the gospel, by letters sent to India, Canada, Ireland, and everywhere, and hindering any teachers not ready to

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receive N.'s views coming here as far as they could, and making a focus of Plymouth, was causing divisions. And it was just—though I shrank from using such a hard word—3 John 9, 10, that was *precisely going on* at Plymouth. No calumny was too bad to cast on the most godly brethren, to discredit them and hinder their coming here. I daresay if I had apostolic power I might have acted more efficiently, but I have not a regret or a cloud on my mind as to my path being where I was, save that I might have left in April. The Lord never roused the conscience of the body till I left.

But I close: I am most sorry to rake up what this letter does (as I have only mentioned things just as they occurred to me to satisfy your mind) without trying to make out all: for many to me most material things I have not mentioned as to facts and evil—but sorry, because the truth is we, who are come out, have our minds with the happy testimony of the Holy Ghost, completely clear of all this, do not ever think of it, and have no need to think of it any more. This has been one of the happy features, the subdued, happy, gracious spirit of those who have left; we are in another world as to our minds.

J.N.D.

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## JND Letter 4

August 5th, 1849.

MY DEAR BROTH<sup>ER</sup>,—I was purposing writing to you when your note arrived. I have heard that the flesh manifested itself in the circumstances attending the leaving Orchard Street; as also it was stirred up by the way they were dealt with. I write to you to say that if this has been so—into which I do not inquire—I justify it in no way; I leave it to the Lord's judgment. I go upon the broad ground that I get for myself—brethren avowedly clear of all upholding of Bethesda—

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without to me any other question. I stated in my circular I should not go where persons were received from Bethesda. Bethesda received those who had been rejected as the *avowed associates* of Mr. Newton, thus forcing us too, if we owned Bethesda, to receive them back again. After what I stated yesterday, I have nothing to add. I can conceive no more miserable effort to serve the doctrine than the document still upheld by Bethesda. As to people's consciences, you must allow me to respect my own as well as others'; and, if others are determined to uphold what I believe to be wickedness, not to walk with them; if others judge so too, how can I condemn them? I have since I left Ebrington Street asked for the fellowship of none, except they felt disposed to receive me as having taken my position. I think Bethesda's position a very wicked one, and I think upholding it is wickedness, though ignorance about it may not be. The question of doctrine is not the question with Bethesda, but that of their trying to screen those who hold it, and thus to force neutrality upon others. That they will not do with me. They have taken their position, and I have taken mine; and I shall act as to all so as to make it *as clear as possible*. But I am not now going to take any part in what is going on: I feel sure I have the Lord with me; time will shew. I think your position a false one. I do not pretend to judge how others may have wounded your sensibilities, for I really do not know. I pronounce no judgment whatever on the acts of persons in my absence. It is very probable I might not have agreed in them, as I felt the Lord was acting, and that the truest way was to leave Bethesda and its associates alone, and that they were in the Lord's hands. But I was not the judge of what others did. I desire earnestly that you may be brought in peace and brotherly unity out of a position I believe to be false. I have sorrows, but no difficulty. I can wait upon

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others, and I do so, but I cannot willingly make my position equivocal. I go on very broad plain ground. I think Bethesda *very bad*. I cannot own it as if it was not. I believe it has been publicly and avowedly unfaithful to Christ; hence that its supporters are upon terrible ground: that suffices to guide my conduct. In dealing with others I shall endeavour to do so according to the grace and truth that is in the Lord Jesus. Such a position is very simple and makes the path very plain, if one only knows how to walk in it. There has been division where there have been supporters and justifiers of Bethesda, but where the guilt lies in that case the Lord will judge; I am not aware, unless a very few individuals, that there has been, where there has been faithful firmness.

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

J.N.D.

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## JND Letter 5

*Hereford, October 6th, 1851.*

... With regard to Mr. —, I have not seen him since the Bethesda question arose, so it is possible that by presenting the matter clearly to him and to his conscience, he would be brought back, even if he has at present gone astray. I suppose that he is more or less connected with Bethesda; now if it is so, and if he rejected warnings, and persisted in keeping up connection with B., I could not walk with him; I am going to tell you why, leaving him aside, not knowing what would be the effect of a conversation with him. First I must tell you that I believe that if one meeting receives the members of another, and the members of the former go there in their turn, there is a bond between the two, though I own that in the present case other motives have power over me. This is how it is then as to B. Doctrine is not in question, but faithfulness to Christ

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with respect to doctrine or holiness. I would not receive a person who knowingly formed part of a meeting which admits heretics, or persons whose conduct is bad, because the principle of indifference to good and evil, to error and truth, is as bad as the wrong action, and even worse. Let me be clearly understood. I believe that the church is bound to be jealous with respect to the glory of the Person of Christ. If Christ is despised, I have no principle of union. I believe that B. has acted with profound contempt for the Lord, to say nothing of brethren. Here there is nothing equivocal. Mr. N. was maintaining a doctrine of which Mr. Müller himself said that if it were true, Christ would have needed to be saved as much as we did. This doctrine placed Christ under the effect of Adam's sin by His birth, in saying that He had to gain life by keeping the law. We had driven away this doctrine and those who upheld it, and the struggle was ended. The persons who had supported Mr. N. had published confessions with respect to the doctrine, and had made confessions before the brethren publicly of the falsehoods and wickedness by which they had tried to make good their views and to justify themselves; it was a truly extraordinary work of Satan.

Well, a lady wished to introduce Mr. N. to teach in a meeting near Bethesda; this meeting refused; she left the meeting accordingly. She was introduced at B., Mr. M. knowing that she was maintaining and propagating this doctrine, Mr. Craik the other pastor having had to do with her. She went there because they admitted such persons into that meeting. At the same time, two gentlemen, who made part of the meeting which Mr. N. had formed when he was obliged to leave on account of this doctrine (those who had supported him having left him and made confession), these two communicants of Mr. N.'s, I say, were also admitted to B. It is proved true that these

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three disseminated Mr. N.'s tracts in the B. assembly. The lady induced a young lady to go who was the most active and intelligent agent that Mr. N. had, in order to spread his doctrines. In consequence of these circumstances, several godly brothers of B. asked that all this should be examined; they said that they did not ask even that the judgment of the brethren should be taken thereupon, but that they should examine the matter and



the doctrine themselves. This was decidedly refused. I received a letter from Mr. C., blaming me as sectarian for making these difficulties, even when he was not prepared to receive *everything* that Mr. N. was teaching. They had many meetings of the flock and the ten labouring brothers (of whom two were really disciples of Mr. N.) Messrs. M. and C. at their head, presented a written paper to the assembly at B., declaring that this was a new test of communion, which they would not admit; that many excellent brethren did not give so decided an opinion upon Mr. N.'s doctrine; that they were not bound to read fifty pages to know what Mr. N. taught, the members of his flock being—mark this!—already admitted at B. A brother asked permission to communicate some information about Mr. N.'s doctrine, in order that the assembly might understand why they held to it that the doctrine should be judged; and this was peremptorily refused, and the paper which said that many had not a bad opinion of the doctrine, rejecting as a new condition of fellowship the examination into the doctrine, was laid down as the absolute condition of the pastorate of Messrs. M. and C., without which they would withdraw from their ministry in the midst of the assembly. Those who justified them on the ground of this paper were to rise, which was done by the assembly, thirty or forty forthwith leaving B. So that, with knowledge of the matter, they laid down as the basis of the B. assembly, indifference to the truth as to the Person

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of Christ; and they preferred to see about forty godly brethren leave, rather than to examine into the question, having in fact in their midst the members of the N. meeting. This was so much the more important in my eyes, because Satan was seeking at that moment, and still seeks, to forbid the assembly of the children of God to examine into and to judge any heresy whatsoever; that once a person has been acknowledged as being a Christian, one has no right to know what he holds. This has been plainly laid down as a principle by many persons who blame us, and they desired to take advantage of it to force us to receive a young man who distinctly denied that there was such a Person as the Holy Ghost. I do not say that all lay down this principle, but the enemy has sought to bring it in, and amongst the brethren who opposed me on this question, some of the most violent maintain it.

Now the principle of indifference as to the Person of Christ being laid down at Bethesda, and the assembly having publicly accepted it, I refuse to admit this principle. They have admitted persons put outside amongst us on account of blasphemy. Messrs. M. and C. are the pastors of the assembly in virtue of this principle. This letter has never been withdrawn: they claim to have done right. Many things will doubtless be told you in excuse, and to make it appear that they have done things which nullify this: I know how it is with them. For me their condition before God has become much *much* worse. I should be ready to say why. I believe that they are themselves more or less infected with false doctrine, but I cannot enter into the story in detail. Mr. M. said to *me* (after having acknowledged that Christ would have needed to be saved as much as we, if this doctrine was admitted) that they maintained the letter of the ten to the full, and that they had done well in all that they had done. Well, indifference to

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Christ is a grave sin: an assembly which bases itself publicly on this principle I cannot

accept as a Christian assembly. Assemblies which are connected with B., which go there and receive from thence, are one with B.—save the case of persons who are ignorant of the matter, an exceptional case of which it is not necessary to speak. For my part this is what I do; having distinctly taken my position I judge each case individually according to its merits, but I will not receive a person who keeps up a connection with B. with knowledge of the matter Faithfulness to Christ before everything; I know not why I labour and suffer if this is not the principle of my conduct.

The fact is that brethren had fallen into a state of spiritual demoralisation which required this sifting, and as they get out of it individually they reject B., which is taking place, thank God, every day. Persons who have written tracts against me write their own condemnation, while declaring that they were deceived at Bristol. As to that, my resolution is taken: I am deeply convinced that the basis of the B. meeting is contempt of Christ, and I do not walk with those who accept it, and I will not mix with it; it would be indifference to my own conduct. If consequently I walk alone it is well; I am content as to myself; I deplore the condition of souls. I do not say, that all that has been done to oppose it has been wise. I do not think so, but my judgment of the matter in the main is definitely taken. I believe B. in a much worse condition than at the beginning of the question.

J.N.D.

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## JND Letter 6

*Pau, February 19th, 1864.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have received your letter, but not the pamphlet, which I shall carefully read when I shall have the opportunity. In my former letter I could only speak of general principles, as I had not the correspondence. I can still only refer to the

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contents of your letter, as I have not the pamphlet, which is not so easily forwarded as a letter. But your letter itself involves so many important principles that I answer in certain respects, though I have not the correspondence. I must avow to you that it does not furnish me much hope of any issue. I am sometimes surprised at the little apprehension brethren have of the bearing of their acts. You ask, Is it a bond of discipline that holds the body together? I answer, in practice undoubtedly. The unity of the, body is in itself immutable. It is divinely maintained and for ever. But the manifested unity of the body here below is maintained by discipline, and cannot be without, though in secret it be God's power which does so by its efficacious working. What has created Nationalism, that is, the dispersion of saints in a crowd of worldly professors, but the absence of discipline—of maintaining by it the sanctity of the Lord's table? But, to come more directly to the shape in which this question applies to you; suppose you let in deliberately the Mormons, how can other assemblies walk with you? Are you to impose the reception of wickedness on all the church of God? Suppose you deliberately admit fornicators, are we to continue in unity? You will say, You have no right to suppose such things. I have a perfect right to judge a principle by plain strong cases, but I have chosen one here which has been publicly insisted on by a meeting standing on the principle you have adopted. Suppose you receive blasphemers and heretics, are we to remain united with you?

It is anxiously insisted on, in a tract published by Yapp, that no assembly can be defiled by receiving evil, but only the individuals who accept it. But your letters, as does that tract, make independent churches, each acting for itself. If this be the case, the unity which constituted the whole being of the brethren is wholly given up; that for which I left the Establishment

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is wholly gone. All this I reject wholly and absolutely. The circumstances I do not pretend to know, for I was in America; but if I have rightly gathered them,... you have judged the conduct of the brethren in L. without having heard what they have to say. I understand the breach arose between you and—by reason of your reception of —. With the main facts of his case I am acquainted, for I took part in what passed. And now allow me to put the case as it stands as to him; I put it merely as a principle. He (or anyone else) is rejected in L. The assembly in L. have weighed (and I with them) the case, and count him either as excommunicated or in schism. I put the two cases, for I only speak of the principle. I take part in this act, and hold him to be outside the church of God on earth, being outside (in either case) what represents it in L. I am bound by Scripture to count him so. I come to —: there be breaks bread, and is—in what? Not in the church of

God on earth, for he is out of it in L., and there are not two churches on earth, cannot be, so as to be in one and out of another. How can I refuse to eat with him in L., and break bread with him in —, have one conscience for L. and another for —; believe that the Spirit judges one way at L., another way at —? It is confusion and disorder....

But your letter apprises me that you have already taken the ground of neutrality; but neutrality between Christ and evil is worse than anything. “He that is not for me is against me,” says Christ. The evil at B. is the most unprincipled admission of blasphemers against Christ, the coldest contempt of Him I ever came across. All their efforts to excuse and hide it only make the matter worse. All who do not abhor the whole system and all connection with it are entangled and defiled. It is, I am satisfied, a mere net of Satan (though many Christians may be entangled in it). Every question of churches and of

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unity disappears before the question of B. It is a question of Christ. Faith governed my path as to it, but I have seen its fruits in America, the West Indies, France, Switzerland, and, in a measure, in India. I have seen it the spring and support everywhere of unprincipledness and evil, and all who were under its influence turned from uprightness and truth. I have found persons unknown to each other, and strangers to our conflicts in England, unite in testimony that they could get nothing honest from those who were connected with it, or who did not openly reject it all. Wherever the difficulty has been, persons going on badly, and in the flesh, were induced to fall in with it or follow in the line on which you have entered.

But before I go further on this point, allow me to recur to your letter. You say, Your arguments are without force if the acts of the L. brethren are not in accordance with the Lord’s will; they could not in that case be by His authority; and this it is which has been the question with us. Who is the judge of whether these acts were so or not? This only means that you at — consider yourselves competent to judge the brethren in L., though you were not there to know what passed, nor, allow me to think, have not been in any way fully informed of what took place. You must forgive me if I think this somewhat questionable. You will say, Are our consciences to be bound by the action of the brethren in L.? I answer, *prima facie*, certainly, or there can be and is no common action. I admit remonstrances—and if it comes to an absolute necessity through deliberate wrong—breaking with a gathering, but slighting the judgment of another body in ordinary cases is denying its being competent to decide for Christ and with Christ, and asserting your own competency to judge it without being acquainted with what passed. You say, We have our own responsibilities to the Lord; others cannot measure them. What are you doing as to L.? You have set aside

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the judgment of L. as null and nought before the Lord. You do not say the individuals have not the Spirit, but you have rejected their corporate action. How can the two bodies get on together? You receive a person because he is in communion in L., that is, you own the body as a competent witness of Christ’s mind, without saying it is infallible. You own the body, its acts; you wish to be in communion with it; you must then recognise its

other acts. I recognise the full liberty in you, as having also the Spirit as a part of Christ's body, led to act by it, in remonstrating or enlightening, but not to disown it on your own authority, and then to pretend to own it still, and speak of being in communion with it.

But what you say as to Bethesda, though only, as I have said, what I expected, shews your position far more clearly. You must not deceive yourselves, dear brother; where Christ is in question there is no middle ground. You have separated yourselves from the brethren in the course you have taken; you think yourselves wiser than they. I have seen these pretensions elsewhere: I know their result. It is in vain to say you do not. If you did not, you would not act differently from them. You cannot remain alone, though you have really taken the position of an independent church. But the question is largely before the saints now, Is union founded on truth or not? The scripture tells me it is. You have abandoned that ground with the pretension to keep it better than others. You are not the first. I do not trust you to do so. You have given up your testimony against evil, but pretend to keep it out. I do not trust your pretension to do so. Here I must speak plainly, because it is not brethren but Christ who is in question. I see the worst and most ruinous effects springing up daily from what I judged in principle sixteen years ago. In this path you will soon be the active supporters of indifference to Christ's glory, and

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covering and excusing the dishonour done to His name. I can easily suppose you will not believe me in this. I only answer, if you continue in it you shall see. I can only say I have seen enough to be content to be burned, with God's grace, rather than enter into it. I am quite aware too these will count what I say as to B. a spirit of party and so forth. I let them say it; the Lord will judge all that, but I know for myself what I say, and why I say it....

I regret and mourn that you should think it a human rule to break with those who receive and countenance blasphemers, and seek to hush and cover it all up. To me what you call a human rule is the first obligation which rests on me as a Christian. Wisdom in discipline all may call in question; fidelity to Christ is at the root of all our conduct. Your letter produces the effect in me of your having become an independent church—so called. Of course, I have no such principles, but what you say as to B. is the first step, and in fact, save God's gracious hand, the whole way to the coldest contempt of Christ I ever came across.... God will judge who has been faithful to Him, or those it condemns. Where that road leads I have no doubt. Satan is making a great effort at present to shake brethren as to these points, but this only makes me more firm.

J.N.D.

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Many other letters by Mr. Darby, which are to be found in the published volumes, "Letters of J.N.D." could profitably be referred to, but the above are considered sufficient for the purpose of this history. They shew clearly what were the origin in fact, and moral basis, of the "Open" fellowship, which commenced with Bethesda. There was

the grossest indifference to Christ in the refusal to exclude from fellowship those who broke bread with one who taught evil as to His Person. Moreover, the failure

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to recognise that true Christian fellowship is universal, and can only be maintained by practically refusing evil wherever it appears, has resulted in the meetings identified with such "Open" fellowship being practically independent companies, so that a person excluded from fellowship at one meeting can be, and often is, received at another meeting in the same fellowship. This is a practical denial of the truth of the one body, although the claim has often been made that those connected with the fellowship in question, as separated from clerical systems around, meet together on the ground of that truth. It is not without significance that ten years or so before the Bethesda matter arose, some who were meeting together in Dublin stated, in reply to an enquiry by Mr. Darby, that they met on the ground of all being the children of God, and that he then pointed out to them that that gave them no true basis on which to refuse fellowship with evildoers.

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## CAC Letter

The following extract from an undated letter or paper by Mr. C. A. Coates further sets out the history and principles in question.

*“The Principle of Christian Fellowship.”*

Now, to pass from the days of the apostles to our own, we find that, in the revival of the truth over a century ago, what was prominent in the minds of the spiritual was the truth of the assembly. We have been told that the light broke into the soul of Mr. J. N. Darby that there was a Head in heaven. Then, said he to himself, there must be a body on earth. If we read his early writings, such as “The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ,” written in 1828, we find that it is the assembly which is before him, and its moral and spiritual features. The coming together of saints was to be in the light of those features which pertain to the assembly universally. The revival was definitely on the line of Paul’s glad

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tidings, and of Paul’s ministry of the assembly. The brethren who were spiritually instructed had no such thought as that it was the divine intent that the assembly in its universal aspect should be, or should become, invisible. On the contrary, they felt deeply the fact that it had become so; that “the true church of God had no avowed communion at all” was a grievous evil to be mourned over and confessed. They felt that the body is here as a substantive reality to be edified, and to increase with the increase of God. Christ is sanctifying and purifying the assembly, and nourishing and cherishing it. This is not in heaven, but down here on earth.

But alongside this revival of Paul’s doctrine there was developing amongst the brethren an entirely different system of teaching. There were those who held that the assembly in its universal aspect had become invisible, and that nothing now remained but to set up local assemblies, each being a self-contained body, having no responsibility with reference to other such bodies, and free to receive any individual believer supposed to be personally sound in the faith and consistent in life, without taking any account of the associations in which he may have been previously. The truth of *the* assembly in its general unity, calling for recognition in a practical way by those who have the light of it, thus entirely lost its due place. According to this system of teaching, each separate meeting is an independent “assembly,” even if there are several in one town. Scripture never speaks of different assemblies in one city. At Jerusalem, where there were thousands of believers, and where they no doubt met in many different places, it is always “the assembly”—in the singular. The idea of independent churches, without any recognition of a universal bond of *responsible* partnership, is quite foreign to Scripture.

There were thus two different conceptions in the minds of brethren. One was governed by the thought

of the unity of the whole assembly as one body, one house, one temple, and by the thought of all the saints everywhere being called to one universal fellowship. The other was based on the idea of each meeting being an independent "assembly." The moment was bound to come when these two different principles would be found to be entirely out of keeping with each other. It was not long before circumstances arose which brought this to light. But it is important to recognise that what happened at Plymouth did not bring about the difference of principles. It only served to expose what was there before.

Mr. Darby and others separated from the original meeting at Plymouth in 1845 because clericalism was set up there, which they rightly judged was not of God. But the Lord in His wisdom did not allow this particular matter to become the general test. In 1847 it was discovered that Mr. Newton held and taught most serious error as to the Lord's personal relationships. This false teaching definitely raised the question as to whether *fellowship* involved a *responsible* partnership or not. The extreme gravity of false teaching as to the Lord's relationships ought to have helped the brethren to be very sensitive in their affections, as well as in conscience and intelligence. They ought all to have weighed well that fellowship (or partnership) with such error was most serious in the sight of God. The ground was taken eventually at Bethesda that the error was condemned, but that fellowship with it by breaking bread with those who held it was no bar to communion, and that no individual believer was to be held responsible for what he might be walking in partnership with, unless he actually avowed the error himself.

Thus where this principle is adhered to, no assembly bond of partnership which involves saints in common *responsibility* is admitted. Each is regarded as an individual who is not to be held responsible for any

associations he may have been in, but only for his personal views and conduct. There is no thought of *fellowship* in this, for fellowship means a common equal sharing, or joint participation, and this, when it is a question of breaking bread, in a most solemn way as before God.

The fact that defilement is contracted by touching what is unclean is clearly laid down in the Old Testament, and the New Testament expressly says, "touch not what is unclean," 2 Cor. 6:17. It is also clear in Scripture that a much less thing than breaking bread with a person may involve one in responsibility for what he does, for John says that the one who gives a friendly greeting to a man who does not bring the doctrine of Christ "partakes [the verbal form of the word fellowship] in his wicked works," 2 John 11. One is viewed as in fellowship with his wicked works if simply greeting him. This shows what a very small thing, as men would say, involves responsibility as before God for one's associations.

If to break bread with an evil-doer does not, in the minds of believers, involve any complicity in his evil, neither does breaking bread with faithful saints involve the recognition that we are in the most intimate partnership with them. The sense of the

divine bond is lost; persons break bread as so many individuals without any sense of responsible partnership. So that, according to these principles, the local assembly takes independent ground in declining to be bound by any assembly action other than its own, and the individual is held free of any responsibility, even in his own assembly, for anything that may have taken place there, save his own views and his own conduct. This principle annuls responsibility in regard of associations, which Scripture so carefully maintains; it entirely sets aside the true thought of fellowship.

C.A.C.

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## MR. DARBY'S TEACHING AS TO THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

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ATTENTION having been called to the subject of the sufferings of Christ by the erroneous teaching of Mr. Newton, Mr. Darby issued a paper in 1858 in which he pointed out that the sufferings of Christ fell into three categories

1. Atoning sufferings which came upon Him from God, when He offered Himself without spot to God to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and was forsaken by God. In these, of course, He was entirely alone.
2. Sufferings which He endured at the hands of men for righteousness' sake, in which character of sufferings the saints may have part. (See Matthew 5:10; 1 Peter 4:14-16, 19.)
3. A wide field of suffering, not covered by the first two categories, which included (a) the suffering in spirit necessarily felt by the Holy One of God in passing through a world of evil (see, for example, Mark 7:34; 8:12; 9:19), (b) the deep anguish occasioned by the *anticipation* of, and the holy shrinking from, being made sin, and in that position sustaining God's unmitigated judgment of it (see John 12:27; Matthew 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-40; Luke 22:39-46; Hebrews 5:7, 8), and (c) the suffering in spirit resulting from His voluntarily entering, in the sympathy of love, into the deep exercises of soul which the godly remnant of Israel will yet pass through as they realise, in the days of the great tribulation, God's governmental dealings with them in respect of their rejection of the Messiah. This character of suffering, as well as that referred to under (b), entered into the sorrows of Gethsemane. The feelings of the heart of Christ, caused by these

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sufferings, have been expressed by the Spirit of Christ through David and others in many of the psalms, which thus provide godly utterances suitable to be taken up by the remnant in the time of their dire distress.

On the publication of these papers, certain brethren charged Mr. Darby with holding similar views to those which had been put forth by Mr. Newton, and a certain number, though not many, separated on that ground. In fact, Mr. Darby's teaching was the exact opposite of Mr. Newton's as will be seen from the following statement by Mr. Darby himself.

*Extract from "The Sufferings of Christ," by J.N.D.*

Since I sent my reply to some previous questions on the paper on the "Sufferings of Christ," two further questions have been sent to me. After the explanation I have given in reply to the former, a short answer will suffice. The inquiry made is, What is the difference between the doctrine of the paper and Mr. Newton's? The question shews the need of making the matter clear to those who have been occupied with it. The answer is very simple. The doctrine of the paper is exactly the opposite of Mr. Newton's. Mr. Newton taught that Christ, as born an Israelite and a man, was at the same distance

from God as Israel and man, because He was one of them, was exposed to the consequences of it, and passed through the experiences an unconverted elect man ought, escaped much of what He was exposed to by being in their position, by prayer, obedience, and piety; but still had the fierce displeasure of God resting on Him as born one of the people. Hence He listened with glad attention to the gospel under John the Baptist, and passed then for Himself as from the law to the gospel. Most of this terrible anguish to which He was exposed, as born one of the Jews and of the children of Adam, was before His baptism by John.

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I believe, on the contrary, that—though suffering from man and feeling for all the sufferings of man, and Israel, and the sorrow of love resting continually upon His heart—the sunshine of God’s favour was on Him and was His delight and His joy continually, and thus there was no divine displeasure resting on that Holy One, nor was His frame wasted by the anguish of it. I detest it as a false abomination. But I believe that in grace, at the close of His history, when His life-work, as presented to Israel according to promise and gracious service towards man, was brought to a close, He, the object of divine favour, entered into the sorrows of His people.

Your correspondent has said in a short parenthesis (“unless anticipatively”); but what is Israel’s sorrow in the last day unless anticipative? They will not undergo wrath at the close. Christ felt it in Gethsemane anticipatively, because He was about to undergo it. But He did it anticipatively; that is, He did feel what Israel will feel, only far more deeply. And He felt it in grace, because He was not under it personally; whereas Israel as to his own position will be; and if Christ had been under it personally, because born a Jew, He could not have entered into it in grace....

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## MR. CLUFF AND HIS VIEWS AS TO “DEAD TO NATURE”

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ABOUT the years 1878 and 1879 considerable confusion was caused for a time in the minds of many by the teaching of a Mr. Cluff as to the believer being “dead to nature.” This teaching, while having a superficial appearance of spirituality, was in fact destructive of it, and tended in its results either to unreality or to legality. The following letters by Mr. Darby, written at the time, will indicate what were the issues as to the truth involved in this teaching:—

*August 16th, 1878.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Exaggerations are always dangerous and, where imagination is at work, deceive to people’s cost; but the subject is a serious one. “Dead to nature” is not a scriptural expression; so we must see what people mean and what Scripture says. But deadness to the world and all the flesh is after, is what is wanting among Christians.

As regards natural relationships, they are very carefully maintained in Scripture. The matter stands thus: *God* established certain relationships, “from the beginning it was not so” [divorce]—“he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.” Sin has come in and spoiled all. A new power has come in which, while fully recognising them as of God, and using them as images of the highest spiritual relationships with Christ and the Father, has nothing to do with them—is above and out of them. In general those who say much about them and being dead to nature, do so because they are not. Paul lives alone, and as a rule says, “let every man have his own wife.” The speaking against it is of Satan. The Lord had considered the lilies and how God had clothed them: Seeking these things as an object is another matter. Adam was to dress

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and keep the garden when he had no sin; but we need to have our affections on things above by a new power, and need a single eye to it to keep us above the power of what is corrupted; “all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” They even who had wives must “be as though they had none,” for “the time is a constrained one.” Nature is of God, but its corruption is not; and it is corrupted, under the bondage of corruption—and that is the difficulty. But “dead to nature” is legality: to seek it as it is, is not of the Spirit, though He has given us all things richly to enjoy. My body is of the old creation; my life, as born of God, of the new; and we are left for spiritual exercises in this very way. Nor is the matter therefore so simply spoken of, as some would humanly: it is meant to be a holy exercise, and those who do not spare the body may be satisfying the flesh. The apostle speaks for spiritual power and for order; every man has his own gift; but it is a gift. He wills that men marry as a rule, but tells them the married man cares for the things of the world, that they will have trouble in the flesh, but he spares them.

We have died with Christ; our life is hid with Him in God: He is our life. We have been crucified with Christ, yet live, but not we, but Christ lives in us; and this life lives by faith



of the Son of God. But you will find that when applied, it is always in view of certain objects which turn the heart from Christ. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh," etc., "is not of the Father." We are dead "to sin," "to the rudiments of the world." You will further find that these are distinguished, and that the highest Christian state does not contemplate this at all. In the Epistle to the Romans the Christian is looked at as a man alive in this world, as we are, but justified, and Christ our life. Here we get "dead to sin," Christ having died to it, and "our old man is

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crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is justified from sin" (not sins)—you cannot accuse a man of sin in the flesh if he is dead. Colossians goes further: "ye have died"; and here they are risen also, and so are looked at as risen men on the earth: they are dead to the rudiments of the world, are not alive in the world subject to ordinances. So we are dead "to the law by the body of Christ," in Romans: it is also said, "if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin." But dead to nature is, in all that we are said to be dead to, quite unknown to Scripture in word or thought. It falsifies the idea of the bearing of death there.

But none of these is the highest measure taken in Scripture. These think of sin, though of death to it, but never of our living in it. Colossians goes a step further, and on to ground which is fully developed in Ephesians. When man's highest condition in this respect is spoken of, he has not died to anything: he is viewed as *dead in* trespasses and sins, and then as a new creation—a creation after God. It is just mentioned; Colossians 2:13. This is fully developed in Ephesians 2 and here note, Christ is not viewed as life-giving, but as raised when a dead man, He having descended in grace to where we were, and in an effectual work for us, so that we rise with Him and into the same place. This is referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:14, 17, and in the remarkable summary in John 5:24. All this stands on a different ground from being quickened and having died: we have changed our place and position, are created anew. But if dying is to be brought in and dwelt on, people are really in general under law, and do not count themselves dead; and if they talk of dying to nature, which Scripture does not, they will soon find to their cost that nature is not dead.

I should earnestly press being dead, crucified with

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Christ; Christ and nothing else our life—not of the world as Christ is not of the world—that the Spirit of God be the source of all our thoughts and desires, to live Christ. Death to sin we have, to the world, our old man crucified with Christ; and if Christ be in us, the body dead because of sin. So all that is in the world, the lusts and pride, is not of the Father. But neglecting of the body may be being "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind"; and dead to nature does not enter into the sphere of scriptural thought. Who is dead to it? And what is he dead to? Is the new man dead? The question would be, Is nature dead? and that they will soon find out it is not. They should not eat nor drink: now, they should not do this save to the glory of God, and with prayer and thanksgiving—have no motive but Christ in anything, the body of sin being destroyed.

What is specially wanted now is undivided devotedness. I dread anything that would weaken that. But dead to nature, in word or thought, Scripture does not know; and in the highest character of Christianity, dead to anything does not come in at all, but a new nature in relationship with the Father and with Christ, and in Him, sitting in heavenly places. If I talk much of being dead to nature, I am occupied with it. I write briefly and in a hurry, but you will find, I believe, the principles of Scripture here.

J.N.D.

*January, 1879.*

Someone has sent me —'s tracts from the *Voice*. There is a good deal of truth as to the new position and new creation, which I fully accept and insist on where it can be. But it is fresh truth poured in and poured out, not matured in the soul. I know what it is, and we all have to learn it. It is delighting in the wondrous fresh truth, but it is not Christ. In this respect I do not think he knows himself. It is a more

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subtle self, delighting in having done with self, not Christ taking the place of self. All through, it is Christ "in all," but not "Christ all." It is striking how this runs through every page. This easily accounts for the effect in others. Now realising the life of Christ as dead to the world is of all possible moment, but this is by Christ being all, not by the life of Christ in us being all. He looks for the 'sense of power,' but it is when we are weak we are strong. I think his view of the way Christ is presented in Luke very defective. I do not mean anything unorthodox. When self has become practically nothing and Christ experimentally all, the truth he has learned may become a most useful weapon of ministry. When we are young in the truth, it fills the mind always more surfeitingly; and to a mind like his where there is considerable treasury of thought, the danger is greater. It is not knowing we are nothing, but being it, which is the point. More of the power of life in Christ we do need and need greatly, at least as far as I am concerned. Truth he has seized very considerably, but I do not find Christ everywhere and what He is—we dead and Christ our life there, and the new sphere we belong to. These are details which have struck me, but they are of no importance now: they run in general into the great point I have noticed. I do not think he understands the wilderness or that he has gone through it; perhaps there is more. Nor do I think he is clear on the connection of Colossians and Ephesians; but all this is by the bye. They were brought to God Himself at Sinai.

J. N. D.

1879.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I must tell you that I have never adequately read the articles in the *Voice*, to give you an exact answer, and in what I have there is such thorough obscurity in the important passages that it

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is not easy to lay fast hold of their import; they are the statements of one who has never thoroughly digested and realised his own thoughts. It is only last week that I read the

larger number of them. These I had at least a month ago; they had been sent to me anonymously. But I would not delay answering a letter so kindly written, and give you what is now with some distinctness on my mind. Further inquiry may enable me to speak with more detail. But there is another point I must refer to. If the effect in all those under the teaching is substantially the same, though it would be unjust to charge all the particular statements on the teacher, we are as much concerned before God with the result in souls, even the weakest dear to Him, as in the particular ideas of the teacher. It is something which produces that effect. Now I always found the effect produced by this teaching to be, not Christ before the soul, but itself. They had got something wonderfully new and beautiful, what was not heavenly (that was common) but divine; and where Christ was spoken of, it was not Christ Himself, but Christ in them, conscious power of His life in them. This was chiefly with women: men were more usually unhappy because they had not this gold tried in the fire. The effect on others, 'convicted Laodiceans'—for all were in Laodicea (a name nearer the truth than they thought), was that they were rich and increased in goods; others were to go down to Bethany too; they supped with Christ. I cannot say this seemed to me of God. It was themselves and Stradbally, not Christ.

It was only here that I read the first three of the articles, the Pauline Epistles; and I shall now tell you what I find answering to the effect in souls, and often expressed by them, though sometimes obscurely, in them and the articles, Colossians being the principal alleged basis. Christ being our life (which no Christian,

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of course, objects to), we are livingly in Him, but He as man is in God, so we are in God. Our life is in God—not hid in Christ there, but we alive in God—so as all the fulness of the Godhead is in Him, and we are complete in Him, we are entered into this place, into this fulness which is in Him: connected with this is that we are not merely justified, but actually and livingly God's righteousness, we *are* it, we livingly. Now I have heard of this being stated much more crudely, and some of the statements in the articles are very obscure, but if they mean anything they mean that all is in the condition and state in which Christ is Himself; as He is, so are we. There is no mediatorial Christ. Now Scripture never speaks of Christ in God. When Christ speaks distinctly as Man, He says, "my God"; and so the Holy Ghost; "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. And I have always remarked that when we are placed in the same glory and acceptance—as we are, or shall be—what belongs to His Person is always carefully secured. Here we are put together. You would never find Christ saying to His disciples, "Our Father"—a rightly formed Christian mind would be deeply shocked at it—though He says, "My Father and your Father." As an inference man would say, we can thus say "*our*"—not one taught of God. And this is what those who have received this teaching are come to, not these words, but this evil thing. It is such a connection with Christ in life, who is a man in God, that we are there too, only in heaven, dead not merely to sin but to nature; and, as far as I have found, it is always justified by such inference. A mediatorial Christ is lost by union. There is another point which I have not mastered, though it is in what I read connected with this—righteousness in incorruptibility; of this, therefore, I cannot speak. But what I have stated is the real substance and root of the doctrine, and is wholly false—not of God, though

it may seem elevating and high. The very barrier that Scripture has carefully put when speaking of our privileges, you have overstepped; and hence souls have got, not Christ all, but an exalted self.

Since this question has come before me, I will look through such of the articles as I can command. I never saw them until I came here. I have spoken plainly, because Christ and souls are in question, but I have not a trace of ungracious feeling. What would rouse souls to more devotedness would always be welcome to me, but we are sanctified by the truth. I write at once that I may meet the letter graciously sent me, but I will (D.V.) look further into the articles, though I have *very* little time; and if called for, as far as I judge, write again.

J.N.D.

1879

... That there is a wholly new creation of which the blessed Lord is Head; that there all is new; that in the moral sense the cross closed the history of the first man, and that all is new, the Second Man not mingled with the first; that we now reckon ourselves dead, and alive to God in Him, not in Adam; that forgiveness is not all; that justification in this character is not all; it applies to our responsibilities as belonging to the former estate, while there is a wholly new position of acceptance ending in glory, in our present estate in Christ—is not what is in question. How far it is realised is a question with individual souls. That everything may be turned into mere doctrine, is alas! true; and I may add, that the cross and the glory answer to one another.

But there is more than this in your teaching: not mere careless expressions, or mistaken ones, to which we are all liable, but a formal systematic doctrine, not so clearly brought out in your printed papers, but

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which has taken possession of those taught by you, and is insisted on as something new and transcendently precious and beautiful—and is something new, and wholly and mischievously false—and runs through all your papers, though not so broadly stated as by those who are adepts in it, still quite clearly to one who can judge in such a case; not union with Christ, not being in Him, and He in us, but, He being in God, such an identification with Christ as makes us to be actual divine righteousness, as so identified with Him; He in God in the glory, but we partakers actually ourselves of divine righteousness and incorruptibility, which sustains us wholly above nature.

'He is in the region of life hid with Christ in God; he enjoys the state and breathes the breath of the new creation' (*Voice*, vol. xi, p. 218). 'We behold the righteousness of God subsist in a living Person for our hearts; He is there—He in whom we have become God's righteousness... Righteousness is dwelling in life of new creation' (p. 221). See also pages 224, 163. 'Not only life, which might be said of the Old Testament saints, but incorruptibility—the power of divine righteousness which sustains in the new creation

place' (p. 73). 'We, having become God's righteousness in Christ, can bring forth fruit unto God, fruit unto holiness' (p. 74). 'As truly and really as we were constituted sinners, so are we truly and really constituted righteous as in Him who has become, in resurrection, the power of God to us. Christ Himself, *risen* in victor-strength, is to be known in the saint as really as he felt the terrible power of evil in his Adam-state. There is actual positive righteousness, not only justification by faith. It is established in the cross, and in virtue of the work done *there* it flows down with glory in its train, and lifts Man out of death, and sets Him to be its own channel from and in glory. That Man, crucified in weakness, is exhibited as God's Son in power, according

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to the Spirit of holiness' (p. 313). Then in page 314: Having received 'the gift of righteousness...' the believer 'enjoys life in righteousness.' All this is error. Resurrection is not looked at in Scripture as victor-strength in man, but as a divine act towards man; though Christ, as being God, could do it. You make it a new kind of power in man: that we are partakers of this power, the source being in Christ on high, and that this being in us in life is righteousness. This is the system which, starting from the truth that Christ is our life, has falsified the whole position of the Christian and of Christ.

But I continue (p. 361), 'The new man is in Him (Jesus) created after God in righteousness and true holiness, righteousness as in power and place in God, to sustain us in light and glory where He is.' 'Thus we see *our* side of the new man as a throne of grace; and *God's* side the fountain of life and righteousness.' What follows I do not receive. How is the new man a "throne of grace"? That—"throne of grace"—is Hebrews' doctrine, but I do not enter on it here. But by this system what Christ is is falsified: He is a Man in God. Righteousness, divine righteousness, is falsified: it is an actual thing in us, not Christ made it to us, or we in Him, but we made it through His being livingly in us: our place is falsified too; as He is, so are we, in present moral elevation: resurrection is falsified, as an intrinsic power in Christ as Man—life out of death consequent on death to sin, and so reproduced in us in conscious power through Him—not the act of God; and made life out of death to sin and self, not out of death in sins, or with Him as risen consequent on His death, as Scripture does; so that the new creation is falsified too. All this exalts man in himself, while professing to do the contrary; but I continue (p. 332): 'We are seen *in* Him in heaven... consequently we are in conflict with the devil and his host *there*.' This is all a

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mistake: He, Christ, at the right hand of God, is not the place of conflict. 'Co-quickened with Him in the same righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21)' (p. 333). There is no such statement or thought in Scripture; it is a system of divine righteousness in actuality in us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says nothing about quickening or co-quickening with Him. So in page 332, 'justified by faith' is accompanied by no hint of Christ's work. Scripture says, "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; *therefore* being justified by faith we have peace with God." This you leave out and add, 'enjoying the justification of life—the power of righteousness *actually* known in the vessel on earth.' Nor is 'the power of righteousness,' that I can think of, a scriptural expression or thought, and at any rate not as the ground of peace before God. It makes our state the



ground, not the work of Christ, nor His acceptance before God. Press our realising life and divine things in power—excellent—but this alters the basis of our relationship with God. The expression even of “justification of life” is quite in connection with another thought, and spoken of where all is made carefully to depend on one Man’s obedience; so that the apostle has to guard against misuse of it in what follows by unfolding the new life; and in the passage itself the present effect of life is left out. In page 335 there is the same neglect of attention to Scripture through following our own ideas: we get ‘the living power of Him who subsists in divine righteousness.’ ‘To find Him, know Him,’ etc. Now it is the power of God, and Christ is looked at exclusively as a raised Man by God, and we with Him, and set in Him in heavenly places. There is no power spoken of in Christ, or in us. The whole of what is said on Ephesians 1:13 is a falsification of the sense of the passage; as on chapter 2 (p. 337): of all you find in it, there is not a trace, not even as an

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object sought; it is by grace we have been saved, for God’s glory in the ages to come: nor is even the second prayer truly stated (p. 338).

In page 361 the connection of the thought is false. In Colossians we have not the new creation (though one verse runs close to it), but that which you always confound with it, that is, death and resurrection: death, on which you make the new creation depend, referring wholly to the old (the new creation being, as said, on the ground of death in sins, not to sin). Hence in Colossians we have only “*renewed in knowledge*” after the image of “Him that created him.” But again we have definitely as to us, not merely Christ even, this falsifying the whole state and condition: ‘The new man is in Him created after God in righteousness and true holiness, righteousness as in power and place in God to sustain us in light and glory where He is.’ Is the new man created in Christ in God to sustain us in light and glory where He is? Such a wilderness of error (forgive me what may seem a hard word, but such is the effect of leaving Scripture, and following one’s thoughts) it would be hard to find, but it is the very essence and summing up of all your system. Thus (p. 362) ‘we come like the day spring from on high... and hear the message to us, *Give*, etc.’...

I know not that I need add any more. I have gone through a year’s articles which were under my hand out here. I add one or two from Colossians (vol. xii. 9). ‘The new man put on as *the life* in actual fact, we are co-quickenened with Him now.... The whole energy of *hidden* life in God is now acting in the power of righteousness in glory. And because it is the condition of soul,’ etc. (p. 10). ‘That is, all is put off that hinders us from rising up in the firmament of His power’ (p. 11). ‘He who is the channel of love is God, and Man in God. This is the first-born out of death’; and what follows (p. 12). ‘Hidden life—

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the risen and exalted One who breathed a new atmosphere in John 20:22 sustains the inner man in incorruption.’ ‘Life hid in God’ (p. 14), ‘a sphere of profession where we receive the power of glory’ (p. 15); so page 16. I have quoted so many passages to shew that it is not rash expressions but a regular system, in which the man in God as risen, life out of death, is divine righteousness according to glory and incorruptibility. All gives



way to this; redemption and Christ's work are really lost in the work in us. Now it will be said, One ought not to oppose the power of a new life in us. I quite agree. It is greatly needed. But it is just what I feel sorrowful in these papers that a handle is given to refuse deeply needed truths, because they are identified with fatal errors and notions which Scripture does not support, and which totally displace grave and important truths, a teaching which, as I said to —, puts Christ in Himself out, that we may have a fancied power of Christ in us. I recognise fully man's history is morally ended on the cross, that Christ risen from the dead is the beginning and head of a new position of man in which Adam innocent was not; but I cannot *substitute* this for redemption, nor give up Christ my righteousness before God for a fancied divine righteousness in me. I have lost Christ *in Himself* in your teaching. Your remarks, I think, are constantly fancies; what you say of the end of Romans 5 seems to me all wrong; what you say of priesthood is quite out of the way; but all this I leave save as bearing on the principle that runs through all. I admit forgiveness is not all; we are also in a new position, Christ being our life, and we, for faith, dead and risen. I see some allusions to wild German theories, perhaps English ones, but that I leave too. The quotations which I have made characterise the principle I object to; but it runs all through the articles, and, I judge, takes a ground Scripture carefully guards against.

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Christ in His own perfectness objectively is gone, and thereby what judges self. I may add, I have a whole collection of poems and I know not what, but I have preferred using what is printed and published, which may deceive a young mind but not, I think, one experimentally versed in the word, and his own heart, and to whom Christ is all. I recognise fully the necessity of pressing life and the new creation; but it is looking at Christ Himself objectively, which subjectively changes us into His image. We, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

It seems to me, dear brother, that for the moment it would be happier for you not to teach at all. You will forgive me for saying that your own case is a proof how little this extraordinary elevation gives real knowledge of self. The effect of your teaching, as I have seen it, is three-fold. Where a person did not know what freedom (Rom. 8) was, nor belonging to the new creation, it has been used to set them free, only imbibing mischief with it:: with wild, specially female imaginations; it has puffed them up with mystic imaginations: with sober God-fearing consciences it threw them back under law, because they had not 'the gold,' and would labour to buy it. I have seen all such, but all with self instead of Christ in some shape: in some, Colossians 2:9, 10 used to prove that as the fulness of God was in Christ, and we complete in Him, we were livingly in that fulness; and this confirmed by Ephesians 3:19, corrected from the Greek, and by 1 John 4:17—all as the present fact of our state. All this shewed that your articles shewed the root, not the fruit of the system. I have only sought to shew what that root is, and sufficiently to shew it is a regular system which dims an objective Christ, and, as I said, a mediatorial one—not merely careless expressions. I have only to beg

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you to believe that all I have written is in sincere Christian affection, not weakened but

strengthened by having to look into it. May I add, that you have to learn to have less confidence in yourself, and to be less occupied with yourself, and what passes in your own mind; more with Christ Himself in Himself. He reads Scripture, it has been said, well, *qui non affert sed refert sensum*. Our part now is to separate the precious from the vile. I have no doubt that your sincere desire is that you and others should walk in that 'higher life' which knows Christ only as its object: but, not knowing yourself, it became what you warn others against—a doctrine; and, not being dead, Satan found opportunity to mix your own imaginations with it, and introduce what tended to sap the reality of truth.

Ever your affectionate brother in Christ.

J.N.D.

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## RYDE AND DR. CRONIN; RAMSGATE AND MR. WM. KELLY

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THESE matters, which occurred in the years 1879 to 1881, and eventually resulted in the separation often referred to as the “Kelly trouble,” were really but the fruit and evidence of a low moral state among the brethren generally, which caused enfeeblement of moral and spiritual perception, and an absence of unity, resulting in a general powerlessness to deal with evil. The general state shewed itself in an independence of outlook and judgment on the part of certain well-known brothers, with a readiness to override the consciences of their brethren in attempts to enforce recognition of their own judgment.

The material facts of this sorrowful history are as follows: There was in 1879 a company meeting at the Temperance Hall, Ryde, Isle of Wight, which was recognised as in fellowship, though admittedly in a low state. A letter of commendation from this company having been sent to the brethren at Kingston-on-Thames, and having been read to them in the usual way, this action was challenged by Mr. W. Kelly and others on the ground that the state at Ryde was such that the meeting should not be regarded as in fellowship, and that therefore a person commended from there should not be received. This attitude was resisted by Mr. Darby and others, on the ground that the Ryde meeting had never been disowned by brethren, and therefore a person from that meeting could not be refused on the private judgment of individual brothers. In the course of the difficulties existing at Ryde, an independent company had been formed in that town by some who previously broke bread at the Temperance Hall, but this independent company was not recognised by brethren generally in the neighbourhood, who continued to extend fellowship to those breaking bread at the Temperance Hall.

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In this state of affairs, Dr. Cronin, who belonged to one of the London meetings (Kennington), went down to Ryde and broke bread with the independent company, seeking by this means to enforce recognition of it. The brethren in London were unduly slow in repudiating Dr. Cronin’s action, though there was much concern about it among the saints wherever it became known, and in August, 1879, certain of the brethren who broke bread together at Guildford Hall, Ramsgate, felt that in order to maintain a good conscience before God, they could no longer continue in fellowship with those who supported Dr. Cronin, whether at Ramsgate, Kennington, or elsewhere. They therefore, after having broken bread with the rest of their brethren on August 17th, but a common judgment not having been arrived at in a meeting specially called on August 22nd to determine Ramsgate’s relations with London, separated themselves and broke bread together on August 24th at Almorah House, Ramsgate. Those they had left did not break bread on that day, the meeting at Ramsgate being thus broken up. Had those who commenced to break bread at Almorah House not acted in this precipitate way, much sorrow might have been avoided, for on the very next day news reached Ramsgate that the London brethren had considered Dr. Cronin’s matter and were proposing his exclusion from fellowship, by which action their consciences would be met. On hearing of the action proposed to be taken by London, those at Ramsgate who had *not* broken

bread at Almorah House, nor indeed at all on August 24th, took another hall at Abbotts Hill, Ramsgate, and assuming assembly status, decided to accept the action proposed to be taken by London, and, without seeking their brethren who had broken bread at Almorah House, closed the door upon them as having withdrawn from fellowship. As soon as London's proposed action became known to those

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who had withdrawn to Almorah House, they ceased breaking bread, and acknowledging that they had been precipitate in the step they had taken, sought to rejoin their brethren. This was refused, those at Abbotts Hill claiming to be regarded as the acknowledged company in Ramsgate, and that their brethren at Almorah House had been guilty of schism and as such were excluded from fellowship. In taking this ground those at Abbotts Hill ignored the just claim of their brethren at Almorah House that, however much they might have failed in detail, their action had been dictated by a desire to maintain what was due to the Lord's name. On November 21st the brethren at Abbotts Hill withdrew their exclusion from fellowship of their brethren who had separated from them, and who by then were again meeting in the old room—Guildford Hall—but declared at the same time that their exclusion of them had been righteous. On December 18th the Guildford Hall brethren who, as stated before, had ceased to break bread, proposed to those at Abbotts Hill that in view of their common failure, the latter should cease to break bread for one Lord's day and that they should then all meet together for confession and prayer. This was refused by the Abbotts Hill company, who took the ground of having continued all along to be the recognised company at Ramsgate, despite the break-up that had occurred on August 24th.

All efforts by godly brethren elsewhere, including Mr. Darby, to bring in healing proving unavailing because of the attitude maintained by those at Abbotts Hill, those meeting at Guildford Hall recommenced breaking bread in March 1881, and appealed for the fellowship of brethren generally in doing so. In the following month a letter of commendation from Guildford Hall, Ramsgate, to brethren in London compelled a decision to be come to as to which of the two companies in Ramsgate was to be regarded as in

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fellowship, and it was judged by brethren, Mr. Darby being present with them at the time, that those at Abbotts Hill could not be accorded assembly status when their actions shewed that they knew nothing of the Lord's presence in their midst, or of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. The letter of commendation from Guildford Hall was therefore accepted, and this judgment of the matter was largely accepted by gatherings throughout the country. There were, however, those who insisted on the recognition of the Abbotts Hill company, among whom Mr. Wm. Kelly, who had previously endeavoured to support the independent company at Ryde, took a leading part, and a division among brethren, which had for some time been felt by those who were spiritual to be inevitable, resulted.

The following letters by Mr. Darby throw valuable light on the moral issues raised by these sorrowful happenings.

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## RYDE LETTERS

*Pau, February 26th, 1879.*

On the whole one can trust in the goodness of God, but the matter will call for long patience, and the leaders of brethren seem above all, to go astray. Still I think God is working.... Waiting on Him, courage, and patience are what are called for. There is a loss of moral sense among brethren, which tends to destroy confidence, and then an action which refers to the whole body, by an individual of his own authority. I love independence, but then an individual should not act in what affects all, unless they can pretend to a commission from Christ, that is, apostolic authority: and it does not succeed, but raises distrust, and what is called radicalism....

Humiliation is the place of all, for dishonour has been done to Christ. But there is a *moral* loosening which is the alarming part of the case. Still trusting the Lord and seeking the blessing of all is our path.

J.N.D.

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*Pau, June, 1879.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Thank you much for your kind note. I suffered more than is any good for me to talk about, more or less for these two years or more, but said nothing and did nothing, but bore, till I gave up everything to God; since then I have been as peaceful as possible, and free to enjoy the unspeakable goodness of God. The state of things forced me to act in this matter alone; and when — gave expression by an overt act to what was going on, and I knew to be going on, for a long while, and he sent me word, I had a full correspondence with him, friendly, but telling him what I saw to be the working of his act; and it was not till all remonstrance and reasoning was useless that I ceased the correspondence, and told him so. Those who backed him up in evil are responsible for a great deal. I then felt I must act individually which I did, and only stated what I had sure and certain ground for, but that definitely and plainly. I have no particular pleasure in the word 'profane,' but my business was to make plain what his act was. He pretended to have a kind of private inspiration as to it, and long insisted on being led of the Holy Ghost. Now the thing was wrong, done secretly, knowing that all brethren would be against it: none defend it now. He had been thinking of it before, I know, though I paid no attention to it at the time. So little was there any leading of the Holy Ghost, that in three weeks he had broken with the person he was led to, and they were in utter opposition. The bringing in the Holy Ghost for what was wrong in itself, and done in this way, and really to put down the meeting which was and is there, I felt and feel was a profane thing. The mischief which was at work seemed to blind to all the plainest features of what was right and wrong, honourable and dishonourable. This was what made it urgent to be plain. Having



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given my personal testimony I have never meddled in the discipline part, and indeed, being out here, could not in the practical part, and I had no advice to give. I cast it on the Lord, and He has wrought. Consciences are gradually awakening. I do not think that we have got into clear water, but there is much more sense of where we are and were. I am not much in correspondence with England as to what goes on there; till about a fortnight ago, I may say not at all. But as I believe God is working, I am quite at peace.

I have never had for a moment an unkindly feeling towards —. I do not think he is the most completely leader in the evil, but it was he who did the overt act; but I do not think I am out of charity with any. I have, up to this, kept the greatest part of what pressed upon me to myself. What I dealt with was a public act done in defiance of brethren: and the state of things was such that it must have led ere long, not to my giving up what are called brethren's principles, for I believe they are God's testimony and in His word, but those who were pretending to carry them out—how I cannot tell. With — I was cordially united, and there was very true union there, but of course I could not make them a meeting independent of others, and go in there and nowhere else. Stay in the evil and see the work corrupted I could not, when it came before the conscience of others—and the very effect of what had been going on was to deaden the conscience. That, I trust, God is awakening up, and if brethren are patient that will bring out clear blessing. I trust God will give me patience still to leave it all to Him, for in seeking to do good we would seek sometimes to hurry His working: but I believe in His mercy He is at work. If brethren are humble and seek His face they will find a blessing. Mere violence against myself I take to be a matter of course; and, save for those who feel it, whom I trust I should be given to meet in the

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wisdom of grace, it does not in the least degree move me. It is good to be alone with God, and walk in grace with others.

I am glad T. is gone to Canada: it makes links where I can no longer be one, though I should like greatly to see them all again.

J.N.D.

... Take care, too, that irritation does not come in; the wrath of man never works the righteousness of God. The saints ought to be able to win back to peace many souls, and the way of peace is that which will do it. But let their vexation subside; you will have given up no principle: one's own soul suffers by being constantly occupied with evil. It is not the place of communion. saying he gave up brethrenism has put the thing in its true light; and if left to reflect on it, many will find where they had got to; if carried on as if seeking to carry one's point, they will not. You should not mind such as —. There is a kind of violence which grace is entirely above. It ought to be above all. God's ways are His own and wonderful.... I have constantly found that bringing things to God, if real, is the way of having them done. Our hearts are very treacherous, and we are in danger of rejoicing in iniquity, if the evil of another proves our point. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and pray for poor — much. He is one dear, as redeemed in the blood, the

precious blood of Christ. Many would think this inconsistent with my letter, but it is not. It was occasioned by a public act which threw the whole testimony of God into confusion. Be assured that God knows how to manage His own affairs: He has shewn it. Give people time to weigh and think.

Affectionately yours in the Lord,

J.N.D.

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London, July 26th, 1879.

... I cannot doubt that the Lord is working. Had I not this confidence, I should have left the brethren nearly a year ago, but I felt it would be unfaithful: not as doubting that they had the truth, but as unfaithful to it. I felt it would be hireling work, but God is working and bringing light into the souls of many, and with a little patience He will bring about His will, I mean His blessing. But there is no doubt it was a deliberate plan for breaking up the brethren here. That, at present, is broken down, but in general, consciences are beginning to find they had got away from the Lord—of course, not every one—and the assemblies trusted a few, and failed in humble reference to God. They had got into a bad state, and this had been brought home to them, but for their good.... But I have no doubt, painful as it all is, that God is turning it to blessing: the humbling will be useful, and seeing God is working. I trust there may be patience till He has fully brought about a blessing.

Occupy yourselves with Christ that you may be refreshed and strengthened. It is a great thing to pass through sorrows with Him; they are then turned to a well, and grace comes down too. Pray for the saints—all of them—carry the sorrows to Christ, and in your own spirit bring Christ to the sorrows. The brethren had got puffed up, and were sinking from fidelity towards God, and He has visited them in mercy. In waiting on Him, He will exalt the faithful in due time, and rejoice in the Lord *always*.

J.N.D.

1879.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—My path is to be quiet, feeding souls with Christ as far as God enables me. It

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restores the tone of the soul for every emergency. My impression is, my letter expressed the desire to be with brethren in the perilous times of the last day, not any break up of brethren. The pretensions of brethren I had seen growing, and it alarmed me a good deal. But God has been putting that down, and that is a very good sign: “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” I counsel patience on all sides. Consciences are awakening and getting humbled as to the state brethren are in, and that was what was wanting.

I could not leave brethren, I felt-it would not be faith, and I feel I was right. I have never a moment doubted that it was the testimony of God. But there was a regular plan to break it up in London, and, with this, the most precious truths, connected with deceit and evil, and this sectarian pretension of what brethren were. This was my difficulty. When a positive act took place, I could deal with it for myself; up to that, it was going on without anything positively culpable to lay hold of. Now we have only to wait patiently the Lord's working. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass."

J.N.D.

*October 1st, 1879.*

As you speak of humiliation, I desire to reply a word. I think humiliation quite the thing called for, for the general state of brethren, their worldliness, their decay in positive testimony, their low spiritual state generally. I thought I had spoken to you of Bochim when I wrote before, but I did not, though I did to another, at the same time. I accepted the general idea of Bochim, but not the special character. Bochim was instead of Gilgal, the place of circumcision, where the angel of the Lord (unknown to them) was. That was the judicial giving up of Gilgal. I do

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not as yet accept that for brethren: *God* might give us up, and we must bow; but as yet I trust that He does not.

The difficulty as to common humiliation was, that what some judged as sin, others advocated and defended, or at least judged very light of. How could there be honest common humiliation? What defended the evil was exactly what the humiliation had to be for. The mere state of brethren was caring for brethrenism, not for God's glory. I do not say there was nothing of this last feeling, but, in general, it was shame for the state, not going to the root. However, *God* has judged the overt act, and, I suppose I may say, has cleared brethren from the principle that was at work so far.... but godly souls are fully convinced that the demoralisation I spoke of has been manifested. The question of the existence of brethren as a testimony depends upon their recovery from this. If they do not, they will be at Bochim; but there, Gilgal and blessing *were over*. I trust the Lord will maintain His testimony. I think the question a most solemn one.

— takes the ground of Hebrews 12:27, that brethren are to be removed as things that can be shaken, he and a few more being taken up afresh as a fresh testimony before the Lord comes. Now this being done as I affirm it to have been done, is an immensely vital point. If it has that character, it is not of *God*. It is no personal question. It is a question if, as he affirms, brethren are to be set aside or to remain a testimony for God. He has acted, as privately led of God, to set them aside. Half the brethren, I dare say much more, do not know what is involved. But God has wrought to judge the overt act. It now remains to see if brethren answer to *His* mercy, in drawing closer to Him....

I do not expect the mass of brethren to see the issues involved, but I look to God to work by His

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Spirit to preserve for Christ's glory a testimony to Himself, in awakening the consciences of brethren, and drawing them in heart and ways out of the world, so that He may use them as vessels of His testimony.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J.N.D.

*Pau, 1879.*

... As regards England, it has been as you know a time of trial. The general state of brethren was really what God was judging. Partisans seek to keep up uneasiness.... In Kent there was haste in those who sought to do right. This gave a handle, but has been the means of bringing out the party-feeling at work. God saw, I believe, that sifting and purifying was needed there. But for God, the want of principle would have been crushing, but with Him is always peace. And we have to ask, "Whither goest thou?" and trust Him. Even if the Messiah and Son of God (Psa. 2) was rejected, it was only to bring out the Son of man in the glory of the Father. God is never baffled. It has been a time of blessing for myself; and many consciences, I would say of all the godly, have been deeply awakened. There was a want of faith in some, but this was not surprising: there is in us at all times. We read, "My flesh and my heart faileth me: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." It has made what is eternal more and more everything to me. It was cheering to see how upright souls soon saw all clear. And how precise God's government is! We have only to lean on Him and all is right....

J.N.D.

*October, 1879.*

MY BELOVED BRETHREN,—I never felt the same distrust of myself as I do now in writing this, and I desire

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to speak to my own conscience as to you. I should not write at all, but as taking the lowest place, always the best, and now especially the only true and right one. He who is lowest and lowliest will be most blessed.

Let me say a word as to Bochim. Looked at merely as used for humiliation or sorrow where saints have failed, and voluntarily by grace place themselves to own it before God, I heartily enter into it, but taken as it is really in Scripture, there was nothing of the kind at Bochim. The Lord declared in judgment that He would no longer drive out their enemies, and they wept when they heard the judgment. There was no sorrow for sin and failure, but for judgment, and they worshipped where they wept. Gilgal, that is

circumcision, the removal of the reproach of Egypt, and the Lord's presence by His angel in it, was lost for ever. There was no voluntary confession and humiliation at all. It is all a mistake. They had not faithfully put out the evil that was amongst them, and the Lord, though interfering from time to time in compassion, left them judicially in this state. I refer to this because the word became a kind of watchword with many. But God has wrought a great deliverance for us, much greater than most of those spared are aware of: some have felt it. And what I desire now is, that our consciences may turn and see where we had so failed as to bring this sorrow upon us. I am not going to turn back and charge any one or refer to any recent circumstances, but to weigh, where conscience is awake, how we brought ourselves into the strait place we were in. I hesitated a moment whether I should say anything, before the details which remain were set in order by God, as I am assured His grace will do; but they do not affect my object.

Is it not true for every thoughtful conscience that the spirit of the world had invaded us? We do not go to parties; if we meet, we meet to read the Scriptures

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and edify one another. Discipline for any gross evil would be, I suppose, exercised with some measure of faithfulness where the evil was apparent: I make no exaggerated statement of evil: many, I doubt not, were walking Christianly, I daresay better than myself. But as to the course of this world, had we not greatly fallen into its ways? not, as I have said, in open worldliness—but was not there that, current, and let pass, which grieved the Spirit of God, and hence weakened all spiritual energy, and spiritual discernment for discipline and for the Lord's mind in all our course—the loss of discerning things that are excellent “to be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ,” “filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding... fruitful in every good work”? Have we been as purified to Himself for a peculiar people; not our own, bought with a price; as epistles of Christ known and read of all men; living by Him, and close to Him, and for Him; as is said, “Christ is all, and in all,” so that whatsoever we should do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus? Were our sole and constant motives Christ, or the common motives of the world? Were buying and selling, our houses, our clothing, ordered on principles which Christ, if there, would approve? Did we walk even as once we walked? Was there devoted service among the poor and needy, visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world? We read, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Were we yielding our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God as an intelligent service, proving what was that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, as Christ offered Himself for us a dying sacrifice? Ah! what place had He, has He in our hearts? Do we live to Him who died in love for us? If the testimony of God as to the truth was with brethren, was it the

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truth as it is in Jesus, the having put off the old man and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness?

I had long dreaded: the Manchester meeting alarmed me: I was not there; but the discussion was whether we were Philadelphia, or who was Laodicea—and not at

Manchester only. Brethren had got to think of themselves as a body of people, and to say the least, less of Christ and His body. Now God calls us, and that in love, to remember from whence we are fallen and repent and do the first works. He looks for consistency and devotedness. He always does, and I bless His name He does, but He does so call us now by special circumstances. Satan, long practically undermining as to devotedness and unworldliness, had made a deadly effort to set brethren aside in their testimony to the truth. God in His sovereign mercy has broken his effort. It has been His doing only. Now comes the positive side. Is that which gave him entrance, and a handle, removed, and the Lord truly honoured? If our consciences do not take notice of His ways, the next thing, though His patience is great and long, would be His judgment. Satan's efforts and power He can easily break, humbling us in the meantime; but His judgment who shall withstand? I ask myself, I ask you, how far can we say, "To me to live is Christ"? That is the grave question for us all now. I do not seek to discourage, quite the contrary. The Lord, in sovereign mercy, has not left us, though we have greatly failed. He has shewn Himself *most* graciously with us, when we might have expected the contrary. How soon could the apostle say, "All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ"! He has shewn Himself full of mercy and grace: what I seek is that our hearts may turn to Him according to that grace.

I add, as the passage has been circulated, that Hebrews 12:27 has no possible application. There

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God Himself yet once more shakes and removes what can be shaken, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. What man, when God shakes all things, can establish what cannot be shaken? One part of the passage does belong to us, to those to whom the warning of God's shaking all things yet once was addressed, namely, "We therefore receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for *our* God is a consuming fire." Such is His government here, but with that we have boldness to enter into the holiest. May our thoughts be formed there: may we yet remember that He governs!

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J.N.D.

1880.

... God gently clears the way, I believe. From the beginning I have felt that God was sifting the meetings in Kent, and when that is done adequately in God's eyes there will be peace. But the evil that was at the root of all this, besides a party spirit that had long existed, was that there were brethren, and dear brethren, who, from what I believe was want of faith, judged it was all over with brethren, and London broken up, and that they must as standing on higher ground start afresh as a new body. Now I admit that the brethren had got into a low worldly sleepy state, but I do not think it was faith to think the Lord could not rouse them up, nor that it was grace to set up themselves to be the cream of all.... I cannot say, sorrowful and humbling as it may be, that I regret that the



sifting has come. It was from the hand of God because in grace He saw it was needed.... While I acknowledge in the party who took the ground of purity many dear and true saints, some to whom I am even personally attached, and their uprightness as

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the governing principle of their lives, I do not believe faith or grace to have been the source of the pretension I have referred to. The enemy profited by the evil, which I admit, to produce the pretension and schism of heart, varying I acknowledge in degree and form. The course of Abbotts Hill I still judge to have been thoroughly wicked, and I have not seen that the conscience has been reached.... I believe God is working, but He does not heal slightly the hurt of the daughter of His people, as Jeremiah says. I do not believe that hurry in acting is the way of God. I look for conscience being reached, and so the root of the evil; then there will be lowliness and the path be plain.

J.N.D.

... As to the act of exclusion at Abbotts Hill: I look upon it as I always did as an act of wickedness, a false pretence to be the discipline of God's house when it was a violent party act: it was not even truthful. If it was discipline which had God's glory, the holiness of God's house and righteousness as regards evil for its motive, as that discipline should, how can they talk of withdrawing it in grace when other people objected: does grace mean giving these up? Other saints not engaged in these questions in any direct way were unanimously struck with the spirit of their conduct from their own documents. I knew some of those concerned in it, which made it worse.... But I go on none of these things, but that their act was a very wicked act: I believe it impossible to be with God and not see it. But they have haughtily refused to meet upon the ground of common failure and confession. Mr. — says it is the Lord's matter. The act was his, not the Lord's: that it is the Lord's to judge it I admit; but people can know by His word whether it is right or wrong before He manifests Himself.

J.N.D.

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*November 26th, 1881.*

... As to affairs in England, it would be difficult to give you a detailed history; but the principle is simple enough, and it is with this we must be occupied, so as to discern what is of God and what is of Satan, and be guided in our walk to the glory of God.

You know that the natural tendency, as numbers increase in the assemblies, is that the heart wearies a little of the truth, which at the outset had authority over us to cause us to walk in the truth in separation from human systems; and at the same time the mind gets more and more occupied with persons who compose the assembly, till at last the truth gives way to the persons in our hearts, the conscience to the intelligence, Christ to the man, and brethren become, in another way, a system of the worst description: this is Satan's aim, and it is in this way that he assails the brethren.

The first fruit from this bad root is, that brethren are occupied with themselves to the exclusion of other Christians who are equally members of the body of Christ: they think of themselves more than of the Lord. They do all they can to keep the gathering together, losing sight more or less of the great truths which have acted upon hearts individually, and which truths formed the gathering, not as a great work visible and recognised on the earth, but as a *testimony* from God and for the glory of Christ in the midst of Christianity.

It is of the last importance that we should continually remember that brethren are a testimony and *nothing* else; that is to say, that it is the truth that has kept us for the glory of Christ, and not we ourselves. This is easily forgotten. I have particularly noticed proofs of this in Switzerland for the last six years at least. A late fruit from this root is, that Christian conscience has become valueless from

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neglect of its promptings, and ceases to act. From this it results that brethren are feeble, and become guilty, even in matters of simple righteousness, in such a way that even the world would condemn them. The assemblies of God are little thought of as such, and the presence of the Lord Jesus in the assembly is forgotten and ignored. This is what has happened in England, but the Lord loves us too much to allow such a state of things without reminding us.

But the test is general; it touches closely each one: that is why so many assemblies, and brethren individually in each assembly, are affected by it. In some cases the assembly is of one mind; in others there are two parties, more or less equal, one holding on to the truth at any cost, the other thinking more of only what is on the surface; and there may be other reasons acting upon many, leading them to follow a course which seems to them more easy. It has always been thus. Lot walked a long time with Abraham without his faith being put to the test: when the time for the test came he must walk alone, and then is seen for the first time the measure of truth that he really possessed in his soul. This is what is happening at the present time, and no one can determine the precise moment when such and such a soul will be put to the test; and we should be wrong in forcing or hastening the test in any way whatever, and even when it is there, to suppose that every one will be tested in the same manner. All this is in God's hand: nevertheless when such a sifting does come, happy are they who profit by it, receiving the test as from God with searching of heart; or better, seeking to get into the presence of God that He may search it, so that all that interferes with the glory of Christ shall be judged and put away.

We must have patience, and help each other: a lack of patience has caused some to act too quickly, and though they acted with the best possible intentions,

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of separating themselves from evil, the result has been unsatisfactory. We are quick at seizing the reins when we see danger ahead; but the Lord knows better than we do what has to be done: in due season He will deliver all who look to Him. But this must be real, not trying to escape the test, or to delay the time of action when the evil is clearly

manifest. Another valuable lesson the Lord would teach us is, I think, to occupy ourselves more before Him with the state of individual consciences. It is easy to neglect pastoral work. One is inclined to act by means of outward pressure, instead of waiting for the inward action of the Spirit, who would lead the assembly by the healthy and spontaneous action of all who form part of it. This ought always to be the aim, but alas! very often it is not possible on account of a corrupt influence which has been already too active, and for too long a time, so that morally, many have become incapable of a spiritual judgment; thus division is inevitable when the test comes to the door. But in any case we ought to wait until God sends the test. A man cannot be hung because he intends to kill me. We must wait until the act is accomplished before taking action, doing all we can, at the same time, to raise the spiritual standard by a healthy ministry of the word, as the Lord in His grace may give us. Then when the test does arrive, some, at least, will be able to act according to God.

The present struggle is between intelligence and the Spirit. It is a subtle thing which exercises the heart to its depths—must I be guided by my intelligence according to the things that I know, or must I walk in dependence on the Lord? Some pretend to be an expression of the assembly of God when their acts prove that they have no sense of the Lord's presence in their midst. To admit their pretension would evidently be to deny the presence and action of the Spirit of God, for such walk by human intelligence,

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and override conscience. This is what happened at Ramsgate, and a division was the result. All was inquired into in London, and three meetings with a week's interval were held on the subject, and every facility was given to arrive at a correct knowledge of facts, in order to come to a conclusion according to God, and this not by any preconceived measures, plans, or arrangements, but simply through God's intervention in rather a remarkable way. Many... wished to set aside the decision arrived at on that occasion, and to walk in their own way: hence the reason of the present trouble. The principles involved I have endeavoured to shew to a certain extent. It is scarcely necessary for me to inform you, that the above inquiry was forced upon the assembly in London through a letter of commendation from an assembly in Kent where the difficulty arose; it was necessary to come to a decision, because all means during several months had been used to induce the opposing ones to humble themselves, but without fruit.

J.N.D.

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## READING AND MONTREAL, 1883.

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CERTAIN difficulties arose in these two places almost simultaneously, that in the former place being connected with the teaching of Mr. C. E. Stuart, and in the latter place with the teaching of Mr. F. W. Grant. Though the teachings in question were not identical, they both had the result of setting aside, in the minds of those who received them, the distinctiveness and heavenly character of Christianity. Mr. Stuart's teaching failed to recognise the complete termination judicially, in the cross of Christ, of the first man, and the truth that in Christ, God has introduced manhood of an entirely different and heavenly order, in which believers are given part, in the Spirit. "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John 5:11; and again, "The first man out of the earth, made of dust; the second man, out of heaven. Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones," 1 Cor. 15:47, 48.

Mr. Grant, on the other hand, while admitting that in Christianity there was increased light as compared with previous dispensations, taught that the saints in those dispensations had life in the Son, and he put forward views which lowered Christianity to the level of those dispensations.

The following letters by Mr. J. B. Stoney set out the truth that was really the issue in these matters.

There is really no difference between the nature of man and the old man. The word *old nature* I do not think occurs. The effort is to spare in some way the *first* man. Let us begin by insisting that "such as the heavenly one, such also are the heavenly ones," and then it is easy to see that there is an entire change of *race*.

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That is the truth to be contended for, and the truth that in every heterodoxy is undermined. There is a *total change of race*—"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Nothing but personal identity will remain of the first man. I shall know that I am a new man, but all the ideas and feelings of the old man will have passed away.

The idea with those who seek to spare the first man is, that if the evil nature were eliminated, that then the old man would be free of all that is objectionable and would be continued. Not so at all.

I am of the order of the great heavenly One—and hence the old order has terminated in judgment on the cross.

J.B.S.

The mass of Christians do not see that a Man has come from God, the Son of man which is in heaven. Many a Christian would be glad that his bad qualities were replaced with good ones; but that *all* must be crucified, as said to the young man in Mark 10, is too much for them.

J.B.S.

... Be assured you will find the snare of the day amongst us is to exalt the standing or status of the Old Testament saint in order to bring him so near to the New Testament saint, that the heavenly character of the latter may be ignored, and that thus the great difference between them—one earthly, the other heavenly—is effaced. And this Christendom has done effectually. What the church did at the earliest date when decline set in is the snare now to us to Whom the Lord has committed the recovered truth. No Old Testament saint will be *of* the heavenly city though he will be *in* it; and this is an immense

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difference. The Old Testament saint could use anything on the earth for God's service; *we* are precluded from using *anything* of man for God. We are confined absolutely and entirely to the *one* Man in *heaven* for motive, for joy, for life, for dictation, for direction in every detail of daily life.

J.B.S.

I had a very happy day at — through the Lord's mercy. I said a little in the morning on the difference between Psalm 73 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. In the former the saint's judgment was changed, while in the latter the saint *himself* is transformed. The word for transformed is used only four times in the New Testament and twice it is translated "transfigured." This is very interesting.

In the evening I spoke from Acts 9. The very beginning of the gospel is, the light comes *out from* heaven and the seal of the blessing is the Holy Ghost who had come down from heaven. Does not that make the gospel heavenly, though some say it is not. I fear that there is a tendency abroad to exaggerate the standing and state of the Old Testament saints in order to make little difference between the church and them, and thus the heavenly exclusiveness is weakened or lost. The aim of the enemy from a very early date was to draw the saints from their heavenly calling. (See the Hebrews.) Once heaven as a present portion is surrendered, all the great privileges and position of the church are frittered away. The Old Testament saints were wrought on by God, and they may put us to shame by their fidelity and devotedness and cleaving to God, but if we descend to them we lose sight of our own calling. It is quite true "the heir" should embrace all that "the infant" has, but not this *only*, but a great deal more!

J.B.S.

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## THE MINISTRY OF MR. F. E. RAVEN, 1890.

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MUCH controversy arose over the matter of eternal life, which eventuated in a separation among brethren often referred to as the Bexhill Division.\* With many, whose minds were not formed by the way the truth is presented in Scripture, eternal life was regarded as no more than the assurance, through faith in Christ, of never coming into condemnation, whereas Scripture presents it, so far as its present aspect is concerned, as a portion entered into, by the Spirit. It was in the mind of God for men in giving His only-begotten Son (John 3:16) and eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord is presented as the gift (or act of favour) of God in contrast to the wages of sin; Romans 6:23. In some scriptures it is viewed as a portion to be entered into in the future, as for example, Matthew 25:46; Mark 10:30; Jude 21, but in John's writings, as well as elsewhere in Scripture, it is presented as given us now in the Son (1 John 5:11), to be entered upon in the Spirit (John 4:14), to be sustained by continually eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood (John 6:54), and to consist in abiding in the Son and in the Father (1 John 2:24, 25) and in the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent; (John 17:3). It is enjoyed in the circle of the brethren, where love reigns; (1 John 3:13, 14). Timothy, who, needless to say, was already a believer when Paul wrote to him, was exhorted to "lay hold of eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12), in contrast to desiring to be rich (verse 9). In the natural order of things life is not mere existence, but consists in relationships, with the

\* This is often spoken of as "the Lowe Division," the leader of the opposition to the truth having been Mr. W. Lowe. On the continent of Europe the brethren who supported Mr. Lowe are sometimes designated Elberfeld brethren.

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affections proper to them, and interests, and eternal life has been well said to be "an out-of-the-world heavenly condition of relationship and being" in which the believer is given part. Peter declared that the words which the Lord spoke, which He said were spirit and life, were words of life eternal (John 6:68).

The following letters, or extracts from letters, will help to set out the truth in clearness. The first six are by Mr. J. B. Stoney, the next two by Mr. F. E. Raven, and the last two by Mr. C. A. Coates.

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## THE MINISTRY OF MR. F. E. RAVEN, 1890.

### J. B. Stoney Letters.

I have the feeling that I cannot be of much help to any one in the present contention who does not understand the truth as revealed in the scripture. I do not think any book can help you if you do not learn it from the word of God, and once you know it as of God no book can disturb you, though it may grieve you. Death is on the first man. Death the judgment of God because of sin—death is first annulled, and then life and incorruptibility are brought to light by the gospel. It is at the other side of death that I enjoy the life of Him who bore death for me, so that you pass out of death into life; John 5:24. The clearer you are that He has in His death set aside all in you under the judgment of death, the easier it will be for you to know that you are in His life. Hence there are three witnesses to prove to you that you have eternal life, “the Spirit, the water, and the blood.” (1) The Spirit dwelling in you; (2) the water—Christ’s death where you are cleared away, or purification through His death; (3) the blood—expiation by death. You must eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, not merely believe that He died for you, but feed on His death, and thus you are freed from the death on you—the wages of sin, and you receive of His life. He was raised from the dead before He breathed on His disciples. Eternal life is (as Mr. D— says) “outside the senses,” an

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“out-of-the-world condition of things.” It is given to every believer, but no one enjoys it but as Christ liveth in him. The pious in Christendom regard eternal life as the assurance that your immortal soul will be happy in heaven. The Puritans and Calvinists consider it to be final perseverance. Many who are supposed to be well taught Christians build their happiness on God’s *promise of a perpetuity of life*! In no case is the idea of Christ being our life apprehended; and the acceptance of eternal life as it is revealed involves an entirely new order of being and relationship. It is the unwillingness to accept the new and heavenly order, which is at the bottom of the opposition.

J.B.S.

As to the contention about eternal life, the mistake is that the work is overlooked for the gift. It is very plain that Christ did not give eternal life until after the work was accomplished. It is as risen from the dead—the last Adam (see John 17:2)—that He gives eternal life. What “feeble souls” want to accept is the work of Christ. The gift of eternal life was never used, that I know of, to establish souls. “It is a good thing if the heart be established by *grace*.” “He that stablisheth you is God.” The more I hear, the more I am assured that “feeble souls” are damaged by presenting to them the gift—the actual testimony to the last Adam, instead of the work of Christ by which He obtained the position. The idea is that if a question be raised as to whether any one is enjoying the result of the work, that you are thereby invalidating the work. Evidently if the work be truly known the result is known. John’s great desire was that the saints might have conscious knowledge of eternal life. Did he thereby invalidate or depreciate the work? If

I tell a man—when there is good light you will see a certain object, am I calling in question

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that he has eyes, or am I calling his attention to the result of his having eyes? I am convinced that those who reason this way are not clear as to having died with Christ, “for if we be dead with him, we believe that we shall also live with him.” “Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” I see that I must in ministry dwell more on the *work*—the death and resurrection of Christ—for that is what souls want to be established in. Every one who is consciously in His life knows and enjoys Him in glory.

Some say that the “babe can delight in eternal life” before he has learnt the setting aside of the old man. This is really —'s doctrine. *He* says eternal life can be given before man is set aside in the cross, and here the doctrine is that eternal life can be delighted in before the setting aside of the first man is learnt. *I say that is impossible.* The whole point of John 3 is that life is connected with faith in the Son of man lifted up. What is the value of the second witness, “the water” (see 1 John 5) if the eternal life could be delighted in while purification by the death of Christ is unknown? If the setting aside of the first man has not been learnt, the sense of sin presses on me, and if it does, how can I delight in eternal life? There is a great difference in delighting in the service of the Saviour in putting away my sins, and in being in the sense of His life outside the scene of sin and death. The divine order is, “Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.” The abolishing of death precedes the bringing to light life and incorruptibility by the gospel. This teaching accounts for and fosters all the earthly ways tolerated nowadays, for in it you gain everything through Christ, and you part with nothing. Be assured that it is the other way. You must part with your own clothes before you take up the mantle of Elijah. Christ in glory is my life. How could I

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know a glorified Christ, the only Christ to be known now, the Christ whom “the fathers” know, but as I am, through the Spirit, apart from and outside of all of that man who dishonoured God, and is at a distance from Him. You cannot eat the old corn of the land without crossing the Jordan.

J.B.S.

There is much to cheer, though I have been sad at heart to think of the condition of soul which could be so influenced.... If I am not very much mistaken, there underlies the teaching fundamental error. What does the “Personality of eternal life” mean? What does it mean that our Lord “gave up eternal life when He died”? Is conversion by my acceptance of grace, as Moody taught, or by the sovereign, absolute work of God which opens my eyes? To live as Christ lived *as seen of men*, is all that is accepted, without apprehending that all the time He, in unbroken communion with the Father, was living in a life which could not be seen of men. So with us. If Christ liveth in me in the detail of

my life down here, He is also *at the very time* my life in the presence of the Father, and the moment I realise that I belong to the divine circle I am enjoying Christ's life. I want Him at every step here, and He does not merely give me grace for my need down here, but as He is ever higher than the heavens, He leads me to the height where He is, if there be no reserve between me and Him. If there is reserve, I have not "part" with Him consciously, though I may be sensibly helped, as in the Psalms, where it is not the *heavenly* man, but the earthly man helped down here.

J.B.S.

A dear simple soul said to me, I prefer to share in Christ's life than to have a life given to myself. As Christ is my life, and as I am of Christ I can never

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lose it. Nothing of Christ could perish. It distresses me to hear discussions about so great a thing as eternal life before there has been a waiting on the Lord to apprehend the nature of the gift. People turn to some or other writings to learn what it is instead of just learning what it is on one's knees and through the light of the word.... Eternal life is not a person, but the power to enjoy what a person is. This is simple. We enjoy it in Christ and by His Spirit. It is very cheering to be here, they are so clear and steadfast. The Lord lead you here some time—about a hundred brothers in the meeting.

J.B.S.

I return the copy of your letter. I like it very much. I have seen for some time that there was a tendency with brethren to make every movement of our Lord's here an expression of eternal life. It is a refuge to the conscience of those who do not enjoy it in its own sphere to reduce it to the details of man's life. But eternal life is outside the senses—an out-of-the-world condition. Surely in everything, as you rightly say, we learn and derive from our Lord to act here in the smallest details in a way and in a spirit quite new and unknown to man. The manna is the beautiful divine touch in everything—even the commonest; but it is a device of the enemy to induce me to relieve my conscience of ignorance of my birthright (communion with the Father) by substituting for it \* that which cannot be known but outside this scene altogether, and which is not merely my behaviour and manner of life among men. This device must be resisted, and I am glad to say that some are delivered from it. I remark that those who are seeking to advance in the world are petulant and

\* This should apparently read "by substituting it" (i.e. the manna) "for that which cannot be known, etc."—Ed.

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irritated when truth is presented which they evidently are not enjoying, and in their

desire for spiritual reputation they cannot afford to admit that they are not enjoying it. I do not believe that any one advancing in this world and not surrendering it can be seeking the things above....

J.B.S.

I am not surprised that you should be depressed by the contention which prevails amongst us. I find that the only true way is to be assured *first* from the Word what eternal life is, and when you are assured divinely of what it is and what it confers, then you will be proof against all perversions and misrepresentations.

It is said that a clerk in a bank first learns what a *good* banknote is, that he is kept in a room where the banknotes are until he knows a *good* one, and then when any note which is not *good* is presented to him he knows it to be *bad*.

I do not believe that any one apprehending the greatness and blessedness of eternal life could fail to see where the truth lies at the present time. Some do not see any unsoundness in the teaching itself who do not enter into the positive side, that is, the greatness and joy of it. These latter, though they do not actually oppose, do not help. The one seeking to have a conscious knowledge of having it (which is the object of John's first epistle, as he says, "These things I write unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life") is sure to be a help. The very fact that eternal life is *outside* of my senses—"To God I am beside myself"—is enough to shew me that it must be opposed or evaded because it is, as Mr. Darby says, "an out-of-the-world condition of things." Every one who has a heart like Peter (Matt. 14) would leave the ship (what suits man) to join the Lord in His own life *outside* and apart from all that refused Him here. Christians, as a rule, do *not* seek

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it. Paul says to Timothy, "Lay hold on eternal life," though it was his all the time. Grace has given me much more than I yet enjoy or have appropriated. The Lord grant that you may appropriate and enjoy it.

J.B.S.

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## THE MINISTRY OF MR. F. E. RAVEN, 1890.

### F.E.R. and C.A.C. Letters

... Next, as to eternal life. It was God's purpose in Christ\* from eternity... but has now been manifested in the only begotten Son of God, who came here declaring the Father, in such wise as that the apostles could see it,\*\* and afterwards declare it by the Spirit—but I regard it of all importance to maintain, clear and distinct from any purpose of blessing for man, the true deity... of the Word. Eternal life is given to us of God, and is in God's Son—for us it is the heavenly relationship and blessedness in which, in the Son, man is now placed and lives before the Father, the death of Christ having come in as the end before God of man's state in the flesh\*\*\* “He that has the Son has life”; the testimony he has received concerning the Son is, by the Spirit, the power of life in the believer, he having been born of God to receive it.\*\*\*\* He has also eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk His blood. But at the same time, the believer still has part in seen things here

\* That is, as to us. See 2 Timothy 1:9, 10; Titus 1:1-3.

\*\* The apostles are mentioned in the text because they were the inspired instruments of declaring what they had seen. Others also were with Jesus and saw Him to be the eternal life, who to the unbelieving eyes of men was only the son of Joseph, the carpenter.

\*\*\* This is not intended as a definition of eternal life but an endeavour to convey the thought that eternal life means for a Christian a wholly new order of things, which is in its nature outside the world and seen things—it belongs to another scene.

\*\*\*\* It might be added here that it is by the Son that the believer lives, he is in Him that is true, that is, in His Son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life.

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(which the Son has not)\* and all that is seen is temporal, and will come to an end. It has no part in eternal life though it may be greatly influenced by it. As to eternal life being a technical term, it simply referred to the fact of its having been a term in common use among the Jews without any very definite meaning. They frequently came to the Lord with questions as to it, and thought they had it in the Scriptures.

As to our relationship with God, whether of child or son, it is of gift, conveyed through the gospel. We are sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. Christ came to redeem that we might receive sonship. It is the full fruit and effect of redemption. Hence, it is in resurrection Jesus says to His disciples, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” The full consequences of redemption belong now to every one who has faith in the Person and work of Christ; none the less, the real entering of the soul on heavenly blessing, of which relationship is the highest part, is in the putting on of Christ, and demands “the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which has been shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” It is the Spirit of God's Son sent forth *into our hearts* that cries, Abba, Father.



I may add a few words in regard to new birth. It is an absolute necessity for man, if he has to do with God in blessing. It lies at the beginning of all—without it a man cannot see, much less receive any saving testimony. It is the sovereign act of the Spirit of God. Peter and John both recognise that those who were really in the faith of Christ were born again of the word of God, or born of God—a seed of God has been implanted in them from the outset. None the less, new birth of itself does not

\* Though in the days of His flesh He had.

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conduct into heavenly relationship or blessing.\* For this, something more was needed, namely redemption, which in its full power, sets man in Christ in glory, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which fits man for the new order of things. Of course, these are now, through grace, the portion of the believer.

F.E.R.

*Extract of Letter.*  
*June, 1902.*

Difficulties have arisen in the minds of some whom I esteem as to certain expressions in the American notes on the subject of eternal life, but I think that the root of them lies in not apprehending how the scriptures on the subject present themselves to my mind. I may be right or I may be wrong, but anyway, it is not at all a question of any thoughts of my own but of the way in which Scripture is apprehended, and I think that those that find difficulty might try to look at things as they present themselves to me before refusing them. I do not in the matter in any way make light of the work of God in the believer, but on the contrary insist on it as that by which alone eternal life can be entered into, but the point with me is that what is wrought in the believer is not spoken of as eternal life, but is the preparation or the means by which he enters into it. A man is born again, is enlightened by the gospel and is then sealed by the Spirit, and it is then that by the Spirit he enters into eternal life. This is in accord with Scripture, which teaches that the living water that Christ gives is in the believer a well of water springing up unto everlasting life; that he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life eternal; and,

\* On the other hand, the Son of God, who is the life of every believer, is the source of all life for men.

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again, that being made free from sin and having become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness and the end eternal life. These passages shew conclusively that the work of God *in us* is not spoken of as eternal life, but as leading to or ending in it. It is a great point to apprehend this.

Then comes another point, that is, as to the part faith has in it. The passage, “He that believeth hath everlasting life,” is quoted, and so it is said that eternal life is had by faith. It is certain that no one has it without faith, for a man must have been enlightened by the gospel in order to have the Spirit, but the teaching of Scripture is not that a man gets it by faith, but that the believer is the person who has it. I might say, by way of illustration, that a member of Parliament votes because he is a member. This is true; it is his qualification to vote, and yet it is not the cause of his voting. This is because he belongs to a party and votes according to that party; that is the immediate cause of his voting, though I might well say that a member votes. A believer has eternal life because he is a believer, that is his title or qualification, but the immediate cause of his having eternal life is that he has the Spirit. It is that in him which springs up into it. He has eternal life as being a believer, so that I say the believer has eternal life, as I would say the member votes, but, then, he needs the Spirit to enter into it, as the member needs opinions or party to lead him to vote. His opinions are not his title, but they are his power, so having the Spirit is not the title to the believer, but faith which apprehends Christ in whom eternal life is.

This leads me to another point as to faith, namely, that one is not called upon to believe anything as to oneself, but faith apprehends what is true in Christ. I am not called upon to believe that *I* have eternal life, but that eternal life is in Christ for man—that He is it. Scripture is explicit that eternal life is in

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Christ—it is God’s gift in Christ, and when faith is there, the seal of the Spirit is given so that we may appropriate what is there in Christ for man. It is ever there, and Christ is no poorer by our appropriation.

This is a very important principle. I do not want to believe anything about myself in particular, but what is in Christ for all men and, therefore, for me, and this faith is sealed by the Spirit and then begins the principle of appropriation, and this goes on as we advance in the knowledge of God, and so that all that God gives is morally in accord with Himself. Redemption is according and suitable to His grace. Salvation is according to His mercy and eternal life is according to His love, and as we apprehend these principles in God, we are enabled to reach our own blessings. It is certain that eternal life is constantly spoken of in Scripture as something to be entered into; the question therefore arises as to *what* it is that is to be entered into. The power or qualification to enter into it I have already spoken of. This is the springing up of the well of water in the believer. What is “entered into” is said to be eternal life. It must be something external to the believer or he could not be said to enter into it. He enters into it in soul. I might illustrate it in this way. When a child is born it enters into the elements of life which it finds existing, such as rule, atmosphere and light; and these things are life to the newly-born infant, without them it could not live. Had there not been sin man would doubtless have lived in them for ever, but the fall brought into the state of man the principle of non-continuance. Thus what is life to the infant, and, without which, even Adam could not have lived, is apprehended by us as objective.

Now, in spiritual things the same principle is true—the believer is born of God and in this way is qualified to enter into the appointed conditions. Just as the

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newly-born infant has a body subject to natural laws, lungs that can take in the air, eyes that can enjoy the light, so the believer, being born of God, is capable of entering into the conditions of life which God has appointed. These are, as in natural things, rule, atmosphere and light. Rule is found in abiding in Christ, so that the believer is delivered from lawlessness; he does not sin because he is under the law or influence of Christ. Atmosphere is found in the Christian circle, where the love of Christ pervades all, and in that the believer is delivered from a world of hatred and death. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Light is found in the perfect setting forth of God’s disposition towards us in Christ, made good in us by the Spirit; Christ is the proof of what the love of God towards us is. We have thus seen what are the elements of life, and it is *in them* that eternal life consists, and they are there for us to enter into by the Spirit, and in entering into them we are conscious that we have eternal life, as we are told by the apostle John.

There is another point as to which objection has been raised, namely, the application of the thought of eternal life to earth. I certainly am unable to find any Scripture that connects it with heaven. It may be said that Christ is it, but this is in its application towards earth, and the principles of which I have spoken as making up eternal life properly apply to earth, such as rule, or kingdom, the bearing of which is towards earth. If Scripture anywhere speaks of eternal life in connection with heaven, I shall certainly receive it, but wherever it is spoken of, it appears connected with God’s ways on earth. In Matthew, Mark and Luke it is connected with the coming age and John gives it a present application. I therefore prefer to take it up in that light. It has been said that I limit it, but this is not my thought, but to put

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the thing in its proper connection, and I cannot attempt to restrict the power of God to bring in other and, in a sense, better things, in heaven or in the eternal state. He says “I make all things new.” I cannot pretend to say what He makes, but I have no doubt there is an ascending scale of blessing. I trust that it will be seen from the foregoing remarks that I have no design to depart from Scripture, but rather to gather from it what is the true idea of eternal life.

F.E.R.

*May, 1912.*

The subject of eternal life seems to be coming to the front again. I have had an impression ever since dear F.E.R.’s departure that the whole question would be raised again sooner or later. F.E.R.’s thoughts as to it were rejected at Gloucester, and I think he felt from that time that brethren in this country were not ready for the truth. You will

have noticed how the subject developed in his mind, between the two volumes of American readings. In the first he connected eternal life with *sonship*; in the second he connected it with *children*. I think his contention that eternal life comes in contrast to all that obtains here in a scene of sin and death and dearth, and that it is connected with *earth* is most important and indeed essential to the right apprehension of the truth. All this gives the truth as to eternal life such an intensely practical and present bearing, that one can hardly wonder that there should be found some degree of reluctance to come face to face with it.

C.A.C.

*March 1st, 1933.*

DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,—I am interested in your enquiries, and should be glad to render any help that I can on the subject of your exercises though I am at present restricted in ability for writing at length.

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“Eternal life” is a distinctive blessing, spoken of in the Old Testament in Psalm 133:3 and Daniel 12:2. It is seen in Psalm 133 to be commanded where brethren dwell together in unity as under priestly anointing, and under the divine refreshing of the dew of Hermon. In Daniel 12 it is connected with awaking out of the dust of the earth, clearly a resurrection figure. Both these scriptures give a very exalted and spiritual view of life eternal. The Jews rightly gathered from them that life eternal described the blessedness which those favoured of God would inherit in the world to come—see Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25, etc.

The Lord makes plain, by the words to which you refer in John’s gospel, that this great and wondrous blessing is available *now*, and is the portion of those who believe on Him. Eternal life is the divinely given portion of every believer just as Canaan was the allotted portion of Israel by God’s gift before they left Egypt, but to possess and enjoy it experimentally they had to take the journey and put their foot on the land which was given. So that the Lord’s words are not to be taken merely as words of assurance that we possess something of which we know nothing, but they are intended to move our hearts to go up and possess the land. Eternal life is truly given to us in the Son of God, but as something to be known experimentally now. To have it consciously we must be characterised by eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood (John 6:54), and we must have the Spirit as the Fountain of living water in us springing up into eternal life; John 4:14. And there must also be a sowing to the Spirit, for Paul says, “He that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life,” Gal. 6:8.

Mr. Raven sought to encourage the saints to go in for the enjoyment of their portion, and not to be content with title without possession. This is highly

important, for otherwise we may be saying that we have eternal life when we are perhaps practically living after the flesh and in the world.

Take some other precious statement of the Lord. "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," John 7:38. "He that believes on me shall never thirst at any time," John 6:35. These statements, and many others which might be quoted from John's gospel, show the immense possibilities that are opened up to men in the love of God, all to be possessed on the principle of believing on His Son. They are there as precious divine proposals, but what they mean is unknown until they become conscious realities by the Spirit. It is possible to find carnal and worldly persons saying that they have eternal life, but such persons do not really know what eternal life means.

C.A.C.

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## THE MANHOOD OF CHRIST

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CONCURRENTLY with the conflict as to eternal life, considerable controversy took place on the subject of the Person of Christ and His true manhood. The following five letters, written at that time by Mr. J. B. Stoney, and a paper written by Mr. F. E. Raven, shew that great spiritual gain resulted as the truth was brought out in greater clarity than it had previously had in the minds of many.

I deprecate discussion on this momentous subject. The moment you travel outside the very words of Scripture you are in danger of error. “God manifested in flesh” is Scripture, but “perfect God and perfect Man” is not scripture. Satan’s direct opposition is against the Word made flesh—the “man-child” (Rev. 12)—from Herod’s day down to this. In Christendom the pious Christians think of Christ as God and not as Man, and they read of His miracles in the gospels to prove that He was God. They do not see that indirectly they are siding with Satan, who will tolerate any measure of religion so that the Man out of heaven is not paramount. Satan, in his opposition to God, perpetrated the fall of man in the garden of Eden, but when the Son of God became a Man His first work (see Mark 1) was to drive the unclean spirit out of man.

The Son of God became a Man. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but He laid His glory by and took on Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death,” etc. He became a Man, born of woman, to bear the judgment on man. He died, and in His death the man after the flesh was judicially

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terminated: so “henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, *yet now henceforth know we him no more.*” There is the earthy man, and there is the heavenly Man. The blessed Son went through the terrible sorrow of death as a man. His very greatness caused Him to suffer beyond our conception, for He bore the judgment on the first man, and He is the second Man. The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second Man is out of heaven. You must see the first man superseded by the second Man. Every believer is of the second Man. You must keep in mind that the greatness of the grace is that the Son of God, who could say, “I and my Father are one,” took on Himself the form of a servant or slave, and He says, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” He, the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, declared God while in the form of a servant. In His grace He connects His own with all He is as a Man. From not seeing this they fell into error at Plymouth in assuming that the church was united to God. The church or the body of Christ is of His order and nature. It has come from Him and is united to Him. It is marvellous grace that the Son of God became a Man—a Man to free every one believing in Him of the man after the flesh, so that every one in Him is a new creation. I think we have but a very feeble appreciation of the new man. We are brethren of the risen Christ. “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed



to call them brethren"—the offspring of His resurrection, in all His divine beauty as a Man.

Again, the manna is not essentially His acts, or His obedience, but the grace in which He did everything; as Mr. Darby has said, His springs were in God: our springs naturally are in ourselves.

Finally, the better we comprehend His manhood, the more fully we see the greatness of the mystery of

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the church—His complement. He would not be complete without His body. The world could not contain the books which could be written of Him, but the vastness of this blessed Man will be expressed by His body, the church, to the glory of God for ever.

J.B.S.

I was glad to get tidings of you.... I greatly deprecate discussion on such a grave subject. I believe we all are given light as we require it; and I do not see that any one understands a particular subject until he is up to it in *his soul*. For instance, I do not see that any one understands the manna until he is really in the wilderness, and is therefore in need of it. Then he will learn it.

I should say to every inquirer, first learn reconciliation—that the man after the flesh has been removed in judgment, and that you are, as is every one in Christ, a new creation. Old things have passed away, all have become new, and all is of God. Christ is the beginning of the creation of God. I am afraid that very few comprehend that the man after the flesh was judicially terminated in the cross, and that He who terminated the first man is the *Man out of heaven*—altogether to God's pleasure—a Man of an entirely new order—He is the Son of God. You are of Him, a member of His body—of Him as a Man; you could not be of the divine Person. The Holy Ghost, His gift, dwells in you. I believe the real difficulty is that the Man of the new order is not seen superseding the man after the flesh, and that each believer now is formed out of Christ as Eve was formed out of Adam's rib. I need not add more. Reconciliation must be first distinctly apprehended.

I may add that manna in its nature and quality is unknown if you do not apprehend the peculiar and blessed way in which a Man (whose springs were in

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God) walked in the details of daily life here, and that you could not walk as He walked but as He lives in you. Not merely in His obedience and in his acts, but in the grace and beauty in which they were done. Be assured that if you were practically in the knowledge of Christ as the manna you would understand His Person better than any one could instruct you.

I see Mr. Darby quoted where there is no possible reference to the present subject; but as I said at the beginning I say at the close, you will never understand any divine truth until you are morally up to it in your soul.

J.B.S.

The truth is that God was manifest in the flesh; the divine Being, a Spirit, took bodily human form. Outwardly there was no distinction between Him and other men. If there were, the high priest would not have given thirty pieces of silver for singling Him out from His disciples. He was only a man to the natural eye, but when anyone had light from God to know Him as a divine Person he was there and then greatly blessed. See Peter in Luke 5 and all through the gospel until you come to the thief on the cross. I believe the opposition is really against the new man—the *Man out of heaven*. Many Christians know something of man being judicially terminated in the cross—and every pious one would like to have more of the grace of Christ in his ways and thoughts, but I am afraid very few would like to have the first man altogether displaced and to be here in the grace and manner of life of the Man “out of heaven.” The opposers want to have two persons in one, man *and* God, one time to act as God, and at another to act as man. They really do not see the incarnation. They do not see that He who was God became a man and hence a Man out of heaven. They would

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have Him to be a man in flesh and blood, and in a way distinct from His being God—whereas He *is God*, and He, that same Person, became a man in flesh and blood, but He came from God, He brought everything with Him. He learned *nothing* from His mother nor from any one here. He is a Man out of heaven. He bore the judgment on man, He was put to death in the flesh but quickened in the Spirit, and He is the Man of God’s pleasure for ever; and it is only as you are of His nature and order that you could be united to Him, or that you are a “living stone” in His building.

I believe when we rightly apprehend the new creation which is ours in Christ, that we must see how very far we are from the manner of life in thoughts and ways which is really ours as “brethren” of Christ; and hence some of the truly conscientious shrink from seeing the exalted position in which He has placed man through Himself.

J.B.S.

I return the letter you so kindly sent me. It is very plain that — does not see God’s purpose in a Man; he is thinking only of Christ as God. God is setting forth His own glory in Christ as Man, otherwise there could not be glory unto Him in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages. If I begin at Genesis, the great purpose before God is man. In His own Son becoming man He had a *man* to His pleasure, and the church is the complement of that Man. The world could not contain the books which could be

written of Him, but the church will fully and perfectly display Him. Some have no idea of the mystery or of God's purpose in Christ. He as a Man can authorise to baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

J.B.S.

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The great impression made on me by your letter is that MAN, the Man Christ Jesus, is not before the vision of your soul as He is in the mind of God. If you do not see with God, you are not in communion with Him. Your one point is to prove His deity, quite right in itself; thus all the old commentators said the miracles were recorded to prove Christ's divinity. But look for a moment *from God's side*. His great purpose is to be glorified *in a Man*, and hence "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages." You do not seem to have apprehended God's purpose in MAN. He has a MAN now to His pleasure; now there is glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men.

I believe that if you would look at our blessed Lord on the earth as He was in the eye of God, you would see that He as a MAN expressed the Trinity here; hence He can authorise His disciples to baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. No one else could reveal or declare the Father but the Son, and no one could have the Spirit without measure but the Son, and He is a man.

Do you apprehend in any measure the greatness of the complement of Christ? The world could not contain the books which would be written, but the church is the complement of the Man who fully expressed God here. The church could not be the complement of His divinity.

I am, thank God, assured that if you are led to see the Man Christ Jesus as He is TO God, you will not in any measure lose sight of the Son ever with the Father, and the only One able to fulfil His pleasure; but you will adoringly see Him as such while afflicted in all our afflictions, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the lowly, dependent Man. He ever lived here from a babe in all divine beauty. The manna was on every leaf and every thorn; never could there be anything equal to it. He magnified God in all

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the details of daily life. He learned nothing from man; so that God is not only well pleased with Him, but His word to us is on the holy mount, "This is my beloved Son: *hear him.*"

One word more. You must keep your conscience up to your faith. And again, I would ask you to look at Christ on the earth as the Father saw Him, or rather as God saw Him, for all the Persons of the Trinity were expressed by the Man Christ Jesus.

May He lead you into His mind.

J.B.S.

## THE PERSON OF THE CHRIST

### F.E.R.

WHILE extremely unwilling to enter on the field of controversy, especially on subjects touching the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, I have thought it right, in the interests of the truth and of the Lord's people, to put out a few remarks on two points of importance which have been in question. In so doing I decline to reply to any attacks which have appeared, based on isolated statements culled from letters I have written, partly from reluctance to notice them, and partly because I see in these attacks the tendency to shift (it may be almost unconsciously) the ground of conflict, in order to gain a point of vantage. In what I have to say I adhere therefore to two points that have been in question, which are these:—

1. As to whether Christ is ever viewed in scripture as man, distinct and apart from what He is as God.
2. As to whether the truth of His Person consists in the union in Him of God and man; a favourite formula with those so holding is “God and man one Christ”—and with this is connected the idea that every title referring to Christ covers the whole truth of His Person.

Now I affirm that the denial of the first, while claiming to maintain orthodoxy, is destructive of

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Christianity in its real power; and I would affectionately warn saints against giving up, in zeal for orthodoxy, the blessed foundations of Christianity. Further, that the assertion of the second is derogatory and dishonouring to the Son; and I proceed to shew that both the denial and the assertion are contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

The first betrays a singular inability to apprehend the great reality of the incarnation, at all events in a most essential aspect of it, namely, the fact of Christ having by it a place as man *Godward*. As the Word became flesh He dwelt among men and revealed God, and in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell; but He Himself filled and still fills a place as Man towards God (see Psalm 16); and the two thoughts are wholly distinct conceptions, which cannot be grasped at one and the same time by any finite mind. “No one knows the Son but the Father.” As Man He is both Apostle and High Priest. In other words, in the Apostle God has, so to say, come out, and in the High Priest man has entered in. Now these two thoughts, though realised in one Person, must of necessity be separately and distinctly apprehended. The one presents God, the other, man.

The reality of Christ's manhood in its aspect Godward is amply presented in the New Testament. There we have the truth, that Christ, having died to sin once, lives to God; Rom. 6. The having put off the old man and having put on the new is said to be “as the truth is in Jesus,” Eph. 4. Christ Jesus before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; 1 Tim. 6. He sings praises to God in the midst of the assembly; Heb. 2. He

praises in the great congregation, Psa. 22, he has entered in for us as Forerunner; Heb. 6. He appears in the presence of God for us; Heb. 9.

Now, while fully admitting that, morally, Christ's manhood had its unique and blessed character from

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God, for in becoming man He gave character to manhood, yet in the thoughts above presented it is utterly impossible to introduce the idea of Deity in its proper character and attributes, because in every case it is man that is presented, or rather, Christ is viewed in the light of man Godward.

The refusal of this is destructive of Christianity in its true power, for it is on the side that I have indicated that Christ is placed within the reach of our appropriation, so that we can eat Him and live by Him. He is, as second Man, the pattern of our blessing, the Leader of our salvation. He draws us to Himself by making known to us His love; and the affection on our part begotten by this appropriates Him as the expression and pattern of what we are according to the counsel of God; and it is in this way that the believer is led into the true sense of the greatness of his portion, and even partakes morally in the life of God. As "Lord" Christ is the Object of faith, as Head He is held by the believer, who is led by Him into heavenly blessing. Hence I am entirely at a loss to understand how the truth of Christianity can be maintained in the absence of the apprehension of Christ in His place as man Godward, distinct and apart from the glory and attributes which belong only to God, and in which Christ has part as Himself being a divine Person.

I may observe here that Christians are, as a rule, uninstructed in three important points of Christian doctrine.

1. Reconciliation, which they do not know as in the mind of God. The distance between God and the sinner must have been removed to effect it, and but few know the nature of the distance. They do not see that the man after the flesh has been terminated judicially in the cross in the Man Christ Jesus.

2. Christ as manna. They do not apprehend in any degree the manner of life of Christ here as man, "the life of Jesus."

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3. The mystery. They have no true conception that the church is the complement of *the Man* who glorified God here; but while admitting that all saints are united to Christ, they are leavened with the error that they are united to the Son of God, and they thus betray their ignorance of the mystery.

Hence it is not surprising that many find difficulty in the apprehension of Christ in the point of view which I have sought to make plain.



The second error maintains that the truth of *Christ's Person* consists in the union in Him of God and man.

Now, this idea arises, I judge, from confusion of thought as between *person* and *condition*, and has been fostered by expressions found in hymns, and the like, which have been used simply and devoutly by Christians without any very strict inquiry into their real force; but it involves a thought very derogatory to the truth of the Son, namely, that in becoming man a change has taken place as to His Person—He is *in Person* something which He was not before. This is not the teaching of Scripture, nor do I think that it can be entertained. When I come to the word, I find that while in three gospels the truth of Christ in certain official positions is prominent, the fourth (John) is given to us to afford full light as to His Person, that is, “the Son”; and in this respect He is seen in three positions, namely, as eternally with the Father, as come into the world, and as going back to the Father, the same Person unchanged and unchangeable.

Further than this, the Person is even viewed as acting in regard to His form or condition, divine or human; “Being in the form of God, he emptied himself and took on him a servant’s form, becoming in the likeness of men.”

He comes to do God’s will in the body prepared for Him.

He raises up the temple of His body.

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He gives His flesh for the life of the world.

He lays down His life (human condition) to take it again.

We have thus a divine Person presented, even apart from the question of form, and the idea of the unity of the Person in the sense asserted is not found.

The One who being in the form of God, emptied Himself, and took on Him a servant’s form, is the same who, having become man, humbled Himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross, and is now highly exalted. There is no idea either of unity, or of change, in the Person. It is the same person in servant’s form, and entering into what that form involved.

The truth of a divine Person assuming human condition, the Word becoming flesh, and in such wise as that He can be viewed objectively as man, I believe; but that is not a question of unity of a Person. It is a Person in a condition in which He was not previously.

Another idea connected with the above appears to be that every title or name inherited by the Son or applied to Him in Scripture embraces or covers, if it does not describe, the whole truth of His Person. Now I believe this to be a fallacy, and a mistaken way of apprehending Scripture. Unquestionably the Lord is identified or designated, and designates Himself, by official names or titles, as “the Christ” or “Son of man”; but such

titles, though serving sufficiently to identify or designate the Person, do not cover the truth of His Person; and different titles applied to or fulfilled in Christ have to be understood each within its own appropriate limits. They describe the office, but not the person that holds the office. In the same way we commonly use official and acquired titles as “The Queen,” “The Colonel,” “The Doctor,” to identify or designate a person, but we have no idea that such a title is descriptive of the

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person, or covers all that is true of the person, though once the person is so designated, many things can be said which refer to the person, and have nothing whatever to do with the particular designation; for instance, I might say, “When the Queen was a child.” She was not queen as a child. It is simply a title used for designation, which has its own particular force and meaning.

Jesus is the anointed of God, that is, the Christ, but not properly so until He was anointed, whatever might be true in purpose. So too, He was not Son of man until He became man, yet He says “The Son of man came to minister.” “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before.” “The Son of man which is in heaven.” The simple fact is that a title serves to designate the Person, without being descriptive of the Person, or involving any question of the unity of the Person. The titles “The Christ” and “Son of man” are both official titles which could have had no place or meaning except in the Son having become man; and it is remarkable that the Lord does not in the gospels use what is, perhaps, the nearest approach to a personal name, that is, Jesus, in the same way.

In conclusion, I earnestly entreat saints to come prayerfully and patiently to Scripture to get their thoughts of Christ formed by the word of God; and not to adopt the creeds or moulds into which men, often with pious intent, have cast the truth in the vain effort to guard against error; and it is significant that those who have of late come forward to expose what they deemed to be error, have shewn a tendency in their minds in the direction of a kind of Tritheism. It is not in this way that the truth of Christ’s Person is guarded, or that of the unity of the Godhead maintained.

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## GLANTON AND ALNWICK, 1908.

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MATTERS which arose in 1908 in connection with the two neighbouring meetings of Glanton and Alnwick, resulting in what has often been referred to as "the Glanton trouble," served to emphasise the important principle that responsibility to the Lord for the testimony in each city or place attaches to the assembly in that place. This is in keeping with the instruction in the first epistle to the Corinthians, which is addressed to "the assembly of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, *with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, both theirs and ours."

The facts were as follows. In the town of Alnwick serious personal differences had arisen among those breaking bread. It may here be remarked that Matthew 5:23, 24, and Matthew 18:15-17, indicate the means by which personal differences between brethren are to be settled, and it is the responsibility of the spiritual, and ultimately of the assembly in the locality, to see that these means are adopted wherever such differences arise. The verses that immediately follow the passages cited above, that is Matthew 5:25, 26, and Matthew 18:21-35, shew what serious consequences to an individual may result if the divinely ordered procedure is not followed, but in following the procedure a befitting spirit of uprightness, meekness and forgiveness is essential. In the unhappy case of the meeting at Alnwick, however, the differences were not settled, with the result that eventually it divided into two parties, each of which appealed for the fellowship of gatherings around. It was not a case of one party being committed to some error in truth, or wrong principle, from which the other party withdrew in faithfulness to the name of the Lord, but simply of disunity,

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resulting from personal differences, of so serious a character that it was impossible for the brethren to go on together. Some of those who had ceased to break bread at Alnwick started attending the meetings at Glanton, a few miles away, and were eventually received by the brethren there to the breaking of bread, ignoring the responsibility that attached to them, with the rest of their brethren at Alnwick, to humble themselves before the Lord in Alnwick in relation to the confusion that existed there, and to adopt the means provided in the word of God to bring about reconciliation. Those who were thus received to the breaking of bread at Glanton were subsequently sent back to Alnwick as the recognised company in that place. The infringement of divine principles involved in their action was pointed out to the brethren at Glanton by many, but as they maintained it and claimed that it must be recognised as done in the name of the Lord, others supporting them in the position they took up, a separation among brethren became inevitable.

The following letters by Mr. C. A. Coates, written some time after the actual occurrences, will help in the further understanding of the principles that were at stake.

(undated).

The question is raised by you as to whether the breach of 1908 was not caused by some "misunderstanding." It appears that it is still your conviction that it was so. I would most gladly do anything possible to remove misunderstandings.

You say, "I do not see disorder if, say, a saint in Laodicea or Thyatira, feeling the condition of things, and having read the instructions of 2 Timothy 2, withdrew and was received at Philadelphia. I cannot see that Philadelphia would be interfering with the Lord's prerogative in receiving such a one."

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If such a one had gone to Philadelphia it seems to me very probable that the brethren would have said something like this to him:—

"Dear Brother, we are deeply interested in you, as being of the assembly in Thyatira, for we love the brethren everywhere, and we feel a special care for those who are comparatively near to us, as you are. We are conscious that the spiritual power we have is only little, but this makes us desirous of clinging tenaciously to every intimation of the Lord's mind that we can gather from His word. And we should like to put before you what we have learned from Him.

"For a long time we have had a copy of a letter written by the apostle Paul, and we recognise that the things he wrote are the Lord's commandment to us. We have gathered from that letter that assembly exercises are to be taken up and worked out in each locality where the saints are found, for not only was it addressed to 'the assembly of God *which is in Corinth*,' but to 'all that *in every place* call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This has taught us to recognise the assembly of God as in local responsibility in each place where saints are found, and that 'in every place' the name of our Lord Jesus Christ can be called on as One who is available to direct His saints, and to adjust them locally. Indeed we count it a most precious privilege that we can thus refer directly to the Lord in our own locality, and obtain His grace and help in seeking to keep His word and not to deny His name. We thankfully own that we are set in Philadelphia in responsibility to maintain here all that is due to the Lord, and also to avail ourselves of all the resources and sufficiency that is in Him for us. We feel it to be a great privilege that in our local exercises we have not to look to our brethren in Sardis or Smyrna, but directly to our beloved and only Lord. We have proved His grace and faithfulness and sufficiency in our local needs,

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and we earnestly and affectionately entreat you not to call upon us, who are of another assembly, but to call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that He may show you His mind and act for you in the locality in which He has set you.

We may say, further, that we have just recently received from Patmos a copy of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, and we have been intensely interested in John's letters to the seven assemblies in this district. These have greatly confirmed us in what we had previously gathered from Paul. We have been greatly comforted by having a direct communication from the Lord to us locally. It has given us

the sweetest sense of His love and concern, not only for the assembly universally, but for His saints in each local assembly. This is exceedingly precious to *us*, and we earnestly desire that *you* should prove the value of it in your own locality. We know something of your exercises, for we have read the epistle to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, and it encouraged us much to know that the Lord was taking direct account of you in your locality even as He did of us in ours. We counsel you to attend to what He says. He is addressing you in your local responsibility, and your blessing will lie in owning this, and in obtaining His grace to answer to His mind.

"As to what you say about withdrawing from the assembly in Thyatira, we do not understand what you mean. Are you not one of those of whom the Lord has spoken as 'the assembly in Thyatira'? This is how *He* regards you, and therefore how *we* regard you. We could understand your having to withdraw from iniquity, and to purify yourself from vessels to dishonour, for we, too, have read Paul's second letter to Timothy. But we believe it to be impossible for you to withdraw from the assembly in Thyatira so long as you are resident there. The Lord

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is unquestionably addressing you *there*, and though we have observed with sorrow that there is much in the assembly there of which He does not approve we have also noted that there are some exercised souls there whom He has addressed as 'the rest who are in Thyatira.' Why cannot you take up your exercises with them?

"If you have not been able to get on happily together with them you need the Lord's grace locally to enable you to do so. He wants you to recognise His voice, and to obtain His grace for the adjustment of your local differences. We are ready to help you in every spiritual way that is in our power, but we believe the greatest help we can give you is to exhort you to be cast upon the Lord that you may prove His sufficiency in your own locality where He addresses you. He has reserved to Himself the authority to adjust and regulate things amongst you at Thyatira; He has not committed any charge as to this to us. We believe it to be your great privilege to recognise His direct authority where you are, and to obtain His personal direction and grace for every difficulty and exercise in regard to your walking together there. We believe it to be His holy and perfect ordering that it should be so."

Are you not prepared to accept that the above is according to Scripture? Then why accept another kind of action which is not at all in accord with it? If there is a divine order, that which is not consistent with it must be disorder. To acknowledge that there is a divine principle which should govern our action, and in practice to go contrary to it, is a course which I find it difficult to understand.

C.A.C.

*May 6th, 1930.*

I gather from Deuteronomy 21:1-9 that certain conditions may be found "in the land" which are altogether abnormal, and which by their seriousness

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affect the whole of God's people. The matter has occurred in a certain locality, but it is a concern for the elders and judges universally, and for all the people; it is not merely local. I judge that we have instruction here as to a case which, in its bearing and issues, cannot be confined to the locality in which it arises, but which has to be viewed as affecting the responsibility and fellowship of saints generally. Something fatal to the enjoyment of the land has taken place, and this is a matter which affects all God's people; all have to prove themselves to be pure in the matter.

The gravity of such a case required that it should not be left undetermined; it had to be definitely taken up *somewhere*, and it was ordained by God that the nearest city should do so. It was not left to any city to act that might feel inclined to do so; responsibility to do so on behalf of God's people generally was definitely assigned to a particular city. Divine support can always be counted on when responsibility is taken up according to the mind of God.

The case contemplated here is not one of mere local unhappiness, but of the working of things that are *fatal* to a fellowship which is according to God. In the former case the Lord must be waited on to grant local adjustment and recovery. In the latter the whole of the people of God have to clear themselves of what is evil.

There may be much local friction without the definite action of an evil principle, but if, for example, clericalism as at Plymouth, or independency as at Bethesda were definitely working they would be things in regard to which all the people of God must prove themselves pure. A local breach amongst brethren raises the question whether it is a case of local confusion which the Lord may adjust locally, or whether it is the evidence that saints are standing in faithfulness against principles which are really

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fatal to spiritual fellowship. In either case it seems to me that Deuteronomy 21 appears to give the mind of God as indicating that any necessary steps for proving the saints generally to be pure in the matter are assigned in the wisdom of God to those nearest. It is a principle which J.N.D. insisted on, and I am not aware that any other principle has ever been put out by intelligent brethren as having divine sanction. It may be that brethren have not always been consistent in acting on it.

In a case of local disagreement, without the setting up of any principle contrary to those which govern the fellowship generally (as at Alnwick), matters must be left for the Lord to adjust locally, brethren giving such help by prayer and counsel as they are enabled to do. In a case where principles contrary to the truth are the cause of local division, and this is fully ascertained, it is the responsibility and privilege of the brethren to identify themselves with those who are seeking to maintain what is due to the Lord, and to repudiate what is contrary. There is no interference whatever with local responsibility in either case. If the nearest meeting has no special responsibility in such cases, who has?



To leave such matters altogether undetermined would be fatal to true fellowship either locally or generally.

I return herewith the little paper on Local Responsibility, which has been for many years out of print. It contains much that is important, and which I should fully maintain, but obviously it does not touch the principle which you write about, which was not at that time in question. Indeed Glanton was held to be quite in order in declining, for the time, to receive from either party in Alnwick. It was when they absolved saints from their local responsibility in Alnwick by receiving them at Glanton that a serious issue was raised.

C.A.C.

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The following paper, by Mr. James Taylor, "The city nearest to the slain man," further elucidates the principles set out in the passage in Deuteronomy 21 already alluded to in the preceding letter, and is of great value in the matter of local responsibility, which, as already stated, was the issue in the Glanton and Alnwick controversy.

## THE CITY NEAREST TO THE SLAIN MAN. DEUTERONOMY 21:1-9

The above passage has clearly a dispensational significance, "the slain man" referring to Christ as slain near Jerusalem, although the city is not charged with the guilt of His death, but rather in grace given an opportunity to clear itself. The remaining subjects in the chapter follow on the death of our Lord in regular order, bearing on the assembly and Israel as seen in the Acts. The "stubborn and rebellious son" is a type of the Jews as utterly disregarding of divine grace and authority in Christ presented to them in the gospel. He would "not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother." Being brought to "the elders of his city" he is stoned to death by all the men" of it. But verses 1 to 9 contain most important principles in relation to local ruptures, or other causes of uncertainty involving fellowship among the saints of the assembly.

First, as to *general* responsibility. "Thine elders and thy judges shall go forth." This refers to the saints universally viewed in their responsibility as to any sin or division, the cause of which is unknown, but which must be investigated so that judgment according to God may be rendered. The next direction deals with *proximity* to the scene of the sin. The nearest city is determined by the measurement of those *generally* responsible, and this matter of proximity

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is in view throughout the instruction. The fact that the nearest city to the slain man has to clear itself rather than determine the murderer or murderers, does not set aside the importance of proximity as a principle. A divine principle is always valid. Scripture may confirm itself, but does not necessarily repeat. One scripture is enough to establish any point, as John 10:35 shows. Some would make the Old Testament secondary, or a matter of detail, but the New Testament constantly insists on the equality of the Old Testament with itself. Throughout these verses 1-9, the mind is focussed on "the city that is nearest unto him that is slain," "the elders of that city," and "all the elders" of it being mentioned.

Then *priesthood*. "The priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them Jehovah thy God hath chosen to do service unto him, and to bless in the name of Jehovah; and according to their word shall be every controversy and every stroke." They represent the spiritual elements; those who are spiritual, and so can "discern all things." Note, they are not regarded as local, nor as belonging to the people: not "thy priests." They are on God's side, chosen of Him. But observe a very important fact, that as the sons of Levi are mentioned, the elders of the city nearest the slain man are again introduced and the priests are not mentioned again, while the elders of the nearest city *speak to Jehovah*. The onus of slaying the heifer was on them, and they wash their hands over her. Then they say, "Forgive thy people Israel... and lay not innocent blood to the charge of thy people Israel." They act *as priests*, and not simply for themselves but for all Israel. This as applied to-day, would mean that the meeting or meetings nearest to a locality in which division and consequent uncertainty as to the sin involved exist, as judging the

matter in the light of the death of Christ and depending upon the Spirit, for the heifer had her neck broken in a

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"water-course," show themselves to be spiritual, and so capable of discerning and judging according to God. A decision reached under these circumstances will be accepted by "Israel," and morally binding.

Christian fellowship is general as well as local, and so if its practical expression in a locality ceases through division among the saints there, the general aspect is involved; in principle responsibility as to it belongs to all the gatherings. This is recognised in verse 2, "thy elders and thy judges," but afterwards *all rests with the nearest city and the priesthood*, the elders of the former merging into the latter. Thus a local sorrow, such as we are contemplating, after general responsibility is accepted, resolves itself into proximity and priesthood. These must go together, and as they do, the nearest meeting will not act arbitrarily, or officially, but on moral grounds, recognising that what they have on hand is not in their own midst and for which they are responsible to the Lord only, but in another locality, and so coming within the range of all; but that wisdom and confidence in others would leave the service of adjustment with them as the nearest to the scene of sorrow.

While the unmanageable and rebellious son alludes to the Jews, as already said, verses 18 to 21 afford important instruction relative to the subject under consideration. He was to be brought "unto the elders of *his* city and unto the gates of *his* place." This links with 1 Corinthians, and shows that when actual sin is in question, and determined, judgment of it must be where the guilty person resides. "All the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die." This is done on adequate testimony, for his father and mother accuse him before the elders. In the light of this, as connected with the letters to Corinth, matters belonging to a given locality cannot be scripturally adjudicated upon in another locality.

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Thus while responsibility as to the slain man is determined by measurement, his position is not presented exactly as a locality; the measurement is from *him*, not the field. Nor is the heifer slain there, but in the valley or watercourse, and expiation thereby made for Israel, although in professed innocence of the death of the man. But when sin is active, innocency no longer contemplated, the guilty person is regarded as of a city and his judgment is there. In truth as evil has to be met the two cities merge into one, for the principle established is that sin occurring in a local assembly must be dealt with *there*, although a nearby assembly may have responsibility as to it, because of division or inability otherwise in the former to deal with it. Leviticus 14:33-53 governs this.

But the extension of fellowship by a nearby meeting to saints in a place where division has existed is not exactly the same as dealing with sin in it, although it may involve the judgment of some who cannot be recognised because of their conduct; it is a question of owning "the approved." This action is as of one assembly to another, and so is done, so

to speak, by the neighbour assembly in its own locality, after godly deliberation, based on full inquiry.

Referring again to verse 2 of our chapter, it is a grave mistake to assume that what is said of "thine elders and thy judges" warrants brethren from many gatherings, whether of a district or generally, coming together to judge of matters belonging to another locality. There is no scriptural warrant for such a procedure; indeed it would set aside the truth governing the local assembly taught in 1 and 2 Corinthians, which is that, as having the Holy Spirit, it has the character of the temple of God and the body of Christ, and so furnished with what is needed for its guidance and maintenance; gifts, as for the whole assembly, being also available.

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The truth governing the assembly, as seen in local companies, taught especially as we have seen in 1 and 2 Corinthians and Deuteronomy 21, the disregard of which has caused widespread sorrow, needs to be constantly pressed, particularly in places where this sorrow was lightly experienced, where many of Israel have not known "*all* the wars of Canaan."

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## DIVINE PRINCIPLES AND A DAY OF RUIN.

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IN 1920 a controversy arose as to the way in which evil, when found amongst us, should be dealt with. It involved the careful consideration of 1 Corinthians 5, and 2 Timothy 2:19-22, with a view to discerning the way to maintain uncompromisingly the holiness which ever becomes the house of God in a manner consistent with the humble recognition of the conditions of brokenness that mark the days we are in. The exercise which the controversy aroused resulted in the general recognition that it was unbecoming for the saints in any place who are truly separated to the name of the Lord Jesus to assume, in their public actions, to be the assembly of God in the place, and thus to have competence, as the Corinthians had, to *remove a wicked person from amongst them*, as it is clear that when the apostle wrote to the Corinthians there was the one assembly in Corinth comprising all true believers in the city, and spoken of in 1 Cor. 5:12, as "within," in contrast to which there were "those outside." Anyone therefore removed from amongst the Corinthians would find himself among "those outside" the whole company of believers in the city, whereas at the present time anyone ceasing to be recognised as identified with a particular company of believers can, and, alas, not infrequently does, associate himself with another company of believers. Such is the state of confusion publicly that marks Christendom, which is described in the second epistle to Timothy as "a great house," in which "there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen; and some to honour and some to dishonour." In this condition of things, the divine provision is in the instruction which immediately follows, viz., "If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared

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for every good work. But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart," 2 Timothy 2:21. In verse 19 we have the immovability of God's foundation, the seal of which is "The Lord knows those that are his; and, Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity." These verses shew that the faithful believer is never compelled to go on with evil. He is authorised, and indeed required, to withdraw from iniquity, and is appealed to to purify himself from vessels to dishonour by separating himself from them. He is then enjoined to pursue righteousness (i.e. what is right in the sight of God), faith, (relying on God and not on what is seen), love, peace, *with those* that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. By this means a collective position is reached, and can be maintained, in separation from evil, in which the truth of the assembly can be followed up and worked out in all that are available, but if among those walking together on these lines, in the light of the assembly, an evildoer is found, involving the necessity for judging the evil and refusing to go on with it, it was felt that it is more in keeping with the humiliating state of confusion publicly in that which bears the name of Christ to do so by withdrawing from the evildoer than by assuming competence, as the assembly of God, to remove him from amongst ourselves. It has been pointed out that this is supported by the typical teaching of Numbers 15 and 16. In Numbers 15:35, "the whole assembly" is called upon to stone an evildoer, and did so. In Numbers 16:26, following on the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, with two hundred and fifty princes

(typifying the great rebellion against the Lord and the Spirit which characterises the Christian profession), the people are called upon to "Depart... from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs."

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The matter is further amplified in the following three letters by Mr. C. A. Coates, a paper by him called "Righteousness in the Last Days," and an extract from a reading in May, 1918, at Rochester, U.S.A., on 2 Timothy 2:19-26.

*March 5th, 1920.*

BELOVED BROTHER,—... Your letter was a great comfort to me, as showing that you could so clearly discern the character of what some were doing, and that you had no sympathy with it. Happily the Lord has in much mercy checked the unwarrantable attempts to cause division, and all sober minds are shocked that such attempts should have been made. But we must continue to pray for our dear brethren, for there is much that needs wisdom and grace, and the Head alone can supply it. It is good to realise that the Lord distinctly acts for His own, and defends them from influences that are not helpful. He lets us feel our own weakness, but then He acts, and when He does it is an effective action which cannot be defeated.

I am most thankful to have your prayers; I value them most highly. I am glad to think of you and of all that is an exercise to you and a trial of faith.

With much love in the Lord to dear Mrs. — and yourself.

Yours affectionately in Him, C.A.C.

*March 9th, 1920.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Many thanks for yours. It is very kind of you to write so fully, and I value the opportunity of considering your thoughts on the subject which is a matter of exercise at present.

It is in the desire to maintain the full force and scope of 1 Corinthians 5:13 as the commandment of the Lord that I recognise His will to be that a wicked person should be excluded from the privileges and fellowship of the assembly, and from the company

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of all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I think this is the scope of the Scripture in a just and sober interpretation of it, taken in its divine setting in an epistle addressed as 1 Corinthians 1:2. I hold that it is obligatory not only on all saints, but on all who call upon that holy name, even though it be in profession only. That, in its full and proper scope, it is not now obeyed is obvious, and is the evidence of departure and ruin, which is humbling to us all as having our part in it.



I am unable to see that the acceptance of the above interpretation involves that "we must necessarily judge as evil all the various judgments of the past and consequently our own present position." It seems to me that if brethren had now come to the conclusion that it was *wrong* to exclude a wicked person from their fellowship there would be force in your argument! But the matter is on quite a different footing from this. Brethren are, thank God, as much set to exclude evil from their associations as ever. They regard those "various judgments" as morally right, and as come to in the fear of God, with true and upright desire to maintain what was due to the Lord, and what was suitable to the abode of God's holiness. But there have been many things in the practice of brethren, and terms frequently used in years past, which have quietly dropped out through exercise in the presence of increased light. For many years, and particularly since we were so much helped by F.E.R.'s ministry, brethren generally have been exercised to avoid taking any ground, or using any terms, that might seem to involve pretension in the scene and circumstances of the church's ruin. But we do not "judge as evil" what was done uprightly, and for the honour of the Lord's name, and which was, as to its substance, approved of Him, though we might not feel free to do things just in the same way now. We do not "judge as evil" the measure of

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light and truth we had forty years ago, though we were happy to say and do many things then which we should not say or do now. To be thankful for increased light does not involve that we "judge as evil" our former measure of spiritual intelligence and growth. The "dilemma" you speak of does not present itself to my mind as being such at all.

I would suggest that the "ground" on which any action may be taken is distinguishable from the "object" or "motive." It is true that all links with an evil-doer should be severed on the "ground" that he is unfit for any Christian fellowship. But the "object" in view would be, first, to maintain conditions suitable to the Lord, and in accord with His holy name, and in keeping with the character of God's house. And, secondly, in the spirit of grace and love, that the offender might be exercised, convicted, and fully restored. The "motive" in all that was done would be the obedience of faith working through love...

My power is very small, but I would certainly earnestly desire to use it to the utmost to prevent disintegration, and to build saints up in Christ, so that as formed in the divine nature they may be comforted and knit together in love. May we have wisdom to discern the movements which really tend to divide and scatter, and spiritual power to resist them as strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. And in every way may we be found "seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed"!

I have jotted down these few thoughts in reference to your remarks. I submit them freely to your consideration and criticism, and shall be glad to be corrected where I am wrong.

With very much love in the Lord Jesus,

Yours very affectionately in Him, C.A.C.

*March 13th, 1920.*

... Brethren generally are in such substantial agreement as to the principles involved in the present exercise that the idea of division on the subject seems to be simply preposterous. As to the essential matters, which might justly be regarded as vital to fellowship, there seems to be, happily, universal concurrence of judgment. That is (1) that all links of association or fellowship with a wicked person should be severed, and (2) that all ecclesiastical pretension should be felt to be utterly unsuitable in the present condition of the church.

But a third question has come in, and become the occasion of diverse judgments running in some cases to the point of serious difference. That is, whether as to our public attitude, and the public statement of that attitude, in relation to a wicked person, we should take church ground and put him away from amongst ourselves, as could be done at Corinth, or whether it is not more suitable and seemly to take 2 Timothy ground and to act together on the basis of individual faithfulness, but, of course, in the light of all assembly truth and principles. It must be one or the other. Whatever terms are used there is really no middle course. Much has been brought before us in ministry as to this for many years past, and it seems to be the Lord's mind that this question should be now definitely faced.

The very fact that there is exercise, with different phases of expression, but which in each case maintains with jealous care separation from evil, and the purity of the saints' associations, and the honour due to the Lord's name, is something to be thankful for, It is evidence that the Lord is not suffering us to drop down into formality, but is preserving exercise as to the import of things, and as to the moral state which can alone take them up rightly. There is nothing in

the exercise which, in my judgment, should be regarded as raising the question of fellowship. It is an exercise for brethren to take up together, and to seek the Lord about, that He may make clear His mind and confirm it in the judgment of His saints. It is surely not a matter which calls for division.

I go most fully with what has been said; viz., "The church—as set up in responsibility here—has failed, and there is no corporate body now that we can look to. We must recognise this, and our own part, too, as contributing to the failure. Further, it is a principle in the ways of God that when the corporate thing fails the principles that belong to it are maintained in individual faithfulness."

A principle clearly laid down in 2 Timothy 2 is that of withdrawing or separation from iniquity or vessels to dishonour. It is a principle of very wide—we might say universal—application. If it is true that we cannot now look to any corporate body to maintain divine principles, in individual faithfulness we can still act on this basic principle of withdrawal or separation from what is evil. It is a most valuable divine provision for the

last days. The faithful saint can never be forced to accept association with evil; he can always withdraw from it. If *two* were walking together, and one of them became characteristically a wicked person the other could, and would, withdraw from him. And if fifty or five hundred are walking together, each one must walk individually in regard to him on the withdrawal principle. It is only as each one acts on this principle that we can follow righteousness together.

But in dealing with such a person those who walk together act together. And the question arises whether there may not be an element in such collective action additional to that of individual withdrawal. I cannot doubt that when faithful saints thus act there is an additional element, and a very important one. If

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"two or three" take action, as gathered together to the Lord's name, and with the support and sanction of His presence, their action—as to spiritual reality, and in the estimation of faith—has assembly character. The Lord's presence, and His power and authority, are concerned in the matter. But the support and confidence which the consciousness of this gives are known only to faith and love, and to the holy and priestly exercises of saints in private with God. I think we should instinctively feel that it would be out of place and unbecoming to take or claim any such ground as to our public position here. Every sober and lowly mind would shrink from it as savouring of pretension.

Now it seems to me that if the difference between these two things were recognised, as it ought to be, the difficulties as to present exercises would be greatly diminished. Some seem to fear that the first is in danger of being given up. No one has any thought of giving it up; it is the supreme joy and strength of faith. But what is said or done in public should be in keeping with the public position, which is that of a few feeble individuals seeking to walk together in the truth in the midst of assembly ruin and confessing that ruin. Hence if brethren feel it comely to say that they "withdraw" from a wicked person I cannot regard such action as an evil so great that it ought to be separated from. It is, at any rate, safe ground to take, as based on a clear divine principle of universal application. And it is unpretentious, and consistent with a condition of things when, admittedly, "there is no corporate body that we can look to." It is acting on a broad divine principle which is clearly available even in the most extreme conditions of weakness, and it surrenders nothing unless it be the claim to act publicly as having church position and the presence and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. But surely all saints would agree that this latter, as I have

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remarked already, is to be known to-day as the comfort and support of faith *within*, rather than taken up as giving a status or authority to be claimed *without*.

I trust that brethren will be patient, and prayerfully consider the principles involved. If the Lord be waited on and confided in I have no doubt as to the result.

C.A.C.

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAST DAYS C.A.C.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 5; 2 TIMOTHY 2. *(The substance of several letters revised.)*

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IN the first of these Scriptures it seems to me that four distinct actions are contemplated. Of course, they all operated together at Corinth, but they are distinguishable one from the other.

1. The apostolic action in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, with which the saints (as gathered together and having the power of our Lord Jesus Christ) are identified, by which the wicked person was delivered to Satan for destruction of the flesh. I think it would be generally agreed that there is no apostolic power to act thus to-day.
2. That with such a one there was to be no mixing—"not even to eat." The application of this would clearly be individual, and it is as obligatory on each individual saint as ever.
3. "Remove the wicked person from amongst yourselves." This was to be the act of the whole company of saints. The evil-doer was to be no longer of their company. He was to be excommunicated from the privileges and fellowship of the assembly, and outside there was nothing for him but the world of darkness and Satan's power. It was a "rebuke" terrible in its nature, and, as we know, well-nigh overwhelming in its effect.

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4. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened." This was a deeper and more searching exercise than merely getting rid of the wicked person. The fact that such a one was amongst them, and known to be so, without any mourning being caused, exposed their general state, and it was this which, I think we might say, was the most serious aspect of the case. There was general puffing up, boasting and the allowance of what was fleshly in many ways. All this "leaven" was to be purged out, that the assembly might be practically true to its character as a "new lump" and "unleavened."

All this is before us in its solemnity and force as the commandment of the Lord. In proportion as we limit it in thought to anything less than the whole assembly of God we lose in our souls its import, its unspeakable gravity, and it is well that a deep sense of this should be retained. The desire to preserve the force of this makes me hesitate to use "yourselves" in a limited sense. That is, to appropriate the "yourselves" of 1 Corinthians 5:13 to a few saints who are perhaps to-day the one-hundredth part of the assembly of God in a town. The assembly *as such* could, and did, act then effectively as an administrative body with divine authority. The "yourselves" was the whole Christian company—a concrete company from which a wicked person could be excluded. The fact that the assembly is not in view as such a company to-day is the sad evidence of ruin

through man's failure. Indeed it was the appalling contrast between what he saw the church to be in Scripture, and what it had become in his day, that led Augustine to speak of the "invisible church" and the expression has been in common use ever since. The use of such an expression is in itself the most complete evidence of utter ruin.

We have to feel, and it is right we should feel, the

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changed conditions. We may be sure that the heart of Christ is very deeply affected by the ruin, and He will not suffer His saints to be unaffected by it. It is really a very holy privilege to be sympathetic with the heart of Christ as to the ruin of that which bears His name in this world. If we are so, it will surely lead us to act with simplicity and lowliness becoming the present state of things. We have, I trust in some measure, the sorrow of being conscious that in the present conditions no such corporate action of the assembly as could be taken at Corinth is possible. It brings home to us that we are in the *last* days and not in the *first*.

But are we, on that account, to give up the truth, and accept association with evil? Far be the thought! If any principle or pretext were alleged which would have the effect of causing saints to continue in association with evil it would be obviously making the commandment of God of none effect. We must certainly in the light of 1 Corinthians 5 refuse all fellowship and intercourse with a wicked person. But we must also recognise that all the conditions in the Christian profession are changed.

It is these changed conditions which have been distinctly taken account of, and provided for, in 2 Timothy. In that epistle we have the Lord's mind as to how faithful saints should act in the last days, and how those saints should *walk together*. But it is essential to the right understanding of 2 Timothy that we should see that the light of the ministry of the gospel and of the ministry of the assembly is supposed to be possessed by the persons who are in view. That is, the epistle is addressed to an individual who has heard things of Paul, and who is thoroughly acquainted with Paul's doctrine, 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:10. These things, entrusted to faithful men, are to be the subject of instruction amongst the saints. This would clearly include what we have in Romans

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and Corinthians, and also Colossians and Ephesians. Every Scripture is also spoken of as "divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work," 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. This proves that no part of Paul's doctrine, or indeed of any Scripture, is to drop out of account.

In the light of all this the faithful saint is to "shun" vain babblings (chap. 2:16), everyone who names the name of the Lord is to "withdraw from iniquity" (chap. 2:19), and he who would be "a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work" must purify himself from vessels to dishonour "in separating himself from them" (chap. 2:21). He must "flee" youthful lusts (chap. 2:22), and "avoid" foolish and



senseless questionings (chap. 2:23). These things, negative though they be, are most necessary in the midst of a profession where iniquity abounds.

But there is something positive also. We are to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (chap. 2:22). The pursuit of these things would clearly involve practical consistency with every part of the truth which the individual has heard and known as Paul's teaching. As *in the light of the truth of the assembly* he finds here definite instructions in relation to his walking together with other like-minded saints. The "with" clearly brings in what is collective. He is not to be isolated. How could he be in the light of the assembly? Righteousness, faith, love, peace, are bound up with the practical recognition of our divine bond with all saints as members of one another in Christ's body, and as built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. We cannot pursue these four things *alone*; in the very nature of the case it must be "*with* those that call upon the Lord out of a pure

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heart." This necessitates much individual exercise, for if I am not pursuing righteousness, faith, love, peace, how shall I be able to discern others who are doing so in dependence upon, and desiring loyalty to, the Lord? "A pure heart" suggests that there must be more than the *claim* to be such; it must be a reality before the Lord, and when it is so there will hardly be the need or desire to *claim* it. The heart is set on maintaining it *under His eye* in spiritual reality.

The assembly exists, and all truth pertaining to it—including 1 Corinthians—remains as divine light for us, but our path amidst the ruin is marked out in 2 Timothy. No company can claim to have the status of the assembly, or to act as such. But saints can still, in the light of 1 Corinthians 5, refuse intercourse with a wicked person. It is imperative that they should do so. Indeed it is clear that none of such as were characterised by the moral traits of 2 Timothy 2:22 would go on with a wicked person. To recognise the authority of 1 Corinthians 5:13 as the commandment of the Lord, and to be consistent with it, is part of the "righteousness" we are to pursue according to 2 Timothy, and we do so in company with our brethren who are treading the same path. Saints *act together* as pursuing "righteousness." And they not only have in mind the necessity for withdrawing from iniquity, but they act as those who have apprehended the true character of the assembly, God's house, as being essentially holy, and thus necessarily *exclusive of evil*. Profound exercise as to this before God, and eating the sin-offering, is of the deepest importance. But all this is spiritual and priestly exercise *within*—a *temple* character of things which forms the moral basis in souls of the action taken in public. This must have due place, or we shall lose a solemn element which should be present in every dealing with a wicked person.

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The assembly is characterised by purity, it is the abode of God's holiness. If the saints are the shrine where God dwells, this necessitates the positive refusal and rejection of evil. But we do not limit the thought of the purity and holiness of God's house to any special company of saints. All saints are of that house, and we apprehend things from that point of view. At Corinth there was a concrete company which had that character,



and from which a wicked person could be excluded. But we are in a time of ruin, and though the assembly still exists, and is still characterised by holiness, it is not in view as a concrete company. But exercised saints can apprehend the character of God's house, and walk together consistently with it, in spite of the ruin, though, of course, very much affected by it. If we walk together in the light of what pertains to the whole company we necessarily take action and we do so together. We come to the solemn judgment as before God that an evil-doer is unfit for Christian fellowship, and we sever all our links of association and fellowship with him. Nothing could be more simple and definite, or more absolutely in keeping with 1 Corinthians 5.

Saints, do not claim to act as the assembly, or as being the "yourselves" contemplated in 1 Corinthians 5:13, because they take account of the true scope of "yourselves," and they realise the present ruin under the eye of the Lord. But they seek to maintain consistency with every part of assembly truth, and every divine principle. They seek to come together and act together, in such a way that the Lord may be able to own them as gathered to His name and acting in His name. They desire, above all, that His presence with them may be their support, and that every act may be so carried out as to have moral value under God's eye. But they own the ruin, and do not set up to be anything. They are conscious that their place of blessing and power is to be a poor and

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afflicted people whose trust is in the name of the Lord. He will not fail such. They act together in refusing to be linked with evil, but the only community or corporate body which they recognise is the whole assembly.

The peculiar conditions of a day of ruin tend to narrow us in thought. If we have found a few saints with whom we can walk according to the truth, and on the line of 2 Timothy 2:22, we have to be exercised that we do not connect with them in a corporate way ideas which properly are only to be attached to the whole company of saints. Beloved and honoured servants of the Lord have frequently warned us against any such limitation. And I trust we recognise the importance of keeping such warning in mind. There are many expressions which we commonly use, as a matter of convenience, in a limited sense as referring to those who walk together. Such expressions as "we," "us," "ourselves," "the saints," "the brethren," "the assembly," "fellowship." So long as these are used simply and understood there is no harm in them, and I have no doubt we shall continue to use them. But the very fact that we do so renders it wholesome for us to be reminded occasionally that if they were used *formally* in this restricted sense they would be purely sectarian. We need to keep our hearts and minds in the largeness of the assembly of God, while our feet are kept in the path of 2 Timothy.

The present application of 1 Corinthians 5 will be found as saints regulate their associations in the light of it, and its moral force will be preserved in their souls and in their actions. It has present authority and application, but it should be clearly before us that we act in the light of it as walking together according to 2 Timothy 2:22. Each walks in the light of the assembly, and seeks to pursue consistency with every part of assembly truth, and this is the

divine way in which saints can walk together in the last days.

This is important as involving personal exercise on the part of each one. And this individual character of things is very suited to the last days, and gives faithful testimony a peculiar character and value. It is very possible that, while what was done at Corinth was the act of the assembly *as such*, there might have been many individuals among them who were not truly in accord with it (see 2 Cor. 12:20, 21). But now each faithful individual is to pursue righteousness, etc., and what is collective really results from what is individual. Thus in the day of ruin it may be possible for things to be maintained under the eye of God in even greater moral value than was the case at Corinth. Faith and faithfulness came out with peculiar lustre in the dark days of Israel's history, and it may be so in the corresponding time of the church's history. We surely desire to have our little part in such divine favour!

You ask, "If two or three in a day of ruin come together, say on Lord's day morning, do they not do it in assembly *character*, if as you have rightly insisted they are 'of the assembly' in the place?"

I should say that the two or three are "of the assembly" and are therefore responsible to judge themselves, and to see to it that their associations, ways and spirit are in keeping with its holy character. It is also one of the first elements in "righteousness" that they should recognise and own the ruin into which things have fallen in the assembly of which they form part. In proportion as they are here for Christ, and devoted to His interests, they can be found gathered together unto His name and acting in His name, and they will have *assembly character*. But if their actions are such as to manifest indifference to Christ, or failure to maintain His rights, or are out of accord with the truth, though they are "of the

assembly" they are not found in *assembly character*. There are many "believers' meetings" which could not be recognised as having assembly character at all, though all believers in them are "of the assembly." It is as saints are formed in these moral features which properly belong to the assembly that it may be said that they come together in *assembly character*. But the more truly they come together in assembly character the less disposed will they be to claim to do so in any formal or ecclesiastical way. The character of their assembling, and of their actions, will speak for itself, and be justified by the truth. To speak, in a day of ruin, of coming together in *assembly character* in any other sense than as having the moral features of the assembly would be, I fear, that very ecclesiasticism which F.E.R. and others have so dreaded and deprecated, and with which J.N.D. would not have had an atom of sympathy.

In connection with this, I would like to call your attention to a most important paper, which, I am sure, you have often read and pondered. I refer to J.N.D.'s "Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ," written in 1828 (Collected Writings, 1). That paper contained, as you know, the seed of the great spiritual movement which, in the Lord's ways, marked the last century so distinctively. What is so prominent and

striking in it is the intense depth of exercise which it discloses as to the *moral features of the assembly*. This was the line on which assembly truth was recovered. It showed unmistakably that everything ecclesiastical was in complete ruin, but emphasised that that ruin was brought about by unfaithfulness and spiritual decline and defection. It presents everything from the moral side. It was in this way that the Spirit of God recalled saints in these last days to the truth of the assembly. It was no question of recovery to correct scriptural order, or to assembly position, but of exercise as to the restoration

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of those blessed moral features which mark the assembly. And I think we must conclude that divine revival could only be brought about in this way; the point of departure must be the point of recovery. It might well be a deep exercise for us, do you not think, as to how far we *do* come together in "assembly character"?

Then you ask, "Is it no longer possible for any saints to 'come together *in assembly*' because they cannot find the whole?" I do not question the possibility of this. I am sure that as saints walk according to 2 Timothy 2:22, and come together responsive to the Lord's love, they will know what it is to be "in assembly," and to taste largely, through His marvellous grace, of assembly privilege. May we desire and experience this more and more! But is it not quite another matter for a few saints amidst the ruin of the last days to claim that they can exercise assembly administration in discipline formally as at the beginning? The assembly which was together in Corinth in outward unity as God's assembly in that city is now broken and scattered, a great part of it submerged in the world. Indeed, such is the state of things that the fact that two or three come together as seeking to walk in the truth is but a witness, as J.N.D. said, to the ruin. The fact that we are in entirely changed conditions is forced in a sorrowful way upon our attention.

My exercise is that we should adequately recognise the present ruin: it is one of the first elements of "righteousness" to do so; and it will be the first effect of receiving "the light of the assembly." J.N.D. said, "If any Christians now set up to be the church, or did any formal act which pretended to it, I should leave them, as being a false pretension, and denying *the very testimony to the state of ruin which God has called us to render....* I think it of the last

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importance that this pretension of any body should be kept down; I could not own it a moment, because it is not the truth" (Collected Writings, I:534). I quote this for the words I have underlined, which indicate J.N.D.'s sense of the importance of not losing sight of the ruin. The conditions are not now as at Corinth. J.N.D.'s paper on "The Formation of Churches," written in 1840, contains much that is instructive in principle as to this, though he is not speaking of the point that is at present before us. For example, "A return from existing evil unto that which God at the first set up, is therefore not always a proof that we have understood His word and will. Nevertheless, we shall rightly and truly judge that what He did at the first set up was good, and that we have departed from it" (Collected Writings, I:217). "Shall we, who are guilty of this state of things, pretend we have only to set about and remedy it? No; the attempt would but

prove that we are not humbled thereby. Let us rather search in all humility what God says to us in His word of such a condition of things; and let us not, like foolish children who have broken a precious vase, attempt to join together its broken fragments, and to set it up in hopes to hide the damage from the notice of others" (Collected Writings, I:220). "I am enquiring what the word and the Spirit say of the state of the fallen church, instead of arrogating to myself a competency to realise that which the Spirit has spoken of the first condition of the church." "The lowliness that feels aright the real condition of the church preserves us from pretensions" (Collected Writings, I:224).

It is not enough to see that an expression is in Scripture. We must take account of the conditions in which the Spirit used it, and we have to ask whether the same conditions are present now. The propriety, or otherwise, of using words now in a *formal way* which stand connected in *Scripture* with the assembly

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in its original character and unity is a matter for spiritual discernment.

What was perfectly suitable and appropriate when the building was intact might be pretentious if taken up formally when it is in ruins. The Lord has revived, in infinite grace, Paul's ministry, and also (especially since J.N.D.'s departure) John's. In the light of this there has been both separating and gathering of saints. But I think we should conclude from Scripture that the work of the Spirit at the end would not be on the line of re-establishing the Corinthian order so much as bringing about personal attachment to Christ and love to the brethren, so that all that is vitally characteristic of the assembly should be found here.

In Philadelphia everything is cherished which is divinely precious and vital. It is that which was from the beginning revived and restored in mercy at the end. Not a restoration of assembly status, but a revival of Christ in the affections of His saints, leading to love of the brethren. This is the principle on which saints may walk together even in the most difficult times; it is in line with 2 Timothy, and we may surely count upon the Lord to maintain it to the end.

The Lord has given through many "vessels to honour" a very blessed ministry of truth concerning Christ and the assembly. That ministry has made its way in the face of conflict all the time, and its effect, where spiritually received, has been that man in the flesh has been known as set aside in the cross, Christ's word and name have become precious and cherished, and the brethren have been loved. This is Philadelphia as I understand it. Not an ecclesiastical body, but saints characterised, amidst the ruin of the ecclesiastical body and owning their share in it, by spiritual affections and intelligence such as were found in the assembly at the beginning.

I most fully own, and rejoice in, the abiding value of Matthew 18:20. It is blessed encouragement for

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even "two or three" of the assembly, and though not given especially for a day of ruin it

becomes available in such a day. To be gathered together unto Christ's name secures His presence; it is privilege and power. And "two or three" may still act in His name, and with the sanction of His presence. Who could doubt that such acts are "bound in heaven"?

But then all this produces deep exercise. J.N.D. is careful to say, "Their acts, *if really done in His name*, have His authority." This is just the point. It is not for any two or three to *claim* that they do things in His name, but to be exercised in every way—in the consideration of Scripture, and in much prayer and humble dependence—that it should really be so. And this is especially important in a day when there is not only the general ruin, but the added confusion of many companies claiming to meet and act in His name. I add that, of course, the responsibility that it should be really so in any dealing with evil rests upon saints locally; saints elsewhere own what is done, as J.N.D. says.

If two or three really act in Christ's name amidst the ruin, would you not expect that their action would be both morally suitable to the matter in hand, and to the conditions in which the action is taken? Christ takes account of the ruin; He is deeply affected by it. Would it not be in accord with Him for us to own that the conditions are changed from what they were at Corinth? The subject of our present inquiry is not whether two or three may act in His name or not, but as to what manner of acting—or rather, what ground to be taken in acting—is most suitable to His name in a day of ruin?

To *have* assembly character, and to *act* in Christ's name, is blessed divine favour. To *claim* that we have this character, and that we so act, might be the most worthless pretension. May our exercise ever be

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to have things in spiritual reality! And it may be well to remember that we do not necessarily get rid of pretension by seeing that 2 Timothy is our special charter in the last days. A few individuals who *claimed* that they acted and walked together according to 2 Timothy 2:22 might be the most pretentious persons on earth. The true value of what we do does not consist in what we claim it to be, but in what it is under God's eye.

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I fully appreciate the importance of order. If saints walk together according to 2 Timothy 2:22 in the light of all assembly truth, and seek, through grace, to maintain practical consistency with it in a day of ruin, I feel sure that of such it may be said, "Rejoicing and seeing your order," Col. 2:5. But this would be found without any thought of setting up to be an administrative body.

The truth regarding overseers or elders supplies a suggestive and helpful analogy. Elders and deacons had an important place in church administration at the beginning. No intelligent brother would think of taking any such place officially now. But I trust it is a matter of continual exercise with us that the care and service should be maintained. And in some feeble measure it is maintained.



All that is comely and in accord with divine order will be found with those who walk together according to 2 Timothy 2:22. But they will have no more thought of setting up to be an administrative body than those who serve in care and ministry would have of setting up to be deacons or elders. Divine order is maintained—as to the moral reality of it—without anything formal and therefore without pretension. It is consistent with the order of the assembly that a wicked person should be excluded from the companionship of those walking together. But this will be done

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on the line of following righteousness, and through each one taking up the exercise of it personally, and maintaining separation from the one in question. And, of course, in such a case those walking together would act together. All that pertains to order and administration is secured, so far as possible in a day of ruin, as saints move on together in accord with the testimony. But there is no claim or attempt to secure this in a formal way in the scene of the church's ruin, though there is that which *faith* can recognise as in keeping with due order.

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"Church position " is perhaps a somewhat ambiguous phrase. If it means that all saints are by God's grace and calling, and as having the Spirit, of Christ's body and God's house, and that all saints are responsible to be consistent with this position, and that those who walk together in the truth recognise this, and seek to be consistent with it personally and in their associations, I do not object to it. But if it means that a certain company of persons have "church position" *in the scene of ruin* in a way special and distinct from other saints, it is ground which I do not care to take.

Spiritually, and as a matter of faith, it is open to those in separation from evil to enjoy assembly position and privilege to the full measure of their spiritual capability—that is, the measure of faith, affection, growth, intelligence, and the Spirit's power; the measure, too, of the Lord's grace, in vouchsafing His presence to them and the gain of His headship. But when it comes to a question of the position which we take up formally *here* in the scene of the church's ruin, and conscious, as we surely are, that we are involved in that ruin, I think the greatest lowliness and the absence of all pretension whether in thought or word are becoming. To have the two sides clearly

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before us, and not to confound the one with the other, is very necessary if we are to be found here in intelligent accord with the testimony. As we know and enter into the grace and blessedness of the former, we can afford to take very low and simple ground in the latter. I believe the present exercise is intended to help us as to both, for if we are defective on one side we shall almost inevitably be defective on both.

Providing that holiness in separation from evil were fully and practically maintained, I should be happy to leave my brethren free as to the terms which, in godly exercise, they might judge suitable to use, because it is the act of complete severance from what is evil



which to me is vital, and not the words in which it is expressed. If they felt happy to use literally the words of 1 Corinthians 5:13 it would not affect my love for them or my fellowship with them, because I trust that *in mind and spirit* my brethren feel, and desire to own, the ruin as much as I do. If it were a matter of conscience with them to use those words I would defer to them. But personally I would desire to avoid the use of terms which might appear to involve the assumption that "church position" attached in some special way to a certain company. That a few saints are privileged to walk together in these last days, through the Lord's peculiar grace, in the light of assembly truth and assembly position is true, and I count it great divine favour to walk with them.

Can it be truly said that the form of action which is regarded as comely in this little paper involves disobedience to the commandment of the Lord, and that it should be separated from as iniquity? Brethren must judge as to whether this is so. If a person is absolutely excluded from the companionship and fellowship of those who walk together, is he not, as a simple matter of fact, removed from amongst them? Is not the Scripture obeyed so far as possible in

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present conditions? Could any words that could be used add to the completeness or definiteness of the severance? And it must be admitted that even 1 Corinthians 5:13 is not a *formula*; it was an injunction to be carried out in *fact*. Where then is disobedience? In what does it consist? There is the fullest possible obedience, but it has taken a form becoming to the day of the church's ruin.

There is a serious exercise as to whether it is comely to formally take the place in the scene of the church's ruin, of a "company" having "church position." It is not thought well to have the "company" idea in mind save as embracing, in principle, the whole. There are dangers to be guarded against—a sectarian position or thought on the one hand, and a lack of due recognition of the ruin on the other. Those who do not agree with the way in which this exercise is sought to be expressed may surely in brotherly love respect the exercise and bear with it. It in no way infringes on what is due to the Lord. No one can say that what are called "new" principles have been productive, or are at all likely to be productive, of laxity in associations. It must be obvious that to insist on each individual being true to certain principles in no way relaxes the obligations which are common to all. But the principles advocated are, in truth, as old as 2 Timothy.

In conclusion, I would submit to the judgment of others the following considerations. (1) Is not the act of exclusion or separation from a wicked person an act which stands in connection with our position and attitude in that which is now the scene of the church's ruin? (2) Can we take up formally any position or attitude *in that scene* save that of being involved in the ruin? (3) Are not the words which we use in such circumstances a solemn and formal announcement to which all who walk together are definitely committed? (4) If these three questions are answered

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in the only way in which it seems to me they can be answered, is it not right and seemly that the words used should be in keeping with the truth of the position? It is really a

question of where we are, or where we consider ourselves to be, in the place where the church is in ruin.

The exercise as to this matter may appear to some to be a mere quibble about words. But I am convinced that when saints consider it soberly apart from the atmosphere and spirit of controversy, and especially apart from any thought that it involves separation from our brethren, they will realise that it is perhaps more important than at first appeared. The exercise has been wide-spread, and one feels constrained to believe that, under the Lord's hand, there is needed divine instruction in it. May it be our concern to see what that instruction is and profit by it! And may we be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, and be ready to give due place to every part of the truth! May God enable us, in this last solemn and critical moment, when the enemy is seeking to disintegrate and scatter, to lay ourselves out diligently to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace!

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## EXTRACT FROM

### “RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE PURSUIT OF IT.”

Reading at Rochester, NY, U.S.A., May, 1918.

#### 2 TIMOTHY 2:19-26.

**A.N.W.** Iniquity is a strong word. What is your thought about it?

**J.T.** It expresses evil or unrighteousness. Of course the Christian must judge and refuse it in himself; but withdrawal from it implies that it is accepted and practised by others, so that in withdrawing from it you have to withdraw from them.

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**B.T.F.** What about false creeds held in religious systems around?

**J.T.** I suppose they are what is called “systematised error.”

**G.A.T.** As a rule, do we not understand that as having withdrawn from “system,” that is all the evil we have to withdraw from?

**J.T.** We have a specific case here, men saying, “the resurrection is past already.” That is a concrete case of iniquity. It takes other forms now, but we are called upon to judge it in its varied features and withdraw from it as inconsistent with the name upon which we call—the Lord Jesus Christ.

**J.D—s.** What we have to do, therefore, is to separate from those who, like Hymenæus and Philetus, are in any way practising or identified with evil.

**J.T.** Yes, so the apostle goes on to say, using the figure of the vessels: “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use.” Evidently the separation is from persons.

**J.D—s.** Just so. Would you give us the force of the expression we have in the New Translation, “names”—“Let every one who *names* the name of the Lord”?

**J.T.** I think the Lord’s name implies His renown—all that came out in Him. That is what you are committed to in your profession.

**J.D—s.** That is, to use “profession” in the proper sense of the term; if you profess the name of the Lord and all it involves, in that way name the name of the Lord, it is for you to separate from evil as seen in men such as those we have here before us.

**G.W.W.** It is important to bear that in mind. You separate from persons only by reason of their identification with what is evil. That has to be borne in mind to convey the right thought to people from whom we do separate. There are some who are not

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personally evil, but because they are identified with evil principles we are compelled to separate from them. That puts us on right ground. People may say they are Christians as much as you are, they are children of God, but because they are going on with principles contrary to the name of the Lord we have to separate from them.

**J.D—s.** It says, “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” That is our refuge.

**J.T.** We leave them with the Lord. We cannot say whether they are genuine or not, but *He* knows.

**W.L.P.** Do we not think a little too much sometimes of the company separating from evil, instead of us as individuals separating from evil?

**J.T.** It is individual here.

**W.L.P.** But do we not often use the thought of withdrawing from evil in a collective sense?

**J.T.** Basing our position on this scripture, the *principle* now is withdrawal.

**A.A.T.** It is not “putting away” exactly.

**J.T.** In Corinth the assembly prerogative is formally recognised, and there was power in the meeting to deal with the person who was guilty. Instead of withdrawing from him they put him away.

**B.T.F.** Do you withdraw from vessels to honour, or is it only from vessels to dishonour that you withdraw; 2 Tim. 2:21?

**J.T.** “These” are the last mentioned. “If, therefore, one shall have purified himself from these in separating himself from them,” etc. “These” would be vessels to dishonour.

**B.T.F.** There might be vessels to honour in systems that you might have to withdraw from.

**J.T.** All are to prove their genealogy, you see. *You* do not know. The fact that they *say* they are true does not prove it. The test is that they separate themselves as naming the name of the Lord. As a matter of fact it is consistency with the truth of

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Christianity that is the test. What I think should be pressed as much as anything is consistency, and following upon that transparency. In Revelation the real ones are seen

on a sea of glass. Things are all transparent. We know, however, thank God! that there are many pious ones in the several denominations, but we cannot walk with them because of their associates.

**J.S.** If the church was in power there would be no need for withdrawal. There would be power to deal with evil by putting away those who practise it. Now it is a question of withdrawing from it.

**J.T.** That is the *principle* now. Whatever words we may use we make it clear that while we do not pretend to be the assembly of God, we must maintain the order and holiness which marks it.

**J.D—s.** This instruction is for the servant, is it not?

**J.T.** The epistle affords instruction for *all* for the last days, but especially for the servant or man of God. In verse 19 we have “every one.”

**G.A.T.** Another scripture says, “They went out from us because they were not of us.” Is that another side?

**J.T.** They went out from the apostles.

**G.A.T.** My thought was that if a company were in a good spiritual state the wicked man would go out himself. Would you agree to that?

**J.T.** We have to deal with evil, however, when it manifests itself. It will not do to leave it to remove itself.

**G.A.T.** Only in Corinthians do you hear of one being “put away.”

**J.T.** Yes, but you see evil may exist without any overt acts and you have to wait for an overt act in order to exercise discipline. Even in the case of Judas, there was no overt act until he went out to betray the Lord. He was allowed to go on. The

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antichrists John speaks of probably would not commit anything in an outward way that would be regarded as a sin. Being servants of Satan, they would avoid that.

**G.A.T.** I thought that if the Lord’s presence were known amongst a company, wherever you find it, you find evil going out. In the second chapter of John’s gospel the Lord drove it out, but I thought if the rights of God were maintained amongst us, and the Lord had His place amongst us, evil would go out of itself.

**J.T.** No doubt there is some truth in that, but we have to deal with it. We judge those within. There has to be that principle.

**B.T.F.** You would say there should be priestly discernment, but you cannot go beneath the surface.

**J.S.** It would not do to assume apostolic authority.

**J.T.** I think the principle of withdrawal is what holds. It may be asked as to those calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, “What will they do with evil?” I would say, if it is there we must deal with it, but the ground each individual takes in his own soul is that if it is not dealt with he cannot go on with it. That is the ground to take: *you cannot go on with evil.*

**W.H.F.** Would you think that for “putting away” you must have the assembly to do it? You have the authority in Scripture not to go on with evil—to separate from it? In the present time the assembly is in ruin, there is failure, etc., so if evil arises you have to separate from it.

**J.T.** The question is what is *within* and what is *without* (1 Cor. 5:12) now. It was very clear when Paul wrote to the Corinthians that “they that are without God judgeth.” That was simple enough because it referred to anybody outside the assembly at Corinth; but when you come to the “great house,”

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what is within and what is without? They are all inside of it, the good and bad vessels.

**W.H.F.** Then the point is, vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour, and, “if a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

**J.T.** That is still inside, all are inside.

**W.H.F.** But my point is that as believers we have been a great failure in assuming to be the assembly, and all that.

**J.T.** As far as I see, “inside” to-day as always, is the sphere of Christian profession, and “outside” is heathendom or Judaism. What do you say about that?

**J.D—s.** I have great difficulty. I quite realise that 2 Timothy 2 is what would stand. We used it years ago and would use it now—there is no change in that respect—but what I see is that there is serious danger of giving up and excluding from our thoughts principles that actuated the church of God in the beginning, given in apostolic times but given, in my view, for the guidance of the church of God in all times, and for me to do that would be peril.

**J.T.** The first thing is to determine what it is that is to govern me primarily in the ruined state of things. Now if you take Israel, the immediate word that governed them in their recovery was the decree of Cyrus, which had no place in the law of Moses. It had no place in David’s instructions nor in any that followed. Now that was an extraordinary



situation, but Cyrus' command was the immediate word that was to govern them. After they were governed by that they were gradually led, in principle at least, into all the light given to Moses and David; but then, they had to come in, so to speak, by that gate. It was a very humiliating gate. It meant their utter shame, that they had sinned, that God had to take up a

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Gentile monarch to tell them what to do. But afterwards they reached a height spiritually that exceeded even David's day or anything subsequent to that. In other words, if we come in by the appointed way, all that God has for us is before us. There is not a bit of it that is not open to us. I think 2 Timothy is the gate of entrance now to what is of God. But as children of wisdom we recognise the altered conditions and act accordingly.

**W.H.F.** I can understand that it is our privilege to walk individually in the light of that which was set up at the beginning, but I see the danger of assuming to be anything in the way of the assembly.

**J.T.** You do not assume to be anything in an outwardly formal or official way, although cherishing the light of the church in your heart, and conforming to it as far as conditions admit.

**J.D—s.** We often say that God permitted a number of things to be arranged in apostolic times that we might have guidance in these days, and, while I am quite sure that we are in 2 Timothy times, and I am quite clear that what you say is correct, that we must approach things in that way, still I would be sorry myself to see the principles that underlie the epistle to the Corinthians, for instance, given up or in any way belittled.

**J.T.** I am sure every one would say Amen to that, but the question is how you approach them. As I remarked, the Jews came back to Jerusalem by the decree of Cyrus, and it was also to build the house, but when they came back they set up an altar. That was what they did before they laid the foundation of the house. They reared up an altar. Cyrus did not tell them to do that. He simply, as it were, opened the gate for them, and it was a very humiliating one, but it led to the feast of tabernacles, which exceeded what was in David's time. So there is nothing to fear on these lines. You will get Corinthians, and Colossians,

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and Ephesians if you go in by the appointed way.

**J.D—s.** If that is clear I have nothing more to say; but I am not so sure that it is in some people's minds.

**J.T.** It is humbling to have to acknowledge that what was once owned of God is now a "great house" in which vessels to honour and dishonour are present. Good and bad are admittedly there, and whatever our exercise and zeal for God, we cannot get out of this great house. We are not called upon to leave it, but to separate from vessels to

dishonour. Each one has to do this, and then follow righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. This is the gate of recovery; going in by it, all that God has for us is available. All the light of the epistles—of all Scripture indeed—is for our furnishing. But as children of wisdom saints in such a position would use Scripture soberly, always having the sadly altered conditions in mind.

**G.W.W.** If evil arises in the midst of a company of saints who are walking together in the light of divine principles it can be no more tolerated than it was at the beginning—the evildoer *must* be dealt with. That is clear. Therefore that company, without assuming any corporate position at all, does act collectively in reference to that evildoer.

**J.T.** You and I act together if we can, but the principle that governs us both is that we *cannot go on with evil*. All should surely have this judgment—be of one mind about it—and so act together in dealing with it. But at the same time, we do not assume to be acting with the authority of the church, nor do we use any formula that would imply this.

**A.A.T.** You do not assume to put the evildoer away?

**J.T.** You cannot go on with the evil. There can be no question that evil has to be judged and refused

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as really as it was at the beginning. Here 1 Corinthians 5 helps, as showing how the apostle judged it as affecting the saints, and how he sought to get *them* to judge it and clear themselves of it. But what has ever to be before us is that no company of saints now can occupy the same position as the church at Corinth, and so we cannot act *formally* as they were commanded to. “Putting away” *then* was from the assembly—indeed from the sphere of Christian profession.

**A.R.S.** Do you mean that if there is evil in a meeting and the rest of the assembly do not see it, you would be responsible yourself to withdraw from it ?

**J.T.** That is the ground you take. Of course you would seek to exercise the others so that there might be united action, but at any rate, *you* cannot go on with the evil.

**A.N.W.** Would Thessalonians apply to this: “If anyone obey not our word by the letter, mark that man and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed of himself; and do not esteem him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” Would not that apply to-day?

**J.T.** I think it would. Such an one is not regarded as a “wicked person,” however.

**G.W.W.** Here it is a wicked person with whom we are going to walk no more. He has ceased to follow righteousness.

**J.T.** That is the judgment you have come to in your soul, and, as walking with you, I have come to it too, so we act together in judging the sin or the person who has sinned; but we do not assume to act as the church. But at the same time, as seeking to maintain the holiness of the house of God, the Lord supports us in a very real way. As there is power there would be moral authority present, and this would make itself felt. But there is no claim to church authority.

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**G.W.W.** I suppose what we do is we declare that that man is unfit for any Christian company.

**J.T.** You do so far as your act is concerned, but that would not alter the man's outward position ecclesiastically. He is in the great house and you cannot alter his position as there. You are altering your own position *as regards him*. Although there may not be much to object to as to the manner of dealing with sin arising among the saints, we do well to enquire—where is a person put away *from*, and, inferentially, where *to*?

**A.R.S.** To go back to what happened in the Bethesda trouble years ago, when the question of false doctrine came up, Mr. Darby, as I understand it, took a very decided stand with regard to a certain man and exercised the consciences of others about it, and the result was that they withdrew. Then that caused division amongst the saints, didn't it? His action did not put that man out of the great house, did it?

**J.T.** It did not alter his position at all in that sense. Mr. Darby separated, and so altered his position *as regards the others, and those with him*.

**J.S.** As regards vessels to dishonour?

**J.T.** That is, he kept himself clear. The "vessels" are all in the great house. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth and some to honour and some to dishonour." You cannot get out of the "great house" unless you become an apostate. But although there is no claim of assembly position or prerogative, if we act against evil to keep ourselves pure as in the light of the house of God—having part in it indeed—the Lord will be with us, and whatever judgment is arrived at will carry the consciences of all exercised persons. Indeed I believe the action will be ratified in heaven. The principle of binding and loosing will be there. This will be known to those who are with

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God. It will not be assumed in any formal way, however. In a word, things are on *moral* ground.

**A.N.W.** Your point is to make clear that the iniquitous system has become a great house.

**J.S.** You would be exercised in respect of others in the company so that all might be on this ground.

**J.T.** So gradually, as governed by the truth, you come to realise the power of God, and you are led into all the blessings of Christianity in this way; but it is a most humiliating state of things. We are beset all around by people who call upon the Lord as we do, but they are not consistent. The ground you take is that they are there and you cannot help it, but you cannot ignore the fact.

**W.L.P.** Had the great house been formed in the apostle's day?

**J.T.** I think he suggests that it already existed. In writing this letter he speaks of certain things that happened that had brought about the change: "Of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus." The sin evidently had not been dealt with.

**B.T.F.** Would naming the name of the Lord be simply profession?

**J.T.** That is what it is, but everyone that does it *proves his genuineness by separating from evil.*

**G.W.W.** We find we can follow righteousness, peace, etc., with certain ones, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. That would seem to be our charter for the moment, so to say. Very well, if one of those ceases to follow righteousness, etc., I want to know how far collective action comes in in respect of him. I am not saying anything about corporate action, but we find ourselves in the presence of very definite directions given in Corinthian days, showing the mind of the Lord about His people going on with an evildoer. Well, we say, it is not God's will that we should walk with an evildoer. I see it. I see that His people should not walk with

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an evildoer, but you see it too, and others see it. His evil doing is plain. Therefore we say, This man is unfit for Christian company. He is a wicked man. Isn't that so?

**J.T.** Yes, certainly, so long as you just leave it that way. The great thing is to bow to the actual situation, and act in keeping with it. As we draw nearer to the end the way becomes more perilous, and hence the need of adhering strictly to divine principles.

**G.W.W.** What we want to get at is that the point must be reached that the company is kept pure; that it is not God's mind that any company of His saints should be found walking with an evildoer.

**J.T.** That is the definite attitude you take up in spite of the ruined condition of things that exists.

**G.W.W.** That is, you do not assume to act as though the failure had not come in. We admit that. Although the failure is present it isn't the mind of the Lord that His people should be found walking with evildoers.

**J.T.** 1 Corinthians 5 affords light as to this. It is thus to be before us, although as children of wisdom we see that we cannot act on it *literally*.

**G.W.W.** You have the light of 1 Corinthians.

**J.T.** Only circumstances have changed. In 1 Corinthian days “without” was heathendom and “within” the Christian circle, where the Spirit was. To-day the outward continuation of that has become a huge distortion; it still bears the name of Christ, however, and you cannot get outside of it. You do not attempt to.

**G.W.W.** But the thing we discern from 1 Corinthians is that the Lord never expects His people to walk with an evildoer.

**J.T.** That is truth of the last importance.

**G.W.W.** We know He is going to support us if we refuse to walk with an evildoer. How we get it does not seem to me to be of much consequence.

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**J.T.** We are children of wisdom and much is left to us as to how it is done. Instead of saying that such a one was put away, it is better to keep to the principle of withdrawal, which is embodied in this letter.

**J.S.** That is what is laid down in this letter.

**J.T.** And you do not sacrifice the *light* of 1 Corinthians.

**G.W.W.** That is really our ground of withdrawal.

**J.T.** It is this one letter that makes so much of Scripture. “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” All Scripture is given of God (1 Corinthians, of course, is included) and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof (so 1 Corinthians is a wonderful scripture to-day) and for correction and instruction in righteousness; 2 Tim. 3:15, 16.

**G.A.T.** Do I understand from what you say that we cannot act as the Corinthians did?

**J.T.** While we cannot take the same position, the *principle* remains the same as theirs. We cannot go on with evil. It must be refused.

**B.T.F.** What would you say in that connection about the loaf representing the circle of fellowship?

**J.T.** We certainly include in our affections every saint. The apostle does here in principle—“The Lord knows those that are his.” We include all the saints in the breaking of bread in that way. The others are just as precious to Christ as we are. The sorrow is that they are not available to us. You go on with those that are available.

**B.T.F.** That is the thought, so the breaking of the loaf would bring a soul under a solemn sense of responsibility.

**Ques.** The question then comes up—if we declare a man unfit for any Christian company, and he refuses to be subject—suppose he says, “I will come here and

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break bread next Sunday morning no matter what you say”—what is to be done?

**J.T.** Leave him; even leave the room to him. You maintain the principle of separation.

**Ques.** Such a one would be eating and drinking judgment to himself, wouldn’t he?

**J.T.** Yes; but you can always withdraw. The proverbialist said, “It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman,” Prov. 21:19. If there is that sort of thing amongst the saints of God you would rather be alone than go on with it. The happy thing is you do not need to go on with it. It is sometimes assumed that you cannot help it, but you have always the resource of withdrawal.

**G.W.W.** And in regard to one guilty of sin, and who does not judge it, we do not deal with him simply as affecting a few in a given locality, but the whole Christian company. We take the ground that such a man is not fit for the fellowship of Christians.

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## THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST.

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IN June, 1929, an enquiry was commenced as to the truth concerning the sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, following on certain remarks at a reading at Barnet, alluding to 2 Corinthians 1:19, which were as follows:—

### EXTRACT FROM

#### “THE DIVINE STANDARD OF SERVICE”

#### *Conference at Barnet, 1929.* *Reading on 2 Corinthians 2.*

**Ques.** Referring to the Son of God, would it be the Son as begotten in time, or would it suggest resurrection? He was “marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead” (Rom. 1:4), or would it be His eternal sonship?

**J.T.** I do not know that there is such a term in Scripture as eternal sonship. “Son of God” is a question of a Person. The Son of God is announced in Scripture after the Lord Jesus was here. In Luke it says, “The holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God.” That is what Luke says, meaning that that should come out in Him in due course. Jesus asserts His relation as Son at the age of twelve in saying, “My Father’s business,” but the Father’s voice announcing it is at His baptism.

**Ques.** You believe He was the Son in eternity?

**J.T.** What the Scriptures say is, “In the beginning was the Word.” It does not say “the Son.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), that is to say, His eternal personal existence is stated. He was there personally in the beginning. To go so far as to give Him a personal name or designation then, is going beyond Scripture it seems to me, but that the

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*Person was there* is the great point. To give Him a name is another matter, but the Person was there. It is the foundation of Scripture that He was a divine Person and so was there in the beginning. Now Luke says that He “shall be called Son of God,” and He says Himself at the age of twelve years, “Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father’s business?” There is a plain intimation of His relation with God. There is the assertion of His relation with His Father as Son at the age of twelve years, and then God Himself calls Him Son as He was thirty years old: “Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight.” That is what He was here. Luke presents Him in that way; and John speaks of His sonship only *after* He is said to have become flesh.

**E.J.M.** “God... at the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son,” Heb. 1:1.

**J.T.** Quite. It was a divine Person, and that Person was the Son, but in a mediatorial position; it is in that way He speaks. The speaking was by Him, as in manhood. I am sure we should be most careful as to applying to Christ as “in the form of God” designations given to Him as in man’s form.

**G.J.E.** When the Son of God is mentioned in Scripture is it not always in manhood?

**J.T.** I know of no other way in which He is so spoken of in Scripture than in manhood, but that in no way detracts from the fact that He was a divine Person and was there in the beginning. I believe many assume that the *revelation* of God and the *form* of God are equivalent, but this is to ignore that it is expressly stated that no one has seen God at any time, that He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen, nor is able to see. This was written *after* God is said to have been declared by the only-begotten Son.

**Ques.** Does the title “Son of God” stand in

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regard to God’s faithfulness to His Old Testament promises?

**J.T.** It does. It has to be borne in mind that the divine personality of our Lord is properly based on the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He is a divine Person and that underlies the fact that He is capable of representing God. As Man the designation “Son” undoubtedly regards Him in this light, but to make it apply to Him as “in the form of God” is another thing entirely.

**Rem.** I thought that in incarnation He took up in new conditions a relationship that had ever existed in eternity and that as the Son of God it was the relationship in a new condition.

**J.T.** I think you are asserting too much in saying the relationship “had ever existed.” It does speak of the glory He had with the Father, but to give the thing a name is, I believe, going beyond Scripture. That the *Person* was there and that He *was God* is the point. I believe many have in their minds a fixed conception of the *form* of God. That is, they think they can bring the infinite and unknowable within their finite comprehension. But we have the declaration of God, of His nature and attributes, and that is in “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”; God is now working in that connection in His own Son. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus preached Him among the Corinthians. While God is thus brought within our range in a Man, owned as Son of God—the title shewing *who* He is—there is infinity in the Person—what is beyond us. “No one knows the Son but the Father.”

**M.W.B.** Is your point that it had to wait for revelation before the title “Son” could be disclosed?

**J.T.** That is how Scripture presents it to us. He is called Son in manhood. So Paul was not moving in Corinth on the low level of man's mind, but on

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the high level of what God was doing. God is operating in His Son, His own Son, and that is what was preached...

**Rem.** I was wondering if Scripture would bear out that He is the Son in Deity, and the same Person Son of God in time and humanity.

**J.T.** But you will run across difficulties if you begin to analyse things like that, because the Son, without any modification, is said *not* to know certain things; Mark 13:32. You have to bear in mind that Scripture is dealing with a mediatorial system of things. Christ has come within the range of men to speak to men, but to attempt to give Him a name before He became Man is going beyond Scripture, it seems to me. Taking up a mediatorial position as Son we can understand the references to subjection, obedience, etc.

**W.R.P.** You would not carry the title "Word" into what He was in Deity.

**J.T.** No. He had acquired that name among the saints. So in Hebrews 1 you get a variety of the glories of Christ mentioned, but they are all taken from the statements of saints, that is, they are all taken from the Psalms, as if God loves to bring in the saints to establish the great truth of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But like "Son," "the Word" implies His deity, for only a divine Person could reveal—it is a question of speaking the *mind* of God.

ALTHOUGH it is perfectly clear from Scripture and is uncompromisingly held by all who love Him, that the Lord is, and has been eternally, God, see for instance John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Revelation 22:13 (compare Isaiah 48:12, 13 as to "the first and the last"), yet the expression "the eternal Son" does not appear in Scripture, and in the course of the

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enquiry into the truth which the above-quoted remarks at Barnet provoked, it became clear that it is only as having become incarnate that the Lord is spoken of as Son, and that for us to assume to carry back into time prior to the incarnation, or into the conditions of absolute Deity, titles and relationships that have only come into view consequent on the incarnation, is to go beyond what Scripture warrants, and results in our unconsciously attributing to the Lord, in His personal glory as in the Deity, a place that is subordinate or secondary, He being thus robbed in our minds of His full glory personally as equal in the Godhead with the Father and the Spirit. If the truth as to the Person of Christ is fully held in our hearts, the glory of the incarnation, and of the relative positions taken up by the Persons of the Godhead, in order that God might be known in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, becomes greater to us, and promotes an increased spirit of worship.

The following letters by Mr. C. A. Coates will be of interest as setting out the truth.

*March 5th, 1931.*

BELOVED BROTHER,—In reply to your letter I may say, in the first place, that the question raised in regard to the expression “the eternal Son,” as applied to our Lord, is not at all a question as to His deity, or His eternal personality. The dear brethren are all, thank God, perfectly clear as to these great and vital matters of revelation and of faith. The Son was eternally God (John 1:1), and subsisted in the form of God (Phil. 2:6); before Abraham was He was “I am” (John 8:58). Whatever inscrutable blessedness and glory and power belongs to the Godhead belongs in the fullest and most absolute way to Christ; He is “over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom. 9:5).

But the question is raised as to whether Scripture

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ever uses the expression “the eternal Son” in speaking of Christ, or whether He is ever called the Son when spoken of as subsisting in the form of God? If Scripture does so speak the question would be settled at once for all who own its authority. But if we find the Son, or the Son of God, spoken of in many scriptures as sent, or given, or as coming down from heaven to do the will of the One who sent Him, or as sanctified by the Father and sent into the world, or as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father declaring God, we see that in many scriptures, at any rate, the designation applies to Him viewed as in a mediatorial position. Now is there any scripture which speaks of Him as the Son when there is clearly no reference to what is mediatorial but to His eternal place in Deity?

We know that He existed eternally in the form of God, in a character of being which we, as creatures, have no power to apprehend. It is infinitely beyond us in ineffable majesty and greatness, “whom no man has seen, nor is able to see” (1 Tim. 6:16). We cannot connect the thought of “begotten,” nor any idea of derivation, or relative inferiority, or posteriority, with One who is in the inscrutable glory of Godhead. He was *God*, in all the incomprehensible and unsearchable greatness which that holy name conveys.

I desire to write with much self-distrust, and with great reverence, knowing that these subjects are thrice-holy. And I hold myself ready to be corrected in every way by Scripture.

We know the Godhead as revealed, and only so, and in the economy of revelation divine Persons have been pleased to be known in the terms of a relationship known to us as men—a relationship created, I have no doubt, in view of God’s purpose so to reveal Himself. In the economy of revelation there is a certain subordination of both the Son and the Spirit;

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both are regarded as sent and given, and as taking up services committed to Them. Son

is a relative term, and it implies a certain positional difference which Scripture never loses sight of. Now, so far as I have been able to trace, Scripture does not carry back this relative and positional difference into the essence of Deity, or what is spoken of as “the form of God.” We are brought by Scripture into presence of the profound and majestic fact that “the Word was God.” As such He is incomprehensible by creatures. We have to recognise that there are depths which are beyond us, and to be thankful that we can know divine Persons as and when revealed. The Persons are eternal, but the names by which we know Them belong to the economy of revelation.

Divine Persons were known to Themselves alone in the past eternity, known in mutual affections, for God is love, but known in a way that Persons in deity alone could know each other. According to divine good pleasure One of those Persons—now known to us through revelation as the Word and the Son—created the universe. It was in the form of God that He did so, for “in the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth.” Scripture does not say that He created *as Son*, but John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1 make known to us that the One whom we know as the Word, and as the Son of the Father’s love, the One in whom God has spoken Son-wise, was the Creator-God of Genesis 1; Psalm 102:25, and many other scriptures. Creation was an act incomprehensible to creature minds, but it is a matter of revelation, and is understood by faith.

All that Christ was in His eternal personality gave unique character to that blest name of Son by which we know Him, and hence we can well understand that “no one knows the Son but the Father,” Matt. 11:27. A relationship is now revealed between divine Persons which is apprehensible by us. That

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precious name of Son gives character to the revelation of God, for He is made known as Father. But it also intimates the relationship into which God purposed to bring men, through infinite grace. “God sent forth his Son... that we might receive sonship,” Gal. 4:6. He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, Rom. 8:29. The Son of God will be eternally the Firstborn among many brethren. So that His name or title as Son would appear to be connected with eternal purpose rather than with His place in essential Deity. Certainly none but One who was God in the most absolute sense could have taken that name so as to bring to men the revelation of God in love, that, in result, holy myriads might be secured to be in the place and relationship of sons eternally. As Son, too, He will be in the subject place eternally, 1 Cor. 15:28; one could not speak of God, *as such*, being “placed in subjection”; it brings out in a striking way. the relative place taken by the Son mediatorially.

There is a sweet mutuality in the affections of a father and a son, but those affections are not exactly co-equal. It is evident that the terms used of the Father and the Son cannot be transposed. One is the Sanctifier, the Sender, the Giver; the Other is the Sanctified, the Sent, and the Given; He comes, at the Father’s behest, and in His own devotion, to do the will of the One who sent Him. All this has to do with the form which divine revelation has taken; it has to do with what is mediatorial.

In absolute Godhead there could not be any precedence or any relative inferiority. The glory of divine Persons, as such, was equal, their majesty co-eternal. We do not safeguard the personal greatness and glory of Christ by connecting with Him as in eternal deity thoughts which in Scripture are connected with Him viewed mediatorially. Our attention is now being called to the difference between what is mediatorial

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and what is connected with the eternal personality of Christ as in Deity. It is, I believe, of the Spirit to establish our faith in His eternal greatness and majesty as God. It is the divine answer to all the diverse and multiplied efforts of the enemy at the present day to obscure His ineffable and divine greatness as in absolute Godhead.

When we see that He is the Son and the Word as having taken a mediatorial place it magnifies before our hearts the perfection and grace of the revelation which has come to us. We are bowed in adoration as we contemplate His glory. We get a deepened sense of the condescending gentleness in which grace and truth have come to us. In the light of what He was eternally all that He is as the Son and the Word becomes more glorious than ever in our eyes. God grant that it may be so!

All that can be made known of God to creatures such as we—and all that creatures redeemed, renewed, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can know—*is revealed* to be our present and everlasting glory and joy. We need not desire to go into matters which are not revealed.

No doubt the expression “the eternal Son” has often been used with a godly intention to denote His eternal Personality, and one would be very jealous that a sense of this should not be weakened. But we gain greatly by recognising how things are presented in Scripture, and particularly those great and infinitely precious things which relate to the holy Person of our Lord and Saviour.

He had glory with the Father before the world was; He was loved by the Father before the world’s foundation. But He spoke of this to the Father in connection with the unfolding of those purposes of divine love which He had come into manhood to effectuate... His was the unique glory of giving effect to all that had been purposed from eternity for love’s full satisfaction

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and rest. His eternal Personality was essential to this, but it was a glory that stood in relation to the purpose of divine love concerning men. He would give effect through His incarnation, death and resurrection, and as a result of His being glorified as Man along with the Father, to all that was in God’s eternal purpose. We know Him as the Son come forth from with the Father, and now glorified as Man with the Father, but the glory given to Him thus can be beheld by His own. It is not of a character which is in unapproachable light, or which no man has seen, nor is able to see.

All that is pleaded for is that we should keep within the limits of Scripture, and that we should regard divine names and titles as they are presented to us, and that we should



remember that the greatness of God is unsearchable. One would not care to assert anything of divine Persons that Scripture did not support.

With much love in the Lord Jesus,  
Yours affectionately in Him,

C.A.C.

*November 25th, 1933.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have looked over the paper in connection with the truth of our Lord's Sonship which you left with me on Thursday. The different scriptures referred to have all been fully examined during the course of the enquiry into this great subject, and the matter published upon it should be carefully read by any one who wants help. I cannot take up every statement in the paper (this would mean writing a pamphlet) but I send a few remarks.

As to "Thou art my Son; I this day have begotten thee," Psalm 2:7, I quite agree that it must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament quotations. These, however, concur in referring it to

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Christ as incarnate. In Acts 13:33 the promise is fulfilled in the raising up of Jesus, "as it is written," etc. This is the raising up of Jesus as God's Son begotten in time; it does not refer to His resurrection. His resurrection is spoken of in verse 34 but not in verse 33. In Hebrews 1:4 He inherits a name, and verse 5 shows that it is the name of Son. He could not be said to "inherit" a name which belonged to His essential Being as in Deity. Hebrews 5:5 is the priesthood of Christ, which is clearly taken up in manhood. So that when we examine the context of the quotations we find that they definitely establish the truth that the Son begotten refers to Him as incarnate.

Colossians, Hebrews, and John's gospel do say plainly that the Son was the Creator. But it is clear that they were all written after the Son had been here as Man, and had become the Object of faith to many thousands. Such were now divinely taught by these inspired writings that the Son in whom God had spoken to men, and on whom they had believed, was no less than the divine Person who created all things. It is a Person now known and believed on as the Son of the Father's love who was the Creator, the One in whom we now have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, this necessitating His humanity and death. He did not have the kingdom, nor had the saints redemption in Him, nor was He the image of the invisible God, until He became Man. But as knowing all that He is and has brought to pass by coming into manhood, we are also permitted to know that long before He became Man, or the saints had redemption in Him, creation was brought about in His power. It is clearly looking back from how He is known now, subsequent to incarnation, to state what was accomplished in His power and through Him long before He became Man. Not at all saying that the title by which we know Him now applied to Him then. It is

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evident that the kingdom, redemption, headship of the body, firstborn from among the dead, cannot be carried back into eternity. But He in whom these things are now substantiated was from eternity and was the Creator. It is the Spirit looking back from the standpoint of how we know Him now to what was true of Him as creating long before. All this enhances His glory, and in no way derogates from it.

“Life in Him eternal and uncreated... brought to light when the Lord Jesus came here... Old Testament saints... all... had life... the thing was in eternity in the Person of the Son.” I cannot follow what is in the writer’s mind in making these statements, but so far as I understand them he does not seem to distinguish between what belongs to Deity and is incommunicable, and that which is in divine purpose for man.

As to Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:9, 14, it will be obvious, upon careful consideration, that the whole mission of the Son of God is in each case in view. It is in each case the object in view in sending that is stressed—that He might redeem, that we might receive sonship, that we might live through Him. “His Son” in Galatians is the One announced as glad tidings; that is, the thoughts of God as to men are set forth in Him. “The fulness of the time” evidently refers to the making known those thoughts, in contrast to the “child” state in which the people of God were as under law. But then this necessitated the Son of God being here as “come of woman, come under law”; it is One in the place of man who was sent forth to redeem, and whose Spirit has now been sent out into our hearts. It is clearly not eternal Deity that is dwelt upon, but One, who was indeed eternally divine, now viewed as in the relationship of Son in view of our receiving sonship. No scripture brings out more plainly than this one does that the title Son of God is relative to divine thoughts as to

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men, and that those thoughts are secured through a divine Person coming into that relationship in manhood.

1 John 4:9 is similar. It is the *manifestation* of the love of God *as regards us*. It refers to what has actually come under the eyes of men in the Son of God as manifested here. We do not live through Him as in pre-incarnate Deity, but through Him as the only-begotten Son of God. John’s gospel is written that we might “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name.” He was sent in love by God to that very end. Nothing could be more simple or precious.

1 John 4:14 confirms this. “And *we* have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world.” The apostles could testify this as having actually seen the Son here as sent by the Father. They did not *see* something that happened before He was here, but they saw Him here as Saviour of the world, and knew that the Father had sent Him to that end.

It is a mistake to say that Nebuchadnezzar recognised Him as Son of God. He said, “the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.” He simply meant he was like a supernatural Being. What could a heathen king know of the Son of God?

With much love in the Lord to yourself and your dear wife,  
Yours affectionately in Him,

C.A.C.

The following ministry that has appeared can also be referred to: "Names of Divine Persons," by Mr. J. Taylor, included in the book entitled "Divine Names"; "The Personal and Mediatorial Glory of the Son of God," by Mr. C. A. Coates.

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Both these books can be obtained from the publishers of this book.

It may be remarked that the truth which the Holy Spirit has now brought out in clearness had been in the minds of many, at any rate as a subject of enquiry, for a long time prior to 1929, and in this connection it is of interest to note that as long ago as 1898 Mr. F. E. Raven wrote the following letter:—

*November 23rd, 1898.*

As to what you refer to my point was that it was permitted to us to know divine Persons AS and WHEN revealed and only so. In view of that revelation the Son has taken a new place relatively, that is, of inferiority to the Father, coming to do the will of God, though of course there would be no change morally or in affection. The names under which we know divine Persons, that is, Father, Son and Holy Ghost are, I judge, connected with this position, and I doubt if we are allowed to enter into the eternal relation of divine Persons apart from this revelation. No one knows the Son but the Father. What I think led me to it was a fear lest in our minds we should almost insensibly give to the Son a place of inferiority (save as regards revelation) in our thoughts of the Godhead, which could not be right. The point is to be within the limits of Scripture and not trading on what is merely orthodox.

F.E.R.

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## EVENTS RELATING TO CHINA.

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FOR some time prior to May, 1932, information had been circulated widely in England, America, Australia and elsewhere as to the existence in China of a work of God among the Chinese, which had taken form in a fellowship which appeared to be based on the truth, and it was accordingly resolved at that time that a number of brethren should visit China with a view to ascertaining the facts. As a result six brothers, two from England, three from Australia, and one from America, and two sisters, wives of two of the brothers, visited China during October, November and December, 1932.

They found that a number of meetings of believers were in existence in the country moving in fellowship with each other, but in separation from denominational systems, and apparently governed by the truth and supported by the Spirit. In this work of God, Mr. W. Nee, who had been marked by considerable ability and devotedness, had been much used in blessing in the gospel and in ministering to the saints. He had been helped by some ministry by Mr. J. N. Darby which had come into his hands, and it was his writing to London to enquire whether further ministry of the same kind was available that had first drawn the attention of saints in the western world to the existence of this work of God in China.

The visiting brethren, feeling assured that there was no reason why we should not be identified in fellowship with the brethren they had met in China, broke bread with them on November 6th, 1932, after having first communicated by cable with brethren at Vancouver and Brisbane, two neighbouring meetings, and been assured of their fellowship with them in so doing.

In the year 1933 Mr. Nee visited England and

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America and attended many of the meetings as one fully accredited as in fellowship. At some of these meetings he ministered the word. After he had left England for America, it came to light that, unknown to brethren at the time, he had on one occasion broken bread with an independent company of Christians in London known as The Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre, which, though not identified with "Open" brethren, was governed by their principles in that anyone claiming to be a believer was allowed to break bread without regard to the religious and other associations in which he was involved. During his visit to America Mr. Nee similarly compromised the fellowship by breaking bread with some who were identified with certain sectarian bodies. As a consequence letters passed between the brethren in New York and those in Shanghai, on the one hand, and between the brethren in London and those in Shanghai, on the other, seeking to enlighten the Shanghai brethren as to the principles of Christian fellowship and to help them to judge the actions of Mr. Nee above referred to. Occasion was also taken to call attention to the fact that Mr. Nee held unsound views as to the rapture of the saints, and also regarded the symbolical teaching of the book of Revelation as literal. The serious character of certain teaching which emanated from the Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre was also pointed out. The correspondence continued over a

protracted period, considerable time elapsing between the date of each letter to China and its reply. The final letter from the brethren in Shanghai addressed to the brethren in London was dated July 2nd, 1935; in it certain principles were laid down, among which were the following:—

“We are to receive all the children of God whom He has received for Christ’s sake.”

“It is the Spirit, and the Spirit alone, who can

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decide the question of one’s fitness for fellowship. We are not sufficient for these things.”

“We must distinguish between ‘sins’ (either morally or doctrinally) that hinder fellowship with God, and ‘sins’ which do not.”

On receipt of this letter a meeting of assembly character was held in London on July 30th, 1935, at which it was decided that we could not remain identified with those who held such principles, and this decision was communicated to the brethren in China by the following letter dated August 31st, 1935.

*August 31st, 1935.*

To the Saints meeting in Hardoon Road, Shanghai.

DEAR BRETHREN,—Your letter dated July 2nd has been received by us with sorrow. It was carefully considered by brothers, and in view of its serious nature, saints in all the gatherings in London were specially called together as in assembly on July 30th. The letter was then read to all as thus together before the Lord. Three of the brothers who met you in Shanghai in 1932 were present.

It was at once noticed, and we call your attention to the fact, that your letter completely ignores the specific instructions as to Christian fellowship in 1 Corinthians 10, and the guidance as to it for the present day, in 2 Timothy 2, to which our letters referred. It also dismisses as of minor importance the serious errors in teaching propagated amongst you, and to which your attention has been drawn.

Your letter is, in fact, marked throughout by a failure to cut in a straight line the word of truth (2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15), and by a grave disregard of the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ

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and of the necessity, as a principle of first importance, of obedience to His commandments. You say :—

“Without the quickening of the truth in us by the Spirit, we will not act,”

and

“It is the Spirit, and the Spirit alone, who can decide the question of one’s fitness for fellowship.”

A commandment of the Lord calls for *action* in obedience to it. (1 Cor. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:19-22), and as it is obeyed the Spirit will support in power. Indeed, Paul challenges all who profess allegiance to the Lord by saying: “If any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord’s commandment,” 1 Cor. 14:37.

This disregard of the clear commandments of the Lord opens the door to every kind of evil, and calls in question the sincerity of your love for Christ, for the keeping of His commandments is both the test and the proof of loving Him, and alone provides the conditions in which the greatest spiritual privileges can be enjoyed, as the Lord Himself said:—

“If ye love me keep my commandments,” John 14:15,

and

“He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. Judas, not the Iscariot, says to him, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him. He that loves me not does not keep my words; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but that of the Father who has sent me,” John 14:21-24.

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To suggest, as your letter does, that there are sins which do not hinder, as you put it, “fellowship with God,” is an affront to His holiness. Not only are the expressions you use in this connection quite unscriptural, but they disclose grave ignorance of the truth as to the presence and service of the Holy Spirit. It is contrary to the truth to attach to the Spirit personally, as you do, the responsibility as to fellowship which the Lord has so directly placed upon the saints (see 1 Corinthians 10, and 2 Timothy 2, etc.). The practical effect of so doing is to open the door to every possible kind of independency.

We recoil from your closing suggestion that we should now set aside assembly principles and order, so clearly defined in Scripture, and thus surrender the holy heritage which has been recovered in divine mercy in these last days for the whole assembly. The long succession of attacks upon it during the past eighty-five years (Bethesda and since) have only tended to make more clear the truth as to fellowship. It is to the preservation, in the Lord’s mercy, of these very principles of fellowship which you would have us surrender, that we owe, in these last days, the rich stream of spiritual ministry from Christ as the Head of the assembly of which some of you have cognizance.



You have alluded in your letter to being guided by the Holy Spirit, but He is the Spirit of truth, and those who are guided by Him are marked by ways of truth. In this connection we feel sorrowfully obliged to refer to a lack of uprightness which has marked Mr. Nee, particularly in some of his movements, while amongst us. We must also add that such principles, as are now set out in your letter, were certainly not disclosed to our brethren who visited you in 1932. Had this been done fellowship with you would have been impossible. Your letter clearly

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indicates that you prefer to substitute for the plain teaching of Scripture, your own professed experimental knowledge, a feature which also largely characterises the teaching of the “Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre” to which previous reference has been made. We have humbly to confess that we grievously failed in our lack of holy care in laying hands too quickly on those with whom we were insufficiently acquainted, and whose principles as to fellowship we now find are so unscriptural, and therefore not of the Lord.

It is with sorrow that we are obliged thus to write to you, but our desire to be faithful to the Lord leaves us with no alternative. The truth, which the Lord has recovered and is preserving for His assembly, requires that our position should be set forth clearly. At the meeting referred to at the beginning of this letter, it was judged before the Lord that we must entirely repudiate, as not being of God, the principles you set out as governing fellowship, and that since you identify yourselves with these principles, we are unable to walk with you, or to receive from or commend to you. This, of course, applies also to all those maintaining links of fellowship with you.

You are, we believe, missing an opportunity afforded by the Lord, in failing to benefit by the truth set before you regarding the assembly. You also place yourselves in a position of grave responsibility before Him in rejecting as of little importance the precious truths for which many brethren in years past have stood and suffered. These truths we have proved and do still prove to be of God, and we humbly seek grace to continue in them until the Lord comes for the *whole* assembly.

We shall continue to pray that at least some in China may yet be found true overcomers as keeping the commandments and word of the Lord in a day

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marked by general independence and lukewarmness.

On behalf of the saints with whom we walk in London,

Yours faithfully in the Lord,

PERCY LYON.

CHAS. R. BARLOW.

ALFRED J. GARDINER.

The exercise resulting from the sorrowful events recorded in this section brought into fresh relief the subtlety and pressing danger of the “open” principle, which Satan is ever seeking to introduce as his most successful means of attack on the recovered truth of the assembly.

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**THE PUBLIC TESTIMONY TO CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD.  
MILITARY SERVICE, 1914-1918 AND 1939-1945.  
TRADE UNIONISM.**

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THE introduction during the two world wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 of compulsory military service in the British Empire and America, where previously such service had been voluntary, and the rapid development, especially since the end of the second of those wars, of trade unionism, have brought to the fore the question of the paramount rights of God over the believer, and the consequent necessity that the believer should maintain a good conscience before Him in all that he does.

In Great Britain and most parts of the British Empire, and also in America, provision was made by law enabling an application for exemption from military service, or from combatant military service, to be made by anyone otherwise liable to such service who objected to it on conscientious grounds, and, as a result, a way was made in the mercy of God for every instructed believer, rightly feeling that he could not with a good conscience take life, to preserve his conscience and at the same time accord to the authorities whom God has placed over him the subjection that the will of God requires. The exercise resulting from this was twofold. In the first place it helped to make clear the distinction between “the world” as a system lying in the wicked one from which the believer is to keep himself unspotted, and the authorities, ordained of God, and ministers of God to us for good, to which the believer is to render subjection “for conscience sake” (Romans 13:5). In the second place, the application for exemption imposed on each applicant the necessity to determine at what point his general responsibility to obey the requirements

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of the law as to military service was modified by his responsibility, as a matter of conscience before God, to do nothing inconsistent with the testimony to God as a Saviour God made known in the one Mediator, Who gave Himself a ransom for all. Each application had therefore to be a matter of genuine conscience, and not something to be taken up in the hope of avoiding what was uncongenial. The testimony rendered before the tribunals by those who appealed as exercised believers served to bring to the notice of the authorities, time after time, that there were those whose first concern was to please God in all things, and to maintain what was due to Him, and in their confession the name of the Lord Jesus was publicly honoured, while the fact that many who were not true believers at all claimed exemption on various “conscientious” grounds, but frequently, either by their conduct or by the absence of sound principle in their claims, failed to commend themselves, only served, by contrast, to bear further testimony to the truth.

Of recent years trade unionism has greatly increased in power, and, in its declared policy of endeavouring to embrace every worker, has adopted arbitrary and murderous methods of enforcing its will. Many unions have, under threat of strikes, forced employers to dismiss from their employment any worker who is not a member of the

union, and they have no compunction, whatever be the reason for non-membership, about robbing a non-member of his means of livelihood. It is clear from Scripture that a believer, on account of conscience before God, cannot be a member of a trade union. "Be not diversely yoked with unbelievers; for what participation is there between righteousness and lawlessness?... Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and *touch not* what is unclean, and I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and

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ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent not. If they say, Come with us,... cast in thy lot among us; we will all have one purse: my son, walk not in the way with them, keep back thy foot from their path; for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood," Proverbs 1:10-16.

Against this aggressive spirit of unionism, which seeks by intimidation to force a believer into unholy associations, and as a result to deprive him of his liberty Godward and thus to rob God of His portion in His saints, the Lord has raised up a standard in many individual believers who have refused to belong to unions, preferring to suffer rather than to surrender what is due to God, and their action has forced on the attention of Governments, municipal authorities, employers of labour, trade union officials, and the public generally the fact that God has paramount rights, and supports those who stand for them. The path for those who desire to be faithful is one of faith, and often entails suffering and loss circumstantially, but it is one in which the truth of what God said to Abraham is verified, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward."

This forcing on the attention of authorities and of men generally of the question of the rights of God, which has resulted from military service and trade unionism and is still taking place, seems to be consistent with the good confession witnessed by Christ Jesus before Pontius Pilate (1 Timothy 6:13); namely, "I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might *bear witness to the truth*. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice," John 18 37.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY REMARKS

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In the foregoing recital attention has been concentrated on some of the more outstanding conflicts which the progress of the recovery of the truth has had to encounter, but conflict in one form or another has continued all down the line. In writing to Timothy, Paul enjoined that the truth was to be handed on by Timothy to faithful men, who would be competent to instruct others also, and then immediately added "Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:2 and 3), evidently implying that the maintenance of the truth required the taking up of a suffering and militant attitude on the part of the faithful. Frequently the conflicts have been confined to particular localities or areas, but in such cases it will be usually found that the principles involved were those which were at issue in the Bethesda matter or the Glanton and Alnwick matter already dealt with in these pages.

There are, however, certain matters in which important elements of sound teaching were involved to which allusion should be made.

### *Salvation in the assembly.*

In 1905 the importance of the assembly as a sphere of practical salvation from the world was emphasised in ministry by Mr. James Taylor, and was, for a time, seriously opposed by certain well-known brethren in England. It is so obvious from the early chapters of the Acts that in the early days of Christianity believers found in the assembly, into which they were introduced by faith in Christ and the reception of the Spirit, a sphere in which, in the practical enjoyment of eternal life, complete deliverance from the elements of the world was realised (see Acts 2:42-47; chap. 4:23-35), that it is difficult now to understand

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how it could have been seriously contested, but the opposition that arose at that time was an effort of the enemy to use objective truth to deny or obscure the importance and value of the presence in the assembly of the Holy Spirit and His resulting work in the saints. In this effort the enemy found material at hand in the failure, for a time, on the part of certain leaders to recognise and acknowledge the Lord's sovereignty in using whom He would to bring out His mind for the assembly, but through the grace of the Lord the truth gradually prevailed, though many who refused a subjective line of ministry, including one of the leaders in the opposition, were carried away at the time of the Glanton issue. The truth brought out at this time is not only clearly set out in the Acts, but is equally clearly presented in Hebrews 11:7, and in the typical teaching in Genesis to which that verse alludes.

### *Christ in the midst.*

In 1909 it was put out in ministry which appeared in print that the Lord had taken up an abiding position "in the midst" of the assembly (John 20:19; Hebrews 2:12), and that

this formed the central truth of Christianity. It was said that on the day the Lord rose from the dead He fulfilled His promise in John 14:18, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you,” and that He did not relinquish the position He then took up in the midst. It is clear from John 20 itself that this is not the truth, for after saying in verse 19 that Jesus came and stood in the midst, the scripture tells us in verse 26 that eight days after His disciples were again within, and Thomas with them, and that “Jesus comes, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst.” Moreover, in chapter 21 we read that “after these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples” (verse 1), and from Acts 1:21, 22, we learn that during the forty days after the Lord rose, as well as during His public

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ministry before His death, He “came in and went out” among the disciples.

The suggestion that the Lord has an abiding position in the midst of the assembly tended to obscure the special privilege and blessedness of His *coming* to His own from time to time, according to John 14:23, leading to the highest form of assembly service Godward, and to weaken the sense that this privilege is dependent on suitable conditions, as is clearly indicated in John 14:15, 21, 23. It also indirectly tended to obscure the special grace and favour of the abiding presence with us, in the *absence* of Christ, of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, in connection with Whose presence the Lord is pleased to come, from time to time, and manifest Himself to His own.

The wrong teaching as to Christ’s abiding presence in the midst was challenged by Mr. J. Taylor, and as a result of correspondence and exercise that ensued, the article in which the teaching appeared was withdrawn in 1914.

The suggestion of Christ’s abiding presence in the midst of the assembly having been shewn to be inconsistent with Scripture does not, of course, set aside the fact that, for support in administration and testimony, He is with us “all the days, until the completion of the age,” Matthew 28:20.

### *Fulfilled responsibility.*

A few years later, considerable discussion arose on the question of fulfilled responsibility, there being an effort with some to press the fact that no one has, in fact, fulfilled responsibility absolutely (“we all often offend,” James 3:2), to such an extent as practically to destroy the force of Romans 8:4, “in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit.” It is clear that, as J.B.S. often remarked, in Christianity man’s capability (as

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having the Spirit) is equal to his responsibility. According to divine purpose man is set up in perfection in Christ outside responsibility altogether, but it is important also to recognise that in the grace of God and the power of His kingdom, believers are given divine capability in the Spirit to answer to His will in the sphere of responsibility. God



does not contemplate that Christianity should be a failure in the wilderness position of responsibility, but that in those who recognise the presence and power of the Spirit of God there should be correspondence morally with Him Whose language was “To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart,” Psalm 40:8.

*The Holy Spirit.*

In recent years the personal glory of the Holy Spirit, as essentially equal in the Deity to the Father and the Son, but as graciously taking, in the economy of love in which God is revealed, a serving place with us and in us, has come much before the saints, and as the holiness which His presence requires is increasingly pursued, and the communion of the Holy Spirit is known, increasing freshness, power and liberty are becoming known in assembly service and all occasions of coming together by the saints, including liberty to address the Spirit in worship and prayer.

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## CONCLUSION.

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A careful consideration of what is set out in the preceding pages leads to the conclusion that the maintenance of the truth requires, in those who desire to walk in it, practical subjection to the Lord, a practical walk in the Spirit with the full recognition of His authority and service in the assembly, and conditions of love among the saints, but it also brings into most encouraging relief the faithfulness of the love of Christ for the assembly, and the faithful and devoted service of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, Who is ready and able to guide into *all* the truth all who genuinely desire to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing (see Colossians 1:10).

The following two letters by Mr. C. A. Coates, one written as long ago as January 12th, 1899, and the other on October 9th, 1934, are included as affording a useful summary and review of most of the matters dealt with in this book.

*January 12th, 1899.*

To get a true idea of the whole matter one must take a general survey of what has happened. It is now over seventy years ago that the Lord was graciously pleased to make known to beloved J.N.D. the true nature of His interests here, and the paper on “The nature and unity of the church of Christ” appeared. Several hearts were at once arrested and attracted by the truth—doubtless prepared of the Lord to receive that which He was imparting through His honoured servant.

At the same time, or very soon after, it was realised that the breaking of bread was expressive of the true fellowship of the church, and Matthew 18:20 assured several hearts that if they were in the current of the Lord’s thoughts and interests they might count upon

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His presence and support even if they ventured to break away from everything which had the countenance of men. Acting on this four brothers broke bread together in Dublin, and a fellowship formed by the truth and according to Christ’s interests was actually in being for the first time since the days of the apostles. It does not follow that each of the four brothers entered fully into what was involved in their seemingly simple act, or that each of them really apprehended the interests of Christ, i.e., what the church was in its nature and unity—but they were in a fellowship formed by the truth, and consistent with the interests of Christ, and each must have benefited to a very great extent because they found themselves for the first time where the Spirit of God was free to act, and where the presence and support of the Lord could be known.

Time passed on; the truth spread in all directions, and was taken up by many—taken up spiritually by some, mentally by others. The enemy was roused to activity and sought to swamp the whole thing at Plymouth. The Spirit of God lifted up a standard against

him—again using J.N.D. Then Bethesda enunciated a base principle of neutrality when the Person of Christ was in question, and adopted the idea of total independency both of gatherings and of individuals. That is, it was a complete subversion of everything that constituted the present testimony of the Lord. The nature and unity of the church was quite given up. That is, the very thing which essentially constituted Christ's interest here was given up. Thus with those who went away at that time the moral evidence of the Lord's presence is entirely wanting.

Since then there have been other secessions caused outwardly by the influence of certain teachers, but of which the inward cause must have been a certain degree of unwillingness to go on with the testimony, or of lack of appreciation of truth that was really at

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stake in each case. In result those who have separated have in different ways failed to maintain what is of God. They have not been supported in the testimony, and thus they fail to display the moral evidence of the presence of the Lord. Of course when we come to this it is entirely a matter of spiritual discernment; it is the spiritual who discerns all things;—that is, it is the man who is walking in self-judgment and in the light of God who discerns what and where the testimony is. It is not a question of intelligence but of spirituality. The simple who are spiritual see clearly what the learned ones miss; and often one has heard simple souls say, 'I cannot explain the truth but I know it is of God.' There is such a thing after all as the "unction from the holy one." If it be alleged that there are meetings with the seceders with more light than some in fellowship, it only proves what I have just said—that there may be intelligence as to the letter of things without spiritual discernment. And be this as it may, it is a very great thing to be identified with the present testimony of the Lord. Those who clave to Paul to the end were much better off, I apprehend, than those who turned away from him, even though those who turned away might appear to have much more intelligence and ability. I doubt whether Onesiphorus was *in* the testimony to the same extent as Paul, but he was thoroughly identified *with it*, and with the one who was its chosen vessel. And the simplest soul may have this great privilege. There is great benefit in being identified with the testimony of the Lord, and those who are so are preserved more than they suspect from the evils and snares and corruptions which run riot in the profession generally. They are where the Spirit can act, and there is much gain in this.

As to realising the presence of the Lord in the holiest" and as "minister of the sanctuary," it must be borne in mind that this is the very consummation

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of privilege and divine favour here. The very fact that it has been so much presented to us by the Lord in ministry of late is a very great proof of His presence and favour. Do you suppose that these precious things have even been to any extent before the minds of the seceders? I very much doubt it. And not only have these infinite thoughts and purposes of divine love been brought before the minds of the saints, but it cannot be denied that there has been a very considerable awakening of heart as to them and more exercise and desire of heart after the realisation of them than has been known aforetime.

Where else in Christendom would you find hearts with any true idea of the divine greatness and attractiveness of these precious and holy thoughts of infinite love?

The *honest* persons to whom you refer have probably never had any spiritual idea of the holiest at all. Most of them would be likely to say if the truth was put before them that it was transcendental or mystical or too high to be practical! They have no idea of a range of things entirely outside the scope of man's mind or body, where the saints may realise entire separation in spirit from the flesh and from everything that is of the present order of things, and find themselves in the undisturbed repose of divine love in association with Christ in new creation blessedness, and in the conscious joy of sonship before the Father's face. Indeed, it was because these things, and others intimately bound up with them, were presented and maintained by J.B.S. and F.E.R. that the seceders withdrew. These things had no charm for their hearts, and their leaders had been for years slighting the ministry of J.B.S., which was pre-eminently a presentation of them.

If many of those in fellowship are not after these things I am very sorry for them, and earnestly desire the awakening of their souls. But so long as they do not resent and oppose the truth one loves to walk

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with them and to seek their blessing. They are at any rate within the circle where light is found, and they benefit by it more than may be supposed. But the true vital power of the fellowship lies in the testimony of the Lord, and in those who are in heart set for it. These may be few—they are few—but it is in them that the whole thing is maintained according to God, though many others may to a great extent get the benefit of it.

If J.B.S. had got into a wrong meeting, as you suggest, he would have felt that he had got into a place where very few were in touch with him. And they would have felt that he was a man with very peculiar ideas and expressions!

One more word as to the effect produced on a meeting by an earnest evangelist. It is precisely the same effect as would be produced in any chapel by the presence and ministry of a similar man. He comes in the freshness and power of divine grace, and infuses for the moment the warmth of his own spirit into the whole company. And if the meeting has been in a low and cold state the effect is often very marked. And this effect will be in proportion to the fervency of his spirit. He acts *on* people, as J.B.S. once said to a fervent evangelist whose ministry carried all before it in the place where he resided and chiefly ministered—"The assembly here comes together not to act, but *to be acted on*." It does not follow that any solid result is left behind in such cases, or that the saints have made any real spiritual move. Indeed it sometimes happens that afterwards they are more dead than ever. Spurgeon said that there was 'nothing so dead as a church after a revival.' If souls get a real divine move after Christ by the Spirit the effect abides and deepens. It is a positive work in the soul, and not a mere stimulus imparted for the moment by the fervency of another. I have run on longer than I intended, and must reserve your

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other subjects of inquiry for another letter in a few days. With much love in the Lord to all your circle,

Yours affectionately in Him,

C.A.C.

*October 9th, 1934.*

DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,—I am interested to have your letter, and to know something of your exercises before the Lord. I feel assured that He will help you, as you continue to seek Him about the matter, and will give you light as to the path in which He would have you to walk.

I am glad that you have arrived at a definite judgment as to the failure of Open Brethren to recognise the truth of the one body in its practical bearing on the fellowship of saints. This will make your way clear as to continuing association with them, and it will also help you much in regard to other difficulties which beset the path of faith in this day.

It is easy to answer the first part of your question. The Christians with whom I am privileged to walk *do* recognise the truth of the one body, and this not only in an abstract way (as I suppose all Christians do) but in its practical bearing. That is, the essential and vital unity of the body is not merely local but universal; 1 Corinthians 12:13 establishes this. So that local assemblies are not independent congregations who may agree to work and walk together with mutual inter-communion, but the saints who meet locally in assemblies form an integral part of a universal unity, and thus no assembly can be independent of any or all the other assemblies. It is not merely a question of agreeing to act on the same principles, but the unity is a vital and organic unity. So that any disciplinary or administrative action is taken in the light of the universal fellowship and the divine

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principles which govern it, and also as recognising the vital unity of the body, which underlies that fellowship.

The brethren at Bethesda chapel, Bristol, in 1848 did not recognise that saints generally were as definitely committed to the refusal of evil which had come to light at Plymouth as were those who had the immediate responsibility of dealing with it. They held that a judgment of evil in Plymouth did not necessarily bind other assemblies; each assembly must judge for itself, or not judge at all, if it thought best to be neutral! This was clearly to make the assemblies independent units, and this principle is still maintained by those known as Open Brethren. What was judged at Plymouth was a clericalism which would have set aside all that the Spirit of God was recovering as to the truth of the assembly. Later it was found that along with this grave error there was the propagation of most serious evil teaching as to the Person of Christ. The latter was professedly judged at

Bethesda *after* division had been caused by the refusal to judge it, but the principle of independency (which had left it an open question whether it should be judged or not) was never judged as evil, but is still maintained.

The second part of your question, in which you ask, “Seeing there are so many different companies of ‘Exclusives,’ how can one know for certain which is the true expression of the one body?” is more difficult to answer. To begin with, I doubt whether the Lord would have us to look for a company which should be the true expression of the one body. I think this would be too pretentious a ground to take in the midst of all the confusion of these last days. I believe the Lord would have His saints to recognise the truth of the one body, and every other part of the truth, and to seek to maintain consistency with it by following righteousness, faith, love, peace, and that in so doing there will be found a divine path of separation

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from evil, in which they can walk in the light of all the truth of the assembly, and have the Lord with them in so doing. But each heart seeking to be in the truth and power of what is of God, and to give expression to it according to the measure of what is made available to us.

To find the company which has the Lord’s approval and presence is a matter which involves not only the truth and principles which have been in question in each case, but also where the different companies stand spiritually at the present time. I would not care to attempt to prove that one certain company was right. It is largely a matter of spiritual indications which the Lord will undoubtedly afford to any who only desire His mind. To follow the man with a pitcher of water is a good guide. Look out for a living and spiritual ministry of Christ, and for purification from the influences of the world. But this calls for spirituality of discernment which can only be acquired by nearness to the Lord. So that we cannot look for certain guidance apart from our own personal communion with the Lord. For, after all, it is a question of where the Lord is, and of where souls are truly gathered to His name. And this, as I think you will understand, can only be appreciated in a spiritual way.

As a matter of history each breach amongst brethren which has resulted in permanent separation has been caused either by the attempt to introduce principles or teachings which were contrary to the truth, or by the refusal to accept light which the Lord was giving and which could be substantiated by Scripture. These things speak indeed of human failure, but they have been permitted as an exercise for faith; they cannot now be ignored, and therefore they cast every enquiring heart very much on the Lord, who does not fail those who wait on Him.

I cannot offer you better counsel than to suggest

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that you continue to wait much on the Lord, with readiness to follow any spiritual leading which He has given you, or which He may yet give you. As you move in faithfulness to the light which He gives you it will increase and your path will be made



very clear to you. I shall be interested to hear from you again, if you care to write and let me know how you are being led.

With love in the Lord to your dear wife and yourself,

Yours affectionately in Him,

C.A.C.

May it be ours to pay diligent heed, until the Lord comes, to His word, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies,” so that every feature of the truth of the assembly may be found livingly in expression at that moment. The Lord says to the assembly in Philadelphia, “I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown.”

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