

a totally Christian designation in lieu of a denominational title. The initial group met in Ireland and postured themselves as a non-clerical fellowship actually within the existing churches although this status did not remain possible long. Early leaders included J.N. Darby, George Mueller, S.P. Tregelles, B.W. Newton and many prominent, titled English persons. The general tenure of theology was Calvinistic and Darby, in particular, postured the need for the group as being an outgrowth of the church as a body politic being in ruins. Darby was an Anglican minister and, as with most of the early leaders, thoroughly trained in the theological disciplines of his time. Baptism as to form and subject was largely an open question and the earlier meetings (1830 and onward) showed a doctrinal broadness.

This doctrinal broadness dissipated under polity attacks and the brethren as a group were soon undermined with many divisions...the nature of which is beyond the scope of this course. The concept of non-sectarianism was soon completely lost in practice although professed in expression. Mueller and Darby parted and separate divisions continued after them...with a number of divisions beyond that.

The brethren were strong for conferences, missions, and works of public assistance. The brother of Cardinal Newman served as a mission worker with the group and some English leaders (such as Sir Robert Anderson) succeeded in maintaining ties with the brethren while holding down positions in their respective churches. The bulk of dispensational teaching was anticipated by the brethren and some developed sides of it were their particular contributions. But uniformity of doctrine was not one of their strong points although a strong evangelicalism was maintained over all. Over-particularization of polity and practice were the big points of trouble. A very good work on the subject is F. Roy Coad: A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE BRETHREN MOVEMENT.

For what it is worth, this has been the area of TVT's fellowship since he fled the United Presbyterian church nearly 40 years ago. That may help you understand part of what is wrong with this course!