

1 Cor. 5

Clearing the Assembly of Leaven

*Number Three in a series on
the holiness of Christian fellowship*

R. A. Huebner

Present Truth Publishers

*825 Harmony Rd
Jackson NJ 08527 USA*

*Made and printed
in USA
2000*

Website
presenttruthpublishers.com

Preface

In the assembly at Corinth there was a case of immorality and an assembly condition with respect to it wherein the saints had sunk below the unbelievers in a licentious city, a fact instructive as to what can occur among Christians. Not only the sin itself, but even the notoriety of the sin did not humble them.

God has been pleased to use this case of immorality in the assembly at Corinth to provide instructions for the saints until the Lord comes to receive us unto Himself. “Leaven” is a well-known type of evil in Scripture usage and we may learn many lessons from the various passages which use it in a typical manner. The sin in 1 Cor. 5 was in a class called in this chapter, *leaven*. The reference to celebrating the feast (1 Cor. 5:8) refers to the feast of unleavened bread of seven days duration (Lev. 23), typifying the entire walk of the believer. The believer’s walk must be leaven free. If not, then just as in the case of the man of 1 Cor. 5, he must be purged out as leaven. And just so with the assembly; it must be leaven free. Saints are unleavened *in Christ* (1 Cor. 5:7; “even as ye are unleavened”) and must answer to this great truth in practice. If the assembly refuses to purge out the leaven, the assembly itself thereby does not answer to the unleavened position in Christ. Thus, it is leavened; i.e., its status is changed from an unleavened lump to a leavened lump by the toleration of the leaven. The saints in that assembly are leavened by the toleration of the “wicked person.” They are having fellowship with the wicked person. They break bread with the wicked person:

The bread which we break, is it not [the] communion of the body of Christ?
(1 Cor. 10:16).

The word “communion” is *koinonia*, fellowship -- meaning, to make one with. Thus, they would have fellowship with the “wicked person, making themselves one, in a practical way, with him. To not purge out the leaven results in this. This disobedience arises from an indifference in the heart to the claims of Christ. It is neutrality in the heart; awful condition! Thus there is a moral link in the heart with the leaven. The same is true when evil doctrine concerning “the doctrine of the Christ” (2 John 2) is not purged out (cp. Gal. 5:9).

A person from such an assembly comes to another assembly as a leavened person, with the leaven of indifference to the honor of Christ, the leaven of neutrality, being in the heart -- the heart *manifested* by the refusal to separate from the evil. He comes with a letter of commendation from a leavened lump. He comes to the assembly where you are . . .

Table of Contents

Part A: Expository Notes on 1 Cor. 5	1
Introduction	1
Sin Worse than the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1, 2)	5
The Apostle Acting with the Assembly to Remove the Evil (1 Cor. 5:3-5)	6
The Toleration of a Little Leaven Leavens the Assembly and does not Answer to the Unleavened position in Christ (1 Cor. 5: 6, 7a)	12
Our Feast of Unleavened Bread Must be Free from Leaven (1 Cor. 5:7b, 8)	26
The Leaven of the World not to be Tolerated in a Professed Christian in the Assembly, or at Our Own Meal (1 Cor. 5:9-11)	28
The Assembly is Responsible to Judge Those that are Within (1 Cor. 5: 12, 13)	37
Part B: Matters Connected with 1 Cor. 5	42
1 Corinthians and Evil Doctrine	42
Do Any OT Scriptures Establish a Basis for Relatives to Act Otherwise?	46
What Are the Results of Refusing to Purge Leaven?	48
What Should be Our Attitude About Discipline?	51
Various Considerations	59
Restoration	64
Conclusion: The State of those Who do not Imbibe but also do not Separate	67
Appendix 1: Matt. 18:20	68
Appendix 2: The Open Brethren View of Leaven Leavening the Lump . . .	70

1 Cor. 5

Clearing the Assembly of Leaven

Part A: Expository Notes on 1 Cor. 5

Introduction

1 CORINTHIANS HAS MUCH TO SAY ABOUT THE FLESH

The book of 1 Corinthians very much deals with the flesh in us in its various forms of manifestation when we do not judge ourselves in the presence of God. The Corinthians were “fleshly” (1 Cor. 3:1), evidently having notions about Christian liberty that in reality serve as a cloak for fleshy indulgence. No doubt there were a few exceptions in the assembly there, but “fleshly” characterized the state of the assembly. So, in 1 Cor. the Apostle deals with the place given to the flesh and with the remedies that produce practical holiness in walk and Christian fellowship.

In ch. 1 the flesh in its entirety is judged by the crucifixion and by the sovereign choice of God. In ch. 2 the inferiority and incompetency of the flesh is seen, and in contrast to the Spirit and the mind of Christ. In ch. 3 we see the energy and mind of the flesh excluded from ministry and service. In ch. 4 the opinions of the flesh are judged concerning Christ’s servants.

When we come to ch. 5-7 we have a cluster of three judgments on the flesh. In ch. 5 the lust and morality of the flesh must be excluded from the assembly. The **collective holiness** of God’s house with respect to leaven must be maintained. In ch. 6 we see libertarian flesh outside of God’s house, seeking its own interests. **Personal holiness** is maintained through self-judgment. Ch. 7 guards against the flesh in our own houses. Here we receive guidance in **family holiness** concerning the relationships that God has established.

In ch. 8 we see the irresponsibility of the flesh intruding itself into Christian liberty in order to use Christian liberty as a cloak for fleshly conduct; while in ch. 9 the Apostle, showing how grace can overcome the assertion of rights, excludes the flesh from Christian liberty. In ch. 10 we find that mere sanctified flesh is judged. It may rest in privileges and ordinances. The Christian is no exception to having within him this character of flesh. Indeed, there is a spirit of subjection and comeliness (ch. 11:1-16) that should characterize the

saints *at all times*, and especially in view of the great privilege of the Lord’s supper, to which we should come as self-judged.

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 bring before us a cluster of three great features that should characterize self-judged saints: ch. 12, the spirit of power, and ch. 13, the spirit of love, and ch. 14, the spirit of a sound mind. These features are found in connection with the truth of the assembly of God in its order. There are many things in these chapters which would lead us to judge the flesh in ourselves.

Ch. 15 refutes the mind of the flesh reasoning upon the subject of the resurrection. It is the occasion to bring forward the first and second man, for the assembly at Corinth was reinstating the first man, who has been displaced by the second man. Ch. 16 closes the book with guidance on proportional giving on the resurrection day, followed by personal circumstances and service of the Apostle and others who labor for the Lord. That is rather to be thought of than indulging our flesh.

Chs. 1-4, then, brought before them judgment on the flesh in various aspects, including the divisions and strifes among them. He had pointed out the temple aspect of the assembly (1 Cor. 3:16, 17), which brings before us this: “the temple of God is holy” (cp. Psa. 93:5). In ch. 5 he brings before them a horrible, collective indifference to the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ when they were gathered together. They were not viewing things from the standpoint of the sanctuary. This matter called for united action (I did not say unanimity¹) in the face of their divisions and strifes and unholiness. They had need of repentance, and grief according to God (2 Cor. 7:9), and to prove themselves *pure* in the matter (2 Cor. 7:11). Had they not so acted they would become *impure*!

EXCOMMUNICATION IS NOT MERELY A LOCAL MATTER

Here, in a quotation from J. N. Darby, the reader will see the general bearing of 1 Cor. 5:

The two questions are, Can there be corporate defilement by allowed evil in morals or doctrine? and, Is there any unity of the church of God upon earth?

It has been openly contended that, if fornication be allowed in a body of Christians, it is no ground of separating from it. This has been met by others; indeed exposing it in daylight was the best way of meeting it. To say that Christians were to separate from the world, to detach themselves from the great body of the professing church because of ecclesiastical evils, and then to affirm that positive immorality did not defile their community, but that, supposing it was allowed, saints should still own such a meeting all the same, was a proposition so monstrous, such a preference of ecclesiastical notions to the unalterable morality of God in the gospel, that one can only wonder how it was possible any Christians could have got into such a state of moral darkness. It was a solemn witness of the effect of false principles. With the

1. See below, p. 60.

individuals or their meeting we have of course nothing to do, save as the charity of Christ demands. We speak of principles; and let us see where these would lead. Those who are inside such a meeting of Christians are not allowed to break with them. They are bound to accept the companionship of sin, bound to accept disobedience to the apostle's rule, "Put out from among yourselves that wicked person." They must live in constant communion with evil, and constantly in the most solemn act of Christianity affirm the fellowship of light and darkness.

But this is not all. In such kind of meetings a meeting in one place receives, as did the scriptural churches, those in communion in another, and, when formally done, by letters of commendation. Suppose the fornicator, or even those who have maintained his continuing in the meeting (another allowance thus of sin), to be commended, or to come in communion from the supposed meeting; and if they receive him deliberately at home, they must of course give him, so far as they are concerned, the same title abroad, and he is received elsewhere; and thus the deliberate wickedness of a majority of the meeting to which he belongs, or of the whole of it, if you please, obliges thus every Christian meeting, and, when the church of God was in order, we might say every church of God in the world, to put its seal on communion with sin and evil, and say that sin could be freely admitted at the table of the Lord, and Christ and Belial get on perfectly well together; *or* break with the meeting or church, that is, disown its being such at all. But if they ought, those who have any conscience in the meeting itself ought.

The national Establishment is incomparably better than this. There there is no pretension to discipline; each one is pious for himself. Here sin, and communion with sin at the Lord's table, is sanctioned on principle. And if it is admitted that it ought not to be allowed, it is declared, that if it is deliberately allowed, every one must acquiesce in it, the meeting is not defiled, and the disobedient sinners have a right to force the whole church of God to accept it, if not in principle, in practice, and deny their principles. It is the church of God securing as such, and by its special privilege and title, the rights of sin against Christ. How it would be possible to conceive anything worse I cannot imagine; it really seems to me the most wicked principle that possibly can be thought of. And it is not merely the habits of a particular class of Christians which lead to this; the scriptural order of the church of God, as shown in the scriptures, involves this sanction of sin if the theory be true.

No person can deny that saints passed from one assembly to another, and, if belonging to one, were received in another. It was not an organization of churches, such as Presbyterianism or Episcopacy, which I name here only to be understood, but it was a full recognition of them as expressions of the unity of the body of Christ. We see the saints going from one, and received as such in another, and that in virtue of letters commendatory. It was because each assembly was owned as representing the body of Christ in its locality that others were bound to receive those who belonged to it as being members of that body. Each local assembly was responsible within itself to maintain the order and godliness suited to the assembly of God, and was to be trusted

in it; it is not disputing the competency of the local assembly, but owning it, when I receive a person because he belongs to it. If I do not receive a person who belongs to it, I deny its being a competent witness of the unity of the body of Christ.

Now it is exactly in this place the Spirit of God puts the local assembly at Corinth; not denying the unity of all saints on earth in one body, but owning the local assembly as so far representing it. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members one of another." Now if I own the assembly at Corinth or anywhere else to hold that place, surely I must receive a person belonging to it as a member of the body of Christ -- other membership I do not own. I quite agree that scripture owns no other; but for that very reason, when the apostle says, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," and "we are all one body, for we are all partakers of that one loaf;" I am bound to own the assembly as representing the body, and those who partake of the one loaf as members of the body. If I do not, I fall into the principle of a mere voluntary association, which makes rules for itself, and does what it pleases. Am I then to recognize, as representing the unity of the body, and acting by the Spirit with the Lord's authority, an assembly which sanctions sin, and says it is not defiled by it?

On the other hand, suppose such an assembly, say at Corinth, had put out from among themselves the wicked person, and another assembly received him, the latter thereby denies that the first has acted in the character of an assembly of God, representing there the body of Christ. It denies the action of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, or that what has been bound on earth has been bound in heaven. It is a mere sophism to suppose that, because an organization formed of assemblies is disowned, the responsibility of each assembly to the Lord is disowned, and its competent action by the Holy Ghost in the matters of the church of God. If a person were put out at Corinth, and received at Ephesus, the action of the Holy Ghost in the body at Corinth was denied, or Ephesus refused the action and denied the authority of the Holy Ghost and of Christ; that is, the assemblies were owned because each did in its locality act under the Lord and by the Holy Ghost. No doubt they might fail; Corinth would have failed but for the intervention of the Spirit by the apostle. But such is the scriptural principle, and that which we have to look for in an assembly; and the assembly is owned because it acts by the Holy Ghost under the authority of the Lord.²

Sin Worse than the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1, 2)

It is universally reported [that there is] fornication among you, and such fornication as [is] not even among the nations, so that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and ye have not rather mourned, in order that he that has done this deed might be taken out of the midst of you

2. *Collected Writings* 20:251-254. See also p. 262; 33:26; *Letters* 1:422; 2:215.

(2 Cor. 5:1, 2).

IT IS UNIVERSALLY REPORTED

Evidently there was no doubt in the Apostle's mind concerning the facts. The Apostle was not one of those Christians who gives ear to "hear-say." He was not vague or a writer of insinuations and innuendo. He named the sins. Moreover, he named the source of his information -- the house of Chloë (1 Cor. 1:11). He practiced what Scripture said about having two or three witnesses (2 Cor. 13:1).

TOLERATING WHAT WAS EVEN BELOW THEIR LICENTIOUS ENVIRONMENT

It has been pointed out that the Corinthians lived in a society characterized by great moral laxity. That is true. On the other hand, it is so sad to think of their state, not only on its own account, but in view of the fact that the Apostle had spent about 1 ½ years there. There was a universal report, i.e., it was commonly known, of something among them that was not even among those around them who were quite accustomed to licentiousness. There arose in the early church various evils that were addressed by the Apostles, thus providing the occasion that we might have the Word of God concerning these matters to guide us in what pleases Him. And here we see how Christians, instead of being a steady light in darkness, fell below their worldly, lusting environment out of which they had been called. The Apostle well knew what was needed when he announced the glad tidings; "Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified" (1 Cor. 2:3). Yes, crucifixion was what they needed especially to hear that they might know the end of the first man in judgment on the cross. But in 1 Cor. we see how the first man was being indulged by them.

The Apostle had not proceeded directly to this awful matter. He dealt first with the matters taken up in the first four chapters, declaring the Spirit's message to their souls concerning indulgences of the flesh which had prepared their hearts for the indulgence of the flesh depicted in 1 Cor. 5. If their hearts bowed to the dishonors to the Lord addressed by the Spirit in the first four chapters, their souls could now be brought to see the horror of the depth to which they had sunk.

PUFFED UP, THEY HAD NOT RATHER MOURNED

Supposing that the saints at Corinth had no instruction concerning the removal of a wicked person from their midst, they could still have "mourned, in order that he that has done this deed might be taken out of the midst of you." The new nature, of which they were partakers (2 Pet. 1:4) would feel the shame before the Lord Jesus Christ, to whose name they were gathered together (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:4), and they could have so prayed, unitedly casting themselves down before the Lord in distress of soul. They were indwelt of the Spirit of God, Who would lead any self-judged ones to do as the Apostle states they did not do.

Moreover, they could have communicated with the apostle to help them. But no, such was far from the case; for, "ye are puffed up," indicated the collective state. It is remarkable how often "puffed up" is used in 1 Cor. In 1 Cor. 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; and 13:4, he spoke of this inflation of the flesh, this haughtiness.

There was something, then, worse than the evil that the incestuous person was committing. That worse thing was the spirit of toleration that characterized the assembly!

We must understand that the flesh is incorrigible (Rom. 8:7; Jer. 17:9) in all dispensations, and will manifest itself in Christians when there is not self-judgment, and it is capable of rising up to such an extent as to call for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Moreover, such a display of flesh may be tolerated by other Christians. Such are we when fallen nature has its way -- right in the face of the unspeakable grace of God that brought us to Himself!

As someone wrote: "**we do not judge the flesh in others because we do not judge it in ourselves.**"

When things arise in the assembly where we have the sense in our souls that God is not honored, and we know not what to do, there is one thing we can do -- judge ourselves, rather than being puffed up, and mourn before God to come in for us.

The Apostle Acting with the Assembly to Remove the Evil (1 Cor. 5:3-5)

For I, [as] absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged as present, [to deliver,] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (ye and my spirit being gathered together, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ), him that has so wrought this: to deliver him, [I say,] [being] such, to Satan for destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:3-5).

Here, we will consider these matters in view of the fact that at this time the ruin of *the church on earth viewed in responsible testimony* had not yet occurred. When we consider v. 13 we shall see how we ought to understand these things in the context of that ruin.

DELIVERING TO SATAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH

Delivery to Satan by None but the Apostle. The act of delivering to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20) is an act of *apostolic power*, and of apostolic power

alone.³ Clearly, the delivery to Satan is Paul's act, and this may be made very plain by reading the above verses with the parenthesis omitted. No one now, no assembly either, has that apostolic power, though there is both responsibility and authority to purge out leaven by any gathered together to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ -- or, that failing, to purge himself out (2 Tim. 2).

The assembly at Corinth was not directed to deliver the person to Satan; they were directed to purge out the leaven (v. 7), i.e., remove the wicked person from their midst (v. 13).

That Paul was not physically present was no hindrance at all. He was present "in spirit."⁴ Being so present with them, and judging as so being present with them, his delivery of the wicked person to Satan was to be coupled with their act of removing the wicked person from their midst. It was effected in the act of the assembly at Corinth because the Apostle's personal power was coupled with the act of the assembly in putting away from among themselves the wicked person.

"For the destruction of the flesh" refers to the body. The body of the believer is the Lord's (1 Cor. 6:12-20), and here we see that Satan may be used as an instrument (cp. Job). But the man (may have?) repented before this happened.

In Acts 5 the case was handled solely by the Apostle Peter. Covetousness was at the root of a lie characterized as a "lie to the Holy Ghost." It was a brazen thing, in the face of the Spirit just come in that special way, in that special capacity, to form the church and indwell it, taking care of Christ's interests here. It occurred among the Jewish believers. In 1 Cor. 5, this occurred among Gentile believers and is a case of profligate uncleanness-- the person being tolerated in the assembly where the Lord's presence is, they being gathered together by the Spirit to Christ's name. God's holiness was signally outraged in both cases.

In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the name of Jesus and His title of authority, and the position He occupies ("made both Lord and Christ") are brought forward as the authority to act for His honor. In this authority the Apostle acted in his apostolic power; and in this authority the assembly acts in the assembly's competency.

(YE AND MY SPIRIT BEING GATHERED TOGETHER,

3. For more on this, see *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:3; *Notes and Jottings* p. 283; *The Bible Treasury* 19:46-48.

4. The assembly gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ enters into the holies by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19), where He is minister of the holy places (Heb. 8:2) and leads the singing in the assembly there (Heb. 2:12). The worshipers are sitting in chairs on earth, but *in spirit* they are there in the holies!

WITH THE POWER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST)

The Apostle Paul could act individually with apostolic authority, as we see in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20). Here, as we saw, he would act in conjunction with the assembly. He could exercise his authority individually. Not so those at Corinth. It was only the assembly, "being gathered together," that could "Remove the wicked person from amongst yourselves" (v. 13). No elder, no elders, no brother, no brothers, nothing else, can substitute for this collective action.⁵ It is only as "being gathered together" that this can be done, and it is imperative that it be done as so gathered together. So, of course, we think of Matt. 18:20 in this regard.⁶ The action is of such a character that nothing less than the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of His saints gathered together to His name will impart competency to so act for His honor.

When the saints are thus gathered together (Matt. 18:20), the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst, and thus His *power* is present. This is not authority (*exousia*), though that is there, of course, but rather *dunamis*, used for works of *power*, i.e., miracles. Christ's ability and might undergird the act to clear His holy name and remove the presence of leaven. This is most solemn, especially where there is toleration of leaven among saints. Such unholiness rises up against the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

Yes, *obedience* is involved in this. There was much disobedience in Corinth and in 2 Cor. 10:6 we read:

... and having in readiness to avenge all disobedience when your obedience shall have been fulfilled.

And this has a bearing on those who will not consent to following the Apostle's instruction.

It is the assembly that puts away:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (ye and my spirit being gathered together, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ) (1 Cor. 5:4).

It is the "ye," the assembly, with which the Apostle's spirit is joined. All consciences in the assembly, knowing the fact of the evil, are engaged in a collective action of judgment ("Ye, do not ye judge them that are within?" v. 12). If the Apostle at a distance joins in the putting away, do you think that there can be any excuse for leaving out the action of the conscience of anyone that was local in Corinth?

In the case of putting away a person, a meeting of overseers, or of brothers,

5. See *The Bible Treasury* 2:351 (on the rejection of debating, voting, imposing a verdict, etc., in this excellent answer to questions); 11:47; 19:44; *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:132, 199, 364, 416.

6. See Appendix 1 for remarks on Matt. 18:20.

or of “laborers,” few or many, gifted or not, is *not competent* to do it. The Spirit has laid down the order to the Corinthians, expressly: “. . . in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (ye and my spirit being gathered together, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ) . . .” (1 Cor. 5:4). Other procedure is unscriptural and unholy. In accordance with this Scripture, JND wrote, regarding acts of discipline and reception, etc.:

The spiritual men, who addict themselves to this work and are occupied with its details, before the case is brought before the assembly so that the consciences⁷ of all may be exercised in the case, may doubtless thoroughly explore the details with much profit and godly care. But if it comes to deciding anything apart from the assembly of the saints, even in the most ordinary things, their action would cease to be the assembly’s action and it ought to be disowned.⁸

Again:

(From the French.)

In meetings called for the examination of cases of discipline, I should insist formally that sisters should be excluded. If they were present, I even would not go myself. It is entirely contrary to the word of God, and as unseemly as it is unscriptural. How examine certain cases with young sisters present? It would be a shame for them to desire it. Besides, the word is plain. . . . For my own part, I do not think it even much to be desired that all the brothers should be present. If there are a few wise brothers, who occupy themselves habitually with the good of souls, true elders⁹ given by God, and that it be not official, but according to 1 Corinthians 16:15,16, that is better than *all* the brothers; it is thus more evidently not the assembly, which is not equally clear when all the brothers are there: and the danger of an assembly of brothers is, lest they should believe themselves to be the assembly to decide.

But a whole assembly cannot make investigation of facts and the character of facts: two or three must do this. When all the information has been obtained, and the matter weighed before God, they communicate the result at which they have arrived, and it is the assembly that decides: if no one says anything, the matter is decided. If a brother of weight were to make an objection, or if he had anything to communicate, or knew of any circumstance likely to throw light on the subject, they might wait, or re-investigate the matter. If it is but a trifling opposition, the assembly may easily deal with it. I have seen such a case. If it is some one upholding the evil which has been judged, he becomes himself the object of judgement

7. {Concerning the matter of the exercise of consciences see also *The Bible Treasury* 2:351, 352; 11:47; 19:43; *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:113, 520; 2:197, 364, 382, 389, 391, 416, 417; 3:46, 58, 458. See 1:418 (on confounding private judgment and conscience); and 1:204, 420, 422; 3:458; *Notes and Jottings*, p. 19. See also *Collected Writings* 1:274; 4:233; 20:265.}

8. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:199. See also 3:46, and 2:197.

9. {See also *The Bible Treasury* 2:351; 9:271; 11:47; 19:44; *Letters* 2:199; *Collected Writings* 26:265.}

(2 Cor. 10:6).

Two things render it necessary that the action would be that of the *assembly*: first, because it is there that Christ is; secondly, because it is the assembly which purges itself (1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 7:11).¹⁰

Another has said:

Q. Have a few brothers, who stay at the weekly meeting for consultation, usually after the prayer meeting, power to act for the “assembly,” say in the matter of putting away, without distinctly calling a meeting of the “assembly”? And if a brother feels he cannot concur in a judgment thus arrived at, is he wrong in saying so at the Lord’s table, in the event of such judgment being read there? J. K.

A. I am aware that, when assemblies are small, and more rarely in larger ones, there is apt to be a want of due care in apprising the saints of a meeting for considering a case of discipline which seems to call for putting away. This ought not to be.

But if a “few brothers” remain at the close of a meeting of the assembly (either on Lord’s day or during the week), and if they be of one mind, the case might be so far clear (especially as many could be there if they pleased) as to warrant their bringing it at once before the assembly at the breaking of bread. Only, if they knew of an honest difference of judgment (for one does not take account of party men, relatives, &c.) among brethren, they ought to seek the Lord about it together; for discussion at such a time is most undesirable, as haste is always. They ought therefore in such a case to call a meeting, *or at least announce at a general meeting* (not at a reading or other meeting in a private house) that the saints are requested to stay for consideration of a case of discipline.

If there has been irregularity in this respect, a brother might rightly say so, taking care of the facts first, and of his own spirit¹¹ in the way it is named to the saints, so as to avoid the hateful appearance of factious opposition, or of other uncomely conduct. But undoubtedly a formal judgment ought to be arrived at by the assembly, not by a few for it; and therefore it is still open even at the last moment to call for arrest of action if the case be not quite clear. The few may come to a sound judgment and be used of God to awaken all to the gravity of the case and the will of the Lord about it: but due means should be used that the assembly should hear *before* judgment is pronounced, so as to satisfy all, and give occasion for correcting those mistakes which are very possible in such a world as this. In a perfectly plain case to hear the facts is enough; and judgment might follow at once. Technical delay of judgment under such circumstances is unworthy of the church, though it may

10. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:415. See also pp. 132, 197, 364, 381, 416; 3:459; *Collected Writings* 4:233.

11. For the “spirit” in which discipline is carried out, see *Collected writings* 1:274, 338-349; *The Bible Treasury* 12:287; 18:317; 19:29; Memorials of the Ministry of G. V. Wigram 2:53ff, 60. Cp. *Letters* 3:47, 61; *The Bible Treasury* 2:352.

suit the world and the lawyers.¹²

G. V. Wigram remarked:

I have known cases in which one or two have unconsciously assumed to rule, by telling one that had sinned that “he had *better not come to the table.*” Where is the authority and power of the assembly? A private opinion of one or two individuals is not the action of the one holy assembly, led by God and the written Word. It falsifies everything, and is the assumption of power. It is evil, too, for it generally hides the sin which God’s word would have either cured or set aside. And what means suspended communion? It is either a refusal to have faith and act upon it according to the Word, or else to bear the shame of incompetency, through sin, to find out God’s mind about the matter in question, and ourselves and the assembly.¹³

And, finally, we should note that the Apostle’s being with them in spirit touches on the unity in one body of all saints on earth. That subject is developed in 1 Cor. 12.

THAT THE SPIRIT MAY BE SAVED IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS

The Spirit Saved. While *this* indicates that it was indeed a real Christian who had fallen into this evil, and 2 Cor. speaks of his repentance, the Apostle used the expression, “if anyone called a brother” (v. 11), and *that* indicates something other than the words, “if a brother.” Likely it indicates refraining from calling one in evil, a brother. At any rate, the Apostle had delivered him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, i.e., his body. It would be well to read the *Synopsis, in loco*, concerning this.

The Day of the Lord Jesus. In speaking of this passage it is easy to slip into the mistake of saying “in the day of the Lord,” but that is incorrect. The day of the Lord Jesus (precious name and title!) refers to the heavenly side of the coming glory of the Lord Jesus, in which this person would be.¹⁴

12. *The Bible Treasury* 9:223,224. See also 2:351;9:271; 19:43, and 12:184.

13. *Memorials of the Ministry of G. V. Wigram* 2:64.

14. This is not the place to enlarge on the difference but let us note that the day of the Lord is an epoch commencing with the appearing of Christ in glory (Rev. 19) and ending with the establishment of the eternal state; i.e., it includes the millennium (Jer. 25:30, 33; Dan. 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14, 22, 26, 27; Joel 2:1-11, 28-31; 3:13-17; Zeph. 1:14-18; 3:8; Hag. 2:7, 22; Zech. 14:3-9; Mal. 4:1-5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10). The day of Christ (Phil. 1:10; 2:16), the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6), the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14) and the day of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8) begins at the same point in time as the day of the Lord, but has entirely different associations and aspects. The day of Christ has the thought of the believer of the present period being presented at the appearing in glory (Col. 3:4) in all the beauty and perfection with which He has invested them (2 Thess. 1:10). **The day of the Lord** is the time of the exercise of His power and government and judgment *in the earth*. It will be inaugurated with judgment and terror and tumult among the nations. **The day of Christ** refers to the heavenly aspect and sphere of this period. The two expressions refer to the same period and begin at the same time, but they are

The Toleration of a Little Leaven Leavens the Assembly and does not Answer to the Unleavened Position in Christ (1 Cor. 5: 6, 7a)

Your boasting [is] not good. Do ye not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened (1 Cor. 5:6, 7a).

YOUR BOASTING IS NOT GOOD

This boasting shows their carnal state noted in 1 Cor. 3:1. It was boasting in fleshly things. You will recall that this paper opened with a brief survey of the Spirit’s dealing with the manifold displays of the flesh in these saints (with a few exceptions). “Boasting” and “puffed up” are descriptions of the state. What good did it produce? What evil it produced!

A LITTLE LEAVEN LEAVENS THE WHOLE LUMP

W. Kelly stated what the thrust of this is, and, interestingly, gives a surprising quotation from the Dean of Canterbury:

Now comes the grave warning of the apostle in Christ’s faithful love to the church. The tolerance of evil in any part vitiates the whole. It virtually commits the Holy Ghost to the sanction of what God hates. No interpretation can be more contrary to the spirit of the apostle’s admonition than that which supposes that the whole is only leavened when every part is saturated with the leaven. It is really meant that a little leaven gives its character to the whole lump. Even the late Dean Alford (though far from sound generally in doctrine, strict in ecclesiastical principle, or firm for the glory of Christ) speaks incomparably better than those brethren who debase the holy name of love to mean license for their friends or themselves. “That this is the meaning,” says he, “and not ‘that a little leaven will if not purged out leaven the whole lump,’ is manifest from the point in hand, namely, the inconsistency of their *boasting*: which would not appear by their *danger of corruption hereafter*, but by their *character being actually lost*. One of them was a fornicator of a fearfully depraved kind, tolerated and harbored: by this fact the *character of the whole was tainted.*”*

*The *italics* are the Dean’s. I quote his words in no way as authoritative, but as a just rebuke of an unholy principle and aim by one who might be thought rather disposed to palliate evil. Much more guilty are those who should know and do better.¹⁵

PURGE OUT THE OLD LEAVEN THAT YE MAY BE A NEW LUMP

W. Kelly also wrote:

different aspects of that time.

15. *Notes on . . . 1 Corinthians, in loco.*

There cannot be a more serious principle for the practical and public walk of the church. Evil is here presented under the symbol of leaven. Not only may it exist among saints, but its nature is to work, spread, and assimilate the mass to itself. The apostle insists that it shall never be tolerated. Here it is moral evil, in Galatians doctrinal; and of the two the latter is the more insidious, because more specious. It does not shock the conscience so immediately, or strongly, if at all. To the natural mind evil doctrine¹⁶ is but a difference of opinion, and the generous heart shrinks from proscribing a man¹⁷ for an opinion however erroneous. The church stands on wholly different ground, because it stands in Christ on high and has the Holy Ghost dwelling in it here below. No assembly can guarantee itself against the entrance of evil, but every assembly of God is bound not to tolerate it. When evil is known, the church is bound to put it away. Elsewhere we may find details in dealing with it. There are those who may be specially fitted not only to discern but to apply moral power, and they are responsible to act faithfully to Christ whose the church is. It is no question, where known evil is persisted in, of exercising compassion, still less of cloaking it. This would be connivance with Satan against the Lord, and the ruin, not only of the individual already ensnared, but of the assembly. When the assembly knows evil, and either forbears to judge through indifference, or (still worse) refuses it when appealed to according to the word of God, it is playing false to the name of the Lord, and can no longer be regarded as God's assembly after adequate means to arouse have failed.¹⁸

Really, this is very simple. If the assembly does not purge out the leaven, it is not a new lump. Is that difficult to understand? And what do you think the lump is if it is not a new lump?

16. {Concerning evil doctrine, see the first pamphlet in this series -- on 2 John. For help on the subject of dealing with evil doctrine, i.e., doctrinal leaven, see:

Letters of J. N. Darby 1:290, 378; 2:5, 12, 326; 3:91, 248, 450.

On false interpretation:

Letters of J. N. Darby 1:46, 378; 2:57; 3:175, 306.

On heresy and error:

Letters of J. N. Darby 3:117, 118.

On dealing with evil doctrine:

Things New and Old 29:308

On evil doctrine being worse:

The Bible Treasury, New Series 9:224.

On various aspects of doctrinal evil:

The Bible Treasury 9:32; 18:82, 84; 19:44, 92-94; 20:96; *The Christian Friend* 1880, pp. 285, 319, 325; *The British Herald*, 1874, p. 10; *Notes and Jottings*, p. 450; *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:192, 193.

17. {Is this the same "generous heart" that says God would not put anyone in everlasting, conscious eternal punishment?}

18. *Notes on . . . 1 Corinthians, in loco.*

Besides that, after they had removed the wicked person, the Apostle wrote:

. . . in every way ye have proved yourselves to be pure in the matter (2 Cor. 2:11).

If the assembly at Corinth had not obeyed, they would not have been pure.¹⁹ What would they have been if not pure?

What is more:

. . . and having in readiness to avenge all disobedience when your obedience shall have been fulfilled (2 Cor. 10:6).

What would they have been if not obedient?

Additionally:

. . . ye have been grieved to repentance; for ye have been grieved according to God . . . (2 Cor. 7:9).

What would they have been if not repentant?

If the assembly had not obeyed the Apostle, what would they have been?

Really, this is very simple. Respectively, the answers to the above four questions are: a leavened lump; impure; disobedient; unrepentant. W. Kelly wrote:

Had they allowed into their hearts the germ of that unholy idea, so rife in modern and even evangelical circles, that the evil of another is not to be judged, but each is solely to judge himself? It is to the destruction of God's glory in the church. For what can more directly strike at all common union in good, all corporate responsibility for evil? Where such thoughts are suffered, it is plain that the presence of the Holy Ghost is either ignored or forgotten; for no believer will deliberately say that He can be a partner of iniquity, and this He must be if evil is known and unjudged where He dwells.²⁰

Moreover, in 2 John we learn how one can be a partaker of another's "wicked works." And in 2 Tim. 2 we learn that those who do not purge themselves out from vessels to dishonor are not themselves vessels to honor.

But for all that, is it your practice to receive from an assembly that tolerates a "wicked person" as long as the person to be received is not doing a wicked act like the "wicked person"? You will receive one whom Scripture shows is leavened, impure, disobedient, unrepentant, and not a vessel to honor by being a part of lump that is not a new lump, is not pure, and is not obedient? Well, yes, because you really do deny that this is true. You hold that unholy and unfaithful notion of neutrality in divine matters, in your heart, that association with leaven does *not* leaven one. You reject the thought of "collateral

19. This purity must be maintained: *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:198; *Collected Writings* 20:251.

20. *Notes on . . . 1 Corinthians, in loco.*

defilement.” Such evil reception is, in effect, a denial of the true condition of such an assembly. You show in your practice what is in your heart. Where such reception is practiced, that is not an assembly where the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst. The first assembly flouts the authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the Apostolic command, and the second assembly (which says Christ is in the midst) partakes of the same flouting. Really, this is not a difficult matter.

It is very important to take into account this solemn fact:

“Leaven” would apply to both the sin and their refusing to judge it.²¹

The fact is that **toleration of leaven in the assembly is looked upon by God as complicity with the evil.** The whole lump being leavened does not mean everyone is engaged in incestuous, or other such evil, practices. The whole lump being leavened means a moral identification with the tolerated leaven. The assembly becomes morally identified with the tolerated evil. Yes, there can be neutrality in the hearts, indifference to the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of the saints. Indeed, to continue on, not purging out the leaven, is in itself *the leaven of wickedness* (1 Cor. 5:8) at work in the soul.

The word leaven brings to mind the thought of fermentation. There is the bubbling and puffing. It represents the unrestrained, unjudged working of the flesh. Paul said evil was present with him (Rom. 7:21), just as we see leaven was in the two wave loaves of Lev. 23:17, which represent believers. But fire (judgment) stops the action of leaven. However, if we do not judge ourselves, the flesh works and bursts out as we see it in 1 Cor. 5.

Holiness becomes God’s house forever (Psa. 93:5). Holiness is separation from evil and in the people of God it is separation from evil to the Lord. God says, “Be ye holy for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). Separation from evil to the Lord is what God looks for in His people in all ages. It is a first principle of walk with God.

That which must be purged out is called *leaven* in 1 Cor. 5. Not everything contrary to the mind of God may be classed as leaven. For example, a man may be a busybody (2 Thess. 3:6-16) and the saints are to conduct themselves towards the offender as described there, but he is not excommunicated, though his course may result in that eventually. A man may be overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1). Or, one may be in a course of sinning and warrant public rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20), which is not excommunication. It is not leaven, at least not yet. It is possible that such an one might yet manifest himself to be an idolater²² (1 Cor. 5:11). THAT is leaven.

21. *Collected Writings* 26:279.

22. “For rebellion is [as] the sin of divination, And self-will is [as] iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:23) helps explain what form the “idolatry” mentioned in 1 Cor. 5 may take.

Judgment must be applied to leaven. In Scripture we find fire used as a symbol for judgment. The two wave loaves (Lev. 23:17) had leaven in them; but as baked in the fire the action of leaven is stopped. Thus they could be brought before the Lord. This signifies self-judgment. “But if we judged ourselves, so were we not judged. But being judged, we are disciplined of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:31, 32). So, if we judge ourselves the action of the leaven, evil, is stopped. If we do not judge ourselves, the Lord will judge us, perhaps through the assembly. If the assembly refuses to judge leaven, Christ will judge the assembly (Rev. 1, 2 and 3).

When sin comes out in the forms noted in 1 Cor. 5:10,11 (which is not a list, as murder and theft, for example, are left out), it is called leaven, and so it must be purged out (1 Cor. 5:7). “Remove the wicked person from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:13).

Scripture presents two ways in which leaven works, or produces results.

1. The first way is given in Matt. 13 in the parable of the woman, the meal, and the leaven. Here, the leaven is seen working to *permeate* all of the meal. The leavening continues until the leaven has worked through the entire meal. It represents the progressive corruption of the doctrine of Christ in *Christendom*, the nominal profession, until the whole is leavened. To force this against the truth that the status of the assembly is changed to a leavened lump if the “wicked person” is tolerated is like saying that unbelievers must not be put out of the assembly because the Lord says, in Matt. 13, to let the tares grow in the field until the harvest.

2. The second way that leaven produces results is seen in 1 Cor. 5. We have already seen that the presence of evil is not necessarily ‘working leaven’ because the action of leaven is stopped by fire, by judgment. The evil takes on the character of active leaven when it is allowed to act unjudged. Thus the fornicator of 1 Cor. 5 was likened to leaven; not because evil was present with him and all of us (Rom. 7:21), but because it worked unjudged and produced something like we read about in 1 Cor. 5:10,11. Just as in the case of a person, so the presence of sin in the assembly does not necessarily transform the assembly into a leavened lump. But if the assembly refuses to judge the evil and refuses to purge out the leaven, that is another matter. THEN the assembly becomes leavened. It does not become leavened when *everyone finally* becomes, say, incestuous persons. The assembly becomes leavened by knowingly allowing even one such person among themselves and by taking the position of refusing to purge the leaven out. The assembly thus changes its character to that of a leavened lump. In 1 Cor. 5 leaven leavening the lump means that the allowed presence of leaven changes the character of the lump. It is not a question of how many are doing the evil. It is not necessary that 100% of the persons must do it before the assembly is leavened. There is something dreadfully wrong at the bottom of such an idea! The idea that everyone in a

meeting of Christians must become incestuous, or thieves, or murderers, before the assembly is leavened is an attempt to escape responsibility. Its direct tendency is to allow fellowship with leaven. Since *Scripture characterizes an act by its tendency*²³ (1 Cor. 8:9-12), we see that this false principle is itself leaven. 1 Cor. 5 does not raise the question of how far leaven had spread in the assembly, but it condemns the very presence of known leaven. But God does not look upon an assembly as leavened until the evil was tolerated. The apostle instructed them concerning their duty to God. But they could at least have mourned (1 Cor. 5:2). Rather, they were puffed up.

Leaven leavening the lump, then, does not indicate that the Spirit is warning that everyone might become incestuous or a murderer, etc. He is warning them that refusal to judge and purge leaven involves them in complicity with the evil. They *all* become leavened by fellowship with the leavened person.²⁴ The second epistle also shows that they would be implicated directly if they refused to judge; that is, they would have been leavened. Paul says, "In every way ye have proved yourselves to be pure in the matter" (2 Cor. 7:11). Had they acted otherwise than purging out the leaven, they would have proved themselves to be impure, i.e., defiled, by allowing that one person to continue in fellowship! Evil associations defile! 2 Cor. 7:10,11 shows that the Corinthians needed to repent. They had already been affected in that their puffed up state prohibited them from mourning. They exhibited a state of indifference to leaven, a state now quite common among the professed people of God.

Up to this point we have considered somewhat the need of holiness and what the character of leaven is. Later we will examine the sins mentioned in 1 Cor. 5, noting again at this point that 1 Cor. 5 is not a complete listing, but gives examples of leaven.

Not the Arising of Leaven, but the Knowingly Tolerating It Leavens the Lump. J. N. Darby remarked:

. . . those who admitted them knowingly and willingly were not a "new lump," 1 Cor. 5. This raised the question: Is an assembly corrupted when knowingly and willingly it admits sin as blasphemy? Our adversaries maintained that an assembly could not be defiled; that individuals who are in sin are defiled, but that the assembly could not be so. They insisted upon this in several tracts. And not only so, but the principal brethren in a so-called neutral meeting signed a printed circular affirming that, if an assembly should admit fornication knowingly and willingly, we ought none

23. Do not pass over this principle without learning what it means.

24. Of course, this has implications for others receiving persons from a leavened lump, hence the effort to define leavening the lump as meaning that all in the assembly would have to commit wicked acts before the assembly could be leavened. It is just an attempt to evacuate the passage of its true force, for an easier path.

the less to acknowledge that assembly and to receive letters of recommendation from it. We judged that, if an assembly (not taken by surprise, which may happen everywhere, or through carelessness, of which we are all capable, but) knowingly and willingly admits sin or blasphemy, it is not a new lump; that in order to be a new lump it must purge itself from the old leaven (1 Cor. 5:7); and that in so doing the other members proved themselves pure in this matter (2 Cor. 7:11); otherwise they would not have been so. This is the principle in question.²⁵

Why the Man was Purged Out. In v. 2 we read of "he that has done this deed." In v. 7 we read, "Purge out the old leaven." In v. 13 we read, "Remove the wicked person . . ." Nothing is said about removing him because he did not evidence life in Christ. He was removed because he was leaven and was a wicked person. Moreover, the words, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" indicate that he did have life in Christ. Furthermore, his restoration to practical fellowship was because he had repented with grief according to God (2 Cor. 2, 7), not because he had "a confirmed testimony of life in Christ."²⁶

EVEN AS YE ARE UNLEAVENED

The words, "even as ye are unleavened" refers to *position*, to *standing* in Christ. As to their standing in Christ, the saints of God are unleavened. There is no leaven "in Christ." If any man be "in Christ" it is new creation where all things are of God (2 Cor. 5:14-18). The point to bringing forward this wonderful fact ("even as ye are unleavened") is to bring it to bear on *state*, on *practice*. Be in practice what you are in Christ, says the Spirit through Paul. Thus, in order for

25. *Collected Writings* 20:300; see also 33:22, 25, 26; 26:217, 218; *The Bible Treasury* 10:262; New Series 5:256

26. That leavenous paper, *The Lake Geneva Conference Report* (p. 34), says:

Since the basis for fellowship is Christ, the man was expelled *because he did not evidence this essential relationship with Christ.*

The reason the signatories say this is because their system of fellowship is founded only on life in Christ -- rejecting the bearing of doctrinal evil and association with it as having to do with practical fellowship. Hence on p. 23 there is a heading which reads, "Fellowship not based on doctrine or practice," followed on p. 24 by a heading, "Christ: the sole basis for fellowship." That includes a false Christ; for example, one who is not eternally Son. See the paper in this series on 2 John.

Would the word *minimize* or *devalue* apply to the special place the breaking of bread has when we consider this?:

Believers are called into a fellowship with God through Christ, and, on that basis, with one another. This fellowship has many practical expressions, of which the breaking of bread is only one. Scripture grants no particular status to this specific expression (p. 47).

Well, that fits their evil system of "fellowship." It goes along with the indifference to a true Christ.

Moreover, the first sentence confuses the distinction between 1 Cor. 1:9 and 1 John 1:3 which have to do with the church and the family of God respectively. Really, their fellowship is a fellowship with evil.

the assembly to remain in practice in a new lump condition (i.e., a lump without leaven), they must purge out the leaven. The continuance in the new lump condition is conditional. The refusal to judge the known leaven, and then to purge it out, would constitute them (not a new lump but) a leavened lump.

As an illustration of the meaning of the words “even as ye are unleavened” we may compare this with “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen wrong in Israel” (Num. 23:21). That is quite different from their actual state.

THREE CONSIDERATIONS IN DISCIPLINE AND THEIR ORDER

It is a deeply grievous thing -- at least it ought to be -- when a case arises to which these scriptures apply. It ought to cause much heart searching and self-judgment by those compelled to act on them. It must also be remembered that the One in our midst (Matt. 18:20) looks for the love proved by obedience, from us. “If ye love me, keep my commandments;” “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (John 14:15, 23).

In putting away a wicked person from amongst the people of God, three important considerations need to be remembered.²⁷ Not only are the considerations themselves important, but the *order* of their importance is also to be observed carefully.

1. The Lord’s honor must be maintained! His presence, as noted in Matt. 18:20, and tolerated leaven cannot go on together since His holy presence is incompatible with tolerated evil. If a company of Christians is indifferent²⁸ to leaven, they actually meet together on the ground of indifference to evil. Christ cannot endorse this by His presence (according to Matt. 18:20) because such indifferent Christians are gathered on the principle of indifference to evil. By this they deny “His Name” which is “Holy and True” (no matter what they profess).

2. The purity of the assembly must be maintained! “Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump . . .” (1 Cor. 5:7). The leaven must be purged out in order for the assembly to be in the practical character of the “new lump.” Had the saints at Corinth refused the apostle’s word, thereby showing that they tolerated leaven, they would have been a leavened lump and no longer regarded

27. Cp. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:520; 2:414; 3:46; *The Bible Treasury, New Series* 1:265.

28. *Indifference* is displayed by refusal to ACT regardless of how great the claim of being “concerned” about the matter. Indeed, indifference is regarded by God as complicity in the thing. Indifference is neutrality, a thing never accepted by God. In cases of evil, “he that is not with me is against me” (Matt. 12:30).

as gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁹

3. The good of the wicked person is in view! Being put away from among the saints has in view the wicked person’s unreserved breakdown and restoration of soul as evidenced by genuine repentance (2 Cor. 2:6,7; Psa. 51). Then in due time the “loosing” of the discipline *by the assembly* clears up the whole matter (Matt. 18:18-20), unless governmental consequences remain.

DISCIPLINE IS NOT MEANT FOR GETTING RID OF SOMEONE

On the one hand our flesh would spare the leavenous outbreak, perhaps especially in the case of relatives.

And behold, Miriam was leprous as snow . . . And Moses cried to Jehovah, saying, O God, heal her, I beseech thee! And Jehovah said to Moses, But had her father anyways spat in her face, should she not be shamed seven days? She shall be shut outside the camp seven days, and afterwards she shall be received in again (Num. 12:13-14).

On the other hand we may think so much of scandal that we merely want to get rid of the offender. This is another form of the flesh that is thinking of itself and its reputation. If the thing were seen rightly as offence against Christ, and as leaven in the assembly, THEN we would think also of the ultimate good of the guilty soul. JND remarked:

On the other hand the discipline of putting away is always done with the view of restoring the person who has been subjected to it, and never to get rid of him. So it is in God’s ways with us. God has always in view the good of the soul, its restoration in fullness of joy and communion, and He never draws back His hand so long as this result remains unattained. Discipline, as God would have it, carried out in His fear, has the same thing in view, otherwise it is not of God.³⁰

But we have not learnt the first rudiments of Christianity if our sympathies do not go out after the outcast and afflicted, to pray and desire that their way might be through darkness to light, through sorrow to joy, through misery to God.³¹

Someone said:

Paul -- the right one -- is the first to enter into the sorrow, with a breaking heart, that he might draw the Corinthians where he was, and that they might, in their turn, draw the guilty into the same. Paul had chiefly to do with and to say to them; they, I submit, to the culprit himself, their grief being, more than anything else, calculated to touch his conscience, and win his heart back

29. One wrote:

For the church to bind up evil with the Lord’s name by glossing it over is to judge itself no longer fit to be called God’s church (*The Bible Treasury* 18:80).

30. *Letters of J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, p. 199.

31. *The Bible Treasury*, vol. 19, p. 45. See also p. 31.

to the Lord. It can never be only an act of putting away, although there must be that, as due to the holiness of the Lord; but in that act is involved a question of eating the sin-offering in the holy place, a confessing the sin in self-judgment, and ever keeping in view the ultimate restoration of the soul. Sever 2 Cor. 2 and 7 from 1 Cor. 5 and a deal of mischief will arise.³²

The lovely prayers and confessions in Ezra 10 and Dan. 9 are most wholesome for our consideration.

J. B. Stoney commented:

If they do not feel that they are guilty of the evil for which they excommunicate, they are merely a criminal jury, giving a verdict against the guilty person, and there is really no clearing at all.³³

It is no wonder that where we do not judge ourselves, God has a controversy with us. In such a case, an assembly may not even be conscious that many of its problems may be the result of such a cause.

The spirit in which discipline should be carried out is examined at length in *The Bible Treasury*, vol. 19, pp. 28-30,43,45, and the paper "On Discipline" in the *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol. 1.

In another paper, if the Lord will, we shall consider discipline which does not require putting away. I mention this here to call attention to the fact that in some cases of putting away, possibly public rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20), or 2 Thess. 3:11-16, should have been applied before *leaven* manifested itself. And possibly before it was necessary to apply such Scriptures, pastoral and priestly care might have checked the development. Alas, how we fail in these things and thus consequently are humbled before our Lord! Perhaps if the love and grace of Christ had been more in power in our souls, we would have engaged in feet-washing (John 14) that might have arrested the development of evil. Personal considerations (how subtle they are!) often keep us from doing these things.

BINDING AND LOOSING

Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 18:18).

There are those who want to read this verse otherwise than this, but this is the true force.³⁴ It is true that there was apostolic power to bind and loose. We do

32. *The Bible Treasury* 12:287.

33. *The Bible Treasury* 11:47.

34. W. Kelly answered a question regarding the translation of this text:

Q. Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:18 -- What is the true form of the future with the perfect part. in these texts? Does it teach, what has been drawn from it and apparently by more than one Christian recently, not a ratification in heaven consequent on the binding on earth, but that what was bound on earth had been previously bound in heaven? W.

not have this today. What abides is that the assembly binds or looses now as it did in the apostolic period, since Christ's presence and authority is there with His gathered saints.³⁵

An assemblage of brothers, or of overseers,³⁶ does not have Christ in the midst (Matt. 18:18-20; 1 Cor. 4:5) and such groups, anymore than an individual now, cannot bind and loose. And as it is the assembly that binds, it is the assembly that looses. Brothers cannot loose. It is an act of the assembly, as such. The disciplined one is in a certain position and abides in it until the action of the assembly changes that position by the assembly act of loosing. It is THEN, and not before, that this position is changed. It is not the prerogative of individuals to decide at some point that they may change their way of acting towards one under discipline. The status of one under discipline is changed when the assembly looses, as directed in 2 Cor. 2. Let us be clear then. The same Scripture that shows that the assembly binds shows that the assembly looses (Matt. 18:18). 1 Cor. 5 shows binding by the assembly and 2 Cor. 2 shows us that the assembly looses. There is no Scripture warrant to delegate assembly authority. Only the assembly can so act *with the Lord present*.³⁷

J. N. Darby remarked:

But the sanction of Heaven on loosing and binding on earth is declared, in another place, to belong to another depository of power where it is not personal {i.e., of an Apostle}, which does not refer to the kingdom but to the Church, and which (if granted of God's grace) may be found at any time

A. I am of opinion that there is no ground grammatically, any more than in the scope of our Lord's doctrine, to suppose that the participle δεδεμένον expresses time past relatively to that which is signified by the future δεδεμένον. The idea is that of a certain condition viewed abstractly from consideration of actual time. "Whatever thou mayest bind on the earth shall be a thing bound in the heavens," etc. It is well known that, according to the grammarians, the futurum III or exactum in many verbs (as δέω, κόπτω, παύω, πιπράσκω) supplies the place of the simple future passive, as may be seen in Jelf's Gr. Gr. second ed. Vol. II. p. 71. The difference, I would add, is that the complex form before us views the result as permanent (δεδεμένον) but, beyond doubt, of a future act (ἔσται). Had the meaning contended for been meant, care would have been taken to express it distinctly, as ἤδη δεδεμένον ἔσται ἐν τ. οὐ., or ἔσται τὸ δεδεμένον or in some other way quite different from the actual construction, which appears to me to admit of no other translation than that which is given in the Authorized Version.

35. "In Matt. 18:15-18, the inheritance of binding and loosing is given to the two or three. Thus the binding and loosing power which is claimed by clergymen and others, and which was given first to Peter, has its succession in the two or three gathered together, and not in clerical successors. And that has its importance in these days" (*The Bible Treasury* 12:127). See an article on binding and loosing in *The Bible Treasury* 19:13.

36. A question concerning this was answered in *The Bible Treasury* 2:351, 352, and 9:271.

37. *The Bible Treasury* 19:13, 14, 43, 44; 12:127; 18:365, 378; New Series 1:265; *The Present Testimony* 1:400; *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 14:101-115, article "Matt.16"; *Notes and Comments* 1:192-200, article "Forgiveness."

while Christianity subsists, namely, wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, because Christ is there in the midst of them. This is no personal authority of any or all the members,³⁸ but of an assembly because Christ is in their midst. The language of the passage is so plain that there would be no difficulty to any one, if habits of thought had not clothed it with a meaning which its language leaves no room for. If a brother should offend, the offended one was to seek to gain him; if this failed, he was to tell it to the assembly; if he refused to hear the assembly, he was to be counted as a heathen man. The christian assembly took the place of the synagogue, and, where the assembly had acted, the judgment (till repentance) was final; the offender was held to be outside as a heathen. First, one was to go, then he with others, then the assembly to be informed of it. It was the discipline of the gathered saints in any given place; and, to make the matter precise, we are told that, wherever two or three are gathered in His name, Christ is in the midst of them. Nothing really can be simpler. There is not a word of clergy, nor ministers (however useful these latter may be by their gifts for service), nothing even of elders, though these had their local functions also. The point is that, where two or three are gathered in Christ's name, Christ is. This then is the abiding seat of the exercise of that authority in its due sphere whose acts are sanctioned in heaven. The same authority given personally to Simon Bar-jonas was that authority conferred on the two or three gathered together in Christ's name, and exists wherever two or three are so gathered. This is a very important point. The perpetuity of the loosing and binding power is in two or three gathered together. It was personal in the chosen apostle and continued in none. It is a mistake to think that forgiveness alone is binding or loosing. What the apostle wrote was to be received as the commandments of the Lord.³⁹

My dear Brother, -- A judgment of an assembly, even if I thought it a mistake,⁴⁰ I should in the first instance accept and act upon. My experience has been that the path of God is to respect the judgment of an assembly of God, while free to remonstrate and beg them to renew their judgment. My writing to you now is entirely individual and in your own interest. I do not judge the case one way or another. But when I first heard of your act of excommunication, I told --, being informed of the circumstances, that it would be impossible to recognize it as an act of the assembly. What I have heard since has amply confirmed this. What you say of females is all true as to teaching, but they form part of the assembly as much as brothers. The weight of an assembly's act is not from the individual voice or judgment of its members, but from the Lord's being in the midst of them when gathered together. What I would press upon you is that there has never been any act of the assembly at all. Grave and godly brethren may give counsel in and

38. {Sometimes JND uses the word "members" in a conventional way, as several times in these quotations, regarding a local assembly; but when writing formally on such a matter, he rightly insists that there is no membership other than that of the one body.}

39. *Collected Writings* 14:108, 109.

40. {Regarding procedural mistakes see *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:198; 1:192.}

help the assembly to a right judgment,⁴¹ but the assembly must act⁴² as such if a person is excluded. This has never been the case. I do not judge of the advisableness or rightness of the act. With that I do not meddle. I only say as your brother, for your own sake, that I do not see how it is possible for any sober person to recognize your act as the act of the assembly at all.

May the gracious Lord give you peace in every way. Personally unacquainted with you, I can only have sincerely brotherly affection towards you all, and desire, for the Lord's glory and your comfort, that you may all be blessed and guided aright.⁴³

Dear Miss ____, Mr. ____'s objection is the common one of loose brethren,⁴⁴ but the question is elsewhere than where he has put it. What does the scripture say about it? Whether men carry it out successfully is a grave question for their consciences, but has nothing to do with what is right. I asked myself this question years and years ago, How if all this should fail? Well, I said it would prove I was a bad workman as far as I was concerned in it: but there it is in scripture just where it was, and that is what is to govern us. 1 Cor. 12 clearly states this unity of the body on earth. Besides the whole teaching of scripture. But the answer as to circumstances is clear. The ground is not the wisdom of a set of individuals, but the promise that where they are gathered to His name He will be in the midst of them. And I have always found that respecting the action of an assembly *prima facie* is the way of wisdom and what God owns. And Mr. ____ forgets that the fact, that we are all one body, gives the title to communicate and remonstrate if called for, and in an extreme case, where evil is *deliberately* allowed, to disown the meeting altogether. The loose brethren have given up the truth of the unity of the body on earth and have gone back into the camp, and are mostly Independents with out a regular minister, or merged in a general looseness that has spread everywhere. But this has not changed the word of God.⁴⁵

In excommunication and reception, the local assembly acts for the whole church on earth :

The object of this effort to make independent flocks is the desire of being independent, of doing their will without submitting to the discipline of the church as one body. Mr. O. says as much (p. 43). Each assembly being independent, united only by one faith and one worship (p. 11), is in a position to judge the disciplinary proceedings of another assembly (p. 43). The unity of the body therefore does not exist. An act is the act of an independent church; it has no reference whatever to the whole, and is not binding upon other assemblies or other Christians. Some one may be put out

41. {See *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:113; 2:382, 389; 3:46.}

42. {See *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:46, 58.}

43. *Letters of J.N. Darby* 2:132.

44. {*Letters* 1:419-421 discusses how binding and loosing sets aside the notion of independency of assemblies.}

45. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:399.

by one assembly and another assembly may receive the one who is put out. It is evident that this is disorder. The “within” and the “without” are not simply the church of God {on earth} and the world. All that is lost. It is the “within” of a small voluntary and independent assembly which only exercises discipline in relation to itself. It is quite evident that the “within” and “without” of 1 Corinthians is not merely the “within” and “without” of a particular assembly, so that the wicked man could be without at Corinth and within at Ephesus. The Epistle carefully teaches the unity of the body on the earth and only recognizes the local act in that unity, a unity composed of individuals and not of churches. Look at the act of discipline in another point of view; and you will see the immense difference of the principles, and how this system of independent churches destroys the truth of scripture on this subject. What is the real power, the real source of authority, in discipline? The presence of Jesus: not simply that the discipline is the act of a voluntary society which excludes one of its members from its bosom, but that it is the act of an assembly according to God, assembled in the name of Jesus, and acting in His name and by His authority, to maintain the holiness which belongs to that name. Now the independent church is only a society which acts for itself: another assembly may judge all that it has done. There is no trace {in this error} either of the unity or of the authority of the church of God.⁴⁶

BE SPECIFIC

I once read of a case where a person that had been excommunicated from a group of Christians because of moral evil received a letter from them stating that he had been put away on the basis of 1 Cor. 5:10,11. He obtained a legal judgment against them on the ground of defamation of character because he was not guilty of *all* of the things mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:10,11. Be specific and remember that we live in a litigious climate.

Our Feast of Unleavened Bread Must be Free from Leaven (1 Cor. 5:7b, 8)

For also our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed; so that let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:7b, 8).

The celebration of the feast refers to the Feast of Unleavened Bread which began on the 15th of the first month and ended on the 22nd of that month. It was seven days long (Lev. 23). It typifies the complete (seven days), the life-long, walk of the believer that is characterized by separation from evil. The believer is consciously and happily under the shelter of the blood of “our passover,

46. *Collected Writings* 20:298, 299. The reader would do well to read “Discipline and Unity of the Assembly,” *Collected Writings* 20:251-265.

Christ.” The Passover took place on the 14th day of the first month, and as we see from our passage, it typifies “our passover, Christ.” It is important to observe that there was no time between the two feasts. Immediately that we are identified with “our passover, Christ,” the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins in its application to our lives. The Feast of Unleavened Bread receives its character from the Passover. Indeed, even on the 14th day all leaven was out of the house of the Israelite.

Thus, there must be no allowance of leaven in the assembly. It is not only a matter for our personal walk outside the assembly, but the Apostle brings the matter to bear on this assembly matter.⁴⁷ Just think of partaking of the Lord’s supper, reminding us of the slain Passover lamb,⁴⁸ doing so in fellowship together with someone such as the leavened persons described in this chapter. Why, we are directed “with such a one not even to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11). That is not referring to the Lord’s supper. That is a private matter. But then, how much more so not to eat with such at the Lord’s table:

The bread which we break, is it not [the] communion {*koinonia*} of the body of the Christ? Because we, [being] many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

There is fellowship (*koinonia*) expressed together in partaking of the loaf. And

47. W. Kelly wrote:

Keeping the feast of “unleavened bread” typifies the feeding on Christ, on Him in His unsullied purity. The bitter herbs were eaten with the lamb’s body on the paschal night; self-judgment accompanied faith in God’s mercy through the Lamb. But the unleavened bread was their food through all the seven days. This involved and required the maintenance of personal holiness. No leaven must be found in their houses. So scripture insists: Rom. 6, 7, 8; 1 Cor. 5, 6; Gal. 5, 6; Eph. 4, 5; 1 Thess. 4: 1-8; Heb. 12: 14, etc. If we do lift up our hands to the Lord, let it be piously, without wrath or doubting; let the walk and ways be under the sense of responsibility, as separate to the Lord; let love be without dissimulation and with incorruptness.

But is this all? Not so. Leaven was to be banished from the house as well as from the individual. You may often find people rightly jealous as to personal walk, yet to the last degree lax as to ecclesiastical impurity. The Lord calls us to beware of allowing leaven anywhere. But corporate purity is a worthless pretension without due regard to personal holiness. Bring not horror of clericalism or of sects into shame by lack of a lowly spirit and a holy walk. We are bound to eschew all evil, whether collective or individual. In short, what God has here at heart is that we should please Him in every relation, in what is collective as well as our individual walk. It is far from all; but it covers the present time here below. The feast of “unleavened bread” takes in the entire pilgrimage, our whole course public as well as private. Thus we may see that, if the feast was to begin the first day after the Passover, the greatest care is taken to show that it was to be continued throughout our actual sojourn on earth. To keep this feast is ever our calling while here (*The Bible Treasury* 16:51; also appears in his book, *The Feasts of Jehovah*, pp. 19, 20).

48. It is normal to break bread on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It is the *only* cyclic observance, so to speak, that Christians have from God. Some things that some Christians observe annually are paganistic.

is partaking of the loaf not a part of our seven day walk of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Certainly it is. We must not celebrate that feast “with old leaven.” In 1 Cor. 5 it is a moral matter but that does not mean doctrinal leaven is to be tolerated (cp. Gal. 5:9). If it is leaven, we are to separate ourselves from it. We must do so personally and in the assembly; and if the assembly tolerates the old leaven within, 2 Tim. 2 is our recourse. God has not bound us to fellowship with evil.

Accordingly, the old leaven of pre-salvation *evil practices* must be judged, as well as judging the leaven of malice, a quality of badness and viciousness within the heart, and judging the leaven of wickedness in the heart. Over against these two characteristics stands in apposition the unleavened bread which we should eat; that of sincerity (uprightness in the heart) and truth in the inward parts. So, while the old leaven speaks of evil practices in a general way, the other two aspects of leaven speak of what is within and seem to denote a comprehensive characterization of the evil within us. So is it with sincerity and truth, which stand in apposition to the evil.

***The Leaven of the World not to be
Tolerated in a Professed Christian in the
Assembly, or at Our Own Meal (1 Cor. 5:9-11)***

I have written to you in the epistle not to mix with fornicators; not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the avaricious and rapacious, or idolaters, since [then] ye should go out of the world. But now I have written to you, if any one called brother be fornicator, or avaricious, or idolater, or abusive, or a drunkard, or rapacious, not to mix with [him]; with such a one not even to eat (1 Cor. 5:9-11).

It is important to note that the Apostle does not here speak of our responsibility in the world, but of our responsibility in the Christian sphere.

I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU IN THE EPISTLE

The words, “I have written to you in the epistle” refers to what we call 1 Corinthians, not to a previously written letter. The problem with regarding this statement as referring to a former letter is that he speaks of having written not to mix with fornicators. The idea that he had spoken of this matter in a former letter conflicts with v. 2 which indicates that they had had no formal instructions about such cases. Concerning the meaning of the words “I have written to you in the epistle,” we have the following help from W. Kelly:

There appears no sufficient reason *a priori*, why an inspired apostle might not have written an epistle which God meant to lapse after accomplishing its end, without filling a constant place in the scriptures. Hence there would be no difficulty, to my mind, if allusion were here made to an epistle of Paul

which was never included in the canon. But where is the evidence that this is the fact, or that any other epistle is here intended than the one he is writing? In the latter case, the tense used would be what is called the epistolary aorist. It is in vain then to say, “*not* this present epistle,” which the phrase means as naturally as a former letter which has not come down to us. (Compare Rom. 16: 22; Col. 4: 16; 1 Thess. 5: 27; 2 Thess. 3: 14.) Indeed 2 Corinthians 7: 8 is the only instance that exemplifies a reference to a former letter, as the context necessitates, where the contrast is plain between the two letters. But there is nothing of the sort to determine here. As the usage the other way is far more frequent, so the sense is excellent, if we understand the actual epistle we have to be in view. The notion of a previous letter involves the inference that the present is a correction of their misunderstanding of a former command of his as regards keeping company with fornicators; but this appears gratuitous. So is the idea that there must be something in the preceding part of this epistle bearing on the point; for it is quite sufficient for the passage that he should be so instructing them now. That he must be referring to what went before is simply to deny the epistolary sense of the aorist. Again ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, far from being irrelevant and superfluous, if he meant the letter in which he was now engaged, is full of force and precision. “I have written to you in [not “an” but] the epistle not to keep company with fornicators.” He was exhorting to this effect now. This he proceeds to qualify: “not absolutely [or in all cases] with the fornicators of this world, or the covetous and rapacious, or idolatrous, since [in that case] ye must go out of the world. But now [or as the case stands] I have written to you not to keep company, if any one called a brother be,” etc. Here the same tense is used for what must be allowed to be what he is going to say in the present epistle; the *νυν* only serving to distinguish the guarded sentence, a more definite application of the principle in verse 11, from the general statement in verse 9.⁴⁹

NOT TO MIX WITH

This command is given again in v. 11 and to it is added the words “with such a one not even to eat.”

In vv. 9 and 11 and in 2 Thess. 3:15 the words *μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι* appear are translated thus:

	1 Cor. 5:9	1 Cor. 5:11	2 Thess. 3:15
J. N. Darby	not to mix with	not to mix with	not keep company with
W. Kelly	not to mix with	not to mix with	to keep no company with

49. Notes on . . . 1 Corinthians, *in loco*. See also *The Bible Treasury* 13:365, 366.

A. Marshall	not to associate intimately <i>with</i>	not to associate intimately with	not to mix with
-------------	---	----------------------------------	-----------------

The context shows that in 2 Thess. 3 that person is not placed into the classification “wicked person” (cp. 1 Cor. 5:13) and leaven, because he was not put away from among the Thessalonians so far as excommunication is concerned. However, though social intercourse with him was ended, he was to be admonished “as a brother.” Of course, such a case may worsen and develop into leaven. Be that as it may, 1 Cor. 5 goes further. There, the words are, “if anyone called brother”; and there is no “admonish [him] as a brother.” Such a one is characterized as a “wicked person” and as leavened. He must be put out. Social intercourse with him was ended also, of course, for the worse case (1 Cor. 5) includes elements of the lesser case (2 Thess. 3).

One might have to work with such a “wicked person” in his employment and have to do with him concerning discharging responsibilities, but not socialize or eat *with* him. Even if there was only a short lunch-break and one common table, it is not the physical proximity which is wrong, even at the same physical table. *Indifference* to evil is the thing that is offensive to the Lord, and under difficult circumstances one may eat his food at such a table without eating *with* the person. This is a moral matter, not a mere physical thing. Are our hearts set on pleasing our Lord?

NOT ALTOGETHER WITH THE FORNICATORS OF THIS WORLD

W. Kelly answered a question regarding how this applied to the world:

J.D. raises a question as to the accuracy of the English Bible, in rendering οὐ πάντως, “not altogether.” He enquires whether the words are not rather to be viewed as emphatically negating any companionship or intercourse with the *worldly* characters which are afterwards enumerated, and whether verse 11 is not a supplement, regarding professed Christian brethren, who are to be yet more stringently dealt with. The best versions, ancient and modern, which are accessible to me, (including the Syriac, Vulgate, Beza, Luther, De Wette, the Elberfeld, the Dutch, Diodati, Ostervald, the Lausanne, etc.,) appear to give the same sense as the authorized V., which in my opinion, *necessarily* flows from the last clause of the verse. For what is ἐπεὶ ὀφείλετε ἄρα ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελθεῖν, but a proof of the futility of an absolute avoidance of worldly bad men? -- “for then ye must needs go out of the world.” The apostle proceeds to show that the command not to keep company refers to communion in any way with guilty *brethren* so-called.⁵⁰

THE SINS NOTED IN 1 CORINTHIANS 5

Obviously, 1 Cor. 5:11 is not an exclusive listing of sins for which a person

must be put out. Theft and murder are not named, for example, as sorcery and occultism are omitted also.

With the aid of *The Englishman's Greek Concordance* let us trace the scripture usage of these words used in 1 Cor. 5:11.

Fornication. Fornication (*pornea*, p. 647) is always translated “fornication.” Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 show that adultery may be called fornication also. Matt. 15:19, Mark 7:21 and Gal. 5:19 show that adultery may be listed separately from fornication. Adultery is a class of fornication as in the incest of 1 Cor. 5:1. The word fornication must not be restricted to illicit sexual relations between unmarried persons. It is a general word for sexual deviations from the Creator's order.

Uncleanness (*akatharsia*, p. 20) is several times listed with fornication and/or adultery. See Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 2 Cor. 12:21. The great whore of Rev. 17 is noted for the filthiness, or uncleanness, of her fornication. In Rom. 1:24 we learn that God gave the heathen up “to uncleanness, to dishonor their bodies between themselves.” The sin of homosexuality is uncleanness and, I believe, rightly falls under the general classification of fornication. 2 Cor. 12:21 and Rev. 17:4 would indicate this as would the above consideration of fornication and adultery. Jude 7 proves it!

The spread of homosexuality and its palliation, even by professed Christians, should have no effect on the Christian's judgment of it because it is judged by the Word of God. This sin is denounced in Scripture clearly and repeatedly. See Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:24-28; 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1:10. See Gen. 19. 1 Cor. 6:11 shows that deliverance from this sin is available.

Lasciviousness (*aselgia*, p. 87) is another related evil, coupled with fornication and uncleanness in Gal. 5:19 and 1 Cor. 12:21 (licentiousness), and with uncleanness in Eph. 4:19. It seems to refer to an evil unrestrainedness that is coupled with sexual sin.

Pornee (p. 648) is translated harlot and whore. *Pornos* (p. 648) is translated fornicator(s) and whoremongers. Sexual relations between man and wife have been given by the Creator and we are to hold marriage in honor in every way and the bed undefiled. Wrong teaching has made persons think that the bed is always defiling in some way. This attitude dishonors God, and His Word, Who tells us to hold the bed undefiled. But abusers of this -- fornicators and adulterers -- He will judge (Heb. 13:4). Within marriage, then, sexual relations are to be held as honorable and undefiled by Christians in accordance with the Word of God.

There is something especially peculiar about the sin of fornication. “Every sin which a man may practice is without the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18). There may be persons who dream that if a couple has sexual relations only once it is not leaven. Not so!

50. *The Bible Treasury* 1:165.

How many times does adultery have to take place before the marriage tie is broken by it (Matt. 19:9)? One act of adultery breaks the tie (and adultery is fornication), and the spouses offended against may forgive and God will recognize the marriage as valid; or the offended one may get a divorce and God will recognize the marriage as dissolved. Of course, in any event adultery must be treated as leaven.

It is clear from the New Testament that fornication is a word which may be used to describe a number of sins that may also be described by other words. Thus:

1. Homosexuality is fornication (Jude 7).
2. An unmarried life of sexual relations is fornication (1 Cor. 7:2). *Of course* premarital sex is fornication!
3. Sexual relations with a stepmother is fornication (1 Cor. 5:2).
4. A married person's sexual relation with another than the spouse is called fornication (Matt. 5:32 and 19:9). Thus it is clear that adultery is fornication, but not all fornication is adultery. Cf. Jer. 3:2, 3, 8 and Ezek. 23:43, 45. There is no ground for claiming that Matthew referred to the postmarital discovery of premarital unfaithfulness. Fornication, not desertion, is the ground for divorce. The so-called 'Pauline privilege' is a myth: Paul did not state another ground for divorce. You say that you have difficulty with "not bound" (1 Cor. 7:15) because one is already gone? Why do you not have difficulty with "let them go away" if they are already gone? Let us beware of being selective about our difficulties. If the unbeliever goes away, let him go away. Do not make various attempts to stop him or try to make him return. You, though a Christian, are "not bound" to make such attempts; you are "not bound" to try to hinder; you are "not bound" to carry out any Christian marital obligations with such. The Christian need not have a disturbed conscience about it. "But God has called us in peace" (1 Cor. 7:15).

Our Lord founded His teaching about divorce on the created order and *therefore* allowed *one* ground for divorce and remarriage by the innocent one. Paul did not change that and introduce another reason for divorce: that would have been a retrograde step, a departure from the order grounded upon the order of creation, upon which our Lord insisted.

That the word fornication can be used to describe adultery is also seen in the figurative use of the word in Rev. 2:21; 9:21; 14:8; 17:2,4; 18:3; 19:2. On the other hand, some lists of sins that mention fornication also include adultery: Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 7:21; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19; Heb. 13:4. In such a case, adultery is singled out and

fornication refers to other sins.

Not only is homosexuality leaven; so is its toleration and/or support by professed Christians. From a scriptural perspective there is nothing "gay" about it. It is not a question of how a homosexual is otherwise in society or at work. Nor is it a matter of cultures. It is not a relationship of love countenanced by Scripture, nor is it rooted in the gospel of Christ. Scripture is against it explicitly and implicitly.

Perversion has alleged "that we may *know* them" (Gen. 19:5) means that the men of Sodom wanted to "get acquainted" with them. But Lot said, "Do not wickedly!" At least he recognized the character of sodomy; but alas, what was he going to do with his daughters? Gen. 19:8 refers to sexual matters (*to know*) also, not "getting acquainted." Gen. 19:9 shows how anxious the men of Sodom were to "get acquainted." And though blinded, they still tried hard to "get acquainted" (Gen. 19:11). "And the people of Sodom were wicked and great sinners before Jehovah" (Gen. 13:13). God's displeasure was registered by the fire and brimstone that consumed them. "Do not err: . . . nor those who make women of themselves, nor who abuse themselves with men . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9). We shall soon find out by experience whether *practicing* "Christian" homosexuals and their supporters are right, or if the Scripture is right. But God has already marked His judgment (Gen. 19) of this perversion from the order of creation (Gen. 3) before the law was given. The law denounced it also (Deut. 23:17; cf. 29:23; 32:32; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12). Jude 7 says, "as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities around them, committing greedily fornication, in like manner with them, and going after other flesh, lie there as an example, undergoing the judgment of eternal fire." Solemn words! Cf. 1 Tim. 1:10.

Other characteristics of the homosexuals in Sodom are given in Ezek. 16:49, 50.

Two other references to homosexuality in the books of Moses are Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, which refer to *morality*.

Rom. 1:26 and 27 is a clear condemnation of homosexuality. Verse 26 refers to what is called lesbianism. Today these sins are called expressing "love" and "tenderness," and, "commitment in an on-going relationship." Rhetoric and semantic juggling will not change Rom. 1:26 which says "vile lusts." Jude 7 classes sodomy as fornication. Homosexuality is a species of fornication. The *act* of homosexuality comes under the judgment of 1 Cor. 5:11-13.

Avaricious or Covetous. A covetous person (p. 628) is an idolater (Eph. 5:5); yet an idolater may be distinguished from a covetous man (1 Cor. 5:11). Covetousness appears to be a species of idolatry therefore.

In Eph. 4:19 JND translates, "who having cast off all feeling, have given

themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with *greedy unsatisfied lust*." The emphasized words are a translation of the word which is elsewhere translated "covetous" and help us to see its force. This greedy unsatisfied lust may be for power (2 Pet. 2:3,14), or money (Luke 12:15), or land, etc.; but in Eph. 4:19 it is connected with fornication. In Eph. 5:13 JND renders it "unbridled lust" and it is found again in a context of fornication.

Idolater. We already noticed that idolaters (*idololtrées*, p.193) are distinguished from the covetous, but that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). "Idolater" appears in 1 Cor. 5:10,11; 6:9; 10:7; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 21:8; 22:15. We hardly need say that literal idolatry is a sin included under the judgment of leaven, but there are other aspects of idolatry. "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them: as it is written, The people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play" (1 Cor. 10:7). This is idolatry -- leaven. We must remember also that "self-will is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). A person characterized by self-will is as an idolater and this is leaven. Idolatry is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20) that finds its answer in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Covetousness is the worship of something else than God and it is thus idolatry (Col. 3:5), as is the worship of pleasure (1 Cor. 10:7) and self-will (1 Sam. 15:23). When the soul becomes devoted to something so that that thing receives God's due, that is idolatry.

Railer or Abusive Person. A railer (*loidoros*, p. 464) is called a reviler in the KJV of 1 Cor. 6:10. It denotes one who abuses others verbally. See John 9:28; 1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9.

Blasphemy (*blaspheméo*, p. 107) is a related thought. In English we now seem to restrict blasphemy to injurious language against God. In Scripture it is used of injurious language against man as well (Rom. 3:8; 14:16; 1 Cor. 4:13; 10:30; Titus 3:2, etc.)

In 1 Pet. 3:9 we see that when our Lord was reviled (railed upon), He reviled not again. The Gospels say that He was blasphemed, though the word might be translated "reviled" (Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29), "injurious" (Luke 22:65) and "spoke insultingly" (Luke 23:39).

These latter two words seem to denote a calumniating, slanderous, abusive, insulting and scornful character of speech.

We must beware of charging a person with this -- it is leaven -- merely because we do not like what he said, or merely because he said something about us. But where this character is in evidence, the leaven must be purged.

Drunkard. The OT contains many cases of drunkenness. I am not aware that the law forbade drunkenness, though priests were to abstain altogether while serving (Lev. 10:9). The law made nothing perfect (Heb. 7:19), as seen also in the case of divorce (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). When grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, a change occurred, and He allowed only one cause for divorce.

Nonetheless, drunkenness was associated with sin and shame (Gen. 9:21; 19:33,35; 1 Sam. 25:36; 2 Sam. 11:13; 13:28; 1 Kings 16:9; 20:16). Eli even suspected Hannah of being drunken (1 Sam. 1:13) at the tabernacle. Isa. 28:7 shows how wine and strong drink grievously affected priests and prophets. There is good advice given in Prov. 31:4-6, and the royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9) would do well to keep this in mind, withal recognizing that nowhere in Scripture is the use of alcoholic beverages proscribed. The New Testament allows its use, and also recognizes a medicinal use (1 Tim. 5:23).

W. Kelly has fully dealt with the teetotal system in a lengthy paper: "The Testimony of the Bible to the Use and Abuse of Wine &c &c, With a Notice of the Corresponding Terms in Hebrew and Greek Scriptures . . ."

While the use of alcoholic beverages is not forbidden in the New Testament, drunkenness is expressly condemned after the descent of the Spirit, and there appear exhortations to soberness. Several lists of vices denounce drunkenness: Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10.

"Be not drunk with wine, in which is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) does not mean that being filled with the Spirit manifests itself as drunkenness. Indeed not! We must be sober (1 Thess. 5:5-8; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 5:4; Titus 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7). Our Lord gave warning against eating and drinking with the drunken during His absence (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45). Drunkenness is incompatible with the Spirit's presence, Who through Paul called drunkenness leaven in 1 Cor. 5.

Extortioner or Rapacious. *Harpax* (p. 82) is translated "ravaging" in Matt. 7:15 and "rapacious" in 1 Cor. 5:10,11; 6:10, by JND, who renders *harpagée* (p. 82) "plunder" in Heb. 10:34. Let us beware of "sharp" business practice which leads on to extortion.

A SIN NOT NOTED IN 1 CORINTHIANS 5

We noted that 1 Cor. 5 is not a list; i.e., it is not a catalog of offences for which a person must be put away as a wicked person. Murder, theft, and "drug abuse" are omitted in the passage.

By "drug abuse" I mean the taking of drugs for the purpose of altering the mental state for pleasure or occult purposes. It may be for the purpose of experiencing "self consciousness"; or for experiencing "reality"; or for experiencing consciousness of "the ground of being"; or for contacting spirits; etc. No Christian should take drugs for such like reasons.

The faithful saints of God do not condone the "hippyism" of the 1960s and drug abuse. Let us examine the relationship of drug abuse to alcoholic beverages. The New Testament allows the use of alcoholic beverages but not the getting under its effect. Be not filled with wine, but be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). The Spirit should characterize our behavior and control our thinking, not the effect of excess of wine. When alcohol begins to affect

behavior, it may not be leaven, but, we are in the wrong. Wine may be drunk for its flavor, but *never* should be drunk in order to produce a mental state of intoxication. But drug abuse (taking LSD, for example) is for the purpose of producing a mental state of euphoria, or for gaining certain “experiences,” “self consciousness,” “consciousness of reality,” etc. These are not Christian motives, and the last one is patent idolatry. Drug abuse, in contrast to having a glass of wine or beer, inherently has a bad motive. (I say these things as one who does not use alcohol.)

There is, then, a difference between having a glass of wine and having marijuana or LSD or heroin, etc. in order to produce a certain mental state. It lies in the motive as well as in the result. If alcoholic beverages are drunk for the same purpose as abusing drugs, it is to be treated the same way. Christians must not “try” drugs, nor must they “try” getting drunk. Young Christians who “cannot” understand this difference and plead in excuse for drug abuse that others drink alcoholic beverages, *will not* understand rather than *cannot*. Self-will is idolatry (1 Sam. 15:22; 1 Cor. 5:11).

“Sorcery,” *pharmakia*, is found in Gal. 5:20, Rev. 9:21 and 18:23. It is the word from which we derive “pharmacy.” Sorcery involved the use of drugs for occult purposes and was used in conjunction with occult incantations. “Sorcerers,” *pharmakos*, is found in Rev. 21:8 and 22:15.

Sorcery, then, involves occult use of drugs, and from this a Christian must be separate. The use of hallucinogenic drugs is leaven and falls under the class of sins named in 1 Cor. 5.

NOT TO MIX WITH [HIM]; WITH SUCH A ONE NOT EVEN TO EAT

This command of the Lord not to mix with him is followed by another statement that we are not *even* to eat with such a person. No, not even that. W. Kelly remarked:

“Put away from” – not the table of the Lord merely, this he does not say, but -- “put away from among yourselves.” This is much stronger than expelling from the table. Of course, it implies exclusion from the Lord’s table, but from their table too – “with such a one, no, not to eat.” An ordinary meal, or any such act expressive even in natural things, of fellowship with the person thus dishonoring the Lord, is forbidden.⁵¹

The Assembly is Responsible to Judge Those that are Within (1 Cor. 5: 12, 13)

51. *Lectures Introductory to . . . the Epistles of Paul the Apostle*, Broom: Patemoster Row, 1869, p. 61.

For what have I [to do] with judging those outside also? *ye*, do not ye judge them that are within? But those without God judges. Remove the wicked person from amongst yourselves (1 Cor. 5:12, 13).

THE “WITHIN” AND THE “WITHOUT”

Is it merely Local? If only the local assembly, as if an independent assembly, is meant by “within,” then what is it that falls under “those without God Judges”? If the “within” means only the local assembly, then all others are in the sphere designated “without.” J. N. Darby well rejected such notions:

In the first of Corinthians it is of moment to remark because it is the epistle in which a local assembly is spoken of as practically in certain respects representing the whole assembly of God, that the epistle is addressed to all believers everywhere -- all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. We get a church-character, but the apostle in his address is careful to associate all Christians with those at Corinth. Hence, if one was put out as a wicked person by the assembly at Corinth, he was “without,” that is, outside the *whole* church of God (not of the body of Christ vitally, but the assembly on earth). Nor can you indeed read the entire epistle without seeing that what was said by the apostle, and consequently done by the assembly at Corinth, was an act valid for the whole body of saints on earth; that they are viewed as involved in it, as indeed they are expressly mentioned. To say he was only outside the particular assembly, when he was put out of it, is a monstrous and mischievous perversion. When the apostle says “them within” and “them that are without,” to say that he only means within or without a particular body (“do ye not judge them that are within? them that are without God judgeth”); it is clearly “within,” or “without,” *on earth*; and it is clearly not within or without a particular assembly; the difference is between Christians and men of the world. Within and without, that is, applies to *the whole* assembly of Christ on earth; they were the fornicators of this world, or one called a brother. In Corinth, to be of the assembly they must be of the local assembly, unless in schism; but if called “a brother,” they were of the assembly, not because they had joined that particular body, but because they were Christians not excluded by just discipline.

I now turn to chapter 12, which will make the matter as clear as possible . . .⁵²

The object of this effort to make independent flocks is the desire of being independent, of doing their will without submitting to the discipline of the church as one body. Mr. O. says as much (p. 43). Each assembly being independent, united only by one faith and one worship (p. 11), is in a position to judge the disciplinary proceedings of another assembly (p. 43). The unity of the body therefore does not exist. An act is the act of an independent church; it has no reference whatever to the whole, and is not binding upon other assemblies or other Christians. Some one may be put out by one assembly and another assembly may receive the one who is put out. It is

52. *Collected Writings* 20:261, 262. This whole article, “Discipline and Unity of the Assembly,” should be read.

evident that this is disorder. The “within” and the “without” are not simply the church of God and the world. All that is lost. It is the “within” of a small voluntary and independent assembly which only exercises discipline in relation to itself. It is quite evident that the “within” and “without” of 1 Cor. is not merely the “within” and “without” of a particular assembly, so that the wicked man could be without at Corinth and within at Ephesus. The Epistle carefully teaches the unity of the body on the earth and only recognizes the local act in that unity, a unity composed of individuals and not of churches. Look at the act of discipline in another point of view; and you will see the immense difference of the principles, and how this system of independent churches destroys the truth of scripture on this subject. What is the real power, the real source of authority, in discipline? The presence of Jesus: not simply that the discipline is the act of a voluntary society which excludes one of its members from its bosom, but that it is the act of an assembly according to God, assembled in the name of Jesus, and acting in His name and by His authority, to maintain the holiness which belongs to that name. Now the independent church is only a society which acts for itself: another assembly may judge all that it has done. There is no trace either of the unity or of the authority of the church of God.

Does it then follow that, if another assembly has acted hastily, a flock is bound hand and foot? In no wise. Just because the unity of the body is true and recognized, and that in a case of discipline the members of that body who gather together elsewhere take an interest in what passes in each place, they are free to make brotherly objections, or to suggest some scriptural motive; in a word, they are capable of all brotherly activity with regard to it. If it be an independent assembly, it is not concerned; there is nothing for it to look into. If these things are done in the unity of the body, every Christian is interested in what passes. It may happen that the discipline of an assembly cannot be owned; but then it is rejected as an assembly, and the presence of Jesus giving authority to its acts is denied -- a very grave thing, but one that may occur. Mr. O. has entirely falsified the unity of the body, and wishes for independent churches and a unity of faith and worship, the aggregate of the churches forming according to him the unity of the body. The word of God knows nothing of this system. The reader may judge of it by reading 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 1 and other passages of the word.⁵³

The Within and the Without in View of 2 Timothy 2. The state of the church on earth viewed in responsible testimony had changed and so the Apostle Peter said that judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). He is not speaking of some particular local assembly. God has but one house here. And in Rev. 1-3 we see one like the Son of man as judge.

The duty to separate from evil abides in a day of ruin. We do live in a day of ruin in spite of the denials of those who palliate evil, who deny the truth concerning the holiness of Christian fellowship, and who pretend that the ruin

does not exist. 2 Timothy instructs us in view of this ruin and this bears upon the matter of the “within” and “without” of 1 Cor. 5:12,13.

Those gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the ruin are not *the* assembly of God in such and such a place, for *the* assembly of God in such and such a place embraces all Christians in that place. (For the doctrine of an assembly in a city, see the helpful remarks in *Letters of J. N. Darby* under index title of “Assembly in a city.”)

Those gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ are part of the ruin and must act so as to recognize the fact. Matt. 18:20 is so worded as to allow for the ruin. We still may now be gathered together according to Matt. 18:20, but when the Corinthian saints were so gathered together the condition depicted in 2 Timothy did not exist. The wicked person was put “outside,” into Satan’s sphere (1 Cor. 5:4, 13; 1 John 5:19). He was outside of that which expressed the church everywhere. But now we are in the time depicted by 2 Timothy. It is not true that we can regard all Christians not gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ as “outside” because such a thought does not take account of the ruin, the condition depicted in 2 Tim. 2. Those “outside” are regarded in 1 Cor. 5 as put there by an act of the Lord Jesus Christ acting in and through the assembly gathered together unto His name (1 Cor. 5:4, 13).

In a day of ruin we may still have His presence thus (Matt. 18:20), only the ruin teaches us not to regard all who are not gathered together . . . as “outside”; yet so far as the discipline exercised through the saints gathered together to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned they *act on the principle* of the “within” and “without.” Such “put away from among yourselves that wicked person,” without claiming to be exactly equivalent to the “yourselves” denoted in 1 Cor. 5. The call to separate from leaven abides amidst the ruin, as we saw when we considered 2 Tim. 2:14-16 in the second paper in this series, yet we do not act as “*the* assembly of God” or claim such status. To do so denies the ruin. However, we refuse fellowship with leaven and pursue righteousness per the instructions in 2 Tim. 2 where the pathway in the midst of ruin is shown to be one of exclusion of leaven and refusal of connection with it.

We ought, then, to walk in that path which should characterize all of the people of God, taking account also of the ruin in which we find ourselves and the directions given in the Word with regard to it.

We must have the mind of the Lord regarding expressions used by the Spirit of God in connection with the condition about which He used it. There are things which can now be taken up in such a way as to pretend that the assembly of God on earth is in its original outward unity; or to pretend that a group is set up as *the* assembly of God. Our faces belong in the dust concerning the general state of the church and our part in it, and concerning the recovery of the truth and the humbling things that have transpired since, and our part in them.

53. *Collected Writings* 20:298, 299. See also *Letters* 1:421ff.

J. N. Darby remarked:

. . . so in cases of wrong it is finally told to the assembly, and the “without” and “within” refer to it; that is, I get the body responsible as well as competent. The Lord, who knew all the coming history of His church, has extended this in His grace to two or three gathered in His name, and connects this with discipline and being heard. When two or three are gathered in {gathered together to} His name, there is He in the midst of them. Thus, while fully admitting that all the saints in a locality constitute properly the one assembly in a place, if they will not unite, the responsibility and the presence of the Lord are found with those who do, and their acts, if really done as met in His name, have His authority; that is, another such assembly must own the assembly and their acts, or disown their connection with the Lord.⁵⁴

The misuse of the truth of the ruin of the church on earth viewed in responsible testimony to undermine scriptural order was answered by J. N. Darby.⁵⁵

REMOVE THE WICKED PERSON FROM AMONGST YOURSELVES

The removal of the wicked person does not require that we be filled with knowledge first, but that we be humbled and godly enough to do what is due to Christ.

The command of God is: “Remove the wicked person from amongst yourselves.”⁵⁶ Much of our difficulty concerning our practical conduct in such cases arises from not bowing⁵⁷ in heart to the sentence of God. Some lightly would think to be more gracious than God! In this connection

To “remove from among yourselves” A WICKED PERSON means among other things that we not outwardly sympathize with him. Socializing with such a one is one form of extending sympathy. It gives expression to sympathy by treating the one put away as if nothing had happened, whereas God’s way is that he should be made to feel his guilt by the uniform attitude of the saints not socializing with him. Eating with such a one on any occasion, whether it be in a private home (his house, our house, or another person’s house) at a wedding, at a funeral, at gatherings of the saints when refreshments are served, etc. is expressly forbidden in 1 Cor. 5:11 -- “With such a one not even to eat.”⁵⁸

There is no scriptural warrant -- no excuse -- no reason -- for one who

54. *Collected Writings* 20:254.

55. *Letters* 1:425.

56. J. N. Darby remarked:

A fall that demands excommunication is not the commencement of evil in a Christian . . . (*Letters* 2:197; see also 3:380).

57. On owning assembly actions, see *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:204, 323, 331, 418, 420, 422; 2:132, 199, 214, 216, 399; 3:25. There is such a thing as *prima facie* bowing to an assembly action: *Letters* 1:420; 2:132, 216, 399; *The Bible Treasury* 14:190.

58. See also *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:225; 3:63.

professes to be a child of God to merely visit with, to socialize with, A WICKED PERSON called a brother. It is really disobedience and unfaithfulness to our Lord and His Word. It evidences the neutrality that is in the heart. It is personally defiling and brings that defilement among God’s people. It is unloving and unkind to the guilty one under discipline to think that “graciousness” and “kindness” in the form of such socializing is necessary to win back the one put away. Such actions only defeat, or spoil, God’s perfect way of finally restoring in accordance with His mind. If we really believed God about this, bowing to it in our hearts as the very judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5:4), our eye would be single, and “if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. 6:22). All so enlightened will have the same judgment and can thus unitedly beseech the Lord to work repentance in the heart of the wicked person so that he might be restored. There is no basis to ask this of the Lord if we disobey Him by socializing and/or eating with the wicked person, thereby identifying ourselves with him.

Part B:

Matters Connected with 1 Cor. 5

1 Corinthians and Evil Doctrine

Following is an extract from a paper by Philalethes (A. C. Ord?), *A Conversation Between a Would-be "Open Brother" and a "Strict Brother," on Matt. 18:20.*

A. She would have "made herself partaker of his evil deeds" {2 John 10, 11}.

B. But if she had only greeted him outside the house?

A. It would have been the same. So the word tells us plainly.

B. But what if she had broken bread with the heretic?

A. In that case she would not only have made herself partaker with his evil deeds, but identified herself entirely with him and his heresy. I must confess things begin to assume a different aspect to me now to what they did before.

B. Yes, dear A, you see how true it is, that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." And how? Through being mixed with it, that is, through association. And this divine principle of truth we find holding good, not only as to immorality, as in the case at Corinth, but also as to doctrine in the Epistle to the Galatians {5:9}.

A. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we find it only applied to immorality, but not to evil doctrine. Why does not the Apostle enjoin them to put away from them those that denied the resurrection, and thus undermined the very foundation -- truth of Christianity?

B. Pardon me, you are mistaken, dear A, the Spirit of God does imply the same principle in the case of the Corinthians. But even if He had not done so, for us who possess the complete Word of God, it is quite enough, that He does so in the Galatians. God speaking once is quite sufficient for any honest and obedient child of God.

A. But where do we find the principle that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and the consequent necessity of discipline urged for the Corinthians except as to immorality? One should have thought that 1 Cor. 15 would have been the very place for insisting on doctrinal discipline.

B. And has not this been done in that very chapter?

A. Where?

B. In vv. 33 and 34. After having dealt with the evil doctrine and exposed its true character, the inspired Apostle continues: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Is not this in other words the same as: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

A. Yes, but they are not told to put away from among themselves the heretic and his adherents.

B. How does the Apostle continue? He writes: "Awake to righteousness, and *sin not.*" Against which sin does the Apostle warn them here? Against association with that incestuous "wicked person"?

A. No, he had dealt with that in the 5th chapter.

B. Quite so. He evidently warns them here against association with doctrinal evil, as the whole tenor of the chapter clearly shows. He adds: "*For some of you have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame.*" These words remind us in their solemnity of those the Lord addressed to the Jewish Sadducees, who like the christian "Sadducees" at Corinth denied the resurrection of the dead: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power God." Equally, if not still more solemn language was that of the inspired Apostle to the Corinthians; in chapter 15 far more solemn even than that employed by the Holy Spirit in the fifth chapter. For however bad and dishonoring to God moral evil in a Christian may be, it bears both as to its nature and the extent of its destructive effects, no comparison with heresy, which touches directly the personal glory of Christ and spreads its baneful poison even more swiftly and in far wider circles than does moral evil.

A. You are right. I never saw these two verses in the solemn light they now appear to me.

B. And do you think that those solemn warnings in vv. 33 and 34 against association with those "ministers of Satan" (2 Cor. 11:15), do not refer to breaking bread with them at the Table of the Lord, whose betrayers and blasphemers they are? You might just as well say, that the "elect lady" would have committed no wrong, if she had broken bread with an heretic, because the Apostle {John} had not expressly forbidden her to do so. And, you might just as well maintain, that the Lord in writing through the same Apostle to the church at Pergamos, blaming them for suffering among them those that held the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes, "*which He hates,*" and calling them to repentance, threatening that otherwise He would "come quickly and fight against them with the sword of His mouth," only referred to personal intercourse with them, but not to the Lord's Table, which expresses the communion of His body and of His blood. Can wilful perversion of Holy Writ go farther than this?

A. I must confess, it is horrible!

B. Let me add one more of my illustrations, dear A, if you do not object.

A. I thank you for them. They have helped me greatly.

B. Take the case of a father who had forbidden his children to have any personal intercourse with a certain neighbor and his family, because of their low and

dishonest character, hostile spirit and injurious activity against the father and his family. Soon afterwards one of the sons of that father having been with his brother invited to supper by the artful neighbor, says to his brother:

It is written, that we ought to love our neighbor as ourselves, and I do not believe father could have meant that we should not go and sup with him. Our father has only forbidden us to greet him in the street and to receive him into our house, without expressly forbidding us to sup with him. So I see no reason why we should not go.

Would not such reasoning indicate a perverse and rebellious heart, in silent conspiracy with the forbidden wicked neighbor?

A. Indeed, it would. It would be high treason against his parents and his family. There is just one more question I should like to ask you -- not for myself, but for others, for I am pretty clear now. Suppose, the "elect lady" had received the heretic into her house or greeted him outside, but did not hold the evil doctrine herself?

B. She would have made herself partaker of his evil deeds," and therefore would have been dealt with as the heretic himself.

A. But what about those who would have admitted the lady to the Table, after she had received or greeted the heretic?

B. If they had done so wilfully and knowingly, they would, on the same principle, make themselves partakers of the evil deed of such a person, simply on the ground of what is due to *Christ, the Son of God*; for remember, it is *the Lord's Table*. The unfaithfulness to Christ would be the same, and, therefore, would have to be dealt with in the same way. And depend upon it, A, those who would receive the one who had received and greeted the heretic, would soon be ready to receive the heretic himself. For indifference to the glory and honor Christ of God soon blunts the spiritual perception of a Christian's mind and the tender sensibilities of his heart, and like a cankerworm undermines his spiritual constitution and saps his power of discernment. This very year a letter was published, signed by one of the leaders of "Bethesda" at Bristol, its head quarters, named Wright, in which he quasi-officially declares, that they now receive even from such meetings, where Mr. Newton is received as a teacher!⁵⁹

59. {The reference is to James Wright, son-in-law to George Muller of the Bethesda, England Open Brethren assembly. Charles Stanley printed this letter in a published paper:

Is it true then, that Bethesda really does now receive from those in fellowship where those minister who teach errors? Certainly not, many will say. C. L., a Christian young man in London, being much perplexed as to this question, wrote to Bristol to inquire at the fountain head. He received the following:

*New Orphan Houses, Ashley Down,
Bristol: 19th. Dec. 1883.*

DEAR SIR,

Truly this goes beyond the second Epistle of John, does it not?

A. Indeed! I feel like one standing at the edge of an abyss.

B. And now let us return to our starting point, I mean Matt. 18:20. You cannot fail to perceive from the whole tenor of the preceding verses, that it is a question there of discipline. And do you think, dear A, that two or three could be considered as truly gathered {together} to the name of the Lord, and claim His gracious promise connected with such gathering, who are indifferent to the honor of His blessed Person?

A. Impossible.

B. Could the Lord in Matt. 18 give the promise of His blessed presence to such, of whom He by His Spirit, in 2 John {10, 11} tells us, that they are associates, and therefore accomplices, of "ministers of Satan," and traitors against His Person?

A. Certainly not. Otherwise the Spirit of God in the Apostle would have flatly contradicted the words of God's own Son. I see it all now. How blinded I have been! . . .

Do Any OT Scriptures Establish a Basis for Relatives to Act Otherwise?

Are family members an exception to this:

With such a one, not even to eat (1 Cor. 5:11).

Let us consider the case of the near of kin, such as the husband, wife, or

In reply to your enquiry, the ground on which we receive to the Lord's table is soundness in the faith, and consistency of life of the *individual* believer. We should not refuse to receive one whom we had reason to believe was personally sound in the faith and consistent in life *merely* because he, or she, was in fellowship with a body of Christians who would allow Mr. Newton to minister among them; just on the same principle that we should not refuse a person *equally sound* in faith and consistent in life simply because he, or she, came from a body of Christians amongst whom the late Mr. J. N. Darby had ministered, though on account of much more *recent* unsound teachings of the *latter*, we might well feel *a priori* greater hesitation.

I am, faithfully yours,

Signed. JAMES WRIGHT.

Now, passing by the false accusations against that honored servant of the Lord Jesus, J. N. Darby, suppose it were true that he also, as well as Mr. Newton, taught unsound doctrine against the blessed Lord, what then are the avowed principles of Bethesda to this very day? (*An Allegory: Things Supposed to Illustrate Things That Are*, available from Present Truth Publishers). At the time J Wright wrote this B. W. Newton was alive and teaching his doctrine of Christ's "unspeakable circumstantial distance from God." See *Precious Truths Revived and Defended*, vol. 2, also available from the publisher.}

dependent children. Mr. Darby wrote about the case of the wife whose husband had been put away as follows:

Here it says, “no, not to eat.” I would not dine with such an one: I would give him to eat if he were hungry, but not eat with him. Take a wife whose husband is put out. It may be awkward, but her action is not keeping company with him as a case of will: it is one of subjection to authority.⁶⁰

It is clear that Mr. Darby recognized that the wife had a scriptural duty to perform as being in subjection; and, as being obedient to Christ because she loves Him, she does His will. The subjection of a wife to her husband is based on divinely instituted authority, and does not cease⁶¹ if the husband is “put away” from amongst the saints by discipline of the assembly. By doing the will of Christ in fulfilling those duties of a wife, she does not wilfully “keep company” with her husband who has been put away, though she eats at the same table as he does.

Mr. Darby has also written about the case of a dependent son who was under assembly discipline. The entire letter is reproduced here for its valuable comments on the subject:

My dear Brother, -- I hold it of all importance to maintain intact the discipline of God’s house, as to not eating with those under discipline. I got a dreadful scolding from one for acting on it. Nor do I in the least blame --. It is very well that the son should feel that the father did not feel lightly his son’s getting put out. I should not eat with him, and if he ate at the same table, I should not enter into conversation with him, and if -- did, I should not like to be at the table. If the lad’s spirit be at all subdued, and there was fear of alienating him by harshness, I might have him eat at the table, telling him that I could not have free intercourse with him. But as he was necessarily in the house I should not refuse letting him eat at the same table. But I could not keep company with him till he was humbled. This would not hinder anxious love as regards him, and the assurance of it; but familiarity and company at table, as if nothing had happened, I should not accept. I give my son his dinner if needed, I shew him my heart yearns over him, but I could not be familiar and at ease with him. I should not eat *with* him, if even I ate at the same time. Something would depend on the age of the son, and how far he was under the father’s authority. If young and under it, I must let him eat, and treat him as I would treat on under rebuke. If grown up and independent, I should be less disposed to do so.⁶²

Some, in an attempt to justify a course contrary to 1 Cor. 5:11, enlist the support of certain OT scriptures. The tendency of doing so is to make God the author of their course (by claiming that they are following God’s Word in doing so),

60. *Collected Writings* 26:220.

61. This subject is more fully treated in *The Department of a Christian Woman*, second ed., obtainable from the publisher.

62. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:63.

while in fact it is fleshly activity and lack of courage to be faithful. An OT Scripture enlisted in support of such a course is Lev. 21:1-4. In this portion of Scripture the priest was allowed to defile himself by the dead in the case of a near relation, and therefore it is claimed by analogy that one may visit with, eat with, and socialize with, a relative put away as a wicked person. There are two considerations concerning this to which I would call attention:

1. As to typical teaching, I believe that it is leprosy in the Old Testament (as typifying the worst energy of active evil) that corresponds to leaven. Leprosy in the head or beard suggests doctrinal evil held (Rev. 2:14) or taught (Gal. 5:9) respectively, while leprosy in the body suggests moral evil (1 Cor. 5).⁶³
2. “Defilement by the dead” suggests moral contact with that in man which has no life toward God. The energy of active evil is not the prominent thought as is the case with leaven (or leprosy) working, but of moral contact with moral death.

These two considerations should be sufficient to show that the use of Lev. 21:1-4 to justify the practice of relatives eating with, or socializing with, one who has been “put away” as a wicked person, is a misapplication of Scripture. (See also Lev. 13:46).

In addition to the above considerations we must ask, “Does the New Testament allow the Christian to have deliberate moral contact with that which is spiritually dead?” No, our Lord said, “Suffer the dead to bury their own dead” (Luke 9:60). Of course, a Christian may bury his relatives, or anyone else, but let nothing interfere with the call or rights of God. The law allowed divorce for many reasons; our Lord allowed but one. The law *allowed* many things; it made nothing perfect. Bow to the word of the Lord in 1 Cor. 5 and do not force Lev. 21 against the clear instruction of the Lord. This is the obedient, and therefore the holy, loving, happy path.

There is still another matter which those who would force Lev. 21 against 1 Cor. 5 have failed to consider, or have ignored. Num. 19:11-14 provides instruction concerning a person that touched a dead body. It specifies *cleansing!* Read the entire chapter. Num. 9 shows the effect of such defilement concerning the eating of the Passover. Ezek. 44:25,26 (a millennial passage) shows that the priest had to be cleansed from the defilement contracted. And Num. 5:2 states that whoever is defiled by a dead person was put out of the camp. The cleansing could, of course, soon take place following the instructions of Num. 19, a case altogether different from leprosy. If one pleads Lev. 21:1-4 to set aside 1 Cor. 5:11, at least the meaning of Num. 5:2-9 and Num. 19, and Ezek. 44:25 should be consistently practiced therewith! But obviously the obvious truth is that a

63. This subject is treated in greater detail in *Leprosy and God’s Presence Among His People*, to be had from the publisher.

false use of Lev. 21:1-4 is being made, and such a misuse of the Word of God tends to make Him the author of unholiness!

What Are the Results of Refusing to Purge Leaven?

The first thing we should note is that those who have practically the character of a leavened lump are not gathered together to Christ's name. *They meet together on the basis of indifference to Christ's honor.* This is the indifference that is in their hearts. But you may say that they even profess to be gathered together according to Matt. 18:20. But not all profession is real. Such a profession only makes the guilt more heinous! It is an outrage against every CHRISTIAN thought to say that Christ and tolerated leaven can go on together. The presence of Christ sanctions the ground, or basis, of gathering. A leavened lump cannot be the assembly of God in a place as gathered together by the *Holy Spirit* unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy and the True. It is rather a haven of evil! -- an association founded upon indifference to Christ. Another said:

But it may be said, Yes, but the apostle did not excommunicate the Corinthians because of that evil. I say, No; if the Corinthians were awakened by his summons to clear themselves from the evil, surely that was the thing desired (2 Cor. 13:7); his authority was given for edification, not for destruction. It is the *Lord's way*, -- "If we would judge *ourselves*, we should not be judged of the Lord;" consequently, it should be His servant's way, for "we are fellow-workers with Him" (1 Cor. 3:9). "I gave her *space* to repent" (Rev. 2:21). We do find (whether resulting from that First Epistle, as is most probable, I have not time strictly to examine now), that the Corinthians were brought to a blessed state of repentance, and dealing with evil (2 Cor. 2:6). They received Titus with fear, trembling, and obedience (7:7,8). In all things they approved themselves clear in this matter. "For to this end," says he, "did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things" (2:9). He was in readiness to revenge all disobedience, when their obedience was fulfilled (10:6). So in Gal. 5:10. "He had confidence in them in the Lord, that they would be none otherwise minded." But if they had refused to deliver up those who had done the evil" (Judg. 20:13), would the apostle then have recognized them as a Church of God, as in the *fellowship* of the truth? Assuredly not.⁶⁴

Do you pretend that breaking bread with a known fornicator does not involve you with any complicity in the evil, the leaven? (Some persons may wonder that anyone should think such a thing, much less say, or write it. See for but one example one from an open communion, W. Hoste, *Rejudging the Question*, p. 21, ". . . We totally reject the collateral theory of defilement." Then neither

64. *The Present Testimony* 2:88,89.

does your "breaking bread" with the saints involve your recognizing that you are one with them. You have no collateral fellowship. You have really lost, if you ever had, the sense of the divinely constituted bond between the members of Christ's body. You "break bread" in a strictly individual way without any sense of what 1 Cor. 10:16-22 teaches, though you may talk about the one body and profess to understand what that is.

It is quite possible to have fellowship with evil. Another has remarked:

Nor is the fact that such a one is a *Christian*, any reason for allowing leaven in him? It is not the *persons* that are to be looked at, but the *fellowship* of the Paschal Lamb: that determines all. Is it worthy of *that*? Compare 1 Cor. 10:18 (Greek), "Are not they that eat the sacrifices *in communion with the altar*"? It is just because he is outwardly in fellowship there, that we are called upon to judge him (1 Cor. 5:13).⁶⁵

The principle expressly, EXPLICITLY, enunciated in 1 Cor. 10:18 is this: a man is in communion with an altar because he eats what is sacrificed on it. The eating identifies him with the altar and what it represents. Leaven (tolerated evil) and the table of the Lord do not go together. It is not the table of the Lord where leaven is tolerated. It is a false table, a table, i.e., a fellowship, of man's devising and not the expression of the corporate Christian fellowship. That assemblage of Christians does not give expression in practice to the Christian fellowship where known leaven is tolerated. They are a leavened lump and have a leavened table, i.e., a leavened fellowship. All who eat, i.e. "break bread," at such a table, i.e., in such a fellowship, are identified with that table (1 Cor. 10:18). They show identification with the leaven. Association with leaven leavens according to 1 Cor. 5 and 10. The indifference to the Lord's honor thus shown comes from within you. Persons coming from a leavened fellowship must not be received unless they break from it. Another has said:

It is not a question merely of wrong persons coming in unawares; for the fatal thing is not that evil should enter, but that it is known and allowed. What evil things did not effect an entrance into the assembly even in apostolic days? But God owns the unity of the Spirit so long as there is the truehearted purpose, in dependence on the Lord and according to His word, to keep or purge out evil. It is not the entrance or amount of or even character of evil that destroys the assembly, but the continued acceptance of it under the Lord's name, even when it is known.⁶⁶

Note the following remarks:

Carelessness there may be -- it should be corrected; but he who, as a principle, owns the existence of sin {leaven} in the assembly, and denies it is defiled denies its unity and the Lord's presence; that is, it is not an assembly met in

65. *The Present Testimony* 2:87.

66. *The Bible Treasury* 14:157.

His name at all.⁶⁷

Here is another helpful extract:

A. You do not surely mean that *any* practical evil which may exist in a body of Christians, destroys their title as a part of the Church of God?

B. Only where it is known and sanctioned, for then *the fundamental principles and essential nature* of the Church of God are denied. God cannot and will not sanction sin where He dwells. When the evil committed by Achan was pointed out, and thus became known to the children of Israel, then it was that God said He would not be among them *any more* except they destroyed the accursed thing from among them. Previous to this, its existence produced weakness and defeat, “they could not stand before their enemies,” for God could not put forth His strength among them on account of it. Has God changed His own eternal nature and become tolerant of evil? Or is it the society of Christians that has become all-important, so that we are to sacrifice His presence to theirs? Impossible that He can abide what denies His very being and glory, and is the cause in those who know Him not, of everlasting exclusion from His presence. He declares He “will be sanctified in those that come nigh Him.” “He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are *round about Him*” (Ps. 89:7). The moment sin in principle is admitted, or the truth denied, or false⁶⁸ doctrine acquiesced in, it is no longer the “house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Even leaving their first love, the Lord calls on the Church at Ephesus to repent of, or He would take away the candlestick, which would be to disown them as His light or witness -- the sole end of the Church’s existence as a body on earth -- and it would then cease to have any claim as such. Let me read you a passage from a tract of great value, entitled, “Separation from Evil, God’s Principle of Unity:” -- “If the body refuse to answer to the very nature and character of God, and the incompatibility of that nature with evil, so that it becomes really a false witness for God, then the first and immutable principle recurs -- the evil must be separated from.”⁶⁹ Further, the unity which is maintained after such separation, becomes a testimony to the compatibility of the Holy Ghost and evil, that is, it is in its nature apostasy; it maintains the name and authority of God in His Church and associates it with evil.”⁷⁰

What Should be Our Attitude About Discipline?

67. *The Present Testimony* 13:172.

68. It would be better to say “evil doctrine” here.

69. {See also *Letters* 1:87, 90, 186, 190, 191, 509; 2:153, 221, 399; *Words of Truth* 1:104. In his book on *Philippians* W. Kelly wrote:

. . . it is evil (not separation from it) which sows discord or makes separation necessary among brethren (p. 62).

70. A. C. Ord, *Is There Not a Cause?* pp. 19,20. Also in *Collected Writings of A. C. Ord*, p. 6, available from the publisher.

BOWING TO DISCIPLINE

Calling to mind the obedience of you all (2 Cor. 7:15).

The following letter by J. N. Darby takes up the question of private judgment and bowing to discipline.

The point I take to be fatally dangerous is confounding private judgment and conscience. We see the full-blown fruit of it in the present state of Protestantism, where private judgment is used to authorize the rejection of everything the individual does not agree with.

The difference is plain in the case put. A father’s authority is admitted. Now if it be a matter of conscience, Christ’s authority or the confession of His name, of course this cannot stand in the way. I am bound to love Christ more than father or mother. But suppose I reject my father’s authority for everything my private judgment differs in as to what is right, there is an end of all authority. There may be cases of anxious inquiry as to what my duty is, where spiritual judgment alone can come to a right judgment. This is the case in the whole christian life. We must have our senses exercised to discern good and evil -- to be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is; and such exercises are useful. But the confounding a judgment I form simply as to right with conscience is, in result, confounding will with obedience. True conscience is always obedience to God; but if I take what I see as sufficient, confusion of a deadly character soon comes in. Does one not submit to a father’s authority unless he can bring, even in an important matter, a text of scripture for everything he desires? Is there no setting up of self and self-will in such a principle?

But I go farther; and it is the case in question. Suppose in an assembly a person has been put out for evil. All admit that such, if truly humbled, should be restored. The assembly think he is humbled truly; I am satisfied, suppose, that he is not. They receive him. Am I to break with the assembly or to refuse subjection to their act, because I think them mistaken? Supposing (which is a more trying case to the heart) I believe he is humbled and they are satisfied he is not, I may bow to a judgment I think erroneous and look to the Lord to set it right. There is such a thing as lowliness as to self, which does not set up its own opinion against others, though one may have no doubt of being right.

There is another question connected with it -- one assembly’s act binding another. I do not admit, because scripture does not admit, independent assemblies. There is the body of Christ, and all Christians are members of it; and the church of God in one place represents the whole and acts in its name. Hence, 1 Corinthians are taken in with the assembly at Corinth as such; yet this last is treated as the body as such, and made locally responsible for maintaining the purity of the assembly; and the Lord Christ is looked at as there; and what was done was done *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is wholly ignored when one speaks of six or seven clever, intelligent Christians, and a number of ignorant ones. The Lord in the midst of the assembly is set aside. The flesh, it is said, often acts in the assembly. Why assume it does and forget it may in an individual?

Again, why speak of obeying the Lord first, then the church? But supposing the Lord is in the church? It is merely setting up private judgment against the judgment of an assembly meeting in Christ's name with His promise (if they are not, I have nothing to say to them); it is simply saying, I count myself wiser than those who are. I reject entirely as unscriptural the saying, "First Christ, then the Church." If Christ be not in the church, I do not own it at all. I assume that the church has not Christ, making them two parties. I may reason with an assembly, because I am a member of Christ, and hence of it -- if it is one, help it. But if I own to it as an assembly of God, I cannot assume Christ is not there. It is simply denying it is an assembly of God. The thought is wanting of what an assembly of God is. This is not surprising; but it necessarily falsifies judgment on the point, which is not "if the word" -- but if I *see* not the word for it. It is just trusting one's own judgment as against others and the assembly of God.

I could not for a moment put a question of blasphemies against Christ on such a ground. It is really wickedness. The attempt to cover them by church questions, or by pleas of individual conscience, I abhor with a perfect abhorrence.

Allow me to put the question as to minor questions in another shape. Suppose I am of another assembly, and I think they judge something in a mistaken way, am I to *impose* my individual way of thinking *on them*? If not, what am I to do? Leave the assembly of God if it be such (if not I do not go there)? You cannot help yourself. If I do not continue in an assembly, because it does not agree with me in everything, I can be of no assembly of God in the world. All this is simply a denial of the presence and help of God's Spirit and of the faithfulness of Christ to His own people. I cannot see godly lowliness in it.

But if an assembly have judged as such in a case of discipline, admitting all brotherly communications and remonstrances, I distinctly say another assembly should, on the face of it, receive their act. If the wicked man is put out at Corinth, is Ephesus to receive him? Where then is unity? where the Lord in the midst of the church? What led me out of the Establishment was the unity of the body: where it is not owned and acted on, I should not go. And of independent churches I think quite as ill, or worse, than of the Establishment. But if each assembly acts independently of another and receives independently of it, then it has rejected that unity -- they are independent churches. There is no practical unity of the body.

But I shall never be brought to such wickedness as to treat acceptance of blasphemers as an ecclesiastical question. If people like to walk with them or help and support the bearing with them at the Lord's table, they will not have me.⁷¹ I distinctly judge that the principles defended shew want of lowliness as to self and a setting aside of the very idea of the church of God. I am not going to mix the two questions. I do not accept the setting aside my spiritual liberty: we are a flock, not an enclosure. But in questions of discipline, where

71. {Withdrawal for refusal to judge evil is the Christian's duty. See *The Bible Treasury* 19:45.}

no principle is denied, I do not set up my judgment against that of the assembly of God in that which God has committed to its care. It is just setting myself up as wiser, and neglecting God's word which has assigned certain duty to an assembly, which He will honor in its place.

Let me add, there is such a thing as obedience in what we do know, which goes before speculating on possible claims in obedience, where we should like to be free to go our own way. "To him that hath shall more be given." Doing what we know in obedience is a great way of knowing further.

Again, "the bond of unity between the churches is said to be the lordship of Christ." But there is not a word about churches (when we speak of unity), nor bond of churches; nor does unity consist of union of churches. Lordship is distinctly individual. Nor is Lord of the body a scriptural idea. Christ is Lord to individuals, Head to the body, over all things. Unity is not by lordship. Of course, individual obedience will help to maintain it, as all godliness will; but unity is unity of the Spirit, and in the body, not in bodies. Both Ephesians and Corinthians teach us distinctly that unity is in and by the Spirit, and that Christ has in this respect the place of Head, not of Lord, which referred to individual Christians. This error, if acted on, would falsify the whole position of gatherings, and make mere dissenters of them, and in no way meet the mind of Christ.⁷²

As to confounding in fallibility and authority, see *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:421, 422, 424; 2:213.⁷³

Another has said:

The most solemn act of the church of God is, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked or evil person." The word for evil is that used for the world; 'the whole world lieth' in it; the opposite to the church. But the person being put away, then arises the question, "How is that person to be regarded or treated now?" We get help to answer the question in 2 Thess. 3, where we are directed not to keep company with a brother because he refused to work with his hands for his daily bread. Now if the rule be so stringent for such a minor offence, when there is no immoral conduct, nor church insubordination, how much more must it applying the case of a person put away! In 2 Thess. 3 the person is not put away, but is subjected to distance and coldness of manner, in order that he might be ashamed; that he might feel how his brethren disapproved of his unhandsome mode of living. Hence when one is put away it is enjoined, "with such an one no not to eat." The excommunicated is for the time suspended from all connection with the body, and apart from the support of the Holy Spirit. If he truly feels his position, he must be soon overwhelmed with grief; and if he does not, he will become the tool of the enemy. If the Spirit of God suspends a person's place in the church, and this with the express object of eliminating from the offender the flesh which had offended, surely no spiritual soul could act in any other way.

72. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:418-421. See also 1:506; 2:224

73. See also *Collected Writings* 14:304; *The Bible Treasury* 10:124; 19:111.

There is often a well-intentioned kindness in the more amiable⁷⁴ to relax the severity of excommunication, but they defeat their own object; they are not wise, for they are not in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. God is wiser than man. Grace is wiser than nature. The grave position of the excommunicated is weakened, if not entirely frittered away by the unspiritual pity with which human feelings would mitigate the penalty of excommunication; never remembering that the object of the penalty is to effect a great result, which as far as they are concerned must be defeated by this unwise and unspiritual social familiarity.

Another thing is, the one who fails in carrying out the most solemn responsibility known in the house of God, invariably fails in everything connected with divine order elsewhere. If the greatest be disregarded, how can the least command attention? If I disrespect Him in His own house, surely He will allow my folly to be exposed, and often in a very painful way in my own house.

Lastly, be it remembered, that the more faithfully I adhere to the Spirit's action in putting away, the more am I seeking for the budding of repentance in the one put away, and the godly sorrow which works it. The first one to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection was the repentant Peter: He delights in confirming His love to the repentant one. If I understand the mind of the Lord in directing the offender to be put away, I submit myself fully to His will; and as He waits to be gracious, so do I, if I am led by Him, rejoice in being allowed to confirm my love to the restored one.⁷⁵

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE EVILDOER?

To treat with indifference the judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ⁷⁶ concerning a wicked person, a judgment expressed in the assembly action of putting away a wicked person, is a very serious thing. J. N. Darby regarded this so serious a matter that he wrote:

Thus, supposing evident sin, as at Corinth, and one supported him in it and refused the clear common consent of all, so that it was a rejection of the assembly's authority when the case and the word were clear, they might hold him guilty with the offender.⁷⁷

The Lord knows, I have no desire to offend anyone; but we are dealing with a foundation matter of holiness in God's house, and in our walk, and so we must be most plain. We are assured, however, that none who really trembles at God's

74. {As A. C. Brown said to me a number of times:

Some think to be more gracious than God Himself.

And again:

We get in the way of God's perfect way of restoration.}

75. *A Voice to the Faithful* 15:61-64.

76. If the assembly did a wicked thing, other considerations would apply to such an act, for Christ does not sanction wickedness.

77. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:46. See *Notes and Jottings* p. 452.

Word will be offended, but rather will rejoice with the truth, as love does (1 Cor. 13:6), glad of help or correction afforded on a subject of profound importance. Is not the *alleged* "love" shown to a wicked person in reality making provision for the flesh and sparing self? If we would judge ourselves, and keep Christ before us, and keep before us the fact that it is *His* sentence that declares the person to be a wicked person (1 Cor. 5:13), -- leavened (1 Cor. 5:7) -- and that LEAVEN LEAVENS THE LUMP -- we would see and judge the seriousness of this false 'love and grace.'

The instruction in 1 Cor. 5:11, "with such a one not even to eat," is so plain; and it is such a fundamental instruction; and it is so consonant with the first principles of holiness; and is so elementary, that if anyone who professes to love Christ is resentful or angered (rather than rejoicing with the truth -- 1 Cor. 13:6) by what has been said, it shows a seriously defective condition of soul. In connection with our attitude towards manifestation of unholiness, the people's response to Ezra's identifying himself with the sin of God's people, and his confession, is very instructive. We find four responses:

1. Those that trembled at God's Word (Ezra 9:4).
2. The people who bowed to the Word (Ezra 10:1).
3. Those who opposed (Ezra 10:15).
4. Those who helped the opposers (Ezra 10:15 in J. N. D. transl.)

Let us cry out to God for grace to be found in the first and second groups whenever the Word of God instructs us concerning our path here.

BOWING TO THE DISCIPLINE BY OTHER ASSEMBLIES

The unity of the members is not in a local body. There is no such thing as a local body of Christ, as if there were many bodies. Membership is in *the* body of Christ. The local assembly, having put out this "wicked person," each assembly truly expressing locally the truth that there is one body, and as acting as one body, acts in concert with the discipline enacted elsewhere. Here a number of helpful comments by J. N. Darby will follow.

Now I openly reject, in the most absolute way, the pretended competency of one church or assembly to judge the other as the question proposes; but what is more important, it is an unscriptural denial of the whole structure of the church of God. It is Independency, a system I knew forty years ago and would never join. If people like that system, let them go to it. It is in vain to say it is not that. Independency merely means that each church judges for itself independently of another. And that is all that is claimed here. I have no quarrel with those who, liking to judge for themselves, prefer this system; only I am perfectly satisfied that in every respect it is wholly unscriptural. The church is not a voluntary system. It is not formed (or rather unformed) of a number of independent bodies each acting for itself. It was never dreamed, whatever the remedy, that Antioch could let in Gentiles and Jerusalem not, and all go on according to the order of the church of God. There is not a trace of such independency and disorder in the

word. There is every possible evidence, in fact and doctrine insisted on, of there being a body on earth whose unity was the foundation of blessing in fact, and its maintenance the duty of every Christian. Self-will may wish it otherwise, but certainly not grace and obedience to the word.

Difficulties may arise; we have not an apostolic center, as there was at Jerusalem. Quite true; but we have a resource in the action of the Spirit in the unity of the body, the action of healing grace and helpful gift, and the faithfulness of a gracious Lord who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. But the case of Jerusalem in Acts 15 is a proof that the scriptural church never thought of, and did not accept, the independent action insisted upon. The action of the Holy Ghost was in the unity of the body, and is always so. The action directed by the apostle at Corinth (and which binds us as the word of God) was operative in respect of the whole church of God, and all are contemplated in the opening of the epistle. Does any one mean to pretend, that if he was to be put out at Corinth judicially, each church was to judge for itself whether he was to be received -- that judicial act pass for nothing, or operative only at Corinth, and Ephesus or Cenchrea do as it liked afterwards? Where, then, was the solemn act and direction of the apostle? Well, that authority and that direction are the word of God for us now.

I am quite aware it will be said, Yes: but you may not follow it rightly, as the flesh may act. It is possible. There *is possibility* that the flesh may act. But I am quite certain that what denies the unity of the church, sets up for itself, and dissolves it into independent bodies, is the dissolution of the church of God, *unscriptural*, and *nothing but flesh*. It is therefore judged for me before I go any further. There is a remedy, a blessed, precious remedy of humble minds, in the help of God's Spirit in the unity of the body, and the Lord's faithful love and care, as I have said; but not in the pretentious will which sets up for itself and denies the church of God. My answer to the question is, then, that the plea is a miserable sophistry, confounding infallibility and divinely-ordained authority met by lowly grace; and the system sought by the question, the pretentious spirit of independency, a rejection of the whole authority of scripture in its teaching on the subject of the church -- a setting up of man instead of God.⁷⁸

See the article "Separation from Evil is God's Principle of Unity."⁷⁹ The center is Christ and the bond of unity is the Spirit. But manifested unity is maintained by discipline and bowing to it.⁸⁰

REMEDY IF EVIL IS DONE

A Case of Evil Being Done. G. V. Wigram spoke of the following evil being

78. *Letters* 1:423, 424. See also 2:199.

79. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 1:353. Contrary to what you may have read in Open Brethren authored histories, this paper was not written after the Bethesda division in 1848. It was published in Oct. 1846 according to R. Nelson (a Bethesda supporter) in his *Protest Against the Proceedings of Mr. John Darby*, Feb. 22, 1852. W. Kelly wrote in his *God's Principle of Unity*, "written by Mr. Darby in view of the Evangelical Alliance."

See also *Collected Writings* 1:369; 14:164, 175; 33:23.

80. See *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:420; 2:119, 198, 213, 214.

done:

Awful as it is, I have known persons looked up to, constitute themselves pleaders against others and judges in cases, and the judgment, *ostensibly by the assembly* given against one that was innocent, and who was excommunicated for that which the pleader and judge had himself committed; and the same sort of thing is oftener still the case in domestic regulations in the assembly. Lord, what is man left to himself? What are we when we play with thy name, and at making, maintaining, and governing in (so-called) churches?⁸¹

Remedy. J. N. Darby counseled this:

When such local matters are thus treated by an assembly, acting in its sphere as an assembly, all the other assemblies of the saints are bound, as being in the unity of the body, to recognize what has been done by taking for granted (unless the contrary is shown) that everything has been carried out uprightly and in the fear of God in the name of the Lord. Heaven will, I am sure, recognize and ratify that holy action, and the Lord has said that it shall be so (Matt. 18: 18) . . .

But whilst a local assembly exists actually in a personal responsibility of its own, and while its acts, if they are of God, bind the other assemblies, as in the unity of the one body, this fact does not do away with another which is of the highest importance, and which many seem to forget, namely, that the voices of brethren in other localities have liberty equally with those of the local brethren, to make themselves heard in their midst, when discussing the affairs of a meeting of the saints, although they are not locally members of that meeting. To deny this would, indeed, be a serious denial of the unity of the body of Christ.

And more than this, the conscience and moral condition of a local assembly may be such as to betray ignorance, or at least an imperfect comprehension of what is due to the glory of Christ and to Himself. All this renders the understanding so weak that there is no longer any spiritual power for discerning good and evil. Perhaps in an assembly, also, prejudices, haste, or indeed the bent of mind, and the influence of one or of many may lead the assembly's judgment astray, and cause it to punish unjustly and do a serious wrong to a brother.

When such is the case, it is a real blessing that spiritual and wise men from other meetings should step in and seek to awaken the conscience of the assembly, as also, if they come at the request of the gathering or of those to whom the matter is the chief difficulty at the time. In such a case their stepping in far from being looked upon as an intrusion ought to be received and acknowledged in the name of the Lord. To act in any other way would surely be to sanction independency and to deny the unity of the body of Christ.

81. *Memorials of the Ministry of G. V. Wigram* 2:62. Speaking generally, this reversal of guilt does happen at various levels of seriousness. It is not uncommon for Christians to charge someone else with the very thing of which they themselves are guilty. Examples are charges of lying and favoritism against someone, when the person making the charge is actually the one who is guilty.

Nevertheless, those who come in and act thus ought not to act without the rest of the assembly, but with the conscience of all.

When an assembly has rejected every remonstrance, and refuses to accept the help and the judgment of other brethren, when patience has been exhausted, an assembly which has been in communion with it is justified in annulling its wrong act and in accepting the person who was put out if they were mistaken as to him. But when we are driven to this extremity the difficulty has become a question of the refusal of fellowship with the assembly which has acted wrongly, and which has thus of its own accord broken its fellowship with the rest of those who act in the unity of the body. Such measures can only be taken after much care and patience, in order that the conscience of all may go along with the action as being of God.

I call attention to these subjects because there might be a tendency to set up an independence of action in each local assembly by refusing to admit the intervention of those who being in fellowship might come from other places.

But all action, as I have acknowledged from the outset, primarily belongs to the local assembly.⁸²

Various Considerations

WHAT IS BOUND ON EARTH IS BOUND IN HEAVEN -- AND DISOWNING DISCIPLINE

J. N. Darby remarked:

When such local matters are thus treated by an assembly, acting in its sphere as an assembly, all the other assemblies of the saints are bound, as being in the unity of the body, to recognize what has been done by taking for granted (unless the contrary is shown) that everything has been carried out uprightly and in the fear of God in the name of the Lord. Heaven will, I am sure, recognize and ratify that holy action, and the Lord has said that it shall be so. (Matt. 18: 18.)⁸³

It is a solemn thing to reject an assembly action. Another has said:

. . . Suppose such an assembly, say at Corinth, had put out from among themselves the wicked person, and another assembly received him, the latter thereby denies that the first has acted in the character of an assembly of God, representing there the body of Christ. It denies the action of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, or that what has been bound on earth has been bound in heaven . . .⁸⁴

Rejecting an assembly decision rejects that assembly as gathered together to the

82. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:199-201; and see pp. 216, 319. See also 1:195, 422, 424; 2:132, 199, 382, 399; *Collected Writings* 14:306; 20:298, 299; *The Bible Treasury* 9:63.

83. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:199.

84. *The Present Testimony* 13:169.

name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In effect, it denies that the Lord is there any longer. In effect, it denies this to all who make themselves one with that assembly, i.e. all who own the discipline. Sometimes such a separation is right, i.e., in cases where positive, proved evil has been "bound" and sanctioned. On the other hand, there have been divisions resulting from refusing assembly actions where no proven positive wickedness was done and maintained. False motives, false principles, and low state foster this. And does any Christian who professes to own the truth of the one body believe that those who refuse the assembly action are still gathered together on the ground that there is one body? Or that division occurs and those who support a false act are still gathered together on the ground that there is one body? The inventors of such notions prefer the fellowship of larger numbers to the truth of God!

UNANIMITY OF JUDGMENT?

J. N. Darby remarked:

. . . unanimity is nonsense, a denial of the power and operation of the Spirit, and clean contrary to the word of God. First, it is nonsense; because till the case is decided the person charged is one of the assembly, and you are not going to make him agree as led by the Spirit in judging his own case. If you do not allow him, you have put him out before his case is decided. It is real nonsense. Waiting for quiet godly men who doubt is all right: unanimity is so many men agreeing. The world must go on and so judges by a majority, but for the saints nothing can be done unless all agree -- this is man, not the Spirit of God. Supposing it was a flagrant case of stealing or adultery? Are you to wait till he agrees to put himself out? Again, supposing the person or persons are obstinate, self-willed, evil walkers? The assembly must, in either case, go on with wickedness, with what God judges in its midst, till the guilty think proper to judge themselves, or break up altogether. It is denying the operation of God's Spirit in the assembly's clearing itself: better not to have any discipline at all.

It will be said that we have not the power -- say of Paul. Be it so. But put out "from among yourselves" is a duty, obedience to the plain word of God, not power in the sense of an apostle. Evil is to be got rid of "that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." The requiring unanimity is contrary to the plain word of God on the point. Paul says, "Having in readiness to avenge all disobedience when your obedience is accomplished." This puts the case that after the labor of the apostle to produce obedience had produced its full effect, some might remain not subject to the word; then he would come with the rod and avenge disobedience. The case is stated of no unanimity, and dealing with those who stood out. I quite understand that people may seek to say the power is not here. But that is not the question, but that unanimity is not supposed even when the power was there; and I am persuaded that though power is not manifested as it was, Christ is just as true to His church, and has just as much power now as then, and will shew it. But unanimity is a mere human device: there is no such thought in scripture. It is merely a set of men must agree: the power of the Holy Ghost is denied. The judgment is not valid because men

agree, but because God is there: and Christ being there is not supposed by the apostle necessarily to produce unanimity.⁸⁵

WHAT ABOUT A MAJORITY?

Another has said:

Now it is quite evident a minority *may* be the most spiritual. In the case of Corinth, all, as far as appears in public, were gone wrong, and allowed, and were puffed up about evil. A majority, judging *as such*, cannot be said to have the Holy Ghost guiding them because they are a majority. This is quite manifest. It is a mere human principle, such as the world is obliged to act on, because it has no other way of getting out of its difficulties. But the Church of God has. It has the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost.⁸⁶

Counting persons does not settle the truth of a matter, nor is it a spiritual mode of determining the mind of God. I remember that a brother once said, at a meeting of brothers for the case of the Lord's interests, that we do not ask for opinions, to count them. If one has an exercise of soul he is free to bring it before his brethren. Also, the judgments of each brother do not carry the same weight. It is well to remember these things when seeking the mind of the Lord on any occasion. God's assembly is not a democracy. Voting is to be rejected.⁸⁷

WHAT ABOUT INFALLIBILITY?

What we have in 1 Cor. 5 is responsibility and competency to judge, not infallibility. Also, there are remedies for fleshly action. These matters were addressed by J. N. Darby quite well.⁸⁸

DOUBTFUL CASES

J. N. Darby remarked:

But if there were godly brethren who doubted about the facts, or the judgment of scripture on the facts -- provided the rightness of discipline in itself be recognized, so that it is not the principle of retaining known evil, or the denial of the competency of the assembly to judge evil -- then I should say they should wait and look to the Lord to make them of one mind. Speaking of a "dead-lock" is supposing only men are there, whereas Christ is. If the assembly be in a state incompetent to judge, it is for the assembly to humble itself, that through grace it may be able to know God's mind. There is One above it all able to bring about His thoughts, and he who has faith will find the sureness of His hand if He be really waited on. But nothing requires more waiting on Him than discipline, personal feelings are so apt to come in.⁸⁹

85. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:143,144. See also 1:422; 3:47, 50, 61, 143, 144, 458; *Notes and Jottings*, p. 452; *The Bible Treasury* 19:112. See *Collected Writings* 1:344.

86. *The Bible Treasury* 2:352. See also *Collected Writings* 4:237; *Ministry of G. V. Wigram* 2:63; *The Bible Treasury* 2:352; 19:112; *Letters* 2:444, 445; 3:50, 143.

87. *The Bible Treasury* 2:352.

88. *Letters* 1:421. See also 2:213; *The Bible Treasury* 19:111; *Collected Writings* 14:307.

89. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:47. See also p. 61. See also *The Bible Treasury* 2:352.

DECLARING ONE OUT OF FELLOWSHIP

Sometimes persons tire of spiritual worship and return to some religious system; or there is some difficulty and they withdraw from fellowship. In another case, one just may have stopped remembering the Lord. They are then "declared out of fellowship," i.e. it is announced that they are no longer regarded as being in fellowship at the Lord's table. Does it mean that such are "wicked persons" as in 1 Cor. 5? No.

Sometimes the going out is an act of mere ignorance; as for instance when one, used to a sermon every Sunday morning, grows weary of worship in spirit and truth, and pines for a discourse to relieve him of the distaste he feels for the Spirit's liberty of action in the assembly. How cruel to stigmatize the weak one, unspiritual though he may be, as a "wicked person"!⁹⁰

It may be that at some time they wish to return. It would then be the time to deal with their state in connection with their withdrawal.

However, if an evildoer has left, there is a charge of one of the kinds of sin noted in 1 Cor. 5, so it is not merely announced by someone that he is out. Assuming that the assembly is pure in the matter (2 Cor. 7:11), it needs to be declared that he has left under a charge of evil, and so the door is closed to his return until the matter is cleared by the assembly.⁹¹ In any event, a person must not escape censure by quickly withdrawing in order to escape an impending discipline. In these matters the following quotation is helpful:

Q. 1 Corinthians 5. In an excommunicable case, that is, one of grave or gross wickedness, can rebuke or withdrawal be substituted for "putting out?" If insisted on by leaders and accepted by an assembly, spite of the strongest protest, in what position does it involve that assembly? Is it really proved "clear"?

A. If a person gave just occasion for public discipline, and there was good ground to fear worse, of which no adequate evidence to convict appeared, it would be godly order to rebuke one thus sinning; and, if he withdrew, it would in the actual state be not only a relief to all, but a more proper course for the assembly to accept his withdrawal by announcing it formally before all, than to put him out without full proof of guilt.

But if the guilt were grave and palpable, so that the common conscience of the saints rejects such offenders, merely to rebuke the person is *not* to "purge out the old leaven," neither is it to be a new lump but a leavened one. And if further and heinous evil came to light, it would still more show the state, not of the offender only but of that assembly, if they then let him

90. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 3:255.

91. See the remarks on these things in *Collected Writings* 26:217, 221. There is much practical counsel here. On the matter of closing the door behind such persons, see also *The Bible Treasury* 18:144; *Notes and Jottings*, p. 450; *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:302; 3:460; *Voice to the Faithful* 24:256.

withdraw by announcing it, instead of directly refusing such a wish at such a time, and forthwith putting out the wicked person from among themselves. We have no such custom, nor the assemblies of God, as to treat rebuke and withdrawal under such circumstances as tantamount to putting out, or allowable to God's assembly; nor does scripture warrant it. No doubt the assembly cannot put out a man if they have accepted his going out; but who has ever known the acceptance and announcement of withdrawal where the assembly had before it the proof of guilt demanding excision? Such a course would give a premium to the wicked in evading solemn judgment, and the command to put out would soon become a dead letter. It has been often tried but always refused hitherto. And no wonder; for it would hinder all adequate clearing of themselves among the saints; it would annul the Lord's authority by His word in the last resort of the church's responsibility; and it would lower a professing assembly of God (yea, in principle the assembly as a whole if acquiesced in) beneath a decent club of the world, which assuredly would not deal so lightly with flagrant offences against public law or common morality. No special pleading, no detraction of others, can extenuate so plain a dereliction of a holy duty on the part of those who are unleavened. Such an assembly, to its own ease, may have got rid of the offender, as well as of those whose consciences protested against such ways as ungodly; but it has never vindicated the Lord in thorough hatred of the manifest evil, nor so much as mourned that the evildoer might be taken away from among them, still less sorrowed to repentance after a godly sort with diligence, clearing of themselves, indignation, fear, longing desire, zeal or revenge. In no way therefore has it proved itself to be pure in the matter, but the contrary. Till it does, it should not in my judgment be owned as God's assembly by all who would obey Him rather than man.⁹²

I have heard of it having occurred that instead of the assembly acting, it was merely announced in the assembly that so-and-so was no longer in fellowship. Is that obedience to Scripture?; or is it rather an attempt to hid shame? Clearly, only the assembly can act and an announcement cannot substitute for that. Moreover, in the case of a public rebuke, we read:

Those that sin convict before all, that the rest may have fear (1 Tim. 5:20).

How is it that dealing with such a case in the manner of 1 Cor. 5, it should have an effect less than that? -- and the effect would surely be less than that if it was done through merely an announcement that so-and-so is not breaking bread any longer. Where is the Lord's honor in that? where the holiness, the purity, the obedience due Him?

IS IT SCRIPTURAL TO CALL AN EXCOMMUNICATED PERSON A BROTHER IN CHRIST?

Another, with whose judgment I concur, said:

92. *The Bible Treasury* 12:144.

I think it is not. He who persisted in gross evil (as in 1 Cor. 5) is treated as a wicked person; and this is the more in point, as the Holy Ghost knew him, spite of his frightful sin, to be converted, as we know afterwards from 2 Cor. 2:7.⁹³

Thus, the Spirit of God says, "if any one called a brother. . . ." *He* does not call him a brother. Should we?

93. *The Bible Treasury* 2:288.

Restoration

WHAT IS REPENTANCE? AND HOW IS RESTORATION SECURED?

First, Firmness Is Needed. A. C. Brown often said that we get in the way of God's perfect way of restoration. He also remarked that some think to be more gracious than God Himself! Well, none of this will do in the work of restoration. Actually it is not love and grace. Someone wrote:

Only he who is firm in truth can safely show grace.⁹⁴

Hear what J. N. Darby said of himself:

I am not at all fit for cases of discipline, I have not the firmness called for.⁹⁵

Next, Grief According to God Must be Seen.

For grief according to God works repentance to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10).

It is often said that the object of discipline is restoration. Rather, this is *an* object, not *the* object. The first thought is the Lord's glory. Secondly, the assembly must clear itself. Thirdly, discipline has for its object the repentance and restoration of the "wicked person."

Having regret for causing a problem, being sorry to be a cause of trouble, is not repentance. Even "godly sorrow" is not repentance, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10). Repentance is a matter of the conscience wherein the soul sees itself as God does, and sits in judgment on itself with the judgment of God. David committed sin with Bathsheba that the NT would call leaven. His repentance is given in Psalm 51, and this is instructive for us to read so that we may see the true character of repentance. When this has been reached by the guilty, then the assembly may forgive and loose.

It is not for just anyone to occupy himself with such cases except in love to pray for such. It is for grave brethren to seek the restoration of such an one. The meddling⁹⁶ that many do in such cases, under the pretense of love, is really a fleshly sympathy with the guilty that would spare the flesh in others as it does in oneself. Lev. 14 gives us typically what is involved in restoration and this is taken up elsewhere.

The man put away as a "WICKED PERSON" (1 Cor. 5:13) did repent and so the Corinthians were instructed, "Assure him of your love" (2 Cor. 2:8). It would have been grievous failure to assure him of their love before the right time. It would be meddling with the work of God in a precious soul.

This person was "bound" until he was "loosed." The sin was bound upon

94. *The Bible Treasury* 16:208.

95. *Letters* 1:520.

96. See *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:381; 3:459.

him until such time as *the assembly* loosed him. It is at the time of loosing that their love to him is expressed. Individuals, or a group of brothers, cannot loose him any more than they can bind. It is done *in assembly* with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Corinthians also were grieved according to God (2 Cor. 7:10), although there were some who were not (2 Cor. 12:19-13:2). It wrought (2 Cor. 7:11):

1. Diligence. They had been careless.
2. Excusing, or clearing. They had been tolerant.
3. Indignation. There had been apathy on their part.
4. Fear. They now sensed what was due to God.
5. Vehement desire. They now longed to be right with God.
6. Zeal. They earnestly desired to obey.
7. Vengeance. They realized the affront to Christ and judged it and purged the leaven.

Thus, in every way, in this seven-fold character, they proved themselves pure in the matter (2 Cor. 7:12).

Self-judgment, repentance and separation from evil to the Lord, is ever the way of spiritual blessing! -- not necessarily the way of having large numbers.

Several brothers will undoubtedly be much involved in the case of one who is to be restored. The following thoughts from *Ministry of G. V. Wigram* 2:63, are apropos to seeking the restoration of one put away.

In rebuke or putting away, I do not get rest or feel I see the whole case until three things are clear. 1st, the root sin; 2nd, the occasion; 3rd, the overt display of sin. 1st, David knew how to climb, using God, from the sheepfold to the throne; but knew not aright God's relative position to himself; 2nd, at rest on the throne, not going out to war when the kings go out, he saw, in his idleness, Bathsheba; 3rd, though on God's throne he defiled himself and dishonored God by adultery, corruption, and murder. Thus he learnt David's self, and afterwards God (Ps. 32). So in Solomon's case, in Job's, in Peter's. This is important, because, until *the root* sin is judged, there is no real healing; and the overt sin is very unlike the root sin; not it at all, generally.

OLD SIN

J. N. Darby wrote:

I copy a letter just sent me, written to a brother at Lyons many years ago. "In sin is very vague. One who is disciplined for fornication is not engaged in the sin when they excommunicate him. He is always in the sin he has committed until he repents and confesses it. There lies the whole question. If there be a long time since he sinned, and the state of soul is entirely changed, I should not bring up the sin again. The question is, has he really repented; otherwise, the time that is passed makes no difference, be it two days or two years. If the

sin was committed before his conversion, his state is totally changed; if since, then it is that of which the assembly has to judge. If the assembly leaves the sin unjudged when it knows it, it makes itself responsible, and is identified with the evil doer. This 1 and 2 Corinthians shows very clearly, and seems to me of all importance . . . to have a firm hand as regards this sin -- love towards the sinner surely -- seek his restoration; one ought to do so, and there is sometimes failure in this -- but the holiness of the table of the Lord must be maintained. To separate because there is a difference of judgment is to break the unity of the body. If the assembly cannot come to any decision, it is a proof that its spiritual state is bad, and then it is well that all should humble themselves together; but if there be a determination to allow the sin (in any one), God will judge them if they separate." . . .⁹⁷

THE PASSAGE OF TIME DOES NOT ALTER THE CHARACTER OF A MORAL ACTION

It is repentance and confession that puts sin away. A person about to be received, who was known to have so sinned and repented, is one case. If a person was at the Lord's table all along, and sinned as in 1 Cor. 5, and this came out some years later; and it is alleged that he had repented and therefore should not be disciplined; I ask, how can one have repented as in 2 Cor. 7:9-11, 2 Cor. 2:7, and especially Psa. 51 -- how can one have passed through this, and others in the assembly not know it? How has all this been kept secret? It seems clear that the assembly must clear itself. Mere distance and time are of no account. If one commits a sin of 1 Cor. 5 and apprizes others of it, stating that he is sorry for it and seeks repentance before God -- and is disciplined; but another keeps it secret for some years and apprizes others, or they discover it, and he says that he has repented -- and is not disciplined; is this a just balance, the balance of the sanctuary, not even to speak of what is due to Christ?

RESTORATION OF ONE PUT AWAY ELSEWHERE

. . . First, when a brother excommunicated by the assembly, and who lives elsewhere, seeks to be brought in again, it is for the assembly in the place where he seeks restoration to judge of his state at the time he seeks it. It is there naturally that the state will show itself. But it is suitable, as you say, that the assembly in which he seeks to be re-admitted, should put itself in communication with that from which he was put out. It may know of many things that ought to be settled, and that the other is ignorant of; then too community of interest and the unity of Spirit are maintained by this means.⁹⁸

Of course, these comments assume that the excommunicated person has not moved elsewhere where his sympathizers are and where they may seek to undo the excommunication. To press the one body as a cover for this is EVIL and not to be accepted!

97. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:414.

98. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:303.

Conclusion: The State of those Who do not Imbibe but also do not Separate

Here we succinctly state what we have seen in the first three papers in this series regarding the state of those who do not act on the truth presented in the three Scriptures we have considered.

STATE OF THE DISOBEDIENT		
2 John	2 Timothy 2	1 Corinthians 5
partakers of wicked works	not a vessel to honor	part of a leavened lump -- leavened

The reader will see from Gal. 5:9 that doctrinal evil is leaven also. 1 Cor. 5 tells the assembly how to deal with leaven. When the assembly will not act, the individual has instruction from 2 Tim. 2 what to do, as well as guidance from 2 John.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Matt. 18:20

The following is an answer by W. Kelly to a question concerning the translation of Matt. 18:20.

Q. Matthew 18: 20. It has been recently stated that men like Mr. J. N. Darby sought to help out their interpretation [of this scripture] “by a quite unwarrantable change in the translation of the words εἰς τὸ ἑμὸν ὄνομα, which they rendered unto my name, and took to import a gathering to Christ’s Name as a rallying point.” Is there any doubt of the right version? or any warrant for so evil an imputation?

A. None whatever for either: no true scholar could have weighed the usage and given such an opinion. The evidence is decisively for the change. The aim of opposing it is to set aside the ecclesiastical character of the context, on which the Lord has impressed it so indelibly, that almost all the jarring parties of Christendom recognize that character, though they naturally overlook a word which none of them heeds, and which does mean a living and exclusive center. Its denial is a very bold exegetical error; for any serious inspection of the Lord’s words suffices to prove that the case adduced had passed out of individual dealing to “the church” or assembly (not the synagogue). Then the Lord (18) strengthens this with His solemn averment of heaven’s sanction of their binding and loosing (not the keys), and His gracious assurance of His Father’s answer to the united petition of even two. Then He closes with the general principle for the worst of times (20) that He is in the midst, where two or three are gathered unto His name. The last promise is an invaluable guard against party work, as well as unbelief and the world. It speaks little to hearts which never had, or have lost, faith in His word or presence.

As to usage, the case in question quite differs from ἐπὶ τῷ ὄν. in ver. 5, where His name is made the motive, condition, or ground for receiving a little child, and εἰς would have been out of place. It is therefore strictly “on,” not “in”; and so in Acts 2: 38 Peter bade repentant Jews be baptized, each of them *on* (ἐπὶ) the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins; and they should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If they had repented, they were already born of the Spirit, as where real is invariably the case. Compare Matt. 24:5, Mark 9:37, 39, Mark 12:6, 9. In Luke 1:5, 9 it shades into “after.” In Acts 10:48 the same Peter commanded the Gentile believers to be baptized *in* (ἐν) the Lord’s name. See Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17; John 5:43 etc. It would have been just as possible and true to have said “on”; but it is not the same thought or expression as in virtue (or, in the power) of His name. In Acts 11:6 Peter speaks of the Holy Spirit’s baptism, contrasted with John’s as ἐν Πν. ἁγ. in the Holy spirit, where ἐπὶ, on, would have failed, for ἐν means in the power of the Spirit Himself. In Acts 19: 5 as in Acts 8: 16 the object proposed in baptism occurs, and here it is neither “in” nor “on,” but “unto,” εἰς. The Revisers correct the faulty “in” of the A.V. but say “into” which is refuted by their own rendering of 1 Cor. 10:2 (where “into” would be improper), and by the A.V. of Acts 19: 3. The Greek admits of either “unto,” or “into” according to context, which here requires the former. Water baptism does not imply

more than “to” or “unto.” It is profession only; and the very aim of the apostle in 1 Cor. 10 is to insist that it might be without life. So in our Lord’s commission in Matt. 28:19 it is baptism “to” or “unto” the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It was baptism with water, and could not itself carry deeper. But the baptism of the spirit has quite a different power, and effects incorporation, not “unto” merely as profession, but “into” one body, Christ’s body. Dean Alford gave up “in” but argued for “into” invalidly, his views being uncertain here as too often.

In Matt. 10:41, 42 we have indeed the peculiar phrase of receiving a prophet; a righteous man, and a disciple, “unto” (εἰς) each’s respective name, or as such. Here it is perhaps hard to avoid *in English* saying “in the prophet’s name”; but it really means as aforesaid, and not what would have been imported by ἐν, in the power or authority of each, as *in* Christ’s name or even without any preposition as in Matt. 7:22. But Meyer thinks that here “by” Thy name is preferable; and this may well be the just sense of a Greek phrase which differs from the rest, the instrumental dative.

Again, such forms as ἔνεκεν τοῦ or διὰ τὸ (or, ὑπὲρ τοῦ) ὄν, are indisputably “for thy Name’s sake,” so that we need not say more.

In the A.V., etc. Phil. 2:10 is, as we all know, rendered “at” the name of Jesus, a rendering on which a well known and pervading practice of superstition was founded. The Revisers here say “*in*” (ἐν). If right, it means as usual in virtue of His name all creatures shall bow.

In 1 Cor. 5:4-13 where putting out for wickedness is laid down peremptorily and perspicuously, it is in (ἐν) the Lord’s name that the assembled saints were charged to act. It was ordered of God that the written word should enjoin excommunication, when no apostle was actually there, nor apostolic delegate like Titus, and no elders had yet been appointed. This abides as the inalienable duty, as does the divine warrant for the assembly’s act, whenever the sorrowful need calls for this last resort. The Corinthian saints were light in various ways and had shirked or ignored what was due to the Lord, not even mourning that one so guilty should be taken away from them. The apostle insisted on purging the leaven out, in accordance with the sacrifice of Christ our passover; and the Spirit took care that as Christendom would show special disregard of this Epistle, it should be more impressively addressed than in any other, not to that assembly only, but coupling with it “all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours.” Slight is therefore verily inexcusable.

As a matter of fact too, it was not till *long after* the Christians referred to had gathered, not as belonging to denominations, but simply as members of Christ, recognising the one body and Spirit according to the word, that the precise force of the Lord’s word in Matt.18:20 struck any. Believing in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost, they had learnt the immense value of every inspired word. Tradition had no place in their eyes. Since they accepted every scripture as God-breathed and profitable, they sought entire subjection to it as a living word, while declining either to claim more than they had or to substitute human devices in lieu of what they had not. Any scholar who looks into the text in question must allow that, unless there were an obstacle from our idiom, in this particular case, “unto” must be

the exact force; for “into” would be absurd, and ἐν properly, not εἰς, means “in.” But, far from a difficulty, the context here favors nothing so much as the proper import of εἰς, gathered “unto” My Name as the central presence on which they all depend and confide.

It was thus and only then perceived to be a confirmation of their position, already founded on the revealed principles of God’s assembly, modified as this must be by the ruin not less carefully foreshown in the later Epistles and the Revelation, of which we are bound to take account, if we avoid that assumption which is so unworthy of Christ and so unbecoming in all that are His. How blessed to know that Christ remains as ever the center for even two or three gathered to His Name!

But it was received as certain truth, on the evidence of scripture better understood and independently of any ground other than the precise and full meaning of our Savior’s words. Just so for many other truths of moment we have learnt since: we acted on the little that we first knew to be from God and of God; for we need the Spirit as well as the word. “To him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.” Nothing more perilous to man, nothing more dishonoring to God, than to give up what we once confessed and enjoyed as divine. Who can tell where departure once begun may end?⁹⁹

Appendix 2: The Open Brethren View of Leaven Leavening the Lump

Do ye not know that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened (1 Cor. 5:6, 7).

J. N. Darby wrote:

. . . the principal brethren in a so-called neutral meeting signed a printed circular affirming that, if an assembly should admit fornication knowingly and willingly, we ought none the less to acknowledge that assembly and to receive letters of recommendation from it. We judged that, if an assembly (not taken by surprise, which may happen everywhere, or through carelessness, of which we are all capable, but) knowingly and willingly admits sin or blasphemy, it is not a new lump; that in order to be a new lump it must purge itself from the old leaven (1 Cor. 5:7); and that in so doing the other members proved themselves pure in this matter (2 Cor. 7:11): otherwise they would not have been so. This is the principle in question. Several went farther, maintaining that in no case does blasphemy or any kind of doctrine call for discipline.¹⁰⁰

Another wrote:

99. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4:94-96..

100.

Can any saint doubt that, if the Corinthians had disobeyed the apostolic command, they must have become a leavened lump? For the church to bind up evil with the Lord’s name by glossing it over is to judge itself no longer fit to be called God’s church: holy discipline is the indispensable condition of its recognizable status and title. For God is not mocked.

Evil doctrine is yet worse and more dangerous to others; it lowers Christ or His work [and pretends that God is the author of it]. So we read in Gal. that their adding a Jewish element is vehemently rejected and designated as “leaven,” no less than immorality. What can be more unspiritual (not to say faithless) than to treat it now with more indulgence?¹⁰¹

We have seen that in 1 Cor. 5 the presence of *tolerated* leaven would characterize the state of the assembly as leavened. The assembly has, by that toleration, lost the new lump character. Those breaking bread with the leaven express, in practice, that they are one with the wicked person (1 Cor. 10:16). Thus they are leavened by indifference to the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. The words of A. C. Ord (written in a conversational style) are much to the issue:

A. But we meet in the name of Christ.

B. Or, rather in the name of Christians; for your principle of association is your estimate of a man’s Christianity, not Christ himself, and the truth of His person, what is worthy of Him and suitable to His presence. Thus you lower down your unity to whatever Christians are capable of, instead of bringing them up to what accords with His name and glory.¹⁰²

The Scripture used to set this aside is Matt. 13:33. W. Hoste seeks to make the Lord Jesus the author of the unholiness that an assembly cannot be leavened until all in it personally imbibe the evil practice or evil doctrine:

Where the leaven is allowed to work unjudged, the whole must sooner or later become leavened, that is, each member will become knowingly inoculated with the evil, be it doctrinal or moral. Our Lord in Matt 13:33 sets His seal on this exegesis by saying, “till the whole was leavened.”¹⁰³

That is quite a flagrant misuse of Matt 13:33. Matt. 13:33 has to do with the corruption of doctrine in Christendom, as even some Open Brethren correctly point out.¹⁰⁴ But then it has nothing to do with the truth in 1 Cor. 5 other than

101. *The Bible Treasury* 18:80.

102. *Is There not a Cause?*, p. 28. Also in *Collected Writings of A. C. Ord*, p. 12, available from the publisher.

103. *The Witness* 60:61 (1930). J. R. Caldwell used Matt. 13:33 for the same purpose (*The Northern Witness* 12:155 (1882)).

104. Concerning Matt 13:33, John Heading wrote:

For Christ as the Bread of life is the food of His people. Unfortunately, throughout the ages [the doctrine of] His holy Person has been adulterated by the woman with leaven; these abominable insinuations have spread throughout Christendom . . . (*What the Bible Teaches, Matthew*, Kilmarnock: Ritchie, p. 195 (1984)).

that leaven speaks of evil in both cases. Matt. 13 is not about the status of an assembly, which changes as soon as evil is tolerated. Matt. 13:33 does not set aside the fact that in 1 Cor. 5 the character of a lump is changed by tolerating leaven in it. Of course it will spread, but that does not change the fact that the character of the lump is changed before everyone in the assembly personally engages in the evil practice. But this is the Open Brethren position, that the lump is not a leavened lump until all practice the evil. There are some persons who take the words in Matt. 13:28-30, “suffer both {wheat and tares} to grow together unto the harvest,” to mean that unbelievers must be allowed in the church. I am sure Open Brethren would oppose such a misuse, pointing out that the field in which they grow together is the world. It is quite evidently a parallel misuse to use the parable of the leaven to teach that leaven leavening the lump, concerning the assembly of God, means that the lump cannot be leavened until all are engaged in doing the evil act. Really, this is outrageous!

It is quite clear on the very surface of Paul’s words that failure to purge out the old leaven would change the character of the assembly. In fact, and in practice, they would be a leavened lump. The tolerance of known leaven changes the character of an assembly. The presence of tolerated leaven characterizes the assembly as a leavened lump -- i.e., even before the leaven has worked its way throughout. The character of the assembly is changed by the presence of tolerated leaven. It is a responsibility-escaping perversion of the Apostle’s statements to say that leaven leavening the lump only means that tolerated leaven will spread so as to cause others to commit the same evil. It is true that tolerating leaven will also do that; but Paul tells us that the character of the lump is changed. No leavened person has a place at the Lord’s table. And those in fellowship with the leaven are part of a leavened lump; and thus, as being leavened by evil fellowship, they also have no place at the Lord’s table.

Please keep in mind that I have cited Open Brethren in this pamphlet who say that the presence of known leaven in an assembly does not leaven the assembly. Therefore, if we consult expositions of 1 Corinthians written by Open Brethren, we would expect that there will not be comments on 1 Cor. 5 saying that if a wicked person is tolerated in an assembly, that assembly is leavened. Of course, that is exactly the case, which we shall now see.

In the paper on 2 John in this series, I quoted from R. E. Harlow for his testimony to the kenoticism among Open Brethren, which I am sure grieves him. But he will not admit that tolerated leaven changes the assembly into a

Thomas Newberry wrote:

Thus it is that the woman introduces the leaven into the meal, and thus not only are souls corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, but the whole system of revealed truth has been vitiated by her (*The Parables of the Lord Jesus Christ Analyzed and Explained*, Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis, p. 42, n. d.).

leavened assembly. In his exposition of 1 Cor., he wrote:

Sin will spread, 5:6-8

Why was it important for the assembly to put this man out? Because evil is likely to spread through the whole assembly. A younger Christian sees another who is not punished for committing sin, so he thinks he can do it too. In this way sinful habits will soon spread to others.¹⁰⁵

R. E. Harlow’s view on when a lump becomes leavened (i.e., not until everyone in the assembly is personally imbibing) is a consistent expression of the Bethesda heritage and position. J. S. Oliphant, who left the Bethesda position, quoted William Yapp (Open Brethren), publisher, writer, inventor of Yapp bindings for Bibles, and an ardent supporter of Bethesda:

In a tract published by Mr. Yapp, entitled “The Church of God According to Scripture,” I find the following statement:

“Meetings of believers cannot be defiled by the allowance of false teaching in them.”¹⁰⁶

I find a specimen of these unsound views in a tract on the Scripture Doctrine of the Local Church, . . .

“They cannot be leavened with the sin which they have not committed, or with the doctrine they have not received.”¹⁰⁷

From another tract, entitled, “A Drop of Oil on Troubled Waters, or Remarks on the Fellowship and Mutual Responsibility of the Churches of the New Testament,” I take the following extract:

“That no individual in any church was held responsible for evil existing in it, either doctrinal or practical, simply because he was one of the worshipers.”

Thus we have *assembly responsibility* and *assembly defilement* entirely denied.¹⁰⁸

Not only did well-known persons propagate such things in support of Bethesda at the time, but assemblies issued similar statements.¹⁰⁹

105. *1 Corinthians: The Imperfect Church*, Scarborough: Everyday Publications, p. 41 (1982).

106. *A Letter on Bethesda Fellowship*, London: Morrish, p. 21.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 69; and etc.

108. *A Letter on Bethesda Fellowship . . .*, p. 23.

109. Recall that *The Letter of the Ten*, signed by ten principle persons at Bethesda, and approved by the vast majority of the assembly by their standing up to approve it, said:

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 . . .

Various congregations took the same position as Bethesda regarding leaven leavening the lump. For example, the Scarborough Statement (Jan. 26, 1849) said:

We do not think it right to exclude Christians from communion because they happen to belong to a gathering in which there are persons of unsound opinion; but we think that

The well-known W. E. Vine wrote:

... there is a certain stress on “little”: if a small amount of leaven spreads through the whole lump, how much more must this gross evil of tolerated fornication affect the assembly! To be indifferent is to incur to some extent the responsibility for the evil. Moreover such an attitude debases the normal standard, and the evil effect spreads surely and rapidly.¹¹⁰

What do the words, “incur to some extent,” mean? Corinth was fully, totally responsible. It is a characteristic, Open Brethren attempt to blunt responsibility. For example, on May 6, 1959 I wrote to Edwin Fesche (a traveling preacher among Open Brethren) concerning 2 John 9-11 and he replied by saying that “they become a partial partaker of his evil deeds.” Where did the word “partial” come from?

Let us see what William MacDonald says in his commentary on the NT:

The apostle is saying that if they tolerate a little moral sin in the church, it will soon grow and expand until the whole fellowship is seriously affected. Righteous, godly discipline is necessary in order to maintain the character of the church.

5:7 Thus they are commanded to **purge out the old leaven**. In other words, they should take stern action against evil so that they might be a **new**, in the sense of a pure **lump**. Then Paul adds: **Since you truly are unleavened**. God sees them in Christ as holy, righteous and pure. Now the apostle is saying that their state should correspond with their standing. As to *position* they were unleavened. Now as to their *practice* they should also be unleavened.¹¹¹

It appears to me that he has been influenced by “exclusivism,”¹¹² but he has held back from declaring that an assembly that tolerates evil is *ipso facto*

every Christian ought, in any case requiring examination, to stand or fall by his own personal innocence, or his own personal offense.

The Tottenham Statement (Mar. 4, 1849) stated:

We distinctly refuse to be parties to any exclusion of those who, we are satisfied, are believers -- except on grounds personally applying to their individual faith and conduct.

That is, the “faith” and conduct that breaks bread with, say, known fornicators is an acceptable faith and conduct.

The Torquay Statement (Oct. 28, 1849) reads:

We cannot *refuse* to receive any person except on *individual* grounds, that is, on grounds that reflect on that person’s *individual* faith or walk.

So the faith and walk of one who breaks bread with known fornicators, or known teachers of evil doctrine, is regarded as a satisfactory Christian faith and walk.

110. *First Corinthians*, London: Oliphants, p. 74 (1951).

111. *Believer’s Bible Commentary, New Testament*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 576 (1990).

112. “Exclusivism” is not Raven/Taylorism. It means what it meant after the Bethesda division: the refusal of persons engaged in evil and the refusal of those having fellowship with evil. See also the first two pamphlets in this series.

leavened, each one being leavened. To declare *that* is to abandon the true Open Brethren position that fellowship with leaven does not leaven a person/assembly, and shows that their system of reception is unholiness. Instead, he explains that “it will soon grow and expand until the whole fellowship is seriously affected.” So, if one or two evil doers are tolerated, the “fellowship” is not “seriously affected.” Toleration of evil (leaven) is thus (to him) tolerable “until” later. Nor does he define “seriously affected” as *leavened*. J. Hunter says something somewhat similar:

The whole assembly was defiled and polluted by this unjudged moral evil, and if left unjudged others would soon take advantage of such moral laxity. The evil did not attach to the man alone who was guilty of it. The assembly was only seen to be clean when the evil was judged.¹¹³

Certainly such an assembly that would not purge out leaven would be unclean. That is not the issue. Note well that various descriptions and words might be used but never the all-important word. It would also be *leavened*, and therefore none should break bread there or receive any coming from there who did not judge this leavened fellowship and separate from it.

John Heading wrote:

But given time, a little leaven could leaven the whole lump, and one sin could affect the whole company before long.¹¹⁴

“Before long” denies that the toleration of leaven leavens an assembly, and postpones into the indefinite future what he does not want to acknowledge. “Given time” and “could” are expressions that deny the *now* of the leavened condition. This is the typical Open Brethren view.¹¹⁵

113. *What the Bible Teaches*, vol. 4, *1 Corinthians*, Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, p. 58 (1986).

114. *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, p. 85 (1965).

115. See also:

The Believer’s Magazine 36:244, Kilmarnock: John Ritchie.

The Believer’s Magazine 1995:150 Kilmarnock: John Ritchie.

Truth and Tidings 30:278 -- Norman Crawford wrote:

When there is failure to judge sin, the door is left open for a flood of sin and leaven permeates the whole assembly.

Truth and Tidings 36:75 -- Sidney Maxwell wrote:

... it is to be purged out so that the whole assembly will not be corrupted by it.

Truth and Tidings 36:298 -- Sidney Maxwell wrote:

It must be judged, lest the whole company be defiled by the fact of complicity with the guilty person.

{Why did he not state that the whole company would be leavened? You see from this that by “defiled” he did not mean leavened, i.e., “corrupted.”}

Words in Season 82:108:

If unjudged, it would open the door for other moral sins such as are mentioned in

Interestingly, J. M. Davies wrote:

If their life and practice was to correspond with this {the unleavened position in Christ}, they would have to purge themselves of the “old leaven.” Only thereby would they become a new lump.¹¹⁶

He did not tell the reader what they would be if they did not, and what the consequences would be. Back a ways in time, the well-known J. R. Caldwell surveyed the Scripture use of leaven as a type and figure, and said it should be put out. As to our subject, he wrote:

Not that those in contact with it become necessarily guilty of the same evil actions, but their moral tone is lowered, and failing to abhor and to judge it their conscience becomes defiled.¹¹⁷

Saying that “their conscience becomes defiled” avoids affirming that the evil they become guilty of is complicity with the leaven and that they are *leavened*. Some Open Brethren have used the word “defiled,” even of the assembly, as we have seen, but not in the sense of being leavened, as “exclusives” have used the

verse 11.

Words in Season 88:236 says:

A new lump is a company where conditions are found in keeping with their high and holy calling, where sin has been dealt with and the condition is in keeping with the new life of fellowship with Christ.

{But then we are not told what would make the assembly a leavened lump.}

The Witness 60:61, in an anti-exclusive article by W. Hoste, said:

Where the leaven is allowed to work unjudged, the whole must sooner or later become leavened, that is, each member will become knowingly inoculated with the evil, be it moral or doctrinal. Our Lord in Matt. 13:33 sets His seal on this exegesis . . .

To characterize the Open Brethren position, the statement of W. Hoste, *Rejudging the Question*, p. 21, may be used:

“ . . . We totally reject the collateral theory of defilement.”

This is the position expounded in the *Lake Geneva Conference Report*, except that it goes much further by refusing discipline of persons for doctrines that W. Hoste would say should be dealt with.

The Open Brethren started (1848) with the Bethesda, England assembly receiving persons from under the ministry of B. W. Newton. A very full, copiously documented history of this is found in *Precious Truths Revived and Defended Through J. N. Darby*, volume 2, 1845 - 1850. The policy put into operation at Bethesda was well stated in a sentence by J. N. Darby:

And that is what was sought and pleaded for by those with whom these questions originated {in 1848}: that whatever iniquity or leaven was allowed, it could not leaven an assembly (*Letters* 1:422).

116. *Letters to the Corinthians*, Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, p. 46 (1982).

117. *The Charter of the Church*, Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis, vol. 1, p. 148, n. d.

word.¹¹⁸ Do not be deceived by this. What we are seeing is a studious avoidance of declaring that an assembly that tolerates evil is, in fact, leavened, even though such words as “defiled and polluted” are used. Recall what J. S. Oliphant quoted from William Yapp:

In a tract published by Mr. Yapp, entitled “The Church of God According to Scripture,” I find the following statement:

“Meetings of believers cannot be defiled by the allowance of false teaching in them.”¹¹⁹

But why continue on? The Open Brethren position is clear. It is how it began with Bethesda in 1848 and has necessarily characterized them ever since. The meaning is that an assembly of, say, 1000 persons cannot be leavened until person # 1000 personally commits the evil; or, in the case of evil doctrine, until person # 1000 imbibes the evil doctrine which the other 999 have imbibed. If those numbers are too large for you, try # 100 and the other 99. Bring it down to # 10 and the other 9. Or, think about an assembly of 3 persons and 2 are fornicators; or, one where 1 is a known fornicator and 2 are not. Not only does the unholy theory state that such an assembly is not leavened; besides that, the one who is not a fornicator is, allegedly, living a “consistent” Christian life though breaking bread with known, wicked persons!

Those that rejected Bethesda were called “exclusives.” Why? because they rejected the wicked persons *and* rejected the persons in fellowship with those wicked persons. J. G. Bellett said:

We are now called “Exclusives.” If this title belongs to us, it belongs to the apostle who tells us to act upon the principle which has given us the title.¹²⁰

I could not refuse to say that such principles of Church action as this would make any place a defiled place, in Levitical language, leprosy would be detected by the priest to be in the house.¹²¹

J. N. Darby wrote:

My experience of the opposite system in the [United] States in all shapes has made me firmer than ever in the path of what is called exclusiveness -- exclusion of false doctrine and false practice, in contrast with protecting and excusing it.¹²²

118. In answer to a question if it would be necessary to “withdraw from such a company” that failed in such discipline, Hector Alves replied:

Personally, I would not feel happy about continuing to fellowship with an assembly where the discipline cited in 1 Corinthians 5 was not carried out (*Truth and Tidings* 21:99).

What do his personal feelings have to do with it?

119. *A Letter on Bethesda Fellowship*, London: Morrish, p. 21.

120. *The Bible Treasury* 16:304.

121. *A Letter as to “Bethesda,”* Sept. 18, 1849.

122. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:225.

W. Kelly was not ashamed to be known as an “exclusive” either:

Only let the writer beware of being influenced by the imaginary difficulties of *ad infinitum* contact with evil,¹²³ which speculative minds urge to destroy conscientious action. No sober mind but rejects a theoretical association extending through endless ecclesiastical receptions and ramifications. If he believes we are right in refusing a sound man who cleaves to and justifies an unsound or wicked association, he surrenders the principle of “Open Brethren,” and is bound to act accordingly. The more devoted the saints may be individually, the worse is their sanction of what is unholy. The writer endorses this himself, which is really the principle, and defines the position, of so-called Exclusive Brethren.¹²⁴

After J. G. Deck was recovered, he wrote:

That, by His grace, I desire to bear the reproach cast on every side on those brethren that are called “Exclusives,” because they desire to exclude all that is inconsistent with the glory of Christ and the unity of the Spirit, and to walk “with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.”¹²⁵

Allow me to warn those who now shun the word “exclusive” and substitute the word “*guarded* fellowship.”¹²⁶ The word “guarded” is a standard-lowering word and is indicative of a shift that has been taking place. And in what direction, think you? I close with the warning of the recovered J. G. Deck:

. . . in a work of Satan *neutrality*¹²⁷ is impossible; and that if there is an attempt to shun the responsibilities and sorrows of a path of entire decision for Christ, the spiritual senses become deadened, the heart hardened, the conscience torpid, the judgment perverted, and soon even hostility to the witnesses against the evil succeeds indifference to the truth.¹²⁸

This he wrote in the context of having led many souls to Christ, his work having

123. {To document one of many cases, let us hear J. R. Caldwell on 2 John 9-11:

Therefore say they {the “exclusives”}, You must treat the one who greets him exactly as you would treat the evil person himself; and, further, you must treat the one who greets HIM in like manner *ad infinitum!* (*Exclusivism*, p. 10).

The talk about *ad infinitum* springs from unholy notions that tolerate fellowship with heaven. It also springs from refusal to acknowledge the church as one. See *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:219, 224.]

124. *The Bible Treasury* 12:143.

125. *Copy of a Letter from J. G. Deck, of New Zealand* . . . , p. 11 (1873).

126. This paragraph was written in 1994 in my book *Precious Truths Revived and Defended Through J. N. Darby, volume 2, 1845-1850* (p. 281).

127. Henry Craik, one of the two most principle leaders at Bethesda (along with George Muller) was a **neutral**. Here is what he wrote on Nov. 15, 1848:

But I am too weak to write any longer. Exercise of mind, lying awake at night, the difficulty of maintaining a **neutral** position . . . (letter quoted in full in G. V. Wigram, *An Answer of G. V. Wigram to “Mr. H. Craik’s Letter, Dated 15 November 1848*, p. 7).

128. *Copy of a Letter from J. G. Deck, of New Zealand* . . . , p. 14 (1873).

led to the establishment of numerous “assemblies,” while he himself had shunned the path!

Regarding “exclusivism,” there are persons who seem to equate the word with the Raven/Taylorites. It seems like an intentional polemical stigmatization by loose persons who do not hold to the conclusions in this present series of papers on the holiness of Christian fellowship -- so as to *stigmatize* these truths. When rebuked with this lumping together such things that differ, they may back away (slightly) from this equating of things that profoundly differ, and then affirm that JND taught things that lead to Raven/Taylorism! Evil *will* be involved in such cases.

