‘Brethren’ and the Brethren Movement or Philadelpia

Some remarks about the so-called brethren and their relationship to Philadelphia or the Brethren Movement/Evangelical Movement, including some remarks about the so-called KLC- & TW-brethren

After I read The Lord’s Testimony of D.J. Christiaanse on the interesting website of brother Tom Chantry, [www.brethrenarchive.org](http://www.brethrenarchive.org), I felt forced to write something. One can find there, on his website, the option Brethren Archive and under the heading The Tunbridge-Wells section two papers of which the last one is called The Lord’s Testimony of D.J. Christiaanse.
The title, you can say, is quite presumptuous and we must say, has a wrong focus. The so-called brethren saw themselves as a testimony, but to focus on “us” and “we” is wrong, because it takes away the grace of God. About times past we read in the Bible about a company “**whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem**” (Ezra 1:5). As has been pointed out by many: in those days and in the Philadelphia (‘brotherly love’) period of the history of the Church God did work something for His glory and our blessing. So, He works and He sustains and preserves. We only are good in ruining things… In days of old (O.T.) many got of the track, as also with Philadelphia.

This is a perspective written for insiders, for those who already know a bit about the so-called brethren.

“You (‘brethren’) think you are Philadelphia!”. I indeed believe, in a way, we can say so, because we ARE PART OF IT. When we try to trace Philadelphia in the history of the church (we take for granted that most of our readers know about reading Rev. 2 + 3 as a prophecy about the history of Christendom, see the Appendix) we will find that around 1700 AD Christians became aware that there was going on a new work of God among them.
The Reformation and also what is called the Second Reformation unfortunately had failed.

This new movement of God’s Spirit we can call the Brethren Movement or the Evangelical Movement. A clear and full gospel again was preached, with results of real conversions and assurance of faith. These believers also often learned that they couldn’t stay in the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed or Lutheran state churches, where there was a mixture of believers and unbelievers. They learned to gather as believers, as brethren (alone)! We will not really dive into this interesting part of Church history here, but will only mention the main characteristics and so draw a sketch.
There also came light again about the importance for Christians of the expectation of the return of Christ, missions, the future of Israel and the Millenial reign of Christ.
Jung Stilling (1740-1817) wrote : “In the whole history of the Church is no time in which the expectation of the Lord’s coming was so instant and so universal as in the first half of the century just ended”.

Again, to draw the great line here a bit, one can also speak of the Great Awakening in the 18th century, which unfortunately had lowered dramatically at the end of that age, but came back as the Second Great Awakening in the 19th century. In that age the the ’(Plymouth) brethren’ came into the picture. The famous count Von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) had said, in my words: when we are not serious and faithful anymore the Lord will take others.
God’s work deepened in the 19th century and we find a more clear dispensationalism developed as the means to understand God’s Word, His ways in history. This right way of understanding Scripture we find already with, for instance, Johannes Cocceius (or Coccejus, 1603–1669), a Dutch theologian born at Bremen. He showed that we don’t find one covenant in Scripture, but more (what we now would call dispensations) and that the sabbath was meant for Israel to keep and not for the Church of the NT. This all was really revolutionary in those days and gave big problems for many years. The well known American evangelical theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) also already worked out an understanding of Scripture in a more dispensational way.

In the ‘official’ church history we can’t find much about Philadelphia, this Brethren Movement, because that gives their own, Roman Catholic and Reformed/Lutheran, perspective. For the interested reader I mention here some names which can help although to get a kind of picture:
Jean de Labadie (1610-1674), he was an ex catholic priest and would not use the name “Reformed” anymore, but preferred “Evangelical” (although by this Lutherans were also named in Europe) . His course of live is descriptive of Gods new work which came up in those days. There started a looking back to Apostolic times and taking serious the teaching of the New Testament, stressing that the church was and had to be the assembly of real believers.
Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), started his “collegia piëtatis”, meetings of serious Christians. These were actually ecclesiolae in ecclesia (“little churches within the church”) and often became the nucleus of Gods new and separate work. Compare with this also the societies of the Wesley’s.
Among these so called pietists (nickname) was also August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), who started the well known “Halle foundations”, schools, hospital, orphanage, printing office etc. In the same way George Müller (1805-1898) started up his famous orphanage etc. in Bristol an age later!
We already wrote about Zinzendorf. He started the well known Herrnhut and although he wanted the community to join or stay in touch with the Lutheran Church, the lot (a method used by them) decided not to do it. Felix Bovet writes in his biography about Zinzendorf (which can be found on the internet under Google books): “he was perhaps the first who had a clear understanding about the essential unity of the Christian Church, notwithstanding their name as Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic “. Zinzendorf indeed saw the unity of all *believers* and tried to give expression to it. He tried to organize the different new assemblies, conventicles and societies which came up but did not succeed. The more institutional Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum, United Brethren) was not his goal.
Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), John (1703-1791)and Charles (1707-1788) Wesley, George Whitefield (1714-1770) and Gerard Tersteegen (1697-1769) are some other well known names. These (and many others!) could be seen as the initiating brethren. As already stated: because the ‘official’ church history often is Protestant or Roman Catholic you don’t get a clear picture of Philadelphia by it.

The nucleus were the more ‘radical elements’, like Jean de Labadie and the radical pietists. They saw ‘the churches’ as Babylon, as part of the world. Many of them who tried to change things were purged out themselves, like Luther before and many others did separate and were called separatists. In a very serious way they tried to return to the N.T. practise. It’s easy to point out wrongs with these radicals, but God was working and therefore much was genuine, scriptural.

In the 17th and 18th century you will see the movement still more alongside and often operating within the Roman Catholic Church, with names as Francois Fénelon (1651-1715) and Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), also alongside and often within the Protestant state churches (conventicles). In the 19th century as a more separate movement within Christendom. Although there were already many separatists (radical pietists, enthusiasts) from the beginning and these did more or less characterise Gods new work in its essence.
It’s typical that the late professor of Modern History, W.R. Ward (1925-2010) called his work about the revival movement in the 18th century: The Protestant evangelical awakening (Cambridge University Press, 1992), but it’s not a Protestant movement. It’s a *new* movement, the Evangelical or Brethren Movement.
The same can be said about the more recent ‘An Introduction to German Pietism, Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe’ of Douglas H. Shantz (The John Hopkins University Press, 2013). It can be stated although that most adherents of the movement had a protestant background.

As mentioned already: Jean de Labadie called himself an evangelical. He had been a Roman Catholic (priest), a Protestant (minister), but now saw himself as an Evangelical (let’s say: just a brother, as fruit of the gospel: “One is your Master and you all are brethren”). Also in our days does an evangelical still stress conversion and the authority of the Bible. Although it’s not that pithy and radical anymore, so to say and we now also have many neo-evangelicals, who compromise Scripture. The high-tide of the movement found it’s end around 1900. See the attached appendix about Revelation 2 + 3 at the end of this article.

Johannes Kelpius (1667-1708) perceived in 1699 a “revolution in Europe… which in the Roman Church goes under the name of Quietism, in the Protestant church goes under the name of pietism, chiliasm and philadelphianism” (W.R.Ward, The Protestant evangelical awakening, page 51). Another quote from the same book: “… the great movement for awakening spiritual life which [has] broken out like a new reformation in Germany under the name of Pietism, and which had also appeared in other countries…” (page 52).
I would not advice my readers to buy this expensive book. It is interesting, but loaded with very much political background info.

Again I do come back upon the mentioned pamphlet of D.J. Christiaanse. He was a brother from The Netherlands (I’m from The Netherlands too) and came from the so-called KLC-fellowship. I’ll try not to make the story about him too long. He was with the ‘TW-brethren’ about four years, until 1956. There came problems within two small meetings, to one of which D.J.C. belonged and he ‘knew things better than the others’, raised himself above his brothers. After this he sought contact with the Renton-group of meetings (don’t confuse this with the Renton-split with the heretic Taylorites). This group divided from ‘TW’ because of certain opinions about marriage and remarriage. On the island Corsica came a division among them in a place called Bastia (1959/1960) and D.J.C. choose the side of the pro-Bastia Group. I have to finish here and don’t relate the further complicated story. You can say that he was a gifted brother and could present things well in a way, but it became clear that it was difficult for him - as it is for all of us - to take the low and dependend place. In the end, so to say, he wrote a short history of the ‘Brethren’(in the Dutch language) in which he made it clear where the Table of the Lord was: in Oudewater, where he lived and with some in Deal, England and perhaps with some in Philadelphia, USA…
For many years he did visit many KLC-persons and meetings (outside), where he scattered his pamphlets etc. and so he delivered the ‘TW-brethren’ here in Europe a very, very bad name…
Some years ago we were contacted by a brother who had been for many years with D.J.C. He was ashamed of it now and let me know many things. Also that he found out that D.J.C. and his son were not honest towards the others. Although I also know about another brother and sister who were with D.J.C. and left him, this is of course only one witness. Although a very earnest (and damaged!) Christian.
Let me relate two more points: I accidently came into contact recently with somebody here in The Netherlands who had invited D.J.C. and his son (by the way, they both don’t live anymore), because he was interested in how they saw things. The main thing what negatively impressed him was the dictatorial attitude.
I even met D.J.C. myself, when doing door to door gospel work in the town where he lived, but can’t remember about nothing anymore.
Perhaps the readers can understand that it pricks, irritates me, that this person and that pamphlet must present the ‘TW-brethren’ on [www.brethrenarchive.org](http://www.brethrenarchive.org) (in itself it’s of course an interesting paper for Tom his brethren archive).

Also, because I believe these brethren, by Gods grace, try to be faithful to Scripture and are not presented well this way.

Let us now first proceed again with the more general Brethren Movement or Filadelphia. Crucial for this Evangelical Movement was a healty and clear gospel: Where are you standing? Do you *know* you are going to heaven, belong to the Lord? They were convinced that something had to happen within people (conversion/new birth) with the end result, as promised by the gospel, the assurance that one belongs to heaven/to the Lord (sealing with the Spirit). Although they didn’t explain it yet the way I do here between brackets. It’s interesting to mention that John Wesley placed some notes in his published dairy where he describes how he found peace at Aldersgate Street on the 24th of May, 1738. He had stated “he wasn’t converted up till that moment” and commented: I’m not sure about that. And further on commented: I did have the belief of a servant and not of a son.
We are not writing now about the wrong teaching of perfection, which John Wesley developed lateron.

I would like to go on describing the history of the so-called brethren of the 19th century, mainly in this just mentioned light of a clear gospel. Can and may we ask the question which Paul asked certain believers: “Have you received the Holy Spirit when you believed?”, Acts19:2. It constitutes the personal believer in this age and also the Assembly. It’s therefore of immense importance!

At the beginning there was the divergence between Anthony Norris Groves and John Nelson Darby. Darby also pointed out that many didn’t understand the difference there is between being born again and the sealing of the Spirit and the important consequences of this difference for the teaching about and the practice of the Church/Assembly. William Kelly did underline this later on.
Also the great danger of clericalism came up among them. Where they not anymore all brethren and didn’t they all receive (at least) a gift?
It became clear that many did not have any definite ideas about what they were practising. Compare this with those who wanted to stay linked with them ‘who stayed’ and the ‘radicals’ of about a century before, at the beginning of the movement.
Unfortunately ‘brethren’ also had to learn by practise that separation from evil is an important principle! We can enjoy the unity of all believers, but this never may lead us to compromise regarding evil of false teaching and wrong/bad practice. In that way we need to be radicals!
Many who felt part of this whole Movement of God in these ages unfortunately missed that radicalism and… were still linked with what Scripture calls the camp (still applicable in our time, where Christianity is more or less based upon Judaïsm and O.T. principles). A choice is necasarry, separation is a must in the light of Scripture.
Perhaps Psalm 119:63 can make this point clear: “I am a companian of all those who fear thee” and we can state that we naturaly love our (spiritual) family. But our verse does go on: “and of those who keep thy precepts” and there we learn that all believers are called to live a live in obedience. Than they will be happy and can God bless them.
So we side with the first ‘exclusives’ (nickname, compare with the mentioned former separatists). To be exclusive concerning evil (separate from evil) is not a bad thing…

In later time again the before mentioned point (about sealing) played an important role in the worldwide split around the eminent teacher Frederick W. Grant (in 1884). Brother Grant, eminent teacher he indeed was, couldn’t agree with Darby on the point of sealing with the Spirit (although he had to admit that only the ones being born again could (after that) receive the Spirit). Of course there is the point that all believers of all ages only could be blessed by Christ and will all be in Him, “in Christ”, the second and last Adam. But we also need to distinguish things and see the special and extraordinary place of the church.

And the theorizing about ‘state and standing’ of the intelligent and also very able teacher Clarence E. Stuart (in 1885) originated an other worldwide division. These two brothers, Grant and Stuart, were probably the most gifted teachers at that time.
F.G. Patterson helpfully wrote: “ C.E.S. [Stuart]. lowered Christianity to mere Judaism, and F.W.G. [Grant] raised Old Testament saints to the level of Christians”.

The main point was and as I wrote that I would highlight this important point of a clear gospel: we must not introduce theories which are not in accordance with Scripture and differ with reality (of experience)! The reality of what Christianity is according to Scripture. These able brothers missed the crucial point of what Christianity was. This sounds perhaps strange to some of my readers, but try to catch what was meant. So did, for instance, Stuart ridicul the point that we, according to I Cor.15:48, already were heavenly ones *now.* Although we have to admit there is a danger at the other side: an over-estimating of the New Testament Church, of our position, resulting in a degrading of Old Testament saints and others who come after us.

Among the KLC-brethren and also Open bethren, the (unfortunal) standard evangelical standpoint (in our days) is that one does receive the Spirit at the same time of being born again. I wrote standard (as far as I know), because there are also those who uphold the ‘old teaching’. Not so A.E. Booth:
“It was said that many in our dispensation, who are born of God (“children” therefore) had not yet received the Holy Spirit. This was a grave mistake”. Pag. 23 of The ministry of Peter, John & Paul, A.E. Booth, Believers Bookshelf, Sunburry, USA.

Before the last mentioned two divisions there was the Ryde/Ramsgate one in 1881. In those days there existed not really a healty condition among the ‘brethren’. The well known and pious brother Wigram stopped his periodical The Present Testimony in 1879 because he thought (in my words) “It’s all over with the ‘brethren’”. On one side there was lukewarmness and worldliness and on the other side came up the so called ‘New Lumpists’ (see 1 Cor.5:7). Perhaps you can say that on both sides the teaching was most in their head, but less in their heart. It was a terrible thing that a beloved old brother, Edward (Dr.) Cronin, who was one of the first, early leaders, started this trouble. Darby, dearly loving him, didn’t, couldn’t spare his wrong step in public.
There has to come now and then the judgement of the Lord. We deserve it, like Israel of old. When one reads about those troubles, also in our days, you can see that a Christian still has two natures... Dishonouring when we also have to experience it ourselves. We are not ‘a hair better’ than unbelievers and also dangerous, when our flesh comes up...

In that time even the eminent teacher William Kelly ‘lost track’, of course according to my perspective, as I give it here. Much has been written about this sad division and we don’t want to repeat things. The point I would like to make regarding this trouble is that in those days the assembly at Park Street London didn’t have yet the negative and unscriptural role it had later on.
Problems dragged on for years already and came to a climax in 1881. Someone came with a letter of recommandation from the Guildford Hall meeting and brethren saw it as needful to seriously look into the problems now (and ‘make a stand’). This they did for days and after weighing things they came up with a decision. Now, one can have certain problems with the decision, but can one basically, principally critizise it? I don’t think so and brethren on the Continent in that time thought so too.
We here can perhaps mention the point of “the unity of the Spirit”. It is the practical unity the Spirit works, wants to work, among the members of the one body. He (alone) can uphold it.

Among the ‘brethren’ there was a right winged party as we already saw (new lumpists) , which went over into the heterodox Raven party in 1890. By F.E.Raven (1837-1903) a seed was planted (“Where the unity of the Person is got from, I know not. It seems to me perfect nonsense” – speaking about Christ) and they are still sitting there, metaphorically speaking, under a big tree, grown out of that seed and can’t see the sun anymore…
But he started his wicked teaching career with teaching that believers (those who are born again and sealed) didn’t standard have eternal live. This again was a departure of the Scriptural teaching we did focus on before… Now detrimental to the other side! I mean that when you are sealed and assured you still haven’t eternal live? Although you can say that believers have to learn a lot, this was clearly wrong teaching. After that Raven also taught that the Lord was *more* than eternal live, He was God. So he separated eternal live from the Godhead and in 1898 he even doubted that Christ was the eternal Son. Which became their standard teaching under the heretic James Taylor later on. How terrible all this. Christians who boast of light can fall in deep a darkness! What are we all when left to ourselves, when we don’t cleave and cling to Scripture?

At the beginning of the 20th century we see the Pentecostal Movement (Laodicea as far as I see it, see the Appendix) coming up and later on, as part of the same movement, the Charismatic Movement. So, when Philadelphia failed Laodicea could come up, which came with a wrong interpretation and practise of the vital point on which we did focus! Instead of teaching that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the formation of the Church at Pentecost, they came up with wrong teaching on this point and other points connected with it.

Through the amalgemations the so-called KLC-brethren in general lost the vital teaching we thought about. Although happily many, as also do the Open Brethren, preach a full gospel and do stress the assurance, it’s a pity that they, as far as I see and believe, can’t explain Scripture and practice anymore the vital, essential and rich way as was done among the early brethren and ‘Exclusives’.
Let me point out some of the important distinctions, in relation to our point:
- You can, by the work of God’s Spirit, be convinced that Christianity and the Bible are true, but not really converted, not born again yet. See Mat. 13:5,6; Hebr.6:4,5.
- You can, by the work of God’s Spirit, be born again, but not yet have received the Spirit as seal, Acts 19:2; Eph. 1:13. This we often find where not a clear gospel is preached.
- When the last mentioned is the case, then one is not a Christian according to Rom. 8:9.
- You can be a sheep in that case, but not yet in the possesion of the abundant live spoken of in John 10:10.
- You could say that the disciples did receive this abundant live in John 20:22, where they received the Holy Spirit as the source and law (Rom.8:2) of their new live (they already possesed).
- Then one is in the proper possesion of eternal live: “because I live ye also shall live”, John. 14:19.
- The Holy Spirit came in Person on the day of Pentecost and all believers were baptized into one body. That is a different thing, although believers since then receive “the law of the Spirit of live in Christ Jesus” and the Spirit as seal at the same time.
- With the apostle Paul there were three days between his conversion/being born again and being filled with the Holy Spirit, Acts 9:17,18. This can be shorter or by lack of a clear gospel longer.

I have, reluctantly, to conclude with some remarks about the TW(Tunbridge Wells)-division.
We know that the Lord’s Name, Person and presence also gives the assembly the authority to bind and to loose. This principle was set aside in practice by some well known brethren as for instance W.J. Lowe and the Continental brethren. Of course wrong decisions can be made, the assembly is not infallible, but one must start in taking them serious. Wait and pray when questions may arise. It is sad to say but leading brethren (like Lowe in England and H.L. Rossier on the Continent) usurped the place of our Lord… Their weight became decisive and that’s a different weight than the Lord Himself… And this still is the case among them when problems do arise. This is what I saw in practise myself when we were among the Continental/KLC brethren. Brethren among them therefore didn’t and don’t take serious assembly decisions anymore, dropped unfortunately this principle in practice.

There is a caricature painted by many (and who ‘parrot’each other) that ‘TW-brethren’ hold that an assembly decision is always infallible, but that’s a wrong insult. Let me copy here out of a letter which Harry E. Hayhoe wrote to Paul Wilson (Aug. 19, 1939): It is clear that we should always bow to assembly judgments, save where it would commit us to a path that is unscriptural. In other words, we should have a positive scripture for refusing to accept the judgment of an assembly. The Word gives the assembly authority. The Word only can set aside that authority. Did our owning of either the 1881, [1885], or 1909 acts of those gathered to His name commit us to an unscriptural path? The answer is simple and clears the mind when principles of the truth have weight in the soul. This does not mean that a mistaken judgment ought not to be reviewed, but in the meantime we bow to it, and wait upon God that those who have erred may see His mind and recall what was not the mind of the Lord.

Philip Nunn states: “We must sincerely admit that our TW brethren have the historic moral high ground on the issue of accepting assembly judgements”. He writes this in “The Re dividing of the Reunited Brethren”. It is a serious diagnose and an integer attempt to help in the present crises among the KLC brethren. Although he himself does see the ‘exclusive principles’ as an ever narrowing path and dropped them. Let me remind although my reader that the Lord Himself speaks of a “narrow (hard, straitened) way” in Mat.7:14 (and that it could have a narrowing effect in these “difficult (perilous, terrible) times”, 2 Tim.3:1, I can conceive even too). But at the same time it is the path of true happiness and blessing and the Lord still works in rich blessing in certain quarters and in other quaters the ‘two’s and three’s’ go on in faithfullness and strengthened from above.

Darby nicely formulated the assembly as “an available mount of communion for any consistent Christian”. He wrote this in 1833 and ‘Open Brethren’ have said that he changed his ideas after that. The truth is, and I believe that with others, that A.N. Groves and others had ideas (concerning the assembly/church) from the beginning which were basically different from Darby’s ideas. The question is: which ones are scriptural? Another point is of course that Darby his ideas were not fully developed than and we already saw that a deep sorrow came in later on, to learn the second part of Psalm 119:63.
I love very much what we read in Matt.23:8: “one is your Master and you all are brethren”. He alone is our Master, our great Teacher and we all as believers, as brethren, are in His school.
We all are priests now and we all are gifted servants, received a gift (at least one). How precious to practice this together! With one mouth to praise our Saviour and worship Him and our God and Father. How precious also to experience the building up ability of the diverse gifted saints do have, among each other. In relation to that there also has to be of course our witness to them that are outside, to spread the word of live.

For sure, there is only one assembly! There are no other brethren than the brethren… When we hold something different we uphold our own ideas. And we do love and have to love each other!
We all have our ideas and beliefs in these closing days of the mystery (period of grace) and we have Scripture to test them. As part of the one assemby, one body we all are called to fellowship, practical fellowship, so to say. Called to continue “steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (in the first place, our basis) and fellowship (based upon the first point, apostolic fellowship), and in breaking of bread (also the expression of our unity), and in prayers (also necessary to uphold that unity)”.

When you say: we have to receive all earnest saints (at the breaking of bread) I principally agree. But when it does mean: receive them once and afterwards as often as *they should like to come*, I must disagree. That’s not practicing together what we find in Scripture. Therefore we find that formerly ‘brethren’ did explain to visiting saints what ‘there position was’, before or after the breaking of bread together. That there was and is one assembly of God in this world and that as believers we all are members of it. When you take that ground you are not on sectarian ground and when you believe that you, by grace, do occupy together the ‘divine ground of gathering’, are you not responsible to share that conviction with visiting brethren?

The heydays of Philadelphia/the Brethren Movement/the Evangelical Movement are over and ‘TW’ are just a bunch of believers who believe that they – by grace – bow to Scripture in what they still may practise together. They practise it amid all their brethren, whom they dearly love and with whom they feel one in the Lord.
As part of that one family they believe we are called and must go to that one place as there also was in the O.T.

Napoleon Noel (1853-1932) has written an extensive work (2 volumes) about the history of ‘the brethren’ (The history of the Brethren). When I’m right he was with the ‘Kelly-brethren’ and he still lived when these brethren did amalgamate with the ‘Lowe-brethren’ in 1926, after six years (!) of correspondence, visits and fellowship conferences.
He for sure wasn’t positive about the ‘TW-brethren’ in his book. There was indeed enough to blame them unfortunately, but he and in our days others, went quite far in it. Actually it is more of a caricature they created. How come? Can it be that because the alternative would be: *we* are wrong and they perhaps right? I suppose so.
On page 699 (page numbering goes on in volume 2) he wrote about ‘TW’: “the new view of assembly infallibility”. Was there anything new and did they hold infallibility? He also wrote there about: “the exclusive possession of the Lord’s table; being the original”. Than about the “dying out”, “the crumbling”, “disintegration among them” and “the most divided of any section of the exclusive brethren; they are pulverized”.
Yet he sees them all by God’s grace and mercy “preserved from false doctrines and independent principles” and therefore the way open “to a Reunion (such as that of 1926) with there brethren from whom they became separated in 1909, *in a manner not open to other sections”.*
The last part of the sentence is italicized by me. So, brother Noel had a different view upon reunion than the editor and publisher of his work, brother W.F. Knapp 1936 (Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.). After years of correspondence etc. etc. even the so-called Glantons were reunited in 1974. These were untill 1908 connected with the Raven party. Were they free from that influence?

W.F. Knapp his reunion principles have led to many amalgamations and not only that…, he also made charts for the book which made it plain that they (the reunited brethren) were “the primitive party” of brethren. The ‘TW-brethren’ he (and also others now) accused of ecclesiasticism, by which he meant that they unduly exalt assembly action. We found that Philip Nunn although wrote: “We must sincerely admit that our TW brethren have the historic moral high ground on the issue of accepting assembly judgements”. He wrote this, as mentioned also already, in “The Re dividing of the Reunited Brethren”. With very much pain in my heart and about tears in my eyes I see this re dividing of the ‘Reunited brethren’ (is another name for ‘KLC-brethren’) for years now going on. We already saw that there unfortunately were enough problems among the ‘TW’ also, to keep them in the low place.
‘KLC/RB’ accuse ‘TW’ of claiming to have the Lord’s table, although we all have to say: it is the table *of the Lord*! But are they not often (as W.F. Knapp) claiming something themselves?

‘TW-brethren’ believe they hold to biblical principles and (by grace) believe they are still treading the path of faith ‘our fathers’ found in Scripture. Of being gathered around their Lord and breaking the bread, the one loaf, thinking also of all their brethren, because there is only one body.

I hope and pray the Lord may use these remarks for my brethren. Perhaps they will not share all I hold, but perhaps there may be some blessing. We are living in the last confusing days of our day of grace and see also much confusion amid Christendom. Gods Spirit, the Spirit of truth is still here and many have the Word of truth in their hands. How much blessing was given among brethren in the revivals of Philadelphia. May Gods Word, as in those former times, be searched prayerfully and acted upon, to His glory and our blessing!

P.S.

So you can look upon ‘brethren’ from a historical viewpoint and see how they tread the path of faith together. The important point although is: are they still characterised by the same biblical principles. How they believed to have found them in Scripture. Can they still stand the test of Scripture?

Darby wrote about ‘brethren’ that their place was to remain in obscurity and devotedness and in that way it is wrong to ask for your attention by this article. When the Word of God and the Spirit of God do really reign us we indeed don’t want any attention for ourselves! We glory in the Lord and in His grace alone.

An appendix the reader will find on the following last two pages.

Revelation chapters 2 + 3

The history of Christianity foretold

In Revelation 2 + 3 we find assemblies spoken of in their responsibility to Christ and we find displayed there, prophetically, already the complete history of the Church (or perhaps better, Christianity)!
First we find the Church giving up its **“first love”** (Rev. 2:4).
Didn’t the Lord tell his disciples that whoever should love Him should prove that by keeping His Word? **“If anyone love me, he will keep my word”**, John 14:23.
With good intentions they might have done things, but we find in the Ephesian period of the Church history disciples, Christians, giving up, little by little, Christ’s Word…

The sketch (flip-chart -) below shows the different stages. Although the text is Dutch we trust that



with the following information it still may be helpful (dates are approximately):

The first four stages are successive.

\* **Ephesus**: the apostolic church - 100 A.D.
*Candle is taken away, Rev. 2:5*

\* **Smyrna**: the persecuted church 100 - 300
*Doesn’t exist anymore but we can still recognize it
in the ‘underground church’ throughout church history*

\* **Pergamos**: Church and state joined 300 – 500
*Doesn’t exist neither anymore but can be recognized
(for instance) in the Eastern Orthodox Churches*

\* **Thyatira**: Roman Catholic Church 500 - 1500

\* **Sardis**: Protestantism 1500 - 1700

\* **Philadelphia**: Pietism, Evangelical Movement 1700 – 1900
*(Great Awakening, Second Great Awakening/Réveil)*

\* **Laodicea**: Pentecostal- and Charismatic Movement 1900 – 20..?

The last four segments (parts/stages) of Christendom do still exist next to each other.

• So, the first four are successional and do slide *into* each other up to Thyatira.

• The last four do slide *out of* each other, out of Thyatira and all remain until the Lord comes.

• Compare Laodicea with Ephesus, Smyrna with Philadephia and Sardis with Pergamos.

The prophetical interpretation of Rev. 2 + 3 we can find for instance with Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202), Bonaventura (1221-1274), Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669) en John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Of course they could not yet see what actually came after them.

A remark I also would add here is:
To see the two stages/phases in the R.C.C. before and after 1000 A.D.
A verse out of the parable about the ten virgins could well mark that turning point: **“But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him.”** (Matt. 25:6). Then it started that many saints (Waldenses, Albigenses etc.) went out of this world again and for them in their time also out of the R.C.C.-system, which system had become totally mixed up then with the world. Millennial ideas and the return of the Lord Jesus again became important for them.
In 2 Cor. 6:17 we read: **“Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord”** and we find there the same Greek word for **“come out”** as **“went forth”** and **“go forth”** in Matt. 25:1 + 6.
As already stated above we roughly can characterize Philadelphia by the Great Awakening which happened in the 18th century and the Second Great Awakening which happened in the 19th century. Just like the period of the Reformation (Sardis) we can discern within it two ‘stages’. Both these periods also lasted two hundred years and the mentioned stages hundred years each (all approximately). We can see a deepening work in the mentioned second stages.

As a final note we have to see that already for quite a time *evangelicals* is being used as a broad term for believers who undersign Gods Word as authoritative. To be a little more accurate we actually see in our times many evangelicals who are better termed by *neo-evangelicals*, who unfortunately have to be qualified as more or less liberal[[1]](#footnote-1).

Douwe Scheepsma Szn

1. Some books about church history which follow the prophetic interpretation are: Church History, Andrew Miller; The Christian Testimony through the ages, T.W. Carron, available from www.bibletruthpublishers.com. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)