

WRITINGS OF W R DRONSFIELD

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A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by W.R. Dronsfield, compiled for study and devotional reading.

19 Chapters

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01.00. Eternal Son of the Father

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INTRODUCTION Of late years, a doctrine has been formulated and taught amongst many Christians that has been termed the "Temporal Sonship" doctrine, as opposed to the orthodox doctrine of "Eternal Sonship". The hitherto generally accepted view that our blessed Lord and Saviour is and was the Son of God from all eternity, was challenged in 1929 by J. Taylor of New York when he was in England at a series of readings held at High Barnet. At first it was only said that Divine Relationships in eternity were unknowable, and therefore the Lord's Sonship before incarnation could not be affirmed, but soon by 1932 it was being boldly taught that the Lord's Sonship began at incarnation, and Eternal Sonship was directly denied. This doctrine has been confined to those known as "Taylor Exclusive Brethren", at one time a very numerous company. It is resolutely refused by others also known as Exclusive Brethren and by well-known teachers amongst the Open Brethren. Owing to the sad break-up of the Taylor company, many individuals and meetings have been forced out of their original fellowship, and would dearly like to be able to share unity with the brethren who have never been in fellowship with J. Taylor. However, because they are still unable to affirm that the Head of the Church is the Eternal Son of God, they have been refused, or, knowing that they would be refused if they applied, they have never pursued the matter. It is with the desire to help any who may be confused on this issue, that this little book is written.

Right at the commencement, let it be stated that nobody has ever failed to confess that the Lord is an Eternal Divine Person, without beginning or end. It is not His personality but His eternal relationship as Son of the Father that is questioned. That the Trinity, three Persons in One God, has always had existence, is a truth held by all. Also we do not wish to evade the arguments advanced by the exponents of J. Taylor's doctrine. We assume they only have the Lord's honour and glory in their motives when they advance these teachings, but firmly believe that they are sadly mistaken. The only authority to which we can turn when the Truth is at stake is the Word of God. We will avoid as far as possible, therefore, using the support of human authorities.

Many, when they learn that the Lord's Godhead and Manhood are not apparently affected, regard the question as not of fundamental importance. They point out that the words "Eternal Son" and "Eternal Sonship" are not in Scripture, and therefore do not see why they should be required to use them. But many words that are not in Scripture are used to define scriptural doctrine. Where are the words "Trinity", "Divine Person", "Vicarious Sacrifice" or "The Fall" for example? Many formulae are used that are succinct statements of scriptural doctrine, but are not themselves in Scripture. It would be impossible to give exposition of Scripture if we could only confine ourselves

to direct quotations. This excuse, used to avoid grasping the issue, is not tenable. Our aim in this book is to show that a fundamental issue is involved.

01.01. Reasons advanced Sonship Doctrine

Dronsfield ESOF: 01 Reasons advanced in Support of the Temporal Sonship Doctrine REASONS ADVANCED IN SUPPORT OF THE TEMPORAL SONSHIP DOCTRINE Here are some of the main arguments of these teachers:

(a) A son is in a place of subjection to his father. Even when a son reaches a high position and state, he still gives honour to his parents. This is a principle found throughout Scripture. There can, however, be no subjection or obedience between Divine Persons as viewed absolutely in the Godhead; therefore the Lord's Sonship has only to do with His mediatorial position taken up in Manhood.

(b) The word "Only Begotten" refers to birth. There was only one time when He was born, and that was at the incarnation.

(c) "He is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). The word "is" does not imply an eternal state as in the name "I AM" (John 8:58) but a present state. The word "in" is the Greek word *eis* which implies that He came into that state. Elsewhere in the chapter the past tense is used to describe Him in the Eternal Godhead (John 1:1-2).

(d) Throughout Scripture the term "Son", "Son of God" is only applied when referring to the Lord in Manhood, and the position He then took up. To the simple objection that the Father must have had a Son in order to send Him into the world, it was pointed out that present relationships are often used to identify persons in events before the relationships existed. For example a man might say, "When my wife was a little girl". She was not his wife when she was a little girl, nevertheless he still refers to her as his wife. In John 17:3, it is "Jesus Christ Whom Thou has sent", but He was not Jesus Christ before He was sent. In John 3:13, the Son of Man came down from Heaven, but He was not the Son of Man before He came down. "Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday and to day and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). Here we have the attributes of Deity ascribed to the Lord under His human name and title.

(e) Scriptures used to support the doctrine are Psalms 2:7, "This day have I begotten Thee", and Luke 1:31, which it is claimed shows that the Lord was not called the Son of God until His birth.

Many have found it very difficult to refute these arguments in a convincing manner. Most of the followers of J. Taylor were persuaded to accept the new teaching. Those who took the lead did so with an acute intellect and knowledge of Scripture, and one may acknowledge that they appeared to have a genuine and reverent desire to honour Divine Persons. Some of those who rushed into print to oppose the doctrine seemed confused and caught off guard. For example, they asserted that the new doctrine was Sabellianism, which was not true. It was a new teaching (to them) and first the Scriptures needed to be searched to see if these things were so. We are convinced, however, that it was really a very subtle attack on the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. We must look beyond the dear brethren who taught the error and see the enemy at work. Satan was behind it, using godly men that he had taken unawares. In doing so, he effected the ruin of a

portion of that great movement of the Holy Spirit in the last century which rediscovered the precious truth of God's assembly. It is one's desire, in producing this booklet, to present a case from Scripture that will convince of their mistake those who have imbibed the temporal sonship doctrine. Many an argument has been put forward in the past that seems conclusive to those who already accept the orthodox view, but very weak in the judgment of those who are opposed.

01.02. The Proof of the Lord's Deity

Dronsfield ESOF: 02 The Proof of the Lord's Deity THE PROOF OF THE LORD'S DEITY

See John 5:17-18. The Lord had just healed a man on the Sabbath Day, to the anger of the Jews. His answer to them was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work", which appears to be the first time He said publicly that God was His Father. This condemned Him utterly in the eyes of the Jews, for they saw that by saying that God was His Father He made Himself equal with God.

Here we see that the Lord's Sonship demonstrated His equality with Deity — not His subjection as the followers of J. Taylor teach. Could it be that the Jews had reached the truth of His claim to equality by the wrong reasoning? No, the inspired words do not say that it was just what the Jews said, but assert plainly that He made Himself equal with God by saying God was His Father. The reasoning of the Jews was as correct as their conclusion.

Why did the Jews see this? Because in the Hebrew thinking, and in the Scriptures, a father is presented as being of the same nature as the one he begets. Here are a few examples:

There is the common term, "sons of Belial". Belial means "worthless", so the term "son of Belial" simply means a worthless person.

Jesus was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (Acts 4:36), meaning "son of consolation", because he was by nature one who consoled for he was a good man who exhorted the brethren that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord (Acts 11:23-24). The Lord surnamed John and James the sons of thunder.

Judas is called the son of perdition because he was by nature one that would perish. Perdition means perishing.

He called the Pharisees a generation of vipers because they had the nature of vipers. See also "children of light", "children of wrath", "child of the Devil", etc.

Every being begets after his own kind (Genesis 1:1-31). Therefore the Jews saw that if God has a Son, that Son has the nature of Deity. There is only One True Son of the same eternal essence as the Father — the Only Begotten Son. But the objection will at once be raised, "If God has begotten a Son, there must have been a time when the Son was begotten, and therefore He has a beginning". This is quite wrong reasoning, for the right implication is exactly the opposite. If an eternal Father, without beginning nor end, begets a Son, that Son also must have neither beginning nor end; else He is not a True Son according to the Father's essence. God's nature is infinite, therefore His Son's nature is infinite.

We must abandon all reasoning from the finite. Every finite creature begets a finite creature with a beginning, but the Infinite begets the Infinite with no beginning. The word "Only Begotten" does not imply carnal or low thoughts of begetting, but implies equal nature. This is what the ancient orthodox teachers called "The Eternal Generation of the Son". The begetting is not an event of the

past, however distant.

Let us not lessen the force of the word "Only Begotten" by saying that it might just be translated "Only" or that it means simply unique or uniquely precious. It means far more than that. It means that He is the only Son according to the Divine Essence. To justify this lessening of the force of the word "Only Begotten", the case of Isaac is put forward who is called Abraham's only begotten son although there were other sons. However, in God's eyes, Isaac was the only son. Abraham said, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" but Ishmael was not recognised by God, the covenant was not to be with him (Genesis 17:18-19). On the other hand it has been stated, that because of the Septuagint use of the word "only begotten" for the Hebrew "only one" (jachid), that "only" is all that is meant by it. But the Septuagint is often an inaccurate translation and certainly cannot be cited as a greater authority than the New Testament itself. Those who have come to the defence of Eternal Sonship by denying that the real meaning of the Greek word monogenes is "only begotten", have actually obscured the issue. But what then are we to say about all the other sons? Are there not many sons brought to glory? (Hebrews 2:10). Are we not sons? (Galatians 4:6). Are we not begotten of God? (1 John 5:1; 1 John 5:18). Are not the angels called sons of God? (Job 1:6/Job 38:7).

It is true that we are brought into sonship by the grace of God. We have been begotten of God as regards the new nature, when we were born again by the Word and the Spirit. This is the divine nature (1 Peter 1:4). It is the nature of God morally — God's true nature from the moral standpoint, but it is not sonship according to essence. That is, we do not partake of Deity and thus become omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, etc. Only the Son has Sonship according to essence. From the moral aspect He is the Firstborn among many brethren, but from the point of view of Divine Essence He is the Only Begotten with no brethren. As regards the angels, the Scripture insists that the Lord's Sonship distinguishes Him from them. "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Hebrews 1:5). Never has God called an angel His Son. Yet the angels are called sons of God in the book of Job. We suggest that this is because they had no progenitors and are all directly created by God to reflect His glory. In like manner the only man to be directly created by God, and not humanly generated, was Adam, and as he had no progenitor, he is called the son of God (Luke 3:38).

We will now consider other scriptures that support this truth. Here it is necessary to find scriptures where the abstract concept of sonship is the subject matter. It is not sufficient to look at places where the name "Son of God" is mentioned because, as we have seen, it is common to identify a person by a name or title even when referring to occasions when the person did not possess that designation. All the scriptures which say that the Father sent the Son do not prove to those who hold the temporal sonship theory that the Lord was the Son before He was sent, because, they say, the Divine Persons were not known by any distinct names before the incarnation, and therefore can only be referred to by the names they took afterwards.

Hebrews 5:8. "Though He were Son". There is no definite article before Son; it is characteristic, and the relationship of Sonship is the prominent thought. "Though He were Son, yet learned He obedience". As the Son, the experience of obedience was unknown to Him, and so He learned what that experience was by the things that He suffered. In this passage we see that the idea of obedience and subjection was foreign to His Sonship. This is the opposite to the doctrine of

temporal sonship which maintains that His Sonship is to be identified with subjection. No, it is not as the Son that He learned obedience, but in spite of His being such. The reason a man is subject and inferior to his father in human relationships is that the son is always the junior, the father obviously being born first. To argue from this that the Lord's Sonship denotes subjection is plainly wrong for there can be no seniority between Divine Persons. It is another example of trying to understand the Infinite by a comparison with the finite.

Now turn to John 1:14. The literal translation is "We beheld His glory, the glory of an only begotten with a father". The glory is that of the abstract relationship rather than that of the Person Himself, that is to say, the glory in this passage is specifically that of His Sonship. This glory shone through the veil of His flesh so that His disciples recognised it. It was His Divine glory. This will be immediately challenged by those who deny His eternal Sonship. They will say that it is His moral glory, which He had as the Perfect Man. We will, therefore, test this by searching the Scriptures. When those who had to do with Him in His life here were constrained to confess Him as the Son of God, what made them do so? Was it His moral glory or His Divine glory? Let us look at the incidents involved.

(1) Nathanael (John 1:49) confessed Him as the Son of God and King of Israel. It was His omniscience that opened His eyes. The Lord had shown that He knew some secret that only Nathaniel could have known.

(2) The disciples in the boat. (Matthew 14:33). The Lord had just shown His Divine power as the Creator and Sustainer of all things, walking on the water and stilling the wind and the waves. Here we have Him as the omnipotent One.

(3) Martha (John 11:27). The Lord had just revealed Himself as the Source of Life. Only God is the Source of Life. All other beings receive their life through Him.

(4) The man blind from birth (John 9:35-38). Here the man is told directly from the Lord Who He is. It is the man's reaction that is noteworthy as he immediately worships the Son of God showing that he recognised His Deity; for the Lord accepted his worship as offered intelligently. We can contrast this with the man in Matthew 19:16-17 who said "Good Master". At once the Lord checked him, because he had ascribed something to Him that only applied to God, without realising that the One he was speaking to was indeed God.

(5) The Centurion (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39). Here the reasons for the centurion's confession are plainly stated. In Matthew it was due to the severe earthquake, the rending of the rocks and the opening of the tombs. In Mark it is specifically stated that it was due to the Lord's shouting with a loud voice just before He gave up His spirit. This was remarkable to the centurion who had no doubt seen large numbers of such executions. A man crucified gets weaker and weaker until he cannot speak above a whisper. Here was One who could shout with a loud voice just before He died, showing supernatural strength. It was, therefore, not His moral glory that convinced the centurion, but His Divine glory, as was the case in all the foregoing cases.

We will refer to Peter's great confession in Matthew 16:16 and John 6:69 later.

We are therefore fully justified in asserting that the Lord's Sonship denotes His Deity and does not pertain to His lowly dependence and obedience as the Perfect Man. A possible reason why some

think that the glory of John 1:14 is moral and not Divine, is the words that immediately follow: "full of grace and truth". We are sure, however, that the Authorised Version is correct in putting the clause "and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father" in brackets. The words "full of grace and truth" refer to the statement before the parenthesis: "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us". The parenthesis is put in to show that in spite of the veil of flesh, the Divine glory shone through for His own to see. In saying all this we are not wishing to infer that moral glory is not included in Divine glory for "God is Light". The idea that we are opposing is that it was exclusively His moral glory as seen in manhood.

Many are convinced of the Lord's Eternal Sonship but do not rank it among the fundamentals. They point out that its denial may be sincerely done in the belief that it is something that guards the Lord's glory, and that it is not accompanied by any doubt as to His eternal personal Being. We, however, maintain that it is a necessary component of the Doctrine of Christ. To demonstrate this, we will refer to the early contention in the professing church when the greatest challenge to the Truth came from Arius, who denied the Lord's Deity.

Now Arius was not like the modern Unitarian who thinks that the Lord was a mere man. His system taught that the Lord was the first and greatest creature that God made, and the only creature that God made directly. To this great creature God gave the task of creating everything else, so all things, apart from Himself, were created by Him. He was God's representative, and expressed God to every other creature. As God's representative, He was entitled to worship, and as such was rightly addressed as God. One thing only Arius would not accept, and that was the truth that the Lord was of equal substance (or essence) to the Father. He said that he was of similar substance but not of equal substance to God.

These two expressions, "similar substance" and "equal substance", differing in Greek by only a single letter, became the great battleground on which the whole of Christianity depended. Athanasius was the great orthodox champion. Constantine the Emperor favoured Arius, and Athanasius had to go into exile. Only to the Scriptures did both protagonists turn. Every Scripture that showed that the Lord was God, that proved He is the Creator of all things, that showed He must be worshipped and honoured by creatures as though He were the Father, was accepted by Arius as agreeing with his system. What scripture then was left to prove that the Lord was of equal substance to the Father? Mainly the truth of Eternal Sonship — the bulwark of John 5:18, that His Sonship proved His equality to the Father, because of His eternal generation. At first the Emperor did not realise the vital importance of the controversy, and he issued an edict that as the words "similar substance" and "equal substance" were not in the Scriptures, the contention was to cease as being an insoluble question. This, however, was not obeyed. How like was Constantine's stratagem to those today, who say that as the term "Eternal Sonship" is not in Scripture, they will neither affirm nor deny the doctrine!

How right Athanasius was when he pointed out that although the difference between the contenders might appear to be small, yet really the difference was infinite! Truly the difference between the finite and the infinite is infinity, no matter how great the finite might be. How serious it is to take away this most important weapon of Eternal Sonship, which proves the truth of the Lord's Person!

Let us also notice the extreme importance that is placed in Scripture upon the confession of the Lord's Sonship. In 1 John 4:15 it says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God". Such a blessed spiritual result as this does not come, of course, from the repetition of a form of words but from the affirmation of the heart in complete awareness and acceptance of the confession's full implications. Many a time, representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses — the modern Arians — have called at the front door, and to the question "Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?", they willingly give the answer in the affirmative. Does God dwell in them and they in God — these deniers of the Lord's Deity? Obviously not, for they do not affirm His Eternal Sonship, nor accept that it is essentially connected with His Deity. In their minds the Lord's Sonship had a beginning; not in incarnation but far back before any other creature had been created.

Peter's confession of Matthew 16:16 also brings before us the great importance of this doctrine, for we find that it is the foundation rock on which the Lord builds His church. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God". Because He is the Son of God He is God. The Father is the Living God, who has life in Himself, the Source of Life, so likewise the Son is the Living God and has life in Himself, the Source of Life. In Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20, the story of Peter's confession is given, but only the first half, "Thou art the Christ" is mentioned. Consequently there is no reference there of its vital importance as the foundation rock of the church. Without Eternal Sonship the foundation is missing. How solemn that some well-meaning brethren have so little understanding that they are tampering with the church's foundation!

01.03. Eternal Sonship Proof of God's Love

Dronsfield ESOF: 03 Eternal Sonship Proof of God's Love ETERNAL SONSHIP THE PROOF OF GOD'S LOVE

We have been considering the Eternal Sonship as the supreme proof of the Lord's Deity. Now we would bring out the second important thing that Eternal Sonship demonstrates — namely the infinite love of God.

"God so loved the world. . ." How much? So much that He gave His only begotten Son. There is nothing that shows His love more.

But, of course, those who teach temporal sonship do not deny the infinite love that has ever existed between those Divine Persons that they say are now known as the Father and the Son. The Scripture is plain, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). But though this love is not denied, the demonstration of it is denied.

How weak John 3:16 would sound if the words "only begotten Son" were omitted, and the words "Divine Person" put in their place! Over and over again the love of God is measured by the fact that He gave His Son. He that delivered up His Own Son for us all, shall He not freely give us all things? (see Romans 8:32). No gift can be as great as that. In the very first mention of love in the Bible, the supreme sacrifice that the Father made in giving His Son is brought before us: "Take now thy son, thine only son ... whom thou lovest ... and offer him . . . for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:2). The love of the Father for His Son comes first, and typically the love of Christ for His Church is the second mention of love in the Scriptures (Genesis 24:67). The main point of the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mark 12:1-9) is that after the lord of the vineyard had sent his servants (prophets), he sent his son. "Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him last unto them, saying, 'They will reverence my son'." Does this look as though the one sent only became his son when he was sent? The objection is made, "It is only a parable". We acknowledge that a parable is not usually an allegory, but one cannot get away from a parable's main point in this way. The whole meaning of the parable stresses that the lord of the vineyard had sent the one he valued most because it was his well-beloved son.

We feel that it was terrible presumption to deny the validity of this demonstration of love to say, as it were, to the Father that His Son only became such after He had entered the world. We ask reverently, may this not have given great offence to both the Father and the Son? Is this not an explanation of the strange madness that splintered that company? Were they given up to be defenceless before the onslaughts of Satan? We urge earnestly that the seriousness of this error be not underestimated.

01.04. The Father's Bosom

Dronsfield ESOF: 04 The Father's Bosom THE FATHER'S BOSOM

John 1:18. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him". This passage has always been taken by orthodox Christians to mean that the Son is eternally in the bosom of the Father, and therefore is able to reveal the inmost secrets of the Father's heart to His own. Those who deny Eternal Sonship, however, must teach that His dwelling in the Father's bosom had a beginning when He became a man.

Here we have the present tense used to deduce eternity, as it is in some other places in the Scriptures. The Lord said "Before Abraham was, I AM" and thereby showed that HE was eternal. If He had said "Before Abraham was, I was", it need only have meant that He was older than Abraham, but the present tense gives the sense of eternal existence — no beginning and no end. In John 8:24, the Lord said, "If ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins". The insertion of the pronoun "he" in the A.V. is quite unwarranted. The context does not show that the Lord had said that He was anybody that the "He" could refer to. It is the assertion of His eternal Godhead. There are other similar passages.

Why then, argue the opposers, did John 1:1, which clearly refers to eternity, use the past tense. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". One feels that the answer to this is that the inspired writing is taking us back to the earliest conceivable beginning of anything at all, and saying that the Word was already there. It is the past eternity here, and the future eternity is not in view. Where the thought of eternity without end as well as without beginning is brought before us, the present tense is used. Of course with God there is no past or future, but that is beyond our comprehension. For our finite minds the Holy Spirit uses words that are within our grasp.

Another objection centres round the preposition "in" which here is the Greek word *eis* denoting "motion towards", similar to our word "into" or "unto". If I say "I walked in the house" it indicates that I was walking in the house all the time, but if I say "I walked into the house", it indicates that my presence in the house was due to my walking into it. In English, I cannot say, "I am into the house", but in Greek that form of words could be used, and it would indicate that my present position in the house is due to my past moving into it. Consequently (say the objectors), the preposition *eis* shows that He is in the Father's bosom as a result of a past act of movement into it. To this objection we answer that "*eis*" does not necessarily denote physical motion. When one believes in the Son of God (John 3:16), the preposition "in" is *eis*. It denotes a movement of the heart or will. This *eis* of "in the Father's bosom" shows movement of the affections. We have here another example of the way these teachers reason from the finite when they are dealing with the infinite. If there is movement here it is the eternal movement of Divine affections. What could be a more beautiful or profound thought? Let us not dare to doubt that a Father's bosom has been the blessed portion of the Son for all eternity, His rightful and deserved place. As one has written "How fearful we should be, lest we admit of any confession of faith that would defraud the Divine bosom

of its eternal ineffable delights, and which would tell our God He knew not a Father's joy, and would tell our Lord that He knew not a Son's joy in that bosom from all eternity" (The Son of God, by J. G. Bellett).

01.05. Two Texts used Support New Theory

Dronsfield ESOF: 05 Two Texts used to Support the New Theory TWO TEXTS USED TO SUPPORT THE NEW THEORY "This day I have begotten Thee"

We now come to certain texts which have been used to support temporal sonship. One of these is first mentioned in Psalms 2:7, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee". It is quoted three times in the New Testament Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5. This sentence is taken up to show that the Lord's Sonship began when He was begotten on a certain day. The usual interpretation by those leaders whom we should remember with respect (Hebrews 13:7) is that this does refer to the Lord's incarnation when He was born in time, and that it speaks of the Lord's Sonship in manhood. These brethren never thought of it as casting a doubt on the Lord's Eternal Sonship which they regarded as true and distinct, not to be confused with the text. Some divided the text into two — "Thou art My Son" being His Eternal Sonship, and "This day have I begotten Thee" His Sonship in time. One would not contend with anybody who is satisfied with this explanation. For those who may feel that this interpretation is not quite convincing, it may be as well to look at the passage more closely. It was not the interpretation made by the ancient orthodox scholars who lived before the so-called Brethren movement, for they regarded it as an affirmation of the Lord's Divine Sonship throughout.

Firstly, let us look at Psalms 2:1-12. Beginning with the time when the nations are raging against the LORD's anointed, it goes on to speak of the day when the King is established on the holy hill of Zion, ruling the nations with a rod of iron. We find that in this context the decree is made, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee". So "this day" in the Psalm appears to be referring to the beginning of His glorious reign.

Secondly, Acts 13:33. This is in the context of the resurrection (Acts 13:30). In Acts 13:33, the quotation from the psalm is given to support the statement that God has raised up Jesus. Many think that this does not refer to His being raised from among the dead as in Acts 13:30, but to His being raised high above all, but in either case it does not refer to His lowly birth in a manger.

Thirdly, Hebrews 1:5. Here the quotation is given to show that He is so much better than the angels having obtained by inheritance a more excellent Name than they. Is this inheritance connected with His birth in manhood? If not, why is the quotation given here? Does it not fit in better if it has to do with the inheritance that is His Own by Eternal Sonship?

Fourthly, Hebrews 5:5. Here it is connected with the text, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec". Melchisedec is seen (as a type) made like the Son of God, without father or mother, descent, beginning of days or end of life (Hebrews 7:3). But the Lord by incarnation had a legal father, true mother, descent (genealogy) and beginning of days. To bring in a quotation which refers to the days of His birth, when the whole point is the eternal continuance of His priesthood does not seem right. It is His Sonship in eternity that is more suitable to the context. So orthodox Christians have taught that this verse refers to "eternal generation", to which we have already

referred; that "This day" or "Today" has the well known meaning (to them) of the Eternal Today, the ever present now, a decree declared by the Infinite God.

One leaves it to the reader to decide. We have shown, however, that it is a very inadequate reference to support such a revolutionary new doctrine as temporal sonship.

Luke 1:35. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God". This verse is much used by opponents of Eternal Sonship. Attention is drawn to the words "therefore also", and it is said that the child became the Son of God by the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of the power of the Highest. But the passage before us is indited with the perfect accuracy of the Holy Spirit, and the exact words need to be examined.

One of the points stressed by the ancient expositors is the term "Holy Thing". The adjective "holy" is definitely neuter, and "Holy Thing" is the accurate English translation. There must be a reason why it is neuter and not masculine, and the reason is that the perfect manhood conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was not a person in itself, but a nature. Though body, soul and spirit, it was personal only because the Eternal Person of the Son of God took it to Himself. It had no separate personality. This brings us to the heart of the mystery of the incarnation which no human mind can comprehend. Body, soul and spirit make up a person in every merely human individual, but in His case it was a nature, made personal only because He took it into His Person. He is One Person, not two. Everything that the Man Christ Jesus experienced was the experience of the Son of God. There were not two sons, but only one. Because of the overshadowing of the power of the Highest, that Holy Thing, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, is rightly called the Son of God. He went through human experiences from birth to death, with human body, human soul and human spirit, yet the Person who did so was never anyone else but the Eternal Son of God. This is a great mystery, and all the historic fundamental errors concerning His Person have been attempts to explain it in some measure. It is inexplicable. He is a real Man and true God in One Person. The two natures, manhood and Deity, are not joined together to form one nature, but are united in One Person. They ever remain distinct but are never separated. Their union is personal, not consubstantial.

Therefore, it is quite true that the Holy Thing born of the Virgin Mary could not be called the Son of God without the overshadowing of the power of the Highest, but neither His Eternal Person nor His Eternal Sonship changed at all at that time.

01.06. The Triune Name

Dronsfield ESOF: 06 The Triune Name THE TRIUNE NAME

We believe we have written enough to show that the Lord's Sonship is eternally bound up with His Godhead. finally let us think briefly of the Triune Name of Matthew 28:29, "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit". The Name of the Father proves Godhead, for it shows that He is the Source of all (Ephesians 4:6). The Name of the Son proves Godhead for it shows that He is of the same essence as the Father (John 5:18). The Name of the Holy Spirit proves Godhead, for God is spirit (John 4:24). The Spirit of God is the essence of God.

These three Names are One.

W. R. Dronsfield.

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02.00. The "Brethren" since 1870

The "Brethren" since 1870 Also Miscellaneous Papers Of Interest This book was written by Mr W.R. Dronsfield, and is reproduced with his permission. It is written from an "Exclusive" viewpoint, and while I might not agree with every statement, this book is presented as a valuable source of history, and as an example of how some within "Exclusive" ranks would view the events in "Brethren" history.

Publishers Note This book was originally written as a sequel to Andrew Miller's little volume which had shown the "brethren" in their origin and subsequent division into "Open" and "Exclusive" groups. The object of writing the sequel was to give the then current generation (1965) an understanding of how we came to be meeting as we meet, a humble explanation of the divisions which had occurred and with the desire that we should avoid the pitfalls previously encountered in our history. Its writing has been updated to deal with the reunion which was consummated in 1974. This reprint has in mind that there is now a new generation which has arisen since the re-union exercises of the years to 1975, that there are enquirers from previous sad divisions amongst brethren and from the denominations as well as some in fellowship who would benefit from a clear and precise presentation of the situation as it is now.

Some have advised that this history could be updated in relation to the defining of a doctrine of "Local Autonomy" amongst "Open" brethren and the disintegration of Tunbridge Wells and ex-Taylor groups, but we feel that the need is to show the situation of those who understand the scriptural imperative that the only ground of gathering for the saints of God is the one body of our blessed Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, in separation from evil giving unhindered fresh communion with the Father and the Son. This the history achieves as originally written.

It is felt that the correspondence during the period of coming together (appended to the history in 1975) is a beautiful picture of the Holy Spirit's exercising of hearts concerning the honour of the name of the Lord Jesus. The various groups had been excised about the dishonour to the Lord because of the separation of brethren who all maintained the truth of the UNITY of the body of Christ. The letters should be valuable for those who have been taught that such a reunion could not be scriptural, and also to show that scriptural principles were strongly upheld. There was not compromise in order to gain unity. The author was brought by the working of the Holy Spirit as a young man to see the truth of the one body and our responsibility to walk in that pathway. He has proved the blessedness of giving the Lord His rightful place in the assembly through many years and was personally involved in the reunion exercises, so that he writes from personal exercise before the Lord. We commend it to our readers. A Word Of Explanation At the Grove City conference in August 1969, there were a number of meetings for prayer and discussion concerning the fellowship matters facing us, particularly our separation from the so-called "Kelly-Mory" brethren in this country. Not being able to arrive at any substantial agreement, it was the consensus that we make these matters the subject of earnest prayer, individually and collectively, so that we might know the mind of the Lord.

Following these meetings, a number of brethren indicated that they did not have copies of the reports and correspondence, since in most cases only one copy had come to each assembly, and this over a number of years. It was felt by many that this information should be available to every concerned brother if there was to be intelligent prayer. With this in mind, the material following has been collected and reprinted for the benefit of all. We have purposely avoided private correspondence and excerpts which might be misinterpreted. All of the material has been previously available to all in the gatherings.

It might also be well to mention that prayer meetings specifically regarding the fellowship matters are being held on a regularly scheduled basis in Detroit, St. Louis and Charlotte. Should there be others holding special meetings on this basis, we would be glad to know about it, and will seek to make it known in the future. As matters develop further, we will (D.V.) seek to have any pertinent papers reproduced on special sheets for insertion in this binder, so that all who are interested may have a fairly complete, up-to-date folio.

02.01. The Open Brethren

Chapter One The Open Brethren The story of the Brethren, as told by Mr. A. Miller, closed in the 1870's and nearly a century has passed since then (1965). All the great movements of the Spirit of God have suffered much decline in the course of 100 years, and the Brethren have certainly been no exception. That which is committed to human responsibility always fails, but the Truth abides. The foundation of God stands sure, although iniquity may abound. In the following pages it is desired to trace briefly the history of the Brethren up to the present day. We will try to avoid paying unnecessary attention to details of controversies long dead, and rather concentrate on those matters, painful though many of them are, which have relevance to us in the present. A. Miller's History left the Brethren divided into two camps - the "Open" and the "Exclusive". The Open Brethren, from their beginning took the line that all meetings were independent units. Discipline and administration were the responsibility of the local gathering alone and each assembly managed its own affairs according to its own standards before the Lord, and had no right to judge or interfere in the management of a neighbouring assembly. This principle had the advantage that it was easy to follow and did not lead to much exercise of conscience. If two meetings ceased to have fellowship with one another, or one meeting split into two opposed parties (and this often happened) the other meetings could continue in exactly the same relationship with both factions, and receive from either. If an offender were justly disciplined by his meeting, he might go to a neighbouring assembly and be received. The decision of the second meeting would be its own responsibility and would not concern the first. The offender could then travel round the gatherings with a letter of commendation from the second and would not be affected by the discipline of the first meeting at all, while that meeting would not consider it a matter for their own exercise of conscience unless the brother they had disciplined came back to them, which he would not be likely to do. It could happen on the other hand that a brother might be put out of a meeting unjustly. He would then be readily received by neighbouring meetings, but the decision of the unjust meeting could not be challenged, nor would the spiritual judgment of those in neighbouring meetings be used to put the matter right in his own locality. A teacher of serious error might be refused by other meetings, but his local gathering could not be disowned. Hence those who were defiled by remaining in his meeting could still be received, providing they did not themselves hold or teach his views. The principle of independency must, of necessity, be in opposition to the scriptural principle that association with evil defiles.

We do not desire, however, to be unduly critical of the Open Brethren, and must acknowledge that most of them are godly and faithful believers. We can thank God that they have not lost the Gospel, and their zeal in that direction has produced much fruit for the Lord. Large numbers of their missionaries have gone to other lands, pioneering independent meetings there. These brethren go out in dependence on the Lord and He does not fail them. The missionary magazine of the Open Brethren is called "Echoes of Service" and the Editors act as a channel for gifts. Consequently Open Brethren missionaries are often called "Echoes of Service" missionaries. As regards the British Isles, about 20 full-time evangelists go into villages with their tents and

equipment, and hold Gospel Campaigns in places where there is no evangelical witness. They are supported by a trust known as "Counties Evangelistic Work". Also 'Mobile Units' have been purchased by gifts from assemblies. These are vans equipped with loudspeakers and other suitable apparatus, for use in towns, mainly London, and manned by Gospel preachers that volunteer for open air preaching in the evenings after their daily work. In addition to this, in Great Britain, there are at least 35 full-time evangelists and teachers, and also a good number in Northern Ireland, who go round the assemblies and in faith rely on the Lord's provision alone depending on gifts from believers as the Spirit moves, with no central fund or committee dispensing financial aid. Such work is highly commendable and we cannot criticise it in principle or practice, except perhaps that these full-time workers must wait to be 'invited' by assemblies to take meetings which would not be necessary if they arranged their own itinerary. Very few of these workers are fully aware of their origin or of Newton's heresy. We are confident that the Lord has used these evangelists, and will still use them mightily, for the salvation of souls and the extension of His Kingdom.

There are at least five Open Brethren magazines in the British Isles. The 'Witness' and 'Harvester' have the largest circulations but they are of the interdenominational school of thought, the Witness having become so during the last few years. The other three are "Precious Seed" mainly for brethren in the West of England; "The Believers Magazine" mainly circulating in Scotland, and "Assembly Testimony" circulating in Northern Ireland.

These three magazines, especially the last, seek to maintain a separation from the sects of Christendom, but they still teach firmly the principle of independency.

A. Miller wrote in his book that comparatively little in the way of written testimony had issued from the press of the Open Brethren. This cannot be said in the twentieth century, and they have had many sound and gifted writers who have produced useful works of the conservative evangelical kind.

Nevertheless, although they have the truth of the Gospel, we must maintain that they have lost the truth of the Church and have become a system of independent gatherings quite contrary to the truth of the One Body "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth". This perversion has not failed to be the author of confusion and the meetings of Open Brethren vary in every kind and degree from the tight gatherings which will not receive anybody unless he first separates himself from everybody else, to those which are in effect interdenominational movements of the present day, and receive any stranger without question to the breaking of bread. Between these two extremes there are large numbers of meetings that are - locally- run on fairly sound New testament lines.

Rather unexpectedly in view of their great diversity, there is one doctrine and practice which is held by all Open Brethren assemblies - except perhaps by one or two of exclusive origin - which is that baptism must be only for believers of a responsible age on confession of faith. Most meetings refuse to allow a person to break bread unless he has been baptised as a believer, and if he was baptised as an infant it does not count in their eyes. The doctrine of household baptism is rigidly rejected and no teaching of it would be allowed. Some meetings might tolerate an individual who held such a view, but he would have to keep quiet on the subject. The majority of the gatherings practise the "closed oversight" system. There are a number of brethren in each meeting who are

the elders, and this group is called the "oversight". These elders are appointed to the office and when a vacancy occurs in the oversight, a brother is invited by the remaining elders to fill it. Those who are not elders have no voice in this appointment. We believe this departs from the scriptural order. In the early days of the church some elders were appointed by apostles or their delegates, but since apostles have ceased, there is no mention of apostolic succession and this therefore no longer applies. It is plain, however, that where there was no definite apostolic ordination, the Holy Ghost still raised up overseers (Acts 20:8) and that the assembly was told to "know" or recognise them as such (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The qualifications of a bishop (elder) are found for our guidance in 1 Timothy 3:1 - Judges The one who is moved by the Holy Ghost will take up the office of a bishop on his own spiritual exercise and the brethren will become aware of the fact and acknowledge it. Needless to say, the person who in fleshly pride desires the pre-eminence will not be "known" by a spiritual gathering. The practice of a "closed oversight" often leads to the appointment of a good "party man" to the office, while the true overseer is overlooked and left outside the inner circle.

It is worth noting that a common practice is, in effect, to recognise two fellowships. A person may break bread as a believer for a time and then be asked if he wishes to become a member of the assembly. Often a letter of commendation is not desired until the believer asks to be put on the list as a member. Thus there are two memberships (1) membership of the Body of Christ, (2) membership of the local meeting, and one can infer that in practice membership of the second needs higher qualifications! When one membership is possible without the other there can be no clear perception that a local gathering should be no more and no less than an expression of the whole body.

It was a very strong point amongst the early "Brethren" that the Holy Spirit should be allowed to have full control in the various gatherings. This principle has been gradually let slip amongst Open Brethren. Now an opportunity for 'open ministry' is very rare, and readings have been abandoned in many places. Even where Bible readings are held, they are often controlled by an appointed chairman who introduces the subject or chapter by a talk of varying length and then leaves the meeting open for discussion or questions.

Pre-arranged ministry is the custom in some places at the Breaking of Bread. Although the early brethren abandoned the Judaistic practice of using the natural senses as aids to worship, organs or pianos are now being introduced in rapidly increasing numbers at the Open Brethren morning worship meetings. The way has been paved for this, as for a great many years, the organ has been used at their Gospel meetings.

Many Open Brethren meetings, especially in Scotland, call themselves the "Christian Brethren" and label themselves as such on their notice boards. There has been a tendency in England lately for some of their places of worship to be changed from being called 'halls' to 'chapels', and a few have begun calling their meeting places "Evangelical Churches". Interdenominational activities have been much increased since the war. Their almost universal participation in the "Billy Graham Campaigns" gave this tendency a powerful impetus. These interdenominational activities lead directly to unscriptural practices such as prayer meetings where sisters take audible part with their heads uncovered.

Division in the Open Brethren - "Needed Truth"

There can be no clear-cut division amongst those who practise independent principles. Obviously a thing which already has no cohesion cannot be divided. Pass a knife through a pile of sand and it remains as before. Apart from local incidents Open Brethren cannot separate from one another and this appears on the surface to be a good thing. It is often forgotten that independency makes separation from evil impossible also. The only way a division is possible amongst Open Brethren is for a group of meetings to forsake independency and separate from those who practise it. In other words, this means that they cease to be Open Brethren altogether. For, suppose there were two groups of meetings, both practising independency, then, according to their principles, one meeting cannot be less independent of another in the same group than it is of one in the other group. In any case, independents profess not to recognise groups or circles of meetings.

Some talk of a division between "Closed-Open" and "Wide Open" meetings, but this is not accurate. It is true that most of the meetings in Northern Ireland and many in Scotland and Northern England are "Closed-Open" and they would be horror-struck to attend the "Wide Open" meetings such as are found in large numbers in the South and West of England. But they are still independent gatherings and are all included in the directory of "Assemblies in Britain and other parts" published by Pickering & Inglis Ltd. They have different practices but are in the same fellowship.

There has, however, been one break away from Independency and this occurred in 1889. Certain brethren formed another party and this has been called the "Needed Truth" company after the name of their magazine which is now obtainable from the Needed Truth Publishing Office, Assembly Hall, George Lane, Bromley, Kent. As early as 1876 questions were published and answered in the magazine "The Northern Witness". This was the first sign that many were becoming uneasy concerning the loose condition of a large number of meetings. By 1889 this course of teaching, started twelve years previously, had obtained a good number of adherents and many of the meetings were calling themselves the "Church of God" in their locality and claiming that no other company of Christians was a church of God in a true sense at all. They rejected the doctrine of independency, but instead of the true scriptural unity which is brought about by the Holy Spirit, they instituted a man-made unity brought about by human organisation, by means of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. First there was the oversight of a city; next came the County Oversight and over them was the National Oversight consisting of the brethren ruling over all the "Churches of God" in the country. In 1904, a dispute between the Scottish Overseers and the oversights of England, Wales and Ireland made an international oversight necessary. Such ideas, of course, are quite foreign to Scripture, although similar to the system of government in most denominations. It is in effect, the substitution of an earthly head for the Head in Heaven. As has occurred in other tight, sectarian circles, a serious error was introduced and forced upon the simple believers by the overseeing caste. Needed Truth Brethren were told that they must not address the Lord Jesus in worship, as worship had to be addressed only to the Father. This rule is still enforced amongst them and must be regarded as a grave departure from God's will "that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." (John 5:23). Worship is the expression of this honour and therefore must be paid to the Son in like degree as to the Father. So far as can be ascertained, the Needed Truth brethren have much decreased in numbers since their beginnings, and their few meetings are predominantly in Northern England.

02.02. The Exclusive Brethren (so-called)

Chapter Two The Exclusive Brethren (so-called)

Early Departure

Andrew Miller's book "The Brethren", has shown us the happy and flourishing state of those who had rejected the "Open" principles and had carried on in the old paths. We have seen something of their unworldliness, hunger for the Word alone and zeal for the Gospel, and how the Lord blessed them by giving light as to the truth, increase in numbers and a harvest of precious souls. It should be noted, incidentally, that the term "Exclusive" was first applied to them by their opponents. They accepted the description gradually, because they said it was a right thing to be exclusive of evil, but no well-instructed brother would have agreed that it was the name of the company. They knew no name but Christ - so they were Christians. They had no desire to be called by the name of any merely human person or any system of doctrine. They were `brethren' no more and no less, than all other Christians. The very use of the capital B in "Brethren" is not strictly accurate, as it implies a brotherhood distinct from other believers.

Yet in a history such as this it is necessary to use certain terms in order to avoid long and tedious circumlocutions of words in describing believers who gathered in various ways and places. One apologises for this, but it is due to the ruin that has come in. The story of the "Exclusive Brethren" is a very sad one. One can see the activity of the enemy of souls, working secretly while men slept, working as an angel of light and even latterly as a roaring lion. With our eyes opened after the even it, we can see how even the most godly and discerning men did not perceive what he was doing, until the harm had become cumulative and obvious to all but the blinded.

It is plain that some of the pristine purity and unworldliness of these brethren was becoming tarnished by the 1870's. Many had come in who had not experienced fully the original exercises. Mr. G.V. Wigram who died in 1879, observed "we had to pray out the truth upon our knees in persevering prayer, but now it can be bought up cheaply."

Because of the great increase in the numbers of meetings, further light was being sought as to the Scriptural principles in the practical administration of the assembly. It was observed - firstly it is believed by G.V. Wigram -that Scripture always speaks of the church (singular) of a town regardless of the number of gatherings in it, but the churches (plural) of a province or country. From this it was inferred that the local church of a town consisted of all the true Christians in that town, and were to be regarded as the local gathering for the purposes of administration. The different sects and systems made this impossible, but those gathered out of these systems must obey the true scriptural principles for themselves, and act as the whole local church would have acted if failure had not come in. So it was put into practice that all meetings in one town were to regard themselves as a single unit for purposes of reception, discipline and other administration.

Now this, no doubt, was based on true scriptural precedent, but they did not take account of the vast difference between the ancient towns and cities in the Scriptures and the conurbations and

giant towns of today. A lot of argument and difference of opinion developed as to the practical problems relating to the meetings in the huge town of London. In New Testament times, cities were small enough for a man to walk from one end to the other in 10 to 15 minutes, while between the cities there was such poor transport that a visit to the neighbouring town would take a lot of travelling time. It was quite natural, therefore, that the Christians in a single town would consult together on everything, regardless of the fact that they may have met in different houses for the study of the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship breaking of bread and prayers.

J.N.Darby, by then aged and greatly revered, was very keen that the church in London should regard itself as one unit, although he advocated that the meetings in outlying districts such as Croydon, which were not in the geographical boundaries of London, should be pruned off. He said that they had been allowed in the "parent body" while they were small and new, but should now become churches in their own right. He seemed to regard any attack on the conception of one local church in London as advocating independent churches. It is not clear why he thought so. Could not the single unit have been the church in a borough? The outcome of all this was that brethren representative of some 26 London meetings used to meet regularly on Saturday nights in a room at London Bridge and later at 145 Cheapside. These meetings were meant to be channels of communication only. As they were not the local church, but only representative brethren, they were not expected to bind or loose anything but merely to pass on and receive information to and from their respective gatherings. But they soon began to recommend decisions, even if they could not ratify them, and in practice a decision taken at Cheapside would be accepted without question, especially on minor details.

Also the Park St. meeting at Islington, being the most central of the gatherings and containing a good number of the most influential brethren, began to acquire an unrecognized and unofficial power and authority. There was a monthly brothers' meeting at Park St. for all the London meetings, where all important administrative decisions were made. It was the seed of an ecclesiastical hierarchy that would become full-grown one day. We shall see how it developed as we continue our history. The Kelly Division of 1881 On August 22nd. 1879, the meeting at Ramsgate, Kent, divided into two factions. This local division was the focal point of the general division of 1881, and we would like to have spared our readers all the details that led up to the Ramsgate split. Nevertheless, to get a true picture, we feel that some explanation of the quarrel at Ramsgate must be attempted so we give the following account of the events that preceded it. The meeting at Ryde, Isle of Wight, was reputed to be in a poor spiritual condition. In 1868 they received a brother T.C. who had previously evaded the English law of the time and, by residing in France for the required period, married there his deceased wife's sister. Years later this became known in other meetings, and many being unhappy about the unrighteousness of this brother's act, the Ryde meeting in 1877 censured T.C. and stopped his ministry. He withdrew from fellowship the next year but was not put out. Many (including Mr. W. Kelly who made his views quite plain) felt that the Ryde meeting should have cleared itself by declaring T.C. out of fellowship.

Some seceded from the Ryde meeting and set up another table at the Masonic Hall. This, however, was considered a divisive act by the other meetings in the Isle of Wight and they continued to recognise the original meeting at the Temperance Hall.

Now aged Dr. E. Cronin who broke bread at the meeting in Kennington, London, and had been one of the original brethren who broke bread at Dublin in 1826 when a medical student, got it into his head that he would force brethren to recognise the meeting at the Masonic Hall. Accordingly on February 8th 1879 he went down to Ryde and broke bread with the Masonic Hall brethren and, against the advice of his great friend, J.N.D., again did so on March 14th. One wonders why he thought this would move the brethren to change their minds and be inclined towards the Masonic Hall. It certainly did not do so, and many in London called upon Kennington to discipline the aged doctor. This Kennington was unwilling to do, but they disavowed all association with the Masonic Hall, Ryde.

One feels surprised at the demand that was made by the leaders in London to excommunicate Dr Cronin in view of his age and previous godly walk. Surely some concession should be made to old age in view of the scriptural command to honour white hair. It is well known that some in extreme old age get obsessions and small delusions even though their intelligence does not seem otherwise impaired. Surely love and respect should pass over the indiscretions of aged brethren, even though they would not be excused in younger men. There seems to have been a lack of love in the attitude towards Dr Cronin. One feels that a declaration that Dr Cronin's course made no difference to the judgment of brethren as to Ryde, should have been sufficient to maintain godly order. When Kennington has hesitated to put out Dr Cronin for several months, on Tuesday August 19th 1879, a meeting of the assembly at Park Street was held in which the brethren decided that Kennington assembly had been apathetic too long and declared Dr Cronin out of fellowship thus disowning those who sympathised with him. This declaration was posted immediately to various country meetings in the surrounding counties including Ramsgate. However, on that very same evening, another meeting had been held at Kennington, in which it was decided to put Dr Cronin out of fellowship, quite without knowledge of the decision at Park St. at the same time. Consequently at the Cheapside meeting on Saturday, it was accepted that the Park St. declaration was annulled and Kennington was still in full fellowship as before.

Thus sadly did Dr Cronin end his long association with his brethren. The Lord took him to Himself in February 1882 at 81 years of age.

Now after all these details we can explain the Ramsgate split. On the next Lord's Day, Ramsgate had received the Park St. declaration but had not received the news that this declaration had been annulled owing to the simultaneous action at Kennington. A difference of opinion arose and many of the brethren there, feeling that they must act immediately in line with Park St., left the dissentients and began to break bread apart. Those brethren who separated in line with Park St. became known as the Guildford Hall company, and the others as the Abbots Hill company. When the Guildford Hall faction heard of the annulment of the Park St. declaration they desired reunion, but the faction at Abbots Hill would not forgive their secession and insisted that they must be received back as "individuals". This condition the Guildford Hall brethren were not willing to accept.

We will not weary readers with the fourteen face-saving proposals and counter-proposals put forward by the two companies during the next two years. It is sufficient to say there was clear evidence of fleshly pride working on both sides. Finally Guildford Hall commended a brother to Park St. hoping thereby to obtain recognition. Park St. thereupon decided that they were forced to investigate and come to a conclusion as to which faction should be recognised and three meetings

were held in April 1881 in which representatives of both Abbotts Hill and Guildford Hall stated their respective cases. Guildford Hall was eventually recognised as the "true company", which could have been predicted, as Guildford Hall had made the division through its loyalty to Park St in the first place.

William Kelly of the Blackheath meeting, however, together with many others, was by no means happy about this decision as he favoured Abbotts Hill. It is clear that Mr Kelly had been sympathetic to Dr. Cronin. So the "Park St. Judgment" became a test of communion and all who could not subscribe to it were outside.

Now, from this distance of time, it seems plain that Park St. had set itself up, in practice, to be the head of the Brethren, thus usurping the authority of the Head in Heaven. Not only did it come to a decision about events not in its district, ignoring the 35 meetings in Kent, but it insisted that all meetings must obey that decision or be out of fellowship. If some refused to accept the judgment they were said to be acting independently. They surely failed to see that unity must be by the Spirit and not by enforced human authority. Those who could not toe the line were not acting independently but were resisting ecclesiastical presumption. Yet both sides accused the other of independency! It is doubtful whether Mr Kelly and his supporters would have realised when they accused Park St. of being independent that actually their error was just the opposite. They were trying to set up a manmade unity. Mr Kelly did object, however, to the "regimentation" of the Park St. judgment. He said in "Christian Unity and Fellowship" now republished by C.A. Hammond, price 1/- (which booklet contains the slightly abridged notes of a lecture delivered in 1882 and is well worth study) - "It cannot seriously be expected that those who compose the church of God should forego the character of a family with its fathers, young men and babes, to imitate an army under martial law. Regimental order is as far as possible from that which the written word prescribes to God's church, where, instead of a regulation standard, the utmost variety prevails, high and low, strong and weak or even uncomely."

J.N.Darby wrote in a letter dated Nov, 26th 1881, "It was necessary to come to a decision, because all means during several months had been used to induce the opposing ones to humble themselves, but without fruit". Yes, a decision was certainly necessary but had Park St. any right to make the decision for the whole body? The Holy Spirit makes true unity, and we cannot do so, but we are exhorted to keep the unity which is already made by the Spirit on His own basis. This is not to advocate independency. These acting on independent principles would have recognised both companies, ignoring the disunity and thus covering up the evil. Those who desire to keep the unity of the Spirit cannot recognise that which produces disunity, but will not rest until there is restoration at the seat of trouble and the evil of selfwill expurgated. Such restoration is not produced by edict, but only by "prayer and fasting". And those primarily responsible for the final recognition of a restored and self-judged company, (although that company may prove to be a remnant) are those who are near the scene itself, that is the neighbouring companies, not an eminent company of gifted brethren who are a great way off. One would desire such a restoration to be speedy, but long suffering knows no time limit.

It is perhaps necessary to stress that there was no fundamental cause for local division at Ramsgate other than self-will. Where there is a clear cut case of fundamentally evil doctrine or gross moral evil it is not a question of reconciliation between brethren, but of individuals and

companies being clear of the defiling evil.

02.03. Ecclesiasticism Tightens its Grip

Chapter Three Ecclesiasticism Tightens its Grip The Grant Division of 1884 The Park St. Judgment of 1881 was generally accepted in America, perhaps for the simple reason that J.N. Darby was very well known and beloved in America while Mr Kelly was relatively unknown outside the British Isles at that time. A very gifted teacher and exponent of the word had emerged in America named Mr. F.W. Grant of Plainfield, New Jersey. In 1881 he was 47 years of age and already well known. His forthright ministry was, however, causing some resentment amongst the leading brethren in England who were centred around Park St. London. He had written an article named "Unity of the Church in a City" in which he attacked the rigid line that a local church was one unit within the boundaries of a city or town. He pointed out that this was regulating spiritual matters according to the arbitrary geographical boundaries of secular authorities, and that London was as vast as, and more populated than, a province in Roman times. He objected to the London Brothers' Meeting that passed decisions for the huge London church. This, as can well be expected, did not please the leading brethren in London. A doctrine had developed in England about this time that the reception of Eternal Life did not usually take place until a period of time had elapsed after new Birth: that this period of time might be considerable and that the sealing of the Spirit (i.e. the reception of the Spirit) occurred at the time of this later receiving of Eternal Life. J.N.D. in his old age seems to have accepted these views. In a conference in Croydon, England, in 1881 when F.W. Grant was visiting the country, he had a disagreement with Mr. Darby, but the aged J.N.D. broke off the discussion and refused to continue what was developing into an argument. Regrettably, Mr. Grant then left the room.

Briefly, Mr. Grant taught the following:

(1) He claimed that every believer in the Lord Jesus was sealed with the Holy Ghost; that he might have the Holy Ghost and yet be in bondage, not having peace or being sure he was justified. London Brethren maintained on the other hand, that nobody was sealed until he fully understood the Gospel.

(2) That the experience of the seventh chapter of Romans was the record of a saved man seeking holiness and fruit for God, and not of a sinner seeking peace. London brethren maintained that the man in Romans 7:1-25 did not yet have the Holy Spirit.

(3) Eternal life was given to a person at New Birth, from the first moment of quickening.

(4) That Old Testament saints were possessors of eternal life as well as those of the present dispensation, and this life was in the Son, although it was not manifested until the Son came. He guarded against the idea, however, that the O.T. saints were in the church. London brethren taught that eternal life was a dispensational thing, exclusively the portion of the church. In September 1883 F.W.G. sent to the leading brethren in America and Europe a tract called "Life and the Spirit" and invited their comments. He revised and enlarged this tract and published it in 1884 with the title "Life in Christ and Sealing with the Spirit".

Now an English brother, Lord Adalbert P. Cecil was, accompanied by Mr. Alfred Mace, on a preaching tour of America in 1884, and began a concentrated attack against F.W. Grant, speaking against him in many gatherings in U.S.A. and Canada. All the opposition to F.W.G. came from him, and he claimed that he and Mr. Mace were acting this way in America as the representatives of the English brethren. It is clear that he knew he had the full backing of the leading brethren in London.

A.P.C. and Alfred Mace got a firm footing in the Natural History Hall meeting at Montreal, for they more or less dominated the assembly for three months, causing a local division, and pressed hard for the rejection of F.W.G. In November 1884 Mr. Grant (perhaps unwisely) came to Montreal hoping to prevent division and his views were discussed from Nov. 15th to 25th. On the 29th day of November a circular signed by 38 brethren in Montreal rejected F.W.G. as a teacher. On December 12th a "last admonition" signed by three brethren was sent to F.W.G. who was then in Ottawa. F.W.G. refused it and stated that it was only from a section of the meeting in Montreal. On December 17th a paper was read out three times to the assembly at Montreal, declaring F.W.G. out of fellowship as a heretic, and each time 40 dissented, but in spite of this dissent the declaration was stated to have been passed and F.W.G. was put out on a slender, majority vote! The dissenters next Lord's Day (it would have been better if they had waited) broke bread at another meeting place in Craig Street in fellowship with F.W.G. Of course, the Plainfield assembly where Mr. F.W.G. resided, rejected the Natural History Hall meeting and so did the majority of American assemblies. So the leaders of the brethren in London had managed to engineer the exclusion of F.W.G. although all admitted that his errors (if they were errors) were not fundamental, and the complaint against him was only that he had formed a party by publishing his tracts! How many brethren have published tracts not quite in line with the thoughts of their brethren, and have not been disciplined! But there was no mercy for F.W.Grant. By this time then, London had got rid of all British brethren who were not willing to follow their lead in the Kelly division of 1881, and all American brethren who did not bow to them in 1884. The brethren of the Continent of Europe as yet were undivided in fellowship with London. The Grant brethren were mostly confined to U.S.A., Canada and the Bahamas.

Alfred Mace confessed in later life that he had acted wrongly towards Mr. Grant, but Lord Cecil was drowned at the age of 48 while still campaigning against him.

Further details of the Grant division can be read in the booklet "Matters relating to Montreal" obtainable from the editor. The Stuart Division of 1885

Mr. Charles Esme Stuart, a scholar and teacher, descended on his father's side from the royal house of Stuart, his mother being a maid-of-honour to Queen Adelaide, as Duchess of Clarence, was a Christian in the meeting at Reading, Berks. He had some eccentric doctrinal views, maintaining that Christ made propitiation in heaven after death but before His resurrection while He was not in the body. This belief was based on Old Testament types. He agreed that the Blood was the sole basis of atonement, but said that, before the atonement was complete, it was necessary for the Lord to present the Blood to God in heaven, after it had been spilt on earth. This was to conform to the type, as the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the holiest after the animal had been slain outside. This view was rejected by all brethren of note. We are sure that, if no division had been forced, the doctrine would have died with him, and it was not fundamental to

the faith. Before this Mr Stuart had brought out a pamphlet called "Christian Standing and Condition" which produced criticisms from J.B. Stoney and D.L. Higgins.

There were two sisters in the Reading meeting called the Misses Higgins, whose brother was a prominent leader in London (D.L. Higgins). They fell out with Mr. Stuart on a personal matter and accused him of malice. The meeting at Reading investigated the charge and found it baseless. A few, including the Misses Higgins, withdrew from fellowship. The brethren in London, beginning to feel their role as arbiter and regulator of all disputes among Brethren, in July 1885, called a large meeting to discuss Mr. Stuart and only London brethren were expected to speak. This meeting decided to refuse Mr. Stuart and the Reading gathering and support the few that had withdrawn. However a few meetings, including a small meeting in London, disowned the decision and continued with Mr. Stuart. Also many meetings in New Zealand continued in the Stuart fellowship The Lowe (or anti-Raven) Division of 1890

We now come to a division that does not fall into quite the same pattern as the previous three. Up to this time, all the divisions had been caused by brethren being forced out of fellowship by a central authority in London which had been arbitrarily assumed. In the 1890 trouble however, we find that a large number of meetings withdrew themselves on their own initiative. Most of these meetings were on the Continent which had been unaffected by previous cleavages.

Firstly we will present the simple history of events in this division and then discuss the doctrines and principles involved.

Before 1890, a teacher named Mr. F.E. Raven had risen to prominence. His meeting was at Greenwich, London, and he had attained a considerable eminence among the brethren in the Metropolis and elsewhere. During the two years from 1888 to 90, much concern and bewilderment arising over Mr. Raven's doctrine, he was questioned in readings and correspondence by many brethren such as Mr. Christopher McAdam, Dr. Cotton, Dr. C.D. Maynard, Mr. W.J. Lowe and others. They were not satisfied by the answers. In February 1890, Mr. J. Corbett charged F.E.R. with false doctrine and withdrew from the meeting at Greenwich. In May he published a circular letter giving his reasons. Greenwich meeting affirmed their fullest confidence in F.E.R. In the same month (May) F.E.R. commended one of his supporters, G. Boddy, to the Bexhill meeting although he knew his teachings were strongly opposed there. The Bexhill meeting refused the letter and requested Mr. Boddy to sit back until matters were investigated. The Greenwich meeting then wrote to Bexhill enquiring why a letter was refused which was signed by a brother in whom they had the fullest confidence (i.e. F.E.R.) Bexhill replied to this on June 8th stating their reasons. Greenwich, meanwhile had excommunicated Mr. J. Corbett for printing a "false and slanderous paper".

Greenwich answered Bexhill a fortnight later saying that "The question of the teaching of any particular brother is scarcely a matter to be discussed between assemblies". (Surely the principle of Open Brethrenism here!) Bexhill replied by rejecting Greenwich as an assembly (What haste!).

All the assemblies one by one decided whether they should support Bexhill or London and the division was consummated before the end of 1890. Mr. W. J. Lowe, who was greatly esteemed on the Continent, judged F.E.R. to be fundamentally in error and a large number of the continental meetings followed his lead. THE DOCTRINES INVOLVED

Now the errors alleged against Raven in 1890 can be put simply and briefly as follows: (1) The denial that every true believer in Christ necessarily has eternal life as a present possession (2) The denial of the Unity of the Person of Christ.

(3) The denial of the full humanity of Christ.

We can say quite emphatically that if these allegations had been clearly true, Bexhill's action would have been fully justified; also we are sure that nearly every meeting in the world would have rejected Mr. Raven and any supporters he might have collected. The fact is, however, that the doctrines of Raven, especially on the subject of eternal life, were by no means clear, and a student of the orthodox doctrine of the Person of Christ will see at once that (2) and (3) are opposite errors which could not appear together in any consistent scheme. Mr. W.J.Lowe, writing in February 1890 to Mr. Bradstock said, "It is no easy thing to find a way, as you seem to have done, through this intricate maze." So we are brought against the difficulty immediately that the issue in this division was an "intricate maze". Few could find their way through it, yet in a few months every believer in the assemblies was forced, whether he was simple or profound, well-taught or only a beginner, to decide whether Mr. F.E.Raven was in fundamental error or not. There can be no doubt that a large number of meetings on both sides followed their leaders blindly or maybe restricted their investigations to a few well chosen quotations from F.E.R.'s writings.

We had in mind to consider some of the quotations to show that Raven could have meant something other than alleged, but have decided not to do so as it might only stir up controversy now nearly dead. It is sufficient to say that no supporter of Raven defended the errors alleged against him (so far as the 1890 division is concerned) but always sought to show that he did not teach them.

Now it must not be supposed that the writer of these notes is a supporter of F.E. Raven and it will shortly be shown that he is not. Nevertheless Bexhill and their supporters cannot be left without the criticism that their action was hasty and premature. Many who have studied Raven's writings have come to the conclusion that (in 1890) he was misunderstood and misrepresented. This was the opinion of C.H. Mackintosh, J.B. Stoney and other well known and godly brethren of the time. In fact it can be shown that one of Mr. Raven's opponents when writing on the Unity of Christ's Person, carelessly leaned towards the error of Eutychianism and suggested that the Lord's manhood and deity could not be distinguished from one another. Those who claim to be separating from heterodoxy should be careful that they are thoroughly orthodox themselves. When we read the correspondence between F.E. Raven and his questioners, we may notice that Mr. Raven was far more interested in pressing his opinions than in satisfying the questioners' fears, and that his views were presented in a complex manner. Surely the sign of a good teacher is that he is able to present the truth in a clear and simple manner so that the hearer can understand. A man who is abstruse is not a good teacher. Now Raven had already built up a reputation for ministering the Word and had shown he was a man of clear mind and speech. Why then was he so confused when on the subject of eternal life, between the years of 1888-90? No doubt it was because he himself was confused for he referred later to "defective statements he had made on the road to light" but did not state what the defective statements had been, and he said his ideas had become "gradually clear". There was a more sinister reason, however, in that, consciously or unconsciously, Raven and the London "hierarchy" were indifferent, or even pleased, that certain

brethren who were not prepared to be 'yes-men' to the party line, should withdraw from fellowship. The practical effect of their secession was that Raven was established as the teacher and leader of the dominant faction in London. From that time until his death nobody could challenge his supremacy, although some of his doctrinal statements became wilder and more suspect. His teachings had a tendency towards the mystical, and the fiction had grown that only the spiritual would understand him because the things he taught were spiritually discerned. So the dissatisfied were quietened, not wishing to appear unspiritual. This was the seed of the deplorable mystical teaching that produced such sad degeneration amongst the 'Ravenite' brethren in the next two generations. The forming of a vocabulary and system of teaching which is only understood by the elite, is very satisfying to the flesh, but one has no doubt Raven would have got nowhere before the spiritual deterioration amongst the Exclusives had allowed the insidious emergence of centralism. Raven had confidence in the backing of the important brethren in London and had no need to be careful in his speech. A brother of such stature as C.H. Mackintosh suggested in 1890 that Raven should cease from ministering until confidence was restored and without London's backing he would have been obliged to give way to the moral weight of such counsel. It is apparent, however, that the London Party saw their authority at stake in the challenge to Raven and he was urged to stand firm and elevated as their figurehead.

Some of Raven's statements made from 1895-1903 can be shown to be definite errors of a serious character. As brethren cannot see into the future, such statements do not justify a division made in 1890, yet many will ask how it was that so many godly brethren could remain in fellowship with Raven even after such statements were made. We will suggest two reasons. Firstly, these brethren had supported Raven in 1890, sincerely believing that he had been badly treated, and it would take a lot of evidence to make them reverse that decision. Secondly, these statements were not pressed as part of any systematic scheme of false doctrine, the major part of his ministry being sound and good, and therefore were largely unnoticed by his followers. They caused an uneasiness in some discerning brethren but no decisive opposition.

02.04. Ecclesiasticism Established

Chapter Four Ecclesiasticism Established The Glanton Division

Amongst those who had remained with Raven (still a world-wide communion) there were many who were concerned about the school of teaching that was establishing itself in those who looked towards London for leadership; also brethren of an evangelistic mind, who were exercised to present the Gospel to perishing souls were not pleased at the restrictive influences that were increasing.

We come now to the fifth of the major divisions of the Exclusive Brethren. This event, known as the Glanton division of 1908, enabled the unofficial headquarters of Brethren in London, finally to cast off its camouflage and openly commence its rule. From 1908 onwards the London Exclusives marched like an army, obeying orders from headquarters even down to the small details as the times of meetings and the wording of notice boards! So quickly had the ideal of spiritual unity changed to man-made uniformity and organisation. The Glanton division was the final test of strength when the London Brethren threw out - on a point that really amounted to a technicality only - all those who would not bow to their will. For some years previous to 1905 the meeting at Alnwick, Northumberland, had been suffering from divisive undercurrents. During the last week of 1904, Mr. Thomas Pringle and three other brethren drew up a notice secretly, which claimed to exclude four brothers from fellowship on the ground that they had been the leaders of these divisive influences and had held "opposition" gatherings. This notice was read to the meeting on Jan. 1st 1905, and caused great confusion. Mr. T. Pringle and his followers then announced that they would break bread elsewhere in future and, as Mr. Pringle owned the hall (Green Bat Hall) he locked it so that the four excluded brethren and their fifteen sympathizers could not break bread there. At the same time Mr. Pringle sent copies of his notice to eleven Northumbrian meetings including Newcastle. On Jan. 4th 1905, the nineteen brothers who had been locked out, sent letters to Glanton (the nearest meeting) and other surrounding gatherings asking for advice as to what they should do. Mr. Pringle sent letters next day to the same gatherings saying that he and those with him would break bread in future in the Town Hall. On Jan. 15th the Glanton meeting wrote the following letter to both the factions at Alnwick.

"We decided last Lord's Day, that in view of the sorrowful division at Alnwick we cannot at present break bread with either party; but would ask you, in love, to seek the Lord's face, that He may put you right with Himself and with one another."

Copies of this letter were also sent to surrounding gatherings and Glanton received general approval for its decision. On March 6th the "nineteen" brethren wrote to the Northumbrian meetings asking if they could now break bread in fellowship with them, but got no encouragement for such a course at that time.

There were many attempts at reconciliation but the "Pringle Party" refused to have any discussions unless the original notice excluding the four brethren was first acknowledged to be a

righteous act. This condition could not be accepted. A large meeting for prayer and humiliation was held at Glanton and attended by brethren from nineteen other meetings in Northumberland. In February 1906, two brothers who had been with Mr. Pringle and had signed the exclusion notice, judged they had been wrong and urged the withdrawal of the disciplinary order. They then separated from the Pringle meeting and became identified with the 'nineteen'. This caused the Pringle faction to cease breaking bread owing to decreased numbers. From February 1906 to February 1908 there was no gathering for breaking of bread at Alnwick. During this period, about twelve brethren came to Alnwick to reside and finding no meeting there, they travelled to Glanton to break bread every Lord's Day. In February 1907 several of the brethren at Alnwick judged themselves and confessed their faults in the general misbehaviour that had led up to the open rupture in January 1905. They then turned to Glanton and asked if they could be received. Glanton then decided that the time had come to consider individual cases and called a prayer meeting on the subject for April 27, 1907, in full consultation with surrounding gatherings. These gatherings expressed their confidence in the Glanton meeting's competence to receive individuals who had judged themselves and become reconciled to one another.

Accordingly some of these brethren were received to the Lord's table at Glanton. Later, on February 23rd. 1908, twenty of the saints living at Alnwick, twelve of whom had come to reside there after the 1905 break up, ceased to take the journey to Glanton and commenced to break bread at Alnwick in fellowship with Glanton and other Northumbrian gatherings. In the meantime certain brethren in London and Edinburgh expressed an exercise that the Glanton meeting, in assuming the dissolution of the meeting at Alnwick and receiving individuals from there, had infringed the principle of local responsibility. Feeling they had the backing of powerful men in London, certain of the brethren in Edinburgh seceded, and began meeting at 12 Merchiston Place in separation from the other four gatherings in the town, because these four meetings had refused their demand that all the Northumbrian meetings should be "shut up" as a leprous house. This meeting, started on August 2nd 1908, immediately commended a sister to London, this being the expedient to bring the London body into the fray in full force. So a large meeting of brothers gathered at 57 Park Street on August 16th and again on August 18th and came to the decision (after strong urging by their leaders) that Glanton and all those in fellowship with them, should be cut off from fellowship. However, 225 meetings in several countries (counting the two's and three's in some places) refused to bow to this cruel and autocratic ruling and remained in fellowship with Glanton.

Now if the new residents at Alnwick, who had been breaking bread at Glanton (a right which nobody could deny them) had first started to break bread at Alnwick and then, as the meeting there, had received the repentant individuals, there could have been no objection that the principle of local responsibility had been broken. Yet the end result would have been the same. This demonstrates that the merciless edict of London was pressed on account of a mere technicality of procedure. Where, too, is the principle of local responsibility in the idea that a complete and final ruling can be made in London, 300 miles away from the trouble? Surely the Northumbrian gatherings had more local responsibility than London, and their decision should have been respected. The hypocrisy of the whole thing is seen, in that Mr Pringle and six others started a meeting on October 11th 1908 at Alnwick and the London Brethren immediately recognised them!

The Downward Course of the London Party

Those who had, in practice, rejected the leading of the Holy Spirit and substituted the rule of an ecclesiastical clique, soon began to show signs that they were adrift from the truth. After Mr. Raven died in 1903, a Mr. James Taylor of New York rapidly rose into prominence. From 1905 to 1908 he issued six books, from 1909 to 1920 twenty-six more, and from 1921 to 1929 he issued forty books - seventy-two in all! And there have been many more after this. Every word in the readings he attended was taken down and printed in magazine or book form. His followers hung on his every word. The centre of authority was soon transferred from London to New York, and difficult matters of discipline were referred over there for adjudication. No longer was it possible for local troubles to cause general division. If a meeting divided, Mr. J. Taylor's decision was law and brethren bowed to it or were "out" .

Very serious error began to circulate in the meetings. It was denied that the Lord had a human spirit. This was not pressed upon all as compulsory belief, but it was not purged out as leaven. Fanciful theories were put forward such as the idea that the Lord was not present in a meeting until a brother broke the bread. Consequently it was necessary to have the breaking of bread very early in the meeting. In 1920 a godly and much respected ministering brother -Mr. J.S. Giles - withdrew from the meetings because of the mystical teaching of J. Taylor. Such was the hold that J.T. had over the fellowship that only 25 small meetings withdrew with him. So far as one knows they have all now died out. A notion was put forward that the assembly should heed the word of spiritual men as much as it heeded the written word, as God had placed them as gifts to the church and they were moved by the Holy Spirit. It was further stated that the words of these spiritual men "did not need to be put to the test of Scripture and that they might be moved to state God's mind without any scripture to back them". So the road to destruction was formed. Who is to judge who are the spiritual men? Certainly they are not the men who teach without scriptural authority. Sunday Schools were abolished and a tight grip was placed on the Lord's servants. There was an accredited list of ministering brethren and any brother who 'offended' could be struck off the list by the overseeing brethren led by J.T. It was openly taught that God took up one vessel at a time to bring forth the truth: first it was J.N. Darby, then J.B. Stoney, then F.E. Raven followed by James Taylor. So there was an acknowledged pontifical succession. One is intrigued to wonder what J.N.D. would have said of such a thing! In 1929 Mr. James Taylor brought out his most serious doctrinal error in a reading at Barnet, Herts, when he denied that the Lord's Sonship was eternal and taught that he became the Son of God at His Incarnation. This was not a denial of His deity, but of His eternal relationship as Son with the Father. So strong was J. Taylor's dominance over his followers, that this fundamental error produced little opposition from within, and very few seceded from fellowship. A fourth revision of the Little Flock Hymn Book was brought out in 1932 from which all reference to the Lord's eternal sonship was expunged.

After the Second World War a teaching began to be heard that the Holy Spirit should be directly addressed in worship. Hitherto, in all sections of Brethren, it had been held that the Holy Spirit brought about worship to God by subjective guidance and therefore He was not to be addressed objectively. It has been pointed out that there is no example in the Scriptures of anybody addressing the Holy Spirit in prayer. The Holy Spirit dwells within and bears witness with our spirits (Romans 8:16); that is to say He works alongside our renewed minds, guiding our spirits with worship to the Father and Son which are viewed as outside ourselves.

J.T. was old and probably more under the influence of the other leaders of the party than formerly. However, it was eventually pressed that worship should be addressed to the Holy Spirit and it was made a condition of fellowship that all should accept the ruling. The worship of the Holy Spirit is quite general in Christendom and cannot be called fundamental error. The serious wrong in this matter was to force the new idea as a condition of fellowship. This would have made the Taylorites into a sect, if they had not been obviously a sect already! Another revision of the hymn book was made and a few seceded from the meetings or perhaps we should say more accurately, they were put out. When James Taylor died, a rivalry for the leadership began which resembled the struggle for power in the Kremlin after the death of Stalin. Eventually the field narrowed to two men - Mr. James Taylor (Junior) of New York, the son of the late James Taylor and the late Mr. G.R. Cowell of Hornchurch, Essex, England. In the current ministry of the time, emphasis was being laid on the scriptural injunction that a person who was excommunicated should be barred from social fellowship with members of the assembly also. ("With such a one, no, not to eat") 1 Corinthians 5:10. The point evaded was that Scripture only envisages a person being put out for gross moral or doctrinal evil, whereas the Taylorites had been putting people out for any deviation from party lines. The conclusion they began to move towards was that members of their meetings should not eat with any professing Christian in another fellowship. This led to cases of members of families eating in different rooms. Many, refusing to do this, were put out of fellowship. A second cause for many being put out of fellowship at this time was a tightening up of their misuse of the scriptural instruction - "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers". This was now applied compulsorily, to partnership with Christians not in their sect, membership of professional or trade associations etc., so that many preferred to go out of fellowship rather than lose their livelihoods. Those now coming out of the Taylorites, therefore, often had no other motive than unwillingness to suffer material loss.

Mr. G.R. Cowell was beginning to see that things were going too far, and he wavered and drew back. James Taylor Jnr., however did not waver at all. He began to contend with Mr. Cowell, especially on an issue which was very important. It was now held that children of the saints, being already on "Christian ground" could be received into fellowship at an early age and must come into fellowship by the time they were twelve or suffer the new discipline and not eat with their parents! G.R. Cowell insisted that they must first have a definite experience of conversion, but J.T. Jnr. maintained that their willingness to come into fellowship was enough. J.T. Jnr. feeling he had the greater weight of authoritative men behind him, summarily excommunicated Mr. G.R. Cowell and all who went with him and became the undisputed dictator of all those who were left!

It will be seen from all this that the "Ex-London" or "Outs" as they sometimes called themselves were in the outside place for many motives and reasons. It is not surprising that some went into the denominations, some went nowhere and others went everywhere. They seemed as sheep without a shepherd and many showed that they had no idea of the True Centre of Gathering or the original principles of the brethren. Many of these "Ex-London" brethren have now taken some form as a fellowship of meetings, but even some of these seem to have little stability and they are only a small proportion of those who were forced out. Also it should be noted that they still hold the "Temporal Sonship" heresy. The state of the ecclesiastical party who call themselves the original Exclusive Brethren, and are known by that name to the world outside, is now truly dreadful. The children of those in fellowship are forced to break bread under fear of ostracism, being compelled

to seek fellowship by the time they are twelve years old, whatever their state of soul. It is clear that in another generation they will become a community of unregenerate professors, and any doctrine may be introduced and received by the spiritually dead. They may become quite a powerful religious sect as they are well organised, and their increase is assured by natural generation.

Mr. J.T. Jnr. has made his authority felt, and recently he made absurd edicts that no-one was allowed to keep an animal for a pet, or display flowers in the home. Terrible things have been happening amongst them. Wives have been instructed to leave their husbands and children, and husbands told to leave their families. Many homes have been broken up, and cases of suicide as a result of these heartbreaks have been reported. The daily newspapers have published many details of their madness, even denouncing the "new sect" in their editorials. Questions were asked in Parliament and an attempt was made to bring in a private members' bill to make it an offence to preach any doctrine that advocated the breaking up of family life. The name of the "Exclusive Brethren" has been blackened beyond remedy.* From this sad story we can learn our lessons. There are two opposite and false theories of assembly administration, independency and ecclesiastical centralism. Independency leaves evil in various localities unchecked, and there is bound to be spreading of evil. Nevertheless, the spread of a specific evil in independent assemblies is slow; the result of independency is confusion rather than systematic heterodoxy. There are a large number of miscellaneous evils going on simultaneously in various localities which do not much affect one another. On the other hand, ecclesiastical centralism (while it develops under a plea that evil must be judged universally and unity preserved), when the earthly centre itself is affected, actually produces an instantaneous acceptance of evil by all companies and is much worse in its results than independency. The True Unity is that produced by the Holy Spirit and not human authority. It is not an easy path to follow as the flesh is always striving against it. One who was still amongst companies that had resisted both independency and centralism said on one occasion, "In the Open Brethren you can do what you like, in the London Party you do what you are told, but amongst us it is all difficulty and exercise".

* Since this account was written (1965) a large secession from J.T. junior's leadership took place, due to an incident of immorality under the influence of alcohol on the part of J.T. junior when he was in Aberdeen. Sub-divisions among the seceders have also occurred, so there are now quite large parties of "Ex-Taylor" brethren. The original party under the leadership of J.T. junior continued, though in greatly reduced numbers.

02.05. The Scattered Remnants

Chapter Five The Scattered Remnants

Now we have traced to the present day the story of both the "Independents" and the "Centralists". It remains to tell of those who had not departed to either extreme. We have seen that by 1908 there were no less than five sections of brethren who had, for various reasons and at different times, been separated from the London brethren, namely, Kelly, Grant, Stuart, Lowe and Glanton. All these gatherings still held to the same original principles, striving to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace meeting on the ground of the One Body, gathered to the Name of Christ alone. Yet they were apart! Such is an obvious anomaly, for those meeting on such principles must, if they are known to one another, be together. The next year, in 1909, there was an exercise to heal the breach between the "Glanton" and "Stuart" companies, and at a conference in Brighouse, Yorks, most of the Stuart brethren agreed to have fellowship with Glanton. A few Stuart meetings in England and Scotland and all in New Zealand remained apart. Also present at the conference were four brethren from the "Grant" company in America: Messrs S.Ridout, P.J. Loizeaux, Wm. Banford and C. Crain. By 1911 most of the Glanton and Grant meetings had come together in America (there had been only about a dozen Glanton meetings there). Some difficulties were expressed by a few Grant brethren in America as to whether full intercommunication should be allowed with the Glanton brethren in Great Britain. In 1921 a correspondence took place between Messrs A.E. Booth, B.C. Greenman, C. Knapp, A.H. Stewart, W. Shaid, F.B. Tomkinson and T. Bloore, on the one hand and Messrs F.B.Hole, J. Wilson Smith, A.J. Pollock and James Green on the other, which satisfied most. The Tunbridge Wells Trouble

We reluctantly turn aside to consider a cleavage which took place in 1909 among the "Lowe" section. This division was healed in 1940 in the British Isles, but as just a few of the Tunbridge Wells meetings remain separate, as well as a large number in the SA, we will take a look at the principles involved. In September 1908, a brother, Mr. C.S. was declared out of fellowship by the meeting at Tunbridge Wells. Mr. C.S. was a 'ministering brother' who travelled round and seldom attended his home meeting at Tunbridge Wells, especially in view of the ill-feeling which he had experienced there for years. The reason given for his excommunication was that he had absented himself from the Lord's Table at Tunbridge Wells, although he had been breaking bread regularly in meetings that were in full fellowship with them.

It is extremely doubtful whether the exclusion of Mr. C.S. was justified, and a few at T.W. dissented from the decision. The leader of the action against C.S. was Mr. W.M.S. and many felt there was a personal dislike at the root of the matter. Nevertheless, in June 1909, they sent forth a notice that in future they would break bread in separation from all those who broke bread with C.S. or were otherwise associated with him. They refused all remonstrance against this.

Thus the meeting at Tunbridge Wells forced a division and tried to establish a principle that the disciplinary decisions of a meeting were infallible and binding upon all. As usual, anybody who opposed such an idea was accused of independency.

Now the principle that a local gathering's decision on discipline is infallibly binding upon all, is based on a wrong inference from Matt. xviii: 15 - Proverbs Here the Lord declares that where two or three are gathered together unto His Name, He is in the midst of them, and whatsoever they bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever they loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. This, in the context of the church's judgment on a brother's sin, seems clearly to refer to discipline, and, if the decision of the "two or three" is ratified in heaven, surely it must be acknowledged by every local assembly on earth! So far, the argument is sound. If two or three are truly gathered unto the Lord's Name, any decision they come to must be right for heaven acknowledges it as such. The converse of this, however, is also true; which is that if those gathered together come to an unjust and unrighteous decision, they cannot be gathered unto the Lord's Name.

Now a group of Christians may be professedly gathered to the Lord's name but their hearts and wills may be turned to some other centre, such as a dominating brother. In that case they come to a wrong decision. This may be a temporary lapse, and the prayers, exhortations and loving rebuke of their brethren, as moved by the Holy Spirit, may bring them to repentance. On the other hand, there may be such obstinacy that the brethren in the neighbouring assemblies may have to institute an enquiry as to the facts and actions connected with the dispute. The findings of such an enquiry should be respected. There is no need to bring a leading brother from a distance. Even those who are least esteemed in the Church are competent (1 Corinthians 6:4) providing they are amenable to the Spirit's leading and not prejudiced by any special interest such as Barnabas had towards his nephew Mark. Those who are nearest to the scene of the trouble have the greater responsibility.

If, in spite of all godly remonstrance, a meeting of Christians sticks to an unjust decision, it will be apparent to all that such a gathering cannot be recognised. Such an unhappy conclusion, however, will be rare if patient and prayerful care is shown by the brethren near to them and, in any case, a hasty division is avoided.

So, we have now come across three forms of ecclesiastical error. Let us pause and consider how each false system would act when a meeting exerted harsh and unjust discipline on a brother.

Independency. It would be assumed that the unjust meeting had a right to do as it chose in its own sphere of responsibility, and there could be no interference or enquiry into its decisions. Nevertheless, the wronged brother would be freely received by neighbouring meetings and the unjust meeting would carry on in the same independent fellowship as before.

Centralism. The issue would be referred to "headquarters" whose decision would be binding.

Local Infallibility. The judgment of the local assembly would have to be accepted by all, whether right or wrong. The wronged brother, therefore, would have no redress. One feels that this last system is not likely to gain many adherents for long, as it leads to situations which are contrary to ordinary standards of justice. The Tunbridge Wells brethren had four divisions within 20 years and seemed to be disintegrating. We are happy that most of them resumed fellowship with the Lowe Brethren in 1940 and only about a dozen small meetings in the United Kingdom and some elsewhere - (mainly in America where there are about 100 gatherings) - remained apart. The "Lowe-Kelly" Re-union of 1926 In 1926, some of the work of Satan was undone, and the "Lowe"

and "Kelly" brethren re-united. About the year 1920, there began considerable exercise amongst individuals about the continued and (as they believed) unnecessary separation between them. Correspondence took place between some interested brethren. In March 1926, the ground having been prepared in this way, the "Kelly" brethren in the meeting at Blackheath, London, sent a letter to the "Lowe" brethren at Woodstock Room, Finsbury Park, London, to invite them to a fellowship meeting to be held on March 13th. This was gladly accepted and the first fellowship conference was most encouraging. It was next proposed that a general meeting for prayer, humiliation and confession of common failure should be arranged which was accordingly done on July 10th. It was a solemn meeting and the presence of the Holy Spirit was deeply felt.

Two further meetings were held on September 11th and October 16th. These were for conference and interchange of thought and they enabled both sides to gain full confidence in each other. The final meeting was at Peckham, on November 13th., and a circular letter was issued as a result of this, signed by 57 brothers, which indicated that unity was complete. There were a very few individuals who left for various reasons, but this was too small a number to affect the unanimity of the decision to re-unite together. A new hymn book was compiled in 1928 for use by the united company. This was really a revision of the 1881 edition of "Little Flock" and a great many of the hymns remained under the same numbers. The title "Little Flock" was dropped, however, and the book called simply "Hymns Selected and Revised in 1928". So occurred the first major healing of Brethren. Although the "Grant" and "Glanton" brethren had come together some years previously, it had been a mutual recognition of circles of meetings in different countries with an ocean in between (not that the reality of fellowship was in any doubt because of that). This was the first time that two circles of meetings, each in the same countries, and in many localities in the same towns had unanimously decided to seek fellowship with one another. There had been a partial reunion between "Glanton" and "Stuart" in 1909, but this had not been unanimous and a Stuart fellowship still continued.

Care must be taken not to confuse this coming together with the ecumenical movement that is growing in Christendom and will end eventually in Babylon. This was not an amalgamation of sects. If two sects, run by two organisations, come together, so that there is one governing organisation, then it makes one big sect instead of two little ones. It is no less sectarian than before. But if meetings gathered to the Lord's Name alone with no earthly centre, begin to have fellowship with one another, they are simply owning in practice a unity which already exists. It is the unity of the Spirit, not made by man but by God - a unity which we cannot make but which we are enjoined to keep.

Some oppose any coming together in this way as they confuse it with mass reception. They remember the dire results of the mass reception of the Baptist congregation of Bethesda Chapel, in Bristol, which led up to the "Open-Exclusive" division of 1848. C..Mackintosh rightly stressed that the only correct kind of reception was individual. Bethesda Chapel was leaving one ground of gathering and being received to another*. In the case of the "Lowe" and "Kelly" brethren, however, they realised that they were gathered on the same ground already - the ground of the One Body with Christ as the Head - and therefore there was no receiver and no received, but mutual recognition of each other. It was not a case of one company being received by another.

* Actually the facts in this matter are doubtful and Henry Groves in his account of the matter published in 1860 (approx) states that Messrs Muller and Craik started renting an empty Baptist Chapel, the congregation having dispersed, and that the assembly they built up as co-pastors was never called a Baptist congregation.

Further Troubles

Even while this happy re-union was taking place, further confusion was being fomented amongst the "Grant" brethren in America. It would appear that a spirit of looseness had been growing among many in that communion, who were looking for wider fields, and their eyes especially lingered on the fertile plains of the Open Brethren. This desire for fellowship and intercommunion with the Independents was being checked by their stricter brethren, but it was causing a restlessness that erupted in 1928.

Two brothers, C.A. Mory and C.J. Grant, had formed a business partnership in 1920. Both these brothers broke bread in the assembly at W. Philadelphia. In 1925 C.A.M. brought charges of dishonesty against C.J.G. who appealed to the assembly to investigate. This they did, and found that C.J.G. had acted in an irresponsible and sometimes unrighteous manner, but they had divided judgment as to whether there had been intention to defraud. The majority decided that the case would be met if a "letter of admonition" were sent to C.J.G., which letter was accordingly sent in March 1926.

C.A.M., however was not satisfied and continued to agitate against C.J.G., so that other brethren were appealed to. A conference was called two months afterwards in Philadelphia. At this conference C.J.G. confessed his weakness with tears before all. Therefore, the majority of his assembly decided that the matter was closed. C.J.G. had been admonished, he had confessed and things had been put right as far as possible. C.A.M. and his supporters, however, continued to press for C.J.G.'s excommunication. A second trouble arose about the same time concerning doctrine. Mr. Andrew Westwood (Senr.) had been put out of fellowship by the New York meeting in 1925, for teaching that the Lord had no human spirit. In combatting this error, a Mr. F. Allaban wrote in a tract that "Christ became a creature and was subject to pain and death", and thus over-reached himself into error on the other side. Everything which has had a beginning has been created. Christ had no beginning and, therefore, He could never be called a creature. His manhood had a beginning but He Himself had no beginning. Orthodox Christians have always taught that He took a created nature, that is manhood, but that does not mean He Himself became a creature. At this time a "Glanton" brother, named J.Boyd, was staying in Philadelphia. He was a teacher of the Word who was highly respected and greatly beloved in Great Britain for a long life-time of ministry, and had reached 77 years of age. This brother took up the cudgels against F. Allaban on behalf of Andrew Westwood (whom he knew personally) and wrote a tractate in which he said the Lord had no human spirit but was "Himself the Spirit of His Own Body". When this caused an immediate reaction and was obviously leading to division, J.B. withdrew the tract as he said it had "opened a door for Satan to come in", but he did not withdraw the doctrine. The division therefore took place, and about one-third of the Grant meetings (which we will henceforth call the Grant-Mory group) separated from C.J.G. and J.B. It is plain that they considered the struggle against looseness, which had irritated them so long, had at last come into the open and that they were separating from a definite and serious evil.

Now that they had been relieved from the restriction of so many "exclusive-minded" brethren, the "Open" school began to make its influence felt amongst those who were left. They began to demand the right to have occasional fellowship and communion with Open Brethren and many assemblies began to practise this. Others, however, were unable to accept the departure and so another division took place and the Grant brethren became divided into three: "Mory-Grant", "Booth-Grant" and "Independent-Grant". The "Mory-Grant" brethren believed that they had truly separated from serious moral and doctrinal evil. They were in fellowship with neither Glanton nor Open Brethren. The "Booth-Grant" brethren (so-called because a brother named A.E.Booth was prominent amongst them) believed that most unjustified harshness had been shown towards C.J.G., that the decision at Philadelphia closing the matter should have been accepted, and that to force a division over it was schismatic. They considered the J.B. affair to be a secondary matter although they repudiated his false doctrine utterly, and as he had now returned to England, they left the handling of his case to the brethren over there. They remained with Glanton but refused fellowship with Open Brethren. The Independents allowed fellowship with Open Brethren, and before long began to be merged with them. By the time of writing, they have lost their distinctive existence and are wholly identified with the Independent or Open Meetings. It is no more possible for a circle of meetings to retain a distinctive status while being in fellowship with Open Brethren, than for a glass of milk to retain its properties after being thrown into a pond.

It may be argued at the present time that the Open Brethren should be treated as any orthodox sect and that an Open Brother known to be godly in walk and doctrine should be received as a believer only. While exceptions may be made for those young in the faith or genuinely ignorant (not wilfully) of the issues involved, once an individual is allowed to come and go amongst Open Brethren as an accepted custom, it becomes intercommunion, and any distinctive witness to true assembly character must inevitably be lost. When J.B. returned to England, correspondence soon began to flow between American and English leading brethren. The leading Glanton brethren in England were shocked that this beloved and esteemed brother should, in his old age, have fallen into such a serious error as, until then, he had always been sound in the faith and much used as a teacher. A meeting was arranged between J.B. and other leading brethren in F.B.Hole's house at Bath. J.B. made a half-retraction and promised not to speak publicly of the error again. A conference of brethren was called at Weston-super-Mare and J.B.'s doctrine was unanimously repudiated. J.B. was not excommunicated as he did not press the doctrine and many felt he would be persuaded to withdraw it completely. They desired to give time for repentance, especially in view of his past record, but he wavered for two years and appeared to withdraw the doctrine at times and then reaffirm it when challenged in correspondence from America. This wavering was not typical of the man and it was probably due to extreme old age. In January 1932, a statement from James Boyd was published in Scripture Truth as follows: "Anyone, if even a little acquainted with the Word, is not likely to deny body, soul and spirit to our blessed Lord. But supposing this were denied it would be easy to turn to Luke 23:46 'And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice He said Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit; and having said this He gave up the spirit'. In Matthew 26:28 He says My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. In Hebrews 10:5 He says A body hast Thou prepared Me". No expression of regret for his past deviation from this line, nor any reference to it, was made.

More Healing of Division In February 1931, a conference of the "Mory-Grant" brethren met in Philadelphia and agreed to send a letter to the "Stuart" brethren in England and New Zealand expressing regret for having ignored their entreaties in the past and for uniting with "Glanton". By 1933 the "Mory-Grant" brethren were fully in fellowship with the "Stuarts" in England and New Zealand. In 1936 the "Mory-Grant-Stuart" brethren and the "Lowe-Kelly" brethren held a united meeting for prayer and humiliation at Passaic, N.J. There were high hopes that reunion would take place, but these were not realised until 17 years later, in 1953. In Britain about a dozen small gatherings of "Lowe-Kelly" - including two of their three meetings in Scotland - were unable to accept this reunion and seceded. As we have already seen, meanwhile a healing between "Lowe-Kelly" and most of "Tunbridge Wells" had been effected in 1940. So by 1953, the Lowe, Kelly, Mory-Grant and a large number of Tunbridge Wells brethren had come together as believers gathered to the Lord on the principles of the One Body. The only brethren of any numerical strength on the same ground, who were still left out of this happy healing of wounds caused by Satan's wiles, were the "Booth-Grant-Glanton" brethren. So by this time there were only two major groups that were unnecessarily apart.

"Little Glanton" In 1938 a sorrowful disagreement occurred amongst the "Glanton" brethren which caused some meetings to secede. Although this was really only a minor split, we put it in this history as a few of the seceding meetings still exist. They are sometimes known as "Little Glanton". In the meeting at Kingsland, London, the leading brethren were large-hearted with a marked love for all the saints and zeal for the Gospel. This, however, was not balanced by care in administration, and many were concerned by the laxity in reception and service there. The issue came to a head in 1938 when a brother who had been disciplined at Coniston, Lancs, was received at Kingsland before a proper understanding had been reached with the Coniston brethren. Some in the Kingsland meeting, feeling that they had the support and sympathy of all the Glanton brethren, seceded and broke bread in another place. Thus they presented the brethren with a "fait accompli" and expected they would be universally owned and the Kingsland brethren repudiated. The majority of the meetings, however, were not happy with this act, believing it to be hasty and independent. Although they had little sympathy with the meeting at Kingsland, they thought the matter should have been handled with far more patience. The result was that the seceding brethren found they had little support and the Kingsland meeting was still recognised although regarded with disfavour. This affair was most unhappy and the Glanton brethren lost some very godly and gifted brethren as a consequence. However, the seceders did not prosper numerically, and now they are reduced to a handful of small meetings.

02.06. The Present Position

Chapter Six The Present Position In 1948 overtures were made by the "Glanton" brethren to the "Lowe-Kelly" groups of meetings. United gatherings were held at Bradford and London but the brethren were not ready for healing at that time. As a result of a conference of "Lowe-Kelly" brethren in London on November 18th 1961, a letter signed by 16 brothers was sent round the Glanton meetings which desired to explore the possibilities of further joint gatherings to dispel doubts and suspicions that lingered between the two companies. Then some local disagreements amongst the Lowe-Kelly brethren about matters connected with this overture delayed things for two years. When these had been settled a letter dated 3rd March 1964 signed by 13 Glanton brethren earnestly desiring that the exercise should not be dropped, was sent to the Lowe-Kelly brethren. As a result of this, many local united gatherings for prayer and discussion were held and a conference of representative brethren took place in London on Oct. 10th 1964. Behind these moves there had been much prayer by brethren everywhere that the Lord might graciously lead to a better understanding. At the conference it was found that there was general agreement on essential points of doctrine about which there had been suspicions in the past. Most brethren there were satisfied that there was no present cause for division, whatever there may or may not have been in history. A few wanted to insist on agreement of historical questions and the degree of blame to be attached to certain individuals long since dead, but this was resisted by the many. Much humiliation was felt at the breakdown in the testimony which the Lord had committed to them. Following this meeting it was agreed that a memorandum should be sent round the meetings, signed by eight representative brethren (four from each group) in which the measure of doctrinal agreement attained at the conference was to be stated. Accordingly there was drawn up a memorandum of doctrines from which there had been divergence (real or suspected) in the past, and replies were requested from all the assemblies as to whether this agreement could be regarded as basis on which further progress towards unity could be built. On March 6th 1965 the signatories of this memorandum met together again to consider the replies. They found that there had been universal agreement on the doctrines on all important points, and a very substantial majority earnestly desired healing. They circulated their report to this effect. A meeting for prayer and humiliation was called for February 19th 1966 and many brethren from both sides attended, representing meetings in most areas of Great Britain. There was such an experience of the Spirit's leading and such a spirit of repentance for past evils that it was generally felt that the Unity of the Spirit was there and no barrier should continue. It was accordingly intimated to the brethren in America that such was the state of feeling that existed in Great Britain. At first there appeared to be an impasse so far as the American brethren were concerned. Their wounds were more recent, the division of 1928 being very much in living memory. However, although it took eight years, that which seemed impossible came to pass and the brethren that had been rent asunder by the work of the enemy became re-united by Oct. 1974. A very few brethren in America seceded, but the change of heart by the many was seen by them all to be a remarkable work of the Holy Spirit. Copies of some of the relevant correspondence are appended to this history. So now all the so-called Exclusive brethren are united except for those with a "Taylorite" history and a section of

"Tunbridge Wells" brethren which are mainly found in America. Some may enquire as to the possibility of an understanding with the many groups of "Ex-Taylorites". The fruits of the false system of "centralism" are still with them, and in particular there is no hope of healing while the Temporal Sonship heresy is condoned.

Brethren give the praise for healing to their blessed Lord and Saviour. It is in no spirit of self-congratulation that they come together, for it is with much weakness and poverty. The Lord's hand has been heavy upon them in chastening because of their pride and lack of watchfulness. The Lord said "Watch and Pray" and even if they prayed, they did not watch. There has been a marked decline in numbers amongst the brethren in Great Britain, due to the influence of the modern ecumenical spirit. When difficulties arise it is easy to give the truth up, where there is little conviction as to the principles of the assembly and the value that the Lord Himself places upon them.

Perhaps some would prefer that a history such as this should not be written. "Why wash the dirty linen again?" they say. "Forget the shameful past." But is that not to despise the chastening of the Lord? Let us remember the past, and then we will not fall into these traps of Satan again. Not that we are any better than our fathers - far from it - but "surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird" (Proverbs 1:17). Neither let us faint under chastening and say the path is too difficult to follow. For the simplest believer the principle is still as clear as at the beginning. Like the man born blind in John 9:35-38, he comes out from all false systems, though many true saints are still there, and approaches the True Centre, bows the knee and worships. He does not look round to see how many, or how few, are gathered with him. His eyes and heart are towards his Lord, Who gave him sight and salvation.

W.R.Dronsfield.

S. Apollonarianism

Apollonarianism The Denial of Christ's Human Spirit

W.R. Dronsfield COMMENDATION FOR PERGAMOS

Many are aware of the wonderful way in which the messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22 correspond with the successive phases of the history of the professing church down the centuries from Pentecost until the present time. These will know that the message to the church in Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17) is a prophetic survey or moral history of the period during the Emperor Constantine's reign and after, when the church became joined to the state. The Lord does not spare them, but exposes their worldliness and corruption, the rise of clerisy, and the overlaying of pure doctrine and practice with the old heathen customs of Pagan Rome (Revelation 2:14-15). Yet, in spite of that, He commends them with these words: "Thou holdest fast My Name and hast not denied My faith". They failed in many things, but Satan did not succeed in deceiving the great majority of the church concerning the doctrine of Christ—His Person, His work, and His word. Many subtle attacks were made against Christ's Person by eminent ecclesiastical teachers, but through them all the majority of Christians steered a straight and true course, and having discovered a doctrine to be false according to Holy Scripture, they exerted proper scriptural discipline against the false teacher and his followers, refusing all fellowship with them.

Two attacks

It would be beyond the scope of this booklet to describe all the subtle, and yet fundamental, errors that perplexed the church at that time, but the two main heresies were Arianism and Apollinarianism. The first attacked Christ's deity and the second attacked His humanity. It is against Apollinarianism that this paper is directed, but a few words about Arianism would not be out of place.

Arianism

Arius was made a presbyter in the church at Alexandria in A.D. 313. His false system of doctrine has thus been summarised by Neander:

"God created Christ, or begat Him, with the intent through Him to produce all things else; the distance betwixt God and all other beings is too great to allow of the supposition that God could have produced them immediately. In the first place, therefore, when He determined to produce the entire creation, He begat a Being Who is as like to Him in perfection as any creature can be, for the purpose of producing, by the instrumentality of this Being, the whole creation. The names Son of God and Logos, were given to Him in order to distinguish Him from other created beings inasmuch as, although like all created beings He owed everything to the will and favour of the Creator, He yet enjoyed the nearest relationship to Him, inasmuch as the divine reason, wisdom, power, all of which titles could only be transferred to Christ in an improper, metonymical sense,

were yet manifested by Him in the most perfect degree". So we see that Arius was willing to give to Christ all the honour due to Deity and to give Him the very Name of God and yet he refused to confess that He was of the same eternal substance (or nature) as the Father. True Christians therefore insisted that assent was given to the proposition that the Son was 'homoousios theo', i.e., of the same substance with the Father, otherwise the Arians could talk as though they were quite sound in the faith.

Arius was the first to introduce the doctrine of the creation and non-eternity of the Son of God without denying His pre-existence. The Arians of the fourth century are followed in our day by the so-called Millennial Dawnists or Jehovah's Witness.

Apollinarianism was the opposite kind of error, being an attack on Christ's humanity. He denied that the Lord had a human spirit. But before we consider this in detail, let us first examine the scriptural doctrine of the tripartite nature of Man. **THE TRIPARTITE NATURE OF MAN** This is clearly taught in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, where it is plainly stated: "I pray God your whole spirit (pneuma) and soul (psuche) and body be preserved blameless". Here the three elements are clearly set down as distinguishable entities. In Hebrews 4:12, the spirit and soul are again distinguished from one another—"The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit".

It may be asked whether we can determine the difference between the soul and the spirit. To do this exhaustively it would be necessary to examine a mass of scriptural evidence. A brief analysis of scriptural teaching will, however, be attempted. Let us look at the term 'spirit' first. The Hebrew word for spirit in the Old Testament is 'Ruach' and the exact equivalent in the New Testament is the Greek word 'Pneuma'. The literal meaning of both ruach and pneuma is 'wind' and they are often used in this way. This is also the word used for 'breath'—the wind of the nostrils.

Taking the word in its extramundane sense, we find it used to describe the essence of God (John 4:24) and also the nature of celestial and infernal beings (1 Samuel 16:14; Job 4:15; Psalms 104:4; Matthew 10:1; Hebrews 1:14; 1 John 4:1, etc.). But we are only interested here in the passages which speak of a spirit as being an essential part of the human being. When we examine all these manifold passages we come to the conclusion that the spirit is that faculty of man which produces not only rational or mental operations, but responsible moral determinations and choices. It is thus the spirit of man which raises him above the level of the beasts. The beasts are not moral, not responsible, and not disengaged from material circumstances. Man is so, and the spirit within him causes him to have an instinctive desire to know God, although the Adamic fall prevents that desire from being fulfilled.

We do not find that Scripture ever affirms that a beast has a spirit, but the beasts are said to have souls (the Hebrew is Nephesh) no less than fifteen times. There is one apparent exception to this in Ecclesiastes 2:19; Ecclesiastes 2:21. An understanding of the nature of the book of Ecclesiastes will explain this seeming inconsistency. Ecclesiastes 1:1 tells us these are the uninspired words of Solomon, but it is the inspired record of his words showing the agnosticism natural under the limitations of human wisdom apart from divine revelation. The Preacher is in despair and can see nothing beyond the grave. In Ecclesiastes 2:19, he takes the attitude of the modern biologist and says that man is the same as the beasts—all have one breath (spirit). In Ecclesiastes 2:21 he asks "Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit

of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth?” (Revised Version). In a mood of utter agnosticism he questions whether man has a spirit which returns to God Who gave it, although his final state of belief shows a recovery of faith; and it is not surprising that he did not know that the beasts have no spirits. Many, not perceiving the nature of the book, have used Ecclesiastes to teach the doctrine of Annihilationism. In the following passage the soul of animals is distinguished from the spirit of man: Job 12:10 —“In Whose hand is the soul (nephesh) of every living thing and the breath (ruach) of all mankind”. We see how carefully Job picked the right words. The spirit is never said to be responsible for the animal desires such as eating and drinking, yet the soul (nephesh) is said to love eating and drinking or to hate certain foods. See for example Genesis 27:25; Numbers 21:5; Deuteronomy 12:20; Deuteronomy 14:26; Job 33:20; Proverbs 13:25, and many other places. Physical love comes from the soul (Genesis 34:3).

Job 32:8; Job 32:18 may be taken as typical passages showing that the spirit is the rational part of man.

“But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

“For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me.”

We find, then, that a study of the human spirit presents a consistent picture throughout the Scriptures. Perhaps it should be added that when we speak of man being spiritually dead because of the Fall, we do not mean that the human spirit has ceased to exist or to operate, but that the communion between it and God the Divine Spirit has been severed. Death here means separation from the source of life, as always throughout the Scriptures.

Let us now briefly consider the human soul. The Hebrew word for ‘soul’ in the Old Testament is Nephesh and the Greek equivalent in the New Testament is Psuche (often translated ‘life’). We find that the word Soul does not always allow such a clearly defined meaning as in the case of the word Spirit. Often it is used to indicate the middle part of man between the body and the spirit, but at other times it is used to describe the whole incorporeal part, i.e., soul and spirit together. Sometimes the term includes the whole individual—body, soul, and spirit. This corresponds with popular usage in which man is usually regarded as dual — body and soul — the spirit being included in the term ‘soul’.

Now we can proceed in our study of Apollinarianism. Because of the wide meaning of the term ‘soul’, it was customary at that time to refer to the spirit as the rational or higher soul, and the middle part of man as the lower or animal soul.

APOLLINARIANISM

Apollinaris was the bishop of Laodicea. He became famous for his intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, which he publicly expounded at Antioch where Jerome was one of his multitude of hearers. He was a most distinguished man, of great learning and intelligence (being one of the few Hebrew scholars of the age) and a champion of the orthodox faith against the Arians, so that he was regarded by all, including Athanasius, as a man to be trusted in matters of doctrine. Yet in his zeal against the Arians, he fell into the opposite kind of error, and his case serves as a warning to all Christians to prove all things and not accept a doctrine simply because of the reputation of the teacher.

Apollinaris, a man of a strongly speculative mind, set himself to show how the doctrine of the Incarnation ought to be viewed. Neander describes his line of reasoning thus:

“Two beings persisting in their completeness, he conceived, could not be united into one whole. Out of the union of the perfect human nature with the Deity one person never could proceed; and more particularly, the rational soul of the man could not be assumed into union with the divine Logos so as to form one Person. This was the negative side of the doctrine of Apollinaris; but as to the positive side, this was closely connected with his views on human nature. He supposed that human nature consisted of three parts—the rational soul which constitutes the essence of man’s nature; the animal soul, which is the principle of animal life; and the body, between which and the spirit, that soul is the intermediate principle. The body, by itself considered, has no faculty of desire; but this soul which is united with it, is the source and fountain of the desires that struggle against reason. This soul Apollinaris believed he found described also by the apostle Paul, in the passage where he speaks of the flesh striving against the spirit. [See Galatians 5:17. Also Romans 7:18-23, and Matthew 26:41.] The human mutable spirit was too weak to subject to itself this resisting soul; hence the domination of the sinful desires. Therefore, for the redemption of mankind from the dominion of sin, it was necessary that an immutable Divine Spirit, the Logos Himself, should enter into union with these two parts of human nature. It does not pertain to the essence of that lower soul, as it does to the essence of the higher soul, that it should determine itself; but, on the contrary, that it should be determined and ruled by a higher principle: but the human spirit was too weak for this; the end and destination of human nature, therefore, is realised when the Logos, as an immutable Divine Spirit, rules over this lower soul, and thus restores the harmony between the lower and higher principles in man’s nature”.

This, then, in the words of Neander, was the doctrine of Apollinaris. It does not really matter whether the reader has understood the particular train of reasoning which led Apollinaris to his erroneous conclusion. It is sufficient to know what the distinctive error was, and it can be summarised thus: Apollinaris believed, in common with other Christians, that man consisted of three parts—body, soul and spirit. But he stated that, in the Lord’s case, the weak and mutable human spirit gave place to the immutable Divine Spirit. He did not acknowledge complete humanity in Christ, but only two parts—body and soul. The spirit inhabiting that body was not a human one, but only the Divine Spirit. Apollinaris clearly taught that the Lord’s eternal Self was the Spirit, and the only Spirit, of His body.

It is to be feared that other eminent men besides Apollinaris have fallen into this error, but it should be recognised as one of the fundamental heresies of Church History. The doctrine was condemned formally by a council in AD. 375 and another in A.D. 378 deposed Apollinaris from his bishopric and forced him and his followers out of communion. He died in A.D. 392, maintaining his false doctrine to the last, but his sect continued until about the middle of the fifth century. To combat his doctrine, the following words were included in the Athanasian creed: “Perfect God and perfect man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.... For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and man is one Christ”. So the church of that period dealt decisively with fundamental error and merited the Lord’s commendation: “Thou holdest fast My Name and hast not denied My faith”. Let us hope that all those who aspire to be Christians today are as worthy of the Lord’s approval.

We will now examine the Scriptures on the subject.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

Many may say “Why bother to go into the matter further? The doctrine is too obviously false to need scriptural refutation. Man consists of body, soul and spirit—no more and no less—and anybody who tries to maintain that the Lord’s humanity was limited to only two parts instead of the three, is obviously deluded”. Yet the Scriptures are not silent even on such an obvious point, and so perhaps the reader will follow us while we show that it is thoroughly scriptural to confess a human spirit in Christ. There will then be no excuse for prevarication on the subject.

Here are some passages which speak of the Lord’s spirit:

(1) Jesus perceived in His spirit. (Mark 2:8) (2) He sighed deeply in His spirit. (Mark 8:12) (3) He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. (John 11:33) (4) He was troubled in spirit. (John 13:21) (5) He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. (Luke 23:46) No doubt the objector will say, “There is nothing in these passages to show that it is a human and not a Divine Spirit spoken of”. But in truth each passage is in itself strong evidence. The Lord, in the last, commends His spirit to His Father’s care and protection, and it is impossible to credit a statement that His eternal, omnipotent, Divine Spirit was the subject of such provision. The first four give a wonderful picture of the spiritual life of the Lord Jesus and demonstrate that, though sinless, He had the human spiritual problems that we face. In the first passage His human knowledge is implied; in the second and third, the perplexity of His trial of faith; in the fourth, the spiritual agony at the perfidy of Judas and the prospect of Calvary’s suffering; all combining to give us a living picture of the Christ of God in the spiritual reality of His Manhood.

God is Spirit. The Son—the second Person (in mention) of the Trinity—is Spirit. Where the Scriptures refer to the Spirit of God, it invariably means the Holy Spirit; for example, “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2) and “The Lord GOD and His Spirit hath sent Me” (Isaiah 48:16). So apart from this, we should not speak of a Divine Person having a spirit, as it might appear to indicate that the Divine Spirit is only a part of the essence of His eternal Person. His inscrutable, eternal Person is essentially Spirit. In the Incarnation the Son took manhood into His Person—true manhood consisting of a human body, a human soul and a human spirit.

Two further texts will now be cited as translated in the Authorised Version Matthew 27:50 : “Jesus, when He had cried... yielded up the ghost”.

John 19:30 : “He bowed His head and gave up the Ghost”.

These two quotations are unique. There are other places where the translation is made “gave up the ghost” or “yielded up the ghost”, as for example, in the accounts of the deaths of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Ananias, Herod and Christ Himself as recorded in Mark and Luke, but in these cases they are translations either of the Old Testament Hebrew word ‘gava’ or the New Testament Greek words ‘ekpneo’ or ‘ekpsucho’, which mean to die or expire (literally, to gasp or breathe out). In our two quotations above the word translated ‘ghost’ is pneuma, which means ‘spirit’. In Matthew 27:50, the word translated ‘yielded’ is ‘aphiemi’ meaning to send away or dismiss. It is never translated ‘yielded up’ anywhere else in the Scriptures, but it is translated quite

correctly in Matthew 13:36 and Mark 4:36, where the Lord sends away the multitudes. In John 19:30 the word 'gave up' is 'paradidomi', meaning to deliver or deliver up (as it is translated 63 times in the New Testament).

Therefore the literal translations of our two quotations is as follows (1) Jesus... sent away His spirit.

(2) He... delivered up His spirit.

These expressions show the unique power of the eternal Son of God to dismiss His Own Spirit, which obviously no mere man could do. It demonstrates conscious power and personality outside and apart from this spirit. Clearly it cannot possibly mean that He sent His Divine Spirit—His Own essence—away from Himself. A stronger proof that a human spirit is included in the Lord's humanity, could surely not be obtained.

"Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels: but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God; to make reconciliation for the sins of the people". (Hebrews 2:16-17) His brethren were spirit, soul and body, and so to be like them He would be completely a Man—spirit, soul and body.

"For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin". (Hebrews 4:15)

It is but a short step for those who subtract from the Lord's humanity to say, "He did not suffer as we suffer, because He could not know real human suffering". The warning "No man knoweth the Son but the Father", should not be forgotten. Let no one try to explain the mystery of the Incarnation. Let him believe with due reverence and adoration. At the same time the inscrutable mystery of the Son should not be used as a means to evade the confession of sound doctrine. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST In the Second Epistle of John, the apostle directs a Christian sister not to give greeting or hospitality to those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ. Some have been puzzled how far they should take this. They say, "We have unconverted relations and acquaintances who certainly do not bring the doctrine of Christ. Must we refuse them entry into our houses?" We find, however, that the Scriptures permit a Christian to eat with unbelievers if he is so minded. In 1 Corinthians 10:27, we read, "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go,... eat, asking no questions for conscience sake". It is plain then, that 2 John 1:10 cannot refer to those who have made no profession of faith in Christ, but must apply to those who are in a Christian assembly and therefore subject to the discipline of the assembly. Those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ should be refused fellowship at the Lord's table, for His table is holy. The Scripture is very plain; a man must bring the doctrine of Christ. It is not sufficient that he does not deny it, he must affirm sound doctrine. No company of believers can tolerate those who follow this middle course of neither affirming nor denying sound doctrine, without opening the door to the secret spreading of leaven. Why should a person not confess the doctrine of Christ gladly, if his heart is pure?

If a man does not confess a human spirit in Christ, he does not bring the doctrine of Christ. The true manhood of the Lord is in question.

There are various plausible excuses. Perhaps the favourite one is to say, "We will not go beyond the plain words of Scripture. Nowhere in the Bible do we find the statement, 'Christ has a human spirit'. Therefore we will not make such a statement. We cannot be called heretics for adhering to the plain words of Scripture". The fact is that many fundamental doctrines are not summarised in Scripture by a single defining statement. To find the scriptural authority for a doctrine it may be necessary to glean information from many places. The clear inferences from all these texts are then put together and the doctrine is found proven, so that it can be defined in a plain statement. This statement is not in the plain words of Scripture, but, in spite of that, the doctrine so stated has all the authority of the Word of God behind it. If a person says he will not affirm the doctrine because he will only repeat the exact Biblical wording, let him say whether he is prepared to limit all his expressions of doctrine to conform to this principle? Of course he will not, thus showing that there is something wrong with such a principle. What is the motive behind this objection? It may be only due to ignorance; but it also may be because the object is to conceal a heretical opinion. This subterfuge is a very ancient one. For example, Anus, after being condemned and excommunicated by the Nicene Council in A.D. 325, laid a confession of faith before the emperor Constantine which was so cautiously expressed, almost exclusively consisting of passages of Scripture, that Constantine was misled. He could not see anything wrong with the confession and did not realise that the evil lay in that which he had not written. He had not affirmed that the Son was of the same substance as the Father. The emperor allowed Anus to return to Alexandria, but the church there refused him communion. After a while Anus went back to Constantinople and laid his confession before the emperor again. Constantine issued an imperative order to Alexander, bishop of Constantinople, to admit Anus to communion the following Sunday. What would have ensued from this awkward situation is not known, because Anus, while walking to the church accompanied by his friends, was suddenly taken ill and died the same day. Later Constantius, who succeeded Constantine as emperor, and was completely under the sway of the Semi-Arian party, was influenced to draw up the following declaration

"Whereas so many disturbances have arisen from the distinction of the unity of essence, or the likeness of essence, so from henceforth nothing shall be taught or preached respecting the essence of the Son of God, because nothing is to be found on that subject in the Holy Scriptures, and because it is one which surpasses the measure of human faculties".

Here we have the plea that the fundamental doctrine as to the identity of essence between the Son and the Father is neither to be affirmed nor denied because this particular form of words is not found in the Scriptures. Yet it is a doctrine on which the whole Christian faith rests. The other excuse given was that the subject surpassed the human faculties. It is true that "No man knoweth the Son", but that must not be made an excuse to undermine the plain doctrine of Christ.

After the death of Constantius, political interference ceased, and at the general council at Constantinople, A.D. 381, the sympathisers with Arianism were finally excommunicated and forced to form a small sect of their own.

Failure to confess a human spirit in Christ may be due to an unwitting belief in another form of error entirely. It may be admitted that a human spirit is an essential part of humanity, but some may feel that one cannot be sure what was the product when full humanity and full deity came together in union in Christ. When two things fuse together they may become something different. It

is not therefore 'safe' they will say, to affirm that Christ has a human spirit. Here there is a lapse into the error of the Monophysites, i.e., the confusion of the substance of the Lord's humanity and deity — another of the four main heresies that disturbed the church in the Pergamos period. (The word 'substance' is used for want of a better one in the English language.) Sound doctrine is that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and Man; God of the substance of the Father; and Man of the substance of His mother born in the world (apart from sin). He is God and Man—one Christ. The unity of the Godhead and Manhood is not in confusion or fusion of substance, else the substance of manhood would be raised to something more than true humanity. (In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. Hebrews 2:17). This spurious explanation of the Incarnation, attempted by human intellect, that the union of Godhead and Manhood in Christ is by confusion of substance, must be rejected. We can say that the union of the natures consists in the Unity of the Person Who possesses both, this being in no sense an attempted explanation or complete definition of the unknowable mystery of the Incarnation. That is impossible.

Some may object to saying that the Lord has a human spirit and yet be quite willing to confess He has the 'spirit of a man'. At first sight the terms seem synonymous, but if a person refuses one and accepts the other they cannot be equivalent in his eyes. Can the words 'human' and 'of a man' always be used interchangeably? If a dog is owned by a man, we can say it is the dog of a man, but that does not mean that we are saying it is a human dog! We see from this example that the term 'of a man' need only indicate possession, but the word 'human' shows the nature of the thing described. Nobody has objected to the word 'Man' as describing the Lord Jesus. Therefore the Lord's spirit, whatever its nature, even if it be solely Divine or of mixed substance (that is confusion of Divine and human substance) can yet be said to be the Spirit of a Man in His case, i.e., the Man Christ Jesus. Of course, those sound in the faith will maintain that the Lord could not be a real Man if He had no human spirit, but as the Arians were willing to call Him 'God' while not confessing His Divine substance, so the Apollinarians may call Him 'Man' while not affirming His human substance. Of course we are not maintaining that it is wrong to say the Lord has the spirit of a man because, for anybody without ulterior motives, it clearly has the meaning that the spirit is part of His humanity; but we are showing that it is an inadequate substitute for the confession of a human spirit. The word 'human' is a test for soundness in the faith, but the expression 'of a man' may be an evasion.

There can be no genuine objection to the use of the word 'human'. It is derived from the Latin word *Humanus*, from *Homo*, *Hominis*, meaning 'Man'. It is not derived from the word *Humus* meaning 'Ground'. Students of Etymology may tell us that the words are remotely akin, but that does not mean that one is derived from the other. In any case the etymological origin of a word has no practical present-day significance.

We end this booklet by quoting the words of a godly servant of Christ who lived in the nineteenth century:

"That He was truly Man, Son of man, dependent upon God as such, and without sin in that condition of dependence—truly God in all His ineffable perfection: this I hold, I trust, dearer than life. To define everything is what I do not presume to do. 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father'. If I find anything which weakens one or the other of these truths, or which dishonours Him Who is their subject, I shall oppose it with all my might, as God may call me to do so" (Letters of J.N.D.,

Volume i, page 282, lines 35-42). The times call for vigilance. Once a group of Christians becomes careless as to the doctrine of Christ, it is no longer entitled to be considered as possessing a claim on the support and fellowship of those gathered unto the Name of the Lord according to Scripture.

S. Defilement in the Second Epistle of John

Defilement in the second epistle of John

W.R. Drunfield

Introduction The insistent teaching throughout Scripture that the faithful believer should be separate from evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Romans 12:9) has become less heard in recent times. Indeed, one might say it has grown distinctly unpopular. In a day when Christian values are less heeded by society in general, it might have been supposed that there would be more awareness among the Lord's people of the need for separation. The opposite has proved to be the case. The 'boiled frog' syndrome¹ has become evident, for the evils have grown gradually.

There are two kinds of defilement mentioned in the New Testament -moral and doctrinal. In the Old Testament there is also what might be called ceremonial defilement, but the Christian is not bound by that. Those laws were but shadows or types of spiritual truths now revealed, and under the faith system of Christianity the believer is no longer under the law. Study of these types to find their spiritual counterparts is very rewarding, but in this exposition we are confining ourselves to the New Testament, particularly the Second Epistle of John. The subject of moral defilement is taken up in 1 Corinthians 5. A case of fornication had arisen in the Corinthian assembly. Fornication seems to be a term used in the Scriptures to encompass all kinds of sexual sins. In this case it was adultery-made worse as he was sinning against his own father-incest. Such a person must be excluded by the assembly from all fellowship. A list of similar serious sins is given in verse 11 and again in chapter 6 verses 9-10. These do not seem to be comprehensive, but in 2 Timothy 3:2-4 we have another list of those persons from which a Christian must turn away, which seems to fill up any that are lacking. The Corinthians' unconcern about this sin in their midst was very serious. Paul warns them that 'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump'. They were not all fornicators, but they were all responsible that such a sin was allowed amongst them and so shared in the sin themselves. They were defiled. Their responsibility was to purge out the leaven, to get rid of it. The nature of leaven is to spread throughout the whole lump, and the more delay there is in purging it out the more difficult it becomes to deal with it. Finally, when it has been established that there is no power to purge out the leaven, then the principle of 2 Timothy 2:21 comes into operation and the faithful individual must purge himself out from the company. These are the only two occasions where the word *ekkathairo* (purge out) occurs in the Scriptures. That it takes some time for the leaven to become inexpugnable is clear from Matthew 13:33 where the leavening is a process which continues UNTIL the whole is leavened. The Corinthians, however, had not reached that stage for, although they were complacent at first, the outside influence of the apostle Paul stirred them into activity. The principles above relating to moral defilement are repeated when we come to consider the subject of doctrinal defilement. The Galatian Christians were troubled by doctrinal defilement and they are told exactly the same thing 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump'. That an assembly is to be condemned if it allows false doctrine, is clear from Revelation 2:14-15. The Second Epistle of John (2 John 1:1-13) This epistle was written to an elect lady. The

word 'lady' here is 'kuria', the feminine form of 'kurios' which means 'lord' or 'master'. She was obviously a woman of high rank. Her husband is not mentioned, which means that she was probably a widow. Nevertheless, she had brought her children up well, for they were 'walking in truth' showing that they had reached a responsible age. She was ruling her house and could decide whom she would receive as her guests, another indication that she was a widow. Our attention is drawn to the fact that she was 'elect'. 'Not many noble are called' (1 Corinthians 1:26). This lady was probably well known for her hospitality and put her large house at the disposal of itinerant preachers who were passing through her neighbourhood. John himself had experienced her hospitality, for he had found, not just heard, that her children were walking well, and he anticipated visiting her again (2 John 1:12). The apostle's main reason for writing this short letter seems to have been to warn her that some of these preachers were not proclaiming the truth.

2 John 1:1-6 : The great apostle of love is emphasising the truth very much in this epistle. In the first four verses he mentions the truth five times. He loves the lady and her children in the truth with all those who have known the truth; and this was for the truth's sake. His benediction is in truth and love and he rejoices that her children are walking in truth.

He reminds her of the Lord's great commandment that we should love one another, but this love can never be at the expense of the truth. Indeed such so-called love could not be love at all, for he defines love as walking after His commandments. This seems to mean the Father's commandments, for in the previous verse he refers to walking in truth as a commandment from the Father. In the first Epistle he says, 'This is the love of God that we keep His commandments, (1 John 5:3) and the Lord Himself said, 'If ye love Me keep MY commandments' (John 14:15). Nobody can exercise love at the expense of truth; that would be only human amiability -a desire to please men. Can we show grace at the Lord's expense? We can only show grace at our own expense, and that we should show abundantly. So we are exhorted to walk in truth, walk after His commandments and walk in love.

2 John 1:7 : And now comes the warning! (2 John 1:7) 'Many deceivers are entered into the world.' J.N.D's translation puts it 'Many deceivers have gone out into the world'. This is rather a strange expression. Does it not imply that these deceivers had once been in the assembly, but had now gone out? Perhaps they had gone out in company with others and had formed a party, indistinguishable outwardly from the true assemblies, but not in the Apostles' fellowship-not in fellowship with the Apostle John. After John died, the true assemblies would be characterised by continuation in the Apostles' doctrine. This verse is very similar to the instruction of 1 John 4:1-3 : 'Many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby ye know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God' (J.N.D's trans.). It is important to examine this quotation carefully. It is not simply the belief in the fact that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, as the Authorised Version puts it. It is the confession of Jesus Christ -come in flesh. It is the confession of that blessed Person, Jesus Christ, and all that that Person means to us. Then follow the words 'come in flesh' because that was the particular heresy that troubled the saints at that time; the gnostic heresy that denied that the Lord had a real human body and irreverently said that his body was an ectoplasmic materialization. Just to confess this fact would not be enough, for it does not imply His deity as some have said. It certainly implies His pre-existence before birth, but if He had been an archangel He could have been said to have come in flesh. The confession of this fact is

not enough, but the confession of His person includes everything. But it is well to notice a slight difference in 2 John 1:7, if we look at the literal translation. In 1 John 4:2 it is 'Jesus Christ-come in flesh'. In 2 John 1:7 it is 'Jesus Christ-coming in flesh'. Does this not include the additional thought that He is coming back again in flesh? That same Person who in flesh and bones left this earth, is so coming in like manner as He left. Let us never receive anybody who denies the Lord's Second Coming to this earth. We may differ on the exact order of events, but the truth that He is coming again must not be denied.

How important these truths are to the Apostle John. In verse 8 he tells how he hopes for a full reward for his work in laying the foundations, in conjunction with the other apostles. He does not want deceivers trying to disturb these foundations.

2 John 1:9 :

Next we read 'Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of the Christ, hath not God'. Literally this reads 'Whosoever goes forward .' It is 'advancement' beyond the truth. There can be no development. The faith is 'once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 1:3). There is no thought of improvement or addition to it. The doctrine of the Christ is fixed and we must abide in it.

It is often asked, 'What exactly is the doctrine of (the) Christ?' Briefly I think it could be answered 'the foundations that were laid once for all by the apostles and (New Testament) prophets'. Of course we know that 'the foundation of God standeth sure' (2 Timothy 2:19); the false prophets can hammer away at it but cannot prevail against it. Yet, in doing so, they can destroy the faith of some who begin to doubt. Surely the most dreadful attack against the foundations began in the 19th century when men began to criticise the Bible and say it was not the Word of God. Some said it contained the Word of God, but had mistakes. Who could say what part of it was the Word of God? Evolution, the 'sure' findings of Science-what nonsense it was!-had 'disproved' the first chapters of Genesis. But the Lord believed the first chapters of Genesis! So the Lord Himself was fallible! Millions were misled and still are.

Psalms 138:2 states 'I will . praise Thy Name . for Thy truth: for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy Name'. All the glories of His Name are belittled if we doubt His word. If we cannot rely on God's revelation of Himself, what is there left? When the Brethren (so-called) movement began, nobody in the denominations or the National Church (or even the Roman Church) denied that the Bible was the inerrant word of God. Read what the bishops of the Church of England declared in writing about the Scriptures.[1] Yet now there is not a single bishop in the Church of England-in this country at any rate-who believes in the literal truth of the creation story or the fall. Nobody who doubts the Bible -who would say 'that is only what Paul taught'-is fit for the fellowship of saints. The truth of the Person of Christ is vital. He is truly and distinctly God-really and distinctly Man-yet One Person indivisible; the Triune God-One God-three Persons-each Person distinct, yet wholly God: Eternal Divine relationships-the 3rd verse of this epistle calls Him the Son of the Father, the only place where this expression occurs: His atoning work; salvation by faith not by works-all these are surely the doctrine of Christ. The person who abides not in these truths has not God. Now many have said that this means such a one is not a true believer; he is not saved and is still in his sins, for he has not God. But it does not say that God does not have him! Only the Lord knows those that are His. We cannot say whether there is not true devotion to the Lord in a professing believer. Every heretic thinks he is right and that his doctrine is honouring to the Lord. It

is Satan that has deceived him, and God is not with him in the course he is taking, with the result that he has no real appreciation or enjoyment of God, but that does not mean he is going to hell! A sheep of the Lord will never be lost no matter how far he strays. He may go far from God, but the Lord has hold of him still. We may look at him and wonder how it is possible for such a one to be a true Christian, but only the Lord knows his heart. When we decide how to behave towards a person who brings not the doctrine of Christ, we do not attempt to judge the state of the heart; we judge his doctrine. If we cannot separate from a person without being sure that he is going to hell, how many errors would we have to tolerate! This is a specious plea for the toleration of error, but it is a false one. On the positive side, the one who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. Take away something from the doctrine of Christ, and logically the whole truth is lost (although the heretic does not realise or admit this), but those who abide in this doctrine have a real appreciation of both the Father and the Son. For them there is joyful communion and spiritual growth.

2 John 1:10 : In this verse begins the practical instruction to this lady. She must not have fellowship with one who comes to her that does not bring this doctrine. The wording is sharply decisive. It does not merely indicate that one who denies the doctrine must be refused, but also one who does not bring it. He must affirm the truth. Why should he not affirm the truth if he believes it? If he will not state it, then he is hiding his negative views. Such prevarication is dishonest and he cannot be trusted. Not only must she refuse to help him by giving him lodging, but she must not even speak words to him that might encourage him in his way. Of course this refers to a mature professor, not to a babe in Christ who has not yet learned a 'form of sound words' so that he can express the truth that he holds. The babe in Christ who has the indwelling Spirit 'knows all things'

(1 John 2:20) and will instinctively react favourably when he hears the truth and adversely when he comes across error; but he will not always be able to explain his convictions.

2 John 1:11 : The startling statement is now made in the next verse 'He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds'. He who has fellowship with such a one shares in his wicked ways. He is just as bad as if he transgressed against the doctrine of Christ himself. In fact, as one has said (J.N.D.) he is morally worse. For the denier of true doctrine is sincere and believes that he is speaking the truth. He is deceived and probably believes that he is honouring Christ. But the one who condones his evil way by having fellowship with him knows it is wrong and does it with his eyes open. As he partakes in the evil deeds of the false teacher, he obviously must be treated in the same way and no fellowship can be given to him. If these instructions are given to a lady with regard to the fellowship in her home, how much more are they appropriate to the holy table of the Lord! Surely no faithful assembly would allow fellowship to one who was offending in this way! So we are coming to the subject of assembly defilement and how the faithful believers should behave in such circumstances. If a person is in an assembly and he does not bring the doctrine of Christ, that assembly is defiled. They must put the 'wicked person' away from themselves. If they will not act, and they allow that person to continue to have fellowship, then they have part in the evil deeds of the transgressor and are themselves judged in 2 John to be as bad as the transgressor himself.

Other assemblies now have concern because they have fellowship with the erring assembly and that means that they have mutual co-operation and responsibility. They endeavour to labour with

that assembly to bring about repentance and restoration, but if they fail in this, they can no longer receive these brethren to the Lord's Table as they are taking part in the wicked works of one who does not bring the doctrine of Christ. In other words they are no longer in fellowship with that assembly. They must not be in fellowship if they are to obey the solemn injunction of 2 John 1:11. But some fail to do this. They say they will examine each person who comes from the defiled assembly, and if he is found not to hold the false doctrine himself, they will receive him, even if he is minded to continue in fellowship with that company. This, they say, is because they have no responsibility for what goes on in another assembly. All they have to do is make sure that evil doctrine is not held in their own company. All assemblies, they say, are independent of one another and inter-fellowship means friendship and free reception, but no responsibility for the condition of the assemblies with which they have such fellowship. So, they are no longer gathered on the principles of the one body of Christ, because the members of the body are 'fitted together' and not independent of one another, and, being all under the direction of the Head, will act in responsible unity. (Ephesians 4:3-4; Ephesians 4:15-16). Moreover in not obeying the strict commandment of 2 John 1:10-11 they become defiled. In actual fact, these assemblies cannot be sure that they do not harbour the evil doctrine themselves, because they are receiving those who see no reason why the doctrine should not be in their assembly. They will, therefore, use their influence to bring in their friends and before long the doctrine will become 'optional' and resistance to it will become 'controversial'.

One argument that these assemblies use in their own defence is the 'Chain of Defilement' theory. That is that C should not be in fellowship with B because B is in fellowship with false doctrine, (A), but if C does have fellowship with B then D should not be in fellowship with C; but if D does have fellowship with C then E should not have fellowship with D; but if E does have fellowship with D then F should not have fellowship with E; and so on until the end of the alphabet! So in the end it becomes impossible or else nobody is in fellowship with anybody. But this is all false reasoning. There is no chain of defilement principle in Scripture. Scripture only says that, if B is in fellowship with A who holds false doctrine, then B is just as bad as A. There has been many a soul worried in case he is defiled because he has some link with D, E or F, etc. but the question to be settled is simply 'Is the assembly, or would it be willing to be, in fellowship with B who is just as bad as A? If this assembly says 'yes', or refuses to answer, then it is C and is gathered on wrong principles as we have shown above. Whether the assembly is D, E, F or Z the question is still the same, 'Would you have fellowship with B?' The Scripture goes no further. But the question is still asked, 'What about an assembly that would not have fellowship with B and yet is willing to be associated with C who would have such fellowship?' To such a one, its inconsistency must be pointed out. 'You will not partake in the evil deeds of A, nor have fellowship with those that are just as bad (B). Unlike C, you say that you acknowledge the necessity to abstain from evil associations, and do not try to evade your responsibility towards other assemblies by saying that all assemblies are independent, so denying the truth of the one body. Yet you are willing to merge with other assemblies that meet on opposite lines. How can you act responsibly in conjunction with assemblies that in principle refuse responsibility? How can you rely on letters of commendation from assemblies that receive from B and would quite likely commend them to you so that you also are in fellowship with B? You are saying one thing and doing another. You are telling us that you are not in fellowship with B and yet you are. You are really C.' The 'chain' goes no further. It only has three links. Perhaps we should stress that C is not refused because everybody in it is necessarily directly defiled, although

the potential is there. (Ed.) It is because it has set up a system which is not on the true ground of the body of Christ, denying inter-assembly responsibility and the true unity of the Spirit which is according to truth. It has become a system based on the reasoning of men and not the Scriptures. Even if the doctrine of A has completely died out and has been forgotten by most, yet the false system remains, ready to receive those associate with other evils even though they do not hold the evil themselves. A person known to be walking in a godly way (not just by a letter of commendation from C) can be received if he is genuinely ignorant of the issues involved, but it is the responsibility of the receiving assembly to acquaint him of those issues. He cannot be allowed to come and go between them indefinitely after he is aware of the position. He would be deliberately flouting the truth and belittling the need for obedience, so that the assembly is compromised. If it is all right for him, then logically it would be all right for all of them. The epistle concludes with 2 John 1:12-13, setting forth the joy that John anticipated when he met again with this elect lady and her children, face to face. How good and pleasant it is to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace in the company of those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart! (2 Timothy 2:22).

WRD

1 If a frog is placed suddenly in hot water it will jump out immediately. But it is said that if it is put in cold water which is very gradually heated up, it will remain happily unaware of the situation until boiled alive!

[1]This is a united statement made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishops of the Church of England in 1863. 'All our hopes for eternity, the very foundations of our faith, our nearest and dearest consolations are taken from us, if one line of that Sacred Book be declared unfaithful or untrustworthy'.

S. On Baptism

ON BAPTISM...

QUESTION: Can Infant Baptism by immersion be proved from Scripture having in mind the six households mentioned where baptism would have taken place?

ANSWER: Firstly, as to the mode of baptism, we are informed in Scripture that it is to be with water, unto Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3) in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). We are not told anywhere how the water was applied. Arguments from the word "Baptizo" are quite inconclusive. Baptism signifies burial with Christ and therefore immersion may be the most suitable method. On the other hand it also signifies washing (Acts 22:16) putting on Christ as a garment (Galatians 3:27). Obviously one method cannot symbolize things so different as burial, putting on a garment, washing. As Scripture tells us nothing about it, the way the water is applied cannot be very important.

One cannot find six cases of households being baptized, only three definite cases--Lydia, the jailor, and Stephanus--and two possible ones--Crispus and Cornelius. There is nothing in Scripture to justify indiscriminate baptism of infants, but when Christians had households, the Scriptural practice was for the households to be baptized. There is nothing to show that these households contained small children and nothing to prove that they did not. We must judge whether believing parents should have their children baptised by our understanding of the meanings of baptism. It is an individual matter and need not affect fellowship between Christians in any way. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind and put what he believes into practice. The Baptist view can be easily obtained, but the case for so-called Household Baptism is not so easily found in print. Accordingly I will quote from some notes by the late Mr. A Jacob, not hitherto published.

"I should judge that there are few who would deny that baptism is a figure of death (Romans 6:4). But death of what? Is it death of me--if so, that would be the end of me and this it cannot be, because I am to walk in newness of life. Romans 6:6 explains that it is the death of "the old man" called elsewhere "The flesh" (that is in my view). I, therefore, am buried with Christ in death that the "old man" may die and the "new man" live in the power of the Spirit.

"But the sign is not the reality and must not be confused with it. A man may have been immersed in water as an adult believer and yet be an utterly unchanged man in heart. We have a clear case of this in Acts 8:13. Before he was baptised Simon Magus was a heathen--what was he after it? In my judgment he was a professing Christian--he had been identified with Christ in baptism and it was not until after-events showed that there had been no real change within him that Peter said, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God," because it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness (Romans 10:10). Peter in effect said he was not a child of God which is a very different thing.

"There is an exact parallel to this under the old covenant. In that case every Jew was circumcised and he might claim to be and was recognised as an Israelite--but he was no true Israelite unless

there was also an inward work of the heart (see Romans 2:28-29).

"This brings me to another point. Colossians 2:11-12 declares that a true believer is circumcised. Now we know that circumcision is not preached by Christians (in a literal sense) at all; but the Apostle goes on to say that the believer's circumcision is baptism. Some who fear the force of those verses deny this, but for me the words are clear and the point settled. Baptism is thus to us what circumcision was to the Jew. What did circumcision do? It marked off by a ceremony a race of people from all others. That rite also signified, spiritually, the putting away of the flesh or the old man. Every circumcised man was admitted into the covenant with God and he was recognised as such by God whether he was Jew or Gentile, but it did not (as shown before) make him an Israelite inwardly. Spiritual things can only be brought about by spiritual means--otherwise we would soon be in the company of those who profess baptismal regeneration.

"Water, a visible thing, can only accomplish a visible result--identification with the Christian profession. Death with Christ (a spiritual thing) accomplishes a spiritual result--the death of old man--in so far only as we are truly dead with Christ; and we then walk in newness of life.

"Now who was circumcised? Abraham and Isaac. Romans 4:9-16 gives a beautiful exposition of this. In those days to the Jew it was all important that they were Isaacs, the seed of Abraham, and circumcised on the eighth day as babes, and they could hardly bear the thought that anyone might be of the real seed of Abraham and be circumcised as an adult! They did let in some proselytes however.

"So Paul is pressing hard the case of the despised adult-believer! He goes on to show that Abraham himself was circumcised as an adult as a sign of the faith he had. This is stressed to show that all who are baptised as adults (after faith has come) are to share equally with the Isaacs who are born in the household of faith and were baptised as babes. In this way Abraham becomes father of all the faithful (verse 16). Fancy having to write half a chapter of the Bible to establish the right of adult believers who are thereafter baptised to equality with those who are baptised as babes!

"Where the Gospel is preached to those who have not heard it before and they believe, those who believe are baptised. They are 'Abrahams.' Later on children are born to believers and they will have their children baptised and they (the children) will be 'Isaacs.'

"But people say, 'Oh but supposing they don't believe afterwards.' Well we have shown that circumcision did not make a true Jew and neither does baptism make a true child of God, but both rites did have an outward effect. Circumcision made a Jew outwardly and baptism makes a Christian outwardly. Is that not clear?

"My judgment therefore is that if I had children I should most certainly baptize them in the faith and expectation that such children would in due course be born of the Spirit and become the true children of God. I would endeavor to keep before their eyes, mind and hearts what had been done to him and why: he could not have known otherwise.

"Sometimes the foolish question is asked: 'In what way is your child who has been baptised better off than mine who has not?' It would be equally easy to ask as foolish a counter question, 'In what way are you who have been baptised as an adult believer better off than I who have not?' No

power of the Spirit enables one believer to discern whether another has been immersed as a believer or not.

"As a matter of fact, if there is spiritual perception in the parents, I think there is a very important difference and that is their own approach to the presence of God on behalf of their child and the instruction the child receives. If believing parents bring their child unbaptized to God they bring them in the flesh unjudged, and as such subject only to condemnation; if they bring them baptized in virtue of the death of Christ, they acknowledge that death with Christ is the only way of deliverance and that in His Name they acknowledge that death with Christ is the only way of deliverance and that in His Name they seek a blessing through the new man. This is what I would do anyway, but none can act in another's faith."

--W.R. Dronsfield

S. Reunited Brethren

Reunited Brethren "Where two or three are gathered together unto my Name there am I in the midst thereof." Matthew 18:20 Simply we are Christians Gathered to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gathered to Thy Name Lord Jesus Losing sight of all but Thee O what joy Thy presence gives us Calling up our hearts to Thee The "Divine Gathering Center" is the Name of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. "No other name would do and there can be no other center but Christ for those who truly love Him and would be loyal to Him"... "He is personally present and takes His place in the center of the gathered Assembly. And this is the place we should give Him, too, the place of pre-eminence, the place of presidency and of authority - the central place." ...See Genesis 49:10 and Psalms 50:5 as instructive prophecy as to Christ being the gathering center. See also John 20:19-26 as an example of the Living Christ taking his place. The Holy Spirit leads only to Jesus and His precious name and not to the names of men or dead organizations..."he that gathereth not with me scattereth' Luke 11:23.

If we are truly gathered unto Christ's name and Person we will not hold up other names as banners around which we rally and under which we are enrolled or be called by names such as those of the denominations about us, Those truly gathered to Christ's worthy name will disown all other names which displace and dishonor that worthy Name. To call ourselves by the names of men and denominations is to deny His adorable name and grieve Him, our Lord and Savior. To the Church at Philadelphia Christ could say, 'thou hast not denied my name' (Revelation 3:8)- from R.K. Campbell: Church of the Living God. The Name Reunited Brethren, like that of Plymouth brethren, was a label which was given by outsiders to identify those who gather unto the Lord's Name and reunited with others on the same ground. Brethren have long reveled in the truth given them by their forefathers, that we gather in no other Name other than that of Christ, What other Name is there? However, when Brethren who were called Kelly brethren, Lowe Brethren, Glanton Brethren or Continental Brethren came together at certain "re-untings" of fellowship, they were labeled "re-united Brethren". The term stuck. W. R. Dronsfeld's article below chronicles some of the activity of our fellowship "the brethren" so called, since 1870-1974. The "Brethren" since 1870 by W. R. Dronsfeld The Present Position In 1948 overtures were made by the "Glanton" brethren to the "Lowe-Kelly" groups of meetings. United gatherings were held at Bradford and London but the brethren were not ready for healing at that time. As a result of a conference of "Lowe-Kelly" brethren in London on November 18th 1961, a letter signed by 16 brothers was sent round the Glanton meetings which desired to explore the possibilities of further joint gatherings to dispel doubts and suspicions that lingered between the two companies. Then some local disagreements amongst the Lowe-Kelly brethren about matters connected with this overture delayed things for two years. When these had been settled a letter dated 3rd March 1964 signed by 13 Glanton brethren earnestly desiring that the exercise should not be dropped, was sent to the Lowe-Kelly brethren. As a result of this, many local united gatherings for prayer and discussion were held and a conference of representative brethren took place in London on Oct. 10th 1964. Behind these

moves there had been much prayer by brethren everywhere that the Lord might graciously lead to a better understanding. At the conference it was found that there was general agreement on essential points of doctrine about which there had been suspicions in the past. Most brethren there were satisfied that there was no present cause for division, whatever there may or may not have been in history. A few wanted to insist on agreement of historical questions and the degree of blame to be attached to certain individuals long since dead, but this was resisted by the many. Much humiliation was felt at the breakdown in the testimony which the Lord had committed to them. Following this meeting it was agreed that a memorandum should be sent round the meetings, signed by eight representative brethren (four from each group) in which the measure of doctrinal agreement attained at the conference was to be stated. Accordingly there was drawn up a memorandum of doctrines from which there had been divergence (real or suspected) in the past, and replies were requested from all the assemblies as to whether this agreement could be regarded as basis on which further progress towards unity could be built. On March 6th 1965 the signatories of this memorandum met together again to consider the replies. They found that there had been universal agreement on the doctrines on all important points, and a very substantial majority earnestly desired healing. They circulated their report to this effect. A meeting for prayer and humiliation was called for February 19th 1966 and many brethren from both sides attended, representing meetings in most areas of Great Britain. There was such an experience of the Spirit's leading and such a spirit of repentance for past evils that it was generally felt that the Unity of the Spirit was there and no barrier should continue. It was accordingly intimated to the brethren in America that such was the state of feeling that existed in Great Britain. At first there appeared to be an impasse so far as the American brethren were concerned. Their wounds were more recent, the division of 1928 being very much in living memory. However, although it took eight years, that which seemed impossible came to pass and the brethren that had been rent asunder by the work of the enemy became re-united by Oct. 1974. A very few brethren in America seceded, but the change of heart by the many was seen by them all to be a remarkable work of the Holy Spirit. Copies of some of the relevant correspondence are appended to this history. So now all the so-called Exclusive brethren are united except for those with a "Taylorite" history and a section of "Tunbridge Wells" brethren which are mainly found in America. Some may enquire as to the possibility of an understanding with the many groups of "Ex-Taylorites". The fruits of the false system of "centralism" are still with them, and in particular there is no hope of healing while the Temporal Sonship heresy is condoned.

Brethren give the praise for healing to their blessed Lord and Saviour. It is in no spirit of self-congratulation that they come together, for it is with much weakness and poverty. The Lord's hand has been heavy upon them in chastening because of their pride and lack of watchfulness. The Lord said "Watch and Pray" and even if they prayed, they did not watch. There has been a marked decline in numbers amongst the brethren in Great Britain, due to the influence of the modern ecumenical spirit. When difficulties arise it is easy to give the truth up, where there is little conviction as to the principles of the assembly and the value that the Lord Himself places upon them.

W.R.Dronsfild.

S. The Incarnation of the Son

The Incarnation of the Son W. R. Dronsfield.

There is no more profound subject than that of the incarnation; yet though unfathomable to the wisest, nothing is more enthralling to the affections of the Lords people. The wonderful truth is that One who is God Himself, while never ceasing to be God, became a real man, living amongst men on earth. The Holy Spirit has given us four accounts of that immaculate life. No creature could have thought up such unimaginable details: a perfect human life, yet with glimpses of the glory of His Person shining through the veil. If any human intellect tries to add anything from its own thoughts, how hollow and confused it sounds! as the spurious gospel of Thomas demonstrates.

Though the incarnation is beyond our reasoning powers, there are certain truths about it which we can confidently affirm, because they are firmly based upon the Holy Spirits own account in the Scriptures.

(1) TRUE GOD The Eternal Son of God became Man, yet He never ceased to be the Infinite Creator. He emptied Himself of His reputation. His Manhood veiled His glory so that He did not receive the universal obeisance that was His due; yet He never ceased in His Person to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, upholding all things by the Word of His power.

(2) PERFECT MAN

He became a Man, entirely untainted by the fall. His Manhood was the same, in essence, as unfallen Adams, though, of course, there were differences. The main one was that His Manhood, though truly human, was joined to Deity in His Person, and therefore vastly glorified. Also Adam was innocent; that is to say he had no knowledge of good or evil. The Lord was not innocent, but He was holy. The Lord was in the midst of evil, but wholly undefiled by it.

(3) REAL MAN

He became a real Man, body, soul and spirit. When God created Adam, He breathed into him the breath (spirit) of life and he became a living soul. The animals were also living souls, but they did not have life by receiving spirit from God. As well as being a living soul, Adam had a spirit. In his soul he had physical life and emotions; in his spirit he had reason and awareness of himself and God. He could have rational communion with God and give God pleasure by his fellowship. For this he was created. The subject of soul and spirit is a study in itself, and cannot be more than touched upon here. The Lord took body, soul and spirit to Himself. He had a real body, visible and tangible, made of flesh and blood, capable of pain and suffering, but not partaking of the consequences of the fall. He was not subject to death as an inevitable event. He died by His own power. The ageing process, which is a result of the fall, was not in Him. His body was perfect. Also, as having a soul, He had real human emotions but without any sinful tendency. In His spirit He had real human thoughts by which He could have, even as Man, perfect fellowship with His Father.

(4) ONE PERSON The Son of God is One Person. The Son of God is the same Person as the Son of Man. Now we are beginning to come up against the inscrutable mystery. Men will argue that body, soul and spirit make a person. This is correct. Therefore (they say) the Son of God and the Son of Man are two persons in unity. No, certainly not! The Scriptures are dead against such an idea. The Person who is in the form of God at the beginning of the sublime sentence in Php 2:1-30 Php 2:6, is the same Person who was obedient to the death of the cross in Php 2:8. The subject of the sentence is the same throughout. There is no change of Person halfway.

We may shrink from saying baldly, God died. How can God die who has immortality and is the Source of life? The bare statement, God died, needs important qualification. Firstly, the One who died was God the Son, not the Father or the Holy Spirit. Secondly, He did not die as God, but in the Manhood He had taken. However, to qualify a statement is not to deny it. To say it was the Son of Man and not God who died, is to divide His Person and make Him two Persons. The fact is that God the Son became a Man for this very purpose, that He might die. He did not cease to be God when He died. The blood that He shed was human blood, but it was the blood that He had taken as His own. The Son of God shed His blood, and experienced death. He who is God laid down His life for us. It is the infinitude of His Person that produces the infinite atonement. This is the marvellous thing that takes our breath away. A divine Person has been through human experience from birth to death. He who is God, remembers His human experiences from birth to death, and sympathises with us in our infirmities. One who is both God and Man feels for us for He has felt the same. What a great High Priest He is!

(5) TWO DISTINCT NATURES The opposite error to saying that He is two persons is to say that His two natures have combined into one. It was an ancient heresy that the two natures, Manhood and Deity, merged together. For this reason the writer does not like the expression the God-man. It implies to him (though not to many orthodox Christians) that He is half man and half God. Such an idea must be resisted. He is wholly Man and wholly God. He possesses all the attributes and properties of real, unfallen, holy Manhood, and at the same time possesses all the infinite attributes and properties of Deity. The unity consists, not in the amalgamation of essence, but in the Oneness of His Person.

If we suppose an archangel becoming incarnate, a creature tremendously powerful but still finite, and by becoming incarnate having two finite natures (but natures very different), we would say, rightly, that such a situation was impossible. Here would be a baby, unable to do anything except to cry and suck, with no ability to talk, unable to understand a word his parents were saying; at the same time that person would be an archangel with tremendous power, not only able to understand the parents but knowing far more than they did. We would say, quite correctly, that it would be impossible for such things to be true in one person at the same time. Our finite judgment would be competent to come to such a conclusion. We would say that the archangel was only pretending to be a baby. Of course, it is not an archangel but an infinite Person who has become incarnate. When we are facing the infinite it is right beyond our ken. We can make no judgment. Mathematicians tell us that both opposites and parallels meet in infinity. We cannot understand, and never will understand it, for we will never have infinite minds. But God has revealed it to us, and so we believe it. The Lord grew in wisdom, yet was always omniscient, as we have seen. He said He did not know, and yet He knew all things. Yet it is very important to see that He could not make a mistake in what He said in Manhood; it would have been God who had spoken falsely and

that would be a moral impossibility. To take human limitations is grace, but to take human fallibility would be to compromise Gods holy nature.

Lastly, let us consider Matthew 11:27 : No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Here we see that it is possible for a man to know the Father if the Son reveals Him to him, but, without exception, it is not possible for a man to know the Son. Why then, is the Son unknowable, but not the Father? It is not the inscrutability of Deity, for that would apply equally to both Father and Son. Nor is it the inscrutability of divine relationships for if the relationship of the Son to the Father is unknowable, so would be the equivalent relationship of the Father to the Son. Clearly, it is the Incarnate Son who is unknowable. The Father, Himself, cannot explain this to us, for to understand the incarnation we would need to have the infinite understanding of the Father Himself.

W.R.D.

1 John 1:14

2 Php 2:7 3 John 1:24 - 3 John 1:25; 3 John 1:21: 17

4 Matthew 8:27 5 John 3:13; Matthew 18:20; Matthew 28:20 6 That is to say, He had body, soul and spirit

7 Genesis 2:7

8 Genesis 1:21 & Genesis 1:24. (The word creature in the King James translation Nephesh should be translated soul as elsewhere).

9 1 John 1:1-2

10 Hebrews 2:14

11 John 10:18 12 The Lord grew to maturity but this was not ageing in the sense meant here.

13 Matthew 26:38; John 12:27 14 Mark 2:8; Mark 8:12; Luke 23:46; John 19:30 (dismissed His spirit).

15 1 Timothy 6:16

16 Hebrews 2:9 17 Acts 20:28. (I believe the King James translation and most other translations are correct here).

18 1 John 1:7

19 Romans 5:10

20 1 John 3:16 21 Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:14-16

22 Luke 2:52

23 Mark 13:32

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