

# **J. N. Darby in Switzerland at the crossroads of Brethren History and European Evangelism**

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## **Meeting at the Crossroads**

When John Nelson Darby arrived in Geneva, he was at a critical point in life. That was why he hoped to find refreshing among believers who had convictions like his own. Of course, he did not know then that he would leave Switzerland a different man. Even less could he foresee that he would be able to test out his ideas on leading God's people into really being his church. Perhaps he realized that he was a fortunate person because he did not have to work for his living and could travel wherever he wished. But more than that, he would have the unusual fortune in life of frequently arriving at places at the very moment when life-changing decisions were being made. By seizing such opportunities, he would be able gradually to establish himself as a leader, first in the towns along Lake Geneva, and then in the Brethren movement of Great Britain.

On arriving in Switzerland towards the end of 1837 he found that the evangelical churches were still giving serious thought to the formation of their identity. Only a young church movement, they had already had enough to contend with in terms of persecution, free-lance missionaries, foreign sects, denominational opportunists, and the like. Thus they were in no mood for further outside interference. After all, they were Swiss: they knew that dependence on foreign leadership had never served them well. Yet history can take strange turns, and in a moment of insecurity they would turn to Darby for assistance and so open themselves to an influence that would challenge all that they stood for more than anything they had yet experienced. Nevertheless, their normally

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fierce, parochial independence would become the stumbling-block on which their evangelical witness would trip, and then fall; thus they would unwittingly provide a foreign leader-in-the-making with a stepping-stone for the outworking of his own idealistic convictions. In this way, an original form of congregationalism would succumb to the extremes of exclusivism and presbyterianism. The startling thing is that so much power — to ‘pluck down’ or ‘build up’ — could be exercised by one ‘foot-loose’ Englishman. Brethren in Britain would live to regret that ‘churchmanship’ and ‘missiology’ (the study of mission principles) never found a place in his theological preparation or practice.

By focusing on the dynamic encounters that became history as British and Swiss nonconformists got to know one another, this essay will show that the Brethren movement developed in the way that it did precisely because its members were part of a larger evangelical stirring throughout Europe. Within this renewal movement there were, quite understandably, both pietist and sectarian tendencies. Because of this, the development of a new ‘Brethren’ identity would depend on precisely which European paths crossed, how they came to cross one another, and what happened when they did so.

## **Where the Paths Began**

### *A Matter of Perspective*

If history teaches anything, surely it is that we rarely learn its lessons and frequently repeat its mistakes. The misfortune of the Christian Church is that all too often its leaders fail to perceive what is happening, with the result that history repeats itself. Had it been otherwise a century and a half ago, a striking parallel might never have developed between John Wesley and John Darby. Recent research has shown how the Methodist Awakening fared well under George Whitefield until he persuaded John Wesley to take care of the leadership while he undertook itinerant evangelistic ministry on an unprecedented scale on the other side of the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> Whitefield was the great evangelistic preacher while Wesley, with his organizing abilities and literary strength, was the one with whom Darby would have so much affinity.

Darby and Wesley lived within a decade of each other. Both began their ministry as austere Anglican curates and followed up their early wanderings with an abortive ‘missionary’ venture abroad.<sup>2</sup> Both became tenacious controversialists: Wesley against Whitefield, and Darby against such as Benjamin W. Newton. Both had essentially insecure personalities that resorted to rash confrontation with opponents, and both produced volumes of dogmatic literature that would leave many

people in no doubt as to what they should believe. In leadership, their style was decidedly domineering, and the oversight they exercised over their groups of followers was rigorous. Where they differed considerably was in the content of their theology: in fact, it was precisely in combating Wesleyan 'perfectionism' that Darby made his first mark in Switzerland. However, both became prominent religious leaders because of their aggressive leadership style, and their theology was basically a 'support system', a compass, and a means for controlling the movements named after them. Such paternalistic control lasted until they died, but after that nobody was able to prevent their followers from dividing into separate factions.

All this is simply to make the point that nineteenth-century dissenting movements need to be viewed not just against the horizon of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, but also in terms of the larger context of Europe's earlier 'Evangelical Pietism' and contemporary experiences of revival.<sup>3</sup> Against the sweep of that broad canvas, the origins and extension of spiritual renewal and evangelical awakening in the first half of the nineteenth century can be analyzed more perceptively. During that time, sectarian experiments and related schemes of prophetic interpretation flourished in the wake of a transatlantic moving of the Holy Spirit, but their value was at best short-lived since they rarely achieved anything substantial in the long term: only diverting believers away from their true vocation of *being* united together in Christ and of *engaging* in his mission, through his Church, to his world, in his way!

Finally, it must be emphasized that the history of cross-cultural Christian ministry should be written particularly with the viewpoint of those at the 'receiving end' in mind. Since no personality is merely an island Darby's career will never be understood until his prolonged inter-action with independent Swiss believers is given due recognition. Thus the present thesis that what happened to a foreign 'fraternal representative' in *la Suisse romande*,<sup>4</sup> between 1840 and 1845, had serious repercussions on the future course of the British Brethren movement. It was there and then that sectarian pietism and independent evangelicalism converged — and then separated, once and for all.

### *The First 'Brethren' Connection*

The origins of dissent in French-speaking Switzerland may be traced back to Eastern Europe. That path began with Count Nicolaus von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) who organized a Czech remnant of the *Unitas Fratrum* into the Renewed Church of the United Brethren in the 1720s. This Lutheran nobleman had been significantly influenced by Spener

and other German Pietist leaders. His 'Brethren' movement was based in Herrnhut (near the southern end of the German-Polish border) and by the 1730s it had begun sending out small groups of members to establish missionary communities overseas.<sup>5</sup> Soon after, in 1741, he visited Geneva and held 'preaching meetings' for some three months, hoping to found a Moravian community there, but it was probably only on his second visit in 1758 that he was successful.<sup>6</sup> Out of such a pietistic cell, a small Bible study group composed of — mostly theological — students came into being in 1810. Most of these young men were to be leaders of a new, evangelical, dissenting movement. Itinerant Moravian evangelists tried to help them grow spiritually, but the Reformed pastors of the town would have none of it and forcibly dissolved their *Société des Amis* a few years later.<sup>7</sup>

An extraordinary feature in the history of the *Ancienne Dissidence*<sup>8</sup> was the frequency with which foreign evangelicals happened to walk on to the scene just when local dissenters were facing a crisis. First in this respect was Madame de Krudener (1764-1824), a widowed baroness from Latvia, who had been married to a Russian ambassador to various European countries. As a Moravian who continued to move in aristocratic circles, she was characterized by a mystical faith which Darby, at a later date, did not at all appreciate.<sup>9</sup> She was clearly anything but the mature, spiritual counsellor that the students needed, and she gained the ambiguous distinction of being the first foreigner to encourage a ministerial student to renounce a clerical career in the Swiss Reformed Church of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Not long after, a British lady, Mary Anna Greaves, began a more sustained ministry among some theological students in Lausanne.<sup>11</sup> With these stimuli, dissent was born in the two main cities on Lake Geneva because independent-minded laypersons thought that the State Church was altogether moribund.

### *The Birth of 'le Réveil'*

Spiritual renewal began on a very low key in cantons Geneva and Vaud. Canton Neuchâtel's turn was to come later. In the city of Calvinist fame, it came to life with the assistance of a series of wealthy British evangelicals.<sup>12</sup> Richard Wilcox, a Calvinist Methodist, came to open a weaving factory there in 1816 and somehow managed to get in touch with the young dissenters. He advised them to reject the prevalent, Socinianist preaching of salvation by works, and eventually they got together to hold communion meals in private. However, he could not help them much in their theological quest, thereby contrasting with the Scottish Baptist lay-leader who arrived providentially, just after he left town.

Robert Haldane did not know about the young group of dissenters when he arrived in Geneva, and he came very close to achieving nothing at all there. Indeed, it was only after he met Miss Greaves in Lausanne and the baroness in Basel that he was willing to return to the city.<sup>13</sup> Yet even then it was only by a happy coincidence that he found the young adults who had been praying that God would send them a teacher. Thereupon, he started lecturing on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, and in a short time he led some of the students to the Lord, subsequently making a great contribution to their spiritual development. The leadership he had provided in Scottish evangelical churches was useful experience to have behind him for this situation, and although he became the first foreigner to speak out against the hostile *Compagnie des Pasteurs*, he appears to have been quite discreet in his approach to all concerned, throughout his stay. Thus, even when ecclesiastical pressure was increased on the dissenting students in 1817, he urged them not to be rash, did *not* encourage them to reject the clerical bans, and refused to interfere in the formation of the new evangelical group.<sup>14</sup> If only subsequent Britons could have emulated his missionary perception and matched his hesitancy to secure a personal following! If only Drummond and Darby had been willing to learn from the example, the cross-cultural-ministry lesson, provided by their predecessor!

Dissent came alive in Lausanne, the main city of Vaud, when some of the students associated with Miss Greaves took the orthodox, Calvinistic lectures they attended more seriously than their clerical professor intended.<sup>15</sup> Their pastor-teacher, who was dean of the Vaudois Reformed Church, could not accept such independent thinking, and he soon became the chief opponent of the evangelical, pietist movement in his canton. Of course, Doyen Curtat and Haldane contrasted with each other in the way they reacted to the renewal of their students' faith, but they were alike in one respect, namely, in providing a doctrinal impetus which fostered spiritual life that expressed itself in an indigenous form of Christian witness outside the established church.

### *Reaction to Problems Along the Way*

Soon after the first evangelical group of 'believers only' had been founded in Geneva, in mid-1817, Haldane moved on to France in order to avoid unduly influencing its decision-making. Two days before he left, however, a wealthy and somewhat eccentric English politician came on the scene. Henry Drummond was a Methodist, only recently converted, who was on his way to the Holy Land, after selling his hunting establishment.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, he was like the baroness in lacking Haldane's sense of churchmanship and doctrinal depth, so it was as a

simple, 'foot-loose' believer that he stumbled across the new-born dissenting group. This meant that the native leaders were able to prevent the foreigner from dominating in their discussion about what would be a suitable form of presidency and pastoral oversight for their new church. However, the impetuous Englishman had ample resources, whereas the young dissenters were unemployed, so when he offered to pay them for doing evangelistic work in France and neighbouring cantons he began to have an effect on the course of their ministry.<sup>17</sup>

It would take too long to describe all that the young evangelicals of Geneva had to suffer once they moved their meetings into a larger room in a well-populated quarter of the city, named Bourg-de-Four.<sup>18</sup> From there they branched out into preaching-points and several 'satellite' assemblies centered on local homes. César Malan then left the State Church and built his presbyterian *Eglise du Témoignage* as a temporary measure, hoping that, one day, sound teaching would be restored in the establishment. During those difficult days, they all took heart when British evangelicals began protesting in the foreign press about the harsh treatment that their dissenting brethren were having to endure from local church authorities. The gospel then came to be heard in new places and some spiritual stirring occurred in the nearby rural villages of Vaud. Along with itinerant preaching went the distribution of Bibles, and this was supplemented by the public circulation of French Switzerland's first evangelical periodical, the *Magasin évangélique*.<sup>19</sup> The formation of related *sociétés des missions*, the holding of informal prayer meetings, and the giving of money for missions, were among the first signs of evangelical renewal in Vaud. But there was a cost to be paid due to clerical ill-will, and rowdy elements of society were roused to assault those leading and attending the dissenters' meetings. Several pious ministers then protested at such unbecoming trouble-making on the part of their colleagues, and left the Church of Vaud. They then had to suffer being banished from the canton — something that the nascent evangelical movement could ill afford.<sup>20</sup> Because of that, their churches were hurt before they had time to become strong, well-integrated fellowships.

The believers' testimony in those days was that persecution could not stop the process of leading persons to Christ and incorporating them into evangelical fellowships. This was achieved largely without help from anyone other than their Genèveois brethren, so it was really quite an authentic 'home mission' enterprise. Geneva's good fortune had been that it had not had to go through the fires of clerical and 'popular' persecution *before* at least one independent church had been formally established.<sup>21</sup> Needless to say, the dissenters understood that anything

that could be deemed to unsettle the status quo would draw fire from a jittery administration which was still very concerned about securing its recently-won independence from Napoleonic imperialism. Thus they knew what was involved in being faithful to the Lord and true to his gospel.

### *The Brethren from Plymouth*

The situation in which the Brethren movement arose in the British Isles was a far cry from what the Swiss believers had to put up with. It has been well described and analyzed by the classic studies of F. R. Coad and H. H. Rowdon,<sup>22</sup> so the focus here will be on the course taken by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) as he gradually moved into a leadership position among those who have been ambiguously called the 'Plymouth Brethren'.

Darby was the youngest son born into an Anglo-Irish family residing in London, and had the distinction of being both godson of the famous Lord Nelson and heir to a fortune. By the time he turned twenty, he had become a Classical Gold Medallist of Trinity College, Dublin, and was heading for a prestigious career in law, although he could well have turned to other spheres of secular life to earn distinction, had he so wished. Instead, he abandoned such worldly pursuits and became a simple Anglican curate, among poor Irish peasants. After a few years, however, he became rather disappointed with the Church because it was so mixed up with mundane affairs, and he resigned from his pastoral charge in 1828.<sup>23</sup> From then, until 1834, he tried to find an alternative to contemporary nonconformity, which he considered to be hopelessly divided, and to the established Church of England, which had hopelessly compromised its spiritual authority.

In spite of the fact that he had been partially disinherited by his father for abandoning a promising career 'at the bar', Darby was provided with sufficient means by his family to be able to travel at will for the rest of his life.<sup>24</sup> First of all, this involved a 'pilgrimage' in search of people who might be similarly concerned about discovering the true nature of Christ's Body, the church, or at least how its unity should be experienced. This led him to fellowship with pious dissenters in Dublin. He was put into touch with believers of similar convictions in Oxford and various other places in England. One of these was Benjamin W. Newton, who invited him to come to Plymouth to meet 'others who had been taken up by the intense interest then attaching to study of the Bible prophecies'.<sup>25</sup> This sort of visiting continued for several years, in the course of which he prepared himself for participation in lively discussions — on matters of prophetic interpretation and its relevance for the

present church, etc.—at conferences, like the series held at Powerscourt, which were latterly controlled by the emerging ‘Brethren’. Such debating inevitably brought into the open ‘quite different conceptions of the Church’ which derived from experiences and theological backgrounds that were just as diverse.<sup>26</sup> An unfortunate result was that some local Brethren leaders found that they could not live with diversity on such tricky, and apparently important, issues as the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy and the form of worship most befitting ‘saints’. This led to Darby and Newton openly and quite deliberately challenging each other by 1837, for both were very concerned about the future course of the Brethren movement, especially as it was expressed at Plymouth.<sup>27</sup> However, by then, the Devonshire believers had established contacts with dissenters in Geneva, which appeared to offer a refreshing diversion from further rounds of exhausting controversy.

### How the Paths Converged

Evangelicals from *la Suisse romande* visited their counterparts in Britain from as early as 1821. Both sides were aware of each other’s publications even earlier due to the contacts established in previous years by British visitors — to Geneva in particular. It was consequently ten years *after* the Swiss *Ancienne Dissidence* had first entered into fraternal relationship with ‘free churches’ in England, that connections were developed between Plymouth and the Bourg-de-Four church. That meant that Darby owed a considerable debt to a number of evangelists, lay-leaders, church-planters, and pastors when he put his cases down in Geneva for the first time, in 1837. Where they had sown and cultivated, he would be able to reap, in his own peculiar way: he was indeed ‘entering into other men’s labours’.

### *Through the ‘Laying-on of Hands’*

History contains some intriguing examples of how beleaguered believers have used their initiative to overcome burdensome liabilities and hard limitations. Leaders of the Bourg-de-Four church were a case in point when they turned to British nonconformists for ordination in order to gain exemption from participating in Sunday military exercises. This was worked out thanks to the help of Haldane, the *Société Continentale* founded by Drummond in 1817, and sympathizers in Paris.<sup>28</sup> Following this plan, Guers and Gonthier made their way to Paris in May 1821 in order to receive from an English Presbyterian pastor, Mark Wilks, introductory letters to nineteen nonconformist pastors in London.<sup>29</sup>

With his co-operation, they made good speed to the metropolis, where they were welcomed by eight Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregationalist pastors, who were willing to promptly administer 'the laying-on of hands' in the presence of a large gathering in Poultry Street Chapel. After that, the two Swiss pastors spent some time visiting Haldane and other acquaintances in London, Bristol and Bath, particularly conferring on the issue of evangelizing French-speaking countries. Then they had the unusual opportunity of helping to ordain two workers from the *Société Continentale*, one of whom had been a founder of the Bourg-de-Four church, their friend, Henri Pyt.<sup>30</sup>

Evangelicals experienced something similar in canton Vaud. Their leaders who had not been ordained by the Reformed Church in earlier years were finding that the ecclesiastical authorities were determined to silence them, but such repression back-fired when they turned to fostering solidarity with British sympathizers. That explains why Henri Olivier, excluded from graduating at the Theological Academy of Lausanne, in May 1823, went to seceding Presbyterians in Glasgow, Scotland, for the 'imposition of hands'.<sup>31</sup> In Vaud, however, such a manoeuvre unfortunately proved to be only of temporary advantage, because six years later the authorities refused to recognize the validity of his Scottish ordination, and ordered him to stop holding house-meetings in their canton.<sup>32</sup> Vaudois evangelicals had more set-backs to reckon with than did the *Génévois*, so it was mostly through the latter that the paths of British and Swiss evangelicals began to converge, in terms of prayer support and encouraging fellowship.<sup>33</sup>

### *Through Swiss 'Deputation Work' in Britain*

As the paths of the brethren on either side of the English Channel began to converge, it became apparent that the Swiss were opening themselves up to paternalistic and even sectarian influences that could do them little good. This was particularly the case when 'para-church' agencies, and proselytizing mission societies, tried to use Swiss pastors for extraneous purposes. The worst situations developed when wealthy patrons like Drummond were in control of operations. Yet all was not lost thereby, for such foreign interference in the *Réveil* did not prevent dissenters in the cantons from developing their own alternative forms of Christian outreach.<sup>34</sup>

From as early as 1822, the *Société Continentale* began to use its Swiss workers to rouse British evangelicals to support evangelistic work in France. The first national to co-operate in this way was probably Méjanel, a Frenchman who in 1817 had been Bourg-de-Four's first pastor, though only for a short time.<sup>35</sup> In 1823, he accompanied Haldane

and preached in many large cities in Ireland, Scotland and England. However, on a later trip to Scotland, he joined the mystic-charismatic Irvingite movement, in which Drummond already figured prominently. He became the first *Genèvois* to fall under the spell of a British sect and to proselytize on its behalf in France and Switzerland. It would have been better if he had never been brought over the English Channel.

Henri Pyt was also an ex-pastor of Bourg-de-Four who turned to the 'mission agency' financed by Drummond in order to get support for a semi-itinerant evangelistic ministry, but he was more stable in character than Méjanel.<sup>36</sup> After the July Revolution (1830) in France, he was called upon to interest Irish Christians in the society's work, so he spent the last four months of the year preaching there. Further months were spent in Britain, in 1832, 'drumming up' financial contributions, but when he returned to Paris that October it became clear that the society was in serious trouble.<sup>37</sup> The irony was that Drummond's zealous espousal of Irvingism led him to attack Haldane in a series of pamphlets, with the result that he effectively wrecked the society and was obliged to withdraw from it! Yet the real tragedy consisted in the bankruptcy of the sole specifically evangelistic agency in France, for although Pyt tried to establish a Parisian committee to take over operations, he found himself left in the lurch.<sup>38</sup> But as if that was not enough, Irvingism began to infiltrate the newly-planted evangelical churches, and Pyt had to spend his last adult years (until dying in mid-1835) sadly trying to counteract the short-sighted, foreign extremists. Thus financial dependence on brash, theologically-eccentric gentry turned sour on him, and even though he belatedly refused to be a tool for fickle foreigners he was unable to respond effectively on behalf of his own people.

### *By Reacting Against Sectarianism*

There is usually good reason for suspicion when overseas mission operations are directed rigidly from the 'sending country'. But what can be worse for churches overseas than a situation where members of a foreign society or sect try to promote their cause by making their money 'talk' at others' expense? That was what the *Ancienne Dissidence* had to face when its leadership was either seduced or tempted to jettison indigenous responsibilities. One of the most glaring examples is the case of Ami Bost, who juggled with church appointments and offers from British missionary societies from the 1820s onwards. His erratic career included a stay with Irvingites in London late in 1835, but he did manage to refuse their advances when they suggested that he establish an Irvingite work in Geneva.<sup>39</sup> Still, he was an opportunist to the end, and on returning home from London he went back to the Reformed

Church's ministry and settled down, as if there never had been any *Réveil!*

Fortunately the Vaudois evangelicals did not have to endure such dreadful inconsistency from their leaders — or from those who should have been — nor did they have a degenerate *Société Continentale* to contend with. Left largely to their own devices in the 1820s and '30s, and in the absence of co-ordinating leadership (due to banishment) they grew in number with the help of many parochial 'evangelical societies'.<sup>40</sup> By the early 1840s they could count some 42 churches or groups which were scattered throughout the canton and were divided up into a number of clusters under area-leaders.<sup>41</sup> Evidently they were not much disposed to working as a collective church movement, and it was only when they felt their public evangelical identity was being compromised that they really worked together. A notable instance occurred in the Yverdon area in 1832 when an 'apostle' named Lardon, began perpetrating a type of exclusive, charismatic fanaticism. The Swiss evangelicals reacted by sending a delegation of leaders from Vaud and Geneva to publicly discipline him in his own church. This had such an impact that the local folk-eccentricity shrivelled up, and even when British Irvingites tried to establish their own sectarian cause in its place, they had very little success.<sup>42</sup>

The history of dissent in Vaud teaches that it is much more difficult to cure problems than to prevent them; but prevention requires foresight. Local churches never learned this lesson since they did not seem to realize that reticence to co-operate with one another — except when defensive, rearguard action was urgently needed — was just as dangerous as overt sectarian threats. Their Achilles' heel was a lack of corporate vision and united action. Such disunity could be exploited by forceful individuals, given 'favourable' circumstances, and it was not too long before the unexpected actually happened!

### *By Joining in a Missionary Venture*

The first intentional contact between Geneva and Plymouth appears to have resulted in a decision to share responsibility for sending a missionary to India. The way this came about can be traced back to two influential evangelical leaders from these cities. First, there was César Malan who had led to the Lord, in Switzerland, a Devonshire squire, surnamed Douglas. Among the many other persons whom Malan influenced were Carl and Rudolphe de Rodt, from Berne. Carl studied under him in Geneva, and it may have been due to the contacts that his mentor established while visiting Britain in the 1820s that Carl was ordained in a separatist church in London, by a Dr. Cox, in 1833.<sup>43</sup> Rudolphe was

converted under Malan, and after studying in the theological school of Geneva's Evangelical Society he was commissioned as a missionary to India, by his home church — Bourg-de-Four — in July 1835. This happened because an early leader in the Plymouth Brethren went on a rather unusual missionary-recruitment drive in Switzerland.

Anthony Norris Groves (1795-1853) sailed from Plymouth in the summer of 1829. His first stop was the Middle East, before he moved on to India in 1833. A year later, he returned home to get new workers, but instead of launching out into deputation work among the Brethren assemblies, he abruptly left England for Switzerland and Germany, with his brother-in-law George Müller.<sup>44</sup> Somewhere along the way — perhaps through Mr. Douglas ? — he must have been informed that *la Suisse romande* was a likely place for getting recruits, and sure enough, Bourg-de-Four had one available! From then on Plymouth and Bourg-de-Four had something important joining them together.

After his commissioning, Rudolphe de Rodt went to Plymouth, and that October saw him on the point of leaving for India with Groves' party.<sup>45</sup> In 1836, Carl visited Plymouth again, perhaps to represent his brother at a time of particular need. Whatever the occasion was, there can be no doubt that Groves and the Swiss brothers were the basic source of the information that J. N. Darby obtained about 'like-minded' believers in Geneva. Thus history repeated itself as British mission-promoters sought, not to strengthen the Swiss evangelical cause, but rather, to enlist recently-trained young Swiss for foreign enterprises. Missiologically, this was far from desirable. Indeed, Groves most probably would have regretted exposing the unsuspecting 'young church' overseas to a difficult colleague of his, who could interfere in its affairs quite disastrously.<sup>46</sup>

### *An Occasion for Going Abroad*

Only a book could do justice to the task of describing the intricate network of the evangelical 'grape-vine' which existed between leaders of Britain's pietistic dissenters in the 1830s. Such a study would demonstrate that a translation of Monod's 1833 *Appel aux Chrétiens de France, et de l'Etranger en faveur de l'Eglise Evangélique de Lyon* in the *Christian Witness* of 1834 was not significant in alerting Darby to the 'goings on' in Geneva.<sup>47</sup> It is just as unlikely that Haldane, Drummond, or any of their friends, were responsible for arousing Darby's curiosity with respect to the *Ancienne Dissidence*. Now that is not to argue that Darby's knowledge of evangelical affairs in Geneva in 1836-37 was strictly limited to what Groves and the brethren in Plymouth shared with him, but it is to underline that the sending of Rudolphe de Rodt to India was

the major occasion that enabled him to cast his thoughts beyond the English Channel to Geneva.

Like Groves, but unlike many earlier British nonconformists, Darby made a deliberate decision to leave England and head directly for Geneva in order to become acquainted with the believers there. Years later, he explained this decision as follows:

It was in no way any particular opposition that led me to Switzerland in 1837, but a report of a brother who had been there, and stated that there were meetings like ours.<sup>48</sup>

Precisely what lay behind such a comment is not clear, but a number of factors may well have contributed to the move. For example, his relationship with Newton on the issue of leadership was very strained, and he did not feel ready to provoke a 'show-down'. As for Ireland, nothing seemed to attract him there any more; he had not been able to establish a strong Brethren witness there, and the eligible Lady Powerscourt had recently died. Under such circumstances, it would be quite understandable if he left to spend time in a place where he could reflect quietly and renew his sense of purpose and direction. He was at a turning-point, and Switzerland appeared to be a good option for a man who wanted to get away from unpleasant distractions.

### **When the Paths Crossed**

Unbeknown to Darby, the Swiss evangelical movement was at a particularly delicate stage of development in the late 1830s. The problem was due in part to the frequent absence of many potential native leaders in past years. It had resulted in unity becoming a low priority and had led to multiple forms of internal dissension over church order. Bourg-de-Four was an obvious example at the local level after Guers returned from a visit to England in 1837, having collected a bequest which was to be applied to the building of larger premises in La Pelisserie, another part of Geneva.<sup>49</sup> In all likelihood, it was just after Darby first set foot in the city that a meeting of Bourg-de-Four's 'brothers only' decided that their church would henceforth 'look after its own affairs' and that the pastors would be the last, rather than the first, to express their opinion on administrative matters. That meant that a swing occurred away from any semblance of presbyterianism by the end of November 1837, and church members subsequently began to have much more of a say in their church's life. It was some time for Darby to arrive!

**J. N. DARBY'S MOVEMENTS : 1837-1882**

	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>KEY</i>
1837								b			§§	§§	A: Canada & U.S.A.
8										B			
9	B	B						b			§§	§§	B: Britain
1840	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	C: Caribbean
1	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	
2	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§f	F	F: France
3	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	h	b		B	B	
4			F	F	F	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	§§	G: Germany
5	§§	§	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
6	B	B				B	B	B	B		B	B	H: Holland, Belgium, or Prussia
7	B	B		F		F			B	B			
8	F	f§	f	B	bf	B	B	B		§§	§§	§f	
9	F	F	F	F	F	f§	F		F	F	F	F	I: Ireland
1850	F	F	F	F	F	§§	§§	§§	f		§§	F	
1	F				F		B	B	b§				N: New Zealand
2		B	B	B	B		B	bf	§§		B	B	
3		F	f	F				F	§§		B	B	T: Italy
4			bf	f	ib	B		bh	G	G	G	G	
5	G	G	G	G	§§				B	B	B		§: Switzerland
6	B			B	F	f				§§		F	
7	F		F	F		B		H	H	G		§b	
8	B	B			b	bf			B	B	B		(A LARGE letter refers to a whole month; a small letter refers to half a month.)
9	B	B	b§		B		I		B	I		B	
1860		f		hf	B	B		F	§§	§§	§§	§§	
1			B		B	B	B	F	B	G		B	
2	B		B	B			B	A	ab			A	
3	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	I	B	B	
4		§f	fb		B	F	F	§§	§h	B	B	A	Darby's trans- oceanic travels occurred between 1862 and 1877.
5	A	A	A		A					B	I	B	
6	B	i	F	§§	§f	B		A	A	A	A	A	
7	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
8	A	A	A	A			I	B		B	B	C	
9	C	C	C	C	C	B	B	§§	§f	§§	G	G	
1870	G	G	G	G	B		A		B	B	B	B	From Feb. 1880 Darby was in Britain where he died on 29 April 1882.
1	B	B	B	B	B	bi	I	ibf	§§		T		
2	hf	hf	F	fb	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
3	A	A	A	A			B	B	b	b§	B	hi	
4	ib	ft	T	t§	§§	G	B	bia	A	A	A	A	
5	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	N	N	N	N	
6	N	N	N	N			A	A	A	A	A	A	
7	A	A	A	A	A	ai	B	B		B	B	B	
8	I			I	bg	§§	§§	§§	bi		B		
9	F	F	F	F	F	fb	B	bi	F	F	F	F	

### *Darby Arrives at a Decisive Moment*

Discovery of some writings of Darby's in French, dated 1837 and 1838, has at last made it certain that he first visited *la Suisse romande* during the last two months of 1837.<sup>50</sup> An interesting letter entitled 'To the Saints of God who meet for worship simply as saints and IN THE name of the Lord Jesus' (*sic*) and dated 1 November 1837, has him identifying with an assembly in England in almost apostolic style. His opening and closing remarks, as well as the special request for prayer, suggest that he was abroad then.<sup>51</sup> More noteworthy are two letters written to brethren in Geneva in 1838, in which he demonstrates personal knowledge of people and affairs in the Bourg-de-Four church, particularly a Mr. Foulquier.<sup>52</sup> The letter from Hereford was written probably that September, just after he had participated in a large conference of brethren 'from nearly all parts of England and from Ireland,' and at which he wished 'some of our Swiss brethren' could have attended.<sup>53</sup> In it, he expressed fond memories of the time he had spent with the brethren in Geneva, for, though 'a stranger previously, and for the most part unknown, I found a welcome which was the manifestation of the operation of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>54</sup> These letters, as well as the existence in Darby's own handwriting of a copy of the letter which the Geneva 'brethren' sent to their three pastors during the crisis of autumn 1837,<sup>55</sup> together demonstrate that he was personally close to some of the church's leaders, and had insight into their circumstances, during that eventful year.

### *His Early Orientation in Geneva*

At the present stage of research into Brethren history, it is impossible to be precise about the nature of the initial relationship that obtained between Darby and the evangelicals at Bourg-de-Four. To begin with, he probably proceeded as inconspicuously as possible, but his 1838 letters show that he already felt free to advise the leadership on the conduct of church life. He was already well aware of the delicate position that the pastors were in, yet he did not refrain from suggesting how he would like to see the brethren become more separate from Christians who were merely dissenters.<sup>56</sup> In the light of this, one should be very careful in evaluating the rosy commentary offered by secondary Darbyite sources, such as Cuendet's, where statements are made to the effect that Darby was received 'with open arms' as one 'who seemed so whole-heartedly in accord with their aspirations', that he possessed 'the confidence of all, pastors and flock' in his early months there, and that he succeeded in repairing the breach between them.<sup>57</sup>

The circumstances that led Darby to return to England after being in Geneva for a few months, are not known. However, it appears from his Hereford letter that some mutual friend of his and Bourg-de-Four's requested him to write to Geneva without further delay, in September 1838, and presumably asked him to return there.<sup>58</sup> Whatever the details, it is clear from his correspondence that he returned to Switzerland by 22 November 1839, and was in Geneva for December.<sup>59</sup> 23 March 1840 saw him in Lausanne, where he probably spent most of his time until early 1843; between March 1843 and February 1845 he spent more time travelling around the two cantons.<sup>60</sup> But one should not jump to false conclusions about the regard in which the Swiss held him, because he himself recorded that he was not considered as 'one of the flock' at Bourg-de-Four; in fact, they even went so far as to tell him not to interfere in their business.<sup>61</sup> That would explain why there was little to hold him back from moving on to Lausanne in March 1840. Yet, in all fairness to Darby, dissent in Lausanne was then in a very sorry shape, and he cannot be blamed for not being impressed by what he encountered there.

### *His Success and Upset in Lausanne*

What had happened before his arrival in Vaud may be summarized as follows. During 1839, British 'Wesleyans' tried to get a following for themselves there with the assistance of unsettled Ami Bost. The first independent pastor to accept their teaching about 'the entire sanctification of the believer' was Henri Olivier, and late in 1839 he and part of Lausanne's church at Saint-Pierre separated from the *Ancienne Dissidence* to found a Methodist congregation.<sup>62</sup> Not long after, British Methodism extended its proselytizing success to the town of Vevey.

All this was news to Darby when he stopped in Lausanne en route for home in the spring of 1840. Geneva was behind him, and he was really looking forward to getting back into familiar English surroundings, when a strange incident occurred. He found himself

suddenly *arrested* in my course, *by what is purely a trial of faith*; ... I turn into a lodging alone tomorrow, knowing none here but those who now are almost all a weight, and that I have a sort of *responsibility for drawing [them] after me* ... All the pastors of the so-called churches — I abhor the name now — stood aloof, and let the wolf do what he might. ... Did I not lean on the Lord ... I should be ready to say, am not I wrong thus to care for them all, instead of letting them all ruin themselves? You have no idea of the patience which this country demands; there was plenty to try sometimes in England, but it was play compared to this. ... However, I hope soon to be free, and to wend my way towards work where my heart a good deal is.<sup>63</sup>

Clearly, he did not wish to minister in Switzerland any more, but when he was sought out by H. Olivier's brother, Francois, he felt that he should try to help out where he could, even if he had no more time for the *Ancienne Dissidence*. In this he was successful, for he refuted the Methodist 'perfectionism', induced the majority of the seceders to return to the *églises disciplinées*, and within a year got H. Olivier not only to recant but even to join forces with himself!<sup>64</sup> This was Darby's first *tour-de-force* abroad, yet it was rather a hollow victory when one considers that it consisted in exorcising *foreign* sectarianism! Furthermore, he was still far from wanting, let alone obtaining, a following in Vaud. The foreign scene had become too much for him, as a letter from mid-September 1840 shows:

I have suffered lately from violent pain in the stomach which ... sometimes four nights a week deprived me of rest ... Labouring in extreme heat, and the toil occasioned by the state of Lausanne — where there was no life to walk stayed on the Lord, and if the evil [Methodism] showed itself elsewhere [there was] none that could go and meet it — so that I was pressed above strength, have occasioned this attack. ...

I see all my weakness here — weakness of conduct, and worse, weakness of faith — but too evidently, and it humbles me exceedingly. It is very distressing when one has the interest of the church and of the saints at heart, to see one's own want of faith and fidelity hindering the inflow of blessing. ... Once too, since I have been here ... my foot has slipped through want of caution, want of patient waiting on His will.<sup>65</sup>

This was a very candid account of his feelings in the previous year, and goes to explain the postscript added to the same letter:

I am, in a measure, for the moment, broken up from Lausanne, and therefore, with some delays of visits on the road, I hope to be among the saints in your country ere very long. ... But I hope to leave this soon.

A short time later, leaders of the Swiss dissenters would be wishing that he had gone ahead and left!

### *Darby Throws Down the Gauntlet*

In actual fact, Darby drew fire from the leadership of Vaud's evangelical movement before he ever came to Switzerland in 1839. It began early in the year when far-sighted Auguste Rochat wrote his *Unité du corps de Christ*, alerting Vaud to the serious challenge that *Plymouthisme* posed to its evangelical congregationalism. This provoked Darby to respond in 1840 with his *Sur la Formation des Eglises*, in which he asserted that Christians are *not* competent to form churches after the New Testament: it was no longer God's will because the Lord's return was

imminent.<sup>66</sup> He simultaneously attacked every type of ecclesiastical organization, and consequently embarrassed and upset the very believers who had turned to him for a peaceful resolution of their problems. In so doing, Darby openly declared how he felt about dissent there, and headed for home, leaving it behind as a hopeless situation.

Who or what made him change his mind is a complete mystery, but on 8 October 1840 he was to be found in Geneva, writing:

I fear I have lost some months of service ...; I thought of being in France almost at this time, and I see scarcely any probability of it as yet; perhaps I can say that Satan hindered me. ... I am afraid of remaining here a while, because *I am like a piece of furniture here*. ... What would comfort me, if I remain a little longer in Switzerland, would be to encourage those in the interior for surely God would have it so in His grace: there is some need of it.<sup>67</sup>

Was it indeed Satan who had influenced this hitch in his plans? Some light can be shed on the significance of these frank reflections by observing that it was around this time that he delivered eleven evening lectures in Geneva, not at Bourg-de-Four, nor at any dissenting church, but in the Reformed Church of Sacré Coeur.<sup>68</sup> These lectures in *L'Attente actuelle de l'Eglise* were published in November, and in all probability were repeated soon after '*dans un modeste local de la maison Barbaz-Mayor, en Saint-Pierre*': ie, in the neighbourhood of Henri Olivier's church in Lausanne. The reason for this sudden turn-around defies explanation, but it certainly proved to be a turning-point in Darby's Swiss fortunes, because the lectures excited interest and caused quite a stir as they injected a new system of Biblical interpretation into the *Ancienne Dissidence*.<sup>69</sup> With that, he abandoned all ideas of a peace-making ministry in Switzerland, and began to promote his own cause at the expense of the weak, yet nonetheless indigenous, evangelical movement. That became possible partly because some believers in the Reformed Church had already begun to regard 'relations with the State as incompatible with the very idea of the Church', but there can be no explanation as to why dissent capitulated to Darby, other than the weakness of the evangelical churches as a co-operating fellowship and the forcefulness of Darby's leadership style.<sup>70</sup>

## Why the Paths Separated

### *First Signs of a Serious Split*

As noted earlier, Darby probably spent most of his time in Lausanne

before he returned to England in the middle of 1843. After delivering his discourses on prophecy, he was approached, he later recounted, by

some young men who desired to work for the Lord [and] wished to read the scriptures with me. I feared a little giving up my own work but would not refuse them, and for a year at one time and a good part of one at a subsequent period, I had ten or twelve, not always the same, and we studied the word together. ... They gradually got into work as the Lord called them.<sup>71</sup>

From 1841, it thus became clear that Darby had found means whereby he could disseminate and apply his own separatist ideas in *la Suisse romande*. On the one hand, he had living close to him a good number of young men who were financially supported by him then, who took the Lord's Supper with him daily, and over whom, he asserted, 'he exercised no control ... but what their affections claimed'.<sup>72</sup> These became adept at propagating his special doctrine, particularly in France. On the other hand, he plunged into a pamphlet controversy with the few leaders of the *Ancienne Dissidence* who were ready to stand up to his dispensationalist assertions about 'the apostasy and fall of the church'.<sup>73</sup>

That Darby had broken with the *Ancienne Dissidence* by as early as the beginning of 1841 is further borne out by his letter from Lausanne on 11 January:

I ... am in a very critical position here, and desire much the prayers of the brethren for me. The brethren who laboured among the Dissenters here ... feared almost the determination with which it [Methodism] was opposed [by Darby! yet] they were ... glad that the battle was fought; but when necessarily this conflict produced other effects, many Nationals came more or less out, and united. ... In the meanwhile, the jealousy of the Nationals was natural enough; many many Dissenters in heart desire the union of God's children; others are excessively irritated, and hence ... [many] of the others ... are timid as to committing themselves with their brethren who are opposed at Lausanne. ... In one place the dissident body is dissolved ... and there is a meeting where all the Christians ... unite to break bread with one of the ministers ... — very happy. At Vevey, Nationals, ex-nationals and Dissenters meet the last Monday of the month to break bread — very happy. It is a beginning. ... Here the old Dissenters, and some who thought to seize the occasion to establish themselves, hate me cordially, at least, the elders.<sup>74</sup>

Under Darby, a new kind of dissent was coming into being which appealed to state-church members and dissenters who would believe his talk about uniting believers together, regardless of denomination. Because of this, some naïve persons began praising him as a man of open-mindedness.<sup>75</sup> Of course, everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but 1841 was a really bad time for evangelicals in Vaud, since a recently-passed law was beginning to deprive the native dissenters of their religious liberty.<sup>76</sup> They had already had to pass through the fires of per-

secution to get their new churches established. Surely this was no time for a rank outsider to aggravate the situation.

### *The Rupture Becomes Complete*

Once separate groups of Darbyite brethren started forming in opposition to the original, independent, evangelical churches, it was only a matter of time before an exclusive assembly took over as the prime, non-conformist *ekklesia* in Lausanne. February, 1842, was the date of that take-over. In Geneva, however, no such capitulation to the foreign doctrine occurred, although a decisively sectarian schism did split the Bourg-de-Four brethren that same year.

Eager to disavow responsibility, Darby claimed that it was during his absence that some 50 or 60 of the Geneva brethren withdrew from Bourg-de-Four to form 'the first nucleus of the meeting at L'Ile'.<sup>77</sup> Guers rejected this alibi on the grounds that a friend of Darby's, named Donnel (*sic*), was there and that he 'opposed Guers and his supporters in an indiscreet and niggardly manner'; that was what precipitated the rupture that occurred on Thursday, 3 March 1842.<sup>78</sup> According to Guers, the seceders were 'the oldest and most capable brethren', who no longer would tolerate pastors over them. A number of sharp letters then passed between the pastors and Darby, but every attempt at bringing about reconciliation evidently ran aground, because the pastors would not renounce their pastoral status and would not get rid of the platform from which they served communion.<sup>79</sup> Who, they thought, did Darby think he was to make such demands of them? A particularly sore point was the withdrawal of Ch. Eynard to l'Ile, for he had been one of the most generous supporters of the church's institute for training evangelists: his departure caused its closure.<sup>80</sup> To the pastors' horror, the walls of the sheep-fold had been breached, and part of the flock was being enticed away by a stranger who would suddenly quit when the wolf of persecution came along.

More followed before Darby returned to Geneva that October, showing that even dialogue with him was now impossible. No longer did he seem to have any respect for the Swiss who refused to concur with that which was 'right in his own eyes'. As far as he was concerned, they could be treated as apostate believers who were not even worthy to receive an explanation from him. At least that was what he communicated in the final show-down during September. He would bring about what not even public persecution had been able to accomplish!

Because they viewed the schism as a calamity for French Swiss evangelicalism, and because Darby was already denouncing the original, indigenous church as itself schismatic, the remaining spokesmen of the

Vaudois *Ancienne Dissidence* sought to end the deadlock by proposing a conference where Darby's views on 'the apostasy of the present economy' would be discussed.<sup>81</sup> The venue was to be F. Olivier's house at Montbenon, Lausanne, and the date, Tuesday 6 September 1842. On receiving the invitation, however, Darby flatly denounced the whole idea, and it was only after he was pressed by someone concerned about their testimony that he eventually acceded. Yet it was to no avail, for when Darby arrived on the scene with a phalanx of twelve disciples, he promptly condemned the meeting and refused to take part in any discussion!<sup>82</sup> How shocking that he should have to be virtually adjured to respond to the questions that were raised! Or was it that he could not relate to people who had not had a pilgrimage similar to his own? Then the volcano erupted. Christian grace flew out the window. Darby had lost control of himself. Even his followers were shocked at the torrent of dogmatic self-contradictions that burst forth from the master-mind. Swiss believers were being subjected to the kind of lashing that only a leader, suffering from sectarian neurosis, could administer. Needless to say, the conference had to be abruptly terminated because such cross-cultural ministry was not perceived to be at all constructive or edifying!<sup>83</sup>

Unfortunately for all concerned, Darby was on an exclusive wavelength. That was why he could prove himself master of the proverbial English understatement when he wrote about the event just a month later:

There is much blessing in Switzerland, but a little commotion, because of the new wine, which does not suit well with the old bottles — old at least in many respects, because they are human — and everything is feared about if anything is touched.<sup>84</sup>

How impatient or insensitive could he be to those on whose shoulders he was standing! Or again, in a letter written the next day:

In comparison with what was the case a year and a half ago [just after he had broken with the dissenters], the awakening and the results are striking enough, but old Dissent on one side, and especially *the old Dissenting ministers, whom the new awakening has laid aside*, are jealous, and are bestirring themselves. We have no other difficulty, except this jealous spirit of the ministers. They have taken the ground solemnly in a conference lately, that the church was not responsible for the condition in which it then was. I feel myself much more, or rather altogether apart, from all official connection with *their system*; ... *it appears to me a principle of rebellion against God*. ... This attempt to revive the old Dissent in opposition to the awakening which is taking place, makes me undecided for the moment as to my duty to leave; the rather because hearts are calm as long as I am here, and are more agitated if they are themselves the object of these attempts.<sup>85</sup>

A more self-opinionated, schismatic approach to a 'young church' overseas can hardly be imagined — even if local leaders did leave something to be desired. Indeed, had not the indigenous evangelical movement got into its poorly-integrated condition precisely because British nonconformists and local persecution had deprived it of a chance to develop a stable, unifying leadership? In the light of that, Darby's approach to cross-cultural ministry rendered him liable to indictment on two counts: first, for lack of care towards a smoking flax burned by British nonconformists (in the 1820s and '30s) who were quite *blasé* with reference to missiology, and second, for lack of missiological integrity towards a bruised reed, already badly beaten by godless local folk.

### *Swiss Attempts to Halt Darbyism*

Shaken by this fiasco, the dissenting leaders realized that they must cooperate more than ever before in order to repulse Darbyism, so that December they produced *L'Exposé scripturaire de principes généraux relatifs à l'assemblée des croyants*. This joint statement was signed by Empaytaz, Lhuillier, A. Rochat, and three others. Francois Olivier then decided to break from Darby formally and he led some of the latter's Lausanne supporters to carry out separate worship meetings at Montbenon; by the end of 1844, he was distributing the Lord's Supper quite separately from everyone else!<sup>86</sup>

The second major attempt to enable the evangelical churches to survive began with 'fraternal communications' admonishing the dissenters to mutual fidelity in the face of Darbyism, and urging them to participate in a conference at Nyon on 20 April 1843. The hope was that a new association could be formed to unite the *première dissidence* of Geneva, Vaud and Berne.<sup>87</sup> Some 50 people did attend, and they did manage to arrive at a fair degree of accord on doctrinal issues, but even then their desire for local church independence overrode the possibility of forming a definite union of churches. A third conference, under Rochat's presidency, was held five months later in order to consider how they should deal with those teaching error (ie, Darby and his followers), but the young Swiss church seemed to be already losing some of its anti-Darbyite momentum now that the contending lines had become fairly clearly drawn.<sup>88</sup> Besides, negative protest in itself was quite inadequate as a bond to unite believers together. In short, the earlier *Réveil* spirit was lacking among those who were still trying to 'hold the fort', which they had won long before Darby had ever come on to the scene.

The most significant explanation for the lull experienced from the end of 1843 in all probability derives from the fact that Darby — at last — left for Britain that summer. No doubt he felt confident enough to do

so because his following had become unified enough to be able to cope with opposing dissenters, and because there were enough young *frères à l'oeuvre* ('brothers in the work') to hold the members together — or keep them in line! In fact, he had achieved something that had eluded the *Ancienne Dissidence* for decades.

A whole year was to pass before he returned to the Swiss cantons. During that time, he found that Brethren in London had been praying much for 'the work in Switzerland', so much so that he received quite a welcome on returning from his long stay abroad. What this reception did for his status among them, and how it affected his growing apostolic self-consciousness, can only be surmized, but the happiness he expressed over them, and the fact that he subsequently launched out on long international itineraries, would suggest that he had reached a turning-point in his self-financed, roving life-enterprise.<sup>89</sup>

His main task on returning to Switzerland, after several months in France, was to consolidate and stimulate the work named after him. This involved not a little remedial work which could hardly have excited him. For example, a case had arisen where one of the assemblies (perhaps Vevey) had threatened to withdraw from him; that had to be dealt with. Then he had to ward off an attack from Swiss evangelicals in the *Société de Genève* and the *Société Laïque de Vaud*, written by P. Wolff and entitled: *Le Ministre aux Temps apostoliques et aux Temps actuels*.<sup>90</sup> To this, Darby replied in 1844 with his *De la Présence et de l'Action du Saint-Esprit dans l'Eglise* since it was vital to him that every opponent should be rebutted, and that he should always have the last word. This meant that his self-defence was already quite lengthy by the end of 1844. It also meant that he contrasted with his opponents, because they felt there were more important things to do than waste their time in endless disputing. Heresy hunting was not to be their full-time occupation even if *his* ministry was obsessed with shooting down every form of 'evil'! Like Wesley, then, Darby proved that he was master of the pen. He would prevail, due to his own persistence and his opponents' eventual default. That was why he brought out *Le Témoignage des disciples de la Parole*, as a journal to propagate his views further, especially during his absence.<sup>91</sup> Yet he was not to get his own way for long, since political realities would achieve what no amount of evangelical self-defence could. History would demonstrate who belonged where.

### **Where the Paths led to**

Darby would never have influenced Swiss dissenters so much if their leaders had been more united in churchmanship and skilled in problem-

solving. In one sense, however, they were unready to meet his challenge creatively because they had never come across anything like his obsessive drive before. As a foreigner, he was difficult to understand and even more difficult to stop, so he was able to get for himself, in their backyard, what would never have been possible in his own land: preliminary experience in leading a movement that looked to him as its founder and theological master-mind. All this he accomplished in a few years, so by 1845 he knew what it was to be 'man of the moment', and how to set the agenda for coming confrontation.

With all that behind him, he felt more prepared than ever to move straight to the heart of Brethren concern in Britain and — even though he had been away from Plymouth for so long — to pontificate in no uncertain manner. Success in confronting hostile opinions and leaders in Switzerland had convinced him of his apostolic calling to straighten out erring Brethren. Yet how ironic it all was! The *Ancienne Dissidence*, which had suffered considerably from foreign, sectarian gentry during the last twenty years, was to return to Britain a re-cycled version of Britain's own sectarian exports. History thus came full circle! The dynamic effects of the cross-roads encounter in *la Suisse romande* were to be experienced no less dramatically and painfully in Plymouth, the West Country, and the ends of the earth.

### *Christian Witness Threatened*

Darby only achieved what he did in Switzerland because the years 1840 to 1844 were far freer of political turbulence than had been the case for a long time. Thus when revolution broke out in Vaud in 1845, under a radical government that was determined to apply the law of 1839 against offending dissenters, Darby and his followers had to decide how they would face persecution.<sup>92</sup> His own decision was to stay around for a few weeks and then leave for England, but for his followers there was to be no such easy escape from 'trial by fire'. In fact, he categorically refused to be persuaded to stay with them — he felt he had other work to do in Plymouth.<sup>93</sup> For him there would be no moderation. Nothing would be allowed to divert him from his peculiar course.

Sure enough, the Darbyites took a beating in Lausanne as their meetings were invaded and their premises ransacked or confiscated, from the middle of February. Reviled as 'Protestant Jesuits' and *mômiers*, they had to suffer as scapegoats while mobs, maddened by Jesuit threats to social order in neighbouring Catholic cantons, vented their hatred for sectarian fanatics, particularly those of foreign origin. Wesleyans, too, came under attack, in Aigle, and had to suspend their proselytizing, close their chapels, and 'make do' with small house-meetings until the

storm passed. This time, others were caught up in the turmoil — even Reformed ministers! Those who had been holding evangelistic services of any sort were forced to desist, and when some 221 of them protested against the clamp down on their religious liberty, 42 of their number were temporarily suspended from preaching.<sup>94</sup> The outcome was that a large majority of the Vaud clergy seceded from the state church by the end of the year, and a new Free Church came into being by 1847.

Members of the dissenting churches do not appear to have fared so badly during this critical period in Darbyite fortunes. Indeed, they sought to take hold of the opportunity to regain some of their number who had gone over to Darby. With this in mind, they held another three conferences and issued another joint statement, entitled, *Moyens de manifester la communion spirituelle que les unes chrétiens ont entre eux et que les églises ont les unes avec les autres par la foi en Jésus-Christ et en Jésus-Christ seul.*<sup>95</sup> It was signed by leaders from three cantons: Guers, Empaytaz, Lhuilier, Saladin, Monsell, de Rodt, Henri and Francois Olivier. But sadly, even at such an opportune time, there was less than total agreement, for A. Rochat and du Plessis of Vaud held back, insisting that the statement did not express the principle of the independence of the local church sufficiently.<sup>96</sup> Such a performance makes one wonder whether the Vaudois remnant of the *Ancienne Dissidence* could ever function as a cohesive, evangelical fellowship. It appeared that no matter what happened, local leaders would never take a substantially united stand in the face of serious threat. A parochial world-view militated against regional — not to mention national — concerns for concerted witness, so it was partly due to ecclesial default on the dissenters' side that they were eclipsed by a new Free Church of Vaud in 1847, and almost ceased to exist by 1850. Degeneration of the *Réveil* thus became complete in Vaud. Darby had managed to snuff it out almost single-handed, thanks to the cantons' lack of decisive, indigenous church-leadership.

### **Christian Fellowship Impoverished**

Darby returned to Vaud rather furtively, early in 1848, not knowing whether he would be treated as an undesirable alien or otherwise. As it turned out, he *was* allowed off the French boat at Ouchy, the port for Lausanne, but he could do no more than hold some meetings with his followers in the Casino there.<sup>97</sup> Soon after that, he returned again to Britain, and it was from Plymouth — that June in Europe's 'Year of Revolutions' — that he complained to a French-speaking 'sister': 'As for dear Switzerland, I am indeed rather a stranger there now'; and again: 'I

am really too much of a stranger, but the circle enlarges, and the difficulty of visiting them all increases'.<sup>98</sup> The point was that his attention was turning more to France than Switzerland. He had given the better part of 1845-48 to Brethren troubles in Britain, and the five years before that to Switzerland, but now he felt it was time for him to develop new areas. For him there could be no settled ministry: he was an apostle-at-large.

In all, some three and a half years passed before Darby spent a satisfactory period of time back in the Swiss cantons. Since he had left them, early in 1845, his hands had been full establishing his own faction among Britain's Brethren, but by October 1848 he felt it necessary to return to his Swiss followers and help resolve some problems that were troubling them. The first, and perhaps the most difficult case calling for his attention was in Geneva. Earlier in the year there had been an open debate about elders between Darby's followers there — led by Foulquier and Guillaumet — and pastor Demole of the *Oratoire*, which was then in close relation with the evangelical church at la Pelisserie.<sup>99</sup> Evidently the Darbyites did not fare too well in this debate, because they could not answer Demole's questions. This upset them so much that Foulquier, in desperation, blurted out that even if God sanctioned elders he would never go along with it. Casting discretion aside, he then told Demole to go to Darby with his questions if he wanted them answered, thereby admitting that Geneva's Darbyites could not stand on their own feet: they were dependent on their foreign leader to do the thinking for them!

All this put Darby in an awkward position since he did not want to admit that any of his followers were in error, nor did it look good that he should appear as an indoctrinator. In the event, he made a lame excuse for Foulquier which convinced nobody, least of all Foulquier, who later publicly admitted his error. Indeed, he even prevailed upon his mentor to include that confession in his rejoinder to Demole: *Vues Scripturaires sur la question des anciens en réponse à l'écrit intitulé: Faut-il Etablir des Anciens*.<sup>100</sup> Of course, this affair did not give Darby or his followers the kind of publicity that they wanted, but it stands on record as an example of the snare that Christians can fall into when they cannot afford to 'lose face' in front of one another. That is what happens in a sect, where one reaps what one has sown. Darbyites referred to themselves as saints and so had to work hard to maintain the sense of spiritual perfection on which their fragile security rested. As a result, they became overly dependent on their leader not only to teach them the deep things that should be believed — Christian *gnosis!* — but also to defend them when they did not know how to answer those who flummoxed them.

After a month of such remedial ministry in Geneva, Darby moved on to Vaud. To his relief, he found that the political scene was much calmer

than it had been earlier in the year. Thus he wrote from Geneva that December:

The Lord is gracious, and gave perfect quiet while I passed through the Canton de Vaud. I had meetings every evening I was in it, and not a word was said. The gendarme looked at my last visa, but did not even ask my name on going into the Canton. I went through Neuchâtel and Vaud, once arrived on the scene of work, save the top of the mountain where we were on sledges, on foot with my haversack. ... In the Canton of Neuchâtel there is a great deal of blessing. In Vaud, the persecutions and lack of visiting have produced some languor. I trust the brethren may pray for these dear brethren. By persecutions, I mean the difficulty of meeting together. There is no particular evil, but slackened energy.<sup>101</sup>

From this, it can be understood that his followers in Vaud had not made any progress since he had left them hastily in 1845; indeed, when he was not present to strengthen their commitment to the Darbyite way, a certain sluggishness took over. This he would have to combat as long as he had the strength to travel. He did so in the 1850s by returning to hold conferences almost every year, but from the 1860s onwards his attention was more taken up with North America and other lands, so that he was only able to get back to Switzerland every two or three years. By force of circumstance, then, Darby eventually found it necessary to let his Swiss followers become responsible for their own affairs. When that happened, the integrity of his movement was disturbed,<sup>102</sup> simply proving that foreign authoritarianism — as the cement that holds believers together — is no substitute for strong, collective leadership that arises from among the people themselves.

### *Christian Integrity Compromised*

Sheer determination and an amazing — he could have considered it providential — ordering of events frequently enabled Darby to be resilient where an ordinary person would have given up. Dogged persistence and stubborn unwillingness to let his opponents have the last word consequently carried him through many an *impasse*. Thus when the evangelicals in Geneva — from the *Oratoire, la Pelisserie* and even the state church — united in 1848-49 to constitute a new *Eglise évangélique libre*, which would contain elders and deacons, would treat pastors as elders, and would allow both adult and infant baptism, he did not consider it impertinent to announce sanctimoniously: 'Brethren of la Pelisserie, the principle of the clergy has destroyed you, and now you cast yourselves there, where one reaps the fruits of this corruption.'<sup>103</sup> From then on, he took advantage of every opportunity to make his Swiss opponents appear to be apostate believers, doubtless with a certain

sense of self-gratification.<sup>104</sup> By doing so, he demonstrated an important feature of sectarian methodology: a leader should never relent from reinforcing and reiterating why his followers should stand fast in their exclusive thinking towards those who profess to be regenerate, yet do not recognize his authority.

The next hundred years were to show that Darbyism had come to stay in Switzerland. In fact, the passage of time has shown that Darby stamped his own outlook, theology and 'assembly' principles on exclusive-minded brethren there to a greater extent than proved to be the case in any other country. Perhaps this reflected the fact that he spent more time in the Swiss cantons (some 90 months spread over 26 years between 1837 and 1878) than in any other country outside England.<sup>105</sup> The course by which the Darbyite movement developed in French Switzerland is consequently significant, and may be analyzed in two ways. First, it evolved through three stages during Darby's lifetime. After a few months of orientation, he launched an *offensive* which attracted a considerable number of followers and provoked schism from the indigenous evangelical churches (1840-1845). But expansion gradually declined due to persecution, internal tension, and exhaustion of the local churches' supply of potential recruits for Darbyism. A *transition* then occurred towards introverted exclusivism and a far less aggressive form of proselytism (1845-1861). Thus *stagnation* set in as staid ritual and pious pondering over Darbyite classics came to predominate in the life of the movement (from the 1860s onward).

From another perspective, it can be seen why Darby appealed to not a few disturbed believers who felt all the more insecure in their faith because of the revolutionary and even violent times through which they were passing. All he had to do was follow the trail of previous manifestations of spiritual renewal in the Church-at-large and take advantage of situations where 'enthusiasm' was on the wane, by promising that he would lead the spiritually-disappointed in a far better way. The tragedy is that people believed him as he passed from one country to another, so much so that he became responsible for promoting sectarian degeneration of church life abroad, as much as at home. It was the misfortune of the evangelical churches in the French-Swiss cantons that he felt free to test his exclusive, programmatic ideas among them. In the process, he encountered considerable resistance, but 'fate' was in his favour and he left the country in the mid-1840s sufficiently self-assured and emboldened to act more forcefully with British Brethren opponents than anyone could have imagined when he first left for Switzerland.<sup>106</sup> *La Suisse romande* thus became the spring-board for Darby's divisive career. That was where he first 'found his feet', even more, where he discovered that authoritarian leadership could achieve much if it simply

gave itself full-time, and without reserve, to the task of aggressive proselytizing, bold apologetics and bulky dogmatics.

### *Audacious Confrontation*

Switzerland was important to Darby because it enabled him to re-orient himself after a long spell of controversy with the Brethren in Britain during the 1830s. The first half of the 1840s was a good time to be abroad, and he was able to carry out a successful apostolate that gained him no little prestige in the estimate of the important concentration of Brethren in London.<sup>107</sup> In short, his five-year spell in Geneva and Vaud turned out to be a test-case for developing his approach to other 'brethren' and evangelicals-in-general. He was able to do this because he initially had nothing to lose by interfering in the affairs of the young church overseas. By 1845, he consequently had a support-base in both London and Switzerland behind him, and it was as a leader in his own right, with his own following, that he felt secure enough to 'jump into the deep end' at Plymouth. Besides, he had hardly anything to lose in Devon!

From such evidence as is available, it appears that Darby's sudden return to Plymouth in March 1845 was not particularly desired by those at the receiving-end.<sup>108</sup> The self-appointed apostle, however, was quite undeterred and promptly set about asserting his own views in opposition to those of his rival, B. W. Newton.<sup>109</sup> Not surprisingly, this provoked outright confrontation between the two, and Newton was put on the defensive as Darby took the initiative. To Newton's shock, he found that it was not only his teaching but also his personal integrity that was up for question; even worse, it appeared that Darby would yield no ground whatsoever. Reconciliation between the two therefore failed at every turn, and nothing could be done to prevent Darby from high-handedly withdrawing from the first Brethren church in Plymouth in order to set up a rival congregation, before the year was out. Under the circumstances, this represented an amazing escalation in the conflict, and can only be explained by observing that Darby had become quite adamant, even fiercely autocratic if necessary, in the way he expected others to submit to his views and hence his leadership. His first year back in Plymouth thus proved to be as explosive as his first full year in Geneva had been: respect for his opponents, into whose 'parish' he had so rudely barged, was totally out of the question, and corresponding 'fruit' followed. How he thought he could 'get away with' such grievous breaches of Christian conduct defies explanation, unless earlier Swiss success had proved too strong a wine — 'new wine', in his own words — for him.<sup>110</sup>

Local evangelicals were caught off their guard by Darby's sheer

audacity. What unnerved them was not so much his keen, almost surgical perception of his opponents' weaknesses, but his brazen shock-tactics. Thus their resistance to him was less than convincing right from the outset. What Neatby wrote about the Brethren in Plymouth consequently reminds one of the situation of the dissenting churches in Geneva and Vaud, which likewise fell prey to exclusive sectarianism:

... In their first emergency [they] found themselves absolutely unprepared to grapple with it. They had no constitution of any kind. They repudiated congregationalism, but they left their communities to fight their battles on no acknowledged basis and with no defined court of appeal. If once the sense of fair play (one would be ashamed to speak of spirituality) broke down, there was no check on the most arbitrary temper.<sup>111</sup>

In short, what Darby wrecked actually succumbed because he went directly for their all-too-vulnerable, ecclesial Achilles' heel. The pious evangelicals had never dreamed that anyone from among them could ever be so grossly indecent as to take advantage of their treasured, organizational informality.

### *Exclusive Disgrace*

The first Darbyite assembly in England — in Plymouth to be precise — began with 50 or 60 members, just as in Geneva; but that was only a start. In Vaud, Darby had managed to topple the whole dissenting movement, so it was hardly surprising that he should go for Newton's 'jugular' in 1846. One of his devices was publication of a *Narrative of the Facts, Connected with the Separation of the Writer from the Congregation meeting in Ebrington Street*. This struck Lord Congleton as so disgraceful that he wrote in Newton's favour, though simultaneously withdrawing from his wronged brother, as follows:

As to John Darby's narratives, I am thoroughly disgusted with them, both the spirit of them and the falseness of them, though I do not charge him with intentional falsehood. He seems to me like a man intoxicated. I trust he will soon come to his senses.<sup>112</sup>

Unfortunately for God's people, Darby was beyond moderation. His most trusted follower, Wigram, followed with another bitter attack on Newton, and at the end of the year Newton was unceremoniously excluded from fellowship by Darby's loyal Rawstorne Street assembly in London. Short of total capitulation to Darby, there was nothing left that Newton could do to prevent himself and his assembly in Plymouth from being 'effectively isolated from all Brethren elsewhere'.<sup>113</sup> Darby had done his worst, and had done it thoroughly, so by 1848 the Ply-

mouth Brethren proper were in irreversible disarray. What awesome responsibility he had taken into his own hands!

The final stage leading to Darbyism's ascendancy among the Brethren in England developed out of a situation in April 1848, when two prominent friends of B. W. Newton applied for communion at George Müller's Bethesda Chapel in Bristol. On hearing that they had been accepted, Darby was immediately incensed, and in a rather back-handed manner announced his separation from the Brethren there. His sectarian 'witness against evil' hardly could have been more explicit than in *The Bethesda Circular* which he subsequently issued from Leeds to all Brethren that July: with that, his exclusivism may be said to have been fully born.<sup>114</sup> From then on there was no way that he would consent to have fellowship with anyone who was sympathetic to Newton. Perhaps the real tragedy was that there was no one to stop him. That, however, may have been partly due to the fact that no other Brethren leader had engaged in such an extensive, free-lance ministry as he had, nor was anyone willing to waste his life spending his energies producing rebuttals that would match his voluminous propaganda. No one else was married with hard-line steadfastness to the spread of such an ecclesial obsession, no one else felt he had as much at stake as a leader among the Brethren, as Darby did. Nobody was as determined to impose uniformity of thought and practice on the Brethren as Darby. He had confused himself with all that his leadership was meant to symbolize and consequently became a dangerous man, whose path it would be folly to cross, but for the fact that he was bringing disgrace upon Christian witness to the Lord.

### **Tumult at the Crossroads**

If there had been a promise of evangelical renewal in the 1810s and 1820s, and if the 1830s had indicated that the path to blessing would not be trouble-free, then the 1840s represented a great leap backwards in terms of Christian relationships. It really happened so quickly. British and Swiss evangelicals had hardly had a chance to establish proper fraternal relations with one another, when a terrible identity crisis developed. What God would unite, Darby would put asunder because he was a stranger to the truth that 'mission is the Church-crossing-frontiers-in-the-form-of-a-servant'.<sup>115</sup>

The dissenting churches of the Swiss cantons were dealt a mortal blow by Darby. Disintegration and disorientation became the order of the day as the 'man from outside' ran rough-shod over the feelings of those who had suffered so much for their Lord. Indeed, one cannot help

but sympathize with the church-leaders who felt 'like a bear robbed of her cubs'. But no sooner had Darby 'done his thing' in Geneva and Vaud than he turned to Plymouth and the West Country of England. Schism upon schism! B. W. Newton had to bear the brunt of the attack, and emerged a crippled man after just two years. As for the Plymouth Brethren, they no longer existed as such by mid-century. Thus it looked as if a complete rout had been accomplished among God's pious people by a man who belonged elsewhere.

The crossroads of Brethren history and European evangelicalism one and a half centuries ago demonstrates how difficult it was for believers from different cultures to respect, and minister maturely to, one another. That each party needed the other was clear enough, but the desire of British gentry to 'lord it over' their Swiss brethren, on the one hand, and the concern of Swiss believers to assert their local churches' independence, on the other, worked to their mutual shame. As a consequence, Swiss evangelical witness never became strong in the French-speaking cantons, while in Britain thousands of needy souls were to discover that Darbyite exclusivism was ultimately a 'dead end'.

One can only hope that the costly lessons of the past — when sectarian leadership forgot that Christ's Church is to be *built up*, not *carved up* — will be learned by the present generation. Of course, there will be anxiety about who should be leading God's people forward, but may we be spared from those who forget that the forward movement to which the Church is called is participation in *Christ's* mission to his world! We are called to maturity of faith *and* to further the kingdom of God, but believers will only demonstrate that Jesus Christ is Lord when they refuse to be side-tracked by personal interests, petty leaders, and confining causes.

Where cross the crowded ways of life,  
 Where sound the cries of men at odds,  
 Above the noise of selfish strife,  
 We seek *Thy Way*, O Son of God!

(Adapted form of the hymn by F. M. North, 1903)

#### NOTES

1. A. A. Dallimore's *George Whitefield*, 2 vols., (1980) is a superlative exposé of the actual relationships and leadership differences between Whitefield and Wesley.
2. Oxford University had an important role to play in the early pilgrimage of both

men in terms of the relationships they formed there; eg Darby with Newton and Wesley with Whitefield.

3. For excellent treatments of these phenomena, see D. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (1978); F. E. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (1971); R. Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (1978); J. Kent, *Holding the Fort. Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (1978); H. A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley, and Patterns for Church Renewal* (1980).
4. That is, the French-speaking cantons of Switzerland, particularly small canton Geneva and much larger canton Vaud, both of which are adjacent to Lac Léman (Lake Geneva).
5. John Wesley was converted during such outreach in 1738 and then visited Zinzendorf and German Pietist leaders in what is now East Germany.
6. J. R. Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf* (1956); A. G. Spangenberg, *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf* (1838).
7. The *Compagnie des Pasteurs* did this in 1813 because it regarded the group as a sect. See E. Guers, *Vie de Pyt* (1850) 247; Ch. Eynard, *Vie de Madame de Krudener*, 2 (1849) 246,247; E. Guers, *Le Premier Réveil et la Première Eglise Indépendante à Genève ...* (1871) 19ff. 43-47 (henceforth cited as *Réveil*).
8. This designation may be translated as the 'original', 'former', or even 'earlier' dissenting movement. As early as 1842, Darby was calling its members 'old dissenters' (see his *Letters*,<sup>2</sup> 1:53). However, the adjective *ancienne* was strictly-speaking a misnomer because Darbyism did not embody the principles of Swiss evangelical dissent in a new way, and a phrase such as *nouvelle dissidence* was never coined.
9. See Eynard, *op. cit.* vol. 2. Eynard was a Darbyite when he wrote this biography, probably for non-Christians in the aristocracy. Darby's prompt critique of the lady was dated 29 May 1849, and was entitled 'On Mysticism': see his *Collected Writings*,<sup>2</sup> (32) 218-226 (henceforth cited as *C. W.*).
10. Henri Empaytaz was the first to be induced to leave Switzerland and engage in evangelism abroad — helping her witness to aristocratic ladies in Karlsruhe, Germany, for two years (Eynard, vol. 2. and *Réveil* 73ff.).
11. She was an Anglican who in principle opposed 'dissent': her concern was for evangelical reviving of the existing church. See J. Cart, *Histoire du Mouvement Religieux et Ecclésiastique dans le Canton de Vaud pendant la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1870-1880) 1; Bk. 2, 96-177; Bk. 3, 269-272.
12. The term *le Réveil*, popularly used by nineteenth-century historians to designate the small-scale movement of spiritual renewal that occurred in the French-Swiss cantons, should be translated as 'awakening' rather than as 'revival': it was essentially an inaccurate term. Guers, one of the leaders in the *Réveil*, professed no embarrassment that strangers were used to animate the spiritual life of Geneva, because that was how the Reformation had been established there centuries before (*Réveil* 100, 101).
13. A. Haldane, *Memoirs of the Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of his Brother James Alexander Haldane* (1853) 378. By 1825, he had spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on evangelical work in Scotland and French-speaking Europe, according to *The Christian Baptist*,<sup>2</sup> 3 (1827) 352.
14. A number of senior orthodox Reformed pastors in Geneva, as well as the theological students who respected Haldane, refused to accept the consistory's ban on the preaching of Christ's divinity, on original sin, the operation of grace, and predestination. *Réveil* 86-98; Haldane (French translation by E. Petitpierre, one of the first dissenting pastors in Neuchatel, 2nd ed. 2 (1859) 33-53).

15. Vaud's Reformed Church, unlike Geneva's, had remained true to its orthodox Calvinism, even if most of the original vitality had been lost through time. Cart 1; Bk. 2.
16. A. L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle* (c. 1934) 126; W. H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists. The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (1978); *Réveil* 99-104; Haldane, 374. Haldane left on 20 June.
17. He was expelled from the canton in Oct. after being interrogated at length by the *Compagnie des Pasteurs*. This happened because they considered him a 'sectarian': the same reason why Miss Greaves was expelled from Canton Vaud in 1822.
18. They met in small house-groups until Sept. 1818. From Oct. they were publicly nicknamed *mômiers*, or 'bigots', because of their nonconformist stance towards state religion.
19. From 1819, Bost and Guers were responsible for publishing and promoting this evangelical paper, which got its information particularly from the Basle Missionary Society. See *Réveil* 224-233; Cart 1; Bk. 3, 190, 191.
20. All this happened by 1825. Some pastors died from the injuries they sustained. The law passed in 1824 prohibited all prayer meetings, on pain of fines, imprisonment and banishment. It was carried out quite seriously.
21. Vevey was the first place in Vaud to have a truly organized dissenting church (from Sept. 1824). See Cart 1; Bk. 4, 10-19. By inciting the common people to attack the *mômiers*, the clergy provoked the very secession from the state church that they wanted to avoid so much!
22. F. R. Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*<sup>2</sup> (1976); H. H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850* (1967).
23. Coad 31-35, 62, 117; W. B. Neatby *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* (1901). Darby hesitated for a long time before severing his ties with the Church of England, c. 1834.
24. Rowdon 43,44,48; Coad 52, 106; Neatby 78; G. Ischebeck, *John Nelson Darby: Son Temps et Son Oeuvre* (trans. from German), (1937) 10, 11.
25. Coad 61. Olivier has demonstrated how fashionable the interpretation of prophecy had become among dissenters, both within and without the established Church, by 1831. An example is the series of conferences held at Henry Drummond's Albury Park villa in Surrey, from 1826. Lady Powerscourt, whom Darby once would have liked to marry, attended the 1826 meeting there (Rowdon 86). Darby attended her Powerscourt (Ireland) conferences at least in 1829 and 1830. Irving visited her at Powerscourt in Sept. 1830. She was the same age as Darby and died on 30 Dec. 1836, in her mid-thirties. See L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (1946) 3; 263-282, 436ff., 449ff.; Neatby, 38, 39.
26. Coad 130ff.
27. The name 'Plymouth Brethren' was coined by outsiders because the Devonshire assembly there was particularly influential in the formation of the Brethren movement. See Rowdon 37, 111, 159-161. Although Darby visited the place occasionally, he never was formally a member there, let alone the 'presiding elder' (Newton filled that position). The Brethren in Ireland were commonly called 'Darbyites' because Darby was the dominant influence there by 1834 (Rowdon 104; Neatby 51).
28. A. Wemyss, *Histoire du Réveil 1790-1849* (1977) 88-100; A. L. Drummond, *Edward Irving* 127. Because of the mediocrity of Bourg-de-Four's resources, Drummond largely financed the society. Between 1819 and 1832, Méjanel, Pyt, Porchat, Neff, Guers, Coulin, Bost and Barbey were the leaders or members of Bourg-de-Four who at some time worked for, or were supported by the society.

- Méjanel organized the society's initial French activities from Paris, under supervision from London.
29. Empaytaz was exempt from military exercises for health reasons. Guers and Gonthier had received ordination from Ami Bost in Geneva in March 1819 (he was already ordained in the state church), but the *Compagnie* would not recognize it. *Réveil* 177, 188, 189. For details about Wilks, see D. Robert, *Les Eglises Réformées en France 1800-1830* (1961) 364; T. Stunt, 'Geneva and British Evangelicals in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Journ. Eccl. Hist.*, 32, Jan. 1981, 40, 41.
  30. In the same chapel in London, at the end of July 1821. The *Société* was known in England as the Continental Society for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge. See Guers, *Vie de Pyt*, 130; Froom, 440. Another worker of the society, who had been a member at Bourg-de-Four, Felix Neff, was ordained in the same place in 1823, also by arrangement of Mr. Wilks. See A. Bost, *Letters and Biography of Felix Neff* (1843), 106-116.
  31. Since he is not mentioned in the relevant records of Glasgow Presbytery for 1823, and since the 'Secession Church' — in contrast to the Church of Scotland — did not refuse to recognize Malan, it is reasonable to assume that Olivier was ordained by the more 'independent' or dissenting wing of Scottish Presbyterianism.
  32. Cart 1; Bk. 4, 233, 259-264.
  33. For the contacts that Malan managed to establish in Britain, see D. Robert; L. Maury, *Le Réveil Religieux dans l'Eglise Réformée à Genève et en France 1810-1850* (1892) 1; 126, 127; Baron H. de Goltz, *Genève Religau Dix-Neuvième Siècle* (1862) 183, 197; *Réveil* 122-125; Stunt, *art. cit.* Haldane led Malan to the Lord in Geneva (Haldane 396, 397).
  34. The *Société évangélique de Genève* was founded in 1831 by dissenters from the state church who did not join the Bourg-de-Four brethren: they opened the *Oratoire* church in 1834. H. Heyer, *L'Eglise de Genève 1535-1909*, reprint, (1974) 134, 135; 466, 467; 489, 490; Froom, 3; 688, 689; *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge* (1908) 4; 437, 438. 7; 316, 317. This indigenous, 'non-aligned', evangelical movement soon eclipsed the outreach of Bourg-de-Four both at home and abroad, and decades later was still going strong with 60 colporteurs and over 12 pastors. See D. Maselli, *Tra Risveglio e Millennio. Storia delle chiese cristiana dei Fratelli* (1974) 39-47, *passim*. Gausson visited England in order to get encouragement for its work, early in the 1830s.
  35. *Réveil* 107-110, 122, 252, 253. Méjanel must have been with Haldane when the latter preached to congregations of Anglican and dissident evangelicals at Powerscourt. Haldane 429. Drummond set Haldane's plan in motion for founding this society in 1818/19 (Haldane 418, 427).
  36. Guers, *Vie de Pyt* 41, 58, 59. Haldane arranged for him to be thus employed in France, from early 1819.
  37. *Ibid.* 255-263, 285-300; Olivier 125, 126; Haldane 428, 455ff., 488ff., 504, 505. Haldane and Irving/Drummond clashed because of the latter's metaphysical speculations on the Lord's humanity, their eschatological speculations, and the matter of spiritual gifts. Trouble about inclusion of the Apocrypha in French Bibles made matters even worse.
  38. This committee established the *Société évangélique française*, but it was very short-lived. In 1834, the independent churches of French-speaking Europe united in an evangelical association of churches—after a lot of slow discussion—with Bourg-de-Four as the nerve-centre for the task of evangelization. This only held together till 1840, when the Geneva church withdrew because it was so concerned about its own developing identity—which by then involved minimiz-

- ing the role of pastors in church affairs. *Réveil* 322-328; Maury 1; 333ff.
39. Drummond was behind this push to buy Bost's co-operation, and Méjanel acted as a go-between. See A. Bost, *Mémoires pouvant servir à l'histoire du Réveil religieux* (1854) 2; 123-329. T. Stunt, *art. cit.*, has pointed to Malan's connections with the circle around Drummond and Irving.
  40. Some time during their banishment, the Olivier brothers worked for the *Société Continentale*. F. Olivier directed the 'Haldane Institute' in Paris from 1824 to 1832 (Robert, 364, 365, 702). H. Olivier worked in French-speaking Canada from c. 1834 to 1839. See *Feuille Religieuse*, no.9, rv. 161, 332; *Narrateur Religieux* (1839) 675, 676, 702.
  41. Church polity varied from presbyterian and congregational to exclusive apostolic. Cart, 1; Bk. 4; 114ff., 204, 232, 2; Bk. 7, 255.
  42. *Ibid.*, 2; Bk. 6, 123-132; Bk. 7, 297. Rowdon (205) notes that Irvingism disturbed the school of theology (of the *Oratoire*) in Geneva in the spring of 1837.
  43. See above, n.33. It is quite possible that Carl then visited Mr. Douglas, who established the first off-shoot of the Plymouth Brethren assembly on his Salcombe estate. See Ischebeck 57; Rowdon 77. Carl died in Sept. 1848 after several years of pastoral leadership in Berne. K. Guggisberg, *Bernische Kirchengeschichte* (1958) 607, 624ff.
  44. Mrs. A. N. Groves, *Memoir of A. N. Groves*,<sup>3</sup> (1869) 355, 356, 324. See Rowdon 195-199, 38-41; G. F. Bergin (ed.) *Autobiography of George Müller*,<sup>3</sup> (1914) 69-76. Groves managed to get several Swiss to go into missions under Brethren auspices, between 1836 and 1840.
  45. Since the party's departure was delayed by bad weather until March 1836 (five months) the Plymouth assembly must have found out quite a lot about the evangelical scene in Geneva from Rudolphe. Ischebeck 57. Did Mr. Douglas, who also counted Malan as his 'father in the Lord', share significantly in underwriting Rudolphe's expenses? Guers (*Réveil*, 245, 246) provides the letter Rudolphe wrote to Geneva from Plymouth on 12 Sept. 1835. It appears that Rudolphe went over to the LMS in India in 1838, after several years of service with Brethren support. *Réveil* 452; R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895* (1899) 2; 738. In Sept. 1834, Douglas was an important leader along with Newton, Borlase and Harris, in Plymouth. It appears that some time in 1836 Douglas and a third of the Brethren at Salcombe went over to the Irvingites. Newton had to preach against the Irvingite threat in the West Country. Did this turn of events affect support for Rudolphe? Rowdon 78, 84, 231. Earlier in Baghdad (in 1831), A. N. Groves had faced the possibility of Brethren support being withdrawn because of their impatience at his lack of success (A. N. Groves, *Journal of a Residence at Baghdad*, 1832, 299).
  46. Groves himself testified that he had several opportunities to talk with Darby between the end of Dec. 1834 and 10 March 1836. See Coad 291-295; Rowdon 292; Ischebeck 37ff., 128, 129, 29. The Plymouth assembly, moreover, had had six months to get acquainted with all that Rudolphe had to share. Did Darby actually meet Rudolphe at Plymouth during this time?
  47. Darby appears to have transferred information about meetings in Neuchâtel from this article into his pamphlet on *Communion and Visible Unity, the Duty and Privilege of all True Christians* (1837). This 24-page booklet may be found in *Brochures Diverses de J. N. Darby at the Lausanne 'Bibliothèque des Pasteurs'* (TP 6106); henceforth cited as *Brochures*. J. J. Herzog, a Swiss theology professor who wrote *Les Frères de Plymouth et J. N. D., Leur Doctrine et Leur Histoire*, during Darby's lifetime, states that in 1830 Darby visited Paris, Cambridge and Oxford, and then went to Plymouth (*New Schaff-Herzog*

- Encyclopedie* 3; 357). This may be a reference to the account of F. Estéoule: *Le Plymouthisme d'autrefois et le Darbyisme d'aujourd'hui* (1858).
48. He wrote this in 1868: *Letters of J. N. D.* 1; 515, 516 (henceforth cited as *Letters*). The 'brother' was either Rudolphe or Groves, and not G. V. Wigram, whose information on Geneva—apparently after his conversion in 1824—was very scant. See his anonymous pamphlet, *What are the Brethren?* (2) in *Brochures*; also Stunt, *art. cit.* 42.
  49. *Réveil* 330-333. As one of the pastors, he began to think during his English visit, that the church was moving too far in the direction of congregationalism, so that Aug. he tried to get the church's constitution modified along presbyterian lines. Some of the 'brothers' then charged the three pastors with dominating them, and several meetings, excluding the pastors, were held in Oct-Nov. to deal with the situation. The outcome was that Guers' controversial proposal backfired. The Bourg-de-Four congregation moved to la Pelisserie some time early in the 1840s.
  50. Two English letters from the 1850s corroborate the evidence in *Brochures*; see *Letters* 3; 293, 297-305.
  51. His comments suggest that he had settled down in the place from which he was writing. It could have been addressed to brethren in either London or Plymouth, but was later printed for distribution. Darby was in correspondence with Wigram about the formation of the Brethren in London in Oct. 1838 (Neatby 109, 282, 283). Notice his 'apostolic' style of writing (see Coad 63). For his relationship with the Brethren in London, see his letter of 3 Aug. 1843 (*Letters* 1; 63) and below, notes 107, 113.
  52. 'G., E. and L.' were probably the pastors there: Guers, Empaytaz, and Lhuilier (see *Réveil* 331ff.). Foulquier became, and perhaps already was, one of the principal 'brethren' there, and it was in answer to one of his letters that Darby wrote the present letter from Edinburgh in Sept. 1838, finishing it on 6 Oct. See the Swiss-French Darbyite periodical, *Messager Évangélique* (1897) 293-300 (henceforth cited as *M.E.*). A third, but short, letter from 1838 is located in *M.E.* (1945) 195, 196.
  53. *M.E.* (1971) 122-130; *Letters*, 3; 232-236; see below, n.78. By 'our enemies who were present' there, he appears to have been referring to believers 'seduced by that fatal delusion of Irvingism'. Was this conference in Dublin? (see Neatby, 38, 39). The letter was written before he visited some 'exclusive' brethren in Edinburgh. On the Hereford assembly, see Rowdon 164-170.
  54. He referred to his 1837 visit (which may have overlapped into early 1838) in the following opening remarks: 'So long a time has passed since I saw you, without my having addressed to you one word, that you may believe I no longer was thinking of it; but it is not so at all. I have been, during many weeks since my return, hindered.' *Letters* 3; 232.
  55. *M.E.* (1897) 258ff. It is not known whether Mr. Foulquier, Lhuilier or someone else enabled him to do this, nor is it possible to demonstrate why he should have wanted to copy it.
  56. The Hereford letter's comments about the process of separation that had taken place among the Brethren in Edinburgh, and his call for the brethren in Geneva to be 'rigid in discipline' towards one another—as well as 'large-hearted towards all Christians', for good measure (so long as they played down the issue of adult baptism in both Geneva and Edinburgh?)—indicate that Darby was moving away from a 'neutral' or non-partisan position in this delicate situation. Already, a distance was discernible between Darby and Guers. See his writing to Guers on the subject of baptism, some time between 1838 and 1840 (*Letters* 1; 43). He did not approve of 'the principle of dissent which was more or less prevalent' in

- Bourg-de-Four's constitution. See N. Noel, *The History of the Brethren* (1936) 1; 40; Coad 88.
57. F. Cuendet, *Souvenez-Vous de Vos Conducteurs* (1935) 23; Cart 3; Bk. 11, 340.
  58. Maselli (25) states that Darby received an invitation from a community in French Switzerland in 1838, and subsequently got a good welcome. The source is not cited. Did Foulquier do this? Darby wrote to him from Edinburgh, just after the Hereford letter: in this, the Englishman was more candid in commenting about pastors such as Guers.
  59. *Letters* 1; 33ff.; *M.E.* (1971) 222ff.; (1965) 252; (1971) 248ff.
  60. For a detailed outline of his travels, see the chart at the end of this article. Exhaustive listing of the evidence for these datings is summarized in my treatise, 188-195. Darby's claim that he worked in Geneva for four years, seeking to maintain peace and unity, is consequently quite inaccurate. He was probably in Geneva never more than about six months at a time, and then perhaps on only one occasion. (See *Letters* 1; 55; 3; 293)
  61. *C.W.*, 4; 188-191. By 1840 he was writing that he encouraged the flock to recognize the pastors, yet he was totally against electing pastors or establishing elders, and had to withhold totally from all interference.
  62. Cart 3; Bk. 11, 319, 340; Bost, *Mémoires* 2; 244, 245, 254; G. A. Krüger, *Le Darbyisme étuïé à la lumière de la Parole de Dieu* (n.d.) 20.
  63. *Letters* 1; 37, 38 (emphasis mine). He also wrote in that letter, in somewhat military language: 'I had broken up from Geneva, where I had a share more or less in all the happy work and intercourse of the place ... and was pleasing myself ... that I should soon turn my face towards my old work in England, and what God in His goodness has prepared for me there, and indeed, I long much ... to be on my way thither, or rather to work there.'
  64. Cart (3; Bk. 11, 341) states that Francois had already met Darby in Geneva in 1837. In 1840, Darby wrote the article: 'De la Doctrine des Wesleyens à l'égard de la Perfection', *C.W.*, 3; 164-205. C. Rieben, *Les Petites Eglises* (1923) 41; Cart, *ibid.* 348, 319-323. Henri recanted in the spring of 1841.
  65. *Letters* 1; 40, 41. Clearly, Darby did not find it easy to adjust to the French-Swiss culture and climate.
  66. The English title was: Reflections on the Ruined Condition of the Church: and on the Efforts Making by Churchmen and Dissenters to Restore it to its Primitive Order (*C.W.* 1; 211-237). It would be helpful to know the precise date of the writing of this article in 1840. See Rowdon 209, 210, 285, 286; and below, n.69.
  67. *Letters* 1; 42 (emphasis mine).
  68. Cuendet 25; Cart 3; Bk. 11, 348, 349. The English title was 'The Hopes of the Church of God, in connection with the destiny of the Jews and the Nations, as Revealed in Prophecy', *C.W.*, 2; 420-582. By doing this outside of the Bourg-de-Four church, he clearly indicated that he was trying to attract support from people not really at home in either dissent or the state church.
  69. His basic ideas on ecclesiology and the interpretation of prophecy were clearly laid out here. For analysis of Darby's 'hermeneutical key', see Rowdon 51ff., 207, 208, 230, 231: 'By now, Darby had come to see clearly that the key to understanding the unfolding revelation of the Bible was the distinction between the Jewish dispensation and that of the Christian Church.'

It helps one to understand his fiercely-held convictions, such as the hopeless ruin of the Church, at this time, if one bears in mind that sometime earlier, he had dated the Second Advent for 1842. See below, n.109. French Darbyites soon made it out to be c. Nov. 1844, while Drummond and others set it at 1847. See Darby's *Studies on the Book of Daniel*, 316; Coad, *Prophetic Developments*

- with particular reference to the early Brethren Movement, *C.B.R.F. Occ. Paper*, no.2 (1966) 18, 21-26; and for many other sources, my treatise, 128, n.361.
70. Cf. Neatby 94; there was hardly any more respect for the idea of paid clergy in some circles. The evangelical cause had already been hurt in Sept. 1838 when one of its spokesmen, Charles Rochat, died prematurely from wounds suffered during the earlier persecution (Cart 2; Bk. 8, 22).
  71. *Letters* 3; 293; 1; 55, 56. Neatby (81) observes that Darby made the study of prophecy the pivot of his work in Vaud. For the Swiss, such study and such a subject was something for which they were quite unprepared.
  72. *Letters* 1; 56; Ischebeck 10, 11; Cuendet 27. English and Vaudois friends also helped to support this *ad hoc* 'Brethren' training course.
  73. See especially his *On the Apostasy of the Present Economy*, 1841.
  74. *Letters* 1; 44, 45.
  75. Cart 3; Bk. 11, 351ff. How many sects and cults claim as much for their leaders and programmes today!
  76. This law came into effect on 1 Jan. 1841. J. I. Good, *History of the Swiss Reformed Church since the Reformation* (1913) 476, 477; Cart, 3; Bk. 11, 346ff.
  77. *C.W.* 4; 189; Cart 3; Bk. 11, 363; *Réveil* 338.
  78. *Ibid.*; Ischebeck 59; de Goltz 455; Rowdon 206. Darby's lectures and publications surely had an impact on Geneva! Is Donnel the (Irish?) contact—'our dear brother'—who, according to Darby, brought news to Geneva about how Darby was getting on in his British work in 1838? See above, n.53. Was the Hereford letter hand-delivered to Bourg-de-Four, and did it partly function as an introduction to them for Donnel? *Letters* 3; 232.
  79. Ischebeck 59; de Goltz 455; Guendet 25; *Réveil* 338; Cart, 3; Bk. 11, 363; P. Perret, *Nos Églises Dissidentes. Assemblées de Frères Largés* [Open Brethren] (1966) 15. Darby himself recorded that one of the pastors asked him to bring about reconciliation between the separated groups, but he would only do so on his own terms (*C.W.* 4; 190).
  80. Cuendet 149. Many of its students then went over to Darby.
  81. The counter-charge by Darby is to be found in his 1842 *Le Schisme* 11ff. See Cart 3; Bk. 11, 370-373. For the spate of articles written by Darby and his opponents, see my treatise, 171-180.
  82. The questions relating to the topic for discussion were later outlined by F. Olivier in his *Essai sur le Royaume de Dieu, suivi d'un examen rapide des vues publiées par M. John Darby sur l'Apostasie de l'Economie Actuelle* (1843). Thus the very leader who had sought Darby's help for the beleaguered dissenters in 1840 was now diametrically opposed to him, so shocked was he with the kind of person Darby was as a leader.
  83. Cart 3; Bk. 11, 373-376; Rowdon 212; Neatby 86.
  84. *Letters* 1; 52. Written from Geneva, 10 October 1842. He wrote from Lausanne the next day (*ibid.* 53).
  85. Emphasis mine. The conversions (mentioned in the same letter) under his 'workmen' in France do not substantiate his claims about a new awakening, for Bourg-de-Four sent out many evangelists until Darbyism split the church and Geneva's Evangelical Society continued to send out many more evangelists for many more years.
  86. Cart 3; Bk. 11, 241ff., 375. Olivier began these separate meetings during the winter of 1842-43; they had a polity which, on leadership, was a compromise between the original dissenting position and that of Darbyism. See Ischebeck 68; *C.W.*, 33; 20.
  87. Cart *ibid.*, 244-248. Carl de Rodt's church in Berne had recently suffered a year of painful relations with the Vaudois Darbyites. Ischebeck 67.

88. Cart *ibid.*, 252-255. The third conference was held at Nyon on 28-29 Sept. 1843. It is not clear whether the conference scheduled for 16 May 1844, at Rolle, was ever held. By the end of 1843, F. Olivier and Rochat gave up wasting their time writing against Darby.
89. From 3 August 1843 onwards. See *Letters* 1; 63-71. It is significant that Darby's ties were with the Brethren in London rather than in Plymouth. See above, n.51.
90. The English title was: *Ministry as opposed to Hierarchism and chiefly to Religious Radicalism*. Wolff was a theological candidate of the school of the *Oratoire* in Geneva and had this essay finished before Darby left in 1843. See Rowdon 211; Cart, 3; Bk. 11, 385; C.W. 3; 206, 207.
91. Translatable as *Testimony of Disciplines of the Word*. See *Ischebeck* 10, 11; Maselli 38; Cart 385; Herzog 82.
92. Good 477-484; *Letters* 1; 126, 82, 83, 55, 42. Physical assaults were suffered and even resulted in death, according to accounts in some of Darby's correspondence between 1845 and 1848.
93. *Letters* 1; 80, 81, 92; *Ischebeck* 46, 72; see above n.63. As early as 1840, he was wanting to get on with some particular 'project' in England. Would he have gone straight for Plymouth once he had been refreshed? If so, what might have happened there then?
94. Cart 3; Bk. 11, 332-498; Bk. 13, 6, 11, 36; Neatby 93.
95. *Means of demonstrating the spiritual communion which Christians have among themselves and which the churches have with one another through faith in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ alone*.
96. Cart 3; Bk. 11, 255-261. According to a letter of F. Olivier from Geneva on 15 June 1846. A. Rochat's death in 1847 only weakened Vaud dissent further. In Vaud, only his 'leaderless' group of *églises des élus* managed to survive to 1859. Then it joined up with a major breakaway from the Darbyites. J. Blandenier, *Le Réveil: Naissance du Mouvement évangélique en Suisse romande au XIXe siècle* (after 1950) 14.
97. *Letters* 1; 135. He probably made this visit while he was based in France during Feb./Mar. On 24 Mar. he wrote about having visited V. (Vevey?) where he persuaded the brethren not to vote in the state elections that were soon to take place (*ibid.* 129). Another sectarian feature of separation from the world! Vevey is the next large port east of Lausanne.
98. *Ibid.* 135-137.
99. Darby's account (C.W. 4; 192ff.) should be compared with the remarks of E. Demole, written just after the *Eglise de l'Oratoire* (of which he was pastor since 1843) united with the *Eglise de la Pelisserie* (formerly Bourg-de-Four) in 1849, entitled, *Faut-il Etablir des Anciens?* (Is it necessary to appoint elders?).
100. *Scriptural Views on the Subject of Elders, in answer to a Tract entitled, 'Are Elders to be Established?'* (C.W. 4). A few years after this, a similar situation occurred in which Darby could not afford to reprimand or deal with another indefatigable supporter, Wigram (Neatby 171, 172). The significance of eldership to Darby is reflected in the fact that the lack of a powerful local eldership was the great negative condition of his autocracy (Neatby 259; see below, n.113).
101. *Letters* 1; 143. Darby was in Geneva on 20 Oct., 10 Nov., 12 Nov. and 8 Dec. (see *M.E.* (1927) 240ff.; (1924) 141ff., 319ff., 339ff.) and in Lausanne on 5 Dec. (*M.E.* (1962) 57ff.). During the late 1840s Darbyism became a force to be reckoned with in Neuchâtel, and disturbed dissenters there considerably. This canton's experience of dissent and Darbyite sectarianism was an 'afterthought' to, and thus was only indirectly affected by, what happened in Geneva and Vaud. In terms of numbers, dissent there was only a fraction of what it had been

- in Geneva and Vaud; however, Neuchâtel eventually became a strong part of Darby's Swiss following. See my treatise, Appendix D 181-187.
102. As early as 1848, Guinand, a leading brother in Vaud, was beginning to react against Darby's authoritarianism. He split the Darbyites over this issue in 1866, when he challenged Darby to an open debate. See his *Lettre à M. Darby* (1866) 7, and Cart 3; Bk. 11, 395, 396.
  103. de Goltz 527-541; Cuendet 133-136; *C. W.*, 4; 109, 81-132, 184, 185.
  104. When Prof. Scherer resigned from the theological school of the *Oratoire* in 1849 because of his unorthodox views on Biblical authority, Darby wrote several articles on *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, and the leaders of Geneva's new Free Church had nothing with which to reproach Darby. Between 1852 and 1859, Darby wrote against several leaders of the new evangelical church—naturally never doing it face to face—including Ch. Saladin, Guers, and Comte de Gasparin. With the last named, he engaged in a running literary duel on the issue of elders (see above, n.100). One of the Geneva elders brought out a tract on *Plymouthism in view of the Word of God* in 1850, which Darby also rebutted. Against Guers' *Note on the Errors of Mr. B. W. Newton* he wrote an open letter in 1853.
  105. See the following chart of Darby's travels, and my treatise, 150, 188-195, for further clarification. He is still referred to with reverence as 'brother Darby' by elderly Brethren there. French Switzerland became the stronghold of Darbyism abroad (Neatby 93, 94, 304ff., 316).
  106. See also Rowdon's interpretation of the effect that Switzerland had on Darby (214).
  107. The Brethren were established in London by Wigram by 1838, and developed a strong semi-connexional system of meetings during the 1840s. Wigram was one of Darby's most staunch supporters and was implacably opposed to Newton by then. He was in close collusion with Darby in breaking from Newton's Plymouth assembly at the end of December 1845. See Rowdon 161-164, 250, 247; P. L. Embley, 'The Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren', in B. R. Wilson (ed.), *Patterns of Sectarianism* (1967) 226, 227.
  108. See Coad 141, 142; Rowdon 236-238, 242, 243; Embley 230ff.; Neatby 103, 104. Harris, who wrote to Darby in Switzerland early in 1844, went over to Darby in October 1845.
  109. See above, n.69; Neatby 104, 105, 109-113, 227, 228. They disagreed most on the question of the Secret Rapture and the relation of the Church to the Great Tribulation. This dispute seemed of immense practical consequence to them since they then anticipated the immediate end of the age. Darby charged Newton with clericalism and sectarianism, among other things.
  110. See above, n.84. According to Rowdon (247), Lord Congleton—a statesman who was not unfairly biased in favour of Newton—described Darby's action as 'unequivocally sectarian'. Newton refused to be judged publicly in Darby's stronghold (London) and so was unilaterally excommunicated by it.
  111. Neatby 119-121.
  112. This is an excerpt from Lord Congleton's letter to Newton, quoted by Embley 234. Lord Congleton had been one of the founders of the Brethren movement in Dublin in 1825 (under the name Parnell). His estimate of the 1845 split was most level-headed (see Neatby 23, 41, 115-122, 147). Darby's action reminds one of Wesley's behaviour with Whitefield.
  113. Newton was embarrassed and discredited by Darby for his *Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus*, even though he admitted his error and retracted his remarks; he even had to leave Plymouth, on 8 Dec. 1847. See Coad 147-153; Rowdon 259ff.; Neatby 50-62, 129, 138, 146, 147, 176, 221, 222, 303, 304, 325.

Rawstorne Street assembly became the nucleus of Darby's metropolitan system of administration. Wigram had a considerable fortune and was another of the aristocratic leaders in the Brethren movement from the beginning.

114. Groves protested in 1836 that Darby emphasized witnessing *against* error—and thus was sectarian—rather than witnessing *for* truth—which is the evangelical position. See Rowdon 292, 276ff.; Neatby 62, 146, 147, 176, 303, 304.
115. This definition of the Church's role in God's mission is taken from D. J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (1980) 248. See above, n.100.