

*The Christian,  
The Assembly  
and  
Leaven:*

*What Is the Responsibility?  
and  
What Is the Ground of Gathering?*

*An Introduction to these Subjects*

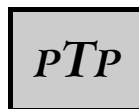
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## *How May an Individual Become Leavened from Another Person?*

### *2 John 9-11*

Under this heading I desire to establish a principle. It is not the particular form of evil that is my point here W. Kelly wrote:

The apostle now comes to the practical consequence. He has laid down the principle in the ninth verse: now comes the practice. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Mark how it is put. It is not -- bring not the true humanity, or the proper Deity; because Satan might change the doctrine somewhat, so as to save appearances for the simple. Therefore it would not do merely to specify some one particular form of error, because then the devil would have only to evade that form, and there would be no resource. But here it stands firm yet comprehensive: if a man come to you, and does not bring this doctrine (that is, the doctrine of Christ) do not you receive him. No matter what may be the particular manner in which the enemy has warped his soul, and through him dishonored Christ; no matter what may be the peculiar nature of the false doctrine, -- if a man come to you, and bring not the divinely revealed doctrine, the Holy Ghost's teaching of Christ in the written word, -- "receive him not into your house, neither bid him greeting." That is to say, do not bid him a common salutation. There is nothing about "God speed" in the word (χαίρειν), though "good speed" might be tolerable. The stronger terms are merely put in by the English translators. It was the ordinary form of courteous greeting every day.<sup>1</sup>

The principle we ought to see from this passage is that outside of the assembly, apart from the breaking of bread, a Christian may become a partaker of wicked works without himself (in this case *herself*) engaging in those same wicked works. The apostle John had a great joy, and this is it:

I have no greater joy than these things that I hear of my children walking in the truth (3 John 4).

One of those truths that "walking in the truth" includes is this:

Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that Abides in the doctrine, *he* has both the father and the Son. If any one come to you and bring not this doctrine, do not receive him into [the] house, and greet him not; for he that greets him partakes in his wicked works (2 John 9-11).

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1. *Introductory Lectures . . . Acts*, etc. p. 361, 362.

In a footnote to his translation of v. 11, J. N. Darby points out that the word "partakes" is *koinoneo* and refers the reader to Heb. 2:14 where this word is used:

Since therefore the children partake of blood and flesh, he also, in like manner, took part in the same . . . (Heb. 2:14).

Concerning the word "partake" in this verse, his footnote says:

*Koinoneo*: that is, they are in that condition, as their common lot.

You see that to be a partaker of the wicked works, in 2 John 9-11, is to place yourself in common with the person doing the wicked works -- even if you do not go with the person -- even if you do not break bread with the person, even if you do not imbibe the evil teaching.

Here, then, the sister at home might make herself a partaker of the wicked works of one going forward, or, who brings not the doctrine of Christ. It would be a professed Christian, of course, who came. She was responsible to know the doctrine of Christ so as to resist, uncompromisingly, evil doctrine: whether it were a person who once abode in the doctrine of Christ, that is, one who abode in what we had from the beginning, but who now "goes forward" beyond revealed truth (v. 9); or, whether it were a person deliberately lacking something concerning the doctrine of Christ (v. 10), which class thrives today.

What was she to do? Perhaps he is a 'loving' man, kindly and amiable, and much admired. Perhaps a 'harmless', well intentioned man; perhaps even called a brother or a servant of the Lord of long standing. Perhaps in the past he had held sound teaching. What was she to do? "Do not receive him into [the] house, and greet him not." Praise God for every sister who so values the Christ of God. He is coming and His reward is with Him! It was well said that:

A woman having the Word -- as this epistle, for example -- was capable of judging his doctrine, and responsible to do so. Inexorable rigor was to be maintained, if the doctrine as to the person of Christ were touched. The door was to be shut as to whoever falsified it. They were not even to say "I salute you"; for they who did so become partakers of his evil work. It should be to help on the deceits of Satan.<sup>2</sup>

But what if she, or you, or I, reader, disobey the revealed will of God about it, deliberately refusing to judge evil, thereby condoning it under the plea of love, or what not? Hear the plain statement of God about it: "He who greets him partakes in his wicked works." Instead of the sister uncompromisingly standing with Christ against the evil, she is *indifferent* to it. She may say, I wish to be *neutral*. She may say, I do not want to be judgmental. But what is it, really? -- *indifference* to the honor and glory of the Son of the Father. Nay, it is helping

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2. *The Present Testimony* 12:370.

the evil. Another has said:

Moreover, the semblance of love which does not maintain the truth, but accommodates itself to that which is not the truth, is not love according to God. It is the taking advantage of the name of love, in order to help on the seductions of Satan. In the last days, the test of true love is the maintenance of the truth. God would have us love one another, but the Holy Ghost by Whom we receive this divine nature, and Who pours the love of God into our hearts, is the Spirit of truth, and His office is to glorify Christ. Therefore, it is impossible that a love which can put up with a doctrine that falsifies Christ and which is indifferent to it, can be of the Holy Ghost -- still less so, if such indifference be set up as the proof of that love.<sup>3</sup>

Notice, too, that not a word is said about her believing the evil doctrine. She may not believe it. But THAT question is not raised at all. The point is not *that*. *The having in the house and the greeting of the bearer* of evil doctrine is the point. Doing this makes the sister a *partaker of his wicked works*. She is, in God's eyes, fellowshiping with the evil. She is morally guilty before God of complicity with the evil. She is *koinoneo* with it – she is making herself common with it, having fellowship with it. The point, I repeat, is not that she imbibed, or accepted the evil teaching. She may refuse the evil and accept the bearer. “Partakes in his wicked works,” says God. You are guilty too, says God. You are guilty by association. Association with doctrinal evil makes you guilty of it. You, by greeting and receiving one who brings not the doctrine of Christ, are one who “partakes in his wicked works.” You are giving comfort and aid to such a one showing that you are indifferent to the honor and glory of the Christ of God. You may *say* that you are not indifferent, but your actions prove to the godly saints that you are indifferent. And God sees that you are really indifferent. Another has remarked:

Hence 2 John lays down in the broadest way, not this or that special form of antichristianism, but that if any bring not “this doctrine” (i.e. the true teaching of Christ's person), “receive him not into your house,” nor salute him. This is much more stringent than the measure prescribed for the incestuous man in 1 Cor. 5, and of course very much beyond withdrawing from the disorderly in 2 Thess. 3, or the divisionists in Rom. 16. It is the most heinous sin, with which the Christian has to deal, and very precisely was the turning point of our great breach in 1849.<sup>4</sup> For v. 11 extends the partaking of evil deeds to all who have fellowship with those who do not bring this doctrine.

3. *The Present Testimony* 12:370.

4. {The writer referred to what the assembly at Bethesda, Bristol, England did, when they accepted an infamous document since known as *The Letter of the Ten* (signed by 10 leaders there) stating the principle that association with evil does not defile a person if he has not personally accepted the evil. This was the beginning of Open Brethrenism. See my book, *Precious Truth Revived and defended through J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, 1845-1850 for full documentation. The godly refusal of Bethesda's evil principle was mockingly called “exclusivism.”}

The reasoning that questions and undermines it is mere unbelief, in direct opposition to God's object in the church; which is bound to purge out all leaven (doctrinal, Gal. 5, as well as moral, 1 Cor. 5). It is in principle to build again Babylon on the ruins of the pillar and ground of the truth, and more worthy of a worldly man than of a soul that loves Christ and God's word. Yet I doubt not that real Christians have been and are beguiled into this indifference to Christ. But this makes it the more urgent that all who are true to His glory should prove their love to God's children, not by the faithless allowance of the worst evil in a person because he may be a Christian, but by loving God and keeping His commandments. And this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.<sup>5</sup>

Now, there are saints who refuse fellowship with evil doctrine and hence with the bearer of evil doctrine; on the other hand there are saints who have fellowship with him. The latter are morally guilty before God of complicity with the wicked works by their manifest indifference to the Son's honor. Another has said:

But surely, if a thief's evil deeds are thievings, to be a partaker of his evil deeds is to be partaker of his thieving. Is there any difficulty in understanding that?

What, then, is the course of those who show such fellowship to the bearer of this evil doctrine? They “partake in his wicked works”? What wicked works? They partake in the wicked works of spreading evil doctrine concerning the Christ. This is just what this bearer of evil doctrine was doing. God says that by receiving and greeting such, we are partaking in his wicked works. Some may not believe it so, but God has spoken. Faithfulness to the honor of Christ will resent such actions and disassociate from those who bear such doctrine and from those who partake in their wicked works, whether they imbibe the teaching or not. This is the course of those who refuse fellowship with dishonor to Christ and the propagation of a false Christ.

The reader should observe that in Scripture the statement that “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” is found in two places. It is found in 1 Cor. 5 in connection with what is generally called *moral evil*; and it is found in Gal. 5:9 in connection with a subject of the book, *doctrinal evil*.

If the sister in 2 John became a partaker of the wicked works of a person bringing doctrinal evil, which is leaven, she partakes of the leaven; she is *koinoneo* with the evil, with the leaven. She thus becomes leavened.

Now, the assembly must purge out leaven is the principle we learn in 1 Cor. 5. She must be put out as leaven. She must not be received. She must be treated as one who partakes of wicked works. She has made herself one with the wicked

5. *The Bible Treasury* 15:224.

works.

How dare anyone who says that he loves the Son of the Father be audacious enough to suggest that while this separation is true as to one's own house, it does not apply to the Lord's table? What? -- I cannot have him in the house, in which *I* dwell, but I may welcome him at the *Lord's* table? What an audacious perversion of holiness! Yet this has been said to be right; and under the pretense that since it is the *Lord's* table, *we* cannot debar one. It is just because it is the Lord's table that evil must be judged there!

If a person does not hold the evil teaching and knows it is evil, but continues to transgress 2 John 9,10, that is *worse than blindness* as to the evil. What is the moral state of a man who says that he sees the leaven and continues to associate with it? Another has said:

I am aware that it is stated that we can deal with conduct (with morality), but not with these questions. But this is what appears to me so excessively evil. Decency of conduct is necessary to communion; but a man may blaspheme Christ -- THAT is no matter: it is a matter not of conduct, but of conscience. It is hinted that perhaps if it be a teacher, he may be dealt with. In truth, the apostle desires even a woman not to let such a person into her house. It is not therefore so difficult to deal with. Just think of a system that makes blasphemous views of Christ, which may amount to a denial of Him, to be a matter of private conscience, having nothing to do with communion! . . . Now this principle is worse than false doctrine; because it knows the falseness and blasphemy of it, and then says it is no matter. I do not own such meetings as meetings of believers. . . .<sup>6</sup>

J. A. VonPoseck wrote:

And if the apostle enjoined the Corinthians not even to take a common meal at the same table with that incestuous wicked person, could he have intended to say, think ye, that they quietly might sit down and break bread with those who attacked the very foundations of the Christian faith, nay, the person of Christ Himself and His work? What! associate and break bread with them at the table of the Lord (Whom they had blasphemed) to "show His death till He come"! The very thought of such a Judas-fellowship is so revolting to every Christian sentiment, that I need not say more about it.<sup>7</sup>

In reply to a reader, C. H. Mackintosh wrote:

What, think you, would the blessed apostle have said to the elect lady if she were to go "for the summers" to partake of the hospitality of a lady who does not believe in the divinity of our Lord Jesus? We confess we are amazed at your question. We cannot understand how anyone with a spark of loyalty to Christ could think of being the guest of a blasphemer of His

6. *The Bible Treasury* 3:142.

7. *The Bible Treasury* 19:92.

Person. You say that "your friend on each of her visits has not shunned to exalt, in a very special manner, the Godhead of the Lord Jesus; but with no apparent success." How could she expect success, when her acts contradict her words? Were she faithful to tell her friend that she could no longer be the guest of one who blasphemes her Lord, she might look for some practical result. Better far to die in some obscure lodging in London, than accept change of air on such miserable terms.<sup>8</sup>

Take an example. Concerning a person who is no longer in an assembly gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is recognized by the assembly as a wicked person (1 Cor. 5); you do not take the attitude that you can visit him somewhere and this is alright as long as he is not breaking bread in the assembly. 2 John 9-11 shows us the principle that doing such is *koinoneo* (making common with) with leaven, and that such conduct leavens the person doing it. It is the flesh acting in you for some satisfaction for your flesh for sparing self; for something you wish to gain, perhaps money, or advantage, or *to be well thought of as kindly*, etc. etc. In reality, it is evil. Take another example. Suppose a Christian named J. had at one time been breaking bread at the assembly at S., but is not there any longer, and he is recognized as a "wicked person." He is leavened. You become leavened by friendly visitation with him. And then you, being leavened, want to continue breaking bread?

Take another example. There are Christians who belong to "secret" organizations; suppose the Masons, for example. Masonry is its own religious system that persons are taught as they gain higher and higher position in it. The Masonic system undermines the truth of Christ's person. Why would that not be a leavened association for a Christian? Should such a Christian be treated differently than the elect lady if she disobeyed what the apostle John wrote? Why, the Christian Mason is in the Masonic *brotherhood*!

You may argue against this that as long as the teacher of the evil doctrine is not in the assembly; or, as long as the Christian Mason is not in the assembly; then association with them is not leavening. You may argue that the consequence of such teaching makes hosts of Christians defiled by leaven -- how could that be true? Your problem is with the Scripture, which teaches that association with leaven leavens a person.

It is difficult for Christians to contradict such Scriptures as 2 John 9-11. And where a Christian is afraid to outright contradict what this Scripture states, they try to weaken it. Let me give an example of how this is done. On May 6, 1959 I wrote to E. F. (a traveling preacher among Open Brethren, and assistant editor of *Help and Food*) concerning 2 John 9-11 and he replied by saying that:

"they become a partial partaker of his evil deeds."

8. *Things New and Old* 18:311 (1875).

Where did the word “partial” come from? It came from the flesh that tries to weaken a Christian’s responsibility for his association with leaven.

## *On Neutrality*

by W. Kelly

“If any one cometh to you and bringeth not this doctrine, receive him not at home, and greet him not; for he that greeteth him partaketh in his evil works.” Now here is one of the most distressing duties that ever was or can be laid on a Christian; and it is laid on the lady and her children peremptorily. Take this illustration. Many years ago a dear friend of mine fell into trouble through being in a Christian assembly which evaded judging similar error. This sister came to live where the assembly did judge the evil thoroughly; but she was slow to allow her responsibility as to it, pleading that she was only a woman, and what could she say or do? Such excuses may sound fair and fine; women might thus act laudably in matters wherein they are not so reserved as they might be. Who expected or hoped to see the evil to be duly judged on that ground? I reminded this “elect lady” of 2 John. This silenced her, for she was intelligent and experienced as well as God-fearing. The issue was that she stood convinced of having shirked her bounden duty.

Where the doctrine of Christ is at stake, one must not hesitate: compromise is treason to the Lord; and if we are not true to Christ, we shall never be true to anything that God has revealed to us. The honor of God is centered in Him through Whom grace and truth came to us. Therefore, if one come, not bringing this doctrine, even had he been once the dearest Christian friend on earth, she and her children were under the most solemn obligation to ignore him for Christ’s sake. Here lies the present call of God. If he does not bring the doctrine of Christ, close the door, have nothing to do with an antichrist. To those who do not value Christ’s name and word it must seem outrageous, especially in these liberal days, where man is all and Christ is little or nothing; and even professing Christians are so ready to say nothing about it. ‘What a pity to disturb unity by these questions! Is it not their chief duty to hold together and avoid scattering, which is the shocking evil? Besides, he is such a nice and dear brother, who may see fit to give up his little notion if you do not fan it into a flame.’ THESE ARE THE NEUTRALS, MORE DANGEROUS THAN EVEN THE BEGUILED MISLEADERS. <sup>9</sup>

9. *Exposition of the Epistles of John*, pp. 404, 405. { See footnote 37. }

## *The Open Brethren View of Leaven Leavening the Lump*

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

The assembly at Corinth received a letter from Paul containing instructions to remove the wicked person in order to retain the “new lump” character in their practice. That would answer to their status *in Christ* as being unleavened. Had they disobeyed the Apostle they would thereby have lost the “new lump” character. At that point they would have become a leavened lump. They would thus be meeting together on the basis of toleration of known evil.

J. N. Darby wrote:

. . . the principal brethren in a so-called neutral meeting signed a printed circular affirming that, if an assembly should admit fornication knowingly and willingly, we ought none the less to acknowledge that assembly and to receive letters of recommendation from it. We judged that, if an assembly (not taken by surprise, which may happen everywhere, or through carelessness, of which we are all capable, but) knowingly and willingly admits sin or blasphemy, it is not a new lump; that in order to be a new lump it must purge itself from the old leaven (1 Cor. 5:7); and that in so doing the other members proved themselves pure in this matter (2 Cor. 7:11): otherwise they would not have been so. This is the principle in question. Several went farther, maintaining that in no case does blasphemy or any kind of doctrine call for discipline. <sup>10</sup>

Another wrote:

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

Evil doctrine is yet worse and more dangerous to others; it lowers Christ or His work [and pretends that God is the author of it]. So we read in Gal. that their adding a Jewish element is vehemently rejected and designated as “leaven,” no less than immorality. What can be more unspiritual (not to say faithless) than to treat it now with more indulgence? <sup>11</sup>

Concerning the standing of the saints before God, they are unleavened. This is expressed as, “according as ye are unleavened.” That is positional truth. Christians are to conduct themselves according to the position they have before

9. *The Bible Treasury* 9:64.

10. *The Bible Treasury* 18:80.

God. In Christ, I am unleavened. In practice, in conduct, I am to answer to that position and be unleavened in practice. The Apostle stated that when he wrote, “That ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened.” The saints were told to maintain a new lump character (in their practice, obviously), according as they were unleavened -- in accordance with their position in Christ.

In order to maintain a new lump character in practice, they must purge the leaven out of the assembly. They could not retain the new lump character if they did not remove the leaven. If they did not remove the leaven they would no longer have the new lump character. They would then have an old lump character -- by tolerating “the old leaven.” They would not be unleavened because by tolerating leaven in the lump, the lump is no longer an unleavened lump. What, then, is it, if it is not an unleavened lump? It is a leavened lump.

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

A. But we meet in the name of Christ.

B. Or, rather in the name of Christians; for your principle of association is your estimate of a man’s Christianity, not Christ himself, and the truth of His person, what is worthy of Him and suitable to His presence. Thus you lower down your unity to whatever Christians are capable of, instead of bringing them up to what accords with His name and glory.<sup>12</sup>

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

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

That is quite a misuse of Matt 13:33. Matt. 13:33 has to do with the corruption of doctrine in Christendom, as some Open Brethren correctly

11. *Is There not a Cause?*, p. 28.

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

point out,<sup>14</sup> not with the status of an assembly, which changes as soon as evil is tolerated. Matt. 13:33 does not set aside the fact that in 1 Cor. 5 the character of a lump is changed from a “new lump” to not being a “new lump” by tolerating leaven in it. Of course it will spread, but that does not change the fact that the *character of the lump* is changed before everyone in the assembly personally engages in the evil practice. But this is the Open Brethren position, that the lump is not a leavened lump until all practice the evil.

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

Please keep in mind that I have cited numerous Open Brethren throughout this book<sup>15</sup> who say that the presence of known leaven in an assembly does not leaven the assembly. Therefore, if we consult expositions of 1 Corinthians written by Open Brethren, we would expect that there will not be comments on 1 Cor. 5 saying that if a wicked person is tolerated in an assembly, that assembly is leavened. Of course, with few exceptions, that is exactly the case, which we shall now see.

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

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

Thomas Newberry wrote:

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

15. This part of this pamphlet is a slightly-added-to extract from the book, *Precious Truth Revived and defended through J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, 1845-1850, available from the publisher.

Elsewhere I quoted from R. E. Harlow for his testimony to the kenoticism (i.e., when the Son became man He was no longer omniscient; this is an evil teaching, not the doctrine of Christ) among Open Brethren, which I am sure grieves him. But he will not admit that tolerated leaven changes the assembly into a leavened assembly. In his exposition of 1 Cor., he wrote:

**Sin will spread, 5:6-8**

Why was it important for the assembly to put this man out? Because evil is likely to spread through the whole assembly. A younger Christian sees another who is not punished for committing sin, so he thinks he can do it too. In this way sinful habits will soon spread to others.<sup>16</sup>

The reason it is important to put the leaven out is threefold, and in this moral order:

1. If the Lord Jesus Christ is present (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:4) in the assembly, the presence of leaven is a grave dishonor to Him (1 Cor. 5:7, 8), and is incompatible with His presence in the assembly. His name must be cleared of this dishonor to Himself.
2. The character of the assembly is changed into a leavened lump if the leaven is not purged out, and each person is thereby leavened by the fellowship with leaven. Breaking bread with such shows communion with them (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). The assembly must judge the evil and show itself pure in the matter (1 Cor. 5:7-13; 2 Cor. 7:11).
3. Moreover, it is unloving to treat the sinning one with tolerance (which, in this case is really indifference to the Lord's honor). The discipline is meant for his restoration (2 Cor. 2).

And after that we may also think about how evil doctrine, or the commission of evil acts, spreads from one person to another in the assembly. But note that the indifference, the toleration, the neutrality, in itself, partakes of the character of what it tolerates. Those who tolerate its presence become leavened by that toleration. Toleration of, such indifference to, evil in the assembly is itself leaven and thus the assembly of persons is by that toleration constituted a leavened lump. Persons received elsewhere from that leavened lump thus receive leaven. Receiving persons from a leavened lump is receiving leavened persons. The fact that they personally may not be doing the evil does not change what God has declared, namely:

Do ye not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

Of course, many Christians want to escape this responsibility and invent ways to do it. Thus, R. E. Harlow's view on when a lump becomes leavened (i.e., not until everyone in the assembly is personally engaging in committing the evil) is

16. *1 Corinthians: The Imperfect Church*, Scarborough: Everyday Publications, p. 41 (1982).

a consistent expression of the Bethesda heritage and position. J. S. Oliphant, who left the Bethesda position, quoted William Yapp (Open Brethren), publisher, writer, inventor of Yapp bindings for Bibles, and an ardent supporter of Bethesda:

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

"Meetings of believers cannot be defiled by the allowance of false teaching in them."<sup>17</sup>

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

"They cannot be leavened with the sin which they have not committed, or with the doctrine they have not received."<sup>18</sup>

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

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

Thus we have *assembly responsibility* and *assembly defilement* entirely denied.<sup>19</sup>

Not only did well-known persons propagate such things in support of Bethesda at the time, but assemblies issued statements.<sup>20</sup>

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

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

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

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

For supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came from under his teaching, until we were satisfied that they had understood and imbibed views essentially subversive of foundation truth . . .

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

We do not think it right to exclude Christians from communion because they happen to belong to a gathering in which there are persons of unsound opinion; but we think that every Christian ought, in any case requiring examination, to stand or fall by his own personal innocence, or his own personal offense.

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

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

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

(continued...)

The well-known W. E. Vine wrote:

. . . there is a certain stress on “little”: if a small amount of leaven spreads through the whole lump, how much more must this gross evil of tolerated fornication affect the assembly! To be indifferent is to incur to some extent the responsibility for the evil. Moreover such an attitude debases the normal standard, and the evil effect spreads surely and rapidly.<sup>21</sup>

What do the words, “incur to some extent,” mean? Corinth was fully, totally responsible. It is a characteristic, Open Brethren attempt to blunt responsibility.<sup>22</sup> Above, I noted that on May 6, 1959 I wrote to E. F. (a traveling preacher among Open Brethren) concerning 2 John 9-11 and he replied by saying that “they become a partial partaker of his evil deeds.” Where did the word “partial” come from? Where is the thought of “incur to some extent” found in 1 Cor. 5? These ideas represent an effort to weaken the force of the Scripture requirement for how an individual Christian, and how an assembly, must deal with evil, and with evil associations.

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

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

**5:7** Thus they are commanded to **purge out the old leaven**. In other words, they should take stern action against evil so that they might be a **new**, in the sense of a pure **lump**. Then Paul adds: **Since you truly are unleavened**. God sees them in Christ as holy, righteous and pure. Now the apostle is saying that their state should correspond with their standing. As to *position* they were unleavened. Now as to their *practice* they should also be unleavened.<sup>23</sup>

(...continued)  
faith and conduct.

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

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

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

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

22. Some Open Brethren may say Corinth was leavened at the time Paul wrote to them. This is an effort to go on with a leavened assembly, because Corinth was not disowned as an assembly at that point. The truth is that they must purge out the leaven that showed itself OTHERWISE they would be a leavened lump – and no longer be gathered together to Christ's name in actuality.

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

It appears to me that he had been influenced by “exclusivism,” (or came from an ‘exclusive’ background) but he has held back from declaring that an assembly that tolerates evil is *ipso facto* leavened, each one in it being leavened by that toleration. To declare *that* truth is to abandon the true Open Brethren position; and acknowledge that fellowship with leaven leavens a person/assembly, and shows that their system of reception is unholiness. Instead, he explains that “it will soon grow and expand until the whole fellowship is seriously affected.” So, if one or two evil doers are tolerated, the “fellowship” is not “seriously affected.” Toleration of evil (leaven) is thus (to him) tolerable “until” later. Nor does he define “seriously affected” as *leavened*.

J. Hunter says something somewhat similar:

The whole assembly was defiled and polluted by this unjudged moral evil, and if left unjudged others would soon take advantage of such moral laxity. The evil did not attach to the man alone who was guilty of it. The assembly was only seen to be clean when the evil was judged.<sup>24</sup>

Certainly such an assembly that would not purge out leaven would be unclean. That is not the issue. It would also be leavened, and therefore none should break bread there or receive any coming from there who did not judge this leavened fellowship and break with it. Really, Christ is not in the midst of a leavened lump.

John Heading wrote:

But given time, a little leaven could leaven the whole lump, and one sin could affect the whole company before long.<sup>25</sup>

Note that this is very clear about his view: tolerated leaven does not leaven the whole lump. It would take time before the whole lump would be leavened. “Before long” denies that the toleration of leaven leavens an assembly, rather postponing into the indefinite future what he does not want to acknowledge, namely, that the presence of tolerated leaven does by that toleration make the lump a leavened lump. “Given time” and “could” are expressions that deny the *now* of the leavened condition.

Interestingly, J. M. Davies wrote:

If their life and practice was to correspond with this {the unleavened position in Christ}, they would have to purge themselves of the “old leaven.” Only thereby would they become a new lump.<sup>26</sup>

He did not tell the reader what they would be if they did not purge it. Back a ways in time, the well-known J. R. Caldwell surveyed the Scripture use of leaven

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

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

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



as a type and figure, and said it should be put out. As to our subject, he wrote:

Not that those in contact with it become necessarily guilty of the same evil actions, but their moral tone is lowered, and failing to abhor and to judge it their conscience becomes defiled. <sup>27</sup>

Saying that “their conscience becomes defiled” (which is true in itself) avoids affirming that the evil action they become guilty of is *complicity with the leaven* and that they are leavened; they are fellowshiping leaven. When we looked at 2 John we noted that the danger was making oneself *koinoneo* (making common with) with the evil, though not personally imbibing it. Some Open Brethren have used the word “defiled,” even of the assembly, as we have seen, but not in the sense of being leavened, as “exclusives” have used the word defiled in connection with leaven. Do not be deceived by this. What we are seeing is a studious, consistent avoidance of declaring that an assembly that tolerates evil is, in fact, leavened, even though such words as “defiled and polluted” are used. Recall what J. S. Oliphant quoted from William Yapp:

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

“Meetings of believers cannot be defiled by the allowance of false teaching in them.” <sup>28</sup>

W. Hoste, a well-known person among Open Brethren, said:

. . . we totally reject the collateral theory of defilement . . . <sup>29</sup>

That means that I cannot defile you and you cannot defile me. What a defiant outrage against the declaration of Christ’s apostle: 2 John 9-11. How dare a Christian utter such words? What unholiness this is.

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

Those that rejected Bethesda were called “exclusives.” Why? because they

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

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

29. *Rejudging the Question*, p. 21.

rejected the wicked persons and rejected the persons in fellowship with those wicked persons. J. G. Bellett said:

We are now called “Exclusives.” If this title belongs to us, it belongs to the apostle who tells us to act upon the principle which has given us the title. <sup>30</sup>

I could not refuse to say that such principles of Church action as this would make any place a defiled place, in Levitical language, leprosy would be detected by the priest to be in the house. <sup>31</sup>

J. N. Darby wrote:

My experience of the opposite system in the {United} States in all shapes has made me firmer than ever in the path of what is called exclusiveness -- exclusion of false doctrine and false practice, in contrast with protecting and excusing it. <sup>32</sup>

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

Only let the writer beware of being influenced by the imaginary difficulties of *ad infinitum* contact with evil, <sup>33</sup> which speculative minds urge to destroy conscientious action. No sober mind but rejects a theoretical association extending through endless ecclesiastical receptions and ramifications. If he believes we are right in refusing a sound man who cleaves to and justifies an unsound or wicked association, he surrenders the principle of “Open Brethren,” and is bound to act accordingly. The more devoted the saints may be individually, the worse is their sanction of what is unholy. The writer endorses this himself, which is really the principle, and defines the position, of so-called Exclusive Brethren. <sup>34</sup>

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

That, by His grace, I desire to bear the reproach cast on every side on those brethren that are called “Exclusives,” because they desire to exclude all that is inconsistent with the glory of Christ and the unity of the Spirit, and to walk “with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.” <sup>35</sup>

Allow me to warn those who now shun the word “exclusive” and substitute the

30. *The Bible Treasury* 16:304.

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

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

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

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

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

34. *The Bible Treasury* 12:143.

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

word “*guarded* fellowship.” The word “guarded” is a standard-lowering word and is indicative of a shift that has been taking place. And in what direction, think you? I close with the warning of J. G. Deck, who was recovered from neutrality:

. . . in a work of Satan *neutrality*<sup>36</sup> is impossible; and that if there is an attempt to shun the responsibilities and sorrows of a path of entire decision for Christ, the spiritual senses become deadened, the heart hardened, the conscience torpid, the judgment perverted, and soon even hostility to the witnesses against the evil succeeds indifference to the truth.<sup>37</sup>

## *The Extent of Putting Out a Wicked Person*

### *Putting Away a Wicked Person*

The sentence of God is: “Remove the wicked person from among yourselves.” Much difficulty concerning practical conduct in such cases arises from not bowing in heart to the sentence of God. Some lightly would think to be more gracious than God! In this connection W. Kelly remarked:

“Put away from” -- not the table of the Lord merely, this he does not say, but -- “put away from among yourselves.” This is much stronger than expelling from the table. Of course, it implies exclusion from the Lord’s table, but from their table too -- “with such a one, no, not to eat.” An ordinary meal, or any such act expressive even in natural things, of fellowship with the person thus dishonoring the Lord, is forbidden.<sup>38</sup>

To “remove from among yourselves” *a wicked person* means among other things that we not outwardly sympathize with him. Socializing with such a one is one form of extending sympathy. It gives expression to sympathy by treating the one put away as if nothing had happened, whereas God’s way is that he should be made to feel his guilt by the uniform attitude of the saints not socializing with him.

Eating with such a one on any occasion, whether it be in a private home (his house, our house, or another person’s house), at a wedding, at a funeral, at

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

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

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

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

gatherings of the saints when refreshments are served, etc. is expressly forbidden in 1 Cor. 5:11 -- “With such a one not even to eat.”

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

### *Are Family Ties an Exception to 1 Cor. 5:11?*

Let us consider the case of the near of kin, such as the husband, wife, or *dependent* children. Mr. Darby wrote about the case of the wife whose husband had been put away as follows:

Here it says, “no, not to eat.” I would not dine with such an one; I would give him to eat if he were hungry, but not eat with him. Take a wife whose husband is put out. It may be awkward, but her action is not keeping company with him as a case of will; it is one of subjection to authority.<sup>39</sup>

It is clear that Mr. Darby recognized that the wife had a scriptural duty to perform as being in subjection; and, as being obedient to Christ because she loves Him, she does His will. The subjection of a wife to her husband is based on divinely instituted authority, and does not cease<sup>40</sup> if the husband is “put away” from amongst the saints by discipline of the assembly. By doing the will of Christ in fulfilling those duties of a wife, she does not willfully “keep company” with her husband who has been put away, though she eats at the same physical table as he does.

Mr. Darby has also written about the case of a dependent son who was under

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39. *Collected Writings* 26:220.

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

assembly discipline. The entire letter is reproduced here for its valuable comments on the subject:

My dear Brother, -- I hold it of all importance to maintain intact the discipline of God's house, as to not eating with those under discipline. I got a dreadful scolding from one for acting on it. Nor do I in the least blame \_\_\_\_\_. It is very well that the son should feel that the father did not feel lightly his son's getting put out. I should not eat with him, and if he ate at the same table, I should not enter into conversation with him, and if \_\_\_\_\_ did, I should not like to be at the table. If the lad's spirit be at all subdued, and there was fear of alienating him by harshness, I might have him eat at the table, telling him that I could not have free intercourse with him. But as he was necessarily in the house I should not refuse letting him eat at the same table. But I could not keep company with him till he was humbled. This would not hinder anxious love as regards him, and the assurance of it; but familiarity and company at table, as if nothing had happened, I should not accept. I give my son his dinner if needed, I show him my heart yearns over him, but I could not be familiar and at ease with him. I should not eat *with* him, if even I ate at the same time. Something would depend on the age of the son, and how far he was under the father's authority. If young and under it I must let him eat, and treat him as I would treat one under rebuke. If grown up and independent, I should be less disposed to do so.<sup>41</sup>

### *Do Any Old Testament Scriptures Establish A Basis for Relatives to Act Otherwise?*

In an attempt to justify a course contrary to 1 Cor. 5:11, some enlist the support of certain OT Scriptures. The tendency of doing this is to make God the author of their course (by claiming that they are following God's Word in doing so), while in fact it is fleshly activity and lack of courage to be faithful. An OT Scripture enlisted in support of such a course is Lev. 21:1-4. In this portion of Scripture the priest was allowed to defile himself by the dead in the case of a near relation, and therefore it is claimed by analogy that one may visit with, eat with, and socialize with, a relative put away as a wicked person. There are two considerations concerning this to which I would call attention:

1. As to typical teaching, it is leprosy in the OT (as typifying the worst energy of active evil) that corresponds to leaven. Leprosy in the head or beard suggests doctrinal evil held (Rev. 2:14) or taught (Gal. 5:9) respectively, while leprosy in the body suggests moral evil (1 Cor. 5).<sup>42</sup>
2. "Defilement by the dead" suggests moral contact with that in man which

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

42. This subject is treated in greater detail in *Leprosy and God's Presence Among His People*, available from the publisher.

has no life toward God. The energy of active evil is not the prominent thought, as is the case with leaven (or leprosy) working, but of moral contact with moral death.

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

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

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

### *It Is a Serious Matter*

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

Thus, supposing evident sin, as at Corinth, and one supported him in it and refused the clear common consent of all, so that it was a rejection of the assembly's authority when the case and the word were clear, they might hold him guilty with the offender.<sup>43</sup>

43. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:46.

The Lord knows, I have no desire to offend anyone; but we are dealing with a foundation matter of holiness in God's house, and in our walk, and so we must be most plain. We are assured, however, that none who really tremble at God's word will be offended, but rather will rejoice with the truth, as love does (1 Cor. 13:6), glad of help or correction afforded on a subject of profound importance. Is not the *alleged* "love" shown to a wicked person in reality making provision for the flesh and sparing self? If we would judge ourselves, and keep Christ before us, and keep before us the fact that it is *His* sentence that declares the person to be a wicked person (1 Cor. 5:13) -- leavened (1 Cor. 5:7) -- and that *leaven leavens the lump* -- we would see and judge the seriousness of this false "love and grace."

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

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

(Ezra 10:15 in J. N. D. translation.)

Where do you and I fit?

## *Evil Associations and Reception*

An article in the *Bible Treasury* says:

The question is this: are we to receive from a sect where they have a practice or principle of communion such that they receive persons whom Scripture designates as leavened?

There are other points, and not without moment, in the Circular, needless to notice. Only let the writer beware of being influenced by the imaginary difficulties of ad infinitum contact with evil, which speculative minds urge to destroy conscientious action. No sober mind but rejects a theoretical association extending through endless ecclesiastical receptions and ramifications. If he believes we are right in refusing a sound man who cleaves to and justifies an unsound or wicked association, he surrenders the principle of "Open Brethren," and is bound to act accordingly. The more devoted the saints may be individually, the worse is their sanction of what

is unholy. The writer endorses this himself, which is really the principle, and defines the position, of the so-called Exclusive Brethren.<sup>44</sup>

If a denomination has such a loose practice or principle of reception, how does this differ from the principle of reception of Open Brethren? Open Brethrenism has always been refused by us, and we require them to separate from it.

The Apostle teaches me that I cannot reprove and have fellowship with the same unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5). This principle puts Bethesda on different grounds from any with whom we have hitherto had communication. For I am sure I could at any moment have said for myself, that if any congregation of Independents, Baptists, or Methodists avowed that they admitted persons who had religious fellowship with avowed heretics, in the sense of the word intimated in the passage quoted from the letter of the ten, provided they were themselves sound in the faith of the Son of God, I should not have even entertained the question of receiving them or not. Under such avowal I could never have been happy in their presence among us.<sup>45</sup>

It is clear from this that J. G. Bellett would not receive from a denomination that did as Open Brethren did. W. Kelly also gave testimony that at that time orthodox sects had no such Christ-dishonoring practice:

In one of their recent "Appeals" C. E. {an O. B.} argues that a true platform contemplates all the saints of God, as we have often said, and still say. But the O. B.'s abuse of this godly plea is to accredit, not only Christians guilty of sin, but yet more their society got up by the determination to shelter such from Scriptural judgment. This was not the case with any orthodox sect known to us; and therefore O. B. have no title to the same gracious consideration. Others began for good according to their light. O. B. began by palliating evil, or screening evildoers, in departure from the light they once had. To receive saints in Christ's name was never meant to let in such as dishonor His name; which is as mighty to detect those who treat Him lightly, whatever their pretensions, as to encourage the godly who may be ever so ignorant.<sup>46</sup>

How strongly J. G. Bellett regarded this is shown in the following article:

### **No Fellowship with Dishonor to Christ**

I refuse the language used by brethren from whom we have seceded, that we have "excommunicated them." This is not a just expression; and it produces indignation, and immediate determination in the mind to have nothing to do with people or with principles of such a bearing. It is NOT excommunication. It is standing at the door of the house of God, and, if

44. *The Bible Treasury* 12:148 (1878).

45. J. G. Bellett, *A Letter as to Bethesda*, Sept. 18, 1849.

46. *The Doctrine of Christ and Bethesdaism*, p. 20.

certain persons come to the door seeking entrance, we act as the spirit of the apostle lets us know we ought to act, and we forbid them entrance.

We do not enquire if they are saints of God or not: this we may know elsewhere. The apostle does not tell us to make any such enquiry. But we refuse to receive them coming up to the door of the house of God from the temple of an idol (1 Cor. 10). They have declared or admitted the declaration, without judging it (and this makes them partakers with it), that they receive at their table one who comes from a place where Christ is dishonored, if he himself is sound in faith and morals, and has not imbibed the heterodoxy. And say no more but just ask, Is a place where Christ is dishonored other in our eyes than an idol's temple, where the cups of demons are drunk? We have no such custom, neither the churches of God. But we say, Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (or of those who dishonor the Lord Jesus). Judge in yourselves, judge the principle in the light of the word. To me it seems, self-evidencing, light, and power, and virtue, and holiness are in it.

But now that I am on this subject with you, I will linger a little over it, though it be very painful, and has been so to me for many years; for I dearly love those personally from whom I am separated congregationally.

There are three distinct elements -- to use a phrase in much present use: formalism, socialism, and divine holiness.

Formalism obtains in all the aged systems of Romanism and the parish church. Socialism has made great inroads on it in this day of ours. To a great extent it is the favorite principle of the present generation; whether in or out of the church, we see it in activity. The men of the world are combining, and form their joint-stock companies, their confederacies, for the advance of present accommodation and international brotherhood. Such is the day. The saints are always tempted by the spirit of the age, and are now very much acting on this principle. They receive one another in an abstract way, not under the condition the word of God prescribes, as in 1 Cor. 10. And the social atmosphere is very grateful; they breathe it freely and encourage one another by no means to disturb it.

Divine holiness pauses in the light of everything, and challenges it, however precise, amiable, respectable, and widely accredited, by the light of the Lord, and forces it to give an account of itself to the word of God. It has its peculiarities, which it can never surrender either to socialism or to formalism. It is something more than the moral sense of man, or even than a "charity" that refuses to judge or distinguish things that differ. It is the mind of God dispensed in scripture in any given age, and walking in the light of His mind. This divine holiness is a separating principle, but not that of a Pharisee, all to the tradition of men, or assumed higher holiness in one's self, but that of obedience to God's peculiarities -- the principles of His house revealed in His word.

It is easy nowadays to take the journey from formalism to socialism.

There is much in the temper of the age to put a very large generation on that road, so that great countenance is given to those who are traveling there. But to travel from socialism to divine holiness is another thing altogether. I add, and this only, that to us it is plain, that among the peculiarities, or attributes, of divine holiness is found that principle which I have already noticed -- that if one come from an idol's temple, where the cup of demons had been drunk (though he be a saint of God), he is not to be received in the house of God. He may say, It is my liberty, and I may go where I please. Divine holiness replies, I cannot combine with such liberty.

Yours affectionately in the Lord, J.G.B. To \_\_\_, Nov. 18th, 1863.

P. S. -- I should like with you to look at the Book of Nehemiah, as illustrating formalism, socialism, and divine holiness. We are now called "Exclusives." If this title belongs to us, it belongs to the apostle who tells us to act upon the principle which has given us the title.<sup>47</sup>

It has been our scriptural and godly practice to take account of evil associations.

Jude directs us to have compassion of some, making a difference; this has always been enforced and acted upon, so far as I know. But when we find saints ignorantly linked with those who leave the door so wide open to evil, we do, and I trust ever shall, try to make them see and understand their danger, and the dishonor that is done to the Lord Jesus. I have lately been informed that some of these brethren, unable longer to resist the effect of the truth as to the unity of the Spirit upon many of the simple-hearted, are now advocating it themselves, but in such a way as to make it sanction and uphold what is really the utter denial of it. That is to say, just as, according to their reasoning, the name and profession of Christ ought to bind together individual saints in fellowship, without reference to their guilty association with evil; so the unity of the Spirit should be enforced as linking together the various denominations as such. Scripture speaks of many members, yet but one body; it does not say many bodies, yet but one body.<sup>48</sup> ♦

Difficulty in receiving from sects became increasingly felt as the leavening process continued, because the denominations became leavened.

We must have sufficient evidence that those who desire to take part in it are true Christians, and that their walk is moral, Christian. Now, if they habitually meet with those who deny the truths of Christianity, they are defiled; and it is so also if they meet where immorality is allowed.<sup>49</sup> ♦

I know of a case, where two persons got into the brethren's meeting at Vevey. I had not the slightest idea of the Vevey meeting being defiled because these persons had deceived the assembly, and the assembly had

47. *The Bible Treasury* 16:304.

48. *The Bible Treasury* 7:240 (1869).

49. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 3:132 (1881).

received them in good faith; but if a meeting, knowingly and willfully, accepts the wicked person it is not a new lump, if I am to believe 1 Corinthians 5. If the meeting judges the evil, or even if it has been admitted ignorantly -- in such a case it may be that there has not been sufficient vigilance -- but the assembly is not defiled, because the conscience has not been engaged in it. But if the evil is there, and brought to light, the assembly must show itself pure in the matter, otherwise it is not a new lump; it is impure, none of the members call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, unless there is real ignorance of the fact; and this is true ad infinitum, two, or two million, meetings do not alter the matter. In every case the question is: Has the assembly, knowingly and willfully, admitted what is impure? Has it willingly associated itself with that which is impure? If so, it is itself impure, and so are those forming it.<sup>50</sup> ♦

But it is of comparatively late years that the fatal tidal wave of heterodoxy has been overflowing Christendom, as to Christ's person on both sides, everlasting punishment of the lost, and God's inspiration of scripture. This actual and growing condition compels all who fear God to reject such as either hold these grievous errors or, what is if possible worse, make light of these evils and insist on their title to go on where these destructive lies are taught. No matter what they plead, they disqualify themselves for true communion of saints, if they also claim indifference practically to such God-dishonoring errors.

Where it is a known saint in an orthodox though sectarian position, yet in no way exercised about it, it appears to me still our privilege as of old to receive such an one in the Lord's name, who desires to remember Him with us in the breaking of bread.<sup>51</sup> ♦

Q. -- Acts 20:7. Is every Christian whose faith is sound and walk godly admissible when known as such to the Lord's Supper?

J.O.S.

A. -- The principle is sound; but in the growing confusion care is due to the Lord that it be rightly applied so as not to cover ungodliness in either way by evil communications which corrupt good manners and defile even when personal appearance seems right. There are vast numbers, besides Papists, who now countenance idolatry in their so-called worship. There are very many, both Nationalists and Dissenters, who sanction or are indifferent to the scepticism of the Higher Critics. It would be wicked to make either of these free of the Lord's Table. They are enemies of the truth, and to allow their fellowship is a sin. Their belonging to some ecclesiastical system where such things notoriously flourish, to which they are attached, is a necessary ground to refuse them as long as they persevere in an evil association. Otherwise it is to blow hot and cold, and to adopt in what represents the

50. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 33:26.

51. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4:64.

church of God the laxity of the world which knows not God. In the case of relatives, friends, or the like, peculiar caution is due, lest in amiable feeling we should compromise Christ. In early days we had neither the idolatrous evil nor the sceptical one as we have now. The shadows of the coming apostasy are around us. Let us increasingly watch unto prayer and in jealousy for Christ's glory, and in true love to Christians.<sup>52</sup>

In earlier days believers were freely received as Christ's members who, having no right notion of the church, were hardly to be counted guilty of departure from what was of God. Yet those who personally departed could plead for no such favor. But there is now an ominous change foreboding "the apostasy." No saint in those days tolerated the sacerdotalism of Christendom with its lie of apostolic succession as the warrant, its saving ordinances, and its idolatry with the real presence of a demon. Still less had we to challenge those who countenanced the gross scepticism of the Higher critics, though we had to refuse such as fell into the denial of God's judgment of sins or the souls natural immortality. We are now bound to apply the later tests of scripture.<sup>53</sup> ♦

Our habit<sup>54</sup> has been to receive a godly Baptist or Presbyterian and the like. But where the avowed creed of a sect involves wickedness -- bad fundamental doctrine, or immoral conduct -- a person still connected with such would not be received. He must sever his connection with a position in which he supports such a creed, before being received.

If, in the Briggs controversy, the body had, as such, adopted the wicked doctrines he held in connection with "Higher Criticism," we could no longer receive a Presbyterian at the table, however godly, because, by his position he is linked with the wickedness. The same principle has seemed to me to apply to "Open Brethren," because they adopted an evil principle as at Bethesda which opened the door to wickedness, and whatever may be the state of "Open Brethren" now, it is well known, that acting on the principles they adopted, they received persons who held the Newton heresy. Trotter's paper shows this clearly.<sup>55</sup> But even if they had not received such persons, they received those still linked with the wickedness, though they believed them to be personally clear of the doctrine. This principle they have never withdrawn. It was reiterated only a few years ago. And I have heard it maintained over and over again in the last few years by those on that ground,

52. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 5:334.

53. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 5:297.

54. {It is well, perhaps, to state here that what was right and proper in this matter many years ago, must be carefully considered in each individual case because of the wide-spread leaven of infidelity and corruption that has so commonly come in almost everywhere. Godly exercise and care must be carried out that the Lord's honor and glory be maintained.}

55. {Very clear proof of these things is presented in *Precious Truths Revived and defended Through J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, 1845-1850, available from the publisher.}

that we should receive all who are personally clear of the doctrine. A person among them being ignorant does not alter the fact that they are identified with the evil. This is where my difficulty lies. Many a one among them one would most gladly receive if only they broke the link with the evil. For the principle, compare Haggai 2:12,13. The clean does not make the unclean clean; but the unclean makes the clean unclean.<sup>56</sup>

And are we not ready to receive all true believers, of godly walk and associations, whether or not their names appear on a list? (J. R. Gill).

If a Christian, sound in doctrine, and blameless in morals and in his associations, wish to break bread with us (upon adequate testimony of those who know him to be such), none could refuse or make bargains.

## *Summary Remarks*

Those who hold that known leaven, unjudged and tolerated in an assembly, does not thereby change the status of that assembly to a leavened lump, assert, in effect, that Christ's special presence (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:4) and leaven can go on together. Allowed leaven, they must believe, does not hinder Christ's presence in the assembly as spoken of in Matt. 18:20, therefore. Such a company of Christians would, in effect, be meeting together on the basis of (on the ground of) sanctioned evil, tolerated leaven, whether they realize it or not. They would have Christ in the midst to sanction this -- so far as the tendency of their belief is concerned. The teaching implies that Christ's special presence and leaven can go on together. Cavils raised about Christ being in the midst where there are uneven tempers, etc., would be just dust for the eyes and expose more fully the hearts of the advocates of these notions.

Clearly, not every matter is one of excision. We are considering things that the Word of God denounces in solemn terms, things which are leaven and must be purged out of the assembly, and from which a Christian must be personally separate regarding leavened individuals, as the elect lady in 2 John was directed. It is not a question of the shop or office, with its duties there. It is a question of fellowship and hospitality, and participation, even in meetings that are not assembly meetings. It is a matter of faithfulness to the Holy and the True.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump means that tolerated evil leavens the whole lump even if all are not fornicators, etc., or even if all do not imbibe the evil teaching. It only requires one wicked person to be tolerated in order to change the practical character of the lump from a new lump to a leavened lump.

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56. *Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule* 2:92, 93.

Anyone coming from a leavened lump is, obviously, leavened. The only way to free oneself from this is to judge *it*, and *self*, before God. But if one comes from a leavened lump and wants to break bread, pleading that he personally is not committing a sin such as is named in 1 Cor. 5, or that he does not imbibe the evil doctrine tolerated where he comes from, let us remember that he is part of a leavened lump, partaker (*koinoneo* -- making one with) of wicked works. And let us treat him as such, remonstrate with him, and refuse him. All that knowingly receive from such a company of Christians put themselves on the same ground of indifference to Christ.

This is the evil of open communion. It shirks responsibility to the Lord, and does so in pious, generous sounding words, and the tendency is to make God the author of this evil system. What has evil at Corinth to do with Ephesus! is the unholy cry. The power of the Lord Jesus Christ may put out a wicked person at Corinth (1 Cor. 5:4), but the same Lord Jesus Christ may receive him at Ephesus and Ephesus not be leavened, is what this all means. Have such persons a conception of what is due the Name of Him that is Holy and True? Have such persons a conception of what "there is one body" means? Have such persons a conception of what the one loaf on the one table signifies?

Those that practice open communion may say that other assemblies "ought" to recognize discipline. There is no substitute for the truth that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Association with known evil leavens, and makes one an accomplice, a partaker (*koinoneo* -- making one with).

Of course, with this is connected the idea of independency of assemblies. The truth that "there is one body" is not understood, even if professed. And, "independency" is no longer strong enough: "autonomous assemblies" is now the word. Let me remind you that Satan is the father of independency (Ezek. 28) and he instilled it into man (Gen. 3).

Think of it. The power of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5:4) puts away a wicked person at Corinth and he is received at Ephesus. No matter, it is said. Ephesus OUGHT not to receive such, but Ephesus is "autonomous" and can judge for itself. The theory is, in effect -- the Lord Jesus Christ might lead the saints at Ephesus to receive him. Is this not what all of this really means? Do these Christians really think Christ is in the midst according to Matt. 18:20? Do they think of it that what Corinth *bound* was *bound in heaven*? (Matt. 18:18). And do you mean to say that it is not, however, bound in Ephesus? That is a denial of the one body. It is independency.

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Read *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:288, 289 concerning many ways in which Satan works; and, "The Enemy's Work" in *The Bible Treasury* 14:6-10.

## *The “Whole Body” in Activity on Earth*

An independent congregation, even with no leaven present, and with no association with it, is not really meeting on the ground, on the basis, that “there is one body.”

In the KJV we read in 1 Cor. 12:27 “ye are the body of Christ.” There is no word “the” in the original. Each assembly is not *a* body of Christ, for there is one body (Eph. 4:4) and 1 Cor. 12:27 does not affirm otherwise. In English, we do not say “ye are body of Christ,” but that it what it means. It means that the Corinthians had *body character*. They were but part of the body and were the expression of the body in Corinth. Hence, JND translated:

Now ye are Christ’s body, and members in particular.

There is no other membership owned of God but membership in that body; members of Christ:

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).

For lack of a better word, we say that “the Christ” is *the mystical Christ* -- the head seen in union with the members. To have numbers of bodies consequently means numbers of Christs. “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13). It means numbers of Heads, or, a Head with a number of bodies.

In 1 Cor. 12:28 we read:

And God has set certain in the assembly: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly teachers; then miraculous powers; then gifts of healings; helps; governments; kinds of tongues.

For the word “assembly,” substitute “local assembly.” How does that sound to you? No, it does not mean the local assembly. What assembly does it mean? Do you think these gifts are set in heaven?

And if one member suffer, all the members suffer with [it] (1 Cor. 12:26).

Do you think that they are suffering in heaven? 1 Cor.12 is not about heaven and it is not about the local assembly except as far as these truths are expressed locally. The gifts are set in the church on earth. It is as simple as that, but complicated in the minds of many because they have been taught that the local assembly is independent/autonomous. This undermines the truth of the one body. Generally, the body is looked at in Scripture in its activity here on earth. Those in heaven are of the body, but not in its activity. The entire thing will finally be displayed in glory; but meanwhile, the body is looked at in Scripture as complete on earth since its formation at Pentecost. Members pass out of the activity of the body (and are with the Lord) and others are added.

Christ has given gifts, we read:

for the perfecting of the saints; with a view to [the] work of [the] ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ, until . . . (Eph. 4:12).

It is not in heaven that the edifying of the body goes on. Nor is this the local assembly, as if it were a local body. “There is one body.” Moreover:

but holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ; 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. 15-17).

What is this “*whole body*” that is seen here in activity, where each one part is *working*? Where is it? The *whole body* is not a local body. ***It is the body on earth***, not in heaven. The local assembly should be an expression of the whole body on earth. We need to practice “whole body” truth.

With such texts before us, how is it that independency is stubbornly insisted upon? And the reader will previously have observed that shunning holy responsibility for associations goes together with independency of assemblies.

Believers in autonomy have set up a false dichotomy: it is either autonomous assemblies or it is centralized control. There is the true way, which is neither of this untrue dichotomy: that is, acting as one body in local responsibility.

We will now look at an article by J. N. Darby which deals with the truth that the one body is the ground, or basis, of gathering -- keeping in mind that this pamphlet only introduces these matters in an introductory way.



## *Is the "One Body" the Ground of Gathering?*

*Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 33:30-43*

"Is the 'one body' of Eph. 4:4 the divinely constituted ground of gathering?" A small paper with this title has been sent to me, signed C. E., initials with which I am not acquainted. The reply is very simple. It is. A very little attention to the passage itself and others which I shall cite, will prove it to every spiritual mind. It is, Christ being the center and head, the great principle of gathering which has been the basis of those called Brethren, and has governed at any rate those of them intelligent in God's ways from the beginning. I add intelligent, because a person may be recently converted, and be sealed and of the body and so have title to be there, though his knowledge be defective. I shall quote a few passages to show this point very quickly, profiting by the attack made upon the principle, to keep the point before the minds of Christians, which it is always profitable to do. As to making it clear and proving it, it has been done, not only in tracts drawn from Scripture, but in discussions with Christians of various phases, National and Free Church, since it came up, and dissenters of all classes, mostly, but not exclusively so, in Switzerland some thirty years ago or more, but translated most or all of them, into English.

It is clear that the perfection of the body of Christ, united to the Head, will be in glory. This has been contested, however, on the plea that Scripture never speaks but of the body on earth. But it seems to me that the end of Eph. 1 clearly teaches the supremacy of Christ over all things as Head of the body, as the counsel of God in this respect. That was one extreme;<sup>57</sup> the other is, that the unity of the body is not on earth, but only in heaven.

The tract confounds the kingdom with the church, quoting Matthew 13, as to tares being among the wheat. But this would deny all discipline; both are to grow together till the harvest. Final judgment would be the only putting out. This I may dismiss. It is simple nationalism or popery, no present gathering of saints at all.

It also confounds the house and husbandry of 1 Cor. 3 with the body, which is not spoken of at all. We have a temple, that is, where God dwells, but in which there is no union with Him who dwells there. Here we have three cases. He who builds with God's materials; he who, himself a saint, builds with bad, and loses his labor; and he who seeks to corrupt and will be destroyed; but no thought of the body. The writer tells us the word *church*, or *assembly*, denotes in their collective character those who profess to have obtained salvation, as when Paul addresses his epistle to the church of God which is at Corinth. The example is an unhappy one,

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57. There is really only one church spoken of in Scripture, though the state be different in heaven and on earth; but of this further on.

because the apostle states what he means by the church, and makes the difference of those who profess, though these are assumed to be genuine unless proved otherwise. The address of the apostle is as follows: "To the church of God, which is at Corinth, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." That is, universal profession and sanctified ones are clearly distinguished, the former looked at as composing the assembly at Corinth, and that by God's calling. And the difference is maintained in the epistle; it is only in ch. 10 that the apostle comes to speak of the body.

Again we are told that in Acts 20, Paul speaks of grievous wolves entering into the church. Nothing of the kind. The church of God spoken of, is what is purchased with His own blood, I suppose the true church which belongs to Christ for ever, and which He will present to Himself. All we have is, that wolves would not spare the flock, from which true members of Christ might suffer, if they could not be lost. I suppose, feeding God's assembly was on earth, yet it is viewed as purchased by the blood of Christ. Now the church or assembly of God, here, though set up in perfection by God, was, as man, as Israel, as everything God has set up, placed under man's responsibility; and man, as he has already done and that the first thing, has failed. But that failure was not the principle on which it was set up, any more than sin was the principle of man's standing in creation, nor disobedience and idolatry the principle of Israel's standing under Sinai. In each case it was man spoiling what God had set up. Even in Matt. 13 (which I do not refer to as the church) it was an enemy's doing, while men slept. The opposite doctrine is what Jeremiah so sternly denounces: "We are delivered to do all these abominations." What the Lord did is clearly stated, Acts 2: 47, "The Lord added daily such as should be saved."

Why does Paul say in the passage on which C. E. relies, "after my decease," but to show that spiritual energy preserved what God had set up, as long as it was there? C. E. with his independent churches, and others, and I holding the unity of the body, all believe that the church on earth has been corrupted, and that in the last days perilous times would come. That is not the question; but, is that corruption part of the divine principle of meeting, or a corruption which makes us guilty? Is it a part of the divine intention or man's fault? What I find in Scripture, in the seven churches C. E. refers to, is, that it ends in the terrible judgments of Thyatira, and being spued out of Christ's mouth as nauseous to Him, and the threat of judgment if they did not repent so soon as they left their first works. But what the author cites of Jude teaches us the same truth; certain men had "crept in unawares"; but creeping in unawares was not the principle upon which the saints were gathered, was not accepted as the order of the place. They were spots in their feasts of charity, feasting with those among whom they had crept. Enoch had prophesied of them. Nothing can be clearer than that they had nothing to do -- their being there had nothing to do with the principle of the gathering; they had crept in. Jude writes to them that are sanctified by God the Father. In John they were not in the assembly at all, but antichrists who had been in it, and were to be

manifested that they were not of it.

Another objection, which is not new to me, is more plausible, and goes upon a certain borrowed acquaintance with Scripture, namely, that the unity of the body was not known till Paul taught it. Now, there was a time of transition of God's patience with the Jews, and Paul, called specially out to be the minister of the Gentiles, was the instrument in God's hands for unfolding the mystery of the union of Jews and Gentiles on the same footing. But God took care that it should not be a new, separate thing in its nature and essence. After Paul was called he was not allowed to begin the introduction of the Gentiles, and Peter insisted on this in Acts 15. He, not Paul, was the means of introducing Cornelius, and C. E. confounds the existence of the thing and the development of the doctrine. Paul was the great instrument, both of promulgating the doctrine, and carrying it out in practice; a dispensation was committed to him. But God graciously took care to guard against the mistake of C. E. by employing Peter to begin publicly that work as a fact, and securing its stability by not allowing Paul to make good at Antioch the truth he had received; and the church remained one from the beginning. But what is its essence is much more important. The union of the body subsists from the day of Pentecost. It was established as to Gentiles, before Paul's ministry, at Caesarea in the bright and godly centurion, and Paul, in God's wisdom, was not allowed to secure it among the Gentiles. That was to be done (where it was important to do it) among the Jews at Jerusalem. No doubt the union of Jew and Gentile was of importance, especially in those days; but it was not the essential principle of the body or its unity. That was union with Christ, the Head, by the Holy Ghost. That was what made the body and unity, and each Christian, so sealed, a member of Christ.

Was there no body of Christ till Paul spoke about the mystery? Yet, if the confusion made by C. E. between the existence of the body, and the knowledge of the mystery be accepted, there could not have been. Thousands have come into communion amongst those whom C. E. attacks, who know nothing but to cry Abba, Father, as sealed with the Spirit, and learn the mystery there. It is much to be desired that they should be intelligent as to it, and that they should know the place they are in. But I never heard of such being a term for communion. I suspect a very large number would have to be put out. That it is as such the assembly meets, that the truth as to this is found in tracts and writings, is quite true. The writer does not mean to say that we should meet as if there were two churches of God on earth. Meeting on that principle, as an expression in common use, means quite a different thing. 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. It is this unity of the whole body on earth which C. E. denies. What a new believer is introduced into, is that unity which unquestionably existed in the beginning, and which we seek to realize as far as we can. Supposing I was to say that we meet on the principle that holiness becomes God's house. C. E. seems hardly to think so, but who would say that could not be the bond of union? Unity with the Head by the Holy Ghost is the only bond of union, but that produces the

unity of the body of which we are thus all members. We meet with the conviction that the gathered saints were at the beginning the body of Christ, and members one of another, and as such all one on earth (does C. E. mean to say they were not?), and that we ought to seek to realize it. To be of the assembly as having the Holy Ghost, and to understand and explain it, are two things; to deny it, which is C. E.'s place, is a third. But his statement goes further. God formed the church -- for it began down here -- on the ground, according to his system, of there being evil in it, tares. They hold the church met on that principle; not that men crept in unawares, but that it is the principle they are united on. Now holiness is not what binds us, nor the principle of unity, yet the assembly meets as composed of those who are sanctified, called saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, on that principle, and as all one (all saints are one body), and we seek to realize it as far as we can. 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.

I shall now show, that what Scripture presents to us is a body on earth, formed on earth as Christ's body, the Head being in heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Let my reader look at 1 Cor. 12:12 to the end. It is perfectly impossible for a man in his senses not to recognize a body on earth. The apostle compares it to our natural body: we have body and members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body; the body is not one member, but many. But C. E. will say that this is in heaven. But, unfortunately, it is by one Spirit we are baptized into one body: now this was on earth. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." They were to tarry at Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon them. It was one of the two great characters of Christ's work. He it is that baptized with the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God came down to earth and formed one body before Paul was called. If anything need be added, it is found here, verse 25: and there was to be no schism in the body, the members were all to have the same care one for another; if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it, or one member were honored, all the members rejoiced with it. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular; and God hath set some in the church, etc . . ." Will C. E. tell me which of these gifts are to be exercised in heaven? The whole passage is as clear as language can make it, that there is a body on earth formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and recognized on earth with these words, "so also is Christ." Ch. 10:17 does not refer to the connection of the heathen with idols, or Jews with the altar. It is used in reference to this as the basis of the argument. "For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." The same principle is recognized as known truth in Rom. 12, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." And all that follows applies to the saints down here exclusively. It is *now* (Eph. 3:10) that the manifold wisdom is to be made known by the church to

principalities and powers in heavenly places, the Gentiles being a joint body. So in chapter 4, the very verse cited by C. E. It is exhortation to us *now* to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, and what we are called to is still a hope, as the verse itself says. It will be said, "But the hope of the calling is glory with Christ above." Undoubtedly, but it will then have ceased to be a hope; it is when we have been called and have it as a hope (for we are saved in hope) that there is one body and one Spirit; there is that, as there is one faith and one baptism. The whole passage plainly shows that it is the present time, the time when the Spirit is personally down here, and faith has its place -- hence the apostle speaks of the edifying of the body of Christ, "*till* we all come," etc. Hence C. E. cannot speak so; He has given these ministries, not for the edifying of the body, as Scripture speaks, but "the members of His body on earth." He has lost the great truth, that God has revived in these last days that presence of the Holy Ghost *down here*. He confounds the kingdom of heaven with the church and the body of Christ, and so will have tares in it, and tares to remain in it till harvest. In Scripture, "an enemy has done it."

I find in this same passage, Eph. 4:15, 16, "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." A husband is to love his wife as the Lord loves and cherishes the church, for we are members of His body. The only other passages, as far as I am aware, are Col. 1:18, and 3:15. The former does not help us one way or the other, saying Christ is the head of the body, save as far as showing, a remark that has its importance, that the apostle does not make the difference C. E. does. The latter passage clearly applies to earth as a present exhortation to peace; it shows clearly, as I said, that as to the unity of the body the apostle makes no distinction between the calling of God in its responsible effectuation now, and its sure divine effectuation when all is complete in result. There is one passage which speaks of it in this result, that is, takes in this view, Eph. 1:22, 23, but even so -- looks at the church as an existing thing. I have not to complain of the spirit in which the leaflet is written, but I am surprised in realizing the complete loss of truth by those to whom the writer belongs.

I add a few supplementary words, to show how this evil system destroys the whole idea of the church of God. First I would remark, that Christ gave Himself to gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad {John 11:51, 52}. Now I admit that this is not properly the body. John never speaks of the body. But it is unity {oneness}, and it is down here, for those who were scattered will all be one any way up in heaven. Their being scattered abroad down here makes no difference as to that; there is no scattering there; yet whereas they were scattered, they were now to be gathered. This unity is ignored by C. E. The word 'church,' says C. E., denotes in their collective character those who profess, whereas in Scripture it is certainly not so at the founding of Christianity. There the

Lord added daily<sup>58</sup> such as should be saved. Further, who added? The Lord. Did He add mere professors? That such crept in ere many years were past we know. So later, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed ." C. E. does not believe in a divine gathering at all at any time. God does not gather professors. And here the language is not quite honest. The writer says: "they (who profess to have obtained salvation) compose the assembly or assemblies." Which? for they are not the same thing. Hence the assembly is slipped out directly, and we read, "the church of God which is in Corinth," "the seven churches in Asia." Hence we read (page 3) that Christ, in His love and care for the members of His body on earth, provides for their edification, through various ministries and gifts of the Holy Ghost. But this does not alter the character of the assembly, whether in Corinth or Ephesus. He then speaks of evangelists as having their service outside the assembly, while gifts of healing were intended to meet the physical needs of men as men. All very well if we do not go to Scripture, but the assembly is wholly lost, save to say that the service of the evangelist is outside it. But where *were* the gifts, whether their service were in or out of the assembly, or for men as men? Here is the answer of Scripture: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular; and God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues," not all in *a* church, but in *the* church -- the assembly. Nothing can be more clear or definite. Evangelists are not there. The gifts are viewed simply as the power of the Spirit. In Ephesians 4 we find only gifts of edification, and they are attributed to the gift of Christ, in His care for the church, His body. There, there are evangelists: "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" -- even the evangelists, for though they served in the world, they did not leave the fruits of their service there; they were brought into the church, never into a church, but into the church. And then pass on to vv. 15, 16, "but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love." Can anything be clearer or more definite?

But this passage leads me to the remark that this distinction, of what is here from what is in heaven, is destructive of the whole nature of Christianity, and the holiness that belongs to it. I have clearly shown from Scripture that the word of God speaks of the body on earth, that its unity is there, its members are Christ's

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58. I do not add "church," as the reading is generally rejected. I quote for thee character of those gathered, also who were the gathered.

members,<sup>59</sup> and members one of another. But I go further, and add that while, as was predicted, the church on earth has corrupted itself, the blessing that God had established being confided to man in responsibility,<sup>60</sup> yet to separate the two in faith is to destroy not only the scriptural idea of a church, but the whole divine principle of holiness, individually and collectively. Our *calling* is heavenly, our hope is heavenly, our standard of walk only heavenly. Not seeing this was the source of the folly of the perfectionists. There is no goal, no measure of attainment down here. They took the deliverance of Rom. 8 for perfection. The Christian has no goal of attainment but Christ in glory. If faithful, he does that one thing, runs to win Christ, and by any means to attain to that first resurrection; that produces the effect, so far as it operates, of walking like Christ down here. The believer's conversation (his living associations) is in heaven; he looks for Christ to change his body and conform it to Christ's glorious body. We say therefore, with Paul to the end, "not as though I had already attained," but we have no other measure of attainment, and he who best knows Christ, best knows *how far* he is from having attained. Every step of progress enables him to see more clearly what Christ is and how far he is from it. But there is no other goal, no other measure known or given. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. He that *sanctifieth* and they that are sanctified are all of one.

Now it is the knowledge of this glorified Christ by the Holy Ghost which is the formative power of holiness. This I proceed to show from Scripture. God chastises us (Heb. 12:10) that we may be partakers of His holiness. Hence, in a very remarkable passage in 1 Thess. 3:12, 13, "and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Where is the difference for faith between our responsible state here and our presentation before God our Father there? How far we realize it, is another and important question; but the measure and principle is the same, or rather, blessed be His name, all one. And this is wrought by the revelation of Christ to our souls by the Holy Ghost, and Christ as He is in glory. Hence He says: "For their sakes I sanctify myself [set myself apart as the glorified man in heaven] that they also might be sanctified through the truth." And this is as clearly taught as possible. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John 3. Again, "We, beholding with open [unveiled, alluding to Moses'

59. I have not cited the latter part of Eph. 5:30, as probably the words are not genuine. Nor "to the church" (Acts 2: 47), for the same reason.

60. So it ever has been since Adam, the first thing man has always done being to fail, while God's patient goodness has continued till the time of judgment came.

veil] face the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory, into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord." All this is as clear as possible. There are not two holinesses; we cannot say, any of us, that we have attained, but our conversation is in heaven; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall bear the image of the heavenly. There is no other goal after which we run: our object is to grow up to Him who is the Head in all things, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And note well here, this is not the question of our acceptance in Christ. There, there is no growth. As to that we say, "As he is so are we in this world."

It will be said, "But this is individual." I admit it. I quote it to show the principle on which God deals with us as regards our responsible state in this world. Being made partakers of the divine nature, having the risen and glorified Christ as our life, and the revelation of this glorified Christ by the Holy Ghost, we cannot look at anything as goal of attainment but that glorified Christ; and as He could say being a divine Person "the Son of man who is in heaven"-making, and in Him perfectly, His life, what it was down here-so we (united to Him in glory, sitting in heavenly places in Him, and the Holy Ghost revealing what eye has not seen nor ear heard nor entered into the heart of man to conceive) take the affections, spirit, self-denial, practical realization of what answers to Him in glory, as the motive and measure of a holy walk here; and thus, he that saith he is *in Him* ought himself also so to walk even as He walked. Hence it is said "Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us, a sacrifice and offering to God for a sweet-smelling savor." "Hereby know we love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And in this chapter of the Ephesians referred to, the other essential name of God is taken, Light, and we are declared to be light in the Lord, and are to walk as children of light; and if our poor eyes have drooped in sleep, and we are lying among the dead, we are called to awake from sleep and Christ shall give us light. Our life is hid with Christ in God; we have no other measure than what He is.

There is not one holiness for heaven, and another for this world, as 1 Thess. 3:13 so remarkably teaches. We have our treasure in an earthen vessel, know in part, see through a glass darkly, but the treasure, what we know and what we see, is one and the same. Eternal life is the end, but it is eternal life we have, but that life is Christ, the present Christ. "He that hath the Son, hath life"; then we shall have it as He is, but it is not another. I repeat he who is nearest to Him by faith, in whose heart Christ dwells, knows best how dear he is to Him, but how far he is from Him as an object of attainment. But he has not two Christs, but one. This is the principle of Scripture. We are in Christ as to acceptance, and Christ in us as present life, and the hope of glory before us; our path, as we are yet in the body, is always to bear about there the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body.

This principle would involve the church on high and below being but one, though here hindered by weakness in a responsible condition as individuals are. There is really no difference, but happily we are not left to draw conclusions on the subject. The word of God is formal and positive on the subject. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." C. E. may say this means the members. Of course it takes place in the members, though collectively too; but *the church* that was loved, and that will be presented to Christ without blemish -- the assembly that was loved and for which He gave Himself, the church that will be presented without a wrinkle by Christ to Himself -- is the church that He has sanctified down here in time by the word. The same thing is expressly taught in ch. 4 already quoted, except that it is also called His body, Christ being the Head, to whom we are to grow up; v.16 specifically presenting the present operation in grace, and the increase of the body by the effectual working in the measure of every part; so that it is impossible to separate that body of which Christ is the Head, from that which grows and edifies itself here -- and the whole body, and an edified and increasing body. There is but one. Nothing can be more specific, positive, and formal.

Even as to a particular assembly, this as owned of God, is not as C. E. states. As such its members are not viewed as professors, but as to be presented blameless before Christ. In Corinth, blamed in all its ways, so bad that the apostle could not go there, he says, "Ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." That was their present calling, that their final state, called into His fellowship (*koinonian*, to partake of His state) now, and blameless in it there. The beginning of the epistle to the Ephesians largely confirms this principle. In chapter 1, from vv. 3 to 8, what time is it that is presented to us? When are we holy and without blame before Him in love? It is evidently the thought of God about us. Is it something else we are to realize now? And is what is here, the spiritual blessings with which God hath blessed us, only for the heavenly places, and our calling different now?

I admit surely the difference of realization in human responsibility by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the perfect accomplishment by divine power when Christ shall come and change our body of humiliation, conforming it to His glorious body, when we shall be to the praise of His glory; but there are not two things. It is spoken of in itself: "to the glory of His grace" now, "to the praise of His glory" when all is perfected. And so in what follows as to the church. It is presented as in the purpose of God, with this much accomplished that Christ is set at His right hand in heavenly places, and the result is there stated as part of the same thing; "though we see not as yet all things put under him." But in what follows He takes care to show that "we are quickened with him," according to the

same power which raised Him from the dead where He lay for our sins in which we were dead, "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." Is this present or not? he does not say "with Christ," but "in Him," but this is to show *in the ages to come* the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Is that of which He speaks, as showing in coming ages the exceeding riches of His grace, a different thing from that which He has wrought now? But this is identified with "head to the church, his body." I admit fully it will be accomplished in glory. We have the spirit of adoption now; we wait for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body. But I close.

The word of God is perfectly clear, and the identity of what is revealed and discerned by the Holy Ghost with what will be revealed in us, is seen to be of the very essence of Christianity, as Scripture presents it in its fulness. It is the very meaning of the phrase "we are saved in hope," and "though now we see Him not, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of [our] souls." A church of professors denies that it is the church of God. He does not form one of the professors, that is quite clear. The thought is next door to blasphemy. The system denies Christian responsibility, and that the professing church will be judged for its unfaithfulness. It falsifies the nature of holiness, and Christ's present relation to the church. There is no bride to say "Come!" No purity according to what there will be then, as in Thessalonians, or according to what Christ is now as in 1 John 3. No recognition of the predicted corruption of the church, for even now we have to walk with those who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. If it were to be a church of professors, and God would have it so, how many are to be allowed? That such may creep in unawares nobody denies, but the theory is that this is what God owns, *His* church on earth; that we are not to purify ourselves from vessels to dishonor, or go outside the camp . . .

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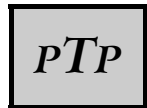
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