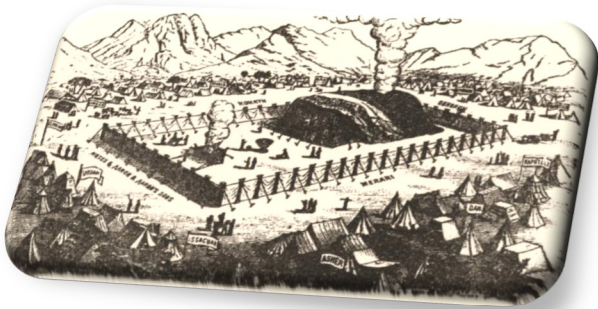


THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER

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



BEYOND THE UA08

OUR PURSUIT OF HOLINESS

**TAKE, MY BRETHREN,
THE PROPHET MOSES**

LESSONS FROM ECCLESIASTES

THE DOCTRINE OF FELLOWSHIP

THE RISE OF THE IMAGE EMPIRE

**EDITORIAL FLYLEAF –
WCF “Picture Bible”**



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EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

WCF ISSUES CONTINUE TO WORSEN

The WCF Organization continues to drag Christadelphians down into the muck of fleshly/carnal and false worship of Yahweh. We have recently learned that this organization has published a Pictorial “Bible” which consists only of 1189 pictures (no text), one picture for each chapter of the Bible. This document can be reviewed at <http://wcfoundation.org/picture-bible/>. The WCF website indicates that this document was put together by John Pople, an Amended Director of WCF. The following website comments provide information about this WCF project (I cannot call this a Bible).

“A representation of the Bible: entirely in pictures! One picture is chosen for each of the 1189 chapters. Only in recent years has the internet been sufficiently vastly stocked with images, and intelligently registered, to enable this Bible version to come to be. The intentions of the Picture Bible are:

- To provide a Bible ideal for visually-oriented people, by which they can readily increase their familiarity with the text
- To provide a Bible one can easily appreciate alongside those who don’t share a common language, or who struggle with literacy
- To create a thing of beauty

The Picture Bible also acts as a provocation for anyone to create their own version, too. After all, if you like this one – you’ll love your own!” (End quote.)

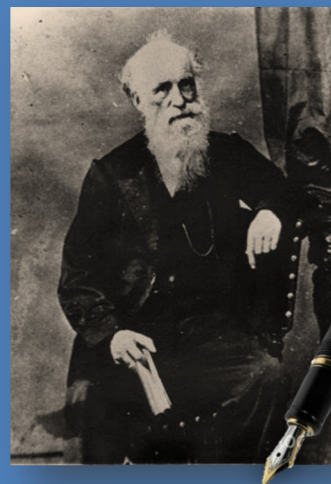
Christadelphian speakers/teachers have used visual aids, such as charts, graphs, and various pictures in their presentations for many years. We appreciate their efforts that have allowed us to visualize subjects such as Ezekiel’s Temple, the Cherubim, the Aaronic Breastplate, Nebuchadnezzar’s Image, etc.

However, as one reviews the pictures in this WCF document, we find that it is not a thing of beauty as intended. It is just the opposite. Many of the pictures are vile, disgusting, blasphemous and apparently selected to appeal to and entice the fleshly/carnal/worldly mind into a modernistic approach of studying and learning about God’s Holy Word. These WCF pictures include nude men and women (private areas covered most of the time, but not always), nude men in a sensual embrace, Lego figures, actors, cartoon characters, winged characters, and even a picture of the worldly concept of a horned “Devil” who is arm wrestling with Job. Eve is depicted with a tattoo of a snake on her back. These pictures are depicting concepts that are in opposition to Yahweh’s teachings. Most Christadelphians will hopefully find these pictures offensive, repulsive and would not want their children or those in the world who are trying to find the truth of God’s Word to be taught the Truth in this matter.

This pictorial document has violated the principle of adding/taking away from the Word of God. There is no divinely inspired text. Will our Heavenly Father be pleased with his Word depicted by Legos, Simpson characters, and lewd pictures that violate the teaching of the Father? How can one individual/organization believe they are capable of identifying one picture that depicts the entire teaching from the Bible chapters that we love and cherish? There should also be concerns about the WCF suggestion that everyone should be free to prepare their own pictorial “Bible”. The words of Judges are definitely applicable to this organization – Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

If you are offended by this blasphemous document, then you should voice your concerns to those responsible for the publication and distribution – the WCF Organization, its Directors and those who support it. – S.K.

JESUS HIS KINGDOM AND THRONE



*“But it is affirmed by some, that Jesus is now sitting upon that throne of his Father of which he is the heir; and that therefore, he hath overcome. To this I object, that **the throne of the Father of which Jesus is the heir does not yet exist; and therefore, of course, he cannot be sitting upon it; and has, consequently, not yet conquered, or overcome his enemies.**”*

*“We have said that the throne of the Father that Jesus is heir to does not yet exist. **He is King elect, but without throne or kingdom.** This may be thought strange, but it is not more strange than true. Jesus is not heir of the throne at the right hand of which he is now sitting. That is not the apocalyptic throne, but the throne of the boundless universe, “in light which no man can approach unto.” The Father intends to have a throne on earth, as well as that now in the light. He has had a throne on earth formerly, which continued for several ages; but he caused it to be overturned superlatively more than twenty-four hundred years ago, **and it has ceased to be ever since.** While it was standing, David and Solomon, and their posterity, sat upon it, governing the twelve tribes of Israel for Jehovah. “Of all my sons,” says David, “Jehovah hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of **THE KINGDOM OF JEHOVAH** over Israel” – 1 Chron. 28:5. So when David was about to die, Solomon was anointed, and “sat on **THE THRONE OF JEHOVAH** as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.” – ch. 29:23.*

(John Thomas, *Eureka*, Vol. 1, pp. 417, 418, bold added)

THE SANCTUARY – KEEPER

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*“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.”
I Peter 2:5*

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

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BEYOND THE UA08

THERE can be no question that years of efforts towards achieving “unity” between the Unamended and Amended communities and more recently culminating in the *North American Statement of Unity* (NASU) and the *Unity Agreement 2008* (UA08) has created a great deal of strife, confusion and further division within the Unamended community. Though such efforts have had the exact opposite effect of unity, such results of confusion and division resulting from such has been merely viewed as collateral damage by the unity proponents – as the ends have been used to justify the means of unity with the Amended at all costs. Since ecumenical/open door type philosophies took over unity efforts, after the Continental Reunion committees of the 1970’s clearly concluded that fundamental differences between the Amended and Unamended were too profound to achieve unity; efforts towards “unity” (so called) have been wrought with misinformation, disingenuous sales tactics, and a watering down of doctrinal differences to the point of capitulating Unamended beliefs to essentially mirror the beliefs of the Amended community, to the outright denial of traditional Unamended belief.

Some more conservative elements of the Amended community have themselves seen the corrupt nature of the UA08, *and to the shame of*

conservative elements in the Unamended community, have been far more vocal in pointing out the flawed nature of the more current UA08 efforts and have been all too willing to deny fellowship at their ecclesias and Bible Schools to those (both Amended and Unamended) who have desired to sign on to it.

We have attempted to keep our readers informed over the last few years in regard to various developments in the UA08 drive. But we are observing that as much as we need to stay abreast of movements such as the UA08 – that there are even larger and more devastating influences that go beyond official, document based unity efforts and far beyond the doctrinal/fellowship issues between the Amended and Unamended. If the UA08 is something that greatly concerns you – let us assure you that you haven’t seen anything yet. A *Worldwide Christadelphian Church* (our name for it) is gaining momentum, where there are no boundaries to fellowship; whether it is among various groups under the Christadelphian name, with those of CGAF or any other mainstream “Christian” denominations that are out there. It is a movement that has no regard for doctrinal clarity and will not be restricted by traditional conventions of written fellowship statements or Statements of Faith. There are no rules; there are no barriers – only “love” and the promptings of the heart.

To briefly review this shift towards absolute ecumenism, we wish to state that we believe that there have been three **general** stages of unity efforts in recent decades:

1. Continental Reunion Efforts - which employed the efforts of sound, experienced brethren appointed by various ecclesias and regions of North America. Most would be brethren with no previous or ulterior motives and whose desire was to get a clear understanding of the beliefs of the other side of the Amended/Unamended divide in order to explore whether or not unity was even possible.
2. Once the previous effort proved that “unity” was not possible and the differences could not be compromised, a movement arose of those who were not willing to allow such results stand and who believed that unity of belief was an existing fact, and were convinced that fellowship could and would be achieved with the right wording and with the right sales pitch. The Focus on Unity (FOU – “fool” in French) led the way in the 1980’s. Along with organizations like WCF and Operation Onesimus that preyed upon the more emotional sentiments of the young people, unity took on a more ecumenical/evangelical characteristic. “Love”, the presumptuous view of “One Body” and the desire to socially be with one another and intermarry became the overriding motive towards unity. This passed on through various stages of wholesale rejection by the Unamended Community until we arrived at the NASU and UA08 efforts, which tended to target individual ecclesias. But even with the unsavory and divisive manner in which these efforts approached “unity”, they were committed to formulating some kind of official documentation that

could be agreed upon and would outline the shared basis of belief and fellowship.

3. Though the UA08 is very much still an issue of the day and a vehicle for the objectives of the moment, and a matter to be opposed – we perceive that such (barring Christ's return) is already passing from concern or legitimacy as it makes way for the now developing (as we have already referred to it as) *Worldwide Christadelphian Church*. The UA08 may be a useful tool in getting the “unity” ball rolling, but it will not be limited to just fellowship between Unamended and Amended Christadelphians. No documents, no barriers, no doctrines – just shared “Christian love” and ecumenical fellowship with anyone characterize this new stage of “unity”.

With the influence of the teachings that found promotion from books such as “*Legalism vs. Faith*” and “*The Judaizers: Another Gospel*” (the more narrow and exclusive ways and “rules” of the past have been labeled as “Pharisaical” and the spirit of “inclusivity” and the casting off as what are seen as “outdated” and “sinful” conventions and barriers of our Christadelphian heritage embraced), the Christadelphian liberalism of the 70's to present has been able to throw off all shackles of restraint. Frustrated by the tedious and never ending talk of “unity” many are simply declaring that since “unity” (in their view) already exists as a matter of fact, that what they call **DOCUMENT BASED FELLOWSHIP** (DBF) is a thing of the past and to be rejected, and that open fellowship is to be practiced NOW and without restriction. No BASF or BUSF, or even NASU or UA08 to define or order their associations – such is too “legalistic” in their view. The rise of the Internet, especially Facebook, has allowed ecumenical Christadelphians worldwide (many younger and some older) to come together in the environment of a kind of murky Christadelphian Underworld, out of sight from the judgments and council of parents, ecclesial elders and conservative voices who wisely avoid the pitfalls of the Social Media revolution. Free to feed off of each other's opinions and diatribes with immediate response, their hatred and disgust with the “old paths” (and those that hold to them) brings them together under something completely unrecognizable to early Christadelphian standards. Some refer to themselves as “*Christadelphians for Unity*”, “*Mended Christadelphians*” (we believe the reader will understand the play on words employed here), and a newer term that we had not seen before – “*Christadelphians Acknowledging Unity*” or “*CAU*”. And though we refer to their internet point of meeting as an “Underworld” – make no mistake that this movement is outpacing and overwhelming the shrinking remnants of “Conservative Christadelphia” to become the mainstream of Christadelphian thought and practice – even if it is out of our direct line of sight.

We provide some recent samplings from the Internet that help demonstrate what is taking Unamended Christadelphia beyond the defined parameters of the UA08 and the new era of a Worldwide Church. We credit and appreciate other

brethren for bringing many of these statements to our attention.

- From the WCF “*Thought for the Week*” blog section, March 30, 2012, Kyle Tucker: “*What do I need to do? I am doing it. Trying to educate people on the sins of document-based, sin of Diotrephes fellowship. Rebuke those who teach it. I don't attend ecclesias, Bible schools or gathering[s] where this is practiced.*”
- From the main *Christadelphians for Unity* website, subtitle: - “*We are a Mended Community – Doing Unity.*” (<http://www.cforu.org/>)
- From Facebook, John Pople (recent Amended teacher at the Great Lakes Bible School): Someone poses the question: “*Alright I'll ask...what IS your motivation?*”. He answers, “*Fair question, and thanks to you*” ... “*To motivate brethren along the domino sequence of: maximizing God's glory by **maximizing those joining our community** to praise Him by **minimizing any unnecessary burden we place on our members.***” In another post it is stated, “*The related point raised on this thread is that, while we still impose **unnecessary rules**, any unnecessary rules, we diminish our membership – even if by only one person – and thereby shame our Lord. I encourage you not to let that continue to be ok in your mind.*” (bold added by S.K.)

There is a deep hatred for what many refer to as “Andrewites”, one which was newly defined by Kyle Tucker to include pretty much anyone that opposes his views. (We addressed this new twist on the “Andrewite” label in the 2nd Quarter, 2010 S.K., p. 40). In another Facebook discussion several Unamended “brothers” express how bad the “Andrewites” are, but the following is from someone presumed to be Amended (Dan Gaitanis) – “*The thing about Andrewites is: There's not many left. Once they're gone, we don't have to worry about “contamination by association” or whatever (“I won't break bread with Brother Bradford because he breaks bread with Sister Sofia who breaks bread at the Jungle Mountain ecclesia which is made of Andrewites”). Hopefully this stupid split will just go away by itself because of that. Andrewites are an endangered species (for lack of a better term) and will soon be gone. After that happens, there will be NO EXCUSE for the U team and the A team not dropping the labels and coming together as one body like it should be.*”

It is no mystery that the Great Lakes Bible school has been a haven for open fellowship and liberal, evangelical thought for many years now, but the growing ranks of a Worldwide Church has the school busting at the seams (almost 500 in attendance this year). The following comments from Facebook, *Christadelphians for Unity* shortly before the school are interesting to consider,

in light of the present discussion.

- From a Glenn Joseph Lea: *“Great Lakes Christadelphian Bible School is Full! And a direct result of the reunion in North America. As a reminder, the CoGAF Gathering in Ohio still has some space available, should you not be able to attend the GLCBS. See the website for contact details.”* There are obviously allusions here to the UA08, but how does that include the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith? Such individuals are clearly thinking way beyond Document Based Fellowship practices.
- Also from the main *Christadelphians for Unity Facebook* page – *“Unity is indeed spreading across North America. The demand from our reunited brethren has had a knock-on effect on the attendance of one of the most important Bible Schools in North America – the GLCBS.”* This appears to be a comment from one of the administrators of the site, and not a random remark from a Facebook user. (bold added by S.K.)

If the thought arises in our minds that “this has nothing to do with me, so I don’t see a problem or threat” – think again. This “unity”/ “worldwide” movement is on the ascendancy, they have the numbers; they have the influence, ability and means to promote their philosophy. The lines are no longer clearly drawn, with the Amended on one side and the Unamended on the other – many are practicing free-range fellowship and association whether we like it or not. In some circles such has been going on for some time, but the rise of the Internet has allowed this populist, frog like message to flourish. They truly represent the views and emotional sensibilities of this modern/humanistic age of “no rules”, doing what “feels right” and leading with the heart rather than the mind, which is very attractive to the inclinations of the flesh. And, their circle of association and influence doesn’t stop at a Great Lakes Bible School or on Facebook. They are not going off on their own in a corner, or under a different name – but are overtaking the Household rather than separating from it.

The following is a recent *Christadelphians for Unity Facebook* post from a member of the “Good Hope”, Arkansas ecclesia, under the nick-name of “Dyronman Hamlinstein”:

“I am a Christadelphian FOR Unity, but more importantly, I’m a Christadelphian ACKNOWLEDGING Unity. When Paul declares there is One Body, he leaves no doubt. So isn’t the question of ‘who’s in or who’s out’ a personal one? In other words, it’s not whether someone ELSE is a part of the One Body at all; rather, it’s a question of whether I am effectively positioning MYSELF to truly be a part of the One Body. This shifts the focus from Governing Others to Governing Ourselves.” (bold added by S.K.)

Though we agree with the Scriptural fact that there is “One Body” (Eph. 4), and it is true that we must position ourselves to be in that One Body, it is also true that we must be able to discern what that “One Body” is, what beliefs and

practices characterize the “One Body” and therefore choose our affiliations wisely. Do the Baptists constitute the One Body; do the Catholics; do the CGAF; do Christadelphians who deny Adamic Condemnation or believe in “clean flesh” or the present possessions of eternal life or of a present kingdom or who are embracing Theistic Evolution constitute the One Body? Are we going to leave to such individuals to decide whether or not they are of the same Body as we and in association with us? (This same individual, in a separate post, tells the story of an individual coming to their meeting who was not Christadelphian. He showed the individual a Statement of Faith, told him the importance and serious nature of breaking bread, but nonetheless left it to the individual to decide whether or not they could break bread.)

Going back to the original post from D.H.:

“It seems to me this forum [i.e. Christadelphians for Unity] is comprised of basically two groups.

1. *Christadelphians Acknowledging Unity (encompassing the vast majority of Bible-aware Christadelphians, COGAFers, and AsYetUnaffiliatedOrOtherwiseAffiliatedBelievers I’m sure, though I have no data nor charts, only many blessed associations), and,*
2. *Christadelphians Emphasizing Differences.*

“As a CAU supporter, it’s a bit ironic that I’m emphasizing this difference, but it’s with good reason. The reason is that I’d like to either, 1) Help those who seem to feel the need to continually divide to see the error of their grievously sinful ways, or 2) Push them out of our midst so that we can focus back on what’s important – learning, teaching, and obeying God’s Word.

“I’m glad GLCBS was such a haven for so many this year, I believe it always will be, as long as we continue to seek God’s will, serve each other in in love, and encourage each other through music and praise!

“Despite all the ‘division,’ I still believe that Christadelphians are the best disorganized religion on earth. And HOPEFULLY the majority find themselves in the One Body. I think they do.” And there it ends with a growing, delusional sentiment.

And another post, again from Glenn Joseph Lea:

“I can only summarize this experience at the GLCBS in this way: Unity is well on its way and it has gone WAY past the tipping point and is irreversible. What is left is for others to make up their mind if they are going to join or walk away. It has reached into all corners of North America now and beyond. Protests against it may or may not get louder, but they will not change the facts on the ground.”

And one final posting from the *Christadelphians for Unity* (Geoffrey Walker), one which we think hits the nail on the head (though very, very sad

to read) in regard to the attitudes and general stream that is taking Christadelphia beyond the faulty, flimsy and already obsolete parameters put up by the UA08:

"I have never had any objection to sharing communion in an Anglican, or Pentecostal or Baptist, or Methodist or house church, and they have not had any problem with me (except the strict and particular Baptists!) as a visitor. I'm sure I've been to one or two where I didn't know what they were. Usually, they just say something to the effect that anyone is welcome to join in if they love Jesus. So just what is the problem for CDs? I have a sneaking feeling it may be driven by fear of contamination from other Xtians who may bring strange ideas as much as anything. I have to admit, the first time I took communion in another church I wondered if I would be hit by a thunderbolt from heaven! I was very nervous!!"

Concluding Thoughts

So, what can we say? We do not provide this to depress you, but to inform those who are not aware of what is taking place at all, and better inform those that do have a general idea. It is good for us to be doing what we are supposed to be doing – working on our own spiritual walk and the business of our own ecclesias and families, and avoiding the outlets that bombard us with the asinine trends of this world. We may be isolated from the trends of Christadelphia through the Internet or the goings on of Bible Schools/Gatherings that we do not attend, or are not aware of the chatter and discussions among the young people. But nonetheless, we cannot be ignorant of the general patterns taking place. We do not have to follow Facebook, nor should we, to be aware of what is happening. All we have to do is keep our eyes open, observe, and heed the warning cries that are being sounded. If not, then no doubt this Revolution (and it is nothing short of that) will take us by surprise; maybe even sucking us into it before we even know what happens.

What can we do? Christ's words, "*will I find [the] faith?*" take on even more impact and urgency when we read such things as provided from these Internet postings. This writer agrees quite strongly with one of the points made by one of these "Christadelphians for Unity" individuals – that "unity" has gone "*way past the tipping point*", and that "*Protests against it may or may not get louder, but they will not change the facts on the ground.*" A very bold, if not arrogant statement – but nonetheless, we must be honest with ourselves and see the writing on the wall in regard to the destructive forces bearing down upon us. And make no mistake that all of this "unity" talk is not just about being with other people, but the acceptance and tolerance of "every wind of doctrine", just as long as it is not traditional in nature.

It is this writer's belief, not out of a spirit of negativity or pessimism, but out of a simple and practical realism that it is not in our collective or individual ability to turn back this tide that has and is taking down the Household.

Especially when there is little agreement among us on how to oppose such influences and whether or not anything should be done at all. Laodiceanism is firmly entrenched and the barn door is left wide open, so to speak. These developments are of God and signal the Return of the Master, and we must trust in Him and not in ourselves, thinking that we can achieve (through the power of our own persuasive abilities) a change in the course that the Household is on. A new "spiritual" breed has arisen that has adopted and been raised under the philosophical and **EMOTION LED** mindset of the world, and that has no interest nor can it comprehend the logical, unchangeable, forceful, exclusive, and yes, **loving** but burning instruction of the Spirit Word that stands in stark contrast to the sympathies and emotions of the flesh. We do not imply that we give up the fight against such things, but simply that we must honestly come to grips with what we are dealing with and where this is all heading. Again, what can we do? **In regard to ourselves, our families and hopefully ecclesias there is much we can do.** The phrase "strengthen the things that remain" comes to mind, even as that which "remains" contracts ever smaller. It is as simple as choosing between good and evil, and right and wrong **and being vocal and explicit** regarding the difference between the two - "*Choose ye this day whom you will serve.*" And, we must stand apart, separating ourselves with clear and unmistakable distinction from pseudo-Christadelphian influences - as clearly as what we are commanded to do in relation to the Roman Harlot herself. Make no mistake that a grave choice lies in front of us as to whether we will continue to follow after God and His ways, or if we will follow after the seducing spirit of the Serpent as we see manifest in men.

Our brethren of the latter half of the 1st Century into the 2nd Century were faced with essentially identical trends, and faced the same choices in how to react to those trends. Even the presence of the Holy Spirit gifts (something not with us today) was not able to stem the tide of apostasy. The pressures to support or capitulate to the developments of Ecumenism and Apostasy were profoundly powerful for them as they are for us. For those who would faithfully cling to the "old paths", would they have been called "unloving", "haters", "lovers of division", "disturbers of peace", "mean-spirited", "un-Christ-like", "judgmental" etc.? No doubt they were, and no one wants to be labeled with such falsely applied words that strike at the very heart of the manner of persons we know we should not be. But such increased in intensity, until their very lives were at stake due to their choice to stand fast in THE FAITH. So lest we waiver under the pressures of insult and our natural desire to be respected by men, let us keep in mind the similar and fierce trials of faithfulness experienced by brethren of old. Once again, what are we to do? **2Th 2:15**, "*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.*" And, **1Co 16:13**, "**Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.**" - S.K.



OUR PURSUIT OF HOLINESS

THE subject matter of these words of exhortation is a subject that should be near and dear to everyone in the one Christ Body wherever they may live. It is a subject that is as important as life and death. Although God's word has many references, direct and indirect, to this subject, none of us will ever be able to fully understand and manifest this Godly principle in our mortal lives. However, we should never use our inability to understand God's Word as an excuse not to study more about a particular principle or not to strive to manifest these principles of God in our everyday lives.

At least five times in the Old Testament and two times in the New Testament, we are told as clearly as possible that we are to be holy, for the LORD our God is Holy. We are to constantly strive to manifest this spirit of holiness in everything that we do. The characteristic of holiness is a beautiful characteristic of the heavenly Father. The following verses show the importance of this divine characteristic that we are supposed to emulate in all that we do.

- **Exodus 15:11** – *“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”*
- **1st Samuel 2:2** – *“There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.”*
- **Psalms 22:3** – *“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”*
- **Psalms 97:12** – *“Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”*
- **Psalms 145:17** – *“The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”*

The concept of holiness is applied to many things in the Bible that are truly associated with Yahweh. We study about the holy garments of the High Priest, of the holy anointing oil, of the Holy and Most Holy places, of the holy temple, of a holy people, of a holy nation, of the holy hill of Zion, of the holy angels, of God's Holy Name, of the holy Scriptures, of a holy priesthood, of the holy conversation in which we are to engage, and of the Holy One, which is applied to both Yahweh and to His Son. In Numbers, chapter 6, we read of the vow of the Nazarite which would cause the individual making the vow to be holy in all the days of his separation. We are told to rejoice and glory in Him who is holy. We are commanded to put a difference between the holy and the unholy, the

clean and the unclean.

In Exodus 19:6 and I Peter 2:9, we have God's assessment of the faithful of both natural and spiritual Israel.

- **Exodus 19:6** – *“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”*
- **1st Peter 2:9** – *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:”*

What does the word “holy” mean? In simple terms, it means to be set apart, to be sanctified, and to be separate. We see all of these definitions perfectly manifested in the personage of Yahweh and also in the life of His Son. God and His Son are set apart from sin, from the ways and thoughts of human flesh and totally separated from those who do not follow their commandments, their laws and their principles. If we are to be holy, then we too must be set apart from sin, from the ways and thoughts of human flesh and from those who do not follow the commandments, laws and principles of divine instruction. This principle of holiness, of being separate, should be the standard in our days of probation. We will face and be able to overcome many difficulties by practicing this wonderful principle.

We certainly realize that to study and gain knowledge about a particular subject is much easier at times than it is to manifest and apply the lessons of that subject to our daily walk. We are commanded to be holy, because our Creator and Sustainer and He who is our place of refuge is holy. For one to understand the concept of holiness, one must first and foremost develop a very good understanding of who God is and what are His characteristics and what are his requirements. We read these words in Hebrews 11:6 – *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Although not specifically mentioned, this verse along with others that we have already considered links the quality of faith with the quality of holiness. If we please God through our faith, then we show that we believe who He is and what He stands for and therefore become part of His Holy people.

There are many verses that teach us of the Divine characteristics of our Heavenly Father. One set of verses that provide a simple summary of these characteristics can be found in Exodus 34:6-7, which reads – *“And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”* We also find these words in Psalms 145:8-9 – *“The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The*

LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.” Psalms 86:15 reads – “*But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.*”

God’s holiness is the result of all of these heavenly attributes. Therefore, if we are to be holy, because He is Holy, then it is imperative that we also manifest not only these characteristics in these verses, but all of the divine attributes that are taught throughout the Holy Word of God. Proverbs 3:3 instructs us to not let mercy and truth forsake us, for we are to bind them about our neck and write them upon the table of our hearts.

There are many more scriptural references that we could turn to that speaks of this wonderful characteristic of our heavenly Father and the absolute necessity for the sons and daughters of Yahweh to strive to manifest this characteristic of holiness in their everyday lives. The subject is so abundant in the Word of God, that even those who have just begun to study about God’s beautiful and glorious plan of salvation should be able to recognize and take note of the many references to this subject.

These characteristics of holiness should be our standard each and every day of our life. It should not matter what others are saying or doing. Our individual responsibility should be to manifest the holiness that we learn of in God’s Holy Word. We should not allow ourselves to be personally offended by the actions or words of others. We should examine ourselves to determine if we are displaying true Scriptural love, mercy, longsuffering, grace, and compassion. The third commandment of the 10 commandments states – “*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain* (Exodus 20:7)”. We are taught of the holiness of God’s name. To take God’s name in vain is not just to use that name in an inappropriate manner but continually acting in an unholy manner which may also be considered as violating the holiness that is represented by His Name. We must not retaliate against those that we have allowed to offend us. We must not murmur nor complain about the trials that we face in this life. We should remember that these trials are necessary to increase the holiness of our character. Our goal should always to be holy as God is holy.

However, it should offend us when false doctrines are being taught or immoral actions are manifested or when anyone is not acting or speaking in accordance with the divine requirements of the Truth of our heavenly Father. These false teachers should offend us, not because of any perceived personality differences between one another, but because Yahweh is offended. When the Word of God teaches us that Yahweh himself would be displeased with something, the performance of that same action should displease us. We should not endorse it, directly or indirectly, nor should we support it or tolerate it in the midst of the one Christ Body. In Proverbs 1:10, 15 and 16, we find these words – “*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and*

make haste to shed blood.”

The shedding of innocent blood is one of the things that God hates, as we read in Proverbs 6:16-19. In type, the bloodshed of the innocents can occur when they are drawn away from the one path of holiness and begin to worship false doctrines and unholy principles. The shed blood leads to death and hopelessness of eternal salvation.

Our minds should pay particular attention to any scriptural phrase that says that “God is”. These verses may be speaking about a very specific quality, or a very specific holy characteristic, or attribute of the heavenly Father that we should learn to emulate in our lives. Let us look at a few verses to help us gain a better understanding of the Creator.

- **Deuteronomy 4:24** – “*For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*”
- **Psalms 7:11** – “*God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.*”
- **Psalms 46:1** – “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*”
- **Proverbs 30:5** – “*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*”
- **1st Corinthians 1:9** – “*God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*”
- **1st John 1:5** – “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*”
- **1st John 4:8** – “*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*”

We have read that God is a Jealous God. He does not want His followers to worship anything else but Himself. He will not put up with false doctrine, false worship or the worship of any idol. He wants His Truth to be kept pure. He wants His worshippers to remain faithful, separate and set apart. He does not want His believers to put the love of anything or anybody, including family, natural or spiritual, above the love that we are supposed to show to Him. We should learn of the severity of His judgments, wrath and anger against those who are in a continual stage of practicing sin of any kind. He has promised to never fail us nor forsake us, as long as we are striving to maintain a faithful, repentant walk towards His Kingdom.

As surely as we are commanded to manifest love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness; we are also to manifest a jealous attitude for the purity of God’s Word. His Word is holy and pure and was given to us to perfect our holiness. Throughout the history of mankind, there have always been individuals who have presented a different form of religious behavior than what Yahweh has set forth as the standard. We also know that there has always been a remnant of true believers in every generation; therefore there have been those who have

opposed these false teachers. To stand against those who are in opposition to God's way of holiness is never easy and sometimes can be very unpleasant as we see in the study of many of the prophets and apostles. However, the unpleasantness of this divine requirement should never, never cause us to fail to try to manifest this jealous attitude for the One Saving Truth. If the true believers of the past had not stood against those in opposition to God and became the remnant of the Truth, what hope of salvation would this generation have?

We are taught that God will not fail us nor forsake us. We are led in the paths of righteousness by the holy power of God. We are taught that it is Yahweh who offers salvation, redemption, peace, forgiveness, grace, and all blessings that we enjoy. We are taught about the goodness and severity of the Creator of all mankind. We are taught about His wisdom and that He is always a place of refuge to those who seek Him in the appropriate manner. We are taught that He will draw nigh to us IF we draw nigh to Him. This IF factor is very important to remember as we are considering the concept of holiness.

We could go on and on speaking about the wonders and glories of our heavenly and holy Father. In our daily studies, we should look for these descriptions, direct or indirect, and as we find them, we should allow them to encourage us, to edify us and to strengthen us in these days of Gentile darkness. These pronouncements of the holiness of Yahweh should cause us to increase the strength of our daily examinations. Are we walking in the paths of holiness or following the evil ways of the flesh and the evils of the world around us? Let us remain steadfast, unmovable, in the correct works of our Holy Father.

As we contemplate all of these glorious positive attributes, we should also consider some of the things that we should not do in order that we can continue to follow our goals in seeking and pursuing this quality of holiness. It has been stated that God is so powerful that he can do anything. This is not true. Let us look at a few verses.

- He cannot lie – Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; Numbers 23:19
- He cannot be pleased with the faithless – Hebrews 11:6
- He cannot be unfaithful to His own laws of His character and to His own declarations and intentions of the prophetic word – Amos 3:7
- He cannot be tempted with evil – James 1:13
- He cannot deny Himself – II Timothy 2:13
- Because of the perfect manifestation of faith in the life of Christ, He could not keep Him in the grave – Acts 2:24
- He cannot remove the kingship from David's descendants – Psalms 132:11
- He cannot remove the office of priesthood from Christ – Psalms 110:4

If we are striving to be holy, then we too should not lie, or tell half truths or follow after anything that opposes THE TRUTH. We cannot be pleased with,

or tolerate, or support the faithless behavior of those around us, whether this faithless behavior comes from our spiritual or natural families or from those of the world around us. We should constantly strive to put away the evil that may cause us to stray from the way of holiness. We must not follow after those who deny the Truth of Yahweh, which denial is a form of denying the holiness of the name of Yahweh. We must fully understand the holiness manifested through the resurrection of Christ. We must fully understand the holiness manifested through Christ in His role as the King of Kings of the coming Kingdom. Incorrect understanding of any of these principles listed in this list of things that God "cannot" do is a violation of the holiness of the Deity.

God is a God of love, but the scriptures also speak of the things that He hates.

- **Proverbs 6:16** – *"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."*
- **Amos 5:21-22** – *"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. (This was in reference to the pollution of the feast days that the children of Israel were performing incorrectly.) This same thought could be applied to our participation in the Memorial Feast. If we do not partake of these emblems in the correct manner with the correct attitude and with the correct striving for holiness, then we are drinking and eating damnation or judgment to ourselves, not discerning the Lord's body."*

We too are commanded to hate evil, and hate the things that God hates. This is not a "love-less" attitude, but one of abhorrence and detesting. God does not love continual sin in any shape, form or fashion. If we are to be holy, set apart and separated, we too must hate that which God hates and disassociate ourselves from those things that God finds detestable.

When we consider all of the divine qualities of this concept of holiness, we should be able to see that there are many requirements that the son and daughter of God should strive to manifest. Some of these qualities are directly applicable to our individual walk and some are directly applicable to our responsibilities to the Ecclesia of Christ. Each and every one is just as important as another. We cannot ignore any of the things that are required of us. Let us always keep this concept of holiness in our minds, our thoughts and our actions. These verses may help us to remember our great responsibilities.

- **Hebrews 12:14** – *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* True peace can only come when one is following and manifesting the quality of holiness that we have been

discussing.

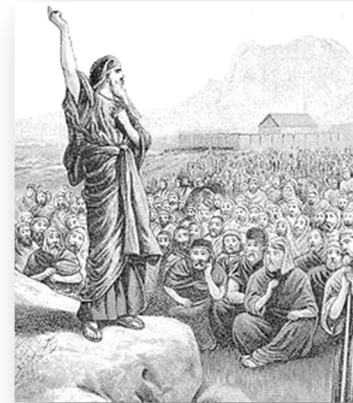
- **Psalms 29:2** – “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”
- **Romans 6:22-23** – “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- **Ephesians 4:24** – “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
- **Colossians 3:12-15** – “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”
- **2nd Corinthians 6:14-7:1** – “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

B. Henderson

ENEMIES

“It is unpleasant to have enemies, whether they are enemies sincerely or otherwise. It is quite grievous to have them haggling at one incessantly. Life, comparatively, would be a “pleasant dream” without enemies. But the man who in this tangle life is without enemies is not a man, except, perhaps, in physical form, because ability to discern truth and courage to declare it will, as long as this evil life lasts, make enemies – some of them so by mistake, others so from a perverted ambition, but he will have them at his heels all the time. What is he to do? Was there ever a servant of the Lord since the fall of man without enemies? Never. Who ever had more enemies than the ‘meek and lowly Jesus?’ Why? Because he dared to do the right and to speak the truth regardless of friend or foe, as steel to divine principles whatever the consequences.” Thomas Williams, *Christadelphian Advocate*, February 1902

TAKE, MY BRETHREN, THE PROPHET MOSES



“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.”
(Jas 5:10)

“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.” (Deut. 34:10-12)

AS we examine Moses’ examples of suffering affliction and patience, we will start in the first record we have of him interacting with his people, the Hebrews. **Ex. 2:11-14** - “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.”

We see that in attempting to calm a dispute between his brethren, his kindness of the previous day was turned against him. In good faith, Moses approached his brethren, thinking they would be susceptible to sound reasoning. This was far from the case, as he found out in short order. The man in the wrong, when his wrongdoing was inquired of by Moses, did not answer the question posed, but responded by calling into question Moses’ person. The wrong-doer, found to be smiting his brother, could not defend his evil deeds. He therefore attacked Moses’ personality, rather than deal with the matter brought to his attention by Moses. The erroneous brother then lodged a false

accusation against Moses—that he intended to kill him as he did the Egyptian. In so doing he revealed Moses actions of the previous day, putting his life in danger. These false accusations against Moses, claiming he desired to be a prince over the nation and that he intended to kill some of his brethren, would be continually brought against him throughout his life.

Moses was likely living in very comfortable conditions in Egypt as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The persecution of the Hebrews by the Egyptians had been going on for a long time. Moses could have turned and looked the other way when he witnessed the abuse of one of his brethren by the Egyptian, but he did not. He manifested the character encouraged by the Spirit in Psa. 82:3-4: *"Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked."*

Moses took it upon himself to execute justice, at the possible expense of the life of comfort he was enjoying in Egypt. Moses exemplified a self-sacrificing care for his brethren, and this did result in him losing that life of luxury in Egypt. He was estranged from everything familiar to him because of his uncompromising stand for righteousness. Heb 11:24-27 - *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."*

When he witnessed the same type of injustice among the Hebrews, Moses took action again. He did not excuse the error seeing it was one of his brethren who was committing it; he confronted him and inquired after his error. There was no respect of persons with Moses, he judged righteous judgment in accordance with the Divine precepts. Lev. 19:15 - *"Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour."* And John 7:24 - *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."*

For these righteous actions, Moses suffered the loss of everything that was familiar to him. Even this he did not bemoan. Ex. 2:21- *"And Moses was content to dwell with the man [Jethro]: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter."* Consider Stephen's account of the history: Act 7:22-29 *"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying,*

Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons."

How often do we take action in defense of the Truth and the ecclesia, supposing our brethren will understand, only to find they are not rooted and grounded in the truth? Are we rebuffed as prideful and murderous in our defense of the word and the Body? Are we accused of condemning people to not be in the kingdom because we withdraw fellowship from them? Are we accused of discouraging and driving away the young people by our defensive actions? If those who make such accusations believe that eternal life is only attained through knowledge of and obedience to the Gospel, then those who drive others away from this Gospel have robbed them of the opportunity for life. What else can these actions be compared to spiritually, other than murder? How different is the modern ecclesia from the ancient typical ecclesia? Do we follow the example of Moses, who did not give up his will to obey when he was met with opposition, even from his brethren?

Exodus 2:15-21- *"Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter."*

Moses fled from the wrath of Pharaoh into the land of Midian. While sitting by a well there he again witnessed an injustice, as the daughters of Jethro were driven away from the watering well by the shepherds. He did not sit idly by in this instance either: Ex. 2:17 *"And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock."*

Moses is revealed early on in the Scriptures to be a man who could not countenance injustice and unrighteousness. He was a man of action, and this type of character was manifestly useful to Yahweh in his purpose of delivering the Hebrews from the hand of the Egyptians, just as men of action have proved useful in many other examples found in the Scriptures. Consider Caleb, Joshua, Phinehas, the numerous Judges, David, Zadok, Elijah, Jehu, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah etc. Do we share this attitude? Do we take decisive action when we see unrighteousness, injustice, or a need? Consider the example Job set: Job

29:12-17- *“Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.”*

Are we willing to suffer personal loss for righteousness' sake as Moses, or do we stop to consider the possible negative impacts righteous action would have upon us? Do we fear what the response of other men will be to our words or actions, be they brethren or aliens? Do we respect the judgment of man or Yahweh?

- **Prov. 29:25** – *“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”*
- **Matt. 5:10-12** – *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*
- **1Pet. 3:12-17** – *“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*
- **1Pet. 2:19-20** – *“For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”*

Moses and the Hebrew Nation

In Exodus 5 we see that Moses and Aaron received commandment from Yahweh to take a certain course of action. In carrying out the will of God, they entreated Pharaoh to “let [Yahweh’s] people go”. Pharaoh spurned this request, and in response to it increased the burden upon the Hebrews. This was not appreciated by the Hebrews, who reproached and blamed Moses and Aaron for the deteriorating conditions. Moses again faced the accusation of being

responsible for killing the Hebrews, this time by the hand of the Egyptians. Ex. 5:19-21 – *“And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task. And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.*

Let us now look a little further down the line in Moses' life. Ex. 16:1-3 – *And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

We are now past all the mighty displays of Yahweh's power in the plagues upon Egypt. We are a mere 45 days beyond the passing through the sea. In this short time Israel commenced their murmuring and complaining against Moses and Aaron for their deliverance from the Egyptian society and environment. They complained about the conditions they had to endure as a result of the execution of Yahweh's word in separating them from Egypt. In their discomfort and perverse state of mind the Hebrews utilized the oft-repeated accusation against Moses of intending to kill them, though this time with hunger.

It is true that the path Moses was shepherding the people down was not to be the most comfortable or enjoyable. It was, however, the path determined by Yahweh—As Christ told his disciples, *“strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* (Matt. 7:14). The precepts of the Lord are not intended to be pleasing or gratifying to the flesh. Contrariwise, they are intended to purge it and bring it into submission. *“We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.”* (Acts 14:22) This part of the process of deliverance the Jews did not want to endure. They wanted the deliverance without the hard path that must be travelled to obtain it.

Ex. 6:6-9 – *“Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD. And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit,*

and for cruel bondage. The Israelites could not see past the present hardships to their ultimate relief.

Shortly after the events we have considered from Exodus 16, the Israelites came to Rephidim. Ex. 17:1-3 – “*And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. (2) Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?*”

The nation again accuses Moses of trying to kill them, as well as their children and cattle, though this time it is to be with thirst. At this time they question the presence of Yahweh, thus hinting at the other common attack against Moses, namely, that he was attempting to set himself up over the people as a prince for his own personal gain.

Ex. 17:7 – “*And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?*” This continual behavior demonstrates that it was not the choice of Israel to leave Egypt, but the will of Yahweh that drove them out. It was with constant reluctance that Israel did those things required of them by God. Act 7:35-43 – “*This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. (He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the ecclesia in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt. Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*”

In all these things Paul warns us not to follow the example of Israel. 1Cor.

10:1-11 – “*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*”

Do we have those in the ecclesia today whose hearts are constantly turned back again to their old bondage? Do we have trouble escaping the friendships of the world? Do we even have a desire to escape the friendship of the world, recognizing that it is enmity with God? Do we have problems with brethren turning back to old habits of drunkenness, adultery, and worldliness in general? Do we have problems with brethren incorporating the old apostate doctrines into our beliefs? Do we have problems with brethren murmuring against those who admonish them to follow the way of the LORD? Let us learn from Moses' example of faithfulness in the face of all these afflictions.

Moses endures the murmurings of Israel

The account of the murmuring which Paul refers to is found in Numbers 14. In Numbers 13 the 12 spies are sent into the land of Canaan and return with their report. Caleb seems to be the only one to speak up at this time with a good report of their findings: Num 13:30 – “*And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*”

Despite Caleb's attempt to calm the people they again murmured against Moses and Aaron, and proclaimed their desire to return to Egypt. Num 14:1-10 – “*And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the*

land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

When Joshua and Caleb pleaded with the nation and tried to encourage them to not rebel against the way of Yahweh, the Israelites sought to stone them all! All of this was what Moses was subjected to simply on account of encouraging the people in the way the LORD required them to go.

The chapter continues with the conversation between Yahweh and Moses wherein Yahweh suggests to Moses that He (Yahweh) should disinherit the Jews and make a nation out of Moses. How tempting would it be to any of us at this point in time to take this offer? Perhaps this was another trial for Moses. From thence it was revealed that the nation would fall in the wilderness, and only the children's generation would be permitted to enter the land, this on account of Israel's unfaithfulness. After the 10 unfaithful spies had been killed for their evil report, (Num. 14:36-37) the nation has a temporary repentance, but it does not lead them to obedience. Num 14:39-45 – *“And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly. And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.”*

In all of this, Moses “departed not out of the camp” – he stood his ground. He was consistent in his obedience to and execution of Yahweh's word.

Moses withstands Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Let us now move on to the account of Korah and his rebellion in Numbers 16. Here we can find great similarities to the present day ecclesia. Num 16:1-3 – *“Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two*

hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?”

Num. 16:12-14 – *“And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.”*

Again Moses is faced with the common accusations – *he intends to kill them and make himself a prince over them.* Those men who had departed from the truth rallied support for their apostasy from certain “men of renown” who were “famous in the congregation”. These assert that Moses has put Israel through all their difficulties simply for personal advantage, or, as they term it, to make himself a prince over them. These oft-repeated baseless accusations had evidently gained some ground in the nation, seeing 250 men of notoriety have accompanied Korah in his rebellion.

When Moses requests a meeting to settle the matter upon Divine principles, it is rejected by those in error. They have no desire to discuss Divine principles, they would much rather lodge personal attacks from afar. Dathan and Abiram likely knew that if the principles were examined, Moses would be exonerated from their accusations. They therefore maintain attacks against Moses' personality, inferring that he was deceitful, claiming this was the reason they would not meet with him. In verse 14 the phrase “*put out the eyes of these men*” is a figurative statement meaning to destroy the sight, blind to facts, or deceive. In the process of their argument, Dathan and Abiram attribute the description used by Yahweh of His land—“*a land that floweth with milk and honey*”—to Egypt. (Vs. 13) How offensive it must have been to Yahweh for his people to claim the great blessing He had promised to them had already been in their possession! Yet, this practice continues today, with brethren claiming the present possession of eternal life and believing they are currently enjoying citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

There was evidently a central hub to this revolt, and it is termed by Yahweh and Moses “*the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram*” in verses 24-27 of Numbers 16. From this place Moses pleads with the Israelites to depart, lest they suffer the fate of those associated with that place. The time had come to cut off that apostasy from Israel, and any who remained affiliated with it would unfortunately share in its fate. They are therefore commanded to retreat from that place. The Truth requires separation from error, whether that error be in the world or in the body. We cannot call upon the earth to open up and swallow

apostates today, nor can we call down fire from heaven, as Moses was capable of doing. The only disciplinary action in the hands of the ecclesia today is that of the withdrawal of fellowship, and it is used for the same purpose Moses used his form of discipline – for the purpose of preserving the Truth and protecting the ecclesia. As Moses, we must plead with the ecclesia to “*get you up*” from the house of the WCF, BASF, NASU/UA08, for the judgment of the scriptures has been passed. Sometimes we must even warn brethren to “*get you up*” from the company of particular brethren, such as Kyle Tucker, just as Moses did. We must warn before we withdraw, though many do not listen, as was the case with Korah’s company. When the sympathizers to the apostasy rose up the next day, they were cut off also.

- Num 16:41 – “*But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.*”
- Num 16:45 – “*Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.*”
- Num 16:49 “*Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.*”

Again Moses faces the accusation of murder, though this time the nation claims it was actually committed. It was only Moses’ and Aaron’s intercessory atoning act that stayed the destroying plague. Without their action, the whole congregation may have been consumed. Peter’s words in 2nd Peter 2:17-20 apply to this situation as much as they do to any today: “*These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*”

These rebellious ones promised liberty from Moses’ rule, but they were the servants of corrupt minds which resulted in their physical corruption. Jude speaks of this event and brings out the exhortation in Jude 6-13, as does Peter in 2 Pet. 2:4, 9-10.

Moses’ example to us

All these events in Moses’ life serve as examples to us, as well as encouragement. Rom 15:4-6 – “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye*

may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Stephen, whose words we have read from in Acts 7, brought the lesson of Moses’ life out for his contemporaries, and we should too. This, unfortunately, may not be received any more readily than it was by those of Stephen’s day. Act 7:51-60 – “*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*”

There are still those who will cry with a loud voice and stop their ears at the sound of the Truth boldly proclaimed. If they could, such would cast us out of the city and stone us with stones. This is the nature of their mentality. It did not change from Moses’ day to Stephen’s, and it has not changed from Stephen’s to ours, it is only better regulated by the laws of the society we have been blessed to live in.

The ecclesia still suffers with those desiring to return to the ways of the old man. There is still an unwillingness to hear and obey the word of God. There are those who murmur against those willing to proclaim the way of the LORD openly. It is still common to hear personal attacks against such meek brethren. There are still accusations of deceitfulness made against them. There are still accusations of authoritarianism, self-elevation, and the seeking of preeminence against those who stand firmly on the principles of the Truth. There are still those who seek to subvert them in their execution of the judgments of Yahweh in any way possible. There are even accusations of murder, though they are slightly disguised in phrases such as “discourage our young people and those weak in the Truth”, or “you are saying they won’t be in the Kingdom” when fellowship is withdrawn. Such accusations bear a great resemblance to those leveled against Moses, and these accusations are as legitimate as they were then.

Men of action, such as Moses, have proven useful to Yahweh’s purpose. The Truth enjoins an “earnest contention” for it upon all the Saints. This will necessarily result in an “earnest contention” against error when it approaches

too close to the ecclesia. The true friends of Yahweh have never been discouraged by an “earnest contention” for the Faith, nor will they ever be. The reason we have so many who disagree with the defense of the Faith today is simple: there are fewer true friends of Yahweh present. Let us remember the affliction suffered by Moses, and the patience he manifested throughout his life, as we face similar trials. Let us gain the exhortation from his life to continue steadfast in the face of great opposition.

- **1st Pet. 4:12-14, 19** – *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” ... “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”*
- **1st Cor. 10:13** – *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*
- **1st Pet. 1:3-9** – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: (7) That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (8) Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (9) Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*
- **Jas 5:7-11** – *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. (8) Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. (9) Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. (10) Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. (11) Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

Adam Kuipers

LESSONS FROM ECCLESIASTES

PART 1

Man’s Opportunity Limited by Time *Ecclesiastes 3*



THE third chapter of Ecclesiastes seems to be divisible into four sections, they are:

1. A divinely appointed timetable for all humanity - verses 1-8
2. There is gladness and joy for those who willingly submit themselves to God’s appointed times – verses 9-15
3. To these submissive, there is a time of judgment - verses 16-18
4. There is a common end to all flesh – verses 19-22

Solomon’s prospectus on time and man’s relation to it is an important aspect of this study, for it is essential that we be acutely aware of the limitations of time. Everything we do is governed by time, even our very lives are subject to determined limits.

In the first 8 verses of this chapter the word time is used 29 times. The Hebrew word for time is “*adar*” and it is defined as to, advance, to pass on, to continue, to pass by, or to take away. Merriam-Webster says that time is a “*nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past, through present, to future*”.

Time is actually a very complex series of calculations that has to do with gravitational and relative velocity time dilation. For our consideration, however, the important aspect of time is our specific and individual relation to it, and how we perceive it.

Whether we see ourselves as passing through time, or that time is passing us by makes no difference. The only thing that really matters is that as each second ticks away, the less of it we have to work with.

We see time in three general categories, the past, the present and the future.

1. There is the past whose reality is bound up in historical data and accounts, in pictures, monuments and memories. Though real for the time then present, the past no longer exists.

2. We live in the present but only for a millisecond at a time, what was the present immediately becomes a memory as it fades farther and farther into the past.
3. Though we plan for and have hopes and dreams of the future, we at the same time are made to realize the uncertainty of the future, because it does not yet exist.

No doubt the future will come, but will we be a part of it? This is where our relation to time becomes all important, for it is encompassed in the word “uncertain”.

For the most part I think we all feel fairly secure in our lives, and rightly so, but the reality of it all is that our very lives hang precariously by a thread, and that thread may break at any moment. If it does, then our lives and all that we’ve done, simply become someone else’s memories.

We’re reminded of James 4:14 where the apostle writes, *“Where as ye know not what shall come on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”*.

For everything there is an appointed time and a season to every purpose. A season is a fixed moment in time, but not necessarily of specific duration, but with determined limits as the will of the Eternal Spirit may dictate.

- **Job 7:1** says, *“Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?”* Here a hireling refers to a worker or servant who is hired on a temporary basis. He might work for a day or for a year, but when his employment expires he departs.
- **Psa. 89:47** - *“Remember how short my time is, wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?”*
- **Psalms 90:10** says: *“the days of our years are threescore and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away”*.

We know by the Scripture and by our own experience that the seasons of our lives are of uncertain duration. We think that even 70 to 80 years is a long time, but it all depends on where we are in relation to that time frame. As Einstein said, *time is relative* and so also is our perception of it.

It has been suggested that a proper heading for Ecclesiastes chapter 3 would be, “Man’s Opportunity Limited by Time”; so all of the aforesaid, we see, is related to that heading.

We do not intend to be morbid, nor do we suggest any undue anxiety about our limited amount of time, but only that we think clearly and unambiguously and keep our lives and our thinking in perspective as is relative to the scripture

and to time. We ask that each of you keep these things in the most sensible corner of your hearts as we examine the context of this chapter.

At the book of Ecclesiastes is the heading, “Ecclesiastes or the Preacher”. Here the word “Ecclesiastes” is an appellative used to describe a person or a thing. For example words like doctor, mother, father, and lawyer are all appellatives.

Ecclesiastes is a transliteration of the Hebrew “*koheleth*”, which means an assembler, or convener. The root from which this is derived is “*kahal*” to call, assemble or to gather. Since the word was transliterated we can easily see the connection to the Greek word *Ek-klesis* and the meanings are practically identical.

When we associate the appellative “*koheleth*” to the preacher, that is Solomon, we see that he is the one who assembles or collects proverbs and expressions of godly wisdom and understanding. This collection of wise and true sayings recorded here is a reflection of the wisdom and understanding granted to Solomon who was the son of one who was a man after God’s own heart.

The wisdom of Solomon

1st Kings 3:5-12 reads as follows: *“In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.”*

So the wisdom of Solomon is that granted to him by divine oracle and as a result, the words of Solomon reflect the wise counsel of Yahweh. As we read this book it becomes obvious almost immediately what Solomon’s opinion of man and his struggle amount to.

All is vanity

In Ecclesiastes 1:2, 13-14, we find these words – *“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”* Here the word “vanity” is from; *“hebeh-habel”* which suggest emptiness, something transitory, and unsatisfactory. The idea presented is that man in general is in a state of transition, working to enjoy the fruit of his labor, and to take pleasure in the gifts that the creator has provided for all mankind.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 – *“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.”* Note that there are 28 things enumerated here in these 8 verses, and we know that 28 is a multiple of 7. Can we see then, some sort of completeness in our appointed times and the seasons of our lives?

As we see man occupying his time in his labor and taking pleasure in the fruit of his doings, Solomon asks the question in verse 9 – *“what profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?”* Man is born, he lives, he works, he loves, he dies, and the Preacher says it’s all empty, meaningless, and pointless. It seems as if the preacher is painting a pretty bleak picture of man and his doings.

Solomon said there is a time to be born and a time to die. All of the other things that we read of in these 8 verses are things that happen in between. During the cycle of our lives we work, we gather together and when we die we have no more than we had to begin with, it’s as if we never existed. So we’re forced to ask ourselves, is that all there is, or are there other matters involved in what is written here?

A higher purpose

We think that Solomon, being filled with understanding and wisdom, has established the fact of the meaninglessness and emptiness of man’s existence without a higher purpose. In Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, verse 18, the wise man says – *“I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.”* And in verse 14 of the same chapter, he makes this statement – *“I know that,*

whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.” God doeth all these things that men might revere before him, not to tremble in fear; but to give, honor, glory, and respect.

Verse 1 of the third chapter says; *“To everything there is an appointed time, and a season to every purpose.”* To God and those who would attempt to understand the meaninglessness of the vanities of this life, there is, in fact, a purpose. The word “purpose” is derived from the Hebrew *“chephets”* and it suggest, *“A delightful, pleasant, desirable matter”*.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 says; *“for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil”*. Are we not being told that there is a day of reckoning, where the works of his people will be made manifest?

In verse 13 of chapter 12 we’re told; *“fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”*. The word “duty” here is *“dabar”*, and one of the definitive terms of that word is, “purpose”. This is the whole purpose of man. There is a delightful, pleasant, desirable matter prepared for those who realize and understand how this whole purpose is to be worked out. God not only has a purpose, that being the glorification of himself in the earth as Habakkuk 2:14 says, *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”*. But that purpose extends to those who, *“fear God and keep his commandments”*, as they will be the means of that very glorification that the prophet Habakkuk speaks of.

The following verses are applicable to our comments regarding the purpose of this third chapter of Ecclesiastes.

- **Revelation 2:7, 17, 26-28** – *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Ecclesias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (17) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Ecclesias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. (26-28) And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.”*
- **Revelation 3:5, 12, 21** – *“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (12) him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the*

name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. (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.”

- **Romans 8:22-30** – “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

If all of the other factors of Solomon’s wise sayings are done in accordance to the will of the Father, like there being a time to plant, to harvest, to build up, to tear down, a time to embrace, to love, to heal, a time to speak, and a time to keep silent, to make war, a time of peace and so on, and if they are done in an effort to glorify the name of the Eternal Spirit in our individual lives, they no doubt, will help determine our fate in an age where the concept of time will be perceived much differently.

At present, all of man’s activities are governed by time. It hedges about us in everything we do; we are imprisoned by it from the moment we are conceived, and it binds us with mighty chains that only omnipotence can break.

God’s purpose with mankind

In this 3rd chapter of Ecclesiastes there is a depiction of the purpose of God with mankind.

- As we have seen in verses 1-8 there is a divinely appointed time table for all human activity.
- Verses 9-15 speak of a joy or gladness for all those who would willingly submit to the purpose of these appointed times.
- Verses 19-22 tell us that there is a common end to all flesh.

Verses 9-15 state – “What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.”

Note that verse 10 says that we are to be exercised by the travail of life, and when we are exercised; it provides meaning to the struggle. Hebrews 12:11 compares nicely here – “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”. The key word, needless to say, is, “exercised”. When our lives are beset with trial, trouble, and tribulation, our spirits can be vulnerable and at times defeated. In my experience, I’ve thought, that if these things are a test of my faith, if I’m being weighed in the balances, I’m certain to be found wanting. Yet this is where faith should come to our rescue. The words of Paul come to mind where he said in I Corinthians 10:13, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”.

Even though time is often perceived as our enemy, it can, however, also be our ally. Time gives us a chance to reflect on our struggle, a time to analyze our faith, a time to examine ourselves, and more importantly, a chance to heal, for time tends to change our perspective on things. So instead of feeling defeated we can be thankful that the Eternal Spirit is still working with us, that we have not been turned over to a reprobate mind, but rather we are being exercised thereby in an effort to determine if our characters are suitable for the purpose of Yahweh. Is this what James was talking about when he said in his first chapter, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience”. In this verse, we find that patience has the same meaning as endurance.

Verse 15 states – “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.” The last phrase of this verse, “God requireth that which is past”, is more understandably rendered, “God seeketh that which is driven away”.

The events of man’s cycle of life continually recur. Each cycle seems to pursue the one that preceded it in an endless circle, as it were. This unchanging

sequence of events is illustrated by man's love, hate, war, labors, and so on. These are performed again and again by each succeeding generation.

This is precisely how God has arranged things, that from each generation, some, with an honest and good heart will pursue righteousness and truth, and this will continue until God's timetable demands that the era of judgment has arrived. Verse 17 says, "*I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work*". The word "judge" here is from "*shaphat*" and its implication is to vindicate or punish. So there is to be a time of vindication for righteousness, and a punishment for wickedness.

During these cycles of life Yahweh allows transgressions of his laws and statutes, but only so the works and activities of those righteous few might be made manifest. So as sure as the believer lives his life, so also sure is the appointed day when the believer shall give account for that which he hath done. 2nd Corinthians 5:10 reads - "*for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or whether it be bad*".

The nature of man

Ecclesiastes 3:19-22. "*For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*"

These verses set in perspective the nature of man, and that man should realize that in nature, his life hath no preeminence above a beast, for as the one dieth so dieth the other, and all are of the dust, and unto it, shall they return. The spirit of man is filled with pride and his soaring ego and lofty ambitions makes him think he is much better than he actually is. So man by nature thinks himself to be something he is not, when in reality he is only flesh and blood, and the scope of his being in life is extremely limited, and being unenlightened, he is much the same as the beasts of the earth.

Summary

It appears to me that Solomon has laid before us the stark reality of life, but the thing that can separate us from the destiny of the beast and those who conduct themselves as such, is our own intellectual abilities which God has given us, and if used properly these abilities can give glory to the one who has created us. God has graciously revealed his plan and purpose to his creation, and through that revelation his intent is to ultimately fill the earth with his own

glory made manifest through a company of beings who through trial and judgment will be made into moral and physical likenesses of the one who created them.

So having an intellectual ability above that of the beast of the earth, we can choose to follow God's laws and commandments. Solomon makes us aware that time is moving and we only have a very limited amount of it. The choices that we make now will determine whether we, as the beast, shall return to dust to spend eternity, or shall we see the light of day when the trump of God shall sound and the dead shall arise. So the vanity and vexation of spirit that Solomon witnessed under the sun, is seen in the workings of man during his appointed time on earth, but in spite of man's wickedness, there is a higher purpose.

"When sin entered into the world and death by sin, a rebellion commenced against God which has never been put down effectually from that day to this. It has ever gained strength, and is at the present crisis more defiant of his authority than ever. But he has declared that things will not always continue thus; for he has sworn by his own life, saying; 'as truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord'. John Thomas

Tommy Azbill

GOD WILL HAVE NO REGARD....

"God will have no regard for those who forget Him or neglect His commandments; those who sink into a state of self-service, who live exclusively for their own comfort and well-being, who let God slip from their practical recognitions; His word from their studies; His honour from their concern; His commandments from their lives, will awake to find that where life and death, and men and angels, and heaven and earth, were powerless to interpose an obstacle between them and the friendly regard of the Almighty, their own folly has done it without further remedy. God is love; but our God is also a consuming fire. He will not be mocked; He will not be put off with the fag-ends of our service. He demands the whole heart and the whole life; and he is not his own friend who refuses the call: for there will come a time when the man who has served himself will find he has served a master who can only pay him at last with tribulation, and anguish, and death; while the man who obeys the Divine call will at the same period discover that in making God his portion, he has secured the joyful eternal inheritance of all things." Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian*, Feb., 1877

THE DOCTRINE OF FELLOWSHIP

Fundamental Considerations

COMMON QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

WE wish to conclude our consideration of the Doctrine of Fellowship by addressing common questions and objections that come up when either discussing or practicing the issue of fellowship, as addressed in our previous installments. The issue of fellowship has always been one that has been surrounded with difficulties and confusion, and as we draw closer to the time of Christ's return and the Household reflects the spirit of Laodicean apathy – such only compounds the degree of confusion and anger as more tolerant, inclusive approaches to fellowship are preferred.

Why do we need a Statement of Faith as a basis of fellowship? Isn't the Bible enough?

We can do no better in explaining this matter than what we printed in the last quarter entitled: *"Fellowship and the Statement of Faith"*, from the June, 1986 *Christadelphian Advocate*. But to reiterate the matter; there are no verses in the Bible that state, *"thou shalt have a Statement of Faith"*. But considering the amount of emphatic commands in the Scriptures as to the importance of correct doctrine and moral practice, and that such depends on true fellowship, it would seem very important that a group of Bible students that claim to have "The Truth" would have that truth outlined so that the doctrines understood as fundamental are clearly and easily articulated as well as agreed upon as an acceptable basis for fellowship in order to distinguish it from the numerous numbers of "Bible based" religions of this world, as well as an agreed upon basis for fellowship.

A very explicit example was given by bro. Larry Fletcher at the Arkansas Bible School Spring Gathering this past April in his consideration as to the importance of having a Statement of Faith. He conducted an experiment in which an internet search was done on the Bible as the exclusively recognized basis for belief. Such a search brings up various churches – those which hold Trinitarian beliefs, immortal-soulism and all other crotchets of Apostate Christianity. So if everyone claims the Bible as the foundation of belief, including Christadelphians, then what are we to do in the effort to distinguish

our beliefs and basis of fellowship from the general stream of Orthodoxy who claim the same basis for their fellowship?

2nd Thessalonians 2:15 commands us to *"stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."* Interpretations of Biblical Teaching (in the hands of men) come and go, and bend or change with the whims of human thought and pride. A clear, and fully Scriptural supported statement provides a summarization of fundamental understanding of those "traditions" we are commanded to keep. There have always been rumblings within the Christadelphian body that ask, "Isn't the Bible good enough?" This is a faulty approach to the matter as we know, of course, that the Scriptures are the SUPREME and ONLY standard for Faith. That is not the issue – the issue is how do we understand what is taught in the Scriptures as a matter of shared faith and fellowship. We quote from comments made in the January, 1931 *Christadelphian Advocate* under "An Appreciative Letter":

"Unless there is a Statement of Faith what basis has an ecclesia to work upon? The mere statement that the Bible is our basis will not do, for all denominations claim that and Christadelphians have laid special emphasis upon the fact that it is 'to the Law and the Testimony.'"

From the December, 1930 *Christadelphian Advocate*:

"There is one thing, however, of which a formal Statement may be, and is, the basis, it registers a united declaration, and it is a basis of cooperation and of collective work in advocacy of the truth. The prevalence of false interpretations of Scripture has rendered it desirable that groups of intelligent believers in the Gospel that saves should set forth the main points of doctrine that they agree to uphold."

And we provide a lengthier quote from Bro. Thomas Williams out of the October, 1891 *Advocate*:

"If a man's faith is worth having, it is worth publishing in a well-defined form; so that others may examine it, accept it or reject it; fellowship it or repudiate it...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."

"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.”

“... 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.”

We summarize the value and importance of having an agreed upon Statement of Faith/Beliefs in with the following.

- With the modern day revival of Apostolic Truth there was a recognition that Bible Truth did not match the beliefs of mainstream Christianity, whether it be Catholicism or Protestantism.
- A Statement developed to summarize such beliefs in contrast to other religious beliefs that exist.
- A guide for the maintaining of sound scriptural teaching under the Christadelphian name.
- Used to make sure that there is a clear basis of agreement or commonality – fellowship.
- A summarized form that presently includes Doctrines to be believed and taught; Doctrines to be rejected; and a summarization of the Commandments of Christ.
- By having a Statement of Faith we do not and should not be indicating that we put such a “Statement” on equal footing with the Scriptures. A Statement of Faith can only be of value if it is a faithful summary of Bible Truth – COMPLETELY supported by Scripture.
- As a Basis of Fellowship, a Statement can be of no value unless fellowship is in harmony with such stated beliefs. Merely stating a “Basis of Fellowship” as a matter of official policy, leaving it on the heads of those congregated to decide for themselves as to whether or not they are in agreement can only foster disunity rather than unity – especially when it is known that there are those present (whether invited or not) whose beliefs and or actions undermine or directly oppose the doctrines that are claimed to be agreed upon. A Statement must not only be clearly defined, but also enforced in regard to fellowship practices.

The “spirit of Diotrephes”

In recent times, we have heard it stated in regard to those who will not fellowship certain individuals due to error – that such are guilty of practicing

“the spirit of Diotrephes”, by rejecting one of “Christ’s own”.

Diotrephes was a self-promoting brother who was mentioned and condemned by name by the Apostle John in his 3rd Epistle (vv 9,10). Diotrephes was guilty of striving for “the preeminence” in the ecclesia, and as a matter of reaching for power rejected the Apostle John himself, and rejecting any others who would receive other such faithful brethren, even to the point of casting them out of the ecclesia.

Now, the evil should be clear here: Out of prideful ambition and control over his home ecclesia, Diotrephes was willing to reject the **Divinely appointed** Apostle himself and any others who were in agreement with him (John, that is). This example can have no application to, nor can it nullify the numerous Scriptural commands, as explicitly outlined in previous articles, as to the directions to have no fellowship with error, and to decisively “reject an heretic”. John was no heretic, and his authority should have been without dispute or opposition.

Great care must be taken to not falsely accuse someone of error and subsequently reject them where facts are not fully perceived. But to falsely accuse those of exhibiting “the spirit of Diotrophes” where Scriptural duty is being faithfully carried out in regard to error is a gross misapplication of Divine teaching.

Does “ecclesial autonomy” prohibit other ecclesias from expressing concern or carrying out dissociation from an individual or from an ecclesia due to false teaching or the tolerance thereof?

There can be no question that the Community of Believers, and its individual ecclesias that make up such a community, are not bound and should not be bound to a centralization of power and authority as is seen in the Apostate Christian world. It was such a centralization of power that brought about the rise of the Roman Catholic system. The early ecclesias were set up under the guidance of “elders” and brethren who were to act as servants to the needs of the individual ecclesias and not as overlords. That individual ecclesias must maintain the control to set policy and procedures for the ability of the ecclesia to operate in “decency and in order” should be without question. No outside source has the Scriptural right to dictate what an ecclesia can or cannot do in regard to its operation.

At the same time, it must be remembered that we are all joined together as one Household under Christ – One Body of Believers that constitute the Christ Ecclesia **in its entirety**. We are bound together, through baptism into Christ, in the bonds of the Truth. What affects one ecclesia, invariably affects another and then another – especially if it is error that goes unchecked or is promoted by the ecclesia whose responsibility it was to deal with the original problem that

arose in their midst in the first place. Leaven does not stay confined to an individual ecclesia if that ecclesia does not squelch such leaven in a timely, Scripturally proscribed manner – even to the point of warning other ecclesias if necessary. Such is especially true as it relates to the great deal of interconnectivity that the Believers have in these last days due to ease of travel and communication.

We again draw from perspectives of brethren from the past:

“The fact that the body is held responsible for the inconsistencies of its members illustrate a principle that runs through the entire scriptures, exhibited more particularly in the history of Israel. The lesson for us to learn from this is that we cannot be individually independent; we have obligations to each other that we must not ignore. In ecclesial matters and in all matters affecting the welfare of the Truth my business is yours and yours is mine. We are brought together in mutual compact under the same name – a name whose honor and reputation are made dependent on conduct. Here, brethren, we must face the fact that great responsibilities devolve upon us, commensurate with the great privileges and high honor to which the Truth has brought us into relation.” Thomas Williams, *The Christadelphian Advocate*, March, 1886

Also:

“When, therefore, it is reported that any brother or ecclesia is following false doctrine, it is not only permitted, but it is obligatory on other brethren and ecclesias to “enquire and make search, and ask diligently” to see whether it be true and the thing certain. If it is, the responsibility of their position leaves no option but that of repudiating complicity with the evil.” J.J. Andrew, *The Christadelphian*, July 1886

What of those of the seven ecclesias who are spoken of as their garments being “undefiled”?

In regard to fellowship, we have heard it contended that since there were individuals who did not embrace the falsehood present in their ecclesias and were not individually condemned (such as Thyatira and Sardis), that such indicates that it is acceptable to remain in fellowship in situations where error is tolerated.

We have to remember, that if the ecclesias Christ addressed did not deal with the problems and tolerance of evil in those ecclesias, that God would deal with it. This did not mean that God would necessarily deliver some miraculous punishment. Though they might continue to exist as congregations, their recognition as lightstands by Christ would be removed – repentance was required. Will any true believer continue in fellowship with those who continue to tolerate the adulteration of the truth or will they be found among those where the light of truth has become non-existent in its purity?

Parable of the Wheat & Tares – Matt. 13:24-30

This parable is often pointed to as definitive proof that no action should be taken against those in error, and that they should be allowed to continue within the ecclesial setting – leaving it for Christ to deal with at his Return. In summarization of the parable itself: A man is spoken of sowing “*good seed in the field*” (vs. 24). Christ goes on to explain that an “*enemy came and sowed tares also*” – “tares” being a weed that looks similar to wheat and is difficult to root out without doing harm to the wheat itself. The servants ask if they can gather up the tares (vs. 28). The master answers, in order to avoid a process that will also harm the wheat, to “*let both grow together until the harvest.*”

It is falsely assumed that the field represents the ecclesia, and therefore the good wheat and “tares” are representative of the righteous and unrighteous believers – something which can only finally be discerned by Christ at the Judgment. Christ clearly defines the context of which he speaks of later in verse 38 in his explanation to his disciples – “*The field is the world* (Gr. kosmos).” Christ is speaking of the present world or order of things at large and not of the ecclesia exclusively. The time of judgment upon the world at large is not yet – but the Scriptures teach us of the fiery end of this present kosmos and all who support its continued existence (e.g. Mal. 4:3; 2nd Peter 3:12, 13; Rom. 3:6). To unleash such destructive force upon the world before the harvest of the righteous is not according to God’s plan. They must be first rescued out of it, before the Judgments of God are belligerently poured out upon a defiant and apostate world.

Even if, as some argue, this parable is in fact a reference to the righteous and unrighteous within the ecclesial setting – there are numerous references (as already listed in this series) that clearly address the removal of those from the ecclesial setting that unrepentantly act as a known leaven influence, counter to the Doctrines of Christ (“a heretic...reject”, etc. Tit. 3:10). The only plausible argument that might be accepted in arguing that this parable is in reference to the ecclesia is the fact that where the thoughts and intentions of the heart are not openly perceived or of sin conducted in secret – that it then becomes impossible to make clear discernment between the righteous and unrighteous. It is not for us to make final condemnatory judgment upon anyone – such will in fact be taken care of when Christ returns.

Matthew 18:15-17

This passage provides one of the most misunderstood and misapplied passages in Christadelphia today. It should be clearly recognized that the inability to bring about repentance by the offender involves their rejection by the ecclesia (verse 17). But unfortunately these very clear instructions of Christ are used as a way to bog down and derail attempts to deal with the erroneous teachings and actions that threaten the Truth in these last days.

First of all – what is the proper application for Matthew 18? Christ

addresses it as a matter of personal offence of one brother against another – “*if thy brother trespass against thee.*” It also seems to be clear that it is a trespass that does not seem to be openly known by others. Therefore, an extremely wise step by step process is put into place before it gets out of hand, and to give opportunity to either clear any misperceptions or to give opportunity for repentance before unneeded embarrassment or anger sets in and harsher action is needed. It gives opportunity for repentance on the part of the offender and resolution of a perceived breach on the one offended against; as well as giving opportunity for repentance before defiance sets in. As the process carries forward to the attention of a few witnesses and then later to the whole ecclesia, if repentance/resolution is not achieved, then there comes the required result of a cutting off if a solution is not reached.

But, some hide behind “Matthew 18” in order to avoid public criticism of their efforts when they are in fact promoting error. Let it be understood, Matthew 18 is not meant for application where error has spread beyond the confines of a “trespass” of one brother against another. Such wish for critical individuals to approach them individually and privately while they continue to promote their ways in a public manner. Though, there is nothing wrong with approaching such individuals in a more private one-on-one way, with the hopes of achieving repentance – the public promotion or tolerance of error cannot appear to go unchecked in a public way. What kind of affect does it have on others who see the open declaration/practice of error, but do not see an equally motivated, open repudiation of such error – if such opposition is conducted in secret? Is there not a bigger concern at stake, a larger group to be concerned with than merely “hurting the feelings” of those who wish to promote error? “*Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear* (1st Tim. 5:20).”

It is also falsely used by those who support the error that is being promoted, or by those whose desire for peace is so strong that it is used to sweep matters out of the public discourse and to shirk duty in the dealing with error. They will say, “*why bother me with this, have you approached the brother in the spirit of Matthew 18?*” Whether or not it is affirmed that such an individual has been approached on a personal level, it doesn’t seem to make much difference. It is falsely, but strongly inferred that EVERYONE must approach the one in error according to the 1st stage of Matthew 18 before fellowship action is taken – which is completely ridiculous and not according to Scriptural teaching. But it is the essentially impossible nature of such a request that ensures that the process of dealing with error and matters of fellowship never come to fruition, by bogging such down in ludicrous and unscriptural expectations of endless discussion. The impracticality and danger of this should be seen on both an ecclesial level, and in dealing with public matters of error Community wide as well.

Fellowship at Bible Schools and Gatherings

This is no doubt a sensitive subject. We recognize the difficult nature of fellowship when much larger numbers are gathered together from various

ecclesias and ecclesial situations. But, are we given some kind of “free pass” to loosen our fellowship standards under such circumstances? Are we willing to fellowship those in these special occasions that we would not be so inclined to fellowship in our own ecclesial situations? These are not rhetorical questions, but what this writer believes has become a struggle for us all to reconcile, as the complexities of fellowship have only grown worse in recent years as many ecclesias fail to handle issues and problems in their own ecclesial settings – which then become problems for larger inter-ecclesial meetings to deal with, or has increasingly become the case - not to deal with. The issue of “Bible schools” and “gatherings” are not something which are specifically addressed in the Scriptures, as they are an activity seemingly unique to the latter day revival of The Truth – facilitated by ease of communication and travel. But if we understand that such an activity is simply a larger collection of the Christ Body, are we at liberty to relax the Scriptural commands in regard to fellowship? This writer has a difficult time justifying such an approach. Is not knowing where brethren stand the best way to approach such things? Or, if it be known where someone stands, and it is not in accordance with the Truth and the official and stated position of the special assembly, is it best to let “sleeping dogs lie” as it were and ignore the fellowship problems that have presented themselves? Is it on the heads of those in error, or is there not a special responsibility to directly deal with such individuals when possible? We have to keep in mind that it is not God that creates the complexity, nor does he cloud the solutions but it is ourselves that tend to make a mess out of things, making God’s solutions that much more difficult to execute. In the complexity of problems it is too easy for us to throw up our hands and proclaim *there is nothing that can be done*, and simply take the path of least resistance. This goes for all aspects of fellowship and the Truth in general – whether on a personal level, ecclesial or in a larger inter-ecclesial gathering setting.

Concluding Thoughts

Through this whole series on fellowship it will be noted that we have drawn upon the writings from earlier brethren quite heavily. We have not done so in order to provide definitive proof to the teachings we have expressed – for only the Scriptures can be used for such “proof”. But what we have desired to demonstrate by the use of extensive quotations, due to the neglect of the subject of fellowship in recent times, that the topic was very much once an important element in the application of Divine Truth among earlier brethren. A profound shift has taken place among Unamended Christadelphians in regard to how the subject is addressed and how it is to be (or not to be) applied. Is such a shift due to a better, more evolved understanding of Biblical teaching on the matter; a more merciful and enlightened view of what God requires of us in application of fellowship? Or, does such a shift reflect the tolerances, apathy and general “sensibilities” (so called) of these modern times? Either our earlier brethren were way too harsh and unmercifully restrictive in striving for pure doctrine in belief and practice and therefore wrong, or they were right. If they were right in

their perception of Scriptural teaching on fellowship – where does that put us today in these last moments before Christ’s Return? Brethren, may we all be found “*walking in the light*” and therefore in fellowship with God, Christ and each other when Christ returns to this earth.

A. Thomas

THE RISE OF THE IMAGE EMPIRE

On the inside/back cover of most issues of the Sanctuary-Keeper we provide a fundamental illustration of the prophetic Image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2). Included with this are quotes from bro. Thomas in regard to the end-time nature of this Image. We quote: “*While the head, breast, arms, belly, thighs, legs and toes have all existed, the feet have not yet been formed; so that it has hitherto been impossible for the colossal image to stand erect as Nebuchadnezzar saw it in his dream...It is therefore, the mission of the Autocrat (of Russia) to form the feet and set up the image before the world in all its excellent brightness and terribleness of form; that all men subject to the kingdom of Babylon may worship the work of the creator’s power (Exposition of Daniel, p. 87).”* And, “*The Russian Autocracy in its plenitude and on the verge of dissolution is the image of Nebuchadnezzar standing upon the mountains of Israel, ready to be smitten by the Stone. When Russia makes it grand move for the building up of the Image-empire, then let the reader know that the end of all things as present constituted, is at hand (Elpis Israel, preface section).”*



Brethren, we are witnessing a building up as we speak. Not necessarily a “grand move” as of yet, but very significant moves have been made by Russia in recent weeks that should bring excitement and joy to those who are watching. Make no mistake that the drive for energy dominance is one of the leading factors that is shaping Russian economic and geo-political maneuverings both in the Middle East and in Europe. (We cannot forget that religious motives play heavily into Russian actions as well, especially when it makes its final push towards, and into the Land of Israel.)

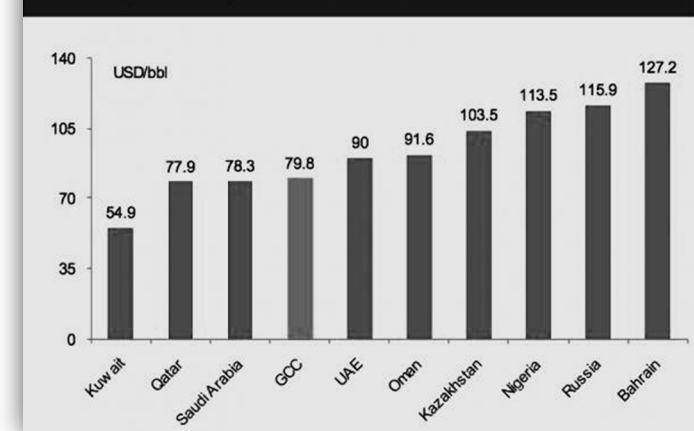
Control of oil prices

An interesting report as posted by *World Net Daily* in early July – “*Tensions rise between Russia, Saudi Arabia*”. The article outlined the fact that not only were critical

tensions rising between Russia and Saudi Arabia over the Saudis’ support of the Syrian rebels and their opposition to the Iranians, but that Russia was furious with Saudi Arabia over oil production. The Saudis have refused to reduce their oil production in order to keep oil prices at a more reasonable level as to not stifle world economic recovery. But Russia desires higher oil prices to help its economic recovery and to allow more money to be allotted for the rebuilding of their military capability in order to keep up with Western military technological advancements. The price of oil is critical as various oil producing countries require different price levels per barrel just in order to break even. Russia requires a much higher price than does a Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. We provide the following graph to demonstrate (thanks to bro. Ken Zlotkowski for sharing this):

Since oil prices have been hovering around the \$90 per barrel mark (though rising), we can see the great problem that this creates for Russia who needs at least \$116 just to break even, while Saudi Arabia is turning a modest profit and has been able to balance its budget – something that other OPEC and non-OPEC members have not been able to do.

Figure 1: Breakeven oil prices for various oil exporters (Brent equivalent prices)



Through this, we see the remarkable need for Russia to seek control over the flow of energy, which beside oil also includes natural gas. As such is the primary source of the Russian economy, we should clearly see that the rise of Israel as an energy dynamo and prospective exporter of energy to Europe (Russia’s primary customer) and a competitor to current Russian monopolies will be something that Russia will not and cannot allow to stand. This leads us to the next very interesting development.

Russian “bailout” of Greece and Cyprus

The European financial crisis is not without great significance in regard to the placing together of the pieces of the puzzle for the Latter Day alignment of nations. It has been long expected by Believers that Europe will fall under the dominance of Russia. The current financial crisis is giving us (we believe) the preliminary steps as to how that might happen, to a certain degree.

It was reported by Debka on July 12th, that Russia's deployment of 11 warships to the Mediterranean was much more than just a show of support to Assad's fight to hold on to Syria. But that Putin "*had his eye firmly fixed on the up-and-coming gas and oil fields of the eastern Mediterranean.*" It goes on to say that "*Russian warships were also on hand to secure the hottest new acquisitions about to fall in Moscow's lap.*" What is the "hot new acquisition"? Russia now has full and complete control over the energy assets of Greece and Cyprus (the other beneficiaries, beside Israel, of the Mediterranean gas finds). This includes: **power stations, oil and gas import firms, oil and gas pipelines running through the country - AND all its offshore Mediterranean and Aegean oil and gas fields, both developed and still in the planning stage.** Both Greece and Cyprus

were in desperate need of bailouts, and leery of the restrictions offered by Brussels and Germany they decided to sell out to Russia – who was all too willing to help. Russia will have ALL administrative (Gazprom) and strategic control of their energy industries. And if you control a countries banks or energy supply – you control the whole country. Both Greece and Cyprus have fallen to Russia without a shot being fired. What other faltering European countries are about to fall into the loving embrace of uncle Vladimir?

And, as Israel had been forging close alliances with Greece and Cyprus over development of the gas fields and the supply of such, as Israel has its eyes on selling its wares to Europe – what does this do now that Russia controls the strategic spigots? Russia now has a permanent foothold in the Mediterranean energy market – putting Israel and Russia head to head as competitors. Putin has also offered Gazprom financing to Israel for the development of their offshore fields and for the construction of pipelines – but Israel has not yet given an answer. Putin has tried to sell this as a way to keep Israel "secure", in that neighboring countries would never attack a Russian platform or pumping station. So, does Russia want what Israel has? – ABSOLUTELY.

Russian showdown with the West over Syria

The Syrian conflict, which essentially amounts to a civil war, is still being played out even as we write these observations. Assad is currently on the defensive, with Damascus itself under siege by the Syrian Rebel movement. How exactly this will play out is difficult to tell at this moment (though this may be answered by the time this is mailed out). Will Assad go the way of Mubarek or will he be able to hold on? No doubt Russia will secure its interests in Syria (including the deep water naval port at Tartus) no matter what. What certainly has been interesting is the showdown of wills that this has created between Russia and Iran on one side, and then the Western "Tarshish" powers including Saudi Arabia on the other. The West supports the rebel cause while Russia severely opposes it with defensive weaponry and "advisors" already on the ground in Syria in support of Assad. The downing of a Turkish



bomber a few weeks ago was not the action of Syria, but of Russian anti-aircraft defenses manned by Russian (not Syrian) personnel.

On June 19th, the Russian ship "MV Alaed" out of the Russian port of Kalingrad, which was shipping arms and attack helicopters to Syria, was turned back off of the coast of Scotland when its insurance coverage was revoked by the British firm *Standard Club*. This was quite a tactical success by the Brits, but no doubt a great source of irritation for Russian interests and another example of the geo-political battle line that is being drawn over the Syrian issue. Russia and China have vetoed any proposed UN sanctions against Syria – which continues to give Assad a lifeline.

Israel

The Syrian issue has of course drawn Israel into a critical state. Iran, Syria and Hezbollah look to increase attacks on Israel, with Israel being blamed (along with other Western countries) for stoking the rebel fires – and also blaming them on the recent attacks on Assad's very inner circle. Israel finds itself in a tough position as Syria's chemical weapons stash comes up for grabs, and as Iran greatly desires to counter what is perceived as an imminent attack on its own nuclear installations. With the mess in Egypt, bedlam in Syria and the pressure to do something to Iran now – Israel is surrounded by chaos. Something is going to have to give to relieve the great pressures that have been building. But, Russia has already made it clear that an attack on Iran and/or Syria will be "an attack on Moscow". Quite a precarious situation for Israel.

Dismal economic outlook

And while such pressures build, the Israeli economy keeps moving right along with the nations of the world (especially Europe) teetering on the edge of collapse. Great pressures are being put on weakening European nations to surrender their economic sovereignties in order to save the EU and to create a "Super Europe" – giving a strong Germany the oversight. They have already achieved political and judicial supremacy over the EU – with the final nail in the coffin being economic surrender. With Russia asserting its military will, and having already asserted its power over the European energy supply and now in the Mediterranean; and with a strengthening Germany taking advantage of the EU chaos for its own economic and political benefit – and with both Russia and Germany growing closer together - we see the Gogian/Magogian pieces (Ezek. 38) coming together. Even if the economies of the world go over the proverbial cliff in the near future, such will not have the same paralyzing effect on Russia, in that it is able to function with much less than other highly developed countries – though it will see the opportunity and need to secure its economic interests and to put a strategic stake through the heart of its Western/Tarshish enemies. Who lies in the cross-hairs to fulfill this purpose? Israel!!

Brethren, we must not be trapped into a *normalcy bias* condition – believing (consciously or unconsciously) that things will continue as they always have. World events are about to break loose, the Return of Christ is imminent, and the troubles of the Brotherhood are soon to be a fading memory. The question is – *Are we ready?*

S.K.