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*The Mystery of Christ and the Church
and The Covenants*

Chapter 4.7

Excursus and Addenda

Excursus on "Original Sin"

Persons mean different things when they speak of original sin. The following quotation may be helpful regarding this:

As to "original sin," it is requisite that we should know what is meant by it. And in the first place it is necessary carefully to distinguish between sin and sins, -- the root and the fruit. We all have sin in us, as we all have committed sins, and the latter are the fruit of the former. They are most clearly distinguished in Scripture, and are separately, and in some respects differently, treated of. Christ was *made sin* for us {2 Cor. 5:21}, but He *bore our sins* in His own body on the tree {1 Pet. 2:24}. Sins are forgiven, sin has been condemned {Rom. 8:3} in Christ as sin-offering on the cross. If we go to the Articles of the Church of England, we find (Art. 9) original or birth sin defined as, "the fault and the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the nature of Adam." In Rom. 8:3, this is called "sin in the flesh," (φρόνημα σαρκός). But this is never said to be forgiven, -- God has condemned it in the sacrifice of Christ; and to faith, the Christian is dead to it (Rom. 6:2, 7), though sin is not dead in him (1 John 1:8). Even in the case of the true Christian, as a matter of fact sin remains in him till he dies (or puts off this body of humiliation), though his sins have been forgiven. How absurd then is it to say that original sin has been washed away in baptism! Evidently the corrupt nature is not washed away, and as to the new or divine nature and reconciliation to God, that depends upon true and individual faith in Christ, and not upon baptism. As we have seen, "by His own will begat He us with the word of truth" {James 1:18} -- this is irrespective of any ordinance. As regards the sin of the world, the work is done in virtue of which it will in due time be removed, viz., the work of Christ on the cross: as yet, however, all that can be said is, "we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in

wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

The sin of the world consequently is no more yet removed, than sin in the flesh is removed from human nature. In the eternal state no trace of sin will exist in the heavens, or on the earth, which will then have undergone its baptism with fire; but, terrible to think, or to say, apart for ever, and in the place of punishment, Satan and all evil doers will be, where they can no more mar or blot the rest of creation . . . ¹

We will now trace the history of original sin from extracts from J. N. Darby, written in a conversational style:

H. . . . The history of the Bible is the history of original sin; the doctrine of the Bible is the doctrine of God's putting it away for ever.

W. You must explain yourself a little.

H. I will. Does not the history of our race (I do not say our creation) begin with the declaration that Adam, fallen and driven out from God, begat a son in his image after his likeness {Gen. 5:3}, the fruit being shown in sin against his brother {Gen. 4:8}, as Adam's sin had been against God, and so death being actually brought into the world, but the death of the pious marking the predominance of evil?

W. It does.

H. That is the early history of original sin -- sin attached to our origin and so in our nature. Further, when the Flood had swept away the insupportable violence and corruption of the world, and the world began again in Noah, in whom rest was given concerning the work of men's hands, and the curse taken so far off the ground, did he not turn the blessing into drunkenness -- he to whom government had been entrusted, and shame and a son's wickedness inaugurate the new career of man?

W. Yes.

H. This is the history of original sin. Did not man then sink -- what there is no appearance of his doing before -- into idolatry, having built a tower to establish his own will?

W. True.

H. This too is. The form of the world in nations and peoples is founded on it. God then called out Abraham from the midst of this idolatry, and after a lapse of some 400 years, so that a people should be formed, brings them out of Egypt with a high hand, leads them to Sinai to give them His law -- the rule of life for a child of Adam. What did they do before they had time to get it graven on stone, though they had heard the voice of God out of the midst of the fire?

W. They made the golden calf.

1. *The Bible Treasury* 14:148.

H. Such then is man according to the history of the Bible; and so you will find it throughout. Before the consecration of Aaron and his sons was over, Nadab and Abihu had offered strange fire and were slain; and Israel, responsible under the priesthood, closed its history by the ark's being taken, and judgment coming on the priesthood itself in Eli: so that the whole system was closed, for without the ark there was no regular association with God at all. God interfered by a prophet; but this was sovereign grace. When the royalty was established, Solomon fell into idolatry. And at last Lo-ammi, Not my people, was written on the chosen people of God; where He had set His name that it might be owned in the midst of the universal corruption and idolatry of the world, and where grace and warning had dealt "till there was no remedy." When God set up a head of Gentile power in Nebuchadnezzar, he sets up an idol and persecutes the saints, and the whole series of these monarchies takes the character of unintelligent ravenous beasts. But, chief and last of all (save special mercy on His intercession), when God declared -- "I have yet one Son, it may be they will reverence my Son when they see him"; when they saw Him, what did they do?

W. They said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours."

H. They had then "no cloak for their sin." "They had both seen and hated both him and his Father." There was a reprieve through His intercession on the cross, and the Holy Ghost . . . announced a glorified Christ, and the open door of repentance, but they would not go in. They closed the history of man with this word of judgment -- "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." A judged world, a broken law, persecuted prophets, the slain Just One, a resisted Spirit, sum up the history of man, the history of original sin. Man "must be born again." . . .

H. God has not said in vain, "All the imaginations of his heart are only evil, and that continually"; and this said too in grace, "I will no more curse the ground for man's sake, for the imaginations," &c. It was not merely the previous wickedness of the antediluvians. They were gone. It was His motive for dealing with the race no more in that way. So the Lord, "Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," &c. Did you ever see it stated in scripture that good things came out of his heart naturally? God has tried {tested} it in every way. It was lawless, broke law, killed His Son, resisted His Spirit.

W. I see what you mean by scripture being the history of original sin; and in truth it is so. The dealings of God in patient mercy, which we find there, in truth only brought this out, so that we might have a scriptural delineation, a history which proved that sin; which, after all, is the history (however far that sin may be developed in them) of our own hearts. For self-will, law-breaking, slighting Christ, resisting the appeals of God, was not confined to antediluvians or Jews.

H. No; it is the picture of my heart brought carefully out. The scripture hath concluded *all* under sin, that all might come on the ground of pure mercy. And you will see that, developed only in promise in Adam's time, then by prophecy, in figures under the law (in spite of senseless rationalist judgment as to them), in accomplishment in Christ, in testimony to His glory by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the putting of it away is the great *doctrine* of scripture. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin [not the "sins," as often falsely cited] of the world" {John 1:29}. It is changing the whole principle on which the world, as such, stood, as we saw before. So again, "But now once in the consummation of ages" -- these times of testing responsible man from Adam to Christ -- "he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" {Heb. 9:26}. This is morally founded, as to the glory of God, on the death of Christ; and man after Him is introduced by resurrection into the new condition, beyond sin, consequent on that glorifying of God. At the same time there is the bearing of sins for the redeemed; but that is not our subject now . . .

H. But it is better to know ourselves; and the largest supplies of grace, and divine objects, are there to take us out of ourselves. In the Philippians we have the pattern of it in one of like passions with ourselves. There, in the picture of the christian normal state, the flesh (save having no confidence in it) and sin are not mentioned. Yet the writer had a thorn in the flesh to keep it down. If we were perfectly humble, we should not need humbling; but we do, all of us, even Paul, as we see in this case. Christ, then, has been manifested to put away sin out of God's sight, out of man's heart, and out of the world. The great work which does it is accomplished, the results not {yet} all accomplished in power. He who has not judged original sin has not that estimate of the new nature animated by the Spirit of God which is on God's side against sin. I judge the individual in no way. He may hate what he sees in himself of actual sin. I speak of abstract moral truth. He who does not see the principle and nature and guilt of sin, as it stands in man's self-will, has not the estimate which the knowledge of a holy nature in reconciliation to God gives. ²

Addendum 1:

C. I. Scofield's Eight Covenants and the Seven Covenants of Scripture

What a Covenant Is

2. "Inspiration and Interpretation," in *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 9: 289-291, 293. See also *ibid.*, 19:69-70; *Letters* 2:239.

Man's covenants are agreements of terms mutually consented to and ratified in some accepted manner. But God's covenants are from Himself -- without mutually considered and agreed upon terms. J. N. Darby remarked:

Covenant, when used in connection with the Lord, is always, it seems to me, some order established by God and announced to man, according to the terms of which He enters into relationship with man, or according to which man is to approach Him.³

W. Kelly regarded it in the same uncomplicated way:

In divine things it means an order established by God and made known to the men concerned, according to which He forms relations with them, and they walk before Him.⁴

C. I. Scofield's Eight Covenants

The following note is given to Heb. 8:8 in *The Scofield Reference Bible*.

* * * * *

The Eight Covenants, Summary:

- (1) The Edenic Covenant (Gen. 1. 25-28, note) conditioned the life of man in innocence.
- (2) The Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3. 14-19, note) conditions the life of fallen man and gives promise of a Redeemer.
- (3) The Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9. 1, note) establishes the principle of human government.
- (4) The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15. 18, note) founds the nation of Israel, and confirms, with specific additions, the Adamic promise of redemption.
- (5) The Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 19. 25, note) condemns all men, "for that all have sinned."
- (6) The Palestinian Covenant (Deut. 28.-30. 3, note) secures the final restoration and conversion of Israel.
- (7) The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7. 8-17, note) establishes the perpetuity of the Davidic family (fulfilled in Christ, Mt 1. 1; Lk. 1.31-33; Rom. 1. 3), and of the Davidic kingdom, over Israel and over the whole earth; to be fulfilled in and by Christ (2 Sam. 7. 8-17; Zech. 12. 8; Lk. 1. 31-33; Acts 15:14-17; 1 Cor. 15. 24).
- (8) The New Covenant rests upon the sacrifice of Christ, and secures the eternal blessedness, under the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3. 13-29), of all

3. *Synopsis* 1:18, note.

4. *F. E. R. Heterodox*, London: T. Weston, p. 57, 1902.

who believe. It is absolutely unconditional, and, since no responsibility is by it committed to man, it is final and irreversible.⁵

* * * * *

The second covenant in this list is non-existent. The sixth is clearly a conditional covenant (Deut. 29) and not what guarantees the land -- the Abrahamic Covenant does that. We will consider the alleged "Adamic Covenant" in Addendum 2 and the other covenants as we come to them. Omitted in this note is the covenant of the priesthood for Phinehas. Concerning the millennium, we will see that it is connected with the Davidic Covenant because it is related to Christ's office as priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13), for then the sons of Zadok, offspring in the line of Phinehas shall officiate under Christ's Melchizedec priesthood.

Regarding the alleged eighth, the distinctive, eternal blessedness that we Christians have (cp. Eph. 3:21) is not secured under the Abrahamic Covenant or any covenant; the *distinctive* Church position and blessing is not *of, through, or by* any covenant. The Church is above ages and outside covenants. Indeed, C. I. Scofield's "Church age" is also false. We are presently in the Mosaic age, though the Mosaic system is ended. The designation "the end of the age" is the end of the Mosaic age, which will be displaced by the Messianic age ("the age to come") when the new covenant is put into force. The Church is a heavenly work going on meanwhile, though here below as to responsible testimony.

The Seven Covenants of Scripture

Rather than saying that there are nine covenants, let us view them as essentially seven -- by ranging three under Moses, as in the table below. These three were all given through Moses as conditional. "Law without mediation" refers to the first giving of "pure law," as we may call it -- meaning law without mediation. The tables were broken by Moses upon seeing that the people had another god they were worshiping. Subsequently, he received the law again, but this time with mediation added, so that God could go on with Israel. Then, the land covenant was given on the basis of condition, because man in the flesh was to see if he could obtain the land promise on the basis of performance. The flesh must have its opportunity first, fail, and then eventually Christ will make all good, sovereignly, to God's glory.

There are, then, *seven* covenants, and these *complete* God's dealings with man in the earth from the beginning to the end (the church is not viewed as

5. New York: Oxford, pp. 1299-1300, 1917. The *New Scofield Reference Bible* carries essentially the same note.

seated in the earth, but seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6), thought it is here concerning responsible testimony). The New Covenant is the seventh and final one. Only the nation of Israel will be under that covenant. After that there is something entirely new: the new heavens and earth in which there are no covenants nor a continuation of any covenant from the present earth. Israel will not have eternal distinctiveness, though the church does (Eph. 3:21), for the church will be already distinct in glory before the dissolution of the present heavens and earth. The church's distinctiveness does not derive from, nor is expressed in or by, a covenant.

The seven covenants are:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Adam, in the garden (Gen. 2:16, 17) | obedience covenant |
| 2. Noah (Gen. 8:21, 22) | merciful covenant |
| 3. Abraham (Gen. 15:5) | gracious covenant |
| 4. Moses | obedience covenants |
| a. Law without mediation (Ex. 19:5-8) | |
| b. Law with mediation (Ex. 20:18-21) | |
| c. Land covenant under law (Deut. 29). | |
| 5. Phinehas (Num. 25:12, 13) | gracious covenant |
| 6. David (1 Kings 2:4; 8:25) | gracious covenant |
| 7. New (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8) | gracious covenant |

The covenant with Noah is a *merciful* covenant of the Creator for the preservation of the creation in view of the working of sin. It is a **general** covenant not made with a select group. Without arguing about graciousness on God's part, to have made this covenant, I have used *merciful* covenant to distinguish it from the **particular**, *gracious* covenants of promise, which are four of the seven (or nine, if you will) named in Scripture, starting with Abraham, the depository of promise, coupled with calling to a path of separation, belonging exclusively to Israel. Concerning God making these covenants good to Israel, these have in view only saints. These four are "the covenants of promise" of Eph. 2:12 which belong to Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:3-5), but we know that when they are made good to Israel, all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). They shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). Thus, "the spiritual Israel," composed of ethnic Jews, will be blessed under Messiah's reign before His ancients in glory (Isa. 24:23) -- the Church is not "the spiritual Israel."

The Mosaic covenant is an *obedience* covenant, a provisional covenant in the trial of the first man to show that he was not recoverable. The issue was

whether the first man could gain the promises to Abraham by obedience and performance. The answer was that the first man, under the obedience covenant, put the second man on the cross. Gal. 3:17-20 shows that the Mosaic system did not annul the promises to Abraham. God will make good on those promises in the millennium under the new covenant. Three of the gracious, unconditional covenants of promise come to realization under the New Covenant. It should hardly need saying that *New Covenant* has particular reference to the *old covenant*, meaning the Mosaic system.

Another point before we pass on is that we should recognize that the order of

- (1) promise to Abraham;
- (2) attempting to secure the blessing by obedience of Israel under the Mosaic system, which failed; and,
- (3) God making good the promise to Abraham through the Second Man, in the millennium,

is in accordance with the principle -- which is warp and woof of God's ways -- namely:

But that which is spiritual [was] not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46).

In Israel's case, under the Mosaic system Israel was the *natural Israel* (though of course God caused some to be born of Him) and during the millennium Israel will be the *spiritual Israel*, all being born again.

In concluding this brief survey, we may note that the Church, then, is not a participant in covenants, all of which have to do with God's ways in the earth. And this is quite in keeping with:

- (1) the mystery of Christ and the Church, concerning which silence was kept in former ages, and was hidden from ages and generations, hidden throughout the ages in God (Rom. 16:25, 26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3); and,
- (2) the covenants of promise being for Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh (ethnic Jews, Rom. 9:2-5).

The death of Christ made provision for the nation, as such (John 11:51, 52). Indeed, He "became a minister of [the] circumcision for [the] truth of God, to confirm the promises to the fathers; and that the nations should glorify God for mercy" (Rom. 15:8, 9). Both of these texts have a two-fold bearing, and give Israel its place according to promise and prophecy, by the sovereign work of God, which alone can secure blessing for any soul at any time.

Addendum 2:
C. I. Scofield's
First Two Dispensations and
First Two Covenants with Adam
C. I. Scofield's First Two Dispensations

See J. N. Darby's *Teaching Regarding Dispensations, Ages, Administrations, and the Two Parentheses*, as well as *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1, for the truth brought out in the 1800s regarding dispensational truth. ⁶ All that material will not be repeated here.

There are some elements of C. I. Scofield's system which are true but the system is false. The first objection regards his scheme of the testing of man, a scheme that has two important errors, errors necessary to the artificial scheme of seven dispensations. His definition of a dispensation is:

A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. Seven such dispensations are distinguished in Scripture (SRB 5, n4). ⁷

These seven are:

The First Dispensation: Innocency (Gen. 1:28) . . . Conscience (Gen. 3:23); Human Government (Gen. 8:20); Promise (Gen. 12); Law (Ex. 19:8); Grace (John 1:17); Kingdom (Eph. 1:10) (SRB 5, n5).

This system sets aside the truth that the testing of man ceased with the cross. The testing is the testing of the fallen, first man, in his Adamic responsibility, to show that he was not recoverable. The final test was Christ, the revelation of the Father in the Son. The conclusion was:

but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24),

and crucified Him. All is then over with the trial of the first man. We have been over this subject previously. ⁸ Christ then rose from the dead as the beginning of the new creation, a heavenly work that is outside of, and above, ages. Thus he took His place as the last Adam, *displacing* the standing that the fallen, first

6. Available from Present Truth Publishers.

7. This reference means *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 5, note 4, 1917 edition.

8. See also my *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. A; and my J. N. Darby's *Teaching Regarding Dispensations, Ages and Administrations, and the Two Parentheses*, available from Present Truth Publishers.

man had before God as under trial to show that he was not recoverable. **There is no trial of the first man after the cross.** There are no ages of trial after the cross. ⁹ Since the rejection of Christ, God has no further open dealings with the world (it lies in the wicked one -- 1 John 5:19) until Christ comes in glory and takes the kingdoms of this world. And that is not to test man (that was settled at the cross) but to crush all opposition by power. Moreover, the assembly of God is under no covenant, neither under the Covenantist's Covenant of Grace, nor C. I. Scofield's covenant of grace, nor under the modification of this by some of his followers, the Church covenant, nor the invention of L. S. Chafer called a church new covenant (as if there are two new covenants).

The error of seven dispensations wherein man is tested is false; and it began as false with the alleged "dispensation of innocency" and the "dispensation of conscience." At the beginning of Chapter 4.1 of this series is a chart showing the distinction of innocency from the trial of the fallen, first man. The testing of a man in *innocency* is of a different order than testing *fallen man* to see if he is recoverable. Eden is its own, distinct thing. The merging of this trial of man in innocency into a trial of fallen man is a scheme, an imposition upon Scripture, and it is wrong at both ends, alerting us to examine the middle carefully.

God created man innocent. He did not dispense innocency. Did God dispense innocency to man to administer it? Man fell and in the fall acquired a bad conscience with the knowledge of good and evil. God did not dispense conscience with the knowledge of good and evil. Did God dispense the knowledge of good and evil (and/or conscience) to man to administer it? Contrast that with Noah, to whom God dispensed government. Noah was not created in government, nor did he do something so that he acquired government. Weigh the non-analogous situation between the *dispensing* of government to Noah and the *creation* of man as innocent, and his *acquisition* of a bad conscience with the knowledge of good and evil in the fall. I am sorry if you cannot see the difference *in kind*.

There was no second dispensation, an alleged "dispensation of conscience." God did not dispense conscience, though is quite true that there was *an age* ¹⁰ from the fall until the flood when God left man to his acquired bad conscience

9. Moreover, there is no such thing as a "Church Age," another serious fallacy in the scheme. We are in the Mosaic age. The phrase "the end of the age" refers to the end of the Mosaic age -- hardly to the end of an alleged church age. The efforts to handle this phrase consistently with the false notion of a "Church Age," by followers of the Scofieldian system, are examined in *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1.

10. Ages and dispensations are not the same thing.

with the knowledge of good and evil -- forming an epoch in the testing of the first, fallen man to show that he was not recoverable.

C. I. Scofield's First Two Covenants

THE FIRST, OR EDENIC COVENANT

There is reason to believe that it is scriptural to speak of a covenant in Eden judging from what is said in Hos. 6:7. Adam transgressed the covenant. What did he transgress? He disobeyed the only commandment he had: not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why drag into this covenant what is written in Gen. 1:28-30 as in SRB, p. 5, n. 1? Adam did not transgress those things. And what is the result of merging those things into an "Edenic Covenant"? Merrill F. Unger gave essentially the same contents to this covenant as did C. I. Scofield; and he wrote of the "Edenic Covenant":

. . . having been abrogated by the Fall, God places man under the Adamic Covenant.¹¹

"THE SECOND, OR ADAMIC COVENANT"

The Adamic Covenant conditions the life of fallen man -- conditions which must remain till, in the kingdom age, "the creation also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:21) (SRB, p. 9, n. 1)

Then seven conditions are then listed, which are on-going consequences of the fall, and are true except stating that the changed state of the woman involved man's headship, which is not so, as Adam was head before the fall and after the fall.

Why call this a covenant? -- unless to establish a scheme of covenants; or, to offer a counter scheme to the Covenantists' alleged Covenant of Grace made by God at this very time when this alleged Adamic Covenant was made? With whom was this "Adamic Covenant" made? Since this covenant "conditions the life of fallen man" was it a covenant made with fallen man? Is it supposed to be a "covenant of promise"? That could not be because Gentiles are strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12). Is it a covenant of works, like the law? No, for there are no works specified to perform to please God. Well, the truth

11. *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1981, 1:13. William MacDonal, *The Believer's Bible Commentary*, Old Testament, Nashville, Thomas Nelson, p. 41, follows the SRB concerning these two covenants. He adds "Solomonic Covenant" to the eight named in the SRB, thus making nine. He seems to follow the seven dispensations system also (p. 106). The New Scofield Reference Bible (NSRB), pp. 5, n. 2 follows the eight covenant scheme. Concerning the dispensations, it has a shift from the SRB dispensation of "Grace (John 1:17)," (p. 5, n. 5), to "Church (Acts 2:1)," p4, n. 1.

is that there is no covenant at all. The things listed are governmental inflictions by God upon fallen man.

Apparently there was an effort to find a name for this second, imagined covenant; and so the "Edenic," or first alleged covenant, was not called the Adamic covenant so that the name Adam could be used for this *second*, non-existent covenant.

The covenant with Adam in the garden was a covenant from God's side only. It called for obedience to the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil along with a penalty for disobedience. Adam "transgressed" (Hos. 6:7) and came under what we call governmental consequences, the results of God's *moral government*, inflicted as a result of his sin. The divine imposition of these governmental consequences do not constitute another covenant with Adam, now fallen. There was no second covenant until what is often called the Noahic covenant -- which was another covenant from the divine side only. The Noahic covenant was made after the epoch of fallen man, left to his bad conscience and to the knowledge of good and evil, led to filling the earth with violence and corruption, swept away by the flood. And with the dispensing of human government to man, the first dispensation, or administration, began. Human government was given in view of the pre-flood condition -- a restraint now set upon fallen man. Man has failed in this also, as in all else. But in the millennial kingdom, the Son of Man will take government into His hands and carry out God's will perfectly, for the appointed time, the 1000 years. We read in 1 Cor. 15:24-28 about this, and that when all is done He will *deliver up* the kingdom. He is the One concerning whom it did not need to be *taken away* -- having perfectly discharged the kingdom rule, He Himself *delivers up* the kingdom.

W. Kelly's Remarks in 1857 Concerning No Dispensation From Adam to the Flood

Doubtless, from the fall to the flood, God did not leave Himself without witness; but the period was not characterized by government entrusted to man. The law was not then given to a people separated from all others by peculiar privileges, nor had Gentiles, as yet, been suffered to exercise universal empire in the sovereignty and providence of God. These things and more (not to speak of the developed dealings of promise and grace) came in subsequently to the deluge, and they are the subject-matter of the dispensations, the millennium included, when every principle which has crumbled in the feeble hands of man, of Israel, and of the Gentile shall be established and maintained, in manifest unflinching glory, by the Lord Jesus Christ. They will flow on till the judgment of the dead before the great

white throne terminates such displays of God's ways among men, and ushers in the everlasting state; when they who despised or abused the holy grace of God shall meet the due reward of the evil which they feared not; when the family of the second Adam shall enjoy the blessedness procured for them by their Head, in whom they, while here, had trusted.

For, looking more closely at these early days, do we find anything like a period regulated, under God, on distinctive principles? The facts are as simple as they are opposed to the notion. There was a positive place and command given to Adam.

And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Obviously such was not the tenure outside Eden, or afterwards. It was not a principle which governed men, or any portion of men, during a finite period. The tree of life, the creation-tree, was barred from the outcasts by divine power; and this, not in judgment only, but, in a certain sense, in mercy. For man was in sin, and death was the declared penalty. Not to have executed the sentence would have dishonored God, would have introduced hopeless confusion into His dealings, would have set His words openly at naught. And besides, what could "living for ever," then and thus, have been but never-ending misery to him whose sin was unremoved? But if the transient condition of Paradisiacal innocence differs essentially from the fallen, sinful humanity which succeeded, there was no new system set up thereon by God, no subsequent human test given to the antediluvians. Man sinned then without law, as afterwards he sinned under it.

It will be said, perhaps, that the first Adam had no sooner broken down, than God appeared and announced the last Adam. There is no doubt that such is the bearing of the judgment which God predicted of the serpent in Gen. 3. Unquestionably, also, His providential might and wisdom secretly ruled then, as always. But the question is of distinctive dispensational dealings on God's part, extending through the antediluvian period; and the answer is, there were none. These ages, ruled by characteristic features impressed on them by God, find their suited place and scope in the space that intervenes between the deluge and the "end" (1 Cor. 15), when, the kingdom being given up, God shall be all in all.¹²

Addendum 3:

12. *The Bible Treasury* 1:119. See also *J. N. Darby's Teaching Regarding Dispensations, Ages and Administrations -- and the Two Parentheses*, available from the publisher.

Covenant Theology's Covenant of Grace

There are three covenants, that many Covenantists hold, that allegedly cover what God has done and is doing. It begins with a Covenant of Redemption of the Father and the Son covenanting together in eternity. The Father covenanted with the Son that He would be the redeemer of the elect and be their head; and the Son covenanted with the Father to die for the elect. Observe that this involves two parties agreeing. At any rate, there is no such covenant; this is a theological figment.

The next covenant is called the Covenant of Works. If Adam would obey God he would have eternal life as a consequence of his obedience; if not, Adam as the appointed head of the race would die and pay eternal consequences, plunging the race into these consequences of disobedience.

Adam fell, and then in Gen. 3:15 God instituted another covenant called the Covenant of Grace. God promises the elect sinner salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner believes and promises a life of faith and obedience.

The other covenants are administrations of this covenant of grace; yes, even, amazingly, the Mosaic Covenant.

The idea of two parties agreeing is an idea drawn from humans dealing with each other and Covenantism has not only projected this onto divine covenants regarding man, but projects this on the Father and the Son, as if divine Persons would bind one another in the way supposed.

In the mid-1800s J. N. Darby wrote:

Covenant, when used in connection with the Lord, is always, it seems to me, some order established by God and announced to man, according to the terms of which He enters into relationship with man, or according to which man is to approach Him.¹³

However, in more recent times there are Covenantists who take the view that the covenants are in the form of Near Eastern suzerainty treaties. After stating that:

When God makes a covenant with His creatures, He alone establishes its terms . . . ,

and mentioning the Noahic Covenant, the alleged Adamic Covenant of Works, and the Abrahamic Covenant, *The Geneva Study Bible* says of the Mosaic

13. *Synopsis* 1:18, note. There is no reason to pattern divine covenants after how man patterns his, any more than that the Lord used the word *hades* to denote what the Greeks thought about *hades*. The Lord used it for the unseen, not with the mythology of the Greeks attached to it. So did Peter with the use of the word *tartarus*. God's use of the word *covenant* is to be learned from *His* covenants.

Covenant:

God's covenant with Israel at Sinai is in the form of the ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties. These are covenants imposed unilaterally by a powerful king on a vassal king and a servant people.¹⁴

That approaches what J. N. Darby wrote, but does not change the character of Covenant Theology.

Now, we do not say that Covenantism does not have in view the glory of God; it does, but Covenantism is about God's glory in the salvation of the elect, and that this is what unifies the Scriptures. Well, God *is* glorified in the salvation of the elect, but this is not what unifies Scripture. The matter is much, much, much grander than this, even God's glory in Christ manifested in the heavenly and in the earthly spheres, united under His universal headship. What is meant by this in dispensational truth is not the Covenantist view.

And so, Covenantism makes the church, which is Christ's body, to be the "spiritual Israel," and sees all of the saints of all ages as composing the church. It regards Adam as having had the law of 10 commandments, and that the Christian is under the moral law. Thus, there is no future for a distinct Israel to which the prophecies apply; and where some Covenantists believe in a future for Israel, Israel will be part of the church.

There are Covenantists who would like to change the name of the Covenant of Grace for reasons we need not inquire into here. The system remains as described above, except that some Covenantists start with the Abrahamic Covenant. Let us now consider the idea that God established a Covenant of Grace with Adam.

Alleged Initiation of the Covenant of Grace with Adam

The Covenant of Grace of Covenant Theology is said to be a covenant first made with Adam, and that other covenants are administrations of this over-all covenant.

Speaking of the representative position of Adam and of Christ, the *Geneva Study Bible* says:

In each case the representative involved those whom he represented in the fruits of his personal action, whether it was for their wealth or their woe. This divinely chosen arrangement, whereby Adam determined the destiny of his descendants, has been called the "covenant of works," though this

14. Nashville: Nelson, p. 30, 1995.

precise phrase does not occur in Scripture.¹⁵

Then, Adam and Eve having not obeyed:

. . . God did not destroy them, but revealed His covenant of grace by promising a Savior (Gen. 3:15). God's covenant rests on his promise, as is clear from His promise to Abraham.¹⁶

The sudden shift to Abraham is interesting. The Abrahamic Covenant is indeed a covenant of promise, so here a link is sought to the idea that a promise was made to Adam, since promise is of the essence of a covenant of grace. We can see this attempted connection with Abrahamic promise at work in the next quotation. The Covenantist, Peter Golding, has provided us with a view of the initiation of the Covenant of Grace.

According to Robertson, 'If those elements essential for the characterisation of a relationship as "covenantal" are present, the relationship under consideration may be designated as covenantal despite the formal absence of the term' [Robertson, 1980:25]. Working on this principle, Louis Berkhof does not hesitate to assert: 'The first revelation of the covenant is found in the protevangel, Gen. 3:15.... It certainly does not refer to any formal establishment of a covenant.... At the same time Gen. 3:15 certainly contains a revelation of the essence of the covenant' [Berkof, *Systematic Theology*:25].

Ultimately, it is the presence of all the elements essential to the existence of a covenant that justifies the use of covenant terminology to describe man's relationship to God prior to Noah. In full sovereignty, God monergistically established a relationship bond involving a commitment for life and death. Although man fell and came under the sanctions of that 'Covenant of Works', God immediately revealed to him in embryonic form a redemptive economy, with a promise of victory for the woman's seed (a human Saviour) over the serpent and his malice ['In this mother-promise is contained nothing less than the announcement and institution of the covenant of grace' Bavinck, 1956:271]. In the words of the Westminster Confession: 'Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace' (VII:3). To be sure, there is no explicit record of a separate covenant entered into by God with Adam, but there is one interpretation only which does justice to the scriptural data, and that is the one 'which takes seriously the claims of the Bible that God truly entered into covenant with unfallen Adam, and that he again entered into covenant with fallen Adam' [Young, 1958:69]. This fact is basic to a true understanding of all Old Testament revelation, and upon it all subsequent

15. Nashville: Nelson, p. 13, 1995.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

revelation is built. What is certain, however, is the ‘record of the enjoyment of *covenant-grace before the ratification of the Abrahamic Covenant*,’ e.g. Genesis 5:22; 6:8-9 [Campbell, 1973:25].¹⁷

The *assumption* is that God cannot show grace without it being the Covenantist’s notion of “covenant-grace.” The *dictum* is that all grace shown by God is “covenant-grace” and so the church must be under a covenant. As *The Geneva Study Bible* states:

The covenant framework embraces the entire economy of God’s sovereign grace.¹⁸

Note also the viewpoint that the Covenant of Grace was there since Adam’s fall, but it “comes to expression” in the Abrahamic Covenant. We deny both the presence of a Covenant of Grace and its thus “coming to expression.” At the same time we acknowledge that Enoch “walked with God,” that Noah “found favor in the eyes of Jehovah” (Gen. 8:6), and “was a just man” and “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9), all because of God’s uncovenanted grace, and that such was Job’s case also. This alleged Covenant of Grace is a fabrication (just as is C. I. Scofield’s second covenant, the Adamic Covenant). During the epoch from Adam’s fall to the flood men were left to both their conscience and the knowledge of good and evil, acquired in the fall, resulting in an earth filled with violence and corruption -- God’s grace meanwhile being operative in certain ones according to His sovereignty.

Returning to the *Geneva Study Bible* comment on Gen. 3:15, notice the words “*revealed* his covenant of grace.” Well, God must have revealed it to the serpent to which He addressed the words found in Gen. 3:15. True, Adam was standing by listening but there is no basis in Gen. 3 to think otherwise than that Adam was in a lost state of soul when God spoke Gen. 3:15 to the serpent. I suggest that this shows what a flimsy basis there is for a far-reaching Covenant of Grace “having begun to be dispensed to men.”

The Covenant of Grace is Alleged to be the Channel for All God’s Grace to Men

John Murray stated:

The Covenant of Grace from the earliest period of the Reformation was conceived of in terms of the administration of grace to men and belonging, therefore, to the sphere of historical revelation. It was regarded as having

17. *Covenant Theology, The Key of theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition*, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, p. 148-149, 2004.

18. Nashville: Nelson, p. 30, 1995.

begun to be dispensed to men in the first promise given to Adam after the fall, but as taking concrete form in the promise to Abraham and progressively disclosed until it reached its fullest realisation in the New Covenant.¹⁹

This *conceiving* “from the earliest period of the Reformation” is a departure from Scripture, a false theological construct embracing the whole Scripture, lowering the true position of the saint now down to something like a millennial Jew.

Why is it important to Covenant Theology to have a Covenant of Grace begin then? Because otherwise regenerate persons would be left out of blessing based in a covenant, and the object of Covenant Theology is to include all sovereign grace as administered through the basis of covenant.

The covenant framework embraces the entire economy of God’s sovereign grace . . . Salvation is covenant salvation: regeneration, justification, adoption, and sanctification are covenant mercies; God’s election was God’s choice of the covenant community, the church . . . God’s law is covenant law, and keeping it is the truest expression of gratitude for covenant grace and loyalty to our covenant God.²⁰

Thus Adam and Eve were the recipients of covenant grace through the Covenant of Grace. Was there not an administration of grace to Adam? Is there reticence to state that God made the Covenant of Grace *with Adam*? If God made the promise to Adam, then why would it not follow that God made the Covenant of Grace with Adam? Well, surely the alleged Covenant of Grace had to be made with Adam, and he has to be an agreeing party to it. Note again, when the words of Gen. 3:15 were uttered, they were addressed to the serpent, not Adam; and, moreover, at the moment the words of Gen. 3:15 were spoken, Adam was unregenerate. He was fallen. Adam was listening to God’s announcement to the serpent, and by grace, through God-given faith, saw that there was a deliverer coming. None of this has anything to do with a covenant.

Result of Covenant Theology

We see from this system that the church began with Adam and Eve and embraces all the saved in all ages.²¹ We see that in it the saints now are under

19. Quoted in Peter Golding, *Covenant Theology, The Key of theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition*, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, p. 122, 2004.

20. *Geneva Study Bible*, p. 30.

21. “Upon the basis of this one covenant, there is one true Church extending through all ages (Acts 7:38, Eph. 2:11-20, Rom. 11, etc.),” G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for*

(continued...)

the law, if not for justification then for sanctification. The seventh day Sabbath is spiritually alchemized and transmuted into the first day of the week Lord's day, for you cannot be without the Sabbath if under the law for sanctification. All ten commandments must be obeyed. And on and on it goes. Paul's words "For me to live is Christ" must actually mean 'for me to live is to live covenantally.'²² Doctrine is the basis of practice, so keeping "covenant law" "is the truest expression of gratitude for covenant grace and loyalty to our covenant God." Thus, "covenant law" is the basis of Christian walk. No wonder we read of such nonsense as that the law is a transcript of the mind of God. In the outworking of this Covenant Theology, Christ's life is measured by (really reduced to) the law, and this must necessarily be so because since Gal. 6:3 speaks of the law of Christ, and since regarding "covenant law" "keeping it is the truest expression of gratitude for covenant grace and loyalty to our covenant God," then that must be the law of Christ. There is nothing higher for Christ, and for us, than the law.

All this, and very much more, is dependent on Gen. 3:15 being a "Covenant of Grace" made with Adam. No promise was made to Adam and what was said by God in Gen. 3:15 was addressed to the serpent.

The reader should understand that "Covenant Theology" adjusts all Scripture to conform to the ideas we have already examined. Let us look at an example, keeping in mind that as far as we can tell the "Covenant of Grace" was made with Adam as a head, and that he was not a Jew. We read in Eph. 2:12:

that ye were at that time without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope . . .

Concerning Gentiles:

They were not citizens of the nation with whom God was in covenant relation. Though God's relationship with Israel included a promise to bless the nations (Gen. 12:3), Gentiles had no awareness of that hope.²³

Let us back up to before there was "the nation with whom God was in covenant relation"; let us choose the time from Adam up to Abraham. Is the Covenant of Grace allegedly made with Adam a "covenant of promise"? Were not all humans under this covenant, at least until Abraham? Were not non-Jews, at least

21. (...continued)

Study Classes, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, p. 67, 1964. The texts cited teach no so thing, of course.

22. Take, for example, Daniel J. Ford, *In the Name of God, Amen. Rediscovering Biblical and Historic Covenants*, St. Louis: Lex Rex Publishing, 2003.

23. *The Geneva Study Bible*, p. 1863.

until Abraham, under the Covenant of Grace, a covenant of promise? If the Covenant of Grace is only for the elect, were there not non-Jews before Abraham that were elect? Were these non-Jewish elect persons under a "covenant of promise"?

There was no "God's relationship with Israel" at the time of Gen. 12:3. Moreover, Eph. 2:12 does not speak of "no awareness of that hope" but of being "without hope," a far different matter. The truth is that there existed no covenant of promise for Gentiles. Our text is speaking of covenants of promise and Gentiles are not participants in any of them -- no, not even the mythical Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Grace is supposed to be a covenant of promise -- and would that not mean it is a covenant of promise above all others? And what of Rom. 9:4?

The unbelief of Israel is magnified by the multiplied blessings they have experienced in the eightfold privileges Paul lists in vv. 4, 5; he confirms his earlier statement in 3:1, 2.²⁴

It was well to connect this with Rom. 3:1, 2 where we read of Israel that "to them were entrusted the oracles of God," not to Gentiles. In Rom. 9:3-5 we read concerning the covenants:

. . . my brethren, my kinsmen according to flesh; who are Israelites; whose is . . . the covenants . . . and the promises . . .

The *Geneva Study Bible* did not attempt spiritual alchemy on this passage. At any rate, it is as clearly stated as can be to whom the covenants of promise belong and to whom the promises belong -- and we can clearly see what "strangers to the covenants of promise" in Eph. 2:12 means. Not ignorance of them, but exclusion from them, for they belong to Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:2-5). Moreover, since the covenants of promises belong to Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh, and since Adam was not a kinsman of Paul according to the flesh -- this is Jewish flesh, not common humanity which all Gentiles have as well as Jews and Adam too -- no promise was made to Adam. Is the Covenant of Grace a covenant of promise, one established with Adam? It is a plain contradiction of Scripture to say, 'yes, with Adam a covenant of promise was established,' a contradiction at the base of Covenant Theology.

What is needed here is subjection to the statements of God just as is the case with the secrecy regarding the mystery of Christ and the church. This mystery is outside of, and above covenants; and to regard it otherwise is to lower it to the level of "Covenant Theology" which is an expression of law-

24. *Geneva Study Bible*, p. 1782.

keeping. That antinomianism necessarily follows is Covenantist mythology. They adjust the meaning of the law of Christ in Gal. 6:3 and so, if we actually fulfill the law of Christ, we are in their view not doing so because we do not see the Covenantist legal view of it. Moreover, the Christian's rule is:

. . . new creation. And as many as walk by this rule peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (Gal. 6:15, 16).²⁵

The law is for the earthly creation, not the new creation.

Covenant Theology is Judaistic

The first "covenant of promise" was the Abrahamic Covenant. Gentiles are blessed by uncovenanted grace. The operations of grace in them are not part of a covenant but the result of God's sovereign choice as it pleases Him. God acts outside of covenant as it pleases Him. Covenant Theology puts God into a covenant straight-jacket, dictating that no grace is shown but covenant-grace -- meaning that grace results from, or is channeled through, a covenant, or on account of a covenant. It is a figment of theology bending the entire Scripture to this theological reasoning, ending with making the assembly of God to be the 'true Israel' and under the New Covenant, and under the law for sanctification, with a spiritual-alyzed seventh-day Sabbath into a first-day Sabbath, and transferring Christ's righteous law-keeping to the Christian, etc. etc. It is ***Judaizing***. The whole of Scripture is bent to this mental construct, including what we have seen such theology do to such Scriptures as Rom. 16:25, 26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3:5, 9; where silence means partial silence, where hid from ages and generations does not mean that it was hid, but means partial hiding -- allegedly just was not as clearly revealed in the OT as it is now -- and its being "hidden throughout the ages in God" means it was hidden in some degree in the OT, but not so completely that Covenant Theology could not find it there. So, Covenant Theology *does* find the mystery in the OT and includes all OT saints in the assembly of God. On and on it goes.

Such is the result of Covenant Theology with its Scripture-distorting Covenant of Grace under which all other covenants are subsumed and administered, including the Mosaic Covenant, as we shall see if the Lord will. Just think of the Mosaic Covenant being an administration of the Covenant of Grace! But the OT is not about the administrations of the nonexistent Covenant of Grace; it is about the trial of fallen man to show that he is not recoverable -- not recoverable under all the situations and conditions that God allowed or specified; and tested until the first man killed the Second Man, the Lord out of

25. See *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, available from the publisher.

heaven!

No Law of Ten Commandments Before Moses

For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

For this [cause], even as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men, for all have sinned: (for until law sin was in the world; but sin is not put to account when there is no law; but death reigned from Adam until Moses . . .) (Rom. 5:12-14).²⁶

Adam, we have seen, had *a* law, not the ten commandments. And just as there is no basis in Gen. 3:15 to assert that there we see "the covenant of grace," there is no basis to say that Adam had *the* law, or that anyone had *the* law before it was given by Moses. We have previously considered that sin is lawlessness, not the transgression of *the* law. It is acting by one's own will, not with reference to the will of God, which is the essence of sin. The following from J. G. Bellett may be helpful:

In those times, or as the apostle speaks, "from Adam to Moses," *law* did not give character to the state of the people of God. Adam was under law in Eden, and so were the children of Israel after the day of Mount Sinai. But not so the generations from Adam to Moses. Sin was equally in the world, but there was no law (Rom. 5:14).

But not only, I may observe, were they not under law; there was also almost a total absence of moral or preceptive instruction. Much revelation of the divine pleasure and counsels there was; but scarcely anything of precept. Under the Spirit, revelation worked its result on character and conduct, and formed the mind and the ways of the saints. Evil was resented by them, and judged of God; but without a written standard of right and wrong. Without any law against murder, Cain is exposed; without a fifth commandment, Ham's dishonor of his father is punished. And so Jacob's guile is visited and resented by the Lord; and the wicked way of Joseph's brethren. And without the light of any precept the soul of a saint can thus plead with temptation, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

All this is so, though neither law nor moral instruction was then published. It was revelation in matters of faith which, under the Spirit, formed patriarchal character. Abraham was not enjoined {to rear up} either his altar or his tent; but his call of God, through the Spirit, suggested both. No precept required his high, generous treatment of Lot; but his faith and hope in God dictated and commanded it. Without direction on the case, his

26. Rom. 5:13-17 is parenthetical.

knowledge of God and the mind of Christ that was in him disposed him, and taught him to let the potsherd of the earth strive with their fellows, but as soon as his kinsman was a captive to go forth for his deliverance. No word, no oracle from God, distinguished for him between the king of Salem and the king of Sodom; but the light that was in him did.

I might go through other histories in this book, and find these same things. The holy judgment of the mind that was in them, under the Spirit, suggested to those early saints conduct by means of revelation, promise, and calling of God. And this is ever beautiful, when we get genuine samples or instances of it.²⁷

These are helpful observations, though no doubt unacceptable to those who will have it that *the* law is the measure of all.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

Note

There are three things I find in the often trying and toilsome life of faith: first, trusting God that nothing can hinder His accomplishing His purpose. All that his brethren did to frustrate the accomplishment of Joseph's dreams, just led to that accomplishment. They sent him to Egypt. The hard and wicked accusation against him in Potiphar's house put him in prison, where he met the butler and baker who brought him where the dream was fulfilled. Next, for us, simple obedience, taking God's mind for wisdom, and doing His will. He has a path for His saints in this world; in it they find Him and His strength, though perhaps the life of faith be dark: then, if we know the purpose of God, light is in the soul. But the path He will guide us in. It may seem dark, but, if His, it is the way of arriving at His rest. But a single eye seeking nothing but Christ is the secret of certainty of walk, and firmness as having the secret of the Lord with you. But what a calling! we have to walk worthy of God who has called us to His own kingdom, and yet what a joy to be thus associated with Himself! And we know His purpose is to glorify Christ, and so we seek that, in walking worthy of Him and serving Him in love.

Letters of J. N. Darby 3:93.

Early Beginnings²⁸

27. *The Patriarchs*, London: Morrish, pp. 3-5, n.d.

28. This article also appears in *Additional Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, which will shortly be printed, if the Lord will.

Notes of Mr. J. N. Darby's Journey, and an Outline of the Work of the Lord in Germany, Switzerland, and the South of France. Taken at the Tea Meeting at Rawstorne Street, 24th November 1853.

It is of great importance that we should most deeply feel that the work *God* is doing on the earth, it is *He Himself* that is doing it. It is true that He uses us as His servants in it, but there is always the danger of SELF appearing in anything that connects itself with man, who is merely an instrument -- but so far as man is hidden, God is glorified, and all goes on well. Therefore, in thus speaking of the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:1), the trials and difficulties of those engaged in it never appear, and of course cannot be known, for you cannot enter into the details and various shades of the work.

It is quite a right thing that the saints of God should know that the power of God's grace is still working in drawing sinners to Himself, and by the power of His Spirit He is driving away individually the gross darkness that covereth the people. Therefore it is right that the saints in distant places should have such intelligence of the work as to feel fellowship with those who are thus contending against Satan's power in the world. For while waiting for the Lord's coming from heaven to set everything right, our lamps should be brightly burning, and our hearts filled with the consciousness that, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes, whatever things are wrong now will *then* be set right, and *never before*. For Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. And the whole desire and devotedness of our hearts should be set on this one point. It is true that the very thought of souls being brought to the knowledge of the Lord should rejoice our hearts. As the witnessing of God's grace still working in the midst of abounding evil, this stirs up the soul and gives it fresh energy to follow on in the work of the Lord, and besides this it also gives fresh energy to the soul of God's servant, to be found working in *God's line of things*, for God has His own thoughts concerning everything that is now taking place on the earth, but He will work according to the counsels of His own will, and who shall let {hinder} it?

But still the more we go on we shall feel, and rightly so, as David says:

I have seen an end of all perfection (Psa. 119:96).

But when He comes who is perfection itself, then the hearts of such will be satisfied, for if we feel what salvation is in ourselves, having been brought to God, the thought of one soul being brought there is endless joy.

The Lord is working in these last days preparatory to His coming (I fix no time, long or short) in a most manifest way in quickening souls, and in a way more remarkable than ever He did, for while the world is in trouble in various ways, men are thus led to seek their rest elsewhere. Souls are being shaken and disturbed by things around, and are the more cast on Him to find their rest. For without pretending to say when it may be, it is evident that the bonds of everything are weakening, and the men of the world know and feel that all outward bonds are dissolving, not of evil, for they are growing stronger, but all ties that held society

together in good feeling are daily dying out. Men are meeting in synods and are entirely at their wits' ends to know what is to be done when all their external things are gone. None question that there was a mighty work of God's Spirit at the Reformation, which has lasted these three hundred years, but there has long since ceased to be that life and energy, so that they do not know what will be done when Roman Catholicism comes in in power. Evil has come in, for there is an astonishing reaction of evil principle at work at the present time in Europe -- take an instance, that of Romanism (Rationalism?) in Germany. At the same time there exists the full consciousness in the Evangelical Church of the want of energy to keep itself alive.

Then on the other hand it cannot but be seen that there is also at this time a remarkable energy of God's Spirit, producing heavings in the large inert masses of professing Christians, and also working individually, by an amazing energy in one and another springing up among them, and this works for good, and if they are not allowed to work there God takes them somewhere else. For if a man will not work while he himself is out of the evil, God will work by some one in it, for He will have instruments. I have also seen places where, through the slackness and languor of Brethren, the work has been given to others; this has not surprised me, for if you are slack in seeking souls He may discipline in this way. God will not wait to quicken souls till you have energy enough, but will use somebody else, for *God must have souls*, and it is most useful for us to see this, for if this is the way in which God is working, I am most anxious we should all look soberly at it, and lay it to heart, and go to the source of all power for fresh strength and energy, for in the midst of the greatest languor God can arouse and give fresh strength. In speaking to you of the work I will mention the places as I visited them last year on my leaving England, and will endeavor to take you all there with me in spirit.

FRANCE

PARIS. -- Here is a despised little flock of happy, fervent, devoted Christians. The place itself is one of great difficulty from the excessive vanity that surrounds them, and being principally servants, lady's maids, and the like, they have great difficulty in getting to the meetings, but still the number is increasing. They have no one laboring among them in the way of preaching -- they edify one another, and God is still adding to their number. There are about thirty or forty of them. After going through deep trials, that we helped them to, for some years, they are now going on better, are very happy, and more united than ever. *Elie Meylan*, who was in England last year, has been at Paris for a little while, and found them happy.

LYONS. -- Here the saints have gone through great trials. The place itself is Roman Catholic. It is also the center of the Evangelical Alliance in France. There is a large Evangelical Church at Lyons, where there is decided blessing in conversions. In this church is a M. *Fisch*, who is well known to myself, and labors

with much blessing in this most trying place. M. *Fisch* and another brother with him have a full knowledge of the truth we hold, as -- the coming of the Lord, the presence of the Holy Ghost, the union of the Body to Christ, &c. M. *Fisch* is fully convinced that we are right, so that he has been spreading the truth we hold, both outside and inside, yet he himself is very clerical, and has not sufficient courage to break with the position he is in, and leave system altogether.

Some half-measures have been taken, that is, they break bread every Lord's Day. But these half-measures will only hinder souls who receive the truth he teaches from coming out and walking with God. The Brethren meeting at Lyons have a brother, named *Vey*, most remarkably gifted, though uneducated, who is ministering among them with great blessing.

NICE. -- Here the Lord has been working in a most wonderful way. Three or four years ago people would not have been allowed to take a French or Italian Bible into Nice. On arriving there this year I found the funeral of a brother, who had been a known Catholic, was about to take place. He had got peace through a brother at Nice, named *Boessler*. He was buried by a club to which he belonged, and several hundred workmen were present. It caused a very great sensation in the place on account of its being a Protestant burial, as there had not been one before. An immense crowd followed him, and as we passed through the town many more were added to the number. At the grave a minister prayed, then a converted priest spoke, and then our brother spoke a full hour with very much power and blessing. The people were most attentive.

MARSEILLES. -- This large town is the Plymouth of the south of France. There are forty breaking bread. *Violet* and *Campredlon* are working there. The Protestants of Marseilles have appointed deaconesses to visit and care for the sick and poor, and one of these deaconesses came lately to break bread with us, and although she was quite willing to go on with them, yet they have utterly cast her off. She was considered the best deaconess in the place. This circumstance has awakened much attention and persecution at Marseilles. There are vast opportunities for laboring in this place.

THE PYRENEES. -- At Pau our brother *Barbet*, who is now laid aside, has worked for many years with much blessing. Then there is much blessing in the neighboring district. At Orthez and other places fully two hundred are breaking bread in various spots. They have been occasionally troubled by the police. They are gathered together again, and many more have come into communion. There have been, and still are, many conversions there.

Our brother, *Violet*, has been much blessed at Lausanne. When staying there some years since, two brethren asked me to read the Scriptures with them. I hesitated at first, fearing it might hinder me in my other work. However, three more came, who were with a schoolmaster, and had learned so much truth, that he said they might go. They joined the other two, and thus they went on till the

number got up to twelve. I read with these daily from ten till one. We then dined together, and we also broke bread together every day after dinner. On the first day of the week we broke bread with the rest of the saints. I had, in the large building, where we met for worship, some rooms where these brethren met. It was no plan of mine, for in truth I was shy of it at first, but the Lord ordered it all, and if I were to attempt to do such a thing now, I could not do it. These brethren are now working in different parts of France and Switzerland with blessing. *Violet* was one of them -- it was this that led me to mention these facts -- and he has been working in the Pyrenees with blessing. One hundred and fifty or so have been converted. *Carrive*, a nice useful brother, a farmer, lives in this neighborhood, and does what he can.

BORDEAUX, in the north of the Pyrenees, where there are a good many Christians, but without much energy. Our brother *D___* is working at a place near where some twenty or thirty are going on happily. An evangelist has been sent into the neighborhood by the Church of M. *Fisch* at Lyons. At *Clairac* a little more east, a considerable number are gathered and many conversions. Our brother *Guignard* has been preaching here with much blessing. There is also a Free Church here into which much truth held by Brethren has penetrated. There are about sixty or seventy there.

MONTPELLIER, east of the Pyrenees, quite in the south of France. In this neighborhood is St Hippolyte. For a long time I preached to one hundred and fifty women and only two men, because the men were ashamed to come; they were such infidels. Our brother *Favez* also had great labor and patience there. I was much struck with the Lord's way in keeping them very low and humble; difficulties pressed hard upon them; they were very much tried with . . . for seven years, yet conversions were going on, and the Lord was adding to their number. He chastened them and now they get on better.

At the center of the south of France the work of God's Spirit is very manifest by others as well as by Brethren. A brother from Lyons, who had been a merchant, but lost all his property, except £150 a year, has devoted himself since to going about as a missionary. He is an upright, zealous, faithful man; his name is *Mourton*. He took his knapsack on his back and went about the country thrashing the people with the law, but had no conversions, as he did not preach the gospel. *Mourton* came into Montpellier, thundering the law, but had no conversions, but still he prepared the ground; for when he was followed by our brother *Sabbatier* bringing the full gospel of the grace of God, many conversions were the result of his preaching, the seed having sprung up. There are about eighty or a hundred breaking bread. At St Laurent in this neighborhood I was very happy; several have been converted there this year. At St Andrede Valborgne, a very dear godly brother is labouring amidst much opposition and blessing. At St Hippolyte, a Swiss brother, *Guignard*, has been much blessed. At Montpellier, one by one have been added by a very dear godly brother who is a physician, M. *Parlier*, who

lives there and who receives the saints into his house. There are now happy conversions and much activity of life in the different villages surrounding Montpellier. If laborers were there, many doors would be open, the Spirit of God producing the sense of need. At Frisa, one of the villages of St Jean du Gard, it was very uphill work for many years, but there have been forty or fifty converted within the past year; in some cases whole families were brought out. When I was traveling I met the mayor of the place, who was once very much opposed, reading one of my works. I asked him about it, when he replied: "Oh, I don't suppose you will like it." When I told him I was the writer, he said that if I would come and preach there, I should have not only one hundred but twelve hundred to hear me, and so I found it. The meetings were once broken up by the police, but they were resumed again through the husband of one of the sisters, who was a Roman Catholic, and who wrote to the Commissioners and said that his wife had always had such meetings without any evil consequences following, but on the contrary, she got blessing from them, upon which the police retracted, and they have continued these meetings ever since with much blessing, but the room is not large enough and laborers are wanted.

The DRÔME (back of the Rhone). -- Here, too, there has been very uphill work. One brother was imprisoned three months for the truth, but now there is much blessing. Thirty or forty Roman Catholics have been converted, and humanly speaking, there would have been more had there been laborers. There appears to be a great awakening amongst them all. Three or four clergymen have been converted who were infidels. The people saw that there was a great awakening, and it so laid hold upon them that the Wesleyan ministers were allowed to preach in the infidel pulpits. The windows even of the building where the preaching was were crowded all round on the outside when I was there, and many could find no room. Twelve women, silk spinners, came to me to speak about their souls the morning I came away. One clergyman, who was an infidel, got into another strain and preached the gospel evidently with another life, leaving his infidelity behind his back, who, if he had been questioned about the inspiration of the Scriptures, might have been puzzled. In fact, the power of the Spirit of God carried them away from their infidelity without their knowing anything about it. In short, the movement of God's Spirit was so remarkable that it seemed to carry persons altogether beyond themselves into a new life. Up the mountains, I suppose, there must be a hundred breaking bread.

ARDECHE. -- A hundred were converted here last year. One brother came and preached the law, and he was followed by our brother *Guignard*, who preached Christ fully, and thus souls got life and liberty in Christ. There have been seven or eight hundred breaking bread. At Montbéliard we held a fortnight's reading, which was greatly blessed. As our way is abroad to set apart a fortnight at a time to read some book of the Scriptures together, as we have lately done at Bath; for, if we are to be teachers of others, we must be making progress in the knowledge

of Scripture ourselves. At Montbeliard and two other places there are very near three hundred breaking bread and conversions going on. Almost the whole village of Colombier-Chatelot is converted. At Besancon, a large popish town, about forty or fifty are breaking bread.

SWITZERLAND

In Switzerland it is a much older work; at one time many of those who worked here went to France to meet the demand there, but languor has crept in and it had grown cold; but now two clergymen have been lately raised up to work there.

At LAUSANNE there are two hundred gathered; the Lord blessed me with conversions there this year. At Vevey much blessing is going on. One hundred and fifty are breaking bread. In the surrounding country there is much revival, most happy meetings in various places, and many breaking bread, and in the Canton deVaud violent persecutions. When persecutions arose in Switzerland, the dissenters gave up their meetings in various places, but the Brethren did not; they still went on and the godly ones joined them. The president of the dissenters' meetings is much blessed among them.

NEUCHATEL. -- Here there is great blessing and extension of the work. There also lives here a very godly brother, _____, a person of consideration in the world. His aunt has built a hospital, according to the custom of the country, and all who go in there get blessing; for meetings are held there. About seventy or eighty converted. Several are now meeting at La Chapelle; also at Berne and Basle there are a few breaking bread.

GERMANY

FRANKFORT. -- Here our sister Miss Whately is and the converted Jewesses, the Misses Stern, also a godly shoemaker who has been much blessed there. I found blessing and was happy there with them. The next I might mention is Tubingen in Wurtemberg, about thirty or forty are breaking bread. At Dusseldorf and Elberfeld, there is a remarkable work of God's Spirit. There has been what is called a Bruderverein set up in this neighborhood by the Church people, which Bruderverein is a kind of home missionary establishment, where persons get qualified as Scripture readers. Amongst them were evangelical clergymen, very legal, but still Christians, although of a very low standing and worldly state. (*Krumacher* was once here.) When some of these Bruderverein saw their liberty of preaching Christ, and were forbidden by the clergymen of the Society to do so, they united with the Brethren in fellowship and service. Our brother *Von Poseck* got hold of one or two of these Bruderverein who were going about selling Bibles and reading them to others. Through them he circulated amongst them various

tracts which he had translated from the English as, "The Hopes of the Church," &c., and some of the Bruderverein receiving truth from these tracts imparted it to others. When they understood that they were to preach Christ, if they had ability, they told it to the clergymen of the Mission, who forbade them and turned them off telling them they might go about their business, and accordingly they went immediately on the Lord's business, which was now their own business. The work thus begun has resulted in eight hundred or more conversions, most of which have taken place during the past year. There are forty meetings in this neighborhood, but they do not break bread at them all. About twelve brethren are laboring amongst them. They go on foot preaching the gospel as far as the frontiers of Holland and of Hesse in each direction, and are much blessed in the work, the Lord being with them. They have had many interruptions by persecution, and have had their meetings broken up by the police, and then they went elsewhere. They were fined several times for having what the police called a procession, when it was merely a dozen or fifteen returning home together from a meeting in the country. They were always obliged to give notice before they could hold a meeting, but however, all this has not hindered, but rather helped on the work of the Lord, for the chief of the Burgomasters became converted, and then he called the other Burgomasters to order for hindering their meetings. I trembled much for these brethren, for the danger with them is this -- they had formerly been under the influence of the popular preacher, who kept them under law and taught them that to be always on their faces crying to God to help them as poor sinners was a healthful state of soul. When they subsequently got hold of the truth of their being dead and risen with Christ, and were so full of joy in knowing their sins put away, when they saw that they were not to be thinking of their sins, but their eyes were to be fixed on Christ, they said: "Oh, we are dead and risen with Christ, and have nothing more to do with our sins." Now while the Spirit of God keeps them really looking to Christ, this is most blessed, but what I fear for them is that they should neglect to judge themselves for the sin still remaining in them. I felt the danger from the sudden influx of light in the time of declension. However, I was very happy with them, and spoke to them freely on this point.

In FRANCE the police magistrates require the names and occupations of those meeting. We could not always give a list of names because all Christians are received whose walk is godly. In general the names are given which leads to imprisonment. Sometimes the police have come in when persons have unexpectedly come into a meeting and increased the number, and have turned out the overplus. Thus if twenty-seven had been the number of names given in, the police would turn out into the street all above the twenty-seven. One brother was imprisoned fifteen days for the truth; another three weeks; another was fined £12; another was fined for not giving the names of all who came. It is also required to state the principles and objects of those who meet, and thus the Lord's coming and other important truths are spread before magistrates on all hands. One of the

official persons with whom I had an interview when I put before him our objects, said he was thankful that we should edify one another and so forth, but it must be done as authorized by law. There was some difficulty in this, for I felt it would be scarcely honest to ask to be authorized, when I well knew we should meet just the same if not authorized. One Christian officer has had an interview with the present Emperor, in order to present to him some articles belonging to Napoleon Bonaparte. He had thus an opportunity of setting before the Emperor (who had previously been prejudiced against the Brethren, saying they were red republicans) all the principles of Brethren, their separation from politics, &c. &c, thus removing the stigma usually attached to Protestants, who are, in truth, most of them, red republicans, and the Emperor was satisfied. A Prefect was directed to protect the meetings of Brethren through similar representations of a lady, connected with the Minister of the Interior, so that now they let them be quiet, and meetings are multiplied all about the country, and there are twenty or thirty laboring in the gospel.

The Christian's Library 3:169-185.

Fragment

The unity of the body is so great a truth, and is connected collaterally with so many other truths of deep and vital moment, that we need not wonder (in a day of so much ignorance of Scripture, and worldliness, as at present) if the enemy should succeed leading many to deny and pervert it. A holy unity in the Spirit, and such it is, can be denied in more ways than one. Readiness of separation may work in some the self-will of the flesh, which cannot understand either the holiness or the unity of *the Church of God*, or the Spirit's presence with the body. Worldliness in others may appreciate *union*, for according to the world's motto (and motto for the day), "Union is strength," but the eagerness of its tolerance will, before God, amount to unholiness, and the presence of the Spirit it must surely, practically deny, for it sees *Him* not, neither knows *Him*. If Satan be more immediately at work, there will be a holiness according to the letter of Scripture, perhaps, *admitted*; but unity will be so put as to shut out *grace*, or *truth*, or the Holy Ghost.

From *Words of Truth* 3:80.

The Multiformity of Sectarianism and the Unity of the Spirit

My Dear Brother,

I see what you say about the difference of our views about the gathering of the Saints of God for worship and the Lord's Supper. I did not know that you professed to gather as saints at all in Sweden, as entirely separate from the

religious world; for, when you gather for the breaking of bread, is it not as members of the "*Lutheran Christian Mission*," and not, simply, as "*members of Christ*"? My inability to acknowledge such a gathering of God's people is, that it is, obviously, *unscriptural*. I do not need to prove this; for your connection with the world, in its religion, shows it. Give up Lutheranism *as a system*; and, by so doing, you will be (*negatively*, at least) in circumstances to assemble with *all saints*, on the scriptural basis of being members of Christ's body: for Scripture says, "cease to do evil," "from such turn away," "depart from iniquity," etc. But, in order to take true scriptural ground, we must have the requisite spiritual *state*, by the spiritual working of the Holy Ghost; for, unless there be good ground, there cannot be a good crop. If the people you are associated with had in their souls a full knowledge of Christianity in power, then they would leave the "Mission" and take up Christian ground; which, you know, numbers of them are doing as they have their Lutheranism supplanted by Christian truth. Who are responsible for this division of the saints? Not those who make the division, under the necessity of obeying God rather than man: but those who *cause* it, by taking up a position, and holding to a system of doctrine and church order which are short of *the truth*. There being no warrant in Scripture either for your position or action, it is imperative on you to give up both. I know that, in a great movement in the souls of men, such as that which has taken place in Sweden, there is need of patience and forbearance: for instruction alone can give them the true doctrine of Scripture for their practical and ecclesiastical guidance. I can also well understand how you, and others who are leaders, should wish to go to work cautiously in introducing the teaching of the Word on subjects hitherto unknown, as the believers are able to bear it; but I grieve to think that you should unwittingly promote division among the saints, by taking up, and advocating as right, a principle of gathering and a place of gathering, which necessarily make those so gathered a divisive body, and thus prevent those whose minds are formed and whose conduct, is guided by Holy Scripture, from assembling with you. The Holy Ghost is the sole guide in His Word. He has given there what is right, and this decides the matter for us all, so that we are not dependent upon the views and thoughts of men. There is such a thing as *the truth*, and this is what we read in God's Word and are guided by, without any reasoning of our own. And, if we can act for God, on the warrant of God's truth, and thereby take up an unassailable position, why should we vex ourselves and our fellow-Christians, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by acting independently of Scripture and according to the dictation of our own wills? No well-taught conscientious child of God can have either spiritual or ecclesiastical rest unless he does the whole known will of God as to individual or corporate position. As a matter of individual godliness, one would never think of its being left to our personal option whether we should obey the injunction, "Let him that stole, steal no more," yet people think they may do as they please as to obeying the ecclesiastical precept, to "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are

called . . . using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit;” not taking note of the fact that both exhortations are found in the same chapter and under the same warrant of the Spirit, and that the first part of the chapter is occupied with ecclesiastical godliness, and the second part with personal and social godliness; and that the one is just as binding on all saints as the other.

Were we all possessed of nothing but the truth of God, and subject to the will of God, we should be all together keeping the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. You, as well as we, have had to give up many hereditary and traditionary ideas because we found no warrant for them in God’s Word; and all our hereditary church views, being totally wrong, must also be abandoned. For, as to their doctrines and ecclesiastical systems, there are no churches, in any country in Christendom, scriptural; therefore, wise men, and men of dependent, lowly, and obedient minds, will forsake them, and accept God’s way of gathering to the name of Jesus Christ alone. There has been for nearly half a century a growing dissatisfaction among Christians with the disorganised and divided state of the Christian profession, and various efforts have been made to obtain, at least, some show of the real unity of the body of Christ.

Before we give the true unity which God made and we have been told to keep, let us look a little at the various substitutes for it which men have adopted in ancient and modern times.

1. That which, if anything, represents historical Christianity -- the Western Church, with Rome for its center, is gathered into its external unity around the Pope as Christ’s alleged vicegerent on earth. This even in outward form goes no farther than the unity of its own religious profession, as all churches err by doing. It is not based on the first set of unities, one body and one Spirit and one hope of our calling; but upon “One, Lord, one faith, and one baptism.”

2. The Greek Church, which embraces not only the population of Greece proper but of Russia and a considerable part of Turkey, holding about a hundred millions of souls in its circle, is gathered around a Patriarch and governed by the world, and has been already judged by the Mohammedan {Muslim} power, and is held in bondage by the Russian Emperor, who is ostensibly its head and ruler. It is not likely that the fallen Eastern Church will ever emerge from its present identification with the world, and act on its own responsibility, as is done by the Church of Rome.

3. Established churches have been formed in many Protestant countries by the State assuming the power of the church which was taken from the Pope; and the principle on which they proceed is, that the nation and the church are co-extensive, and hence the clergy are the state-appointed officials for supplying the whole population with ordinances, and there is no gathering together of the saints: indeed, this would be utterly incompatible with the idea of a state church. This is

a return in principle to the system of ordinances, out of which the church sprang on the descent of the Holy Ghost and the formation of the church of God. In such circumstances the keeping of the unity of the Spirit is an absolute impossibility.

4. Episcopal churches are formed on the assumption that there are three orders of church officers -- bishops, priests, and deacons; and their system is hierarchical. But there is nothing plainer than that there is no trace of this system in the Holy Scriptures; for there elders and bishops are identical; and there is no diocesan bishop such as they now have. The apostles knew no such thing as a prelate in the church -- neither instituted them nor recognized them: nor do the Scriptures refer to any such functionary as a diocesan bishop. No one denies that at the end of the second century the episcopal system, not the diocesan, but one superior president of the principal local churches, was generally established. But it was not established in apostolic times by God, when the government of the Church was settled. There is no warrant for it in Scripture. But had it been otherwise, Scripture assures us that the ground, center, and principle of assembling, are other than in connection with an episcopal hierarchy.

5. The Presbyterian system adheres to the scriptural order of only two classes of ecclesiastical officers -- elders and deacons: but they have neither, as the apostolic church had them. They overlook the fact that elders were never established save by the apostles or their envoys; and the presbytery never appointed them. But not heeding this fatal bar to their proceedings that they have neither warrant nor power to establish elders, they do so, and make the work of their own hands the foundation for their gathering as a church. Even if they had been in the days of the apostles when the Presbyterian care-taking of the church was in full force by divine warrant and apostolic appointment, they would have learned, as all saints may now do, that church union was not secured by external government, but by a power entirely outside of church government. It might expose their false ground of unity to ask where was the unity of the church in assemblies where no elders were established? The assemblies were owned by Paul and Barnabas to be true churches without elders; and they, and not the churches, “established elders in every church.” But the church being there before the elders shows clearly that the church must have assembled on some other basis than that of having elders. This principle of gathering of theirs seems to have been very little successful in the past; and feeling this, they are now holding Pan-Presbyterian councils at stated intervals, to try to re-unite the scattered fragments of their body; and as many as forty-four differing churches sent up representatives to the council to demonstrate their ecclesiastical unity! This shows total disorganization.

6. Congregationalists or Independents meet on the ground of the absolute independence of the local assembly. This is the complete negation of the unity of the body. They make life in Christ their professed ground of gathering, but they appoint ministers and deacons, and there is neither liberty of ministry nor of worship. Independency means that each church judges for itself independently of

another. In every respect this system is wholly unscriptural. The church is not a voluntary system. It is not formed (or rather unformed) of a number of independent bodies or assemblies, each acting for itself. There is not a trace of such independency and disorder in the Word of God.

7. *The Baptists* make adult baptism by immersion their principle of separation from other Christians, and of assembling themselves together. This principle is, on the face of it, unscriptural, for (though none should eat the Lord's supper who are not baptized) Christ is the center of Christian gathering and not an ordinance, and the only ground of gathering is the unity of the body of Christ; not the merely mechanical thing of assembling around an ordinance, although the participation in the Lord's supper is that by which the oneness of the Church is expressed. "For we, the many, are one bread, one body" (1 Cor. 10:17), for we are all partakers of that one bread.

8. *The Methodists* make no pretensions to being on a church ground at all, only "a society of penitent sinners fleeing from the wrath to come," and their creed is very much the Arminian doctrines of John Wesley, which are generally a reflection of the doctrines of Lutheranism. They are characterized by intense earnestness and zeal for the conversion of souls; but, as a rule, their converts know neither redemption nor peace with God; and to them the knowledge of the Church of God is simply an impossibility; and, as already remarked, they do not profess to be on church ground. They are like the Lutherans of the mission-houses in Sweden, who do not give up a nominal connection with the established church, yet, for their own convenience, have the Lord's supper by themselves. The Methodists of today {late 1800s} are just what the mission-house believers will become, unless they embrace and act upon the truth that "there is one body and one Spirit."

9. Besides the above-mentioned, there is a multitude of sects assembling on bits of truth or falsehood, or ranged under different leaders' names, such as Irvingites, Campbellites, Swedenborgians, Mennonites, Mormonites, etc. All this is simply the will of man and not the Word of God.

10. *Temporary unions* are also formed by Christians for special purposes, on the principle of sinking their differences, and enjoying each other's society for some days. They have their Bible and missionary societies, their Christian conferences, and the Evangelical Alliance. This last was formed nearly forty years ago {in 1846, in England}. It is a great international society of the heavier portion of the evangelical world, who yet have a notion that some manifestation should be given that all Christians are one in Christ. The more spiritual and evangelistic part of the Evangelicals have their *Christian Conferences*, where they meet together for a few days on the ground of sinking their differences, and have preaching, prayer, and sometimes the Lord's supper. But, even in both, the clergy never relax their grasp; and indeed, the owning of a clergy and ordinances is the real ground of

their assembling, for those who own neither are excluded. The clergy always assert their place of usurpation as dispensers of the supper at such gatherings; and in all the church-making of the age they have the place of pre-eminence and supreme control. They are the cause of the ruin; and they perpetuate it (Acts 20:30).

13. {sic}. But the *divine unity* is different from all these unions of men by which Christendom has been disfigured and ruined, and lies before the eyes of mankind as a wreck, to the dishonor of Christ and the disgrace of all the saints who sanction it. All man's churches are distinctly opposed to God's church, and in defiance of the plain word of God -- "there is *one* body" {Eph. 4}. This does not mean *many* bodies. Man's error lies in making churches instead of owning the church God has made. He has a unity of the Spirit He enjoins us to keep. He has united Christians in one body in Christ by His sovereign grace, and in virtue of the power of the Holy Ghost, without consulting with them and without availing Himself of their co-operation. He has baptized all saints into one body, and exhorted them, not to make unions, but, to act so as to maintain "THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT in the bond of peace." And that there may be no mistake he points it out in the words which follow -- "There is ONE BODY and ONE SPIRIT, even as ye are called in ONE HOPE of your calling." And when saints assemble ¹ on this divine ground, they have only to worship God the Father and show their oneness in Christ by breaking bread together in remembrance of Him at His table; "for we, the many, are one bread, one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). This is the Spirit's way of giving an outward expression of our unity; and He will admit of none other. The scriptural principles of gathering for worship and the breaking of bread require only faith, a mind subject to the Spirit, and a heart for Christ, to own them and act upon them in maintaining the unity of the Spirit.

(1.) On account of the holiness of God, the necessary *principle* of gathering to Christ is separation from evil. ² Christ's redemption takes the saints out of the ruin of themselves as well as of their sins, having delivered them from this present evil world. God sets them in the Spirit as those who are Christ's in the midst of evil, but separated from it as He was.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world {John 17:4}.

Cease to do evil {Isa. 1:16-17}.

Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity {2 Tim.

1. {Rather, when they 'are gathered together unto Christ's name' (Matt. 18:20) indicates there is a gathering Power, namely, the Spirit of God, Who only gathers together to Christ and to nothing else -- in purity, of course (1 Cor. 5:4).}

2. {See "Separation from Evil God's Principle of Unity," *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 1:352-365.}

2:19}.

God's essential character demands separation from evil, for

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth (1 John 1:5, 8).

To think of this were to belie the character of God. If there is to be fellowship with God, and, if connected with the Holy One of God, the heavenly Christ, there must be separation from evil. This principle working in men's consciences at Pentecost, the Holy Ghost formed a Christian unity in the midst of evil. The Reformation from Popery, if not some of the sects of Christendom, owe their existence in measure to this principle. But although they came out of gross evil they came far short of the unity of the Spirit. Not one church ever contemplated "the body of Christ."

(2.) The only scriptural *basis* of gathering³ to Christ is that "*there is one body and one Spirit*" {Eph. 4:4}. Although all the constituent members of this body do not assemble, the Spirit remains, and as many as see the truth, and have faith to act upon it, may scripturally meet to eat the Lord's Supper and worship. All Christians being already members of this "one body" are all one thing, and do not require to wait until something be formed. The body is there; and if there is faith to own it, and dependence on the Spirit, they may manifest their oneness by eating together the Lord's Supper at His table, and worshipping His God and Father. This is the privilege and duty of every saint on earth: and it is sin against Christ not to do this.

(3.) The *power* of gathering, as well as of unity, is grace⁴ as revealed in Christ and His cross, which manifested God in His nature, and "God is love;" and in His character, for "God is light." Love, as grace in God revealed in Christ, alone gathers; Christ lifted up draws all men to Him. And He gave Himself to gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad. The Holy Ghost works in souls through the grace of God revealed in His nature in Christ, and thus brings them into oneness with Him. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" {1 Cor. 12:13}.

(4.) The divine *center* of gathering is Christ Himself {Matt. 18:20}. God was in Christ; God in His nature was revealed in Christ; Christ in His person has revealed Him; in His Cross glorified Him; and vindicated Him in His character. Having died to clear God's name and for our sins, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. God has

3. {See note 1.}

4. {See "Grace, The Power of Unity and of Gathering," *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 1:367-377.}

wrought from His own nature according to His counsel in Christ; and it is by the revelation of perfect love -- Himself acting in grace towards us, clearing us for God's presence, giving us a new nature too, and relationship as children of God; we cleave to Christ, our deliverer, where He is. Christ by His death has died to sin, and now liveth to God: and we are attached to Him by the Spirit in the heavenly places where He is -- the world and sin left out -- that we too might live together with Him. The sphere where we are gathered {together unto Christ's name}, in spirit, is the Father's presence in love and light {cp. Heb. 10:19}. We have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The glorious Man, the Son of God, in the Father's presence, is the One to whom we are gathered {together}, and the One in whom we are blessed with every blessing in that heavenly sphere of light and love.

As this point is of importance, we press it a little more precisely as Scripture teaches it. There must be an intrinsic power of union holding the body together to a center, as well as a power separating from evil to form it; and this center found, it denies all others. The center of unity must be a sole and unrivaled center. The Christian has not long to inquire here. It is Christ. The object of the Divine counsel -- the manifestation of God Himself -- the one only vessel of mediatorial power, entitled to unite creation as He by whom and for whom all things were made; and the Church as its redeemer, its head, its glory, and its life. And there is this double headship, He is head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all {Eph. 1:22, 23}. This will be accomplished in its day -- for the present we take up the intermediate period, the unity of the Church itself, and its unity in the midst of evil. Now there can be no moral power which can unite away from evil but Christ. He alone, as perfect grace and truth, detects all the evil which separates from God, and from which God separates. He alone can, of God, be the attractive center which draws together to Himself all on whom God so acts. God will own no other -- there is no other to whom the testimony could be borne, who is morally adequate to concentrate every affection which is of God and towards God. Redemption itself, too, makes this necessary and evident; there can be but one Redeemer, one in whom a ransomed heart can be given, as well as where a divinely quickened heart can give all its affections, the center and revelation of the Father's love. He, too, is the center of power to do it. In Him all the fulness dwells. Love, and God is love, is known in Him. He is the wisdom of God and the power of God. And yet more than this, He is the separating power of attraction, because He is the manifestation of all this, and the fulfiller of it in the midst of evil; and that is what we poor miserable ones want who are in it, and it is what, if we may so speak, God wants for His separating glory in the midst of evil. Christ sacrificed Himself to set up God in separating love in the midst of evil. There was more than this, a wider scope in this work, but I speak in reference to my present subject now. Thus Christ becomes not only the center of unity to the universe in His glorious title of power,

but, as the manifester of God, the one owned and set up of the Father, and attractor of man, He becomes a peculiar and special center of divine affections in man, round which they are gathered as the sole divine center of unity. For indeed, as the center, necessarily the sole center,

He that gathereth not with me scattereth” {Luke 11:23}.

And such, as to this point, was the object even, and power of His death. “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” And more especially, He gave Himself not for that nation only, but that He might gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad {John 11:51, 52}. But here again we find this separation of a peculiar people. He gave Himself for us, that he might purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He was the very pattern of the divine life in man, separate from the evil by which it was universally surrounded. He was the friend of publicans and sinners, piping in grace to men by familiar and tender love; but He was ever the separate man. And so He is as the center and high-priest of the Church.

Such an high-priest *became us*, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, *separate from sinners* --

and, it is added

made higher than the heavens {Heb. 7:26}.

Here, in passing, we may remark that the center and subject of this unity then is heavenly. By His death He broke down the middle wall of partition, and made both one, and reconciled both in one body unto God -- making peace. Hence it is as lifted up, and finally as made higher than the heavens, that He becomes the center and sole object of unity.

From what we have seen, it is evident that the Lord Jesus Christ on high is the object round which the Church clusters in unity. He is its head and center. This is the character of their unity, and of their separation from evil, from sinners. Yet they were not to be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil, and sanctified through the truth; Jesus having set Himself thus apart to this end. Hence, as well as for the public display of the power and glory of the Son of man, the Holy Ghost was sent down to identify the called ones with their heavenly Head, and to separate them from the world in which they were to remain; and the Holy Spirit became thus the center and power down here of the unity of the Church in Christ’s name -- Christ having broken down the middle wall of partition, reconciling both in one body by the cross. The saints, thus gathered in one, became the habitation of God through the Spirit. The Holy Ghost Himself became the power and center of unity, but in the name of Jesus, of a people separated alike from Jew and Gentile, and delivered out of this present evil world into union with their glorious Head.

(5.) The divine *bond* of unity is the Holy Ghost.

For *by one Spirit* are we all baptized into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}.

There is one body and one Spirit {Eph. 4:4}.

He is in all, binding all together in Christ; and, dwelling in the assembly, gathers efficiently in love and holiness to Christ; and by His blessed Word, revealing Christ in fullest grace, engages our souls and hearts so fully with Him, that being separated to Him in love and grace, the good in Christ to which we are attached is the great presence to our souls and hearts, and not the evil from which we are separated.

All saints are of the body of Christ, and, when it is practical, gathering⁵ in the unity of the Spirit, who dwells in the Church as His habitation, it will be in accordance with the Word of God; for light and darkness, Christ and Belial, cannot be linked together. For practical fellowship then, while the Spirit gathers by love He preserves from evil by holiness; yet He gives us such a hold on the good that it is uppermost in our minds and hearts, and evil, as by very necessity of our communion with God, is left. The Spirit who gathers in grace yet maintains in light.

In 1 John we have *the manifestation* of the eternal life in love and the fellowship of the Father and the Son enjoyed -- our joy full; but we have also *the message* “that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all,” and our walk is to be in accordance with this perfect revelation of God in Christ. But the manifestation of God in His nature comes before the message regarding God in His character. Love gathers us into this divine fellowship according to the *nature* of God: and light maintains us there according to the *character* of God. Such then are some of the principles of unity and gathering, according to the Scriptures. “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*”

Bible Witness and Review 3:383-395.

Fragment

There is no more common device of Satan than to seek the destruction of a divine testimony, by evil insinuations against them who render it. *Words of Truth* 5:113.

5. {That is, being gathered together by the Spirit unto Christ’s name.}

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