

**Demonstration of Errors in the New Teaching  
as affording opportunity for presenting the Truth.**

## 11. THE "ONE BODY" DENIED TO BE THE PRINCIPLE OF GATHERING.

It is astonishing how the system, we are examining, has so affected the minds and the memories of those who have embraced it, that they have actually forgotten the facts of their own previous history. We mean those supposed to have been acquainted with what these were, for allowance has to be made for many there *now*, who were never cognizant of them, and who have no opportunity of learning the truths formerly held and taught, as long as they remain where they are, since these are no longer alluded to except to discredit them. At any rate things have come to this, that one is positively obliged to prove to them at this time of day that, what formed the distinctive feature of their very constitution, and marked them off from all other grounds of meeting everywhere, was that they were gathered on the principle of "one body and one Spirit" (Eph. iv. 4.) This was known and acknowledged; not only by themselves *then*, but by Christians elsewhere, whether in Nationalism or Dissent, and particularly by all phases of Independency. Indeed, it surely is remembered by some at least, how they were being constantly attacked by such for occupying and maintaining that position in the face of every other *way* of meeting. It was in reply to one of these attacks that the Tract "Is the 'one body' the ground of gathering?" was written. As the title of a small paper opposing it, the question was asked "Is the 'one body' of Eph. iv. 4 the divinely constituted ground of gathering?" J.N.D. took it up and said:

"The reply is very simple. It *is*. A very little attention to the passage itself and others which I shall cite will prove it to every spiritual mind. It is, Christ being the *centre* and head, the great *principle* of gathering which has been the basis of the assembling of those called Brethren, and has governed at any rate those of them intelligent in God's ways from the *beginning*. I add intelligent, because a person may be recently converted, and be sealed and of the body and so have title to be there, though his knowledge be defective. I shall quote a few passages to show this point very clearly, profiting by the attack made upon the principle to keep the point before the minds of Christians, which it is always profitable to do. As to making it clear and proving it, it has been done, not only in tracts drawn from Scripture, but in discussions with Christians of various phases, national and free church, since it came up, and dissenters of all classes, mostly, but not exclusively so, in Switzerland some thirty years ago or more, but translated most or all of them into English. It is clear that the perfection of the body of Christ, *united* to the head, will be in glory. This has been contested, however, on the plea that Scripture never speaks but of the body on earth. But it seems to me that the end of Eph. i. clearly teaches the supremacy of Christ over all things as head of the body, as the counsel of God in this respect. That was one extreme, the other is that the unity of the body is not on earth but only in heaven. The tract confounds the Kingdom with the Church. It also

confounds the house and husbandry of 1 Cor. iii. with the body which is not spoken of there at all. We have a temple, that is, where God dwells, but in which there is no *union* with him who dwells there. Here we have three cases: he who builds with God's materials; he who, himself a saint, builds with bad, and loses his labour; and he who seeks to corrupt and will be destroyed; but no thought of the body. All believe,——with his independent churches, and others and I holding the unity of the body, that the church on earth has been corrupted, and that in 'the last days perilous times would come.' That is not the question, but, is that corruption part of the divine principle of meeting, or a corruption which makes us guilty? Certain men had crept in unawares, but creeping in unawares was not the principle upon which the saints were gathered.

"Another objection, which is not new to me, is more plausible, and goes upon a certain borrowed acquaintance with Scripture, namely, that the unity of the body was not known till Paul taught it. Now there was a time of transition of God's patience with the Jews, and Paul, called specially out to be the minister of the Gentiles, was the instrument in God's hands for unfolding the mystery of the union of Jews and Gentiles on the same footing. But God took care that it should not be a new, separate thing in its nature and essence. And——confounds the existence of the *thing* with the development of the *doctrine*. Paul was the great instrument, both of promulgating the doctrine, and carrying it out in practice; a dispensation was committed to him. But God graciously took care to guard against the mistake of —— by employing Peter to begin publicly that work as a fact, and securing its stability by not allowing Paul to make good at Antioch the truth he had received, and the Church remained *one* from the beginning. But what is its essence is much more important. The unity of the body subsists from the day of Pentecost. It was established as to the Gentiles, before Paul's ministry, at Caesarea in the bright and godly centurion, and Paul, in God's wisdom, was not allowed to secure it among the Gentiles. That was to be done (where it was important to do it) among the Jews at Jerusalem. No doubt the union of Jew and Gentile was of importance, especially in those days: but it was not the essential principle of the body or *its* unity. That was *union* with Christ, the *Head*, by the Holy Ghost. That was what *made* the body and unity, and each Christian so sealed a member of Christ. Was there no body of Christ till Paul spoke about the mystery? (Yet, if the *existence* of the body depended on the *knowledge* of the mystery this could not have been). Thousands have come into communion among those whom —— attacks who know nothing but to cry Abba Father, as sealed with the Spirit, and learn the mystery there. It is much to be desired that they should be intelligent as to it, and that they should know the place they are in. But I never heard of such being a term for communion. I suspect a very large number would have to be put out. That it is as such the assembly meets, that the truth as to this is found in tracts and writings is quite true. The writer does not mean to say that we should meet as if there were *two* Churches of God on earth. Meeting on that principle, as an expression in common use, means quite a different thing. We cannot meet as being *the*

one assembly because a great number of Christians are outside of us, but we meet on the *principle* of that unity. It is this unity of the *whole* body on earth which — denies. What a new believer is introduced into is that unity which unquestionably existed at the beginning and which we seek to realise as far as we can. Unity with the Head by the Holy Ghost is the only bond of union, but that produces the unity of the body of which we are thus all members. We meet with the conviction that the gathered saints were at the beginning the body of Christ and members one of another, and as such all *one* on earth (does — mean to say they were not?) and that we ought to seek to realize it. To be *of* the assembly as having the Holy Ghost and to understand and explain it are two things; — to *deny* it, which is —'s place, is a third. The principle or ground of gathering is that of *all* saints being *one*, and as such forming the *one* Church of God on earth. Christians had lost this principle and it has been recovered; hence much, and rightly put forward."

Nothing could be more decisive than this as to what the true ground of gathering for this age is, but in this system it is lost again and needs to be recovered as much as ever once more.

Further is it possible for one to read the Letters of J.N.D. without seeing that the unity of the body is insisted on all through as the principle or ground of gathering, so much so that he would not go where it was not owned and acted on? He said, "We do not meet on the ground of churches, but of the unity of the body of Christ and members of that one body. Membership of a church I do not find in Scripture. The great truth I find there is the coming down of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost that formed believers into one body, members of Christ, the Head in heaven." "We have the promise which first led me to meet, that wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, He is in the midst only it must be in the *unity of the body*" (Letters vol. ii. p. 245.) "Nothing but what constitutes a person a member of the body of Christ can be the ground of union, but in union the whole will and truth of God is to be maintained in truth, holiness, and grace, according to the Word and by the power of the Spirit." "But the presence of the Holy Ghost forming the unity of the body, I feel to be the centre and keystone of the whole doctrine of Christ, now exalted on high, till He comes again in glory. I have seen as to the manifestation of that unity, all ruined and scattered, but this difficulty has not altered the duty of the saint, nor is the love or power of the Head, nor His interest in the blessing of His saints, diminished or enfeebled" (Ibid pp. 430-1). Again, "The meeting for breaking of bread is *in principle* the meeting together of all Christians in the unity of the body of Christ" (vol. iii. p. 164.) "The principle of meeting is the unity of the body" (vol. iii. p. 182). Let these suffice, for if plain statements of that kind will not convince gainsayers, they are simply confirmed rejectors of the ground of "one body" and must just be let alone as not open to conviction.

But there are those who have gone the length of denying that we *ever* were gathered on that ground, whenever they think they will get anyone uninformed enough to believe them, and, sad to say, many who know no better, are found to receive, in their simplicity, these wicked

mis-statements. When such misrepresenters, however, come across persons intelligent enough to bring them face to face with J.N.D.'s actual writings, and show them the fact on black and white, they are with a bad grace forced to admit it. Nevertheless not even then will they desist, but, having nothing else to say, will coolly turn round and affirm, "Had J.N.D. been alive he would have gone with all this," that is, would have been a party to the subversion of the very truth he spent his life to bring out and establish! Thus they are simply incorrigible. So infatuated do they seem to have become that they are impervious to the *truth*, yet recklessly imbibe the wildest *notions* this New Teaching presents. Nothing appears too untenable to be embraced, if it emanates from the system's late chief or his satellites. Fortunately J.N.D. has left on record the refutation of this vain conceit. He said:

"I know of no such change as you speak of in my views. In general it is a mistake about *fresh* truth. There is nothing so fresh as the *truth*, which comes from God and is always fresh. I do not trust notions. There is a large linking of truth in Scripture; and if people get out of this for notions, these only mislead and hinder, and give importance to our ideas and so to ourselves, whereas in receiving the truth, one is subject to God, and nothing one self. I write these few lines because an important principle is involved in it." (Letters vol. iii).

Another thing that shows where the adherents of this system have drifted to spiritually, is the self-sufficient pretention of having *outgrown* the Synopsis. The fact is they had only touched its fringe, and at most had no more than scratched its surface. Its depths were to them an unexplored region. God's own Word having lost its true place, a faithful exposition of that Word, such as the Synopsis affords, was bound to be despised and set aside to their own irreparable deprivation and injury. J.N.D. said himself, "But as to my Synopsis I go and learn from it myself sometimes. Nor am I aware of any changes." Nay, its study would have at least prevented their falling into the host of errors for which the Raven teaching is responsible, and preserved *them* from the abandonment of "one body" as the ground of gathering.

The baseless defence of such defection from the divine principle of meeting is, that to be gathered on the ground of one body would make them a *sect*. Where have they got to? What does this mean? That among many other things they have lost the very meaning of what a *sect* is. So far from being gathered on the ground of "one body" constituting a sect, the truth is, that meeting on any other ground but that, would be utterly sectarian. This has been unanswerably shown in J.N.D.'s "What is a Sect?" He says, "All Christians are members of the body of Christ—an eye, a hand, a foot," &c. (1 Cor. xii.) Now the Supper of the Lord being the expression of this union of the members (as says 1 Cor. x. 17), when a corporation of Christians recognizes its right to receive its members to it, there is a unity formally opposed to the unity of the body of Christ. It is possible this may be ignorance, or that these Christians have never apprehended what is the unity of the body and that it is the will of God that this unity be manifested on earth, but, in fact, they form a sect, a denial of the unity of the body of Christ. There are alas! many who have no idea of the unity of the body of Christ, or who deny the duty of manifesting this

unity on earth. But all that does not annihilate the truth of God. If I join with other brethren to take the Lord's Supper only as a member of the body of Christ, not as a member of a Church whichever it may be, but verily in the unity of the body, ready to receive all Christians walking in holiness and truth, I am not a member of a sect; I am a member of nothing else but of the body of Christ. But to gather together on *another* principle, in whatever manner it may be, to make a religious corporation, is to make a sect. A sect, then, is a religious corporation united upon *another principle* than that of the *body of Christ*" (Coll. Writings, J.N.D., vol. iii; Eccl. pp. 552-4).

There is no uncertain sound about this, and shows where the New Teaching has wandered to, and what a sad falling away there has been. The only thing that *is not* a sect, viz., being gathered on the principle of the *whole* body of Christ, is mis-called a sect, and what *is* a sect, which this system assuredly is, namely, meeting as a mere collection of separate individuals is vainly imagined *not to be* one. Ever since they shunted from the "one body" line, they have been running, not only on a sectarian, but an *independent* line. It is obvious they cannot be both *off* and *on*, the unity of the body rails at the same time.

The self-evident fact ought to be recognized at a glance that for all Christians outside the various forms of denominationalism there are only *two* grounds of gathering *possible*, either that of independency or that of the unity of the body. If, as this system has confessedly done, the "one body" ground is given up and even scorned, their present position is unquestionably *independent*. They cannot help themselves, there is no other alternative, and it is sheer folly to attempt to explain it away. All the protestations in the world to the contrary could not alter this, though unsuspecting souls are made to believe otherwise.

But there is quite as great a misapprehension as to what is meant by 'one body' being the 'ground' of gathering. To any one who sees there is such a thing as the body of Christ formed by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven at Pentecost, and united to the Head on high, it need present no difficulty, but follows as a necessary consequence. From its formation then till Paul's decease, what characterised the coming together of those composing that "one body" was that they were all *one*, and that too even before the doctrine of it was taught. There was the *one* Church, or body of Christ at Jerusalem. The Samaritans were not allowed to have another Church when they were converted. Peter and John had to come down and they were *one* with Jerusalem. So it was with the bringing in of the Gentiles in connection with Cornelius, they also were *one* with Jerusalem. It was all the *one* thing and there was nothing else. No need then to speak of any *ground* of gathering. They were the thing itself, and when gathered together were the *one* body, the *one* Church, in every place. There were not two kinds or ways of meeting in any city or place in Apostolic times. If it was Corinth "Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular," and the gathering together was as much *one* as the body is one, and comprised all the Christians in Corinth. But look at the different ways of gathering together there are now, and so many members of Christ in particular scattered here and there. We could not say, "We *are* the body of Christ" in any place now. It would be a false pretention

and make us a testimony to a lie instead of the truth. The utmost we can say is that we are gathered on the *ground* of that one body, but we could not, a mere handful, say we *are* it as could be said of Corinth. But we can be on the *principle* of what they were, and refuse every other. By taking that *ground* it is just the opposite of a sect, and when properly understood, why should there be such an outcry against, and objection to, the "ground of gathering" as that of "one body?" There was nothing but this *oneness* at the first, and if we are to conform in any measure to the path of the early Christians, though not the *whole* as they were, yet, if only two or three, we must be on the *ground* of that, on the *principle* of that. Nothing else is pleasing to God, and Scripture knows no other *way* of meeting since Pentecost.

The New Teaching, however, has discarded all this and will not have the "one body" as the ground of gathering as we shall show.

Fellowship as I understand it, is not connected with the thought of the one body, but with saints being gathered to the name of the Lord: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Spirit's Day, p. 66).

But the ground of fellowship remains unchanged, and the ground of fellowship is calling on the Lord (Ibid p. 92).

If believers are brought into our fellowship, what we hope is that they will learn their privilege; depend upon it, people do not learn their privilege very much until they learn the true ground of fellowship (Ibid p. 94).

There is no mistake about this. It is the direct contradiction of what J.N.D. asserted to be the "great principle of gathering which has been the basis of the assembling of those called Brethren," and which "governed those intelligent in God's ways from the beginning." Here we have submitted another and different "ground" which is "not connected with the thought of the one body," and instead of "one body and One Spirit" as it should be, is actually made out as "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." We appeal to every fair-minded person. Is this anything like the "Communion of the body of Christ; for we being many are one loaf, one body" of 1 Cor. x? You cannot but be struck also with how the term "ground," which is cried down as so objectionable when connected with "one body," is used in these citations no fewer than three times as applied to the *new* ground of this System, viz., the "ground of fellowship is calling on the Lord." Could there be a greater mistake? "Calling on the Lord" is true of every saint in every age, but what has it to do with *any* ground of gathering, least of all *the* ground of gathering for the Church of God? "Lord" is not connected either with "gathering" or "fellowship" in Scripture. It is a title of authority over *individuals*, not a title to which people are *gathered*. Though constantly taken for granted, there is in fact no such *principle*, nor any such *expression*, in God's Word, as "gathered to the name of the *Lord*." Every tongue will yet confess Him "*Lord*" to the glory of God, the Father, but that is *subjection* not gathering. When God does gather in one (head up) all things in heaven and earth, it is declared to be in "*Christ*" (Eph. i. 10). In relation to the Church, it was *as* the "*Christ*, the Son of the Living God," that Peter confessed Him. The full name to which we are gathered is the Lord Jesus Christ. "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ when ye are gathered together" (1 Cor. v. 4). Leave out *Christ* and the very title that is distinctive of *fellowship* (1 Cor. x. 16) is wanting, no less than

of *gathering*. Take the expression, the "body of Christ," it means His body the *Church*, but the *Lord's* body is His *human* body. Just think of "calling on the Lord" being said to be the "true ground of fellowship" for those who are one body in Christ and every one members one of another!

But this is not all. The present recognized leader, on whom the mantle of the System's founder is supposed to have fallen, has yet another "ground" as we shall see. A few years ago certain zealots for the New Teaching wished to (what they called) "help" one well known here in Australia, which, being interpreted, meant helping him to *give up* the truth, he was then known firmly to hold fast. These urged him to write to the one, who is now the leading light in the old country, stating his difficulties, in the hope that he might be able to solve them all, and thus a proselyte might be made of him. The one referred to did write and received an answer which anything but satisfied him, yet he let matters alone. But not long after an "Extract" out of the letter from the one at home to the other out here was *printed* in England without the latter's knowledge or consent. This was sent to Australia and was being circulated here. A copy fell into the hands of the one to whom the letter was originally written, and his feeling on reading it was that it must be replied to. Consequently a printed "Reply" was given, in the front of which a re-print of the English "Extract" appeared. In this a certain writing of J.N.D.'s was recommended as an "orthodox paper." A serious discrepancy, however, was found between the remarks in the "Extract" and what J.N.D. said, not to mention constructions which his words did not seem fairly to bear. This the "Reply" clearly showed, and verbatim quotations from the "orthodox paper" itself were sufficient to convict the author of the "Extract" of mis-apprehending its true purport with an apparent disposition to give a complexion to the article foreign to J.N.D.'s intention, while his version of the "history of brethren" was quite the opposite of Mr. Darby's. Was this ever acknowledged? No. From the way that "Extract" spoke of the "formation of the assembly" it was evident the writer had in his mind some supposed assembly before ever the *real* assembly was formed at all, such as what he called the "Company of the disciples in John's Gospel." We know its actual formation took place by the coming of the promised Comforter on the day of Pentecost, *not* in John's Gospel, whether as the *house* or the *body*, and neither was in existence *till* then. Further it is well-known that it was just the unity of the body, the vital reality, that remained intact in spite of all failure, on which J.N.D. acted, while not till some time *after* was the truth of the house proper brought out. Moreover the part played by Matt. xviii. 20 was mis-stated. It was hailed as a *resource*, never as the principle or ground of gathering. He knew the truth of the body before ever he left the Establishment, and did not learn it after being gathered. But all through the "Extract" the centre is confounded with the principle. The *centre* assuredly is all-important, but you must also have the right *principle*, for if a thing is wrong in principle all is wrong. Sad to say, there is more than a suspicion from certain of its founder's statements affecting His blessed Person that this system has a *false* Christ, instead of *the true* Christ for its centre.

But his treatment of "Is the one body the ground of gathering?" was even more reprehensible. There was no dubiety about J.N.D.'s position in the matter. He emphatically *affirmed* what, the one he was replying to, *denied*, just as the author of the "Extract" denies it, and was proving that it *is* unquestionably the ground of gathering. Why then did he give such a twist to J.N.D.'s plain words and misrepresent him as speaking of the "unity of the body as an essential principle," when what he did say was "The essential principle of the body and *its* unity," distinctly declaring what that "essential principle" was, viz.: "That was *union* with Christ, the Head, by the Holy Ghost?" This was brought home to him. Did he confess it? No. On the contrary his admirers never wearied of bringing pressure on the writer of the "Reply" to withdraw it. He was at last induced to do so. Yet it should never have been done. Error was preferred at the expense of truth then. Let any unbiassed person read the "Extract" and the "Reply" and say which of the two should have been withdrawn. Is it possible for any man to retain confidence as a reliable teacher if he has not the candour to own where he was wrong, when proved conclusively to be so? But what of his ground of gathering? He says in the "Extract":

The question for to-day is not, who is on the ground of the one body? but, Who has stepped out of the ship (like Peter) to join the Lord.

That is to say, *walking on water* is now the *ground* in place of that of "one body!" Can one conceive such to be a "ground" of anything? "Water" is the most yielding, unstable, insecure, thing as a *figure* that can be imagined, and most meaningless as a *ground* of gathering for the Church of God, which is what "on the ground of the one body" means, and is said "*not*" to be "for to-day; but" something else is avowed to be so. When Peter "stepped out of the ship" he had nothing to walk on but water.

Accordingly, to leave the solid ground of "one body and One Spirit" for anything so unstable as "water" in which Peter sank before ever he reached the Lord, who had to reach him *instead* to save him from a watery grave, is surely a strange position to take!

Being gathered on the ground of the unity of the body they do not hesitate to misrepresent as gathered to a truth. In other words they have lost the sense of even the difference between "on" and "to." The gathering, on the contrary, is *to* Christ, the *centre*, but *on* the ground of the "one body" of which He is the "head." They tell souls they hold the truth of the "one body" as ever. Is that honest? It is held only as an expression in Scripture which they cannot deny is there, but as for the *truth* of it, that has no place in their thoughts as the Spirit of God means it. The *reality* of it has been taught away and reduced to "body" in the sense of a body of troops or army whose head is a commander-in-chief to whom no one is united. As a substitute for the "one body" as the true ground of gathering, the late author of the system gave "calling on the Lord" and his successor gives "walking on water!"