



*Practicing the Truth
that “There is
One Body”*

in View of Division

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Preface

What a wonderful truth broke in upon my soul one day: that in the time of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1) the Lord Jesus Christ had formed *one spiritual center* for His heavenly people as in the past Jehovah had one geographical center for His earthly people! (which will be true again when Israel is restored after the church is removed from earth; see Appendix 5). I came to see it as did J. N. Darby (as well as others):

What the temple was to a Jew, the gathering of the saints is to me. ¹

This truth of one spiritual center had been given up in the company of Christians with which I had been associated, a company formed by mergers of groups that had previously divided from those gathered together to Christ's name on the basis that there is one body. I saw that I was not at the Lord's table, but at a man-made table (fellowship) and that the Lord was not in the midst (Matt. 18:20).

I was gathered together to the Lord's name where John W. Begg resided, who soon proved to be not only a brother in Christ, but a friend and counselor. Shortly after I was gathered together to the Lord's name, he remarked twice, in public:

The Lord's supper is on the Lord's table and that's the only place where it is!

This sentence, then enigmatic to me, became clear a short time later when I was privately reading 1 Cor. 10:18 and 1 Kings 12 together. My joy in finding also this truth was shared with me by brother Begg as we rejoiced together. I saw, then, clearly that this truth is consistent with the fact that there can be only one expression, in practice, of "the whole body," viewed in Eph. 4:16 as on earth. Moreover, I subsequently found that such truth was held during the 1800s also. For example, W. Kelly said:

As for the notion that you may have the Lord's supper without the Lord's table, the thought is beneath sober Christians. We may distinguish where we must not separate. All such speculations are but the fruit of idleness with a certain small activity of mind, but none the less injurious to faith and practice. ²

This paper (now in a new title, and augmented) reaffirms numbers of truths held formerly, but given up by many. May the Lord bless these truths to your soul and to your practice of them.

A companion paper to this one is: *Restoration to Divine Ground or Reunion of Divided Saints: What is Consistent with the Truth That There is One Body?* -- available from the publisher.

1. *Collected Writings* 14:197.

2. *The Bixble Treasury* 15:34 (1884).

Chapter 1

God's Purpose to Have One Center Introduction

The thought of God to have a place of His choosing came out in Gen. 22. A burnt-offering was appointed by Him on one of the mountains of Israel which He would show Abraham. "The place" was found by Abraham (Gen. 22:3, 4); and it was found in connection with that great and precious type -- the offering up of the only son. This surely demands (yea, commands) the attention of the heart of God's saints.

In several chapters of Deuteronomy, Israel is told that in that land, God would *choose* the place where put His name and they were also instructed concerning their responsibility relative to that place. These instructions were clear enough for the Israelites. Deut. 12 clearly teaches that God was going to set up one center of worship for Israel and that *the altar of Jehovah* would be at that place (Deut. 12:27).

We shall consider parts of Deut. 12, 14, and 16 which laid down the truth of the one, divinely appointed center, doing so in the spirit of 1Cor. 10:11. We do want to profit from these directions. These things have their counterpart in Christianity, though little understood and often resisted. The truth of the one center must be understood and acted upon if the Christian desires to honor God corporately, according to His will. There is a divinely appointed spiritual center now (Matt. 18:20). My reader may not be in the place of God's appointment and wishes to know how to find it. One trusts that these pages may be used of God for his help. Perhaps he professes to be in the good of Matt.18:20 already. Let him then examine these pages and search the Scriptures if these things be so; and if he finds that he is not in the one, appointed center, let him seek of the Lord the right way for himself and his. "Them that honor me, I will honor."

Abraham had been directed to offer Isaac at "the place" (Gen. 22:3, 4). Christ is the center at the spiritual place now and the chief characteristic of that place is that Christ is remembered in His death (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). Gen. 22 foreshadows the burnt-offering aspect of Christ's death and this marks that center in a special way as we shall see. Indeed, the burnt-offering

gave its name to the alter of burnt-offering. This is morally necessary and fitting, for the burnt-offering gives character to all. But that is hardly all that marks the center, so let us ask for grace to be enabled to gather the mind of God, from Scripture, regarding His directions about it.

Anticipatory Directions Given in Deut. 12

Deut. 12:1-3 teaches us that idolatry is inconsistent with the truth of the one center. There is no display of unity in idolatry. Idolatry has many places, or as verse 2 says, “all the places.” Jehovah intended to have one, divinely appointed center that would command every Israelite subject to His word.

Idolatry is a serious thing. There are many forms of idolatry which Christians deny are idolatry. We naturally resent being told that something with which we are connected is idolatrous. But we know that Christians can have idols (1 John 5:21). It is a mistake to think that an idol is only a physical thing.

For rebellion is (as) the sin of divination, and selfwill is (as) iniquity and idolatry (1 Sam. 15:23).

Note well that divination and idolatry are compared to rebellion and selfwill. It is a very serious consideration. The author of rebellion and selfwill is Satan. See then how the sins of divination and idolatry are linked with rebellion and selfwill. So where rebellion and selfwill are found, there is no display of unity. Multiplied “places of worship” are the result of rebellion against the Word of God. They are founded in selfwill. They are the result of the working of the flesh, the world, and the Enemy, in their onslaught against the truth. This has resulted in substituting man’s thoughts for God’s one center. Nor is it only where persons speak of “places of worship” that the truth of the one place is rejected. Let us beware that we do not acknowledge the truth of the one place with our lips while our heart and/or practice is far from it.

Notice how thoroughly the idolatry was to be destroyed. The fire was applied and even the names should be destroyed. This meant no adaptation of anything idolatrous. Destroying the name involved destroyed the thing, not adapting the heathen practice under a new name.

In Deut. 12:5 we find a thought dear to the heart of God: *His habitation*. God did not dwell in the midst of His people until redemption in type had been accomplished at the Exodus. Then as soon as the tabernacle was finished, Jehovah hastened, as it were, to dwell in the midst of His people (Num. 9:15; Ex. 40). David entered into God’s thoughts concerning this habitation:

Jehovah, I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thy glory dwelleth (Psa. 26:8).

See also Psalm 84. God has a habitation now.

. . . in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in (the) Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

Consequent upon the glorification of Christ (Acts 2:33) the church was formed (Acts 2:1-4) in the power of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 1:5) Sent down (John 14:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33; 1 Pet. 1:12) at Pentecost. God formed that habitation which included all sealed by the Spirit. But there ought to be a display of this truth in our walk. We ought to answer to this in our walk. We ought to live out the truth in practice.

There are things that God wanted brought to the “place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to set his name there” (vv. 5-7). It was no question of them going there to get something. They were going to bring something. The one place was the place for rejoicing, “Ye and your households, in all the business of your hand, wherein Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee” (v.7). The “business” is diligence in the good land, the land flowing with milk and honey; yea, the inheritance. This is what produces the firstlings, the tithes, etc. Occupation with Christ and His love, and hearkening to the voice of His words, results in increase. *The voice of my beloved!* May it fill our ears, minds and hearts, for then our business with that which is divine, unshakable, eternal, and real will result in increase; and we shall have burnt-offerings, sacrifices, tithes, heave offerings, etc., to bring to the divine center and we shall rejoice before our great God and Savior.

We must also notice how often it is remarked that *Jehovah* would choose the place. It was a divine choice. There was nothing voluntary about it. Israel would not be left to their human reasoning or human discernment to find some place. Jehovah would choose (vv. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26).

Next, we should note that Jehovah would put His NAME in the one place (vv. 5, 11, 21). See Psa. 122:4; Isa. 26:8; Matt. 18:20; Rev. 3:8.

The last point that we shall consider in Deut. 12 is *the altar of Jehovah* (vv. 27, 28). This altar was going to be located in the place Jehovah would choose. Observe, too, that the burnt-offering is usually noted first in the list of things brought to the one place (vv. 6, 11, 13, 14, 27). This was dear to the heart of God. Oh, how dear it ought to be to us -- Christ, His burnt-offering. How those words thrill our souls; “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). It speaks of that which was wholly consumed for Jehovah. It represents the highest aspect of Christ’s work, He offering Himself up wholly to God as a

sweet smelling savor, for His glory.

We have then several marks for identifying the one place. It would be the *center of unity* where rebellion and self-will are depreciated. It would be the habitation, *the dwelling place of God*. It would be the place of rejoicing where the sacrifices, especially the burnt-offering, would be offered. His *name* would be placed there. And, the *altar of Jehovah* would be located there. Therefore there is this warning:

Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest, (Deut. 12:13).

Please read *Notes on Deuteronomy* by C. H. Mackintosh., pages 121-138.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27

Here we have a gracious provision for a trying circumstance. The way might be long to the place Jehovah would choose to set His name and therefore the distant Israelite was permitted to turn the items noted in v. 23 into money. But he must take the money to the chosen place. Distance was no excuse. God's one center would command the presence of every Israelite.

Deuteronomy 16:1-8

Deut.16:5,6 lets us know that the passover must be eaten at the chosen center. Of course, this order applies when the chosen place was actually pointed out by God. Note well that no passover could be eaten outside of the chosen place once the presence of Jehovah was there. Persons might eat a lamb in Dan or Bethel (1 Kings 12) and call it the passover. It might look like the passover. Those who would do it might sincerely believe it would be the passover. When those at Dan (1 Kings 12) would be warned by those at the divinely appointed place for the one passover, that God didn't recognize what they were doing as the feast of the passover, such might mock and ridicule the truth saying that those at the one place were proud and arrogant and were making "high claims." In reality it would be insisting on the truth and those at Dan and Bethel would be eating a false feast in spite of any appearance to the contrary.

Deuteronomy 17:8-13

Another thing meant to characterize the one center was order and authority (not infallibility). Compare with Matt.18:15-20.

Chapter 2

The One Center Marked Out *Was Shiloh the Center?*

The children of Israel set up the tent of meeting (the tabernacle) at Shiloh (Josh.18:1). It was called the house of God (Judg. 18:31) and in this scripture we find idolatry also in Israel. Shiloh was located in Ephraim. 1Sam. 3 tells us the condition of things in Shiloh. The godly woman Hannah, one cannot but believe, was a Nazarite of God (1 Sam. 1:15) and the longing for the man child (1 Sam. 1:11) was the desire of a heart that was bowed down because of the evil, evil allowed at Shiloh by Eli. Certainty she did not merely want a child to dote upon and spoil, as many do. She wanted a Nazarite from the womb (1 Sam.1:11). She wanted one who would be used of God to remedy the evil. She was a true Nazarite, a real mother in Israel, one whose chief interest was God's glory. Would to God every mother who is a Christian were so.

But Shiloh was not the place chosen in fulfillment of Deut. 12 & 14. We shall consider several proofs of this because some truth very much needed by us, the people of God now, is illustrated in the matter.

The first proof that Shiloh was not the chosen place is the fact that while the house of God was at Shiloh, burnt-offerings were permitted to be offered elsewhere. Deut. 12 did not permit burnt-offerings to be offered outside of the chosen place. The following scriptures speak of burnt-offerings offered elsewhere than Shiloh: 1 Sam. 6:15; 1 Sam. 7:9; 1 Sam. 10:8.

The second proof is that Shiloh was *never chosen*. Jer. 7:12 says that God caused His name to dwell there at the first. It is instructive that Shiloh was located in the lot of Ephraim. Reuben had lost, and Ephraim had acquired, the place of the firstborn (Jer. 31:9; 1 Chron. 5:1, 2) which denotes a certain place of eminence. With the passage of time a tension had arisen between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah and this is not without significance. We may learn from this fact (1 Cor. 10:11), if we are willing. We see the tension manifested in Judg. 7:24; 8:1-3; 12:1-6.

Judg. 17-21 is a *moral* appendix, as it were, to the book of Judges and the incidents recorded in these chapters actually took place early in the

history of the Judges as seen by the fact that a grandson of Moses and a grandson of Aaron had a part in the difficulties. These chapters show us the moral reasons for the declension recorded in the book. Judg. 17 opens with a Levite, a servant of God, leaving Bethlehem-Judah to go to Mount Ephraim where he becomes a (false) priest. What is the meaning?

Judah means “praise”; Ephraim means “fruitfulness”; Bethlehem-Judah means “house of bread and praise.” Judah represents worship; Ephraim represents service. However, service out of its order, as typified in Ephraim, represents service carried out in the energy of the flesh. The lesson in Judg. 17 is what results from substituting “fruitfulness,” i.e., service, for worship. Many Christians are caught in this snare. It almost seems that service has become a reason for happiness before God, or a ground of approach to God. Service should flow from communion. The Levite is the servant of the priest. Let us ever remember the divinely constituted order of these things, else we will get caught up with the spirit of Ephraim. What is that spirit?

After God had chosen Jerusalem as the one and only center, a division in the kingdom of Israel came about in the days of Rehoboam the son of Solomon. The 10 northern tribes went with Jeroboam who set up two other centers (1 Kings 12). The 10 northern tribes were sometimes called Ephraim (Isa. 7:8; Hos 5:3, 5, 9, 13, 14). Ephraim spoken of in this way became a cake not turned (Hos. 7:8), i.e., half-baked and one-sided. How often those whose only occupation is “service” complain about others that they conceive are not active enough, especially in their own line of service, which they seem to assume is the only worthwhile service. It was said of Ephraim that gray hairs were found on him (Hos. 7:9). These gray hairs on the head, the seat of intelligence, denote decline in spiritual discernment, typically speaking. Service is good and God has servants. Only let us be very careful to keep things in right perspective and balance. The development of the Ephraim attitude in our souls works against being found at the one place.

Finally, it is expressly stated that God had chosen no city to put His name there before David’s reign (1 Kings 8:16). So God had *not* chosen Shiloh in Ephraim. God has *not* chosen “fruitfulness,” i.e., service, for His dwelling place. Service is *not* the leading thought in connection with the place that God chose. Rather, it is Himself in the midst of His redeemed people inhabiting their praises. God rejected Shiloh. It was only provisional and brought out the true state of the people.

The sons of Ephraim, armed bowmen, turned back in the day of battle.
They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law (Psa. 78:9, 10).

Besides, we find the corruption of the house of Eli at Shiloh and then God

raised up the godly Nazarite Hannah to intercede for His glory and that she might bring forth the man-child Nazarite to lend him to Jehovah all his days. This very son was chosen of God to anoint the great David to be the shepherd of His people Israel. What a signal honor to Hannah! What a mighty answer to her godly cries to Jehovah! What a blessed rebuke to the Adversary! What a solemn lesson for every Christian mother!

Psa. 78:67-72 shows us that Shiloh in Ephraim was rejected and was not chosen. God chose the tribe of Judah. God has chosen *praise*. God has chosen *worship* as the pre-eminent thing. Nothing satisfies our hearts and God's like worship in the Spirit (Phil. 3:3). The Father seeketh worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). And He will have in His presence a redeemed people who shall have in everlasting remembrance the Person and work of His Son Who offered Himself up to God without spot by the eternal Spirit.

And Hezekiah commanded to offer up the burnt-offering on the altar. And at the moment the burnt-offering began, the song of Jehovah began . . . (2 Chron. 29:27).

May God grant His beloved people a right and mighty increase in the apprehension of what Christ is to God and thus fill our mouths with the high praises of God (Psa. 150).

How God Marked Out Jerusalem as the Center

And David gave to Ornan for the place in shekels of gold the weight of six hundred (shekels). And David built there an altar to Jehovah, and offered up burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon Jehovah; and he answered him from the heavens by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering. And Jehovah spoke to the angel; and he put up his sword again into its sheath (1 Chron. 21:25-27).

David said, This is the house of Jehovah Elohim, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel (1 Chron. 22:1).

Jerusalem was chosen in connection with David the great type of our Lord Jesus. The burnt-offering, the expression of acceptance, and the peace-offering, the expression of peace, were laid upon the altar and David called upon Jehovah. Jehovah answered him from the heavens by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering.

What a spectacular sight! What a momentous event! The fire of Jehovah fell upon the offering and consumed it. Jehovah accepted it. Jehovah chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved; and He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He hath founded forever.

And He chose David His servant (Psa. 78:68-70).

And David said, This is the house of Jehovah Elohim, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel (1 Chron. 22:1).

Thus God noted His election of Zion by fire from heaven and David pronounces the place as Jehovah's house. Here was located the altar of burnt-offering for Israel that was spoken of in Deut. 12:27 as the altar of Jehovah.

Shiloh was, then, provisional and it brought out the state of the people. Just so was it with Saul. He was provisional, too. God never chose him, as we shall shortly see. And this demonstrated the great force and meaning of *choose* in Deut.12. It was God's sovereign designation of what was important to Him, what was dear to His heart, what was precious in His sight. He ever had before Him His glory in the only-begotten Son manifest in flesh and exalted over all. And so David, a type of Christ, was chosen. It was no mere act of providence or provision. Psalm 78:70 says "he chose David his servant" the type of the great Shepherd of the sheep and the ruler of God's inheritance.

The other scripture which tells us that David was chosen shows that Saul was not.

Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be prince over my people Israel; but I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel (2 Chron.6:5, 6).

There is thus no question of where, and when, and what, was chosen. And all of these scriptures show us the immense importance of these matters in the eyes of God Who has the glory of the Son before Him in it all. God thus designated the place for the *name* and the *house* and *the altar of Jehovah*. Henceforth it designated the center of Israel's national unity (composed of 12 tribes). Every Israelite who would go to that place according to the direction of Jehovah would give expression to the divinely appointed worship and to the national unity. He could not confess the divinely constituted, national unity of Israel in any other way but to go there with his worship and his gifts.

But the altar was not yet built in the house of God. Solomon was the one chosen to build the house. Meanwhile there were still sacrifices offered outside of Jerusalem (1 Kings 3:2-4).

Then Solomon built the house of God at Jerusalem and when he had ended his prayer, we read,

And when Solomon had ended praying, the fire came down from the heavens and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah filled the house. And the priests could not enter the house of Jehovah, because the glory of Jehovah filled Jehovah's house. And all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah upon the house, and bowed themselves with their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshipped and thanked Jehovah: For he is good, for his loving-kindness (endureth) for ever (2 Chron. 7:1-3).

And then we read,

For I have now chosen and hallowed this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually (2 Chron.7:16).

In Jerusalem, then, was located the altar of burnt-offering for Israel. Thither were the offerings to be brought (Deut. 12 & 14). How good it was for every Israelite to be connected with the divinely chosen and appointed center. After this election of Zion, God owned no other place of assembly for His people to bring the sacrifices. God was exclusive about it. He gave His mind by fire from heaven and by the word of David as to the location. He gave His mind concerning Israel's offerings in the divinely chosen place through Moses.

C. H. Mackintosh notes something that we may learn from this.

Jerusalem was and will be God's earthly center; but now, the Church of God should own no center but the glorious and infinitely precious Name of Jesus. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Precious center! To this alone the New Testament points, to this alone the Holy Ghost gathers. It matters not where we are gathered -- in Jerusalem or Rome, London, Paris, or Canton. It is not where, but how.

But be it remembered, it must be a divinely real thing. It is of no possible use to profess to be gathered in, or to, the blessed Name of Jesus, if we are not really so. The apostle's word as to faith may apply with equal force to the question of our center of gathering -- "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say" he is gathered to the Name of Jesus? God deals in moral realities; and while it is perfectly clear that a man who desires to be true to Christ cannot possibly consent to own any other center or any other ground of gathering but His Name, yet it is quite possible -- alas! alas! how very possible -- for people to profess to be on that blessed and holy ground, while their spirit and conduct, their habits and ways, their whole course and character, go to prove that they are not in the power of their profession.

Woe be to the man who presumed to turn his back on the place where Jehovah had set His Name. He would very speedily have been taught his mistake. And if this was true for God's earthly people, is it not equally

true for the church and the individual Christians? Assuredly, it is. We are bound, by the very highest and most sacred obligations, to refuse every ground of gathering but the one body, every center of gathering but the Name of Jesus, every power of gathering but the Holy Ghost, every authority of gathering but the Word of God. May all the Lord's beloved people everywhere be led to consider these things, in the fear and love of His holy name.³

Another point to be noticed is this statement of Solomon at the dedication of the temple:

. . . that thine eyes may be open upon this house night and day, upon the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place. And hearken unto the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people, when they shall pray toward this place . . . (1 Kings 8:29, 30).

Cp. Matt. 18:19, 20.

3. *Notes on Deuteronomy 2:200-202.*

Chapter 3

An Attack Upon the Truth of the One Center

Jeroboam the Son of Nebat

Read 1 Kings 12.

We are given a clue to the character of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite (footnote in J.N.D.), in 1 Kings 11:26. He resisted the repairing of the breaches in the wall. The wall speaks of separation from evil; and of protection. Typically speaking, he did not like the principle of separation from evil to the Lord.

Ahijah the prophet declared to Jeroboam that he would obtain rule of 10 tribes. Jeroboam thus learned that he would be God's instrument of discipline upon the house of David. But this concerned only a political division.

Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam but was unsuccessful (1 Kings 11:40). Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, reigned in Solomon's stead but he was made king in Shechem instead of the place where God had chosen to put His name. It would have been better if he had been firm about *this* and yielding in the matter of the yoke (1 Kings 12:1, 10-14).

We learn from 1 Kings 12:10-14 the human side of the rupture of the kingdom, but God says, *this thing is from me* (vv. 15, 24). It is well for us to look steadily at these words and consider. Sometimes Christians react to a division among the saints of God this way: Well, it was an ecclesiastical matter; or it was caused by squabbling; or, there was a low condition. God says, *this thing is from me*; and until we see it as He sees it, we have but our own poor thoughts and useless opinions that darken counsel without knowledge.

We have then, the political rupture. The instrument used was an Ephraimite who did not care for the repairing of the breaches of the place that God chose to put His name there.

The Separation From the One Center

Jeroboam did not trust the word of the Lord through Ahijah (1 Kings 11:31) and thought that the kingdom would return to the house of David (1 Kings 12:26). His personal considerations caused him to meditate mischief in his heart (1 Kings 12:26) against the divine center, though initially he acknowledged to himself that the house of Jehovah was at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:27). But he subsequently counseled with himself that he must obliterate the truth of the one place, for that is what his conduct really meant. The rupture was at first political and the Israelites of the 10 northern tribes had free access to Jerusalem at the appointed times in which to bring their offerings. He took counsel, therefore, to ensure that this would not result in the loss of his personal place. Jehovah's place may be given up but not one's personal place!

The course taken is not infidelity, but corruption. He set up a second and third center. It would seem that in the matter of the calves (1 Kings 12:28) he quotes Ex. 32:4. The people of God on a wrong course justify it by twisting Scripture, often in an absurd manner, whether they are conscious of twisting it or not. The reader may think such an application of Ex. 32:4 is absurd. It is; but let him reflect upon his own course so that he does not justify it in a similarly absurd manner, especially in regard to resisting the truth of the one, divinely chosen place where Christ's name is placed.

The path upon which Jeroboam launched himself is the popular one. It is the path away from the one place. Jeroboam means, "he will multiply the people"; and Nebat means, "we shall speak idly." He instituted popular, easy-going places.

He set up two more centers. One was in Bethel which means, "house of God." There are clever imitations of the truth with some who reject the truth of the one place. Bethel was located very close to Jerusalem and any "leaning" in that direction had something to satisfy them.

Dan was at the extreme northern end of the kingdom of Israel, i.e., the northern kingdom under Jeroboam. Dan means, "judging." These imitations of the truth all sounded good to many, no doubt.

Next he "ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah." Oh, the subtlety of it. He installed a false altar which attacked the truth of the altar of Jehovah. He set up a competitive center which attacked the truth of the one place. And now I desire of the Lord that He will impress upon myself and the reader another solemn consideration, namely, that a false feast goes with a false altar; a devised feast goes with a devised altar and a devised center. In addition, it was an attack upon the national unity of Israel and those things which gave practical expression to that national unity. No doubt, the deeper thing under attack by

the enemy was the witness of Israel to the unity of God!

The Sin of Jeroboam the Son of Nebat

God considered the sin of Jeroboam as most reprehensible and reprobated it in the most solemn way. It is amazing to find how many references there are to this sin and how so many other sins were compared to it. It is well, therefore, for each of us to especially take it to heart and consider our ways. Below is a catalog of the references to Jeroboam's sins and ways.

We repeatedly find the expressions:

the sins of Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:30; 16:31; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:22)

the way of Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:34; 16:2, 19, 26; 22:52)

wherewith he made Israel to sin (1 Kings 15:30, 34; 16:20, 26; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 23:15).

See also 1 Kings 21:22.

Finally:

And Jeroboam violently turned Israel from following Jehovah, and made them sin a great sin (2 Kings 17:21).

Read 1 Kings 13 and see how God denounced that heretical altar. No sign of fellowship was allowed by the man of God from Judah. His instructions were firm, his orders were fixed, but he listened to the compromising voice and judgment fell upon him. Please read *The Old Prophet of Bethel* by J. G. Bellett.

What made this sin a standard by which to measure other sins?

1. In practice, it denied the unity of God. Israel's testimony was "Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah." Idolatry denies this truth. We noted that in Deut. 12, the chapter that speaks so much of the one place, God begins by denouncing idolatry.
2. It denied the truth of the one place
3. It denied the name of God at the divine center.
4. It denied the sovereign action of God in bringing Israel to that center where He was present.
5. It denied the true altar of burnt-offering.
6. It denied that God dwelt between the cherubim in the midst of His people.
7. It denied the true feast for Israel.

8. It denied the national unity of Israel.

An Israelite partaking of the false feast at the false altar may hardly have meant to do things wrongly. Perhaps there was much ignorance. But we are speaking of the true implications of their associations, not their opinion about it. Thus, many Christians are caught up in things the seriousness, and the true implications, of which they are not conscious. But that in no wise alters the facts.

Fault on Both Sides

Many times have I heard brethren who are away from the divine center say that saints in a number of divided companies are none-the-less gathered (together?) to the Lord's name. We must remember, they say, that there was fault on both sides.

Many who say so do not seem to condone Bethesda's position on the basis of this reasoning. And will such go so far as to palliate the Raven position, at least between the dates 1890-1908, by finding fault with the assembly at Bexhill which rejected Mr. Raven and Greenwich for sheltering him? Alas, alas, this has happened. What, then, will be next?

At any rate, we have an OT case of fault on both sides. Rehoboam had fault (1 Kings 12). Did God then share His presence with the places at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12 & 13)? What a foolish idea. Perhaps you think it was not comely for one with such fault as Rehoboam to say what he did as recorded in 2 Chron. 13:11 (cp. Lev. 24:6). But it was the truth that he stated. And Scripture tells us that he reigned 17 years in the place where God has chosen to set His name there (2 Chron. 12:13). Hezekiah reaffirmed the truth (2 Chron. 30) and the return of the remnant under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah reaffirmed it. The argument about fault on both sides is a device used to justify unscriptural ideas and practices, and being in a wrong place.

Chapter 4

Division and the Passage of Time Do Not Change the Truth of the One Center

Read 2 Chron. 30.

There is no record of a Passover killed outside of Jerusalem after the temple was built. Jerusalem was the place where God had chosen to put His name; there was the altar of burnt-offering located. Only there would the offerings be accepted and the Passover be a valid one.

The northern kingdom (the 10 tribes) could not celebrate a valid Passover outside of Jerusalem. They had no divinely appointed center where God's name and altar were. They were not in fellowship with the altar. 1 Cor. 10:18 explicitly says that a man is in communion with an altar because he eats what is on it. Manifestly, those in the northern kingdom who ate what was sacrificed on the false altars were in fellowship with those altars and were not in fellowship with the altar at Jerusalem. It was useless for them to reason as Christians do now. Some Christians say, "I am not at the table of demons and I am not at the Jewish altar: therefore I must be at the Lord's table." It would be like a Jew of the northern kingdom saying, "I am not at the table of demons: therefore I must be at the altar of Jehovah." You see the falseness of the reasoning! It is Scripture we want, not the reasonings of the mind to justify a false course. Those in the northern kingdom were not connected with the divine center and altar. They had their own altars, as sects have their own tables. Neither did the northern kingdom have the Passover. They had a false feast in imitation of the feast at Jerusalem. It was devised in the division-maker's heart.

There are several divine principles that we believe are taught in the Word of God. The first is that *a moral stream never rises above its source!* Nothing could sanctify the altars in the northern kingdom, or even in Judah (2 Chron. 32:12). They were corrupt at the source. The second is that *the passage of time does not alter the character of a moral action!* As the years rolled by, did Jeroboam's sin become less offensive? Generations later, was he less guilty? Generations later did those who were the heirs of his actions have the altar of Jehovah? Did their false feast become the true one? We are dreaming,

or worse, if we think we can so easily shrug off what formed our associations in the past.

In connection with Hezekiah's call many years later, to those in the northern kingdom to return "to Jehovah, and come to his sanctuary, which he has sanctified forever . . ." (2 Chron. 30:8), we have the following helpful words of W. Kelly and then C. H. Mackintosh.

But Hezekiah was not content with this (2 Chron. 30). 'He sent to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh that they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem to keep the passover unto Jehovah God of Israel.' This seemed, no doubt, a very bold thing, and I have not a doubt that they considered that the king was behaving in a very presumptuous manner. What business had he to send to all Israel? He was only the king of Judah! Why should he not be content with his own people? He was proselyting. They did not like it. They thought it was exceedingly improper to be taking away the Israelites to Jerusalem. But Hezekiah was thinking of God. Hezekiah was filled with a sense of what was due to the claims of Jehovah. Jehovah had set His house in one place for all Israel.

Now there is nothing that gives a person such boldness as this, and nothing, also, that sets love to work so earnestly as this. If we are merely contending for doctrines of our own, it does seem rather strong to expect other people to receive them. If it is merely my own doctrine, I had better make myself happy with my own affairs. But if it is God's grace, if it is God's worship, if it is God's way, has it not a claim upon all that are God's? The moment you see that, you can go forward; and you can appeal to the conscience of all that belong to God, that they should be faithful to God's own will and Word. And what I want the children of God to see now clearly, and all the children of God as far as He is pleased to give it efficacy, is that they are set not merely upon something better than what other people have, but upon what is God's will, because that must be the best of all; and inasmuch as they have got the Book of God, they can see and are responsible to find this out for themselves. Anything that is herein has a claim upon a child of God -- and more particularly as regards the worship of God. I grant you that in human things what is of man has a claim; but not so in divine things. 'Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

I think it was in this spirit, therefore, not trying to be a Caesar over Israel, or even recalling Israelites to their allegiance to himself, which perhaps he might have done, that Hezekiah so acted. He was a man of faith, and he knew well that it was of God, the rending of the ten tribes from the house of David; and therefore he did not ask the tribes for himself, but he did ask them for God. He sent out 'to all Israel and Judah' (chap. 30). And so should we do now. We ought not to desire the world. Let men, if they will, seek the world and the pretended worship of the

world. Let them seek 'the masses,' as they say. Let them have the masses if they will, and if the masses are weak enough to follow them. But the business of faith is to call upon all who have faith in the name of the Lord, and to get them to follow His Word. So did Hezekiah now, according to what God gave him. 'And the thing pleased the king and all, the congregation.' What I call your attention particularly to is this: nobody thought of all this for all these years -- nobody thought of it but Hezekiah. The more you draw near to God, the more you love the people of God. It was because God was so great in Hezekiah's eyes that the people of God were so dear to Hezekiah; and so he claimed them for God, and called them to come out from their abominations. 'They established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto Jehovah God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written!' How quickly people departed from what was written!

'So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel! -- not merely, 'Ye children of Judah,' but 'Ye children of Israel' -- 'turn again unto Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers and like your brethren which trespassed against Jehovah God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation as ye see. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into His sanctuary, which He hath sanctified for ever.' God's principles do not change. It is all a mistake that because the apostles are gone, the apostles' truth is gone. Not so; it abides, and forever. It is always binding on the people of God. So here with the sanctuary in Jerusalem. 'So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them.'

As it was then, so it is now. The more true, the more it be according to God, so the more is the contempt of men who have chosen to blend the world with Christ. 'Nevertheless, divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.' In the most unlikely and distant quarters, and where no one could possibly look for them, there are those that have humbled themselves and have come. 'Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king, and of the princes, by the word of Jehovah.' And there they assembled. 'And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away and cast them into the brook of Kidron. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month, and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of Jehovah, and they stood in their place.' -- because this was in consequence

of some not being ready. The priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently. The second month was the gracious provision that God made in the case of uncleanness in the wilderness, as we may see in Num. 9: 10, 11.⁴

And now, in reference to the actings of the good king Hezekiah, let us see how his faith was regarded; let us mark how he was treated when he sought, according to his measure, to carry out practically the truth of God. For be it well remembered, Hezekiah did not rest satisfied with offering the sacrifice for 'all Israel.' He not merely established the ground on which God's people might gather, but he sought to gather them thereon. And observe how he did this. 'So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren which trespassed against the Lord God and their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again to the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.' (2 Chron. 30:5-9). This, if rightly viewed, was a most touching and powerful appeal. Hezekiah takes the highest ground, and would have others to do the same. He was himself consciously on God's ground, and he would have others to occupy it with him. His eye rested on the God of Abraham -- on the land of Israel -- on Jerusalem -- and on the whole nation of God's people. It might, and doubtless did, in the judgment of many savour of presumption in Hezekiah to put forth such very lofty language, to speak as if he and those with him were alone right, and all their brethren wrong. But that would entirely depend upon the spirit in which the letter was received and read. To pride and self-sufficiency such an appeal was absolutely intolerable; but where there was true contrition and humility it would be received with hearty approval. Thus, in fact, it proved, as we read in the scripture before us. 'So the post passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they Laughed them to scorn and mocked them. Nevertheless divers of

4. W. Kelly, *Lessons (sic) on Chronicles*, pp.100-102.

Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.’

This, brethren, is just as it will ever be. Faith and its actings will be laughed at by those who are on false ground, those who are walking in the sparks of their own kindling. But the broken and contrite heart gets the blessing which ever flows from taking God at His word, and acting on His eternal truth. Those who humbly bowed to Hezekiah’s appeal gathered themselves together on God’s ground, and owned God’s center. They did not say, ‘It is vain to take such lofty ground in the face of the nation’s actual condition. It is the height of folly and presumption for Hezekiah to attempt to carry out such principles amid the hopeless ruin of the dispensation.’ No; they ‘humbled themselves,’ and came to Jerusalem. In true humility of mind they gathered themselves together to carry out God’s object -- namely, to keep the passover.⁵

The truth of the one place is applicable in remnant times. Neh. 1:9 speaks of the gathering of Israel back to the chosen place even though scattered to the uttermost part of heaven, upon their repentance. The truth abides in spite of man’s failure! It is false to say that because division has come in there are therefore many centers; or that one center is really in many places; or that all have failed and that changes everything.

The book of Ezra records the rebuilding of the temple, though not according to its former glory (Hag. 2:3-7). Whatever the general failure, God’s truth of the one place remained. It was idle for others to plead the contrary because of ruin. It would be merely excuse not to act on truth. Some acted on the truth; and as in the temple of Solomon twelve loaves were on the table of showbread, so in Ezra 6:17 we read of “twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.”

No doubt the thought of the one place was precious also to the remnant waiting for the Lord (Luke 2).

Conclusion

We have reviewed the OT truth of the one divine center for Israel where the national unity of Israel was expressed. This is also seen in the 12 loaves on the table of showbread. The 12 loaves on the table expressed the nationally unity of Israel as composed of 12 tribes. After the division of the 10 northern tribes the priests continued to put 12 loaves on the table at Jerusalem. Today we have one loaf which denotes that Christians are one body (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). In the next chapter we shall see that the body is looked at as on earth, in

5. C. H.M., *Unity: What Is It? and Am I Confessing It?*, pp. 15-17.

activity and consider how the truth that there is one body is given expression in practice.

Chapter 5

The Whole Body on Earth and Its Expression

The Whole Body on Earth

Sometimes in Scripture the word “body,” referring to the body of Christ, is used to describe something on earth that does not mean the local assembly and does not include saints who are with the Lord above. And, while the word “assembly” is often used of something that is local, this word also is used to describe something on earth that is larger than the local assembly but which does not include saints now with the Lord. These Scripture uses of the word “body” and “assembly” is denied by some who are committed to the erroneous doctrine of independency of local assemblies. In truth, however, Scripture uses the designation “assembly of God” not only of the local gathering in a place but also of the assembly of God on earth, of which the local assembly is the expression of the whole, in the place where it is. The fact that the local assembly is an expression of the whole assembly on earth indicates that the assembly of God on earth is *not* viewed as an *aggregate* of the local assemblies. Observe that in Scripture the word “members” is always used in connection with the body and the Head. There is no such thing as local *membership* found in Scripture. We will review here some points in connection with these truths.

Matt. 16:18. Matt. 16:18 is usually acknowledged by all as a passage that refers to what Christ does and therefore speaks about what is true, and does not include untrue profession of Christianity. Presently, part of His assembly is on earth and part is in heaven. It is objected that Scripture does not speak in that way, namely, that part is in heaven and part is on earth. But do not be hasty. First, we see from this passage that the believers on earth are in this assembly spoken of here. Second, it leaves room for what we shall see below, that Scripture most certainly does present a view of the assembly as on earth.

Matt. 18:20. This Scripture has the local assembly in view. But it has a bearing on more than what is local, though that is not our subject just now.

1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13.

I have persecuted the assembly of God (1 Cor. 15:9).

. . . I excessively persecuted the assembly of God, and ravaged it” (Gal. 1:13).

What was the thing that Paul ravaged? He said that it was “the assembly of God.” This persecution Paul carried on in many places (Acts 26:11). The words “the assembly of God” are being used here of something that is more than a local assembly, something that is larger than a local assembly, but does not include saints in heaven. Some Christians were dead already (so, they were already in heaven) when Paul was carrying out the persecution of “the assembly of God.” Those already in heaven were not being persecuted there in heaven. So the Word of God does, in fact, use the expression “the assembly of God” to describe something that is not the local assembly, and which Paul persecuted on earth, though some Christians were already dead and in heaven, where they could not be persecuted. But what if someone should make the following objections, as has been done:

You make the point that Paul could not persecute Christians that were in heaven. That is not scriptural for Christ, Himself, said to Paul on the Damascus road, “Why persecutest thou me?” Christ was in heaven when He said Paul was persecuting Him. What did He mean? We know that He will say in a coming day to those at the judgment of the nations, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40, 45). Anyone who persecutes a Christian persecutes Christ and since all believers are members of His body anyone who persecutes one Christian persecutes them all. That is the truth of the unity of the body. It cannot be divided, if one member suffers all the members suffer with it (1 Cor. 12:26). It is in that sense that Paul said he persecuted the church (the body). It would not be reasonable to conjecture that Paul said he persecuted every single Christian that was living at the time. When he wrote 1 Cor. 15:9 and Gal. 1:13, he understood clearly that the body was a unity and that when he was persecuting one member he was persecuting the whole body. Whether any particular member was on earth or in heaven or not even saved [yet] was inconsequential.

The reader should carefully consider the way in which the attempt to circumvent the truth is carried on. To such arguments, the following replies may be made:

Sheep, goats and brethren of the King imply nothing about how a body works. Matt. 25:31ff has reference to the judgment of living nations prior to the millennium and the “brethren” there are the believing remnant of Israel. Christ’s relationship to the remnant of Israel is not that of Head to members of one body.

Christ was in heaven when Paul persecuted the assembly of God, but the question at hand is *where was the assembly located that Paul persecuted*, not where was the Head. Where Christ was is not directly relevant to *that* question. Scripture affirms that the Head is persecuted when the members on earth are persecuted, but nowhere says that members in heaven (i.e., not the Head) are

persecuted when members on earth are persecuted.

When Paul was persecuting one member, he was persecuting the whole body viewed as something on earth larger than the local assembly but not including saints already in heaven. Is it not astonishing to see how the objection involves one in what is so false, namely, that Paul persecuted the saints in heaven? And why does the objector make this absurd claim? It is because this matter would otherwise mean that there was something on earth that is called “the assembly of God” which is larger than a local assembly. And these objections are required in order to deny this great fact. Note also how 1 Cor. 12:26 is brought in to bolster the false view. Does not the above quoted objection really bring together Paul’s persecution of “the assembly of God” (implicitly acknowledging that this is larger than a local assembly), and connecting that with 1 Cor. 12:26, that “if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it,” thus implying that they are suffering in heaven?

The last sentence quoted above uses the word “inconsequential.” In reality, it is most consequential that saints in heaven are neither persecuted nor suffering. The consequence of this is that we have presented in Scripture something on earth that is larger than a local assembly, and this great fact is at war with the erroneous doctrine of independency of assemblies.

1 Cor. 12:26. Of particular importance is 1 Cor. 12:26. Does this verse apply to members of the body in heaven? In other words, when Paul wrote that if one member on earth is suffering, then ALL the members suffer, was the martyr Stephen suffering in heaven? To this question, the author of the objections quoted above responded as follows:

The scripture does not say that and we have no right to infer that. The passage in 1 Cor. 12:26 is distinct from verse 27-31. The verses 14 to 26 are a discussion of the human body and its members. The truth relating to the members of the human body are only applied in principle to the spiritual body of Christ. Without stating specifically how the members in heaven respond to the members on earth we can assume, I suppose, that the principle is true. In the spiritual realm things are quite different than in the physical. I would have no problem with the thought that believers in heaven are concerned about believers on earth or vice versa. It is difficult for us earth bound creatures to enter into spiritual phenomenon with any degree of confidence. Certainly we know that God, who is spirit, is intimately concerned about His people’s cares on earth. We are enjoined, on the other hand, to take into account what angels think about the way things are done in an assembly on earth (1 Cor. 11:10). We know that no believers in heaven are suffering but they certainly are quite capable of suffering empathetically, I am sure. We are told that when a sinner repents on earth there is joy in the presence of the angels and I would expect that that means that saints in heaven rejoice at sinners being saved on earth.

Here are more examples of what is required to get rid of the unwanted facts of

Scripture. What this adds up to is the assertion that “persecuted the church” corresponds to “suffering empathetically.” He has invented two kinds of suffering for 1 Cor. 12:26. In the human body, when one member suffers injury, then the whole body may suffer much more than merely empathetically: fevers, chills, sweats, cessation of normal functions far from the site of injury, etc. Rejoicing in sinners being saved, being concerned like angels in how things are done elsewhere, empathy, etc. do not add up to “suffering” in heaven. This is acknowledged even by the author of the above objections, who wrote:

No, I did not say that if a member on earth suffers the members in heaven likewise suffer.

But this was certainly implied in the very first quotation. To claim that 1 Cor. 12:26 cannot mean the body on earth (“the whole body” of Eph. 4:16) distorts 1 Cor. 12:26, which does have in view the body on earth. The truth is that if one member suffers, then ALL the members do indeed suffer with it. It is clearly “all” because the verse states so. Hence, this suffering is not in heaven, but on earth. The implication is that there is a view that Scripture presents of the body here on earth in activity.

1 Cor. 12:28. In the same passage (1 Cor. 12) where we have seen a plain indication that there is presented a view in Scripture of the body here on earth (1 Cor. 12:26), Scripture also presents to us a view of the church on earth:

And God has set certain in the assembly: first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; then miraculous powers; then gifts of healings; helps; governments; kinds of tongues (1 Cor. 12:28).

So 1 Cor. 12:28 brings before us the assembly on earth in which God has set apostles, prophets, teachers, etc., and that this reference to the church is neither to a local assembly nor to something that includes those in heaven. It is the assembly on earth; indeed, “the assembly of God” that Paul persecuted -- and this is a teaching of Scripture that is often not acceptable.

Eph. 4:16.

. . . from whom the whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to [the] working in its measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love (Eph. 4:16).

The force of the words, “the whole body,” tells us that each one part of that whole body is working for the increase of the body. Like the Scriptures cited above, Eph. 4:16 refers to something on earth in busy activity, namely the body on earth. The immediately obvious truth of this verse contradicts the denial that the assembly of God may be viewed as one whole body on earth, not including the saints in heaven already. Its plain statement is not an interpretation added to Scripture. Here is what the objector wrote whom we have quoted above:

A careful reading of the verse will reveal that the point of the whole

passage is that the body is to develop in Love. I do not think that the saints in heaven have reached the ultimate in that regard. They are growing in love still. The only difference between them and us is that they do not have the flesh to contend with as we do . . .

Here again is another example of the mental processing of Scripture. He is determined to get the saints in heaven into this just as in the case of the saints suffering, and “the assembly of God” being persecuted by Paul. We see the text of the verse read through the eyes of one who supports independency of assemblies so as to make the verse agree with his ideas at any cost. He seeks to dull the sharp edge by which it cuts through the system of independency of assemblies. The passage states “the whole body” and he wants to get the saints in heaven into this, or else the verse will mean, as is clearly true, the body on earth! The verse is about “every joint of supply” in activity “*according to [the] working in its measure of every one part.*” This is the working body, every part of it. This is not interpretation, but what the text states. We either accept what it states or we try to explain it away. It is obvious on the face of it that the verse means the “working in its measure of each one part” here on earth, not in heaven.

How simple it is, really, to see that 1 Cor. 12:26 relates to this: “If one member suffer all the members suffer with [it] . . .” It is that same body on earth. None of this contradicts that there is another true view of the body seen in its completeness, in glory. Every Scripture is perfect in its place. These Scriptures we have been discussing have their bearing and application also -- and they require that we seek to practice them in spite of our failure, not explain them away.

Thus is the Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). The subject before us is very large but the object is to keep this paper short. But we should glance at one more Scripture before passing on.

For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also [is] the Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).

This is the same body that we learn in 1 Cor. 12:26 suffers. It is not about saints in heaven. It is the body on earth and the Head in heaven, viewed as “the Christ.” The Scripture does not view the saints in heaven as in the present activity of the body. The Scripture does present a view of the body in its activity here, and this has a bearing on our responsibility in giving expression to the truth of God in our practice.

Laodicea and Thyatira. And finally, regarding Laodicea and Thyatira, the objector quoted above was asked the following question: Since Laodicea was “a true local assembly,” as shown, you say, by the call to repent, then that would mean that Thyatira was a true local assembly also, as called upon to repent. Would you use letters of commendation to and from such assemblies as

Laodicea and Thyatira if they were in neighboring towns where you live? He replied:

Definitely we would, I hope, receive commended persons from either. Their reception might be with some conditions attached such as not being permitted to preach false doctrine.

This unfaithfulness in reception is consistent with the independency-of-assemblies system. Such would recognize letters of commendation from Thyatira and Laodicea as valid letters coming from assemblies regarded as being gathered to Christ's name. They know that there is evil doctrine tolerated at Thyatira, yet they would receive a letter of commendation and the person commended - with the caveat, perhaps, that they not be permitted to teach false doctrine. And it follows that the person was not leavened by being in the assembly at Thyatira. Such hold the doctrine of Bethesda. ⁶ They hold that a person is not leavened by breaking bread with leavened persons. They hold that an assembly cannot be leavened until every person in it has personally imbibed the leaven. These things are the result of their views and denying these consequences of their views will not change the fact that their doctrines do have such consequences, at least for those who have eyes to see the evil of this. Independency is a system that mitigates and/or eliminates the responsibility for evil associations. There are some *groupings* of those who hold to independency, and there are some *variations* in views of how to handle the subject of leaven leavening the lump; but the end result is the same, whatever exact way some may prefer concerning how to arrive there.

Rev. 2 and 3 are used by independent brethrenism to support independency, which has resultant consequences and we may appreciate the above candid response about Thyatira and Laodicea. It would be beyond the scope of this short paper to take up that entire subject at this time. ⁷ J. N. Darby wrote in his masterful examination of B. W. Newton's *Thoughts on the Apocalypse* in 1845:

And if He was walking among the candlesticks judging, it was clear it was not the candlesticks as the divine type of what they were in God's mind that He would judge. The candlesticks were God's idea of them. The report is of things that are -- what man had actually made of them here below. Christ judicially brought what the Spirit saw to bear on what man had produced. ⁸

Summary. In order to appear to have Scripture support for rejecting the truth that Scripture presents a view of the body on earth, and also of the assembly on

6. See *Precious Truth Revived and Defended Through J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, 1845-1850.

7. Some further comments on Rev. 2 and 3 are found in *An Exposition of 2 John With Some Comments on Gal. 5:9 and Rev. 2 & 3*, available from the publisher.

8. *Collected Writings* 8:25.

earth, the following tack was used:

1. Matt. 25:40, 45 was dragged into the discussion, which has to do with the Jewish remnant. And this was used in an effort to rebut the statement that Paul did not persecute Christians in heaven (cp. 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). There was failure to show that Paul persecuted Christians in heaven though it was said, "You make the point that Paul could not persecute Christians that were in heaven. That is not scriptural for Christ, Himself, said to Paul on the Damascus road *Why persecutest thou me?*" It was not shown that because the Head feels it, the saints in heaven were persecuted by Paul. The thing Paul persecuted is "the assembly of God," and obviously, that is on earth. Of course, that fact is destructive of independency.
2. Then a "empathetic suffering" of saints in heaven was brought forth to parry the force of "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" as meaning on earth only. This implicitly acknowledges that it is not the local assembly, or a local body, that is meant (there is no such thing as a local body) -- but this is needed to get rid of the fact that this is only on earth, because otherwise it means that Scripture does present a view of the body as on earth. And that fact also is destructive of independency.
3. 1 Cor. 12:28 also speaks to this matter because the gifts are not set in heaven nor in a local assembly. God set them in the assembly on earth.
4. Next, since Eph. 4:16 speaks of "the whole body," and in spite of the fact that it speaks of each one part working, showing that "the whole body" as contemplated by this Scripture means here on earth, the system of independency of assemblies requires circumventing the meaning. So the text is studied more and the result of such study is to bring into this the notion of the saints *growing in love in heaven*, so as to bring them into what is meant by "the whole body." And thus Christians satisfy themselves that they have gotten rid of the thought of "the whole body" in activity, working, on earth. The fact is, the truth of this is destructive of independency.
5. Finally, views on Laodicea and Thyatira show the practical outworking of independency dealing with (or rather refusing to deal with) evil associations.

*The Scriptures teach local responsibility,
not local independency.*

One Spiritual Center as Expressing The Whole Body on Earth

It is clear that Israel as a nation had a national center of worship at one geographical location -- Jerusalem. This will be in force again during the millennium. Israel has an earthly calling. At the present time there has been interposed the "heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1), since the cross, and until the

rapture. This is not an earthly, national calling. In connection with the heavenly calling, there is no national, no geographical center. We must not look at the subject of our center as if it is geographical. Rather, it is a spiritual center. It suits the whole body on earth. There is only one center for us as there was but one center for Israel. Following is a number of quotations from J. N. Darby, with some observations thereon.

There is one assembly on Earth.

The principle or ground of gathering is that of all saints being one in Christ, and as such forming the one church of God on earth. Christians had lost this principle, and it has been recovered; hence much, and rightly, put forward.⁹

There Is an Analogy Between the Divine Center at Jerusalem in the Earthly Order and the Assembly in the Present Spiritual Order.

Now as to one or two objections you make. First, you refer to Israel. There was abuse, you say, but they were not to leave it. In the first place, we are not Jews but Christians. Judaism was an elect nation; there could be no such thing as leaving it: Christianity is not, but a gathering of saints. God has not recorded His name in the English nation; but wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there is Jesus in the midst of them. *What the temple was to a Jew, the gathering of the saints is to me.* My complaint of the Establishment {Church of England} is that it is not, and never was, a gathering of saints. If a man ceased to be a Jew, he ceased to be of God's people altogether. That nation and its ordinances were wholly, solely, and exclusively God's people, sanctuary, and place: to leave them was to apostatize from God. They were gathered, not in spiritual worship, but to carnal ordinances, imposed not by conversion of heart but by Jewish parentage. The church of God is analogous in one place.¹⁰

Only One Assembly in a City. The fact that there is only one assembly in a city is clearly demonstrated by the assembly at Jerusalem.

All that believed were together,* and had all things common,” and “the number of them was” already “three thousand.” “And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.”

*This passage shows the futility of the objection -- an objection refuted besides by a thousand experiments -- that the gathering together in one is an impossibility. It may be so *materially*, and it was no doubt the case here. When they broke bread from house to house, they were not three thousand at once together. Yet that does not hinder, in the mind of God, their being gathered together in **one place in moral and real unity**. There is no question of disposition here, but of facts which demonstrated the power of

9. *Collected Writings* 33:35.

10. *Collected Writings* 14:197. Emphasis added.

the Holy Ghost. ¹¹

Observe carefully, then, that no matter in how many meeting rooms the saints in Jerusalem met, Scripture always says “the assembly” (not assemblies) or “the assembly at Jerusalem” when speaking of the saints there. You will see this important fact in Acts 2:47; 5:11; 8:1; 8:3; 11:22; 12:5; 14:27; 15:4; 15:22. There were no independent assemblies in Jerusalem no matter how many meeting places there were. Why not learn from this instead of fighting against it? A number of independent assemblies in a town or city are just a number of sects. Of course, there *may* now be in just such a city a non-independent assembly that is not a sect.

J. N. Darby only recognized only one assembly in a city, because Scripture does. In the following extracts he uses “one place” for ‘one locality.’

The result of the examination of scripture is, that there was one assembly of God in each town where there were Christians; that these were members of the body of Christ -- the only membership known in scripture; and gifts were exercised in the whole church, or one assembly of God in the whole world, as members and servants of Christ, by the operation of the Spirit, according to rules given in scripture. ¹² ◆

When two or three are gathered {together unto} in His name, there is He in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}. Thus, while fully admitting that all the saints in a locality constitute properly the one assembly in a place, if they will not unite, the responsibility and the presence of the Lord are found with those who do, and their acts, if really done as met in His name, have His authority; that is, another such assembly must own the assembly and their acts, or disown their connection with the Lord. ¹³ ◆

All scripture clearly shows there was one assembly in a place, which was God’s assembly. ¹⁴ ◆

The one assembly of the place, looked at as unseparated from the whole company of saints, acts as the body of Christ. ¹⁵ ◆

The word recognizes all the Christians of one place as forming the church of that place. ¹⁶ ◆

Membership of a church I do not find in scripture, nor a number of separate assemblies in one place (though as to mere locality they may be several, and meet in private houses, as at Jerusalem, but still be one assembly) . . . ¹⁷ ◆

11. *Collected Writings* 3:367. Emphasis added.

12. *Collected Writings* 20:321.

13. *Collected Writings* 20:254.

14. *Collected Writings* 20:320.

15. *Collected Writings* 14:31.

16. *Collected Writings* 4:225.

17. *Letters* 2:208. I quote the following from W. Kelly’s paper, *On the “Church” in a Place*, (continued...)

In London, the saints practiced this truth:

In London we are all in one place, however large.¹⁸

By “in one place” he did not mean in one meeting room. At one point in time, there were 26 meeting rooms in London. The saints in London were “all in one place, however large {London is}.” But after division occurred in 1881, there were saints meeting in separation from one another in London. They were *not* “gathered together in **one place in moral and real unity**.”¹⁹ They were not all any longer in the practice of what we learned from the truth of the one assembly in Jerusalem. Some were no longer gathered together to the name of Christ (Matt. 18:20).

How can the divided saints reunite many years latter on the basis that they were all gathered [together ?] to the Lord’s name while in such division? Well, persons can say and believe whatever they want to, but to the Lord we will give account of ourselves. Two, or more, loaves broken in division did not confess they were one loaf.

A Case of Divided Saints in a city or Town. Think of the assembly in Jerusalem, noted above, and a city where there is a group of, say, ‘Grant brethren’ meeting, and in the same town a group of ‘Kelly brethren,’ and also a group of ‘Stuart brethren’ all *in division* -- not as the saints in Jerusalem. How dare you claim that they were all “gathered together” (Matt. 18:20) in that town, to Christ’s name? You should see what the true character of this is. They would not be “gathered together in **one place in moral and real unity**.” Moreover, “exclusive brethren” profess that the local assembly is the expression of the whole body. Just think of three *divided* local expressions of the whole!

17. (...continued)

City, or Town, not as in sympathy with his purpose in the paper, but as agreeing with what we have been considering:

That there may have been several companies in that great city {Rome} even then is in no way improbable: verses 14 and 15 {Rom. 16} seem to indicate groups; and there are, besides, many names recorded in the chapter, unconnected either with these verses or with 5, where we hear expressly of the assembly at the house of Priscilla and Aquila. Yet the analogy of Jerusalem, to speak of no other, would not only warrant but require the conclusion, that, whatever the number of companies meeting in Rome, all the saints in it formed the assembly there. Of course it was “the assembly” in this house, and “the assembly” in that; but the saints as a whole constituted “the assembly in Jerusalem,” Ephesus, Rome, etc., as the case might be. All stood on one divine ground; and it abides for us. Had there been “churches” in Jerusalem without common action, it would have been not “the” but “an” assembly here and another there, not unity but independency, the most opposed of all principles to that of God’s church.

18. *Letters* 3:432

19. *Collected Writings* 3:367n (1849); emphasis mine.

What to do about it? -- reunite to hide the sin and shame of sect (but not deceiving God, though you do deceive yourself)? or seek restoration? “Sin and shame of sect”? you say. Listen to this by W. Kelly:

We have here {in 1 Cor. 11:18, 19} important help toward deciding the difference between these terms as well as the precise nature of each. *Schism* is a division within the assembly, while they all still abide in the same association as before, even if severed in thought or feeling through fleshly partiality or aversion. *Heresy*, in its ordinary scriptural application as here (not its ecclesiastical usage), means a party among the saints, separating from the rest in consequence of a still stronger following of their own will. A schism within if unjudged tends to a sect or party without, when on the one hand the approved become manifest, who reject these narrow and selfish ways, and on the other the party-man is self-condemned, as preferring his own particular views to the fellowship of all saints in the truth. (Compare Titus 3:10, 11.)²⁰

The Greek word for heresy is sometimes translated “sect.” This is the Scripture word for the divisions within Christendom. Why would you flatter yourself that “brethren” are exempt?

Separating is a Declaration of Rejection as an Assembly.

Clearly persons ought not to separate from the Table while they own it to be the table of the Lord. The very statement proves itself, for so far as the act goes, I am separating myself from the unity of the body of Christ and from the Lord’s table.²¹ ◆

And I think that if anyone, through the flesh, separated from two or three walking godlily before God in the unity of the whole body of Christ, it would not merely be an act of schism, but he would necessarily deprive himself of the blessing of God’s presence.²² ◆

I would never leave an assembly as such, unless I could say when I had left, that it was not God’s assembly at all.²³ ◆

For my part I would never separate from anything, of which I could have an idea that it was the church after having left it.²⁴ ◆

I met today in a French tract which had no reference to these matters, a principle I have always accepted, that I would never separate where I could recognize the body as on the principle of the church of God after I had left it . . .²⁵ ◆

I could not go to any loose table as the Lord’s. People do and call it the

20. *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, p. 178.

21. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:398 (1865).

22. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:87.

23. *Notes and Jottings*, p. 451.

24. *Collected Writings* 4:206.

25. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:306.

Lord's, of course; but I do not call it so, or I should be there. ²⁶

Referring to his separation from those in fellowship with B. W. Newton in 1845 because of clerisy (not because of fundamental evil; that evil came to light in 1847), J. N. Darby wrote:

I have not broken bread, nor should do it, till the last extremity: and if I did, it would be in the fullest, openest testimony, that *I* did not own the others then to be the table of the Lord at all. ²⁷ ◆

I do not speak of a second table as regards Ebrington Street, more than I should say a fifth or sixth, if I began to break bread where there were four or five other dissenting bodies already established in the place. ²⁸ ◆

. . . it was a question of having *any*, not a *second* . . . ²⁹ ◆

It is clear that JND held a different doctrine concerning the Lord's table than those who unite divided saints on the basis that in division all are nonetheless in the good of Matt. 18:20. Doctrine affects practice. It was necessary to abandon the teachings that we are reviewing in order to carry out the mergers of saints that had divided. The mergers tend to hide the sin, not cancel it.

There Remains the Divine Ground of Gathering in the Ruin of the Church.

The testimony of brethren is more definitely a testimony as to the state of the church around. God had, I believe, prepared it for this: but what a responsibility for us, and how much we need to be unworldly, and personally faithful! I am just publishing a tract that the real point is, not that the church got corrupted, but that the original principle of what is now called the church was a departure from the scriptural and divine ground. ³⁰ ◆

I think of the brethren, not of myself, that they may be kept in unity on true divine ground as the testimony of God, as I believe they are. ³¹ ◆

This gives us divine principles. But we must take into account the ruin of the church on earth viewed in responsible testimony. Therefore:

We cannot meet as being the one assembly, because a great number of Christians are outside of us, but we meet on the principle of that unity. ³²

Conclusion. What has been said about *one place* in the above quotations involves a spiritual truth applicable to all who are gathered together to Christ's name, in accordance with the truth that "there is one body." Those who are

26. *Collected Writings* 26:253.

27. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:88.

28. *Collected Writings* 20:76.

29. *Collected Writings* 20:43.

30. *Letters* 2:244.

31. *Letters* 1:454.

32. *Collected Writings* 33:34.

locally in one place in spiritual unity are an expression of the whole body. The basis for the “reunions” of divided groups repudiates, in practice, many of the principles we have reviewed in this paper.

Now, though meeting in different meeting rooms in London or Jerusalem, there was but one local assembly; there was but one spiritual center. But this is true in a general way. Saints are separated geographically in countries and towns created through the instrumentality of the government committed into the hands of man by God. Moreover, due to the fact that we are spatially delimited creatures, and are subject to government, and are in different geographical locations, we must not allow that to set aside the truth that there is one body (a spiritual, not a geographical, reality) and its corresponding one spiritual center. Yes, there is local responsibility (much to be insisted on), but there is to be the expression of the truth that there is one body -- at the one spiritual center. God has made the body one; but not all members of that body are in the good of the spiritual center. It is one thing to be a member of the body, it is another matter to express that truth in practice.

The Lord’s Supper as Expressing the Truth That There is One Body

We have briefly surveyed the fact that “there is one body” (Eph. 4:4) and that “the whole body” (Eph. 4:16) to which this refers is looked at as here on earth. Those for whom these notes are primarily intended have learned somewhat about it already. They have rejected Congregationalism, i.e., independency of assemblies, as subversive of that truth. They know that unity is not in the local assembly, nor in a confederation of assemblies, but it is in the body of Christ of which every sealed person is a member. They know that they are not members of a local assembly, but rather that they are members of the body of Christ formed by the Holy Spirit sent down at Pentecost. They may have learned that the body is looked at as complete on earth, because if one members suffers, all the members suffer (1 Cor. 12:26) -- and the saints in the glory do not suffer. Those who were sealed with the Spirit and are now in the glory are *of* the body and we all will be displayed together in the perfection of glory, but they are not at the present time looked at as *in the activity of* the body, which is considered in Scripture as complete at every moment while on earth -- to manifest Christ while He is in glory.

Those for whom this paper is primarily intended have also learned that the breaking of bread is connected with the truth of the one body. It is possible to know something about all of these things and yet not confess, in practice, the divinely constituted unity. The truth of the one body must be expressed in practice, at the place of God’s appointment. The following notes, therefore, have in view some matters which bear on expressing the truth that “there is one

body.”

Some persons rather triumphantly ask, but where does “one place” occur in the New Testament? They may be as pleased with themselves in stating this objection to the truth as persons are who think they have avoided the truth of the eternal Sonship by saying that Scripture uses no such expression; or by saying that Scripture does not say “Trinity,” so there is no such thing. These are all the merest cavils if *the thing* meant by those words is really in Scripture.

The truth of the one place in the OT involved a geographical location, and God’s special presence was sought in one geographical place.

God’s center now is a spiritual one, but no less real because of that fact. When we considered Deut. 12 we saw that there were “several marks for identifying the one place. It would be the *center of unity* where rebellion and self-will are depreciated. It would be the place where the *presence* was manifested. It would be the place of rejoicing where the sacrifices, especially the *burnt-offering*, would be offered. His *name* would be placed there. And, the *altar* of Jehovah would be located there.” Furthermore, order, authority, and prayer were meant to characterize the place, as well as *separation unto the Lord*. We say also that there were 12 loaves on the table of showbread, setting forth the national unity of Israel. These things have a spiritual counterpart today. *The truth of the one place is implicit in the truth that there is one body.* The difficulty lies in the fact that it is not understood what “there is one body,” and related scriptures, really mean for practice in our walk. There can be but one expression of that unity, one spiritual expression of that spiritual body, as there was but one expression of the national unity of Israel in one geographical place.

So persons may object because they demand that a certain mode of speech be found in the Word before they will believe the truth. They will some day learn to their loss that God has not been pleased to comply with their demands for certain modes of speech before they will believe.

As we consider the subject of the Lord’s table, we realize that we are not speaking about a physical table. Rather, we are speaking about expressing a spiritual fellowship resulting from the death of Christ and formed by the Spirit of God Who indwells each member of the body of Christ (Matt. 3:11; Luke 24:49; John 7:39; 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:4, 5; 2:1-4; 2:32, 33; 1 Cor. 12:13; 3:16; 6:17). The Spirit has brought each believer into the Christian fellowship (1 Cor.1:9). But we must practice the truth of this fellowship. We must give expression to it collectively. 1 Cor. 10:16 bears on the scriptural practice of the truth that we are members one of another. E. Dennett remarked:

There are two things to be clearly understood in this scripture: the meaning of the word communion, and the significance of the act of eating and drinking. As to the first, it may be pointed out that the word translated “partakers” in verse 18, and that rendered “fellowship” in verse 20, are the

same as “communion” in verse 16; and herein we may discover the key for its interpretation. The word communion, then, signifies, in its simplest elements, a common participation -- and, in this place, the common participation by the saints, as members of the one body, at the Lord’s Table, in what is set forth by the blood, and by the body of Christ. Eating, or drinking, implies identification with the thing eaten or drunk, and thus the apostle says, “Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?” (v.18.) That is, by eating what was placed in sacrifice on the altar, they became identified with the sacrifices, and were thus brought in a way into fellowship with the altar. Their eating the sacrifices identified them, in a word, with both the sacrifices and the altar; just as the apostle teaches, our drinking the cup (though he only alludes to eating the loaf), and partaking of the one loaf, identify us with what these things signify, and with the Lord’s Table. Applying this to the Lord’s Table in the order found in this passage, we learn, first, that by our taking “the cup of blessing” we express our communion one with another in the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and at the same time avow our identification with all the value of that blood before God. Secondly, when we partake of the one Loaf, we express our communion one with another, as members of the one body, in the sacrifice of the body of Christ (for it is the actual body of Christ, offered through the Eternal Spirit without spot to God, to which reference is here made); and we also avow our identification, as known by faith, with all the sweet savour of that sacrifice before God. How blessed the privilege then to be gathered around, and to be identified with, the Lord’s Table. And how solemn the act of partaking, both of the cup and of the loaf, proclaiming, as we are thus permitted to do, that we are before God in all the value which He attaches to the blood, and to the sacrifice as the burnt-offering of Christ. The cup, it may be added, comes here first, because the truth of the one body is involved in the one Loaf; and thus to show the impossibility of any, whatever their pretensions, being members of the one body, unless they are under the value of the precious blood of Christ. For knowing the efficacy of the work of Christ, the cleansing power of His blood, is the divine condition for the reception of the indwelling Spirit, whereby we are united to Christ. ³³

Another wrote,

1 Cor. 10:16-22 brings out the more blessed place the Lord’s table holds in connection with the communion of the saints, and the unity of the body of Christ. It is the place where the fellowship of the saints with Christ, and His death, and with one another, is exhibited, and that on the ground of the unity of the body of Christ.

The assembly is the body of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 12:12, 13.) The Lord’s table is the place where that unity is exhibited by the members, all partaking of the one loaf, the symbol of unity. (See 1 Cor. 10:17.)

33. *The Christian Friend and Instructor*, pp. 221, 222 (1888).

This is put in contrast with Israel, and the Gentiles, in chapter 10:16-22. The Israelites, by partaking of the sacrifices offered on the altar of Judaism, showed their fellowship with that system of worship. The Gentiles, by partaking of the sacrifices offered on their altars, showed their fellowship with that system. But they offered to demons, consequently it was fellowship with demon worship.

At the Lord's table the Christian exhibits fellowship with the Lord, and His altar, His death, and that as a member of the body of Christ with the others gathered on that ground. This would shew the Corinthians the utter impossibility of mixing up fellowship at the Lord's table with fellowship with devil worship. Thus we see that the Lord's table holds the very central place in Christian worship; so much so that if saints are not gathered as members of Christ's body to that table, there is no exhibition of the church of God in the place. The Lord's table is where the members of Christ are gathered as members of one body, to shew it by partaking together of the one loaf, which is the symbol of unity, and where the authority and claims of the Lord are owned. It is the Lord's table. The Lord therefore invites; the assembly, as representing Him there, receives in His name (Rom. 15:7).³⁴

Let us examine a little further how a person gets in communion with an altar and how this bears on the present truth of the one, spiritual place.

Communion with the Lord's Table

The Title "Lord." Our Lord is referred to in different ways in the NT. Sometimes He is referred to as Jesus, or Lord Jesus, or Christ Jesus, or Lord, or Christ, etc. A different thought is connected with each one of these designations.

In 1 Cor. 10, when communion, i.e., fellowship, is spoken of, the title Christ is used. Christ is used when speaking of grace and what it has wrought.

When the Christian's responsibility for his associations is spoken of, Christ's authority is brought out and so He is called Lord. Hence, the Lord's table is the expression used when responsibility is stressed. The expression "table of the Lord," stands in contrast to the table of demons in 1 Cor. 10. So is it with the cup. The cup is the fellowship of the blood of Christ. Drinking of it expresses fellowship in the results of Christ's death. But when contrasted with the cup of demons in connection with the subject of the Christian's association and responsibility, it is called the Lord's cup. *Lord* brings out the thought of authority and our responsibility to Him. Fellowship with the Lord's table is morally impossible while we are in fellowship with another table (1 Cor. 10:21). We become characterized by the false table. A false fellowship, insofar as it goes, is a denial of the one Lord (1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5). We are gleaning a principle from 1 Cor. 10 that we cannot be in fellowship with the Lord's table and a false table,

34. *The Bible Treasury* 12:185 (1878).

whether it be the table of demons or some other table. The table of demons was a possible snare to the Corinthians. It may be that some other table is a snare to Christians now.

We speak of sectarian tables (plural) and there is a sense in which that is true. But they are all of a common piece just as Jeroboam's altars were all of a piece. We see this in the thought of the cup of demons and the table of demons. Only one cup and one table of demons is mentioned. It is true that "there be gods many, and lords many" (1 Cor. 8:5), yet there is a kind of unity in this such that Paul speaks of only the cup and the table of demons, not of cups many and tables many. Yet idolatry is a denial of divinely constituted unity in that "there be gods many and lords many" and places of worship are multiplied.

How a Person Is in Communion with the Lord's Table. We reject the notion that a person is at the Lord's table by being saved, for two reasons:

1. Scripture nowhere says so or implies it.

2. 1 Cor. 10:18 tells us how a person is in communion with the Lord's table, and it is not by the fact of being saved.

1Cor. 10:18 is explanatory of the relationship between the loaf and cup (vv. 16, 17) and the table (vv. 19-22). The way in which one is in communion with the table is illustrated by how the Jew was in communion with the altar. Notice that the Jew was not in communion with the altar because he was born an Israelite (or circumcised). That would have put the disobedient, those in division, in the northern kingdom of Israel in communion with the altar at Jerusalem; which in fact, was not so. They had to go to the one place, the one center, Jerusalem, in order to do what was necessary to be in communion with the altar.

What did they have to do?

. . . are not they who eat of the sacrifices in communion with the altar?
(1 Cor. 10:18).

They needed to eat of the sacrifice in order to be in communion with the altar. The Apostle used this to show us how we express communion with the Lord's table. The Lord's table is a figure for the spiritual place where the Christian fellowship is expressed where Christ is in the midst. The outward display of this fellowship is expressed in the breaking of bread.

The thing "written aforetime" for our instruction is this: *a man is in communion with an altar because he eats what was sacrificed on it* (1 Cor. 10:18). The principle of this is applied by Paul to communion with the Lord's table. One is in communion with the table because he eats what is on it. Weigh this well. We shall look at this again a little later.

An Altar Imparts its Own Character to What Is on It. It is important to know that the altar is greater than what is on the altar. Scripture expressly teaches that the altar is greater than what is on it.

(Fools and) blind ones, for which is greater, the gift, or the altar which

sanctifies the gift? He therefore that swears by the altar swears by it and by all things that are upon it (Matt. 23:19, 20).

The altar sanctifies the gift. This means that the altar sets apart the gift. This means that the altar imparts a character to what is on the altar. We learn something from this principle just as we learn something from Paul's application of 1 Cor. 10:18 to the truth of the Lord's table.

We must now apply the principle that an altar sanctifies, or sets apart, what is on it. First of all, the Lord's supper is on the Lord's table. The Lord's table sanctifies the feast which is on it. The Lord's table imparts its own character to what is on it. The Lord's supper is the Lord's supper because it is on the Lord's table. No other supper can be on the Lord's table because the table imparts its own character to the supper which is on it. We have learned this principle from Matt. 23:19, 20. Nor can the Lord's supper be on a sectarian table, i.e., the Lord's supper cannot be connected with a sectarian fellowship. W. Kelly has forcefully rejected the idea that the Lord's supper can be on a sectarian table thus:

As for the notion that you may have the Lord's supper without the Lord's table, the thought is beneath sober Christians. We may distinguish where we must not separate. All such speculations are but the fruit of idleness with a certain small activity of mind, but none the less injurious to faith and practice.³⁵

Just as the Lord's table imparts its own character to the supper which is on it, so does a sectarian table impart its own character to the supper which is on it. A sectarian table, (i.e., a sectarian fellowship) sanctifies (i.e., sets apart) the supper which is on it; and that supper is a sectarian supper. It is not the Lord's supper; it is a sectarian supper. The Lord's supper, then, is on the Lord's table and Matt. 23:19, 20 shows that this is the only place that the Lord's supper can be.

We find this truth illustrated in 1 Kings 12. Jeroboam set up false altars and he "ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, Like the feast that was in Judah, . . ." (1 Kings 12:32). The divine center and altar were at Jerusalem and it was impossible for him to have a true sacrifice on these false altars or to have a true feast. His altars sanctified the sacrifices offered on them and, his altars imparted their own character to the feast. Those in division must return to the house of God at Jerusalem to hold the Passover (2 Chron. 30:1) because there was no valid Passover outside the place chosen by God. We see, then, that the table determines the character of what is on the table and eating what is on the table puts one in communion with the table.

35. *The Bible Treasury* 15:34 (1884).

Chapter 6

There Is Only One Lord's Table & One Lord's Supper

The Lord's supper is on the Lord's table and that is the only place it can be; and a sectarian supper is on a sectarian table. This must necessarily be so because it is implicit in Matt. 23:19, 20 and 1 Cor. 10:18; and it is given typically in 1 Kings 12. Deut. 12, 14 and 2 Chron. 30 also bear on this matter.

It may not have appeared clear why 1 Cor. 10:18 also shows this and we shall now consider this further. (Now, as we consider the fact that the Lord's supper is on the Lord's table we should remember that we are speaking of spiritual truths and not a physical table. We are considering partaking of the Lord's supper on the basis that there is one body.) First, let us observe the difference between 1 Cor. 10 and 1 Cor. 11 in regards to this subject. 1 Cor. 10 speaks of the associations of the Christian. It contrasts the three great systems in the world: Jew, Gentile, and Church of God (1 Cor. 10:32), and speaks of the place of the expression of their characteristic communions. And so the loaf which we eat is the fellowship of the body of Christ; i.e., that expresses the truth of the one body. The loaf expresses the unity of the body of Christ. 1 Cor. 11 deals with the state of soul of those who eat the Lord's supper and there the loaf is looked at as representing the body of the Lord Jesus given in death for us. But, *the loaf in 1 cor. 11 is the same loaf as in 1 Cor. 10*. There is only one loaf, one cup, one supper, one table, and one Spirit Who gathers us together to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ on the ground of the one body.

Next, let us note that Paul is writing from another city, yet he says to the Corinthians, "The cup of blessing which we bless," and "The bread which we break." There may have been a thousand cups and loaves used in one day in many cities, but Paul does not say, "The cups" and "The breads." No, there is only one cup, one loaf, one Lord's table, one Lord's supper. All gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ partook of the same cup and loaf at the one Lord's table. It is a spiritual thing. In the city of Jerusalem, there may have been thousands of Lambs eaten, but it was *one Passover*.

In partaking of the loaf we express the fellowship of the one body. Manifestly, a loaf eaten at a sectarian table cannot express the truth of the one

body. The loaf on a sectarian table is not the loaf of 1Cor. 10. There are not two loaves sanctioned of God, one of which expresses the fellowship of the one body and one of which does not express it. Loaves broken in division do not confess unity. Loaves broken in division do not confess we are one loaf. There is only one loaf. The loaf on the sectarian table is a sectarian loaf (Matt. 23:19, 20) and there may be many sectarian loaves. A Christian cannot eat the Lord's supper and have that put him in communion with a sectarian table. Eating the Lord's supper links a Christian with the Lord's table because Scripture principles show that the supper derives its character from the table it is on, and a Christian is linked with that table via eating what is on it.

So, there are not two Lord's suppers, one which has a loaf that expresses unity and one which has a loaf that does not express unity.

Since the Scripture expressly teaches that what is on an altar derives its character from the altar it is on, you cannot pick up the Lord's supper from the Lord's table and put it on a sectarian table. What is placed on a sectarian table derives its character from the sectarian table it is on (Matt. 23:19, 20). The supper thus becomes sectarian in character.

F. G. Patterson wrote:

So that it is impossible to partake of the Lord's Supper in its true sense, according to scripture, without expressing in the act the unity of the body of Christ.³⁶

But unity is expressed by partaking of the loaf on the Lord's table:

Many have thought they could now come together as individuals merely, to break bread. But such a ground is unknown in scripture since the revelation of the truth concerning the Church of God, through the Apostle Paul.³⁷

C. H. Mackintosh remarked:

The Lord's Supper demands that the body be fully recognized: if the one body be not recognized, it is but sectarianism: the Lord Himself has lost His place.³⁸

W. Kelly said:

I admit ministry most fully; but the Lord's Supper has no connection with it. Make it a necessary function of those that rule to administer the bread and wine, and it bears not even an outward resemblance to the Lord's Supper. It becomes a sacrament, not His Supper; a manifest innovation, a decided and complete departure from what the Lord has laid down in His

36. *Paul's Doctrine*, p. 147.

37. *Paul's Doctrine*, p. 31.

38. *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper*, p. 14.

word. The very idea of a person standing apart and claiming to administer it as a right alters and ruins the Supper of the Lord.³⁹

As for the notion that you may have the Lord's supper without the Lord's table, the thought is beneath sober Christians. We may distinguish where we cannot separate. All such speculations are the fruit of idleness with a certain small activity of mind, but none-the-less injurious to faith and practice.⁴⁰

J. N. Darby said:

. . . I could not own, with the light I have as to the unity of the body, that these denominational ordinances are the Lord's table . . .⁴¹

Again:

. . . there was one Table and one bread, and that they were therefore responsible, and as I felt so myself I could not identify myself any longer with the evil I knew.⁴²

Another wrote:

The Lord's Supper differs from the other standing institution of Christianity in this, that while baptism is essentially individual, the breaking of bread is distinctively congregational. Individuality of enjoyment is not at all the thought in the Supper, but rather communion.

The whole force and blessedness of the Lord's Supper consists in this, not only that it is essentially an act in common, but that it is based on the truth of the one body of Christ. Being the expression of our common worship of Christ, anything that does not leave full room for every member of His body, walking as such, destroys (as far as it goes) the aim and character of the Lord's Supper. Not, of course, that even in each city all could eat together in one spot; but, Let them eat in ever so many, it was to be on the same ground, and in real intercommunion. The very principle of it embraces the saints walking as such in the whole world: whatever does not is not the Lord's supper.⁴³

Another said:

The body is one; the communion of the body, if existing at all, must be by the unbroken action of the Spirit. The Lord's Table is one, and in the breaking of bread saint is linked to saint in fellowship. Hence, if Mr. Newman had broken bread at any table, every table was involved; for in principle there is one Lord's Table (though for convenience and of necessity we meet in different places); where the Spirit rules it is "one

39. *Lectures on the Church of God*, p.157, Morrish edition.

40. *The Bible Treasury* 15:35 (1884).

41. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:447 (1877).

42. *Letters of J. N. Darby* .3:243 (1844).

43. *The Bible Treasury* 15:23 (1884).

bread,” “one cup” and all partake of that same bread, that same cup, as linked by the Spirit since the Spirit is the power of fellowship.⁴⁴

C. J. Davis wrote:

A table spread on any other basis than that of God’s assembly is sectarian, and therefore has no claims on the godly.

To be more explicit, let us suppose that all of us in this room now, who are believers, should agree to break bread tonight, and should spread the table for ourselves only, without providing, according to the Scriptures, for all the “approved” saints. Then we might “break bread”; but it would be our own, and not the Lord’s supper; for the Lord’s Supper contemplates all the members of the “one body.”

Again, contemplate any society of Christians meeting as a society, subject to regulations arranged among themselves, and to which all the members are agreed. Let such meet as a society to break bread. Then, I say, from 1 Cor. 10 and 11, they eat a Society’s supper, and not the Lord’s, although they attach, with the most pious motives, His name to their feast.⁴⁵

As to those who have left the Lord’s table, or from whom the saints gathered together to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ have separated, they no more have the Lord’s supper than Jeroboam had the feast held at Jerusalem. Such may have a supper that has the same outward form as that supper which is on the Lord’s table, but it is a feast devised in their own hearts -- even though it appears like the one on the Lord’s table. The writer had eaten such a false supper at one of these tables from his 17th to 31st year. Certainly he thought upon the Lord’s death and love, and spoke appreciation of it, and to him it seemed to be the Lord’s supper, but that did not make it the Lord’s supper. It is the Lord’s table that makes it the Lord’s supper.

Those of whom we have just spoken are certainly not at the table of demons. They have made a fellowship, a table, of their own, and it has their own supper on it, too. Also, they think upon the Lord and His love but that does not make it the Lord’s supper. It is a sectarian table and supper. If we call it by its scriptural name, the only name given to designate an outward rupture among God’s people (and we do want to call it what God calls it, don’t we? Well, don’t we?) is sect, i.e., heresy, in 1 Cor. 11:19. (See Appendix 3 for the difference between schism and heresy.)

In 1 Cor. 11:18 we read that there were internal divisions (schisms) in the Corinthian assembly. Unjudged, this would lead to sects (heresies), v.19, i.e., open ruptures. A group might go down the street, in separation from those

44. *Where Am I, and Why Am I There?* p. 9 (1857). Available from the publisher.

45. *Aids to Believers*, p. 56. A newer edition is now available from the publisher.

cleaving to the truth, and set up a congregation and carry on in imitation of what they left. Those that go on with the truth are the approved (v.19). What are the others, then? Does anyone really dream they are still at the Lord's table? Will such also tell us that the excommunicated man of 1Cor. 5 was still at the Lord's table? Perhaps they think that a leper put outside the camp was still in communion with the altar? Or that those partaking of Jeroboam's altars were still in communion with the altar at Jerusalem? Such had neither the altar nor the sacrifice thereon. Those that go on in disobedience to the Word as to the collective pathway have neither the table nor the supper of the Lord. We are verily guilty of playing down the sin of sect and covering it up with the word denomination or "division among brethren."

G. V. Wigram admonished:

But do not let your own distinctive position or ground be lost sight of or covered over; to quote a favorite text, "Let them return unto thee, but go not thou to them." ⁴⁶

On the other hand, let us remember this:

The position is of God, and must be abided by. Our weakness in it is most palpable to others; Let us not hide the condition from ourselves. ⁴⁷

There is a baseless argument against these things that brings the human system of process of elimination into divine things. It proceeds thus: I am not at the table of demons or in connection with the Jewish altar, therefore I must be at the Lord's table. The false conclusion, in effect, puts all Christians in connection with the Lord's table. The argument is as unsound as if a Jew in fellowship with one of Jeroboam's altars said, "There is the table of demons, and there is also the altar of Jehovah at Jerusalem. I am not at the table of demons, therefore I am at the altar of Jehovah." How absurd such reasoning is!

A table denotes fellowship. From Rom. 11:9 we see a principle that man can form his own table, his own fellowship. The Lord's table, the Jewish altar, and the table of demons denote the places of expression of the three great characteristic communions in the world. Besides this, man makes tables -- fellowships -- of his own. This has been done by Christians.

Human generosity concerning the truth of the Lord's table has even invented the idea that divided Christians may be like three sons who cannot get along, so the three eat separately, one at the table at 4 o'clock, and another at the table at 5 o'clock, and the third son at 6 o'clock! I do not know if it is alleged that they all eat something that sets forth their unity or if the father stays during both meals or eats with each separately! At any rate, there is no

46. *Ministry of G.V. Wigram*.2:85.

47. *The Present Testimony* 4:159 (1853).

Scripture for such confused ideas; rather, the Scriptures we have considered show the falseness of the idea. Imagine! A table denotes fellowship. They eat separately and express fellowship!?! To what is opposition to the truth reduced?

Another error is this statement: "Now I think it can be shown that every child of God is a partaker of the Lord's table, though he may not actually take the supper, but eating the bread and drinking the cup would be the outward expression of it." What will be shown is that the statement is diametrically opposed to the express statement of 1 Cor. 10:21, which says, "Ye cannot partake of (the) Lord's table and of (the) table of demons." The statement above clearly undermines the apostle's warning about association because if all Christians are in fact partakers of the Lord's table it is impossible to be a partaker of the table of demons -- which is absurd and reduces the apostle's warning to a warning about behavior that was impossible. The fact is that the Corinthians could partake of the table of demons and lose thereby their connection with the Lord's table since one *cannot* partake of both. This would, however, be impossible if all Christians partake of the Lord's table. "Partake" is the same word, really, as "communion" in 1 Cor. 10:16. Communion with the table of demons was a very real danger to the Corinthians and a very grave possibility. The Lord's table is connected with the corporate practice of the truth that "there is one body." It is not something with which we are necessarily connected just because we are "in Christ." Besides, the above false statement has no more weight than saying of Jeroboam's followers, "now I think it can be shown that every Israelite is a partaker of the altar at Jerusalem, though he may not actually have eaten of the sacrifice in Jerusalem, but eating of the sacrifice would be the outward expression of it." This is exactly parallel and flies in the face of 1 Cor. 10:18 which says that those that eat of the sacrifices are in communion with the altar. Let us bow to the statements of God and all will be clear; and these reasonings of the mind will be judged. We can see from these reasonings that those who so talk have lost the truth, if they ever did hold it. But some from Ephraim, Manasseh and Asher humbled themselves (here is the secret) and came to the house of God at Jerusalem and entered into His sanctuary which He has sanctified forever (2 Chron. 30). May the Lord grant that humble and contrite spirit that will find us at the place He has chosen to set His name there, even the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It has been objected that "The true church, the true Lord's table, the Lord's presence among His own, are things which cannot be sectional. They cannot be appropriated by this or that section (note, he avoided saying *sect*) of the people of God exclusively with impunity." If this reasoning were valid, it would follow that the Lord's table and presence is wherever the church is. The Lord would be present amongst those in sects. It is a fact that membership in the body of Christ is unconditional and is effected when we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Matt.18:20 is obviously conditional. Why does the

objector lump together what we are in Christ (“the true church”) with what is conditional (“the Lord’s presence among His own”)?

Regarding the Lord’s presence, W. Kelly remarked:

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

A. None whatever for either; no true scholar could have weighed the usage and given such an opinion. The evidence is decisively for the change. The aim for opposing it is to set aside the ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTER of the context, on which the Lord has impressed it so indelibly, that almost all the warring parties of Christendom recognize that character, though they naturally overlook a word which none of them heeds, and which does mean a living and exclusive center.⁴⁸

We have seen what a sin the sin of Jeroboam was, how God denounced it most solemnly. We saw how in practice it denied the unity of God, the name of God, the national unity of Israel, the one place, the one altar of burnt offering and the presence of Jehovah Who dwelt between the cherubim in the midst of His people. Is that not very solemn? Is sectarianism less than that? Let us look at what sectarianism does even though sectarians do not realize it.

1. It denies the unity of the Christ. “But I speak of this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is the Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:12).
2. It denies the truth of the one spiritual place. “Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). Christians in *divided* groups are certainly *not* gathered *together*. Scripture calls such a thing heresy, i.e., sect. See Appendix 3.
3. It denies the name of Christ as the divinely appointed center of gathering. Sectarianism brings in something else as the basis and reason for the existence of the sect (1 Cor. 1:12).
4. It denies the action of the Holy Spirit Who only can gather souls to that center where Christ is present (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:4). The Holy Spirit does not gather Christians to more than one center. Do you think He condones division?
5. It denies the truth of our unity as members of the one body.

48. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4:94 (1902).

Sectarianism in practice makes many bodies (Eph.4:4)

6. It denies the Lord's table. In practice, it denies that fellowship into which we are brought (1 Cor. 1:9). It forms other fellowships, other tables.
7. It denies the presence of the Lord in the midst of His people gathered together unto His name by the Spirit, according to the truth that there is one body.
8. It denies the one Lord's supper. Sectarians eat a sectarian supper that is made such by being on the sectarian table, as we have seen (Matt. 23:19, 20).

So, sectarianism is indeed a reprehensible sin.

The Lord's table is

where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

It is where the truth of the one body is owned and expressed in the breaking of bread that is on the Lord's table. It is there that the Lord has chosen to put His name; and where we celebrate that which speaks of Christ our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7, 8).

As in Jerusalem, the only place where the Passover was held, so is it with those gathered together unto the name our Lord Jesus Christ; only there is the feast truly held. As there were many lambs throughout Jerusalem, yet one Passover; so now there are many loaves, yet there is one loaf of which all gathered together according to Matt. 18:20 partake and express the divinely constituted unity.

It simply is not true that groups of the Lord's dear people have gone on in an outward breach of fellowship are all gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are gathered in division! -- not together; in separation, not together, in sect (for it is right to call what Scripture calls it)! The followers of, say, Mr. G., Mr. L., and Mr. K., etc., after a while gave up the truth of the one place and then assert that saints in each those separated groups of the followers of men are gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (But truly they are not gathered together; and the Lord Jesus is not in the midst of sect). They then unite upon the ground that the Christians in each group were in those intervening years gathered to His name. Their union therefore is not on the basis of the truth set forth in Scripture; and their union is a public, avowed, and standing repudiation the Scripture teaching of the one place. Worse still, such compromise touches deeper questions. They must come together denying that, when Mr. C. E. Stuart taught the fundamentally evil notion of propitiation made in heaven by Christ in the disembodied state (which Mr. K. vigorously denounced in *The Bible Treasury* as being a fundamental

matter), it was fundamental evil -- or at least not speak of it. Perhaps the next step will be to repudiate the expulsion of Mr. B. who denied the human soul to the Lord and to allow that those once in fellowship with R. (from whom Mr. B likely learned that evil) were not defiled by an evil association. (Since writing these notes years ago, a merger was accomplished with those once in direct communion with F. E. Raven, exactly on that basis; i.e. no confession of an evil association with FER from 1890-1908). Such is the path of compromise. We have learned from the Scripture of Truth three divine principles that bear on these things but which we only list:

1. The point of departure is the point of recovery!
2. A moral stream does not rise higher than its source!
3. The passage of time does not alter the character of a moral action!

As Hezekiah would not acknowledge that the false centers were the sanctuary, nor were they an extension of the sanctuary, nor were they as well as the temple the sanctuary, so do we say that there is only one expression of the one body and all else is sect, or heresy (1 Cor. 11:18, 19). Many will do as they did in Hezekiah's day. They will *laugh*; but some will *humble* themselves, come back to Jerusalem, as it were, the one divinely appointed center, and enter into His sanctuary which He has sanctified forever!

Conclusion

We observed that the objection against the truth that the NT does not speak of the "one place" or that there is no such statement as "one expression of the one body" is a cavil based on demanded modes of speech. The *things* thus described *are* taught in the New Testament. That the truth that "the Lord's supper can only be on the Lord's table" is not stated in that way in the New Testament is also true, but we have seen this is taught by the New Testament, even if that particular mode of speech is not used.

The truth that there is only "one (spiritual) place" is implicit in the fact that there is only one body. We need to put away our false generosity, naughty objecting, and refusal of the truth; and ask God to open our eyes to the truth of the one body; and to give us an understanding of Matt. 18:20, Matt. 23:19, 20, 1 Cor. 10 and 11 as well as Deut. 12, 14, 16, 1Chron. 22:1, 1 Kings 12 and 2 Chron. 30. Of course, there are other New Testament Scriptures we have not touched on concerning the church on earth, which bear on this.

W. Kelly remarked about the case of the two women who came before Solomon, both claiming the child, that the one whose baby it was not, was willing to share it, whereas the true mother would rather give it whole to someone else than divide it up. Those who do not possess the truth are often

generous with what is not theirs.

We have seen that the truths brought out from Scripture in this paper were also held and taught by brothers in the 1800's (see also the Appendices) who were used in unfolding much truth. The Scriptures still teach these same truths and there seems no need to insist on changing the truth except as an attempt to get rid of the sin of heresy, i.e., sect (1 Cor. 11:19). But merely holding this truth will not preserve us in the path. "To this man will I look, to him that is of a humble and contrite spirit and trembleth at my word."

Appendix 1

Expressions Regarding the Lord's Table

Persons who are more generous about the Lord's Table than about their own table sometime speak like this:

The Lord's table, however, is not something we "come to," or are "received at," or "set up," or "are gathered round," or "put away from."

This reasoning is the end result of the following erroneous idea which is really the root.

Now I think it can be shown, that every child of God is a partaker of the Lord's table, though he may not actually take the supper, -- but eating the bread and drinking the cup, would be the outward expression of it.

Quoting Heb. 10:10 and Col. 1:20 in connection with this assertion to show that we are identified with Christ is entirely beside the point. Our union with Him, as one body, by the indwelling of the Spirit does not prove our connection with the table except in the mind of him who merely asserts it is so. Every sealed believer is in union with Christ but 1 Cor. 10:18 (and context) shows expressly and conclusively that only those who partake of the loaf are in communion with the table of the Lord. There is nothing difficult about 1 Cor. 10:18. What is wrong is that Christians prefer their theories!

1 Cor. 10:18 has shown the falseness of the second quotation which is the root of the first. Let us examine the first. We are not concerned merely about an expression like "come to" (see *The Bible Treasury* 15:34, 35) but if a Christian desires to be in communion with the Lord's table he must do so by partaking of the loaf and the cup (1 Cor. 10:16-18). He must begin at some point in time. He does so now with the consent of others already partaking. Is he not received at the Lord's table? Certainly. F. G. Patterson has well said,

If a fresh action of the Spirit of God causes a Nehemiah-like company to follow from Babylon, they are glad to welcome them to the divine ground they occupy themselves. If the Nehemiah-like company comes, they find before them a remnant who had previously, through grace, occupied the divine position. They must gladly and cheerfully fall in with what God had wrought -- there was no neutral ground -- no second place. They dare not set up another, it would be but schism. It was the same Spirit who had wrought, and who, if followed, could not but guide them to the same divine position to which He had guided others. How completely this sets aside the will of man; and independency of the movements of the present day which stop short of that to which God has called His people, to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; for "there

is one body and one Spirit,” and only one!

How fully too this meets the questions which so agitate souls in the movements of the day. How impossible for this fresh company of Jews, (Nehemiah) if led of God, to assume that because they were of Israel, they could gather together in some other city, apart from those who went before, (Ezra); and take up divine principles in the letter, and to claim that they were Jews, and had separated from Babylon, that they could act independently of those who had gone before, and had preoccupied that divine position. It was wide enough for all of Israel, and surely contemplated (as faith ever does) them all. But as it was a return, they were careful to maintain it intact in its purity and divine character, refusing entrance to all that was unsuited to the presence and name of Israel’s God.

It has been a successful device of the enemy -- sad to say -- to use the divine and blessed truth of the Church of God to cover what is really schism, and to support a counterfeit and, Jannes and Jambres-like, to deceive. For this is not a day of violence -- but of deception and resistance of the truth by counterfeit in divine things.

It is simple and plain, that those who have had grace to separate from the evils of the professing Church, even though members of Christ, cannot use this grace to the disowning of that which God had wrought in others in this way before them. If led of “one Spirit,” they cannot but link themselves practically in the unity of the Spirit, with those who had pre-occupied the divine platform; cheerfully and thankfully owning what God had wrought, and following where “one Spirit” had led their brethren before them, to the name of the Lord, as “one body,” to break “one loaf” in remembrance of Him! ⁴⁹

F. G. Patterson certainly did not hold that view that the Lord’s presence was equally among those meeting in separation. Division (i.e., sect or heresy) from those “gathered together” is retrogression; it is departure. Those who separate from those gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ do not any longer assemble at the one spiritual place breaking the one loaf that is on the Lord’s table.

It is true that sometimes certain expressions are used which do not convey some truth found in Scripture and we must be careful about what we say and how we say it. However, to reject a thought merely because Scripture does not use a certain mode of speech or phrase may have no more validity than denying the Trinity because the word “trinity” is not used in Scripture. What is meant by the word trinity is found in Scripture and the objection to the word usually stems from a denial of the truth regarding the

49. *Paul’s Doctrine and Other Papers*, pp.124, 125 (about 1870).

Godhead.

In keeping with the human-generosity-view of the Lord's table, sometimes the expression "put away from the Lord's table" is refused as well as "received at the Lord's table." As a matter of fact, 1 Cor. 5:11 shows us a professed Christian whom we must refuse a place at our own table at home. And regarding the Lord's table, we prefer the Scriptural exposition of W. Kelly on this, which is founded on a correct apprehension of 1 Cor. 10. He wrote,

"Put away from" -- not the table of the Lord merely, this he does not say, but -- "put away from among yourselves." This is much stronger than expelling from the table. Of course it implies exclusion from the Lord's table, but from their table too -- "with such an one, no, not to eat." ⁵⁰

We may be put away from the Lord's table as well as be received at it.

The Lord's table is not omnipresent; it is not everywhere where there are Christians. If in some city Christians begin being gathered together to Christ's name and eat the Lord's supper, the table is there. There was not communion with it before (1 Cor. 10:18). The table is not something that is just around anywhere and everywhere. The supper and table are connected. Thus when the breaking of bread commences, we speak of the table being set up there, keeping in mind that there is only one table, enjoyed by all gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We mean by "set up," not an independent table, but that a local expression of the one body has commenced.

The following from J. N. Darby has been quoted along with the two objecting quotations at the head of this appendix.

If love to all the saints is not present in my spirit, I break the unity of the Spirit, while keeping it up in form rightly according to Scripture in outward practice. On the other hand, I cannot deny in practice what Scripture teaches, and especially in that which is given as a sign of the Scripture truth. The words, "table of the Lord," are used to signify that identification with Him in confession, which was found in the priests' partaking of the altar, and the heathens eating of what had been offered to idols. I do not therefore object to use "the Lord's table," as an expression significant of this. Hence it necessarily embraces in principle all that are His. ⁵¹

To quote this with the first two quotations above is to be grossly ignorant of the teaching of J. N. Darby, or else shows an inability to see the truth, or

50. *Lectures Introductory to the Epistles of Paul*, London: W.H. Broom, p. 61, 1869.

51. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:447.

else a deception. Likely, it is the first and second. It is an idle dream to think that this means J. N. Darby thought all Christians are partakers of the Lord's table. The very quotation says otherwise; and on the very same page he says,

. . . I could not own, with the light I have as to the unity of the body, that these denominational ordinances are the Lord's table; but I am quite ready to believe that souls may go there with a deeper sense than myself of the Lord's love personally.⁵²

Again,

The unity of Christ's body being the ground assumed, all christians have, in principle, a title to be there, the Lord's name being maintained as to doctrine and discipline.⁵³

Obviously, not all Christians partake of the Lord's table. Or, to put it another way, not all Christians are "at" the Lord's table. And we have seen that the Jewish altar, the Lord's table, and the table of demons denote the three characteristic communions in the world and the unities that they represent. They embrace in principle the Jew, the Christian and the Gentile respectively, though not everyone is identified with their respective, characteristic communion.

52. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:447, 1877. See also 2:410.

53. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:370, 1877.

Appendix 2

There Can Be Only One Expression of the One Body

We have considered some of the scriptures which bear on this subject in the body of this paper. Following, we will see that there was a time when many had no difficulty with this truth. J. N. Darby wrote:

I understood the breach arose between you and Rotherham (i.e., between the Exclusive meetings at Sheffield and Rotherham) by reason of your reception of Goodall. With the main facts of his case I am acquainted, for I took part in what passed, and now allow me to put the case as it stands as to him. I put it merely as a principle. He (or any one else) is rejected in London. The assembly in London have weighed, and I with them, the case, and counted him as with excommunicated or in schism. I put the two cases, for I only speak of the principle. I take part in this act, and hold him to be outside the Church of God on earth, being outside (in either case) what represents it in London; I am bound by scripture to count them (sic) so. I come to Sheffield; there he breaks bread, and is -- in what? Not in the Church of God on earth, for he is out of it in London, and there are not two churches on earth, cannot be, so as to be in one and out of another. How can I refuse to eat with him in London and (yet) break bread with him in Sheffield? have one conscience for London, and another conscience for Sheffield? It is confusion and disorder. I do not apprehend I am mistaken in saying you received Goodall without having the reasons or motives of the Priory or other brethren in London. If you have had their reasons, the case is only the stronger, because you have deliberately condemned the gathering in London and rejected its communion; for he who is outside in London is inside with you.”⁵⁴

This was cited as a reproach, of course. It is labeled “Darbyism” by opposers. Brethren were of one mind about these things at one time. Independency, or false generosity, or rejection of the truth with a view to hide the seriousness of sin is the reason to change doctrines, whether persons are aware of this or not. J. B. Stoney wrote:

I was in a place lately where there were five meetings, and all assumed to be on the ground of this verse (Matt. 18:20) yet they were each opposed to the other; there was no intercommunion. Well, there must be something radically defective in the meaning given to this passage to admit of such a

54. Cited by W.B. Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren*, pp. 225,226. I have quoted this exactly as it stands in the source.

state of things, and all I have to say is, we must learn what the right meaning is.

. . . the presence of' the Lord of glory, and that He cannot be with two companies opposed to each other. ⁵⁵

F. W. Grant held the same scriptural truth on this as did others. He wrote:

On the ground of the church of God, then, we cannot be Local bodies, whether confederated or independent, nor refuse to own in the fullest and most practical way the two or three on the same ground anywhere, nor (refuse) to accept their binding and loosing as what has Christ's sanction. Infallibility, whether on our part or theirs, is not pretended to . . . ⁵⁶

Edward Dennett was just as pointed about it. He said:

If these questions could be answered in the affirmative, then you might perhaps CONCLUDE that you had found the Lord's table; but if not, however fair and inviting it might seem at first, you would have to reject it equally with those in the denominational systems around. ⁵⁷

C. D. Maynard wrote:

There is one Loaf, one Table of the Lord, as there is but one Head. This all the sects, by their very existence, deny. Mr. . . . 's course does the same. If we have been keeping the unity of the Spirit in refusing and his party, then they should own their schism and be restored; and if they have been keeping this holy unity, then we should do the same.

To amalgamate, is to own both right, i.e. to own division right. There is no difference in principle between owning two opposed Tables, and owning all the sects of Christendom. ⁵⁸

F. G. Patterson likewise held the scripture doctrine, and said:

Tables of varied sects and parties in the professing church could not be owned as the "Table of the Lord." ⁵⁹

The following extract is quoted from a paper titled *Tunbridge Wells: Its Question Considered*:

Mr. F. G. Patterson, one of our most able teachers back in the "seventies" of the last century, wrote: "What Scripture teaches is the competency and duty of each assembly to carry out its own discipline, under the Lord, who has promised His presence and guidance in the matter. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them'

55. *Lessons of the Sanctuary*, pp. 2,10, 1889.

56. "The Ground of the Church of God, and What It Implies," *The Bible Treasury* 12:282 , 1879..

57. *Twelve Letters to Young Believers*, p. 30, 1877.

58. *How Mr. Kelly Came to Be Outside*, 1904.

59. *Helps By the Way*, New Series 2:13, 1880. Edited by F. W. Grant and C. Wolston.

{Matt. 18:20}. I am sure that when two or three meeting in godliness and truth, come to the decision before the Lord in cases of discipline, that it is owned of the Lord, and the person who is the subject of it will never get comfort till he bows to it. Those who are together in the practice of this truth are ‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ The Holy Ghost constitutes the unity of the body. They are seeking to walk in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost -- a divine Person who will not bend His ways to us -- we must bend our ways, in the truth, to Him . . . None can have the practice of this truth unless in the unity of the Spirit, and with those who have been there before them: it is impossible to have it avowedly apart from such. The common practice of the day is to accept divine principles and terms apart from their practice. Scripture is too strong for this.”

J. N. Darby wrote:

And I think that if anyone, through the flesh, separated from two or three walking godly before God in the unity of the whole body of Christ, it would not merely be an act of schism, but he would necessarily deprive himself of the blessing of God’s presence.⁶⁰

I could not go to any loose table as the Lord’s. People do and call it the Lord’s, of course; but I do not call it so, or I should be there.⁶¹

A. H. Rule wrote:

On the same principle, a man put away for sin at Corinth was put away elsewhere. The act of discipline was carried out at Corinth “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” and valid in Ephesus and everywhere, for the simple reason that the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ at Corinth could not be set aside by the same authority at Ephesus or anywhere else. This is a simple principle connected with the truth that the assembly of God is one, however many local representatives of it there may be in different places. There is one body, one Spirit, one Head and Lord, whose authority was the same in every local assembly. All this excludes independency, and shows that if there are a number of different companies of brethren in a place, meeting, walking and **acting** independently of each other, some of these at least, have departed in their position and walk from the simple truth that the assembly of God is one: They are not keeping the unity of the Spirit. These principles are simple enough, and we only need to be self-judged in the presence of the Lord to discern them.⁶²

C. H. Mackintosh wrote:

It may be well to add a word here for the guidance of any simple-hearted Christian who may find himself placed in circumstances in which he is

60. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:87.

61. “Notes of a Reading on 1 Cor.,” *Collected Writings* 26::380 (Morrish ed.).

62. *Selected Ministry of A.H. Rule* 2:204. See also pp. 138, 194, & 195 of this book.

called upon to decide between the claims of different tables which might seem to be spread upon the same principle . . .

Suppose, then, I find myself in a place where two or more tables have been spread; what am I to do? I believe I am to enquire into the origin of these various tables, to see how it became needful to have more than one table.⁶³

These are some of the statements that could be cited that show that many have departed from truth once held. It is pride that has given up these truths, while some would try to make it appear as pride to maintain these truths. In Israel, those who were in the northern kingdom who bowed to the truth of the one place “humbled” themselves (2 Chron. 30).

Following are a few consequences of the error of supposing that divided saints can be gathered to the Lord’s name, though separated in division. These consequences are:

1. That if the Lord is in the midst of both of two divided meetings of Christians, and they mutually agree that each other are in the good of Matt. 18:20, then according to Matt. 18:20 they “are gathered together.” But this is a mockery of words because it is manifest that they are not together and therefore they are not gathered together. Matt. 18:20 applies to all meeting on the same ground everywhere. And if all meeting on the true ground were in one locality they would all be physically together too (size permitting). But this is manifestly not so with separated saints. Just as there are many loaves broken in many meetings and yet there is only one loaf; so Christ is present in many meetings yet there is one divine Person to whom all are gathered together.
2. That if Christ is in the midst of separated meetings of saints, and since the Spirit gathers, the Spirit directing one to this meeting in separation from another who is directed to that divided meeting. This makes Spirit the instrument of division.
3. That there are several divided expressions of the body; i.e., the one body can have two or more divided expressions, if this teaching is true.
4. That loaves broken in division express unity.

Beloved brethren, all of this reasoning against the truth is false generosity or is meant to hide the sin and shame of sect, i.e., heresy. May God preserve, in all lowliness and grace, His people desirous of practicing these truths.

63. *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper*, p.16.

Appendix 3

The Difference Between Schism and Heresy

A sect is a heresy (1 Cor. 11:19). It is an open breach such as what is often called a division, meaning a break in fellowship so that two or more companies exist where one existed before and the saints then break bread in separation. Heresy, or sect, is the word scripture uses to describe such a situation where saints have broken away from one, spiritual place. Schism describes something else. So, W. Kelly remarked, concerning 1 Cor. 11:18, 19 that:

We have here important help toward deciding the difference between these terms as well as the precise nature of each. Schism is a division within the assembly, while they all still abide in the same association as before, even if severed in thought or feeling through fleshly partiality or aversion. Heresy, in its ordinary scriptural application as here (not its ecclesiastical usage), means a party among the saints, separating from the rest in consequence of a still stronger following of their own will. A schism within if unjudged tends to a sect or party without, when on the one hand the approved become manifest, who reject these narrow and selfish ways, and on the other the party-man is self condemned, as preferring his own particular views to the fellowship of all saints in the truth.

(Compare Titus 3:10, 11.)⁶⁴

Using a concordance to trace the use of schism and heresy in scripture will show the truth of this observation.

Some of the writers quoted above should have used the word heresy when they used schism.

Note well that scripture uses no other term than “heresy” to describe separation. Yet the followers of certain men have united without a word of confession about heresy!

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

Appendix 4

The Lord's Presence and the Spirit's Presence

Sometimes the presence of the Spirit of God in the Church is connected in some minds with the presence of Christ according to Matt. 18:20 in a way which shows Matt. 18:20 is not understood. The Church was formed in the power of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) uniting believers to the exalted Head (Acts 2:32, 33; 1 Cor. 12:12; 1 Cor. 6:17). God dwells in the Church by the Spirit (Eph. 2:22). The assembly is the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16) though man may, and does, bring what is false on the foundation (1 Cor. 3:12-15). The Spirit dwells in the Church. Christ does not dwell in the Church. Christ's presence is conditional; the Spirit's presence is unconditional. The condition for Christ's presence is given in Matt. 18:20. Christ is only present where the condition is met. His presence denotes that the ground of gathering is right. The Spirit's presence does not sanction anything.

The Spirit seals all who rest on the person of Christ and His finished work, for the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:13, 14). Receiving the same Holy Spirit of promise today (Eph. 1:13, 14) as did the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:32, 33), we become part of the body formed once for all at Jerusalem (Matt. 3:11; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5; Acts 2:32, 33; 1 Cor. 6:17; 1 Cor. 12:12-14). The Spirit would have us practice the truth that "there is one body" (Eph. 4:3, 4) and thus He cannot gather us in division. He would bring each one to the one, spiritual place where Christ is in the midst of His saints gathered together unto His name.

C .H. Mackintosh said:

We must now very briefly glance at our third point, namely, what is the power by which the assembly is gathered. Here again man and his doings are set aside. It is not man's will choosing, nor man's reason discovering; nor man's judgment dictating; nor man's conscience demanding; it is the Holy Ghost gathering souls to Jesus. As Jesus is the only center, so the Holy Ghost is the only gathering power. The one is as independent of man as the other. It is "where two or three are gathered." It does not say "where two or three are met." Persons may meet together around any center, or any ground, by any influence, and merely form a society, an association, a community. But the Holy Ghost gathers saved souls only to Christ . . .

This is a very simple truth. A soul led by the Holy Ghost will gather only to the name of the Lord, and if we gather to aught else, be it a point of truth, or some ordinance or another, we are not in that matter led by the

Holy Ghost. It is not a question of life or salvation. Thousands are saved by Christ that do not own Him as their center. They are gathered to some form of church government, some favorite doctrine, some special ordinance, some gifted man. The Holy Ghost will never gather to any one of these. He gathers only to a risen Christ. This is true of the whole Church of God upon earth; and each local assembly, wherever convened, is the expression of the whole.⁶⁵

See also:

The Present Testimony 2:154, 155 (1850).

Helps By the Way, New Series 2:208 (1880).

E. Dennett, *Twelve Letters to Young Believers*, p. 64.

Bible Witness and Review 3:394 (1881).

Appendix 5

One Place in the Future

Those for whom this paper is written receive the testimony to the future restoration of Israel. Before Messiah reigns before his ancients in glory (Isa. 24:23), two thirds of Israel in the land will have been cut off (Zech. 13:8, 9). Before any of those regathered from the 10 tribes enter the land, the rebels among them will have been put to death (Ezek. 20:38). Thus will ungodliness be turned away from Jacob and all Israel be saved (Rom. 11:26).

Jerusalem will again be chosen (Zech. 1:17; 2:12). The glory-cloud that once departed from Jerusalem by way of the east-gate (Ezek. 10), shall yet again denote the glory of the God of Israel. The glory of Jehovah shall return to His house by way of the east gate (Ezek. 43:4) and that latter glory of the house shall be greater than the former glory (Hag. 2:9). It is clear that there shall be one place in the future also. Whether that place be geographical for an earthly people, or spiritual for a heavenly people, it must be one place, since that is taught by Scripture and this alone is consistent with the unity of God. So the closing statement of Ezekiel's vision of the city and its order is:

and the name of the city from that day, Jehovah is there {Jehovah Shammah} (Ezek. 48:35).

65. "The Assembly of God," *Misc. Writings*, vol.3, pp..34, 35.

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