

SUBSCRIPTIONS & RENEWALS

The 2009 First Quarter edition of the Sanctuary-Keeper Magazine marks the annual end of our fourth year of publishing the magazine. If you would like to continue to receive these quarterly editions of the SK magazine in 2009, please complete the enclosed subscription slip and mail it to:

The Sanctuary-Keeper
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The subscription rate will remain at \$10.00 for four quarterly editions. We would appreciate receiving your subscriptions by the end of April, 2009. We wish to thank those who have already sent in their subscription for 2009 as well as to thank those responsible for the continued donations. Any donations that are received will be used to offset the cost of printing and mailing that may be needed during the course of the year as well as for a wider distribution of the effort.

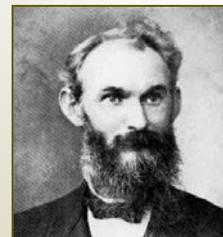
SANCTUARY-KEEPER INTERNET VERSION

The S.K. now has a website that provides searchable back issues, including issues from the editorship of J.J. Andrew as well as Jim Stanton. Web address is <http://sanctuarykeeper.homestead.com>

(continued from front-inside cover)

This is what all will do who are willing to open out their true position to the light of day, and are not disposed to do things in “a corner”. What is true of men is also true of ecclesias. What is good and right for an individual is so for a body composed of individuals. How absurd it would sound to hear a person say, “I have no creed,” which really means that he has no faith, nor hope – no well-defined understanding and belief of the plan of salvation. Such a person is not even a negation; he is a mere neutrality – as near nothing as he can well be. It is not the same with an ecclesia, when its members are, with a seeming boastfulness, crying out, “We have no creed; you are not going to get us to adopt a statement of Faith; we have seen enough of that in the religious world?” The fact that men ignorant of the first principles of the Truth have blundered in stating their belief will never deter a wise man from trying to state his faith in a way that others may understand it. Where others have failed, a wise and earnest man will try to succeed.

The ecclesia is not a secret society. Being “the pillar and ground of the truth,” it should clearly draw the line between truth and error in all the various subjects which demand a taking sides for the one or the other. A man or an ecclesia that holds heresy will not be thanked by one sound in and trying to be faithful to the truth for opening its doors of “liberality” to him. The liberality of the truth is the right to believe and to do right; and the right and wrong in all cases should be well defined, so that if there is union, it should represent *unity*; if there is the formality which represents fellowship, it should not be a farce, yes worse, a mockery; but a genuine expression of that true oneness which it is intended to exhibit.



Every faithful soldier of the truth will be willing to state his faith in unambiguous terms, and will have the courage to say, “That is what I sincerely believe to be the truth, and that is the basis upon which I can conscientiously fellowship others; and for me to pretend to fellowship where there is not a hearty belief in the truth thus defined, would be hypocrisy.” This is certainly what the teachings of the New Testament demand, in its many imperative warnings to have no fellowship with “the unfruitful works of darkness.”

Not long since, we were rebuked by a brother for coinciding with those who maintain “a doctrine of separatism”. What is the truth, but a system of “separatism?” Its first and last work is to separate. It begins by separating the “good and honest hearts” from a wicked and adulterous generation. It ends by separating the just from the unjust at the judgment seat of Christ.

Men bent upon maintaining the purity of the truth will not be frightened nor taunted off from their foundation by ever so much babble about “casting out” and “separatism”. They will keep their faces Zion-ward; press on in the strait and narrow way, let the enemies of the truth spit, jeer and throw stones as they may.

*Thomas Williams, Editorial,
The Christadelphian Advocate, October, 1891*

THE SANCTUARY – KEEPER

*A Magazine for the Exposition and Defense of
The Holy Scriptures*

“Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar”

Num. 18:5

“Ye are...an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.”

1 Peter 2:5

“Thou hast kept My Word and hast not denied My Name”- Rev. 3:8

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MEN’S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR

As we begin a new quarterly year of the Sanctuary-Keeper it would be remiss of us not to briefly comment on what no doubt is being forced on all of our minds on a daily basis – and that is the bleak economic circumstances and financial crisis that continues to deteriorate. What we briefly commented upon in the last quarter as a U.S. problem has quickly evolved into a global crisis of almost unprecedented magnitude.

What started as a collapse in the mortgage and financial sectors has given way to a sense of fear and uncertainty in all aspects of the economic engine. For years there was a general stream of unreasonable and exuberant feelings that good times would go on forever. But, as was recently stated by an economic commentator - the psychological mood has shifted to an unreasonable sense of fear and hopelessness for the future. Irrational exuberance and a society intoxicated with living beyond its means has given way in many places to panic - an almost stampede like mentality towards despair. Spending has slowed to a crawl and economies are flirting with collapse around the world.

As Believers, we should have had no part in the “irrational exuberance”, and as Believers we should have no part in the “mentality towards despair”. The world is a lesson in extremes – either greedy overindulgence or hopelessness, and often both at

the same time. The Scriptures are full of direction in regard to our relationship to finance and material goods, and our pursuit and use of it no matter the circumstances – “*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*”; “*take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on*”; “*the love of money is the root of all evil*”; “*having food and raiment let us be content*”; etc.

But even if we have heeded the Scriptural directions given to us, we have all benefited from and enjoyed a time of prosperity almost unparalleled in history. Jobs have been readily available; we were more able to choose the jobs and careers we wanted rather than what we were forced to take out of necessity; salaries are such that we have lived very comfortable lives; goods and services of endless assortments have been readily available to us; food has been over-abundant; retirement and pensions have been earned that made retirement a pleasure; the comfort of a stable society – that except for the return of Christ, seemed like it all would go on indefinitely.

Now, as we await the return of Christ, we really don’t know what to expect from one day to another. But, what we do know is to what our mindset and expectation should be. Our comfort and salvation can clearly NEVER be found in the “princes” of this world. In Psalms 112: 7 we are told that the righteous “*shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.*” Psalm 46:1, 2 – “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea...*” And Matthew 6:31-34 – “*Therefore take no thought, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or, ‘What shall we drink?’ or, ‘Wherewithal shall we be clothed?’ (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*”

There have always been cycles of prosperity as well as uncertainty and deprivation. Believers throughout the Ages have been tested greatly as the world circumstances of famine, pestilence, war and disease affected the places of their sojourning. Since the revival of the Truth in the 19th Century, brethren have had to live through Civil War, Depression, and World Wars. No matter where the current economic issues lead, based upon the days we live in at the last of these Gentile times, we watch with great interest at the geo-political ramifications as nations turn inward making moves not usually seen in times of prosperity; and we see centers of power shift. As one columnist observed - alliances change and nations tend to become more nationalistic and aggressive during economic upheaval. We think of the political shakings that came out of the Great Depression as an example of this.

While men’s hearts may fail them for fear, this provides opportunity for us to be reminded of the fragile and transient nature of the systems of this world, and where our strength and trust should rest. And above all things – perceiving where we are on the prophetic timeline – that truly our “*redemption draweth nigh!*” S.K.

PERILOUS TIMES

The Influences of Humanism

Since the beginning of creation, mankind has been impacted by the human philosophy that has been identified as “Humanism”. All individuals, except for Christ, have been deeply influenced by and succumbed to this disease throughout their lives. The Bible presents us with many pictures where even the faithful of old have succumbed to this philosophy. What exactly is this disease that the sons and daughters of God are commanded to constantly overcome?

The primary characteristic of humanism is the belief that individuals have the right to make decisions for their selves without the influence of a higher authority. The humanists believe that the rights of the individual should be the highest priority in the various systems of the world. We see this basic belief within the framework of all the democracies of the world. Human rights, not obedience to the will of the LORD, is the battle cry of this deadly system of false beliefs. A permissive society is one that the humanist would seek and thrive in.

In the following list, we have presented a summary of the teachings of humanism as listed in the Christadelphian book – “Be Ye Doers of the Word”.

- Man is basically good
- There is no future hope or accountability, therefore live the good life now (Eat, drink and be merry!!)
- Religion is irrelevant, illusory and harmful
- All moral opinions are of equal value
- There is no absolute moral authority because morality is situational
- Human experience, intelligence and reason are the arbiters of right and wrong
- The individual is the center of all importance
- Man should not be restricted in any way
- Submission to the will of God is unacceptable
- Thoughts and actions are not to be determined by any organization or authority.

As we read through this list, many Scriptures should come into our mind that would contradict these erroneous teachings. These humanist teachings are in direct contrast to the teachings of God’s Holy Word. It is our desire for the remainder of this article to look at the practical day-to-day aspects of these humanist teachings and see how they have impacted those who have been called out of the darkness of the world around us.

The *Wikipedia* definition of “Humanism” reads: “**Humanism** is a broad category of ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all people, based on the ability to determine right and wrong by appealing to universal human qualities, particularly rationality, without resorting to the supernatural or alleged divine authority from religious texts. It is a component of a variety of more specific philosophical systems. Humanism can be considered as a process by which truth and morality is sought through human investigation and as such views on morals can change when new knowledge and information is discovered. In focusing on the capacity for self-determination, humanism rejects transcendental justifications, such as a dependence on belief without reason, the supernatural, or texts of allegedly divine origin. Humanists endorse universal morality based on the commonality of the human condition, suggesting that solutions to human social and cultural problems cannot be parochial.” (end of quote)

Other definitions that can be found on the American Humanist Association web page are noted below.

“**Humanism** is a progressive life stance that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity. - *American Humanist Association*

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. Affirming the dignity of each human being, it supports the maximization of individual liberty and opportunity consonant with social and planetary responsibility. It advocates the extension of participatory democracy and the expansion of the open society, standing for human rights and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as a part of nature and holds that values – be they religious, ethical, social, or political – have their source in human experience and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny. - *The Humanist Magazine*

Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality. - *The International Humanist and Ethical Union*

Humanism is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity, recognizing that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone. - *The Bristol Humanist Group*”

The Bible gives us a much simpler definition of this humanistic philosophy.

- **Genesis 6:5** – And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
- **Genesis 6:12** – And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.
- **Judges 21:25** – In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes.
- **Proverbs 14:12** – There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
- **Isaiah 5:20-23** - Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!
- **Isaiah 22:13** – Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die.
- **Philippians 2:21** – All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Many of us would agree that the world that we live in has been greatly influenced by the three frog-like spirits of liberty, equality and fraternity that arose out of the French Revolution, in the 18th century. However, that event was not the birth of the humanistic attitudes that are so prevalent in today's society. These reasoning's of man have been manifested since the beginning of time.

Can we find these humanistic philosophies manifested in the individuals in the Bible that are presented to us on the pages of God's Word? Absolutely! Every individual that we encounter as we travel through the history of God's Plan and purpose has been impacted with this deadly issue. Even Christ was impacted by the temptations of the flesh. However, we learn that He was without spot or blemish, able to overcome all of the temptations of humanity through His love for His Father, His love for His disciples and for the joy that was set before Him.

The first manifestation of this philosophy can be found in the narrative regarding Adam and Eve. Why did Eve partake of the forbidden fruit? She wanted to experience the pleasure of that which was forbidden. She wanted equality with the angels. This was done in opposition to the commandments from the higher authority of Yahweh and the Elohim. She became a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. In her mind, she must have thought that she had the individual right to make her own choices. As we know, Adam followed her in her sin. Every other character in the Bible has been impacted by this same philosophy.

Most of the sins of mankind can be classified into one of these three types.

1. Ignoring or wanting to change the divine hierarchy that God has given to His creation – God, Christ, the angels, father, mother and children. Sinners

- of this type have desired to seek equality with those on a higher level of hierarchy. These individuals want to bring God down to the level of man or ignore Him altogether.
2. Creating their own system of morality based on their own individual situations. This sin of situational immorality has also been applied to their children, and children's children. How many times do we see brethren strong in the faith have an about face regarding a particular issue when one of their own is now impacted by this particular matter?
 3. The humanistic desire to have everything right now. The influences of the pleasures of the flesh are so strong, so mighty and so constant on each of us. Power, money, living the good life, placing the ways of man before the ways of Yahweh. We have to have the latest and the greatest. Do we ever make this statement? - *"I JUST HAVE TO HAVE (fill in the blank) BECAUSE I DESERVE IT."* Brethren, what do we actually deserve? We are not promised tomorrow. Our eternal rewards are not based on what we have or don't have in this materialistic world. If we succumb to these humanistic tendencies, all we deserve from the One who has power over everything is eternal death.

In the third chapter of the second book of Timothy, the apostle Paul provides this message of warning to his beloved son in the Truth. *"This, know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves. Covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof, from such turn away."* This message was given to warn Timothy of the perilous times that would befall the nation of Israel prior to the Roman invasion of the first century. However, we believe that this divinely inspired list of evil characteristics perfectly describe these evil humanistic days that exist before the return of our Lord and Master. We should be careful to not point our fingers at others in this world and take the stance that we would never succumb to these sinful manifestations, for we are all weak at times and should always strive to overcome these works of the flesh.

How has this philosophy of humanism impacted the collective Ecclesia? Throughout the history of the association of called out ones, we can see the negative influences of these evil conditions. Brethren have wanted to change the prescribed way to worship Yahweh. Changes to basic first principles of salvation have been introduced into the Body, apparently, just for the sake of change. Our Statement of Faith, which represents a simple agreement on scriptural first principles, has been abandoned and tossed to the side for all to trample on that disagree that we need to have such a summary document for our beliefs about God's Plan and Purpose with His creation. Elder brethren who have valiantly worked hard in the Lord's vineyard are being treated with little or no respect. The current elders of our Ecclesias are slack

in their responsibilities of shepherding their flock and overseeing the affairs and activities of the Ecclesia, if they are not addressing the manifestation of these humanistic characteristics in their Ecclesia. In order to be all things to all individuals, toleration of false ideas is increasing in the Brotherhood. Compromise is sought just to achieve unity and peace. We should remember that there can be no peace and unity as long as the Truth is being assailed with false doctrines.

The second commandment to love our brothers and sisters is increasingly placed above the first commandment to love our God with all of our heart, soul and mind. Those who challenge others who are bringing in false doctrines are declared to be “harsh and unloving”. Brethren, these two greatest commandments are not mutually exclusive. The Word of God teaches us how to be steadfast and stand up for the Truth and still manifest the agape love that we should have for our brothers and sisters who may be manifesting sin and error in the Truth. Brethren, do we see any of these humanistic tendencies in our home Ecclesia? If so, then what should be done to remedy the situation?

How has this philosophy of humanism impacted the individual within the Ecclesia? Do we make a habit of being absent from the organized spiritual activities of the Ecclesia? Do we attend all of the activities of the Ecclesia as frequently as we do the Sunday morning activities? Do we prepare for the various classes of the Ecclesia so that we can better learn about the topic of discussion?

Brothers, do we let our responsibilities in the world take precedence over our Ecclesial and family responsibilities? Brothers, do we take the necessary time to prepare for all of our teaching and speaking responsibilities? Are we always trying to come up with something new or a new way of proclaiming an established godly principle? Brothers, especially the elders, do you fulfill your role as shepherds of the Ecclesia – keeping the Ecclesia affairs organized and providing guidance to the topics that are being taught to our young in the Truth?

Sisters, do you desire more of an active role in the teaching responsibilities of the brethren? Do you secretly wish to see your name on the formal speaker list of the Ecclesia? Sisters, do you publicly challenge the brothers of your Ecclesia when you disagree with what has been spoken? Are you content to accept your role and responsibilities in the divine hierarchy as presented above?

Young people, (baptized or not), do you ignore the elders of your Ecclesia? Do you tire of the standards of the meeting that you attend? Do you have separate spiritual meetings where just the young people are invited? Do you always invite the elders of your Ecclesia to help with the teaching responsibilities of these spiritual meetings? Do you always inform the elders of your Ecclesia of your discussion topics for these spiritual meetings? Do you desire a greater place in the hierarchy of the Ecclesias? Do you wish to have a greater voice in the affairs of the ecclesia? Are you rebellious towards the traditions and guidelines of your home Ecclesia which has been supported by your Ecclesia for a long time? Do you intentionally wear a different

style of clothing at our worship activities than those who have been in the Truth for a lot longer period of time? Do you take the time to study from the pioneers of the Truth or do you ignore these wonderful tools?

Do we question the moral standards established by our home Ecclesia or of those Ecclesias that we may visit? Do we push for open fellowship with those who may not be of like mind? Do we set aside the study of God’s Word in order to enjoy the pleasures of the world? Do we question proven Biblical foundations? Do we manifest casualness towards our responsibilities to worship Yahweh as He has decreed? Are we habitually late for our worship activities? Is our attire and attitude during our worship services appropriate for the occasion? Are we always complaining about something in the Ecclesia environment? If so, what is the root cause of our complaints? Is it because things are not going our way? Do we give in to peer pressure just to be part of the accepted group, even if the group is not following the ways of Yahweh?

There are many more questions that we should ask ourselves as we struggle with the influences of humanism. Our responses to all of these questions should be compared to the summarized list of humanistic tendencies that are presented above. Are we humanists and do not realize it? How can we overcome these problems within ourselves and within the Ecclesia environment? Brethren, we know the day of the LORD is nigh. Let us not let the ways of the world overcome us. We must be strong and courageous and fight the good fight of faith. The following scriptures should help us in this endeavor.

Jeremiah 9:3 – “And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.” (Are we valiant for the Truth or have we manifested an attitude of apathy and tolerance and compromise?)

Luke 21:34-36 – “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (self indulgence), and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

1st Corinthians 3:18-19 – “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.” (Have we brought the “world’s wisdom” into our meeting as regard to dress, attitude or lack of organization?)

1st Corinthians 10:31 – “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

1st Corinthians 14:40 – “Let all things be decently and in order.”

1st Corinthians 16:13 – “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

2nd Timothy 3:14-17 – “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

1st Thessalonians 5:22 – “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

1st John 2:15-16 – “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Brethren, we need to ask ourselves some very serious questions during our daily examination. Are we seeking to change the brotherhood just to meet our own vision of how things should be? Are we constantly seeking for the “next new doctrine or newer way of communicating our older, but tried doctrines”? Are we willing to accept our place in the hierarchy of the family of God? Are we willing to serve God and not mammon? Are we ignoring or showing disrespect to our elder brethren in the Truth who has served Yahweh and the Ecclesia as best they could? Our choices regarding these matters should be clear. We can trust in man or we can trust in Yahweh. We ask our readers to read the middle verse of the Bible. Psalms 118:8 - “*It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man*”. The entire testimony of the LORD hangs from this foundation belief. Collectively and individually, the Ecclesia of God is being influenced with these humanistic teachings. Are we strong enough to overcome these matters? 2nd Corinthians 6:14-16 teaches us that there can be no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness. We must admit that the doctrines of the humanists that we have discussed would fall under the realm of unrighteousness. God’s Word has absolute and well defined black and white standards that we should strive for. There can be neither compromise nor toleration of any false doctrine or moral standard. We cannot allow ourselves or our Ecclesias to follow the ways of the humanist. We must continue to overcome these ways of the flesh until His Kingdom comes.

B. Henderson

PSALM 33:18-22

“Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, Upon them that hope in His mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, Because we have trusted in His holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, According as we hope in Thee.”

“THE DEPTHS OF SATAN, AS THEY SPEAK”

During the very early days of the Ecclesia – not long after the ascension of Christ to sit on the right hand of the Father, and shortly after the Day of Pentecost; we are given a very succinct but rich description of their spiritual condition. We are told in Acts 2:42 that “*they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship (partnership/commonality), and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*” We know that the “apostles’ doctrine” spoken of would have been those glorious Truths known as the Gospel or “good news” – or more specifically that good news of “*the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ*”. Further on in verse 46 it is recorded that “*they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart* – or more accurately, with “*joyfulness and simplicity*”.

This was the simple and contented state of the early stage of Christ’s ecclesia. They were well pleased with the teachings of the apostles **and diligent to maintain them**, and they shared such beliefs in common fellowship with one another. They were of one mindset and full of joy due to those glorious promises that they were blessed to understand and to be heirs of, due to their mutual position they had in Christ. Though we know that such a condition was to be very short lived, nonetheless it is a pleasing time to consider, along with other similar time periods in the Scriptural record where Truth and unity existed. David beautifully articulates such a condition of unity in the 133rd Psalm – “*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity*”. We look forward to the full application of these words when the Christ multitude will truly dwell together in unity or as one – all filled with the absolutely unifying element of the Spirit of Deity.

But going back to the 1st century ecclesia, we need to understand that unity, oneness or singleness of mind depends on one very simple, but critical factor – **agreement**. In this case, agreement on scriptural principles – Agreement on what the apostles’ doctrine (or teaching) is, and how it should be maintained and practiced. Christ prayed for his followers, “*that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us*” (John 17:21). The apostle Paul, by the authority of Jesus Christ, commanded in **1st Cor. 1:10** – “*that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*” (Similar commands appear in Romans 15 and Philippians chapters 1 and 2.) According to Strong’s, the word “mind” means *understanding*, and according to Thayer the word “judgment” indicates “*what ought to be done*”. **So there is supposed to be a sameness of belief as well as a sameness in understanding as to the execution of such belief in its various**

aspects. In the 119th Psalm, verse 63 it is stated, “*I am a companion* (Bullinger – “fellow of the same party”) *of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts*”. Anything otherwise would therefore indicate a lack of companionship or sameness. Social connection, friendship, the sharing of a common name or identity, family relations or any other outward appearance are not in and of themselves real indicators of commonality. In regard to spiritual matters – **there must be agreement.**

But this state of early agreement was challenged very quickly, which is clear from the scriptural record left for our learning. These were the struggles of the apostle Paul, along with the other apostles and appointed elders to maintain doctrinal purity and unity. But even with the help of the Holy Spirit to establish the early ecclesia, the flesh would work its way in, and by the introduction of humanistic logic (gnosticism or “science falsely so called”, 1st Tim. 6:20), and superstition would disrupt the unified and simple condition of the ecclesia. In the 2nd epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul warned of the coming Apostasy and the strong delusion that it would incur, admitting that this “mystery of iniquity” was already at work in his day (**2nd Timothy 4:3**).

Before the Divine record closes, in the Apocalypse delivered through John (and even in earlier epistles) we are given very clear indicators as to the influences that were pulling away brethren from the pure teaching of the Apostles. Specifically, in the letters to the Seven Ecclesias we are informed of the Nicolaitane, Balaamite and Jezbellion influences as that which are labeled as the primary perpetrators in this development. Bro. Thomas, in the 1st Volume of Eureka, outlines the specifics regarding the particular influences that these corrupting elements promoted. Simply stated, they were the philosophical and theological knowledge (“science” – Gr. *gnosis*, therefore termed “Gnostics”) of men borrowed from the Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek superstitions of antiquity, that were at first subtly and then later with full force mixed in with the pure teachings of the Apostles – later making the name of Christianity unrecognizable from its original form, and therefore nullifying the hope of salvation for any influenced thereby. Both Balaam and Jezebel (through their craftiness) were instrumental in corrupting the Children of Israel from the true and pure worship (and obedience) of the One True God. Like the falling away of the Children of Israel, those who followed after similar seducing influences in the 1st Century were spoken of in no uncertain terms (Rev. 2:20) as committing fornication and adultery. When the Truth is compromised, spiritual fornication/adultery is how the Deity identifies such infidelity to His Word. Unfaithfulness to the purity of God’s Truth and the command to uphold it is a breach in the spiritual vow of faithfulness and obedience to Yahweh’s commands that the believer takes on at baptism.

But there were those who remained faithful! In chapter 2:24, in regard to those of Thyatira who were holding fast to the apostles doctrine in direct opposition to symbolic Jezebel, the spirit word states, “*as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have, hold fast till I come*”. It is this phrase, “*the depths of Satan, as they speak*” that is the focus of our consideration. The

implications of such a statement, though simple, are profound and provide a descriptive identifier and warning to the believers of all ages, **especially our own.**

IDENTIFYING “THE DEPTHS”

Regarding this phrase bro. Thomas states, “*The Satan, is not a solitary individual, but representative of a plurality of speakers, whose speech is enunciative of deep things, called ‘depths’.* *These depths were adverse to the “Name,” “Faith”, and morality, or “works,” styled by the Spirit “his”, and therefore they were Satanic Depths; and those who taught them “the Satan;” and those who received them both teacher and disciples, “the Synagogue of the Satan;”*” (end of quote) These influences were not something outside the Household but very much inside, claiming to be “Jews” (or in other words of the Household – spiritual Jews) when in fact they were not.

Before we continue further, there has to be a distinction made between the deep things of the Word as opposed to the “depths” spoken of here in Revelation 2. The Scriptures are truly a treasure of infinite wealth and depth that we spend a lifetime uncovering and absorbing. But when so called “deep things” or new “insights” (though as Solomon observed, *there is really nothing new under the sun*), or new “perspectives” are offered that do not harmonize with, or do not clearly scripturally relate to, or support plain and basic Truths (the Truth in its simplicity), then we are dealing with an Adversarial spirit of error, or Satan, in relationship to the Truth itself.

Bro. Roberts, in his Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse, provided further commentary: “*The tendency of this teaching was to draw the brethren into connection and fellowship with the popular Paganism by which they were surrounded, in opposition to the doctrine of Christ that his brethren are “not of this world”; and that friendship with the world is an impossibility if the friendship of God is to be retained. Such a communion of light with darkness is very commonly spoken of as fornication...They spoke of their views as “the depths”, by which, of course, they would mean that their ideas were advanced and profound as compared with the elementary propositions of the gospel with which the simpler members of the congregation were content... This system of thought scorns proximate and concrete forms of truth, and dives, or makes profession of diving, into the “essence” and “inner self” of things...It can see something to tolerate and even admire in idolatry and in every form of superstition...Their notions are the mere vagaries of speculation; their pretentious language is the gibber of ignorance in its worst form: ignorance that thinks itself informed: shallowness that thinks itself profound...Jesus prefers those who are not thus sophisticated, but whose wisdom consists in the recognition of facts natural and revealed and adaptation to them.” (pp. 19,20).*

“*The depths of Satan, as they speak*” is as much of a challenge to the preservation of the Truth in our day as it was to the 1st Century believers, if not more so – due to the incredible expanse of learning and the rapid exchange of ideas in this modern era – and we must be prepared for the challenge. These “depths of Satan” are not always obvious at first, but the sooner such influences are recognized and dealt

with the better. Such influences do not enter the scene all at once but gradually manifest themselves. They begin as whispers or what may seem as harmless suggestions, until one small step at a time they promote themselves as the standard. Christ had first warned the believers regarding this kind of influence identifying it as false prophets disguised in “sheep’s clothing”, and explained that they were in fact “ravening wolves”. The apostle Paul also warned of “ravenous wolves”, and in **2nd Corinthians 11:13,14** stated that – “*such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*”. (Also 2nd Peter 2.) Though difficult to detect, by the existence of such warnings it should be understood that the guarding against and recognition of such influences is expected of the Believers.

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT OR WORLDLY EDUCATION?

Christ admonished his disciples to be “wise as serpents, but harmless as doves”, and such guidance suits us as well. But this kind of wisdom is not one that is increased with a college education, or the masteries we may achieve in the modern workforce, or by latching on to bits and pieces of the mainstream religious philosophies that have become so popular in our day. And in fact, we should have no doubt that the opportunities that the present generation has had at higher learning, career and self help techniques have actually created more complications in achieving such a wisdom - to the detriment of maintaining the simplicity of the Apostles’ doctrine; while also providing more opportunity and skill in the promotion of ideas that fall in line with “*the depths of Satan, as they speak*”. Christ’s words indicate the need for spiritual discernment, a discernment that is unrelated to the wisdom and “depths” of man’s thinking. And though we are to be as harmless as doves, in no way are we to be blind to, tolerate or ignore the influential “depths” that undermine the Truth.

In the World’s Redemption (p.138) bro. Williams makes the observation that, “*THE TRUTH is such a perfect system that it will not admit of the introduction of one error without making confusion*”. (end quote). The commands, lessons, allegories, historical examples and principles laid out for us in the Word of God clearly show us why challenges to the Truth (and unity based upon that Truth) should be dealt with, and how they are to be dealt with – extensively and explicitly. The overlooking or tolerance of evil influences in the hope that it will take care of itself is not something that the Scriptures ever advise, the negative ramifications are too serious.

There has always been a struggle between the Truth in its original apostolic form as opposed to the Satanic (or adversarial) influences under the general umbrella of Humanism that wish to modify or improve it. We haven’t the space to go into detail here, but we know that **ecumenical tendencies** of a world-wide brotherhood regardless of doctrinal issues or differences has been on the move for years, causing confusion and strife within the brotherhood, which ties in to more broad and inclusive (rather than exclusive) ideas regarding doctrine and fellowship – even in **opposing the need for a Statement of Faith**. Clarity regarding the **Atonement**, the **nature of man**

and Christ, and the matter of **Adamic Condemnation** are always under attack. The **professional and organizational methods of business and the churches** have found promotion. Our clear and basic understandings of subjects such as **faith and works**, **eternal life**, **the Kingdom of God**, and **Christ’s priesthood** have been challenged. **Political and military participation** has been justified by some who carry the Christadelphian name. The “old paths” in general (including the helpful works of our pioneer brethren) are viewed with increasing suspicion by a generation that views them as too restrictive and not relevant to the times we live in. Simple and concrete Truths that were once taken for granted are being mystified or altered before our eyes. These beliefs and attitudes did not develop overnight but represent a gradual process that is now bearing fruit at an alarming rate. These things are difficult enough to deal with, but in these last days there are growing philosophies and views, no doubt shaped by the times that we live in, that create an environment or scenario where such “depths” have easier access to make shipwreck the simplicity of the Gospel message, challenging our hold on the Apostles’ doctrine and the natural unity that results from agreement on that doctrine - Views or influences that disable our ability to see and effectively deal with such influences when they present themselves.

THE MODE OF OPERATION OF THOSE WHO PROMOTE OR PROTECT “THE DEPTHS”

We wish to briefly mention a few perceptions and strategies that we believe have lent help to the development and protection of the “depths of Satan, as they speak”, which puts the preservation of the Truth in peril.

“PHARISEES”, “JUDAIZERS” & “LEGALISTS”

There are continuing efforts to label those who hold firm to traditional views regarding the Truth as “Pharisaical”, “Judaizers”, or “legalists”. It is thought that since the Pharisees were steeped in Tradition and in their man made laws and as a result unreceptive to Christ’s teaching, that therefore the same label can be applied to those who do not want to change or compromise their beliefs and practices to the newer or more liberal ideas and practices that some wish to promote. These labels are convenient and simple ways of marginalizing and neutralizing those who desire to stand fast in “the faith once delivered unto the saints.” Interestingly enough, these arguments have found use for years (long before finding use among Christadelphians) by mainstream Christian religions to stifle opposition to more contemporary trends in belief and worship.

Though we must avoid the examples of the Pharisees for their ceremonial obsessions, their unscriptural restrictions, their insincerity, their hypocrisy in expecting others to follow such meaningless burdens while they themselves found loopholes out of them; and especially their rejection of Christ - such labels do not apply to an uncompromising defense of the Truth and opposition to anything that is not in harmony with it. Brethren, the apostolic doctrines (whether in belief or practice) do not change. They do not change in regard to circumstances, and they do not change in

regard to the times. **Proverbs 28:10** – “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” **Proverbs 23:23**, “Buy the truth, **and sell it not**; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”. **1st Cor. 16:13**, “Watch ye, stand fast (be stationary) in the faith, quit you like men, be strong (Diaglott “be manly”). **1st Thess. 5:21**, “Prove all things (to test, discern, examine), hold fast that which is good.” **2nd Thess. 2:15** – “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions (precepts) which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” And in **chapter 3:6**, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us”. **Coll. 2:8**, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Why would we forsake following after the precepts of God and His son, just so that we can follow after the thinking of men? **Standing fast by the Truth and opposing anything that would do it harm is not a Pharisaical activity.**

CHRIST’S OWN NON-CONFORMITY

Along these same lines it has been argued that since Christ did not conform to the traditions of the Pharisees (that in sense he might be viewed as a revolutionary) and that he brought about a new way of thinking; there has been attempts by those who are modifying the Truth to compare themselves to Jesus’ situation, and justify **their** new ideas or approaches and their non-conformity to the beliefs and practices long held by Believers. And as Jesus was opposed by the Pharisees, they point to the opposition that they receive from those they now label as “Pharisees” as a type of persecution and as “evidence” of the righteousness of their cause.

The fact of the matter is that Christ was not a revolutionary or rebel. **He was a conformist** in that he conformed to the Mosaic institutions that he was born under perfectly – coming to fulfill the law rather than to oppose or destroy it (Matt. 5:17). He conformed completely to the will of the Father. What he taught and tried to help the children of Israel see was not new, but was in complete harmony with the Law and the Prophets, teaching the things concerning the Kingdom God. The facts of his own very purpose were not new, but a part of the Divine plan since the very beginning. The Pharisees, as corrupt shepherds, had led the children of Israel astray and away from the true traditions (precepts) of God’s Word both in belief and practice, and of the true expectations and understanding of their coming Messiah. Christ’s opposition to them was to bring the Israelites back to conformity with Yahweh. If we understand Christadelphian belief for 150 years to be in conformity with the teachings of Yahweh, then we will understand the fallacy of setting up Christ as a cover or justification for the falsehood they wish to promote.

They use the psychological term “cognitive dissonance”, which means *the uncomfortable feeling that is experienced when faced with something new*, to explain why we might oppose their so called new insights or beliefs – that we are just having an emotional reaction. **Let it be understood** that we are to oppose such things not merely out of a feeling of discomfort, but because their teachings are not in harmony,

and are not in conformity to the pure and simple teachings of God’s word. Christ and his apostles taught the Truth, those who wish to promote humanistic thinking and borrow from the theology of the churches do not. This cannot be lost sight of, no matter the emotional arguments and victimization that may be portrayed in the attempts to weaken our conviction.

DEEPER SPIRITUAL INSIGHT OR NONSENSE?

It has also been explained that discomfort and opposition over the introduction of new ideas and expressions into the Christadelphian community shows a lack of ability or spiritual maturity to understand what they are trying to promote. As Christ spoke in hard to understand language to the confusion of his listeners, it is argued that we must understand there is no harm in the mystical and circular arguments they wish to promote. Though we may be viewed as “too close-minded” or too steeped in our traditions to understand what they are saying, we are asked to trust them.

Christ was justified in his use of parables as he explained to the apostles in Matthew 13, but he let them know “*the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall **shew you plainly** of the Father.*” (John 16:25). The apostles therefore taught the Gospel message that was commended to their charge plainly. As Paul states in **2nd Cor. 3:12** – “*Seeing then that we have such hope, **we use great plainness** (openly, frankly, without ambiguity or circumlocution) of speech*”. And as he goes on to with a striking comparison, “*and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face*”. If we are in fact speaking the Truth, there is no need to hide it behind circular reasoning or easily misunderstood or ambiguous expressions. For Scriptures that may be hard to understand, there are always those passages that are plainly stated and explained that help us to understand comments and expressions in the scriptures that may be more difficult to grasp.

We must remember that the “depths of Satan” do not want to be concretely clear, and that they see that they have achieved a so called deeper spiritual insight and a higher ability that we may or may not have. It then requires **their** spiritual understanding and guidance to guide us through the so called enlightenment that they profess. It should be of great comfort to know that “*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen*” (**1 Cor. 1:27,28**) And as Paul continues in the next chapter to explain the lack of worldly polish in his own presentation of the Truth, “*that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*”.

“JUDGE NOT”

Another difficulty we run into in protecting the Apostles’ doctrine from the “depths of Satan” is rooted in the misuse of the words found in Matthew 7:1, where Christ commands us – “*Judge not, that ye be not judged*”. This is definitely a command to live by, but this is increasingly misapplied in such a way to keep brethren from obeying other clear Scriptural commands to speak out against error and

misdeeds, and to separate from the error when necessary. Along with this verse is added the “pulling out of the beam from our own eye before attempting to cast the mote out of our brother’s eye”. It must be understood of the kind of judgment that Christ was speaking of. We know that in many cases Christ drew attention and condemned error in no uncertain terms, a practice continued on by his Apostles and that which is commanded of us as well. What we cannot do is place ourselves in a position to pronounce final judgment or punishment on any, for we have not the authority (this is the job of Christ when he returns); nor are we allowed to nitpick perceived flaws or annoyances we think we see in others, for we are all certainly flawed in our own way – as is stated in James, “speak not evil one of another”.

But error has to be dealt with, if not, then the risk is a most certain final judgment upon those who promote error, and those they may influence, if the need for repentance is not pointed out and the right way directed. **1st Timothy 5:20** – “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” **Titus 1:10-13**, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;”. Christ tells us in John 7:24 to, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” In **1st John 4:1**, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Again, **spiritual discernment and recognition (judgment) of facts is essential.** And as was mentioned early in our consideration, we must be united in the requirement and ability to judge in spiritual matters. And if error is not opposed, judgment will be brought upon our own selves. To the spiritual watchmen over Israel it was stated in **Ezek. 3:18**, “When I say unto the wicked, ‘Thou shalt surely die;’ and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquities; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

Unrepentant error is compared to “leaven” in 1st Cor. 5 which is to be cast out for:

1. the benefit of the one in error, to hopefully help them understand the seriousness of the problem, and
2. so that the evil influence is understood for what it is, and does not spread and infect those who remain. Such does not indicate “judgment” according to the command given in Matthew 7:1 or of final punishment – but of Scriptural duty for the benefit of all.

In the pamphlet “Judge Not” (published by The Christadelphian Advocate) the author observes regarding the misapplication of Christ’s words to “judge not” – “It would mean that we would be totally helpless to preserve the purity of the Truth because a brother could depart as far as he wished from any or all of the Truth, and we would be prohibited from reproving him or disfellowshipping him. Interpreting the Scriptures to teach that we may not judge whether the brother is sound or unsound, we would not even be in a position to fortify our own minds against his

pernicious teachings, so the Christadelphian body would soon sink to the level of the churches of the world. Our Statement of Faith would become a meaningless claim to sound doctrine and conduct, since we could not enforce it. Our claim to be the same as the pioneer brethren would have to be dropped, since they were so careful to contend earnestly for sound doctrine and conduct.”

AVOIDANCE OF “CONTROVERSY”

Another difficulty lies with the matter of what is called “controversy”. Controversy, or strife, is not a pleasant matter to deal with and we often hear calls to avoid controversy or controversial topics for the sake of peace. One of the listed fruits of the flesh in Gal. 5 is “strife”, while adversely one of the listed fruits of the Spirit is “peace”. In Phill. 2:3 we read, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” It is interesting to note that in most instances the subject of strife is mentioned in the scriptures it is directly connected to the issue of pride. Proverbs 13:10 confirms this where it is observed, “only by pride cometh contention”. The apostle Paul warned Timothy about “Doting about questions and strife of words” that lead us away from the doctrine of Christ – in other words a splitting of hairs attitude that is not a benefit to the Truth.

But as we consider the threats **to the Truth**, threats that come from the influences as Scripturally identified as “depths of Satan”, we know that there is a duty incumbent upon us as such matters arise. When ideas are brought into the Household that are at odds with the Truth or even subtly (rather than directly) undermine saving Principles of doctrine or walk, then beliefs once commonly understood and appreciated fall into the stigma of “controversy”. Is the proper procedure to ignore the subject altogether – agree to disagree? For the sake of peace do we diminish what were once viewed as important truths to the realm of “not that important after all”? Do we make a place for error as just another “alternative”? We can try to ignore error, but this creates only a false sense of peace and a false sense of unity. James 3:17 states, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.” The marginal note in my Bible makes the wise comment regarding this phrase that “Peace must not be sought at the expense of the truth.”

The Truth by its very nature is controversial, as it is averse to the thinking of this world and the flesh in general. How and if we deal with these things is the question. The ecclesia at Ephesus (Rev. 2) was praised by Christ for their strong opposition to the errors they were faced with, while other ecclesias were condemned for their tolerance and threatened with the removal of their respective lightstands. **At the same time**, the Ephesians were condemned for losing their first love in the process. **Controversy and the winning of arguments is not to be our objective.** It is not something to be embraced like a good challenge, a game or a battle of wits, or a mark of authority. We are not to instigate strife/controversy, but we are to deal with it as it compromises the Truth and disrupts true peace and unity. Though the exaltation of the flesh and human thinking may motivate “the depths of Satan, as they speak”,

opposite to this we should be humble soldiers – purely motivated by a love of God, His Son, The Faith given to us, and our fellow brethren. In the heat of conflict this can very easily be lost sight of, but this is our test and challenge as it was for the Ephesians. We are told in 1st Cor. 13 – “*Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth*”.

For further consideration on this, please read the article “*Complaints About Controversy*” found in the Life and Works of Thomas Williams, that is a very good consideration of the matter of controversy and our responsibilities in relation to it. Please think seriously about what bro. Williams states.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are other matters we must be on guard against, and we only have space to make brief mention of a few. We must avoid a “*one foot in the world and one foot in the Truth*” mentality that tends to soften our personal zeal for the Truth and the clarity of mind needed to identify and oppose anything that would do it harm. We especially need to avoid looking to the mainstream churches and its so called spiritual leaders for any kind of spiritual guidance or strength. We have heard of books such as the *Purpose Driven Life/Church* and *Your Best Life Now* being used as guides for classes or lectures among believers. These kind of influences do nothing more than promote the “doctrine of prosperity” (or in other words true faith will translate into wealth and abundance in this life); they promote the “seeker sensitive church” where the meeting of the entertainment, casual lifestyles and emotional needs of people is considered to be the primary concern of the church. They challenge the traditional as outdated and “legalistic”. They bring God down to a more human level – God and church can be “cool” too. **We should have no part in such things.** We have nothing to learn from the “Harlot” or her “daughters” except as examples as to where the road of tolerance and compromise, and the acceptance of the “depths of Satan” leads.

We see trends that tend to compartmentalize the young people into independent sub-groups allowing them to provide their own spiritual guidance and social networks and organizations for mutual support, further removed from the parents and elder leadership of the ecclesia. When did this become a good idea and where has this led?

Brethren, we are blessed with a knowledge and hope that will bring eternal life and everlasting joy upon Christ’s return. When you really stop to think, who are we that out of the billions of this earth we are so blessed to have a knowledge of what the Scriptures refer to as “the great salvation”? Really we are nothing; we are faulty flesh and blood creatures, but by God’s grace and mercy we have been given this “pearl of great price” - A pearl that was rediscovered and has been protected by the sacrifice of life, health and reputation of faithful brethren who have come before us. It is an immeasurable blessing, but equally it is a great responsibility. Will we hold fast to it and defend it from the “depths” of fleshly thinking? Or do we love the praise of men more than the praise of God? Rev. 2:25,26 “*But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.*”

A. Thomas

GNOSTICISM DEFINED

Speaking of the challenges and erroneous influences that were beginning to threaten the early ecclesia, and which the Apostle John was addressing in his epistles to the Believers – the writer of the following commentary makes note of the Gnostic movement that was beginning to manifest itself in the 1st century. As reference to Gnosticism was made in the previous article, we provide the following as supplementary information (*From the Expositor Series on the Epistles of John – “The Test of True Love”, H.P. Mansfield*):

The theory of Gnosticism threatened the Ecclesia from within, and constituted a more seductive and dangerous doctrine than persecution from without. John wrote to counter the influence of a so-called “higher form” of “knowledge” that challenged the foundation of faith. The peril came not from men who were out to destroy the Truth, but from those who thought that they were improving it, and whose aim was to make it intellectually respectable.

It is significant that there is a tendency to the same end today (this was written in the late 1960’s – Ed.), which likewise threatens to destroy the foundation of faith, and against which we must be on our guard.

A further aspect also emerges that makes the comparison even closer. By the time John wrote (towards the end of his life), any members of Ecclesias were second or even third generation believers, and this is also so today in regard to the latter-day revival of the Truth. Then, as now, the pioneering spirit was being set aside, and more and more time was being given to mere speculating and philosophizing upon truth.

Jesus had warned of this. He predicted: “The love of many shall wax cold” (Matt 24:12). By John’s time, as today, the first thrill of the early establishment of Ecclesias had faded, and, in many instances, the early flame of zeal had dimmed to a flicker. Tradition has it that John ministered at Ephesus, and Christ warned this very Ecclesia: “I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4).

Therefore, whilst John constantly reminded the brethren of their obligations in the sphere of divine love, he also manifested a stern, unyielding attitude towards those who would undermine the faith with their theories. In describing them, he used appellations such as “liars,” “seducers,” “false prophets,” “deceivers,” “antichrists,” and so forth, writing thus in the abundance of his love, in order to help the sheep who, as a good shepherd, he “knew by name” (3 John 14).

WHAT WAS GNOSTICISM?

The Greek word *Gnosis* signifies “knowledge,” and the Gnostics claimed to be “knowing ones.” However, the form of knowledge they embraced, did not constitute a greater understanding of the Bible. The Encyclopaedia Britannica

states: “Among the majority of the followers of the movement “Gnosis” was understood not as meaning “knowledge” or ‘understanding’, in our sense of the word, but ‘revelation’. These little Gnostic sects and groups all lived in the conviction that they possessed a secret and mysterious knowledge, in no way accessible to those outside, and not based on reflection, on scientific inquiry and proof, but on revelation. It was derived directly from the times of primitive Christianity; from the Savior himself and his disciples and friends, with whom they claimed to be connected by a secret tradition, or else from the later prophets, of whom many sects boasted.”

It goes on further to explain:

Gnosticism has been defined by A. Plummer in the following terms:

“Gnosticism, although it often had much in common with Ebionitism and Judaism, was not, like these, the open enemy of Christianity. It professed to give its approval and patronage to the gospel. The gospel was very good as far as it went; but the Gnostics had ‘a more excellent way.’ They understood the gospel better than the apostles themselves. It was a mistake to suppose that the historical facts and moral precepts of the Scriptures were to be taken literally. It was a still greater mistake to suppose that the Scriptures contained all that was necessary for man’s spiritual well-being. There was a higher knowledge, a more profound gnosis; and this the Gnostic would attain to and impart. Illuminated by this, men would see that everything else was comparatively of unimportance. The philosopher whose mind was enlightened by this esoteric knowledge need not trouble himself much about his conduct. He was steeped in light. Good actions could not seriously detract from it. Indeed, there were many things commonly regarded as bad, which the true Gnostic would not shun, but seek, as a means of enlarging his experience.”

Passover – 2009

It will be noticed that the year’s Passover feast begins the evening of Wednesday, April 8th. It is worth noting that this corresponds this year with the equivalent day of the week that Christ himself was sacrificed as the great anti-type of the Paschal Lamb (at least from our view of the time-table).

Remembering that the new Jewish day begins at sunset:

- Christ would have been laid to rest in the tomb on the beginning of the Jewish 5th Day (our Wednesday evening and the beginning of the Jewish Passover).
- He remained in the grave through the 5th, 6th and 7th evening/days of the week.
- He would have risen sometime towards the beginning part of the 1st Day of the week (our Saturday evening, and not Sunday at sunrise as promoted by Apostate tradition).

These are worthwhile matters to reflect upon, and as we see significant signs all around us, and knowing that our *redemption draweth nigh*, the typical nature of all of the Feast days (Lev. 23) should not be lost sight of.

MODERN DAY LESSONS FROM THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

PART 1

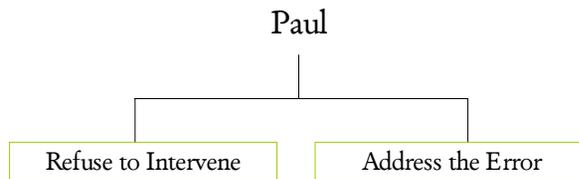
Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Tim 3:16, “*All scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is *profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” It is against this backdrop that we endeavor to study Paul’s two letters addressed to the Corinthians, as the Believer is to search these scriptures with the intent to glean lessons from them that will instruct him in righteousness. Throughout the course of this study, it becomes apparent that those same issues that plagued the Corinthian ecclesia in the first century still plague the ecclesias in the modern day. This should not be surprising, Solomon states in Eccl 1:9 that, “The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.” The flesh is still the flesh, no matter what time period it resides in, so that the same issues will continue to manifest themselves and must be addressed in the manner which is ordained by God. For this reason, it is equally important that the Believer in AD 56 and AD 2008 closely consider, contemplate, and correctly apply the inspired words of Paul that are written throughout the New Testament. In doing so, the modern-day believer is able to learn from the Corinthian difficulties and the exhortations given to them by God through Paul, in the hope that these instructions will strengthen his faith, resolve, understanding, and walk so that when the glorious return of Jesus Christ becomes a reality, the believer may be found faithfully watching and waiting.

By way of introduction, the following description of the city of Corinth is taken from *The Story of the Bible, Vol. 8*: “Paul spent nearly two years in Corinth where a flourishing ecclesia was established. He had more trouble and experienced more disappointments with that ecclesia, than any other; and yet he had a greater affection for it than for most others. Corinth’s two harbors attracted the commerce of both east and west. Jews and Greeks flocked to the Roman Colony, and the commercial activity they brought with them caused wealth to pour into the city. But with opulence and plenty there came sophistication, self-indulgence, intellectual restlessness, and excessiveness. Corinth became the center of Macedonia, the capital of permissiveness, a veritable Sodom, catering for every form of vice, and every variety of pleasure. Its citizens lived in an environment of gross immorality, prostitution, effeminate men, drunkards and sexual misconduct. In short, two vicious vices plagued Corinth: greed of material gain, and lust. The stink of wealth, luxury, and excess became the new testing ground for the efficacy of the Truth’s teaching.” One would find it difficult to find a better description of our modern society, thereby

furthering the premise that the words written to this ecclesia are very pertinent to the believer at the present time.

In regard to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Scofield writes that, "The main thrust of the Epistle is *correction of error* brought about more by the carnality of the believers at Corinth than by heresy. The letter is not a treatise but an expression of his grief, concern, and holy indignation on account of the unspiritual and immoral condition of the Corinthian ecclesia. The subjects treated are various but may be related to the general theme, Christian conduct."

Throughout the consideration of these letters, we find that there are many "forks in the road," that are presented. If one path is taken, then there are appropriate consequences, either good or bad, that coincide with that decision. For instance, when the house of Chloe became so concerned with the spiritual welfare of the ecclesia that it prompted them to contact Paul (1 Cor 1:11) and request his intervention, there was a decision that he had to make or a choice that had to be considered: 1) Would he refuse to intervene in their affairs, determining that to do so would be too difficult and time consuming? Would he decide that involvement would be "meddling" in their private ecclesial matters? Would he determine that becoming involved would risk inciting an unfavorable and uncomfortable response from them? 2) Or would he decide that the need to address this erring congregation superseded any personal difficulties that might accompany this action, and that leading them to repentance from their wrongdoing was much more important to the overall plan and purpose of Yahweh? As with any predicament or question, Paul relied on the wisdom of the scriptures to determine which path he would take, possibly recalling his duties as a Watchman to the Household that Ezekiel writes of in 33:7-9:



"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

As this passage teaches, if the Watchman (which includes every member of the household) fails to warn the congregation of the impending danger, then when they are overcome by the enemy, the Watchman will be held accountable for their death because, although he knew of the danger, he did nothing to warn them. On the other hand, if he loudly proclaims the impending danger so that all of the congregation can clearly understand, then the responsibility is shifted to them, as they have an

opportunity to save themselves from destruction. Of course, the lesson to be learned from this example is that, as Watchmen of the congregation of believers, we are all responsible for the spiritual well-being of the congregation. If we see error circulating in the body of believers and ignore it, then we will be held responsible for allowing the members of the body to fall prey to that error. However, as the example continues, if we clearly and loudly "sound the alarm," regarding the error and the congregation chooses to ignore it, the responsibility rests on them alone. It must be noted, as will be obvious throughout the study of these letters, that it is no easy or enjoyable task to act as a Watchman for the congregation of believers, for the message of impending danger due to error is dire and difficult and many times the effort is unwanted and met with disdain because it calls the perpetrator to the recognition and repentance of his error. This was a concept that was no doubt very familiar to Paul, being guided by this scriptural understanding.

It has been stated that the Watchman is charged with protecting the spiritual condition of the believing congregation so that doctrinal and moral error does not destroy them. This concept closely coincides with the concept of Love that is spoken of in scripture—particularly "Agape" love towards the brethren, which Paul addresses throughout his various letters and particularly in 1 Cor. 13. In *The Story of the Bible*, we read that, "Agape signifies a love unknown to writers outside of the Scriptures (because it does not exist outside of the ways of God-author). It is a self-sacrificing desire to render the greatest good to the object of the love, not because being attracted to that object, but having become intellectually enlightened to manifest that good (from the constant reading of the word of God-author). It is the demonstration of godliness, and is shown in 1 John 3:16. Thus it is a sacrifice for the benefit of another." Certainly this was the intention of Paul's involvement with the Corinthian ecclesia in a corrective manner as, being "intellectually enlightened," and desiring the "greatest spiritual good," of the Corinthian brethren, he willfully engaged in "self sacrifice," of his reputation, time, and energy on their behalf in order to "benefit his brethren," so that they would correct their errors, repent, and turn back to the ways that he had originally taught them.

The display of Agape love should not be confused with that of Phileo love, which is defined as "to be fond of; a lesser degree than agapao; as between friends." Since the word "agape" by its definition, is not used outside of the scriptures, its concept is difficult for mankind to grasp, and it is all too common that the word "love" when used in the scriptures is misapplied by inserting the worldly view of love (a feeling of fondness, friendship and emotion), rather than the correct interpretation of "self-sacrifice for the purpose of achieving the best spiritual outcome for a brother," regardless of any emotional affinity toward them. Having a phileo friendship is not necessary for one to practice the more-important agape love, or self-sacrificial love toward one another. For example, Christ demonstrated the pinnacle of agape love, or self-sacrifice for the spiritual benefit of one's brothers when he laid down his life for us, even though he did not yet have a phileo, or emotional friendship with us. In John 15:12-14, Christ states, "This is my commandment, that ye love (agape, he did not

command that we have a phileo friendship, though it is certainly desired!) one another, as I have loved (agapeo) you. Greater love (agapao) hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

And who are defined as Christ’s “friends?” Those to whom he had a personal affinity and like for? NO! Rather he states, “ye are my friends, if ye do what I command you.” What did he command them? To *agape* one another, or to “will oneself to act in the best interest of one’s brother,” regardless of whether there was an emotional personal relationship with them! Only by practicing this most important concept can we then be classified as Christ’s friends. This was Paul’s state in regard to the Corinthian ecclesia as a whole. Though we will see throughout this study that he was not considered their friend (phileo), he still held an agape (desire for their best spiritual interests) love for them that he was compelled to act upon.

To summarize these most important concepts, we as individual brethren are required by Yahweh to act as Watchmen to the congregation of believers – calling attention to destructive error and displaying love by acting in one another’s best spiritual interests, regardless of what difficulty doing so may bring to us personally. This is exactly the path that Paul, being led by the Spirit Word of God, chose to take when presented with the decision of whether or not he would become involved in the Corinthian situation.

The Corinthian ecclesia was greatly and adversely affected by the community that surrounded them, just as we are in this day. The affluence of the region led to all sorts of worldly vice, and they were constantly distracted and tempted with the wealth, immorality, carelessness, and complacency that surrounded them and permeated their fledgling ecclesia. The criticism from Christ to the Laodician ecclesia that, “thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” would also seem to apply to the Corinthian ecclesia. Likewise, as Christ exhorted the Laodician ecclesia, saying “I counsel thee to buy of me gold (faith) tried in the fire (of tribulation); and white raiment (righteousness); and anoint thine eyes with salve,” so that they would recognize their errors and repent of them, the Corinthians were in need of similar rebuke. They, like the present-day ecclesias living during this Laodician period, were in need of strong correction and constructive criticism from Paul, lest they should be enticed by and return to the evils of the world.

Though there are roughly 20 different moral and scriptural issues inundating the Corinthian ecclesia that Paul was compelled to address throughout the first letter to the Corinthians, they may be categorized into two main areas of error: 1) Strife Among Brethren, and 2) Worldly Influences that led to Moral Error. It is now our intention to consider in detail some of the specific offences that were addressed by Paul, along with the exhortation given by him as he sought to help them correct these errors. This is a most important lesson to remember, and one that is necessary if one is to practice agape love – that it is not enough to just criticize the person in need and offer no help. If one truly seeks to display agape love to one’s brother (achieving his best spiritual

interest), then the criticism must be constructive, exhortation of how to correct the problem must be given, and help, personal effort, and guidance must be offered. It is easy to criticize from afar, but never get involved or “get yours hands dirty” in helping to achieve a favorable and correct outcome for one who is in need. It is quite different to engross oneself with the correction of the error by sacrificing time, effort, thought, prayer, and possibly monetary gifts to those in need in order to achieve a solution. The references considered will clearly show that Paul adequately accomplishes this, as he states in 2 Cor 12:15, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.” This is the appropriate attitude and action in seeking to correct and help an erring brother, sister, or ecclesia, and is the definition of the self-sacrificing agape love that is expected of us.

STRIFE AMONG BRETHREN

Strife among brethren is as common today in the modern-day ecclesia as it was in the Corinthian ecclesia, so that the exhortation given by Paul in how to identify it and correct it is very pertinent in the modern day. He addresses this ecclesial problem in seven different passages in 1st Corinthians, some of which we will consider in detail. It is important to compare the situation in our modern-day ecclesias to that of the Corinthians, as the similarities are obvious. As will be shown, first Paul identifies the problem, and then he provides the spiritual solution.

Problem: Personal (not doctrinal) strife within the ecclesia was preventing spiritual growth. 1st Cor. 3:1-2: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

Solution: As Paul shows, the internal petty strife between ecclesial members was preventing their spiritual growth. The members of the ecclesia were not striving about doctrinal or moral issues among themselves, but were involved in human and petty strife that Paul categorizes as “carnal,” or “sinful.” He therefore exhorted them to put away their envy and jealousy that had led them to strife, divisions, and sinfulness. Instead, as he writes in 1 Cor 3:9, “For we are labourers *together* with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”

Problem: Jealousy among members: the various members of the ecclesia had been granted spiritual gifts by Yahweh in order to further His will, but instead of appreciating one another for their various talents they had been given and seeking to learn from those members, there was jealousy and envy among the members because of the talents of others. 1st Cor. 12:28-31: “And God hath set some in the ecclesia, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”

Solution: As Paul states, the Corinthians were not to be jealous of one another because of the talents given by God, but were to instead earnestly covet the *best* gifts, which he defines as Agape Love in the following chapter (as follows).

Problem: Lack of Agape Love within the ecclesia. The word “charity” used in the King James Version for this passage should be substituted with the word “love.” The translators of scripture had difficulty with the word “agape,” because, as stated earlier, it is not used outside of the scripture, again indicating that it is not something that mankind is familiar with, being outside of the Ways of Yahweh. They therefore used the word “charity,” which coincides with the Christian view of “love,” and the application of it: the emotional friendship and warm feelings that are translated in scripture as “phileo.” Rather, in this chapter all references to “love,” or “charity,” are from the word, “agapao,” which again is defined as “seeking to accomplish the best spiritual interest of one’s brother.” The word is also defined as “benevolence,” which provides understanding to its meaning when closely considered. “Bene” means “to wish well,” and “volence,” means, “to will oneself.” In combining these two words, the meaning is “to will oneself to the welfare of others.” By definition, it is apparent that this is not a trait that is inherent to our being, but is something that actually is contrary to it. The fact that the definition requires one to will himself to do this act shows that, regardless of his Phileo or emotional feeling towards that person, he must still seek to accomplish the welfare of that person. This is why Christ could instruct the believer to “love thine enemies.” He did not mean that we were to have an emotional attachment to them, but that we were to will ourselves to seek his best spiritual interests and outcome—that is, to call him to do the will of Yahweh. With the clarification of this definition in mind, we will now consider this most important passage that is most times misunderstood, not only by Christians, but increasingly so in the Christadelphian community.

1st Cor. 13 (NIV): “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Solution: As stated, Paul seeks to show the Corinthian ecclesia, “a more excellent way,” in regard to their envy and jealousy that they were involved in. The “more excellent way,” is that of agape love, and he seeks to demonstrate in this chapter that even though they may have all spiritual gifts and admirable traits such as 1) speaking in tongues, 2) prophetic understanding, 3) faith, 4) charitable works, and 5) the “giving of his body to be burned,” if these acts are not accompanied with agape love and an effort to achieve the best spiritual outcome for his brethren, then they are useless, as far as Yahweh is concerned. All of our various individual talents have been given to us for *one* purpose and *one* purpose only: to further the Plan of God for this creation. If we use them for any other reason, then they are not being utilized correctly and all of our efforts are worthless. Having established this, Paul then gives a definition of the word “agape love,” stating that it is:

1. Long-suffering, in that it continues to seek the best spiritual state for the brethren
2. Kind (defined by Strong’s as “to be useful; to act benevolently” towards one’s brethren.) It is important to remember that the word “benevolent,” means “to will oneself to the spiritual welfare of another.” This is true kindness, and not to be confused with the “acting nice” to another.
3. NOT prideful or conceited, as pride and self-elevation is not useful in nurturing another’s spiritual state
4. NOT rude (KJV: unseemly), as this fleshly act would hinder the spiritual growth of another
5. NOT selfish (KJV: self-seeking), as this would be contrary to the definition of the word. Rather, it engages in self-sacrifice and seeks to better one’s brother in the Ways of Yahweh, rather than being concerned only with one’s own spiritual standing.
6. NOT easily angered, as it is undeterred in doing and promoting the will of God; as Paul did so many times, he discounted and dismissed the criticism that was levied against him, choosing rather to continue his guidance of the Corinthians in the ways of God.
7. Forgives (keeps no record of wrong); If one is constantly reminded of the wrongs that have been done to them by a brother or sister, then they will not be able to help that person in the Ways of God
8. Does NOT rejoice in evil, but delights in TRUTH; this is a most important concept that must be considered when seeking to understand agape love. It is *not tolerant* of evil or error, as Paul demonstrates in the writing of this letter of correction to the Corinthians. The toleration of evil is in opposition to the practice of agape love, for it allows the person in error to continue in that manner. If the actions are not corrected, then that person will be held accountable at the judgment for them, and the one who was silent and tolerant of the error will be judged as an unworthy Watchman. Rather, agape love “delights in Truth” and therefore tries to steer and influence the one in error towards the Truth. The intended result is that, when the formerly-erring

brother arrives at the Judgment Seat, he has replaced his error with Truth so that he gains acceptance by Christ and Yahweh.

9. Love “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” This is the characteristic of agape love: it *protects and defends Truth*, trusts (has faith) in truth, hopes for the spiritual best for the brethren, and perseveres against error and adversity.

Finally, Paul demonstrates the importance of agape love over all other traits, in stating that whereas the gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, and knowledge will be rendered obsolete when the Kingdom age is instituted, agape love, or leading one to the best spiritual outcome, will continue. Prophecy will be fulfilled. Speaking in tongues will become unnecessary. Knowledge will become complete for those made perfect. But the act of leading and guiding the mortal subjects in the Kingdom to their spiritual perfection and immortalization will remain until that Bride is made whole at the completion of the millennial age and the institution of the 8th Day.

Problem: Brethren were creating Stumbling Blocks for one another. These Stumbling Blocks were inconsequential actions rather than scriptural or doctrinal differences, and they were causing difficulty to other members in the ecclesia. Paul uses the specific act of “eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols,” to again demonstrate the agape love attitude and desire that brethren should have in regard to one another’s spiritual well-being. According to Matthew Henry’s commentary on these verses, “It must be observed that it was a custom among the heathens to make sacrifices on their feasts, and not only to eat themselves, but invite their friends to partake with them. These were usually kept in the temple, where the sacrifice was offered (v. 10), and, if any thing was left when the feast ended, it was usual to carry away a portion to their friends; what remained, after all, belonged to the priests, who sometimes sold it in the markets. It was accounted a very profane thing among them to eat at their private tables any meat whereof they had not first sacrificed on such occasions. In this circumstance of things, while Christians lived among idolaters, many had relations and friends that were such, with whom they must keep up acquaintance and maintain good neighborhood, and therefore have occasion to eat at their tables.”

In response to this touchy subject, Paul states in 8:4, “we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.” He continues, however, in 8:7-8 to state that “However, there is not in every man that knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.”

Solution: This was an example of what ultimately was an inconsequential action in regard to the Truth or one’s salvation unduly becoming a point of controversy and agitation within the ecclesia. The stronger and more experienced brother knew that

his eating of this meat sacrificed to idols was inconsequential and harmless. However, the less experienced brother took offense. In this section, Paul tries to show the stronger and more experienced Corinthian members that they were in error if they knowingly continued in this action that offended their weaker brethren. Indeed, the stronger brother was not in scriptural error for his actions in partaking of this meat, but the higher and loftier scriptural concept (that coincides with the practice of agape love) is that they were amiss by continuing to participate in an action that caused unneeded dissention, questioning, and harm to a brother who was not experienced enough to realize that it was irrelevant. The correct action to take in this situation is to eliminate the stumbling block that was being placed in front of the weaker brother, since it was hurting him spiritually. Yes, the more experienced brother was right in his understanding and action, but the higher principal is to show agape love toward a brother in a matter that is not doctrinal or moral. *(To be continued.)*

Arthur Sankey

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Fundamental Considerations

Part 2

The Six Elements

Now turning our attention to the future kingdom of God.

We are told that the Kingdom's mission is to "break in pieces and consume all kingdoms", and to "fill the whole earth" in ruling over all. However, this is not a job that will be done in a day, a week, or a month. All of these great nations and republics are to be put down, and their millions of armed defenders cut up and dispersed – this will take time. The work to be done is great, but not too great for the forces of the Kingdom. And, it is my belief that sin and death will still exist during the Kingdom Age itself, and for the final destruction of sin in the flesh, God has allotted 1,000 years.

A kingdom is composed of certain key elements and it cannot exist in the full sense unless all of the component parts are united: 1) Territory, 2) A King, 3) Royal Associates, 4) Laws, 5) Subjects, 6) A capitol. These are the parts that must be combined before a Kingdom can be said to be established.

Territory

In preaching the gospel to Abraham, God made this promise to him: Gen 22:16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand

which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

The kingdom is to be a worldwide dominion. Again in Numbers we read... "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD."

Here are promises that have never been fulfilled, and the fulfillment of which necessitates the establishment of a Divine government upon the earth. How otherwise can all nations of the earth be blessed, and the earth be filled with the glory of the LORD than by the establishment of a kingdom that will rule the nations by Divine laws?

Psalms 72: 8-9:

- 1) He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the river unto the ends of the earth
- 2) They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

King

Psalms 72: 10-11

- 1) The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
- 2) Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: All nations shall serve him.

When the birth of Jesus was heralded to the world, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem saying, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.'" (Matt. 2:1,2)

Jesus of Nazareth will be king over all the earth. Christ, then, will be the King of the Kingdom of God, and the Scriptures abound with proof. **Luke 1:32, 33**, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." **Acts 2:30**, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne..."

The good confession that Jesus himself "witnessed before Pontius Pilate" was of his kingship, when, in answer to Pilate's question, "Art thou a king?" Jesus answered him, "Thou sayest it."

Royal Associates

In considering this question we come to see how the Kingdom of God stands related to human redemption, for we shall find that the gospel is God's invitation to man to become inheritors of His Kingdom, as kings and priests to reign with Christ.

- Luke 22:29,30 – “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
- Dan. 7:27 – “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”
- Rev. 3:21 – “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

From these testimonies it is clear that the royal associates with Christ in his kingdom - the Kingdom of God - will be all the redeemed from among men from the time of Adam down to the second appearing of Christ. These will be those who have been redeemed by His blood - His saints.

Laws

What will be the nature of the Laws? In answer to this it is necessary to remind you that concerning the kingdom of God, we are commanded to pray, Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The laws will consist of the will of God, revealed through His Son. The laws being from God and therefore righteous, will meet the universal requirements of mankind in a way that will bless all nations. This will result in universal laws and universal worship. **Luke 2:14** – “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

With a universal empire it follows that there will be one law and one religion. Isaiah proclaims, “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (**Isa. 2:3**). There will not be one law for the rich and another for the poor, neither will there be injustice in the enforcement of the law.

In the future Age, man will not be allowed to worship God according to the when, where or how of his own whims or conscience. He will be compelled to conform with the Divine requirements. “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me saith the LORD.” (**Isa. 66:23**). None will be exempt from this law. It will be brought forth by such demonstrations of Divine power that none will be able to resist or ignore it for any lengthened period. Should any mortal subjects determine to conduct worship in their own fashion, the effort would be deadly. For the Scriptures give us examples of everything from a famine to a plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of the tabernacles. In the face of famine the people would soon be brought to their knees, and would be led to seek mercy at the hands of the LORD.

The Psalmist says, (chapter 72)

- 1) Give the king thy judgments, O God and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

- 2) He shall judge the people with righteousness and thy poor with judgment.
- 12) For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; The poor also, and him that hath no helper.
- 13) He shall spare the poor (oppressed) & needy, And shall save the souls of the needy.
- 14) He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: And precious shall their blood be in his sight.

Subjects

It shall come to pass, that the Jews will be restored to Palestine and become the immediate mortal subjects of the Kingdom of God, and, every one that is left of all the nations, which came against Jerusalem, shall be mortal subjects as well. The mortal subjects will be Israel in the flesh and all of the other surviving nations. With that being said, the second coming of Jesus Christ will have tremendous consequences for the generation that witnesses it; every aspect of human life – social, religious, and economic – will come under a new directing power.

An important change in the world under Christ's rule will be the recognition of God, and of the responsibility of giving praise and thanks to Him for His goodness and of obedience to his commandments.

Psalms 72: 15

- 15) And he shall live, And to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: Prayer also shall be made for him continually; And daily shall he be praised.

Sin, death, and sacrificial worship will exist in the kingdom until the end of the thousand years. “Gifts and sacrifices,” therefore will all that time be necessary because of sin, and being necessary, there must be a high priest to offer them for men to God in the place appointed. “All nations shall flow unto the LORD's house which shall be called *a House of Prayer for all people*, the offerings of whose flocks and herds shall come up with acceptance on mine altar saith Yahweh, and I will glorify the house of my glory.”

Let us now turn to **Zechariah 8:20-23** to get a better description of what exactly will take place. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that God is with you.*”

This prophetic testimony shows that there will be a pilgrimage from all parts of the earth from one year's end to the other in which all nations will take their turn. It will be periodical, and take place in every case, once a year.

In the establishment of such an era of blessing, divine wisdom will prevail. Men will acknowledge God's goodness, and the words of God through Habakkuk will be fulfilled: Hab 2:14, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

During the millennium, the peoples who are the subjects of God's Kingdom will be mortal, but the excellence of the conditions under which men will then live, will prolong life. The tenure of life will once again run to unusual length. In the coming Age the whole of mankind will understand the knowledge of God's salvation, and this will result in a great harvest of men and women attaining to immortality at the end of the millennium. The final stages of the work of redemption are revealed.

There will be a final resurrection for those who have died during the millennium. Those then raised, together with the living, will be judged; the faithful, who by faith and obedience have qualified for eternal life, will receive immortality even as those who have reigned with Christ were given it at the beginning of his reign. On the other hand the unfaithful die and pass into the oblivion of the second death.

At the end of the thousand years the great mission of Christ will have been accomplished. His prayer will be completely realized: John 17:21 – "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Capitol

Psalms 72:16

16) There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: And they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth.

We are told numerous times in scriptures that the capital will reside in Jerusalem. The prophets make many references to Jerusalem in connection with the promises of the restoration of the kingdom.

- **Jer. 3:17** "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart."
- **Mat 5:34** "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King."

We have just completed our review of the six elements that constitute the kingdom of God. These when combined, will form a divine system of government as literal and as real as any kingdom that has ever existed.

- With the whole earth as the territory
- Jesus the Son of God, as the Christ or King
- The redeemed, immortal saints as his royal associates

- The will of God revealed and enforced through his Son
- All nations of the earth as the mortal subjects
- Jerusalem the city of the great King as the capital

In this glorious state of things the saints redeemed from among men from the downfall of Adam the first to the "restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets" by Adam the second. They will individually and as a happy company of divine princes realize the salvation now preached in "the things concerning the kingdom of God." **Mat 25:34**, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

All nations, too, although mortal, will rejoice in the national salvation which is also involved in the same gospel that God preached to Abraham, when he said... "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." (Gal. 3:8).

In summary. We have discussed previous kingdoms and the future Kingdom of God while answering the following questions...

- What does the word "kingdom" mean or represent?
- Has a kingdom of God ever existed on the earth?
- What man first established a kingdom for himself?
- What is the mission of the future kingdom of God?
- What are the six elements of the kingdom of God?

Let us be clear. These tremendous and awe-inspiring events are not the beginning to a reign of God in men's hearts with the reception into heaven of each believer through death. They are the fore-ordained doom of human rule, to make way for the inauguration of a divine realm upon the earth. "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy" (Zeph. 3:8).

Then follows the Kingdom of God: "He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge (rule) the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts. 17:31).

The Kingdom of God will become the means of individual and national redemption to the children of Adam's race, when "the Lord shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

Thus are interwoven in all the Scriptures the promises and prophesies of a Kingdom of God which cannot be moved, that will take the place of the shaken kingdoms of the world, which stagger to and fro like a drunken man.

Finally, the Seer of Patmos says: “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ” (Rev. 12:10). “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

In closing, reading from the book of Psalms 72: 17-19.

- 17) His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: And men shall be blessed in him: All nations shall call him blessed.
- 18) Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, Who only doeth wondrous things.
- 19) And blessed be His glorious name for ever: And let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen.

Joel Thomas

“UNITY” EFFORT FOLLOW UP

We need to provide some follow up information to what was reported in last quarter’s Sanctuary-Keeper regarding the separate unity efforts taking place in the upper Midwest and in Ontario, Canada.

After the 4th Quarter, 2008 issue of the S.K. went out we were made aware of a letter that had been sent out in opposition to the packet that had been put together by Mark Drabenstott and a Peter Bilello as a working unity agreement between the Unamended, Amended and CGAF groups of the upper Midwest regions. It would appear that their efforts did not receive full endorsement from those on the Amended side. We provide the following letter:

August 31, 2008

To: all ecclesias in the Midwest US and Southern Ontario

Dear Brethren,

Loving greetings in the Hope we share.

The Midwest Central Fellowship General Committee is a group representing 14 Amended Ecclesias who have been working on a unity effort with the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith (CGAF).

We, the undersigned, are writing to inform you that the recent packet of information (Midwest Unity Agreement, dated August 2008), as well as subsequent e-mails you may have received from Bro. Peter Bilello (the acting

secretary of the Working Group) and Mark Drabenstott (the CGAF convener of the Working Group), do not represent the collective position of the Midwest Central Fellowship Ecclesias signed below.

Over the past few years, significant progress concerning the doctrinal issues with the CGAF has been made. Part of the packet included sections that were previously approved by the Midwest General Committee. However, new sections have been added that we have not approved, with points being unilaterally added without the input, knowledge or agreement of the undersigned. These sections include the addition of the NASU (dated October 2003) as a bridging document, as well as fellowship, and ecclesial autonomy.

For this reason, any further information concerning unity in our area should have the endorsement of the Midwest General Committee. Any information you receive from the current “Working Group” (or any other source) does not have the endorsement of the Midwest General Committee.

We regret if these recent communications have given the impression that we endorse the use of the NASU as a bridging document or basis for fellowship. We do not. We are currently in the process of restructuring the unity effort in our area so we can provide a united basis of counsel to both the CGAF and the Unamended. We believe this united approach will result in a unity proposal that encompasses the support of both our Midwest Amended Ecclesias and our larger Amended Community.

It is our hope and prayer that God will bless our efforts.

Your brethren by grace,

Atwood Lake, Ohio – Cliff Adams
 Jasonville, Indiana – Ted Plew
 Kouts, Indiana – James Asbury, Tim Bryan
 Livonia, Michigan – Jim Styles, Paul Styles, Lindbergh Van Reuter
 London West, Ontario – Mike Derbyshire, Les Winter
 Milford Road, Michigan – Trevor Snow
 Paris Ave., Ohio – Joshua Bates, Kevin Flatley, Greg Misko Jr.
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – Len Budney, Gar Cooper, Bill Folkerts
 Royal Oak, Michigan – Ron Clubb, Mark Newth, Ken Styles, Bucky Wilhoit
 Troy, Illinois – Jerry Asbury

Cc: CGAF, Unamended, Pacific Coast Christadelphian Amended Reunion Committee, editors of The Christadelphian and Tidings magazines

So in regard to the Midwest Unity Agreement, for several Amended ecclesias this was a “thanks but no thanks”. Rather than endorse the “unilateral” efforts of the two individuals mentioned, it would appear that these ecclesias are still working towards “unity”, but based upon a basis that they themselves have control of developing and implementing.

Now, in reference to the separate Ontario unity effort, we had reported that there were some indications that *“some of the Amended ecclesias who are not on board with this agreement are not happy with the idea of the Unamended participants breaking bread back-and-forth between BASF and BUSF ecclesias.”* According to a recent bulletin (3/11/09) sent out to members of the “Christadelphians for Unity” on the “Facebook” social network, it was announced that *“the four Toronto meetings have suspended fellowship with Unamended ecclesias in order to clarify certain fellowship practice questions.”* The following letter was also included in the bulletin that was a response/rebuke to the hesitation that is taking place among the Toronto Amended ecclesias.

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

We are deeply disturbed by the communication from the Toronto Amended ecclesias regarding the Unity agreement and their decision to withhold fellowship at the memorial table from the three participating Unamended ecclesias. We cannot help but think of the Lord's admonition: "He who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God." We understand that this is intended to be a temporary expedient in order to create unanimity on fellowship practice, however, striving for unanimity must not take the place of doing what is right in the eyes of our Lord. While bringing together all the Amended ecclesias in the area to a point of common understanding, purpose, and direction is certainly desirable, we cannot expect our community to function like a school of fish turning synchronously in the same direction on a consistent basis. We are individual brothers and sisters who must make up our minds in these matters and act according to conscience. Our survival as an example of first century apostolic Christianity is a result of our repudiation of group-think and hierarchical dictates.

Our understanding of the Central Fellowship position is this: That an ecclesia which has a thorough and comprehensive statement of faith summarizing the first principles and which is reasonably equivalent to the BASF, is de facto a member of the Central Fellowship. Furthermore, all who agree to and consistently uphold the aforementioned summary are welcome to break bread at such an ecclesia. Any ecclesia with a statement of faith and a fellowship practice as described above is squarely under the Central Fellowship umbrella. It would be abhorrent and unprecedented for other Central ecclesias or individual brothers and sisters to scrutinize the list of visitors to any other Central ecclesia to determine if some irregularity has taken place. We cannot let fear and distrust turn our community into a police state. For one hundred and fifty years all Christadelphian communities have successfully fended off the "broad outstretched arms of ecumenical unity" as espoused by the apostasy. It would be a bitter irony if the first letter to the seven churches became particularly applicable to ourselves inasmuch as we have left our first love for one another in our headlong pursuit to avoid Laodicean lukewarmness. Our appeal to all brothers and sisters involved in this process is to stand up and be counted in the Lord's cause.

With love in Christ,
David and Mary Styles

This letter of protest is a clear demonstration that there is strong resistance within the Central group on how to deal with the concept of “unity” that allows the Unamended to have one foot in the Central fellowship and one foot still planted in Unamended fellowship. There is no surprise to this, and it has always been an “all or nothing” deal when it comes to any official “unity” efforts with the Amended – assimilation under the BASF. As it has been demonstrated time and time again – the BASF and BUSF are not compatible documents nor are their doctrinal implications compatible. The writers of the previous letter do not seem to completely grasp this – though they do make an interesting, but over-reaching and desperate argument when they propose that any ecclesia that even comes close to the BASF is a *“de facto member of the Central Fellowship”* and is *“squarely under the Central Fellowship umbrella.”* It would seem, as evidenced by the second guessing that is going on regarding fellowship practices, that the Amended leadership would not agree with this. It would also appear that “reasonably equivalent” is not how they view the BUSF compared to the BASF when it comes to fellowship – **and neither can we.**

As further evidence to Amended resistance to the so called “Unity Agreements” that have been put forward, we supply the following announcement that was put out by the Mid-Atlantic Bible School (Shippensburg, PA) for this year:

“The Mid-Atlantic Bible School is organized and conducted on the basis of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF). Fellowship at the Memorial Services is extended to all who fellowship consistently on that basis. The Mid-Atlantic Bible School does not acknowledge the Toronto Unity Agreement 2008 or the proposed Mid-West Unity Agreement at this time. Members of other fellowships and members of ecclesias that have signed on to the previously mentioned unity agreements are welcome to attend, but do not partake of the Memorial Emblems. All persons officiating at the Bible School shall be members of the Central ecclesias who fellowship consistently on the basis of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith.”

By the explicit nature of what is being expressed here, it is no wonder that some of the Toronto ecclesias that were once on board with the “Unity Agreement” have suspended fellowship with the Unamended ecclesias.

The “unity” contingencies on the Unamended side are long past due in making a vital decision - Either exclusively go with the BASF if they think that they are in agreement with the Amended, or stay and exclusively endorse the Unamended position, but they can't have it both ways. The strife and further division resulting from the “unity” push over the years has been detrimental to the “unity” they claim to desire, and in practice creates nothing less than a “third fellowship.” Unfortunately, those who claim that there are no differences between the fellowships by ignoring, sugar coating, or manipulating the doctrinal issues to fit their agenda will not learn the lesson. And as the liberalization and discounting of the importance of doctrinal clarity widens, these and a growing list of other disturbing issues will continue to test the fortitude of those who wish to hold fast to the faith *“once delivered unto the saints.”*

EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

Israeli Elections

While momentous events are taking place on the world scene, we do not lose sight of what should be the very center of our attention – Israel. The latest Israeli elections are but yet another example that truly *“the MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giving it to whomsoever He will”*. Though the Kadima party, headed by Tzipi Livni, surprisingly came out with the most Knesset seats for a single party, a very interesting and unlikely set of circumstances came into play, giving the leadership to the second place party - Likud, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu. Since there was a majority of Knesset seats gained by the combination of all of the various conservative parties, it was understood that Netanyahu had a more realistic chance at forming a workable government coalition – therefore Netanyahu was given the position of Prime Minister.

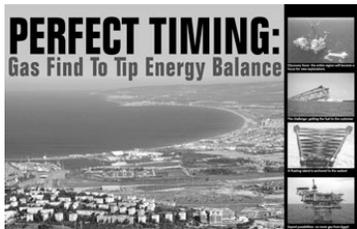


As of this writing, Netanyahu has formed a coalition with Avigdor Lieberman, the “far right”, nationalist Israeli leader. This sets up the possibility of Mr. Lieberman becoming the foreign minister, and with three additional cabinet posts for his party, including oversight over internal security. Mr. Lieberman and his party are strong opponents of the “Two State Solution” – so forcefully touted by foreign governments of the world, including the Papacy. (The Pope is to visit Israel in May.) The world already views Netanyahu with disdain as a “right wing extremist” and a “threat to peace”, but he doesn’t compare to the stronger nationalistic characteristics of the other conservative parties that he is politically bound to form coalitions with.

Negotiations and compromises are still taking place, but with the present course it would seem that tension between Israel and the world at large (especially Iran) is going to exponentially increase very soon.

Israel discovers natural gas

Noble Energy Inc. of Houston, TX in cooperation with Israel has discovered 5 trillion cubic feet (and the discovered size is still growing) off the coast of Haifa.



Israel currently imports 85% of its energy needs, but with this discovery as it now stands, Israel could supply at least 50% of its energy demands for the next 20 years. This would reduce its dependence on countries such as Mexico, Norway and interestingly enough – Russia.

As might be expected, Lebanon has already tried to lay claim to at least a portion of the find. No doubt, good news for Israel will provide yet another catalyst for further tensions. And, is this part of the “spoil” that will attract Russia and its Confederacy? – Only time will tell.