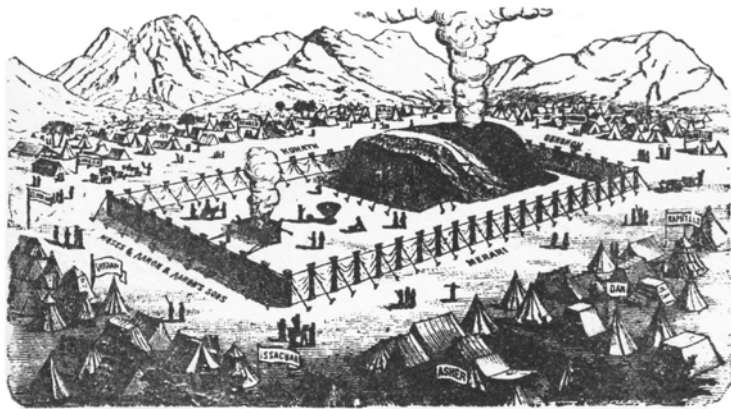


THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER

A Magazine for the Exposition and Defense of The Holy Scriptures



The Russian Bear Makes a Dramatic Move



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3rd Quarter 2008

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Fundamental truths illustrated

Back Cover

"I WILL BE"

The **Sanctuary-Keeper** is published on a quarterly basis. The doctrinal position of this magazine is founded exclusively on the principles of Bible Truth as outlined and defined in *The Christadelphian Unamended Statement of Faith*

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P.O. Box 13045
Maumelle, AR 72113

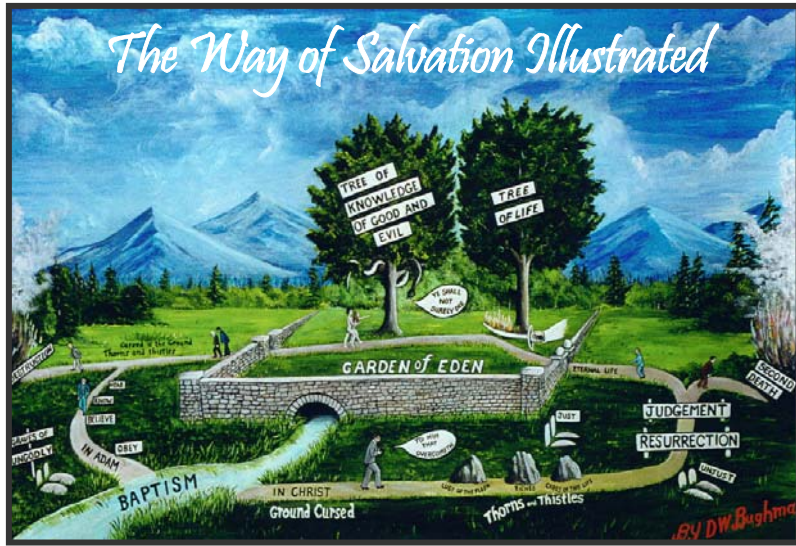
NEW PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

→ A New Sunday School Booklet has been compiled and is now ready for purchase. It is 130 pages and made up of 42 lessons on fundamental subject matter, written by an assortment of Unamended brethren. Cost of the booklet is \$7.50 and can be purchased by contacting bro. Bob Conrad of the St. Louis, MO ecclesia. Check the Ecclesial Directory for phone and address or e-mail: conradsmo.1@juno.com

→ *The Christadelphian Advocate*, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 (1885-1887) See page 19 for more information.

CLINTON, AR ECCLESIA STUDY WEEKEND

The Clinton, AR Ecclesia has announced their annual Study weekend for October 4th – 5th, 2008. The subject will be "The Restoration of Israel". Six classes will be conducted by Bre. Lou Locklear and Sid Strickland. For more information please contact bro. Adam Kuipers: 501-733-0087 or e-mail at: standinthegaps@hotmail.com



THE ORIGIN AND EXTENT OF THE KINGDOM OF MEN

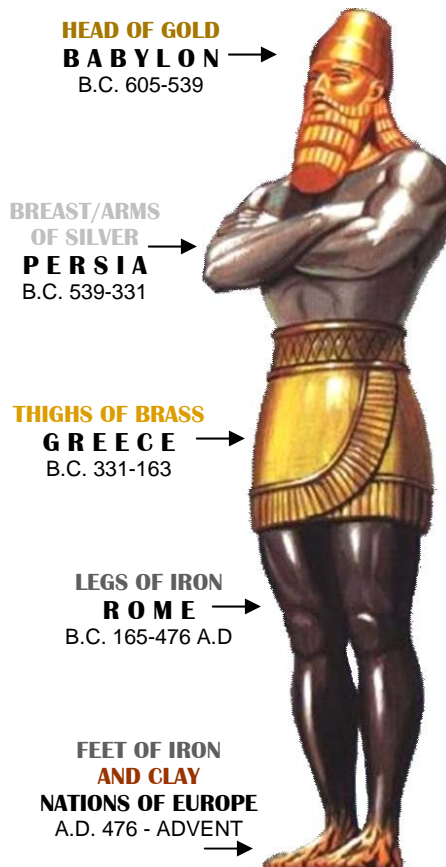
In taking a general survey of the contents of the Book of Daniel, it may be seen that two great powers are the principal subjects of its predictions. The one is styled the KINGDOM OF MEN (Dan. 4:17) and the other the KINGDOM OF GOD (Dan. 2:44; 4:3; 7:27)...It will be seen that the Kingdom of men has been diversified in its constitution, extent and throne since its foundation by Nimrod to the present time. It has nevertheless been the same Nimroudian kingdom with Babylon and Assyria for its characteristics. (Exposition of Daniel, pp. 7,8)

THE FEET OF THE IMAGE

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 its creator's power. (Exposition of Daniel, p. 87)

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE IMAGE

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 its grand move for the building up of its Image-empire, then let the reader know that the end of all things as present constituted, is at hand. (Elpis Israel, preface)



“I WILL BE”

When Moses stood by the burning bush, wondering at the manifestation of the power of God displayed in his presence, how the words of the Deity's Mighty Messenger must have thrilled and energized his whole being. “I will be, who I will.” This was and is the declared purpose of the Deity. Moses did not doubt it for one moment, though the work required of him seemed to him stupendous when it was at the first presented to him. But he well understood that God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would surely perform what ever He promised.

Certainly “I will be with thee.” What strengthening, life-imparting words were these. Who could fail, supported by the mighty arm of the God of Abraham? Yet Moses felt his own weakness, his utter insignificance in the presence of “*Ail Shaddai*, strength of mighty ones.” This feeling of self abasement in the presence of Almighty power taught him to fully rely upon the great power of God's unchanging Word.

Again when he stood on Pisgah's height and viewed the promise land from afar, not a doubt entered his mind; God had promised. The long, wearisome journey was ended for Moses, he must die and go out of existence for thousands of years before he could arise to enter the land. Surely, he was the meekest of men, for he never murmured even under this great disappointment. “Moses was faithful in all his house”. Faithful unto death, faithful as Jesus was – “And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, (for what?) for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

Christ is our Joshua, and by and with him, we shall enter the land to be “mighty ones.” The “*Yahweh Tizvaoth*, The who shall be hosts” shall we be. Certainly, “I will be who I will be.” In the waiting time let us:

*Be always faithful, kind and true;
The angels note all we say and do;
In the Book it is written for good or ill,
Be diligent in doing the Father's will.
What I say unto you, I say unto all,
Watch and pray, for the Master's call.*

*Loosely hang the keys in the locks,
The Master stands at the door and knocks,
Should any man hear his voice,
While weaving threads of gold,
Till his garments are shining in every fold.*

E.J. St. John

The Christadelphian Advocate, August 1887

THE SANCTUARY – KEEPER

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

*“Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar”
Num. 18:5*

*“Ye are...an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.”
I Peter 2:5*

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

VOLUME 18

3rd QUARTER, 2008

NUMBER 3

BIDDING “GOD SPEED”

Selected words of wisdom from our past

In the Holy Scriptures we will find the expression “God speed” twice, and in both instances there is a negative instruction. Once, in 2nd John 10, the admonition is to not bid certain ones God speed, and second, in 2nd John 11, the dictum is, “For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” The entirety of the book of 2nd John emphasizes the duty of the ecclesia to maintain the proper standards of the truth. John announces his love for the ecclesia, rejoices that they were walking in the truth, and encourages them to love one another which he defines as walking after God’s commandments. He warns them of the many deceivers around them who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, which deceivers he labels as antichrist. One who believes that Jesus Christ was not of the Adamic flesh believes in another Jesus than the one preached by the apostles. The religious world around us believes in an entirely different Jesus than that presented in the Bible. It is imperative that Jesus be seen as having come in the flesh if we are to perceive him correctly.

John further urges the ecclesia, the elect lady and her children of verse 1, to “look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” Any warning given by inspired writers of the Bible are in effect

commandments of God. John was not offering a casual suggestion that the ecclesia should feel comfortable about its status, but he was commanding them to take stock of their spiritual and doctrinal values. The seriousness of his counsel is seen in the words that follow: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” It appears from this verse that this is one wrongful act or position, that of transgressing and abiding not in the doctrine of Christ. The verbs do not appear to be inferring two separate and distinct positions.

Then we come to the warning and course of action required in the text, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” To receive one into your house is fellowship – reciprocity of kind feelings. The ecclesia was warned that, in the particular instance of transgressing and abiding not in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, fellowship should not continue with such a one. To continue in fellowship is equal to agreeing with such transgression and false concept of Christ’s nature.

This illustration in the inspired Word is one example of an individual believer’s walk and belief which cannot be countenanced by an ecclesia. If one came into our midst, and this does not mean they have to migrate from other cities or states—they can arise in our midst – who transgresses and believes the kingdom has already been set up, then he would be unacceptable for our fellowship or good wishes. We would not want to bid him God speed in such belief. The same could be said if a bigamist came into our midst; we could not bid him God speed in such position. The ecclesia who fails to act against such transgression is guilty of the doctrine of toleration or implied consent. Recognizing that the ecclesia is not a place for militants to constantly search for matters of minor importance, we nevertheless must be vigilant, each one of us, to see that our standards are maintained as we have received them. Without maintenance they are sure to decline in effectiveness. Soon we would be just another church of the multitudinous denominations of Christendom. What keeps us a separate and distinct people is our perseverance for truth in all important matters. In connection with this we suggest that the section of the Statement of Faith on “The Commandments of Christ” be reviewed by each of us.

In regard to the maintenance above referred to, many times the onus has been placed on the arranging or managing brethren of the ecclesia. Some will ask, “What are the arranging brothers going to do about this?” True, the arranging brethren do have a responsibility of maintenance of correct standards, but they do not have it all. We cannot depend on the arranging brethren to save us; we must have definite convictions and be able to stand up for those convictions as individuals. At the judgment seat Christ is not going to say to us, “You were in an ecclesia where the arranging brethren allowed regrettable practices and doctrines, so you are free from any guilt or responsibility, therefore you will be allowed to enter the kingdom.”

On the other hand, the arranging brethren cannot wash their hands by saying, "We told him not to do it, but he went ahead anyway, so that's about all we can do." The dictum in 2nd John is to "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Even though the word "God speed" is given in the Authorized Version as two words, it is from the single Greek word, *chairō*, meaning "be glad" or "rejoice." It is easy to see what the apostle means here - Do not rejoice in wrong actions or beliefs, do not agree and sympathize with the wrong-doer, do not express gladness at what has been done, but rather reprove it so its cancer does not spread. Love for our brother, from Paul's analysis in 1 Corinthians 13, "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." From a dictionary definition, Godspeed (a single word) means "good fortune; success; a wish for the welfare of a person starting on a journey or venture." We often use this expression to well-wish someone leaving our midst to travel home. We want to see them protected from harm and granted the blessing of continuing in their race for life. To such an one who can be described as antichrist, of which the illustration in 2 John is only one, we cannot bid them God speed, or else we partake of their evil deeds.

An ecclesia is a group of people called out of the Gentile world by the good news and glad tidings of the gospel. It is not merely a social group who agrees to get along with one another. The Truth has to come first and the social amenities are subsidiary. An ecclesia, of which most of us are a part, is designed to help and strengthen poor, weak, mortals to become better in their spiritual aptitude. It is made up of weak, imperfect people who are capable of erring in judgment, so judgment should not be hasty and without mercy. But we must remember the ecclesia is founded upon a covenant made by each individual member that "all that the Lord hath said, that will we do." An ecclesia is not an institution where each member does as he pleases, and disregards the well-being of the whole.

The illustration of Romans 14 involving the eating of meats serves as a good example. Paul made it clear that eating of meats or observing of a certain day were not wrong in themselves. But, there was a greater responsibility than merely participating in such practices, and that was the conscience of others in the ecclesia. "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died" (vs. 15). We can have our way and disregard the conscience of others, or we can yield to our brother's weak conscience and help him. Mind you, this is in things which are not specifically forbidden by the Word, such as the option of eating meat or whatever its parallel might be. Later Paul says, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (vs. 21).

I have had a reasonable amount of experience with situations such as the bidding of God speed teaching of 2 John. In a great majority of the instances the party who opposes the wrong-doing comes under more criticism than the wrong-doer. The wrong-doer is made a martyr while his critic is often treated as a heathen and a publican for expressing views which he genuinely believes to be consistent with the

teachings of the Word. He is often viewed as a trouble-maker and a factionist. Rarely is he called aside and kindly asked to review the Bible principles upon which he bases his claims. And even more rarely is he given the kindness of the statement, "Well, I have respect for your viewpoint, and feel that you are sincere in it, but I cannot quite see it the same way."

Let us recognize that there are instances where the ecclesia must act to not receive some into our house, or to put it another way, to disassociate ourselves from fellowship from those who depart from the doctrines of Christ. Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own body; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17). Some mistake this for witch-hunting – looking for an excuse to cast out someone for a minor infraction. May the Lord spare all of us from such an attitude. On the other hand, if the ecclesia is unwilling to preserve its stand on principles, there is no good reason why the Pope of Rome should be excluded from our services.

Paul further writes, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1st Cor. 5:11-13). Here the ecclesia is instructed to put away from their company certain brethren whose walk is contrary to Christ's commandments. The ecclesia has a duty to maintain its integrity, not to cater to the special interests of those socially acceptable to them.

Again Paul writes, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2nd Thess. 3:6). There is but one avenue to follow here: the ecclesia is not to countenance disorderly walk. Experienced brethren recognize that the apostle is not here talking about mistakes or weaknesses, for we are all guilty of these. Disorderly walk is habitual and locked-in practices which are the lifestyle and continued indulgence by a brother. Certainly there is no pleasure in withdrawing from a brother. Every effort should be made to recover the offender. Counsel should be given as to the dangers of his losing his crown of life, and the secondary danger of causing discord in the ecclesia. These are perilous times in which we live, ones which present ominous threats to our individual and ecclesial spiritual prosperity.

James Stanton

The Sanctuary-Keeper, June 1988

Also included in the compilation: *We Have An Advocate*

THE INWARD MAN

Luke 11:37-39

“And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.”

Jesus, in these verses, is criticizing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The phrase “inward part” as related to hypocrisy is one of the most discussed and harshly criticized conditions in the Bible, because God is concerned with the inward things of the heart. He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart and the inmost secrets of the heart are made known to Him. It is by these standards that the destiny of a man is determined; not by any pretentious outward manifestation. It is true that in a general sense “a tree is known by its fruits,” and that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;” but there are exceptions and these fall under the heading of hypocrisy.

True Christadelphians (brethren in Christ) are distinguished from mere pretenders to the word, by their works. True Christadelphians are virtuous and upright people. They believe the Truth and it has separated them, and keeps them separate, from the world. It inspires them to exhibit in their daily life the moral excellence of their Father in heaven (1st Peter 2:9; Phil. 2:15). They are the enemies of unbelief and all unrighteousness (2nd Cor. 6:14-18). They are children of the Spirit inwardly and outwardly, having been begotten by the Spirit Word. God does not expect them to be perfect as He is perfect but He does expect them to meet the Divine requirements to the best of their human ability; praying always and possessing His word in their hearts. Those who, with determination and effort, exhibit to a high degree in daily life, the mercy, kindness, patience, justice and moral purity of God are God’s children and true Christadelphians.

These same principles which isolate us from the rest of the world also must isolate us from those among us who persist in the communion of false belief and teachings. There are those who accept the Truth in part, but are either unable or not willing to receive it in its entirety. Such persons claim to be “charitable” in their works and are willing to feign ignorance of or fail to recognize doctrinal diversity so long as friendliness is maintained. These are lovers of peace, and peace is certainly desirable when it can be had on a pure foundation; but these particular peace lovers are not sensitive to the foundation. These people glory in the outward man and by their teachings and actions declare the true intent of the inward man.

In these last few hours before the return of Christ there have arisen certain ones who pervert the gospel obviously seeking the satisfaction of the man after the flesh. These are pretenders to the faith; claiming to be friends but inwardly are filled with hypocrisy. Those who *contend for the Faith once delivered unto the saints* are ridiculed and made objects of condescension by such, which in effect, creates enemies.

In addition to those who pervert the Truth there are those who stand by and watch it happen. Brother Thomas once stated, “I have no sympathy with a yea and nay profession and advocacy of the Truth. It does no good to the professor, to those who are associated with him, nor to those dwelling in outer darkness” (*Herald of the Coming Age*, 1856). Here he is emphasizing the fact that there are brethren who do not challenge questionable doctrine or teaching. Their attitude towards the truth is apathetic and this complacency in no way benefits the Truth and its sincere adherents. To simply accept or reject an apparently new or different teaching without examining the details is not the way of Christ’s brethren. Sincerity and spiritual strength engenders a Berean approach to the Truth and the inward man is edified in the Lord’s name.

Keeping the sincerity of the inward man in mind, we know that the “*whole world lieth in the evil one*” (1st John 5:19). If we are to be the scriptural exceptions to this truth we must keep clear of this evil world and its traditions that would nullify the Word. Our lives must be guided by the purity of the inward man, sincere in belief with lives based on the singular foundation of the Truth. Brother Thomas also says in the same article just quoted, “The greatest and most dangerous enemies to Christ are those who pretend to be his friends, but are not faithful to his doctrine; and they are unfaithful...(in that) they would weaken the point of doctrine, or soften it for gratification of their natural feelings, or for fear of hurting feelings...and affecting their popularity” (*Herald of the Coming Age*, 1856). We are to take up a position of understanding and defense of the ancient apostolic doctrine and obedience of faith. To take such a position and to maintain it without surrender requires knowledge and faith working by a love of what has been developed by the spirit in the inward man.

A word of caution should be given here because the light of the Truth must be clearly established in the inward man before he can speak critically or accurately about the deep things of the Spirit and the foundation principles of the gospel. Our goal is to strengthen those things that remain and edify our brothers. We are to be stewards of the testimony; faithful after the example of Christ and Antipas (Rev. 1:5; 3:14; 2:13).

The outward manifestation seen in the creation of the natural world and our first parents, have their obvious temporal realities but more importantly contain inward truths of profound significance. These truths have been working from the beginning in the minds and hearts of men and women who truly seek the creator. These truths will continue to work and stimulate spiritual considerations of the Word until the

Great Truth contained in the Memorial Name finds its fulfillment in the antitypical decree “let them have dominion.”

This is exemplified in the fact that the outward part of Abel’s sacrifice was a literal lamb slain and offered acceptably to God; the inward part was “the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” The outward part of Noah’s work was the building of a literal ark for the saving of the faithful and preserving material for a new cosmos. The inward part concerned the salvation of God carried over the flood waters in perfect safety to build a new and everlasting cosmos. In the call of Abraham we have a history of outward realities but in the inward part is heard the “still small voice” of the gospel calling men out of darkness into light to receive the precious promise of salvation. The stream of light as brought into existence by the first words pronounced by God, “let there be light” has shown down through the ages and penetrated the heart, enabling those with an eye of faith to look with wonder at “the inward parts.”

All these truths have come down to us and we find that our salvation depends upon what we are in the true “inward” sense. As a body of believers we outwardly repudiate the apostate teachings of Christianity and deplore the decadence and immorality of the decaying world around us. But again, individually and as a collective body of Christadelphians (brethren in Christ), there exists the outward man and the inward man. We are all born into Adam, the outward man. However, it is the character that makes a true Christadelphian, according to the Truth of God’s revelation and his expectations for his creation. We are inwardly a creature of our own creation, so to speak, and of God’s creation in another sense. The order being first the natural then the spiritual. One is begotten by the flesh, the other by the spirit.

In the scriptures we have the “old man” and the “new man.” First, Adam, who represents the former, and Christ, who represents the latter. The natural order that follows is the outward man is born into the world of the “children of wrath.” Those in Christ represent the spiritual or inward man who is renewed day by day (Romans 7:22; II Corinthians 4:16). The character of the inward man formed in us is based upon the life of the most remarkable man that ever lived. He was a man of perfection in meekness, courage, faith, hope, love, a righteous man. This is the character of the new man that God expects to dwell in every faithful child of God. Paul prayed that God would: “...grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man – that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:16,17). We travail, he says, until Christ is formed in us.

Has Christ been formed in us? The inward man is fearfully and wonderfully made of : “...the fruit of the spirit... love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” (Galatians 5:22-23). When the spirit of those qualities is received into the mind and heart a new creature is conceived. The new birth into Christ brings forth a child of God and since our outward man (Adamic) is perished we are expected to move from the sincere milk of the word which has brought us to a new creation, to the strong meat which constitutes the only food upon which this new creature can thrive and mature.

As Christadelphians we strive to mature mentally and morally in heart and mind. We reject the foolishness of the amoral world and the apostate religious system. We do not seek our spiritual strong meat from secular or “Christian” sources because the growth of the inward man depends on our thoughts, actions, and words as described in the Spirit Word, the voice of the Almighty Increate. How can the darkness of the world enlighten our inward man? All popular television evangelists, motivational books or other writings or seminars and sessions aimed at developing the man after the flesh are simply wrong according to the Spirit. We cannot in any way apply these principles to life in Christ. We are to develop spiritual minds created and enlightened by the Spirit Word, not the appealing declarations of the flesh. If our thoughts, actions and words are righteous, then they are assimilated into our inward man and spiritual growth takes place. As the outward man dies the inward man is renewed in God and we come to realize the awesome responsibility involved in preserving spiritual purity and its value in writing characters that will be transferred to the Book of Life.

Lately there has been a tendency for Christadelphians to overlook or ignore these things. Some (influenced by the world) seek for easy explanations of the gospel and comforting theories of salvation. Some even expound bizarre theories of spiritual import that can destroy the inward man and create a false representation of true brethren in Christ. They reject the pioneer basis of our understanding in favor of feeding the outward man. Meanwhile the inward man is dying for lack of nourishment in spiritual food. Our admonition is “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom” (Psalms 51:6). Our search is for wisdom in God’s word, not according to the world, but according to what we know and believe is Truth. How do we know what we believe as Christadelphians if we do not read and study the Bible and the pioneer foundations of our faith? We do not worship these early brethren but their expositions are essential to a proper guide to spiritual nourishment. The facts as presented by these pioneer brethren is the Truth of the Bible. Christadelphians have from the beginning believed in the value of these expositions. The Truth is there expressed in complete harmony with the Bible. We know that the Bible is the only true source of salvation but those who place their own distorted interpretation on its message are neglecting the veracity of its message: the gospel as preached to Abraham and embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christadelphians believe the Bible is the spirit word of God. If we are sincere in that belief just how do we handle that Word as to respect and intent? Do we try to wring new ideas out of established truth or do we faithfully regard the fullness of the express mind of God as revealed in his word. To regard any part of the word of God separate from the Truth that has been re-discovered and established by those who have gone before us is the height of hypocrisy. But, there are those who delight in the honor and status that these endeavors bestow upon them. They love the places of honor and the titles of the man after the flesh, the outward man, that set them apart from and above the rest. Compassion and humility are foreign to them although feigned in their communications and interactions with the brethren. They tolerate that

woman Jezebel and her idolatry while disregarding the words of the Master that condemned the wickedness of the Laodicean age.

The true Judaizers are those who glory after the flesh, claiming to be the seed of Abraham and ministers of Christ. But they preach another Christ, another Spirit, another gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; 2:4; 4:17; 6:12-15). Brother Thomas' exposition of the early ecclesias in Eureka is without doubt carried over to our times. Christ denounced these pretend apostles, the Nikolaitans, the Synagogue of Satan, holders of the doctrine of Balaam and Jezebel the false prophetess. These are evil men and seducers, deceiving and being deceived. Because of their teachings the love of many has grown cold. Ecclesias contain apostate elements that are as faithless as those that fell in the wilderness. The hidden principle of lawlessness is still at work. The same principle that Paul warned the ecclesia at Miletus would motivate grievous wolves to come into the household who would not spare the flock. He warned the Ephesian brethren that from among themselves men would stand up, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. They would leave the simplicity of the Truth to follow false prophets (Acts 20:30). This applies to our time too as verified by the apocalyptic letters and most remarkably, the deceivers come from among the brethren! The growth and strong influence of these factions cause the inward man to starve as the fleshly man is nourished with iniquity.

Grievous wolves established a foothold in the Ephesian ecclesia and abandonment of the first love continues to this day. These Nikolaitans - "vanquishers of the people" - continue to beguile by their contrived philosophy and vain deceit (*Eureka*, vol. 1, Logos ed. p.203-204). The spiritually sound inward man must continually strive against the apologists of deceit and gnosticism in the Ecclesia. True believers seek spiritual food for growth and to maintain the true gospel. In these last days, as exhibited by the apocalyptic Balaam and Nikolaitans, the same class of false teachers exists. They succeed in their deceit because the principles they hold and teach appeal to the outward man. Their teachings feed the fleshly appetite and those who accept milk as their only food. These false teachers, prophets, and deceivers are collectively represented in the scriptures by a woman of vicious and profligate character - Jezebel. This is the state of affairs that, in the first century, led to the rise of the Mother of Harlots (*Eureka*, vol. 1, Logos ed., p. 324). This is a very serious matter effecting the entire Ecclesia and we must ask: how does the Ecclesia stand in relation to uncertain doctrine and worldly influences? This writer recommends reading the exposition of the letters to the ecclesias and the definition of the "called out ones" offered by brother Thomas in Eureka. This reading is not incomprehensible, but edifying and spiritually nourishing, in complete harmony with the Biblical account. This exposition helps us understand that being spiritually enlightened by the Truth we can realize the serious nature of properly nourishing the inward man. This is in direct opposition to the outward man, a pretender to the faith, who desires only the milk of the word and is satisfied by the manipulation of the Spirit Word, for whatever reason, to the degradation of the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

Brother Thomas Williams likens our spiritual lives to the writing of characters represented by words, thoughts and actions recorded on a phonograph record or other recording device. We can also relate this to the concept of the Day Book kept by the Eternal Spirit. "These actions and characteristics of the inward man will present the record of our lives at judgment; either to our shame and condemnation or to our honor and glory when certain names are transferred to the Book of Life" (*Christadelphian Advocate*, July 1898, pp. 202-206).

The use of the terms begettal and birth used in scripture are analogies to help us understand the spiritual while using the natural as a type. We have therefore, the birth of water and the birth of spirit. The Truth is planted in the mind of the natural man and is nourished by the spirit word. This process is a mental condition created in harmony with the mind of God. When we are, at some point in the future, at last truly born of the spirit a physical condition is created consubstantial with God. The natural is what we are now, but, what we will be, if we come to full nourishment and maturity in Christ, depends on the results of our thinking, talking, and actions that are written in the Day Book of the Eternal Spirit.

There is no room for hypocrisy in our walk in the Truth. God has a deep disdain for the hypocrite as does our Master. If our inward man is properly nourished hypocrisy will not flourish instead we will live and speak the Truth from our heart and in humility reject the foolish notions of the flesh.

It is a great and consoling truth that the saints have an advocate with the Father. Through this advocate (Jesus Christ the righteous one) sins are forgiven. He is our High Priest and is in the most holy place now while his people, engaged in confession and prayer, wait for his return. We must be patient and not grow weary. We know not whether our confessions have been favorably accepted until our High Priest and Advocate comes forth to bless those faithful ones who will rejoice before Yahweh in the glorious Feast of Tabernacles. These are those who have matured in the inward part and he "*shall appear unto them who are looking for him a second time without sin unto salvation*" (Heb. 9:28).

Ronnie Sanders

**A thought leads to an action
An action leads to a habit
A habit leads to a character
Character leads to a destiny (who you are).**

Often used by Bro. Holmes McGaha

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS – PART II

Application of our role as Conscientious Objectors

The word “conscience” as found in Acts 24:16 and 1st Peter 2:19 is from the Greek word *sunideesis* and means - *distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter; commending one, condemning the other.* Now, related to the word “conscience” we often here the term CONSCIENCIOUS OBJECTOR, but usually this is in the context of refusal to do military service. But the term, **more fully defined and scripturally applied**, should describe one who objects to any form of involvement in the organizations and activities of man which require him to think or act in a way that is contrary to the principles he claims to believe in. As a matter of “conscience”, those who consider themselves “strangers and pilgrims” are to clearly distinguish “*between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter*”.

But a couple of questions arise in regard to this matter of conscience. First of all, as Consciences Objectors of those things that might compromise our position as strangers and pilgrims - what exactly is it that we must shun, condemn or separate ourselves from? And second - How do we, as Christadelphians demonstrate that we are strangers and pilgrims? We have no choice to live in this world, so how do we function in the necessary things of making a living, getting an education and peacefully interacting with those we live around? These are questions that cannot be taken lightly and one that poses a constant challenge to young and old alike.

Now there are seven areas that we would like to touch upon that make up the world as far as the application of our stand as Conscientious Objectors. They are: MORAL, POLITICAL, LEGAL, LEISURE & SOCIAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, RELIGIOUS, & ECONOMIC.

MORAL

Without question, we live in an increasingly wicked and depraved society. This is one of the biggest challenges that we face as believers (including and especially our young people). Through the all pervading distribution of mass media and popular culture, in almost every direction one can turn the forces of fleshly pleasure are winning the day. We are living in the time that parallels “the days of Noah”. Those things that would have been considered unspeakable some twenty, thirty years ago are now not only tolerated but they are embraced. The frog-like spirits of the French Revolution (*liberty, fraternity, and equality*) have created a cultural revolution that has eliminated the influence of the Bible and replaced it with a moral void. It is such freedom (so called) that has developed into anything but freedom, resulting in complete and utter slavery to a depravity that is at such a low level that it destroys

families, cripples men’s abilities to think clearly and enslaves man to constantly seek after the next pleasure. It cannot satisfy. That sin acts as a master (both in its federal and moral aspects) is clear from the scriptures – “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Once we constitutionally put away sin through baptism we are commanded that “*henceforth we should not serve sin*”. (Rom 6:6).

In Galatians 5:21 we read, “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication (sexual immorality), uncleanness, lasciviousness (which means extreme indulgence) idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (quarrelsome), emulations (jealousy), wrath, strife, seditions, heresies (false teachings), envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” These are the behaviors of the flesh, behaviors that this world has accepted as the norm. Are these the kinds of things we wish to be associated with? Are these the kind of behaviors that we wish to participate in? Are these the kinds of activities that we can enjoy as entertainment even if we do not actually act them out? Now the fact remains that these “works of the flesh” have been around since the fall of Adam and Eve, but at no time in the world’s history have they been so openly promoted, seen, enjoyed as entertainment through the modern phenomena known as television, movies, radio, internet, etc. We live in a society that is absolutely obsessed with immorality and matters that were once considered private. Though we may not actually practice such condemned behaviors, if we enjoy them as entertainment or accept them as the norm are we not in a very real sense condoning it? We are feeding our minds with activities that God considers evil. The saying goes, “trash in, trash out”. We nonetheless are sowing to the flesh – and the scriptures state that we reap what we sow. We are told that it “vexed” or oppressed Lot’s soul - it greatly troubled him – to be exposed to the “filthy conversation (conduct) of the wicked”. Do these things trouble us, are we strangers from such activities? Or, do we consider them entertaining and harmless as long as we do not participate in them? Let us not be deceived.

Addressing the young people: it is an easy mistake for those not baptized to sometimes fool themselves into thinking that they can get away with such behavior. It might be tempting to think that “I can do as I please before baptism.” But, it doesn’t work that way. The road to baptism is to be training for what comes after. If our training is an indulgence in sin we fool ourselves if we think that upon baptism we will somehow magically change our course of direction after baptism. We still possess the sin flesh nature in our bodies after baptism and it has to be realized that the works of the flesh are something not to be meddled with. Such activities leave a permanent sense of pain on the mind and conscious, and other activities become a permanent fixture in our fleshly minds that become a weakness and a constant source of trial, while other activities carry unpleasurable if not potentially deadly consequences that never can be rectified.

Whether we are baptized or not, sin and its consequences are something that we should **fear greatly**. Again, as the apostle Peter commands, “*as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*” And consider Moses who chose to “*suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*” Think about all that Moses gave up to serve God.

POLITICAL

The many passages already referred to very clearly show what our relationship should be to the political course of this world very clearly. All of us by birth are natural citizens of the country we were born in. Citizenship to any country involves privileges and certain duties that go along with such a status. But what does the “stranger and pilgrim” do since there are certain privileges and duties that are not consistent with our beliefs, like voting and military service? We know that our “*citizenship is in heaven*” as we have read. Upon baptism we become a part of the “*commonwealth (Gr. – politeia) of Israel.*” In Acts 5:29 we are told to “*obey God rather than men*”; and in Col. 3:2, “*set our affection on things above.*” This is the citizenship status of the believer.

This country may demand of us to go to war to kill, but Christ commands us not to kill (Matt. 5:21,22). Let it be understood that we are not “pacifists”, but will fight upon Christ’s return to subdue the nations under His rod of iron (Ps. 149: 5-7; John 18:36). We are pressured with the phrase “it is your duty to vote” but yet we know that it is God who sets up the rulers of this world (Dan. 5:39, 44; 2nd Cor. 10:3-5) and that we will rule with Christ in that coming Age. Simply put, we have a duty to obey God rather than men, and where His commands conflict with the demands of the country we live in, our heavenly citizenship (the Commonwealth of Israel) requires firm allegiance to God rather than this country - Giving our oath and allegiance to Christ rather than a flag or the systems of men in general (Matt. 5:33-37; Luke 16:13).

But there are certain obligations to the country we live that we must fulfill. Not because man has commanded it, but because it is a command of God:

1. We are to pay our taxes – Matt. 22:21; Romans 13: 6-7.
2. We are to obey the laws of the country – Romans 13:1-5; 1st Peter 2:17
3. We are commanded to honor the king or rulers of the country, but we cannot fight to preserve their rule. 1st Peter 2:17.
4. We are to respect and obey those who are in positions of power, but we cannot be involved with voting them in and out of office. (Romans 13:1-5).

LEGAL

The scriptures are very clear as to our relationship to the legal system. What do we do if someone sues us or what do we do if we have been cheated or wronged by someone? Any time our rights as citizens of this country are infringed upon by others, according to the laws of the land we have the legal right to make use of the court system. **But what do the scriptures teach? Matt. 5:40; Luke 6:29-30; 1st Cor. 6:1-7.** We may on occasion be asked to appear in court as a witness or unfortunately as a

defendant, but we should never be the one to use the courts for our own benefit against another.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES & LEISURE TIME

There are many different activities that we have to choose from in this world when it comes to recreation, relaxation, or our social interaction with the people around us or even with fellow Christadelphians. We have to make decisions on a daily basis as to what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Though there are scriptures that clearly tell us what we cannot do – a “thus saith the LORD” - there are many activities that we may wish to involve ourselves with that may not be specifically mentioned. **BUT**, that does not mean that it is acceptable to God. So what do we do? Scriptural principle has to be our guide. The question may come down to not “what is wrong with it”, but as believers, as “strangers and pilgrims” we must ask ourselves “what is right about it?” and does it compromise our status as “strangers and pilgrims”? A few principles to guide us are as follows:

- 2nd Cor. 6:14-17 – “*be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers*”
- James 1:17 – “*unspotted from the world*”
- James 4:4 – “*friendship with the world is enmity with God*”
- 1st Pet 1:16 – “*be ye holy as I am holy*” holy = “set apart”

Christadelphians have historically been against social and professional activities that the world has to offer. Organizations such as fraternities, sororities, professional organizations, country clubs, civic clubs and brotherhoods (such as Rotaries, Lion’s, Shriners, Freemasonry etc.) - though possibly at times providing some good, Christadelphians have understood these things to be fellowship with the world.

Our time will soon come to engage in activities of the highest order for the good of all mankind by the means provided by Yahweh when His Son returns. To have fellowship is to have commonality with something. What commonality can a “stranger and pilgrim” have with such things as designed by the world? As brothers and sisters in Christ we are to be separate from the world. It is not our place to engage in the various philanthropic organizations and activities, compromising our spiritual status thinking that “we can make a difference” all the while wrapped up in the socialization and misled attempts of the world around us. James 4:4 – “*know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*” This language is extremely blunt and provides an overriding principle that should be very clear to apply to our confession of being strangers and pilgrims. Do we dare try to justify our way around such unambiguous scriptural guidance?

We now even see the Internet with its on-line social communities (what some call the “human-network”) and the ability it provides for the promotion of every inane and ignorant idea and whim conceivable with others. One can promote and share the most trivial and self absorbed details of their lives (pictures and information) and what and how they think to the entire world. Not only is such activity dangerous, but it reveals a

portion of both the “lust of the eye” and the “pride of life” in wanting to not only see, but be seen.

When it comes to relaxation or entertainment what do we choose to spend our time on? Relaxation and leisure is necessary and beneficial in its place, but what do we choose to do and how much time do we spend on it? Does it interfere with our Bible study or time with our family or spouse? Does it interfere with the principle that we are to “*seek ye first the Kingdom of God*”? How much more opportunity does it give the world to influence us? Television, internet, movies, music events, sporting events, athletic leagues for our children, etc. How much of this can we assume is pleasing to our Heavenly Father considering the finite amount of time He has given us? Considering the amount of time we already have to spend in the world through work or school, are we willing that the world have even more of our time? This writer himself is not above reproach on such matters – but we have to be honest with ourselves. As Christadelphians we begin to run into serious trouble when we start trying to justify to ourselves, and others, the benefits of the many worldly activities at our disposal rather than admitting that really all things outside of spiritual pursuits are nothing more than “*vanity, and vexation of spirit*”. **And just because we may indulge in such things with other Brethren does not somehow magically provide justification for vain and worldly activities.** What do we really need in pursuit of required relaxation and enjoyment? What do we really need in pursuit of quality family time? Do the entrapments of this world provide the solution? We do not intend to imply that we lock ourselves in a closet and throw away the key, but spiritual discernment, balance and honest self examination are needed in our assessment of how we choose to refresh ourselves and what entertainments we enjoy.

PHILOSOPHICAL

The term philosophy refers to learning and how we think and according to Webster’s is – “*a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means.*” We live in a very philosophical time which has become known as the “postmodern” age. Much could be said about this subject but simply defined, this label or way of thinking questions the existence of any universal truth or standards. **There are no absolute truths or morality:** “Truth is only what we think it is and is personal to our own view”; “One opinion is as good as another”; “old standards and values are now obsolete or are in need of revision”; “Think outside the box”; “Every person’s views should be respected and language must be revised as to not offend anyone” – otherwise known as “political correctness”.

At one time it was more commonly recognized that there are absolute Truths and such absolutes are based upon God. But with the spreading of the spirit of Democracy and the “frog-like” ideals espoused by the French Revolution of “fraternity, equality, and liberty” men began to question the existence of moral truths or that man was bound to any moral responsibility to a Creator. Such reasonings, which were nothing more than the speculations of the human mind developed into the democratic spirit (opposed to the only True Hope of a Divine Theocracy). *Atheism, humanism,*

socialism/liberalism, sexual liberation, feminism, the homosexual movement, youth centered society - all kinds of philosophical views and attitudes that either deny the existence of God or minimized the absolute quality of His commands. Look at the wickedness, lawlessness and moral confusion of the world we live in and we see the results of such reasoning. Man has set up his own code of morality, which basically states – “I can do as I please, whatever makes me feel good.”

Now this would be of no concern of ours if such philosophies were kept in a corner, but such thinking has overtaken our society, with the education system being the chief promoter. It even has influenced most religious bodies of this world and increasingly has taken over the thinking of those who call themselves Christadelphian. One does not have to be an atheist to subscribe to “postmodern” philosophy. Such thinking as it has entered the brotherhood has sought to destroy old standards by labeling them as nothing more than the “traditions of men” or as “pharisaical” or “legalist”. Such influences (along with the democratic spirit that finds no endorsement in the scriptures) are some of the most serious and deceptive underlying influences of the world that the Household faces.

In 1st Corinthians we read that “*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*”. And in Isaiah 8:20 – “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*” 1st Timothy 6:20 – “*avoiding profane and vain babblings, and the oppositions of science falsely so called*”. God’s Word is absolute. His Truth is absolute. The philosophies of our day are sometimes blatantly obvious in how they are manifested, but other times – especially when they are used by so called believers – they are very, very subtle. We must beware of the philosophical (speculative) spirit.

RELIGIOUS

There is an increasingly vocal movement among fundamental Christianity that opposes the course of direction being seen in this society from a moral standpoint. To a certain degree we can respect this, but all Christianity in general is still something in which we have to be set apart from for obvious reasons. The scriptures clearly point to mainstream religion as “Apostasy” or a “falling away”. The scriptures refer to the “Man of Sin”, “Mystery of Iniquity”, the “Harlot” system, the “Mother of harlots”. Whether it be the mother herself or her harlot daughters, why we would look in such a direction for spiritual guidance or help?

Not only do we stand apart from its false beliefs, but also the Ecumenical spirit – “*promoting or tending to worldwide Christian unity or cooperation*” - they promote in regard to the view that all men are “God’s children”. “God loves you”, and “Jesus died for you” are their overused and shallow catch phrases.

We as Christadelphians are to be set apart from the world body of “Christians” so called. We are not Christian as the term is commonly understood. We have come out from a putrefied system of false religion that upon Christ’s return will be utterly destroyed. Now, there are some of mainstream religion that are moral people,

sometimes better than the examples set by the true Brethren of Christ – but nonetheless they do not have the proper foundation of Truth, a foundation built upon the Covenants of Promise and the Truth in general. Therefore we should not be influenced by any examples that the religions of this world may set in regard to belief, organization, or their evangelical work. And as the world religions adopt the philosophies of the modern age, reinvent God, promote tolerance, focus more on the “good life” now rather than eternal salvation, and re-package religion to appeal to more people (especially the younger generation), we must be on guard for similar influences that work to establish themselves within the Household.

The Churches of the world are not places to seek out salvation, they are places to find counseling and self-esteem building; justification for the pursuit of wealth, a good place to make business contacts; find acceptance in the community; hear choirs, orchestras and exciting pop or rock style music that “lift the spirit”; to be entertained by a trained speaker that can get a laugh and feed the emotional desires of the listener – but such is not salvation. As strangers and pilgrims we should have a highly trained sensitivity to anything that remotely resembles such trends as seen in the modern churches – trends that embrace and promote the flesh rather than subverting it. The Children of Israel wanted to be like the world around them – they introduced the religious influences they admired into their own worship. Where did this lead? – absolute apostasy. Apostasy does not come in all at once; it comes in one tiny and seemingly harmless piece at a time.

ECONOMIC

A couple of years ago this writer changed careers, in which selling is a major part of the job description. We were given a best selling book on the subject, and quoting from it:

“Champions want to get rich. That’s right, rich. The Champion wants the high income that’ll provide the capital for investment to make him or her independent. There’s nothing wrong with getting rich... The true Champion shapes his values and organizes his lifestyle to achieve his objects of getting rich.” Then the reader is instructed to say out loud three times, *“money is good”*.

Is there anything wrong with this? Is it a compatible attitude with the life of a “stranger and pilgrim”? What do the scriptures teach about this so called “Champion” attitude? 1st Timothy 6:10 – *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”* Have no misunderstanding here; it is the *“love of money”* that is condemned. We can be poor or wealthy, but if the seeking/coveting after financial success is a motivating factor in our lives then we have a problem. The driving force of the history of this world, and especially in the success of these modern times is money. But the believer is not to be caught up in such things. We are not condemning those who have money - for different circumstances of life, different careers that Christadelphians may sometimes have lead to wealth. Abraham himself was wealthy, but not because it was a motivating factor of life for him. On the other hand Christ had

no place to lay his head. Certainly Christ would not have been considered a “champion” based upon the definition we read. And referring back to Moses, we are told he had his priorities correct. Heb. 11:26 – *“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward”*.

In Matthew 6:19 we read, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt”* and in verse 24, *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”* The seeking after money/financial success is a cruel taskmaster that can never be satisfied (Eccl. 5:10). Further on in the same chapter we read – *“Therefore take no thought, saying, ‘What shall we eat’ or, ‘What shall we drink’ or, ‘Wherewithal shall we be clothed?’ (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* We are to work for a living and not be slothful, there being other scriptures to support that, but as strangers and pilgrims we do need to be careful in the kinds of careers we follow. And we must recognize that if our priorities are correct - of a spiritual nature - God will give us what we need; maybe not as much as we want or think we should have but He will provide enough. Back in 1st Timothy 6, backing up to verse 6 it stated, *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”* If we are not satisfied then we are in a very real sense turning our noses up at what God has graciously given us.

Do we desire financial security or independence? There really is no such thing, all can be taken away in an instant – Consider the circumstances surrounding Job. Does our job/career absorb all of our time and a majority of our thought process? Does our job/career provide more interest to us than service to Christ and attention to our families? A true “champion” as defined in the scriptures will follow Christ’s words – John 6:27 – *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In our consideration it may seem that we have been nothing but negative, giving a long list (and not a complete list) on what we are to avoid - but it all depends on how it is viewed. It is a long list, but if we are Persuaded and Embrace the promises then we will understand that as strangers and pilgrims such things have no value. If we love the world, then yes we may feel deprived. If we love God more than the world then this helps us to change our perspective.

As living in these last days, we as Christadelphians have walked a fine line often acting as if we can enjoy all that this world has to offer while at the same time claiming to have The Truth – having the best of both worlds. Is such a course of

action in harmony with Scriptural command and example? Maybe we do not participate in the most horrible of sins, but it is the sins of a more subtle nature as found in this world that may be our worst enemy. The world has nothing of real worth or lasting value to offer us – let us always keep that in mind. These things may not be something that we wish to readily admit, but it is worth our serious examination – not of each other, but of our own selves. We live very good lives in these modern times. Is there any difference between us and the world around us? Can they (the world) tell the difference? Can we tell the difference? Again, these are questions for personal examination. We may consider ourselves to be “strangers and pilgrims” or “Conscientious Objectors”, but are we? Do we reflect the great and precious Hope that we have in our daily lives? Remember the long list of faithful that are spoken of in Hebrews 11. Do we fit the profile that they demonstrated in their not so easy lives?

God will provide for our needs and comfort (both natural and spiritual), this He has promised to do. But if we are to be strangers and pilgrims we must completely understand the nature and purpose of our calling. We must be *persuaded, embrace*, and then *confess* that we “*are strangers and pilgrims on the earth*”.

A. Thomas

NOW AVAILABLE

Reproductions of the following volumes of *The Christadelphian Advocate* are now available from the Republic, MO Ecclesia. These volumes can be purchased in either softcover or hardback.

- Volume 1 – 1885/86 (March 1885 – Feb. 1886) \$11.29 or \$20.74
- Volume 2 – 1886/87 (March 1886 – Feb. 1887) \$11.33 or \$20.80
- Volume 3 – 1887 (March – December) \$11.09 or \$20.56

It is hoped (Yahweh willing) that over the course of the next few months that additional volumes will be added. These books can be purchased on-line at

<http://stores.lulu.com/republicchristadelphianbooks>

From Eden to Eden by Albert Hall has also been reprinted for a 3rd Edition and is available at the same web address. The quality of the printing is much improved over the previous edition. Price: \$11.99. (If you wish to purchase any selections, but not through the internet, contact Herb Thomas – hjthomas1@juno.com.)

MATTHEW'S AUDIENCE

God inspired four men to record the life and death of our Savior. The four pillars supporting the veil of the tabernacle (Ex 27:31-32), the four faces of the cherubim (Ezek. 1:10), the four directions of the Israelites' encampment (Num 2), and the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12) – all hinted at four biographers. Beyond the answer that such an appearance of four Gospel accounts falls in line with other types and shadows found throughout the Scriptural record; we still ask the question – why four accounts of Jesus' first appearance? The four divinely inspired authors fulfilled their roles in addressing their respective accounts to differing audiences for differing purposes. Such a conclusion is not unproven, unprovable, or indefensible. In the following comments we wish to demonstrate the matter.¹

Matthew wrote his account for a predominately Jewish audience through examples within the book and contrasts with other gospel writers. Specifically: the orientation of Matthew to a Jewish audience will be demonstrated through genealogy, citation of scripture, his assumption of necessary background information, the role of the Law of Moses, and passages of emphasis.

Matt 1:1 reads "*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*" From the onset Matthew demonstrates his connection with a Jewish audience in three ways. First, the underlying Greek of "the book of the generation" is a direct quote from Gen 5:1 out of the Septuagint (LXX) introducing the genealogy of Adam and thereby linking together the first man with the second man (1 Cor 15:47). In addition, the format of the genealogy is immediately recognizable to readers of Scripture since it is identical in form and language (the phraseology with the "begats" is also identical to the LXX) to the genealogies of Genesis and Chronicles. Matthew's use of the genealogy of Jesus in this format establishes a relationship to the Jewish Scripture that has come before him. Second, the genealogy is an apt example of required prior knowledge. By repetition the genealogy makes clear Abraham is an important individual, but he is not explained or expounded upon in any fashion. Likewise, the reader is left to interpolate Bathsheba's name in verse six - not a challenge for a child of Abraham. Third the genealogy establishes the essential requirement for Jesus Christ as the Messiah: the seed of Abraham and the son of David. However, these credentials would be only recognizable to a child of Abraham. This genealogy would have no spiritual or practical significance to someone not familiar with the word of God - for example first century Gentiles. In contrast is the genealogy presented by Luke. Luke's genealogy does not clearly specify Jesus as a descendent of a royal line, and Luke takes his readers all the way

¹ The arguments presented here have already been presented by numerous other individuals and this work is a synthesis from a variety of sources.

back to creation. Luke's Gentile readers would not necessarily know Adam was the first man and was created by God, whereas it is a fact not necessary to articulate for Matthew's readers.

Matthew specifically cites more Scripture as fulfilled than any other New Testament author. This peculiarity of Matthew is explainable by recognizing the purpose of such efforts is to convince those familiar with prophecy of their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. For example, Matthew documents by specific citation to his readers how, in accordance with prophecy, Jesus was born of a virgin (Sa. 7:14); sought refuge in Egypt (Hos. 11:1) from Herod's slaughter (Jer. 31:15); began preaching in Galilee (Is 9:1-2); was the man of sorrows (Isa 53:4); in him the Gentiles would be called (Isa 42:1-3); taught in parables (Ps 78:2); and the price of his betrayal would buy a potter's field (Jer. 18,19,32:6-15). None of these very specific Messianic prophecies are specifically cited as fulfilled in Mark, Luke or John. Matthew writes for an audience familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures and who would have certain expectations based on prophecy of the Messiah.

As mentioned in the discussion of the genealogy, the record of Matthew is tailored to readers who have an advanced degree of prior knowledge of customs, society, and the Law of Moses. All of the Gospel accounts require a certain level of prior knowledge, but Matthew has higher expectations. A comparison of the discussion on handwashing illustrates how Matthew (15:2) does not need to explain Jewish traditions to his audience as does Mark (7:3-4). Matthew gives no description of synagogue activities, whereas Luke's readers need to be told (Lk. 4:16-17). Jesus' answer to the temptation of the Pharisees (Matt. 19:3-9) demonstrates a recognition that the reader would know of the division of the sect into two conflicting schools (for a detailed discussion see the *Jewish Encyclopedia*). As to the Law of Moses, the record of Matthew assumes readers understand Joseph's legal position regarding Mary's pregnancy (1:19) since he provides no additional explanation. Additionally, Matthew does not explain the Temple tax (17:24-27) or even name it, but simply calls it by the denomination (the two drachma).

Matthew records how Jesus was the authoritative interpreter and teacher of the Mosaic Law. This is particularly evident in chapters 5-7 where as Moses delivered the Law from Sinai, our Lord taught the people. The parallel would be obvious to students of the Torah. Much of the teaching in these chapters is an exposition on the spiritual in relation to the Law; where Jesus uses the construction of the stated letter of the Law followed by the intended spirit of the Law. A typical example is (5:43-44), "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*" As concluded by Matthew (7:29), Jesus was the authority on interpreting the Law. In contrast, Luke (6:27) records the same teaching ("Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you"), but not as an explanation of the Law of Moses. Matthew records the interplay between Jesus' teachings and the Law. Why would Matthew do

this unless his readers knew the Law and understood how other teachers (scribes and Pharisees) were interpreting it? Likewise, Matthew's readers would understand what was meant when Jesus stated, "*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Finally, Matthew (5:17) also records how this exposition of the Law and the teachings of Jesus will not be contrary to the Law. "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*" A Jewish audience needed to know the Messiah would not break the Law of Moses. Only an audience with Old Testament knowledge and expectations of the Messiah would find reassurance in the promise to fulfill and not to break.

Several events, sayings, and wordings are only recorded in Matthew. The common thread connecting these unique passages is the importance and relevance for a Jewish audience. Only Matthew (10:5-6) records that the twelve were to go only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel", and not to the gentiles or Samaritans (see also 15:22-28). Matthew proves to his readers that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah sent to the Jewish people to establish the Jewish kingdom and fulfill the promises to the Jewish patriarchs. It is notable at the end of the book (28:19) comes the overt call for the inclusion of the Gentiles. Also, only Matthew records Jesus' detailed exposure of the falsehoods and hypocrisy in the Pharisees' oral traditions (23:16-22). In contrast, Luke (11:37-54) does not record for his readers the detailed analysis. The detailed level of analysis was important for Matthew's audience, whereas Luke's would not appreciate its origins or subtleties. Only Matthew uses the historical or reverent names for the land, "the land of Israel" (Matt 2:20,21), and for Jerusalem the "holy city" (4:5, 27:53) or "the city of great King" (5:35). Additionally, many commentators have found Matthew's use of "kingdom of heaven" versus "kingdom of God" in Mark, Luke and John as evidence of his sensitivity in the use of the Divine Name. Finally, it is Matthew who records how Moses' infancy was a type of Christ's.

The aforementioned is an effort to demonstrate that we can deduce that Matthew was inspired to direct an account of Christ's life and purpose to a predominately Jewish audience. Although Matthew's primary audience was Jewish, by no means was it to be restricted to such. For us, we must read Matthew understanding that part of his purpose was to demonstrate Jesus was the Messiah, with a life in accordance in both word and actions with the Law of Moses which was in effect until his sacrificial death. Accepting this assessment of Matthew prevents assertions that Scripture is contradictory, and is strong evidence against denials of the Four Gospel accounts historical accuracy. Simple assertions that Matthew had no audience, or the audience is unknowable, are not sufficient. Any other position on the book of Matthew must present plausible alternative explanations to the above evidence and fully explain any perceived differences between the gospel writers' inspired testimony.

THE FINAL SCATTERING OF ISRAEL

Summary: Bringing the End-Time Picture Into Focus

We have come to the end of our consideration, but not before we make a critical summary of the “latter-day” events. We have focused on a couple of key areas that have been forks-in-the-road in our Community. Multiple views will not harmonize, and serve only as a barrier to further study if we come up to them and retreat in confusion. We cannot successfully interpret the prophetic record from current events - working backwards by observing contemporary events and developments and then going back to alter Scripture to fit the present scene.

The case in point in these latter days is the re-emergence of Russia. In the late eighties and through the early nineties it was difficult to comprehend how Russia would emerge as a latter-day great power, as king of the north to come into the Holy Land and accomplish what Yahweh has set out for her-but not today. Gog as Russia is another discussion but the evidence that supports her divine role is overwhelming, prophetically, in the course of world history (Scythians ancient Russians) as it is today in current history. [See Issue No. 1, 2008 of the *Truth Gleaner* for an expanded consideration – Ed.]

The might and the control that Russia is generating through oil and gas, the total return to a Soviet style, state run, totalitarian government cries to us from the daily headlines. The stranglehold that Russia is beginning to have over Europe is obvious, compelling and beyond dispute. She is back in Syria with the re-location of her major ship building in the port of Tartus. She is back in Lebanon with the re-location of her Chechen army general and with so-called “engineers”. Her hand is deep in the fostering of the anti-West, anti-Israel, Islamic terrorism. Her hand is evident in the behind the scenes fostering of the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars. We need to therefore be cautious in our impatient, reactionary tendencies as to what Yahweh has clearly revealed He is going to do.

We’ve also identified the manner and the state at which the Jews have been returning to the land of Israel – in unbelief, relying upon the strength of her own hand. *“There is, then, a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom. The pre-advantual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish*



colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him. They will emigrate thither as agriculturalists and traders, in the hope of ultimately establishing their commonwealth, but more immediately of getting rich in silver and gold by commerce with India, and in cattle and goods by their industry at home under the efficient protection of the British power.” (Elipis Israel pg. 441).

We have identified the state and nature of the peace and safety that is secured and which entices Gog to come down to the land of unwalled villages, to take a spoil. It is a peace and safety that is rendered a “confident” dwelling by the Jews, relying upon their supposed strength. Because of this it is accounted to their shame in Ezek. 39:26-29 *“After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people (scattering) and gathered them out of their enemies lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations. Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.”*

Gog invades the “glorious land” and like a whirlwind, with *“chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships, and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.”* Edom, Moab and the chief children of Ammon escape out of his hand (this is Jordan), but Egypt does not escape being a victim of his advance and being spoiled by the northern invader. Gog successfully (and temporarily) sacks Jerusalem where he *“plants the tabernacles of his palace (or the military tents of the chief and his court) between the seas in the glorious mountain. Jerusalem is taken and Yahweh will “gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” “...when the Assyrian shall come unto our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men”* (Mic. 5:5).

Many of the Jews are scattered, a residue will stay, but most will flee from the face of the spoiler. Many flee into Egypt and cry because of their oppressors (Isa. 19), some find refuge in Moab-Jordan, where Moab is commanded to provide a covert for the outcasts fleeing from the face of the spoiler (Isa. 16). Others flee into the *“wilderness of Paran”* in the Sinai Peninsula, and others into the wilderness of Arabia. Other Jews, seen from Joel 3:6 being the *“children of Jerusalem”* and *“of Judah”*, are “sold” and deported from off their land and borders unto the Grecians. This is a terrible time of affliction even the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7), this is when Israel cries *“Our bones are dried our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts”* (Ezek. 37:11). It is for this reason that Yahweh roars forth and the time when His fury shall rise up in His face, when he comes forth for the salvation of His people.

Judgment has passed and the immortalized host with their commander is now prepared to advance from Sinai to battle and for the redemption of Israel. It is imperative that we understand this location, this point of departure as being that of

Sinai. (Deut. 33:2, Hab. 3:3, Psalm 68:17). *“The LORD is to come* (Hebrew) *from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran and he is to come with speed* (Hebrew) *with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them”* (Deut. 33:2). *“Yahweh Elohim is to come”* from Teman (or the south-margin) and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise,” (Hab. 3:3). *“The chariots of Yahweh are twenty thousand even thousands of “changed ones” the Lord is among them, as in Sinai in the holy place, or “from Sinai into the sanctuary.”* (Hebrew & Companion Bible rendering), (Psalm 68:17).

The march of the Rainbow Angel commences and first engages those in the immediate proximity of Sinai. The Christ multitude attacks the peoples who were nearest to their encampment. These are the “tents of Cushan” and the “curtains of Midian” which are afflicted and made to tremble. This Cushan is east of the Tigris, and north of the Persian gulf; the Midianites are the Arabs of the desert, who are to “bow down before him” (Psalm 72:9-15).

Then we look for a westward engagement which humbles and terrifies Egypt and rescues the Jews from their oppressors. *“Yahweh shall smite Egypt”* to *“recover the remnant of his people from Egypt,”* (Isa. 11:11). As a result they (Jews) experience a remarkable second exodus under a one *“like unto Moses”*. They are led like a trembling bird through the Red Sea (Hos. 11:11). They pass through it dry shod or with shoes on, that is walking on bare ground because Yahweh has miraculously parted that sea yet a second time. *“Yahweh shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian Sea; and Israel shall be brought again from the depths of the sea,”* (Psalm 68:22). The multitudinous Christ does not lead them by the Isthmus of the Suez, but after the example of Moses and the angel, his prototype, he leads them to the sea shore. *“Was thy wrath against the sea,”* saith the Spirit, *“that thou didst ride upon thine horses (Rev 19:11, 14) thy chariots of salvation? Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters. When I heard,”* says the prophet as representative of his people in the flesh, *“my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble”* that day so great that none is like it; even the time of Jacob’s trouble, out of which he shall be saved” (Jer. 30:7).

Having destroyed the tongue of the Egyptian sea and brought Israel up again from its depths, the Rainbow Angel leads them into the wilderness of Paran. Habakkuk sees him here in great power and indignation; for *“before him goes the pestilence and burning coals from his feet,”* apocalyptically styled *“pillars of fire”*. When he *“is to come”* from mount Paran and rise up from Seir unto them, Adonai Yahweh (He who shall be Lord) shall blow the trumpet and shall go forth with whirlwinds of the south (Zech. 9:14). The Jews are now being gathered and are part of the Rainbow Angelic march but they do not engage in battle at this time (Isa. 63:3) for they are still becoming acquainted with their Saviour and his power. And it is Christ alone who is treading the winepress of his enemies at this time.

The miraculous transformation of the desert and wilderness areas is transformed to bring forth water for the scattered refugees. This miracle is brought to our attention in Isaiah 41 verses 13-14, *“For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel.”* Then in vs 17-20 we read, *“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open the rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.”* The redeemed Jews now follow in the wake of the Rainbow Angel march and this time their will be no Amalek to terrorize them.

The movement of the Christ-body from Sinai follows an east-west-then north direction. This is the pattern indicated by piecing together the word of the prophets and it is also a pattern that is militarily sound. The flanks must be secured before the main thrust forward. This begins the establishment of the southern half of the Abrahamic land grant. In Habakkuk, before he marches through the land and threshes the heathen, Cushan (possibly Ethiopia-west or possibly as Bro. Thomas identifies a Cushan in the east) and Midian (southern Arabia in the east) are described as feeling his power (3:7). Other prophets involve Arabia and Egypt at an early stage. So the pattern appears to be the establishing of a broad base by extending on the east to Midian and Arabia, and on the west to Egypt. This accomplished, there is the movement northward to Mount Seir: *“Yahweh came from Sinai, and rose unto Seir unto them, he shined forth from mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints”* (Deut 33:2). He meets the northern armies at Bozrah in Edom. From EOD pg. 97, *“Edom may be styled the front of the Gogian armies: and therefore when Yahweh goes forth to fight them “as when he fought in the day of battle”* in old time, He strikes the first blow at Bozrah. And a terrible blow it will be, as may be conceived from the answer to another question by the same prophet (Isaiah) saying, *“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?”* *“I have trodden”* says the advancing Hero, *“the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me.”* (Isa. 63 & Isa. 34:1-8).

With the first decisive battle inflicted upon the enemy the Rainbow Angel advances to the plains of Moab and continues to gather the outcast Jews. From there it moves to the north end of the Dead Sea, crosses the Jordan into the plains of Jericho and through the valley of Achor (once accursed but now as a door of hope for Israel). This emulates Joshua’s crossing of the river after Moses’ death (Deut 2 and Josh 4). It is at sometime during this northwestern advance that Gog hears tidings out of the north and east which trouble him (Dan 11:44). From the valley of Achor near Jericho the march moves westward toward Jerusalem where Christ will stand upon the Mount of Olives which shall cleave in its midst (Hos. 2:15, Zech 14:4-5). There, the multitudinous Christ defeats the massed Russian confederacy in the Valley of Judgment, styled Armageddon. The site is between the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east, and Mount Moriah, and through which flows the

Kidron. The feet of the Assyro-Babylonian Image is smitten and the Image commences to crumble.

With all of this scripture to be fulfilled and with all of this scriptural evidence before us how can we discount the final chastening, scattering, cleansing and re-gathering of Israel and emergence of Christ and the saints from the south? We simply cannot. May we watch and wait, and eagerly anticipate participation as part of that great redeeming force that will redeem and rescue the natural seed of Abraham and restore it to preeminence above the nations as part of the restored Kingdom of God.

Tom Northey

COMMENTARY ON THE GREAT CHRISTADELPHIAN PROPHETIC DIVIDE

In the last few editions of the Sanctuary Keeper Magazine, we have published some articles on the fulfillment of latter day prophecies. This series of prophetic expositions have sparked some outcries from a few brethren in the Household. Please be assured that the publication of these articles was not intended to cause any angst or distress among our brethren. The primary objective of these articles was to provide a prophetic view of end time prophecies based on the understanding of many of our pioneer brethren. It appears that the primary objection to these articles is in regard to the scriptural presentation that was made within the articles that the prophecy of the Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37 is related to the full restoration and restitution of the nation of Israel after the destruction of the Gogian Host instead of the partial re-gathering of the nation of Israel that has occurred since the miraculous proclamation of their statehood. The presentation of this series of articles and the exposition on Ezekiel 37 found therein has caused some to believe that the articles are relegating the current gathering of the Jewish people and the establishment of the state of Israel to a lower position in the outworking of God's Plan and purpose for His creation.

If our readers would read closely all of these articles, they will find that this is definitely not the case. In Part 2 of this series of articles, as published in the Fourth quarter of 2007, the author clearly states that he agrees that the establishment of the state of Israel in these latter days is the most significant prophetic event that has occurred on this planet since the resurrection of the Lord, with the re-capturing of the entire city of Jerusalem out of the hands of the Gentiles as a close second in the

prophetic importance of that event. The Sanctuary Keeper magazine definitely supports this assessment.

In endeavoring to look at this outcry in as simple of terms as possible, it appears that the objection about the exposition of the 37th chapter of Ezekiel is based on the timing when the dry bones come together to form a viable living entity filled with the Spirit of God. Does this dry bone prophecy refer to a partial restoration of the Jews into the land as we have seen over the last 60 years, does it refer to a process that started with the establishment of the nation of Israel and continues into the Kingdom or does it refer to the complete restoration and restitution of all things that will occur after Christ establishes the Kingdom in the land promised to Abraham? The timing of this event seems to be the crux of the matter in regard to the outcries about this series of articles. The author presented many scriptures for our consideration of his subject. Let us not be harsh against our brethren.

This is not the only prophetic issue where the timing of the fulfillment of a future prophetic event has caused a lot of dissension between brothers. Here is an example – the timing of the Gogian invasion and the timing of when will Israel be living in un-walled villages and in a peaceful condition, and the role of the Arab/Islamic nations in latter day events. The ordering of the fulfillment of these events has lead to many a scriptural discussion. Most Christadelphian students who have studied prophecy to some degree have probably been in a discussion regarding the fulfillments of these events. Some of these discussions have probably been heated. We all could probably agree that the Christadelphian Body has a zeal and a passion for the un-fulfilled prophetic events that would signal the return of our Lord and the outworking of the promised Kingdom of God on earth. Those who have put forth some effort in their individual studies of these events usually have developed a fairly rigid belief system about these events. This is where the great Christadelphian Prophetic divide has been developed. There are definite sides chosen and positions strongly defended on both sides of these prophetic differences.

Brethren, I think there are a few things that we must keep in mind, regardless of which side of the prophetic divide that we believe or support.

1. We must study to show ourselves approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of God. 2nd Timothy 2:15
2. We must search the scriptures, as the Bereans did, to determine the accuracy of the Word put forth by our pioneer brethren and by our modern brethren. Acts 17:11
3. We must prove all things and hold fast that which is good and true. 1st Thessalonians 5:21
4. We must always be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that lies within us, with meekness and fear. 1st Peter 3:15
5. We must not let our belief systems regarding these matters be in conflict with the Word of God. Ephesians 4:1-6

6. We must develop and manifest the character of Christ in all matters. 1st Peter 2:21-23

This commentator has been part of the Body of Christ for about 30 years. During that course of time, it appears that our community has been more patient and tolerant of brethren that are bringing false doctrines into the Body or who walk in an un-Christ like manner than we are with brothers who may differ from our prophetic understanding.

What is our responsibility in regard to discussing and defending our beliefs regarding the latter day prophetic events? First of all, if we have not studied out these events and the scriptures that God has given us to learn, then we should not take any side. If we do take sides without proper study, then the sides we have taken can only be attributed to a relationship with those on the side in which one has chosen. There also may be some in the Brotherhood who have chosen not to study these events due to the controversy surrounding them. Brethren, this appears to be simply an excuse to not put forth the effort that is necessary to come to an understanding of the details of the most significant event in the Bible – the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

We probably have those in the Brotherhood who follow the system of prophetic exposition put forth by the pioneers, simply because they are the pioneers. We also have some that may take the exact opposite position - That is, they do not want to accept any of the works of the pioneers just because they lived 150 years ago and in the minds of these individuals, the pioneers work has no relevance to the “modern” Christadelphian. Another group of believers may be willing to follow the prophetic exposition of modern brothers because of their prominence in our community. And finally, we have brethren who have taken the works of our pioneer brethren and those prophetic expositions of our modern-day brethren and with Bible in hand have gained an understanding that is guiding them through these last days where we are witnessing the majesties of the fulfillment of God’s wonderful Word.

Out of all these scenarios noted above, which one is the right approach that we should take to build our prophetic foundations? Surely all would agree that the last scenario is the one to follow. Unfortunately, this approach still has not healed the prophetic divide. Learned brethren can look at the same prophetic verses and come up with totally opposite interpretations. How can our community get past this seemingly impassible divide? Constant communication and discussion with a Christ like spirit and mind is the only means which this commentator can put forth for your consideration. How we interact with our brethren regarding these matters will surely be a part of our “account” when we stand before the Judge of the entire Earth.

Unfortunately, insinuations and accusations have become an unwanted and unnecessary part of the ongoing discussion across this prophetic divide. Brethren on both sides of the divide are probably guilty of this transgression. We have terms used such as “Thomasites”, “stupid”, “loony”, “fools”, “foolish” and “slavishly devoted to

the pioneers”. This is not an appropriate way to bring others around to our system of beliefs.

Those who regularly read the Sanctuary Keeper magazine should realize that the magazine has and will continue to support the overall prophetic interpretations of latter day events that have been put forth by our pioneer brethren. This commentator believes that until these events are proven wrong, they have a lot of merit that should be considered by any student of prophecy. I personally do not have a problem sitting down with brethren that may disagree with me on these matters and enter into a Christ like discussion on these matters. However, I do not desire to discuss these matters with those who continue to use terms similar to those listed in the preceding paragraphs nor with brethren who continually use insinuations and accusations in their prophetic discussions.

To conclude this commentary, let us learn patience with our brethren and continue to learn to discuss in a Christ-like manner these matters of prophecy that are causing such an uproar in our community. Let us not throw away the prophetic interpretations of end time events that have been put forth by our pioneer brethren until they have absolutely been proven wrong. Let us learn to reason together in these last days of Gentile times.

B. Henderson

THE ONENESS OF GOD

Fundamental Considerations

I would like to address the subject of the Oneness of God. In order to get the proper understanding of this subject we have to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We read in 2nd Tim. 3:16, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*” Therefore, we have to believe that what the Bible teaches and tells us is true.

Deuteronomy 6:4 reads, “*Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is One LORD.*” If the LORD our God is One, LORD, then how can so many current Christian religions including Catholic religion believe differently? I can remember growing up Catholic and in my younger years being taught about the trinity using the example of an equilateral triangle showing that God is made up of three persons---the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Ghost (or Spirit). That in this trinity none was before or

after the other, none was greater or less than the other, but the whole three persons were co-eternal together and co-equal.

We need to ask ourselves ‘Is this teaching scriptural?’ Can it be found in the Bible? **Quite the contrary!** The Bible teaches us about the oneness of God, not about a triune God. The first thing revealed about Him in the Bible is His absolute unity. He is declared to be **One**. Along with the verse from Deuteronomy Chapter 6, verse 4, where Moses tells the Israelites about the oneness of God, we submit the following illustrations of this testimony:

- **Mark 12:29** -- Jesus speaking to one of the scribes: “*And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.*” And he further elaborates in verse 30 to “*love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength.*”
- **1st Corinthians 8:6** -- Paul speaking to the Corinthian believers: “*But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.*” So, there is one **God** and one Lord Jesus Christ – God being the Father and Christ being the Son.
- **Ephesians 4:6** – Paul speaking to the Ephesians: There is “**One God** and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
- **1st Timothy 2:5** – Paul speaking to Timothy: “*For there is **one God**, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” Let me point out that this is after Jesus has ascended to the Father and notice that he is referred to as a man, not God. God does not share His Supremacy with anyone.
- **Isaiah 45:5** – “*I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...*”

These scriptures clearly teach that there is only **One God** and if we follow the advice in 2nd Timothy 2:15 to rightly divide (or harmonize) the Word of Truth, we will see that the One God is the Father. The scriptures repeatedly refer to Jesus as begotten of God. One being very familiar to us – John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” Also, 1st John 4:9 reads, “*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*”

Since Jesus was begotten of the Father, the thought of his being co-eternal and co-equal with the Father was never intended to be conveyed, and is scripturally unsound. Jesus himself said in John 5:30, “*I can of mine own self do nothing...*”. He further elaborates saying, “*as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*” Also, in John 14:28, Jesus says, “*...my Father is greater than I.*”

Throughout the scriptures, the supreme position is given to the Father. We need only think of the prayer Jesus taught us to pray: “*Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be **Thy** name. **Thy** kingdom come. **Thy** will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*” Jesus always acknowledged his dependence upon the Father, as we read in John 5:19, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*”

In chapter 15 of 1st Corinthians, we read that once Christ has carried out the work which his Father has given him to do, then he (Christ) will give up the Kingdom to God, even to his Father. Verse 24 and 28 read: “*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*”

Jesus taught the Jews that in seeing him, they saw the manifestation of the Father. Let’s read John 14:10, “*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*” So Jesus could say in John 7:16, “*My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*” He could say in John 14:9, “*...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...*”. Jesus was the manifestation of the Father by means of God’s Spirit. The Father existed from all eternity, but Jesus did not come into existence until he was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of woman at the set time that God had appointed.

Jesus did not teach the Trinity, yet he taught the existence of a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit. However, nowhere in scripture does he declare that these are three persons, co-equal and co-eternal.

Thus far, we have reviewed verses from scripture that show without a doubt the oneness of God. There are also some verses from scripture that are frequently quoted by people professing the trinity and are used to dispute the oneness of God. These verses are without merit in this regard. Let’s examine a few of these passages to see that, in fact, they also show the oneness of God.

The first passage is John 10:30, “*I and my Father are one.*” If we look at the context in which this statement was made, I think we will see that Jesus was performing the shepherding work of the Father. It could be said that he and the Father were ‘one shepherd’. In verse 37 of the same chapter we read, “*If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.*” And in verse 25, “*... the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.*” Thus, Jesus performed the one shepherding work on the Father’s behalf. In this, he fulfilled the words of Zechariah 13:7, “*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.*”

Jesus goes on to say in John 10:29, “My Father is greater than all...”. When we read John 14:28, “...my Father is greater than I,” (which we quoted earlier) it is clear that Jesus included himself in the ‘all’ of verse 29 of chapter 10.

John 17:21 speaks of the believers “*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us...*”. Jesus is not talking about the so called essential unity of the Trinitarian teaching but unity in work and mind and purpose with the Father. Similarly, the Spirit-filled church (or ecclesia) will be in unity with Christ, and thus also with God.

Another often quoted verse is John 8:58, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” There is only one way in which Jesus existed before Abraham and that was in the mind of God. Peter tells us this about Jesus in 1st Peter 1:20 when he says, “*Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.*” The ‘I am’ refers to the fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah predicted and predetermined before Abraham as we read in Genesis 3:15. As we stated earlier, Jesus was begotten of God and born of a woman at the set time appointed by God.

How could God, who possesses the Divine Nature, who has **always** possessed the Divine Nature, ever take on the mortal human nature of man? If you think about it, **WHAT HOPE DO WE HAVE IF THIS IS POSSIBLE?!**

The next question to address – Is the Holy Spirit a “God” co-equal with God the Father? Again we must say **no!** The Holy Spirit is the power of God directed to the accomplishment of His purpose. It is the energy or power of God by which all creation came into being and is sustained. When the virgin Mary conceived, as described in Luke 1:35, it was the One God, the Father, who by His limitless power or Holy Spirit implanted the necessary life-seed in the virgin Mary and no other person. He did not implant in her another co-equal God. The importance of recognizing Jesus Christ to be the begotten Son of God is shown by two declarations in the Acts of the Apostles. The first states, “*And straightway he (Saul after his conversion) preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*”, recorded in Acts 9:20. The second is in an address in the synagogue at Antioch where, in reminding the Jews of the promise made unto the fathers, Paul says, “*God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*” (Acts 13:33.)

God’s Spirit is diffused throughout the universe and is the power of all creation. When God’s Holy Spirit was poured out upon men so that they could use it, it enabled them to perform miracles, or to speak with Divine Wisdom. We know the Bible is the inspired Word of God from 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 and 2nd Peter 1:19-21. Let’s look at these passages. 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 reads, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (or complete), thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*”

And 2nd Peter 1:19-21 that reads, “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*”

The power of God (or the Holy Spirit) was the means whereby He inspired the writers of the Scriptures, and whereby Jesus and his disciples did the mighty deeds ascribed to them. In Acts 1:8, we read of this power given to the disciples, “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*” In John 14:26, Jesus promised the apostles, “*...the Comforter (or Advocate) which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*” And in Acts 2:4, we see, “*...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*”

In Acts 19:2-3, when Paul visited Ephesus, he came upon certain disciples and inquired as to whether they had yet “received the Holy Spirit”. The disciples replied that they had not and commented, “*...We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit.*” Obviously, they had never heard of the doctrine of the trinity.

In conclusion, we need to read and study God’s Holy Word of Truth, for it was written for our learning as we read in Romans 15:4, “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*” We need to seek the Truth of the scriptures, and turn from the false doctrines that characterize the Apostasy – from the Catholic church to the modern-day mega churches. Ultimately, we need to know the **One and Only** True God and Jesus Christ, whom He sent to redeem the elect to Life Eternal.

Pat Hamilton

ISAIAH 9:6

Regarding the future titles of Messiah that further confound the Trinitarian - the title “*mighty God*” is defined by the “Brown, Driver & Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament” as “*divine hero, reflecting the divine majesty*”. The title “*everlasting Father*” was understood by the Jews to mean “*the father of the Coming (Messianic) Age.*”

The Scriptures reveal to us that Christ will come “in the glory of his Father” (Matt. 16:27); and with “power” (2nd Pet. 1:16). He will in fact be a father like figure to “the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah” (Isa. 22:21-24).

AN OPEN LETTER TO CHRISTADELPHIAN YOUNG PEOPLE

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends:

The subject I wish to address is a most serious one. Our aim is to briefly and candidly discuss the steady erosion and modification of historic Christadelphian standards in both doctrine and practice that is currently underway, and has been for some time, in the Christadelphian body. I realize that this is quite a serious assertion. Please know that I do not make this statement lightly or without due consideration of the Christadelphian landscape. It is after much deliberation on the present condition of the young people in our community (and I am a young person also) that I humbly submit these thoughts for your consideration. The objective of this letter is not to pound an idea into anyone's head, but to ask each of you, whether you agree or disagree with my conclusions, to study the issues for yourselves and subsequently "stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13), regardless of what such a position may require of you. With these thoughts in mind, I ask you to prayerfully and sincerely consider the following comments and observations.

Throughout its history, the Truth has never existed for a lengthy period of time without false notions and teachings being introduced. We may think back to the time of Cain, who sought an alternate means of sacrifice and worship only one generation removed from his parents who were given the methods for proper worship by the Elohim. We might also consider the wicked men of Noah's time, Nimrod, the incidence of the golden calf soon after the exodus out of Egypt, the constant cycle of apostasy, punishment, and deliverance found in the period of the Judges, and even the ecclesia only a few short years after the death of Jesus and with the Holy Spirit-possessing apostles still in their midst. The examples are innumerable. Fellow-believers, should we be so blind to these examples and of such a spirit as to expect that they should not happen in our day, as well? The fact is obvious and cannot be ignored. We, like those believers of old, have experienced departures from the Truth in the form of doctrinal alterations, modernizations, and wholesale, 180-degree change. We should take careful note of the fact that the Truth, throughout its history, has not had much difficulty fending off attacks from those who come from the outside with doctrines that are wholly opposite to it. The trouble comes when some within the umbrella of Truth espouse a few, seemingly harmless doctrines that change only "minor" and "inconsequential" beliefs. These alterations are presented as valid alternatives to traditional belief and as non-threatening to the Body, represented rather as providing "balance." However, one change begets another, and soon the ramifications are far beyond what we might have imagined at first. My point is that error rarely finds acceptance when it kicks down the front door, but instead it slips

quietly in the back and subverts the foundations of our beliefs before we even notice it's there.

These doctrinal drifts are not exclusive to the arena of "fundamental" teachings such as baptism, resurrection, eternal life, etc. Moral standards and prophetic interpretations have also suffered deterioration from the early days of the Truth. A lengthy list of activities that were once shunned by believers and perspectives on various issues of morality that once belonged solely to the ungodly could be created, but it would be difficult to choose an ending point! The typical Christadelphian household, in many cases, is not what it used to be. Children participate in more extracurricular activities and spend more time with "friends" from school or work, thereby detracting from time spent with the family and ecclesia – those who hold the same values and behavioral expectations. What should we expect, young people, when all of our time is spent around the ungodly and profane? Will we develop a spiritual mind? Or will we shift our interests from the Truth to the temporal pleasures and interests that surround us daily? I do not mean to suggest becoming a recluse from the world, but I urge all young people to consider their associations and the influence they may be having on our spiritual well-being.

Although socializing extensively with worldly youth is a problem, an even bigger issue appears to be that of ecclesial polarization according to age. Young people are arranged into ecclesial youth organizations that can, albeit unknowingly in many cases, breeds lack of respect for the elder brethren whose ways are considered "outdated and restrictive." Young people, where in the Scriptures do we ever find an example of youth coming together, without the influence of any with experience, to effect good? We may think of the example of Timothy, who as a young man was charged with leading an ecclesia. However, we must remember that Timothy was near 40 years old and guided by Paul, an elder. He did not lead using his own ideology, but carried on with those things he had learned from his "father in the Truth." We might say that, in effect, the Apostle Paul led that ecclesia through Timothy, rather than Timothy doing it on his own. Conversely, we may consider Rehoboam's decline when he failed to heed the advice of the older counselors that had stood before his father in favor of the "wisdom" of the men with whom he had grown up. What was the result of his ill-advised decision? His kingdom was divided and he retained control of only two of the 12 tribes (1 Kings 12). Brethren and friends, please consider this account which is surely left as an example for us. Do not maintain a line of demarcation between the elder brethren in your ecclesia and yourself! This is not how the ecclesia was intended to run. Abandon activities which exclude their presence and wisdom. Youth organizations within the ecclesia are but the creation of a faction which, with time, will create a rift between wisdom and youth. Examine the situation in your ecclesia – it may have already happened.

Have you considered the state of the young people, not just in your ecclesia, but in the Body at large? When you give these issues honest consideration, do you not see the problems that arise out of extensive participation in school-related events and groups,

overindulgence in the “entertainment” that surrounds us in the world, neglect of ecclesial activities (except those consisting solely of young people, of course), feelings of loyalty and untamed affection for “friends” of the world, elevation of the value of worldly education over that of the “wisdom that is from above,” elevation of career aspirations over our career in the Truth, manner of speech, recreational choices, etc., etc., etc? Again, my point is not that we should avoid everything that a person of the world enjoys, but that we should spend more time contemplating the outcomes of our choices. Do they lead us to love God or the world, which is to be the “enemy of God” (James 4:4)?

Prophetic interpretations are increasingly spoken of as if they are matters of opinion, all of which are acceptable and legitimate. The obstacle preventing opinion from becoming belief is a degree of uncertainty. Therefore, the use of the term opinion in relation to prophecy implies doubt, and doubt suggests that we cannot know definitively what God has revealed to us. It is my belief that young people often become disenchanted with Bible prophecy for one of two reasons: (1) lack of desire to become engaged in a “controversial” subject that is not agreed upon by all brethren and (2) unwillingness to devote the necessary time to study. It is probably more often the case that a young person possesses both of the above-mentioned traits than just one. Brethren and friends, in John 14:29 Jesus said, “And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it come to pass, ye might believe.” Also, in 2nd Peter 1:19 we read, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” Faith seems to be a popular subject among young people these days, as it should be. When you consider your faith, on what is it based? A vague concept of a judgment seat and a kingdom to come, in which we will be eternally happy and healthy? Or a vivid understanding of the events which have transpired, those which are being worked out in our present day, and those soon to come on the earth, all of which have been foretold by the Almighty God?

The verses we have considered tell us that the study of prophecy is important. But is the study of the subject, using any interpretation that pleases us, sufficient? Jesus said that we were to see things happen and subsequently believe, or have faith. How can our faith be strengthened if we do not comprehend the Truth of the matter? Without the correct interpretation, we will not see what we expect to see and, therefore, our faith will not grow and become robust, as it should. Instead, we may end up losing faith as a result of unfulfilled expectations. We must give attention to prophecy, as it was not placed in the Bible merely as optional reading, and we must also set our minds on ascertaining the correct meaning of it.

I write to you as a young brother of your own generation. Please, consider this correspondence a heartfelt encouragement from a friend, as David and Jonathan surely sharpened each other even as young men. My goal is not to seduce anyone with good words and fair speeches, nor do I aim to expound on each of these subjects, as it would take much more than the few pages this letter occupies to do so. Instead, I

hope to have sparked an interest within each of you to look into the issues for yourself, with the Scriptures in hand, and come to an honest conclusion that will not violate a single letter of the Spirit Word. If you agree whole-heartedly with these conclusions, please continue to stand with those of like conviction and “hold the line,” so to speak. If you doubt that my concerns are legitimate and feel compelled to question the motivation behind this letter, please know that I do not ask you to do anything for my benefit, but rather to look into these things in the interest of your own. Each of us must “work out (our) own salvation...” We should all take enough interest in our eternal well-being to closely examine what is transpiring within the community of believers. The trials that the early ecclesias faced are upon the modern ecclesia, as well. To deny that “false teachers,” “evil men and seducers” exist among us is to charge the Almighty with lying (2nd Peter 2:1; 2nd Timothy 3:13). Will we ignore the fact? Or will we put our hand to the plow and do our work in the Lord’s vineyard, that we might have our rest in the age to come? We each make the answer for ourselves.

Joey Moon

EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

THE RUSSIAN BEAR MAKES A DRAMATIC MOVE

In the preface of Elpis Israel bro. Thomas makes the comment (and that which we often include in the back inside cover of the Sanctuary-Keeper): “*When Russia makes its grand move for the building up of its Image-empire, then let the reader know that the end of all things as present constituted, is at hand.*” Keeping that in mind we make the following comments.

A periodical, especially one that appears on a quarterly basis, takes a risk when commenting on current events, especially when such events are still in the process of developing. We write these observations as the Russian/Georgian crisis is attempting to be resolved after its climax with the attack of Russian forces on the former Soviet satellite of Georgia. And, events continue to unfold just as we are finalizing this issue of the S.K. We do not wish to speak too hastily or make unwarranted predictions when we still do not know where this specific crisis will end up. But there is a striking element to this Russian show of force that not only should make the Believer take serious notice, but is also drawing a great deal of overdue concern from the more attentive elements of the media and political world.

We have heard and read many interesting comments in the media regarding the Russian aggression such as this being “*the most significant event since the fall of the Berlin wall*”; a “*return to history*” as one commentator observed in reference to Russia’s 19th century Imperial past; a “*wake-up call to the West*” as an indicator of “*Russia’s true intentions*”. A statement was made that Russia is making its preliminary moves towards “*empire building*”, and that Russia’s move is a strategic

“*checkmate*” against the United States and other Western powers in regard to control and influence over former Soviet States, and the control of energy (oil, and more significantly - natural gas) that moves through Georgia and Turkey – which was intended by the West as a bypass around the virtual Russian monopoly of the movement of energy supplies out of the Caspian area for European consumption. As we look at our *National Geographic* map that is devoted to the Caspian Region and the energy reserves there present, of Georgia it states – “*Georgia’s good regional relations and commitment to market reforms make it an appealing route to Western markets for Caspian oil.*” Oil is the main thing right now that flows through Georgia. But as we learned recently, the oil supplies are only a small fraction of the European and world supply. Plans were being made to use Georgia as a pass through for what Europe needs even more – and that is natural gas. Russia has now cleverly cast doubt on the stability of the region for such a purpose.

While the Western nations spewed out threats and ultimatums, they were basically powerless to do anything about it – Russia knows this and has exploited this weakness for all to see. Russia has even turned the tables to blame the West – specifically the United States. And though it is clear that Georgia made the first moves in invading the break-away province of Ossetia in order to put an end to the rebel operations against portions of Georgia, it is now becoming evident that the Georgian president fell into the trap of a long and brilliantly planned strategy by Russia who was able to counterattack almost immediately.

Not only has Georgia been witness to the ineffectiveness of Western “support”, other former Soviet states and Eastern Bloc countries who have forged close relationships with the West and the U.S. while turning their backs on Moscow, have also come to a chilling realization – that Russia is now able and willing to impose its will through force and the West will not and cannot provide meaningful opposition. Countries such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Baltic States have been included into NATO, which by treaty an attack on a NATO country requires military support by all other members of NATO. Russia has viewed the infringement by the West into “their territory” as a heinous and unacceptable circumstance. Ukraine and Georgia were pursuing NATO membership, but this now seems to be in jeopardy with no NATO country wanting their inclusion (accept for the U.S.), and therefore leaving these countries as sitting ducks in a much



larger political and military game. And even the eastern European members of NATO are coming to understand, that despite the treaty they are supposedly protected under, Western Europe does not have the force needed to counteract Russia, and ironically Russia controls the spigot of over 50% of the European energy supplies. The U.S. – though a military power – has been thrown “off balance” (as one news article observed) by wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and tensions with Iran, and is essentially helpless to do anything short of nuclear engagement – which is not an option against Russia.

As Bible students, what does this mean to us? A few points in our brief commentary will have to suffice for the time being:

- 1) After years of embarrassment and being taken for granted on the world stage, Russia (what we believe to be *Gogue* of Ezek. 38, The “King of the North” of Dan. 11; and the “Latter Day Assyrian”, etc.) is aggressively and now brutally reasserting itself and working to build an empire. (Reminiscent of the rise of the German power after the embarrassing years following WW1.) Georgia was the testing ground for this first open step. It should be noted that Georgia is a part of the historical and prophetic region known as “Togarmah” (Ezek. 38:6) that will be a part of the Gogian confederacy. The region of Togarmah also carries into neighboring and extremely strategic Turkey, which Christadelphians have long expected will fall to Gogue prior to the fateful expedition of Gogue into the “mountains of Israel”. Georgia’s alliance with the West (along with the rest of Eastern Europe) will not be able to stand.
- 2) There is no democracy in Russia. Putin has clearly shown who is in charge and is effectively ruling as an Autocrat.
- 3) Oil and Natural Gas is the key to wealth and the exertion of power leading up to the great and terrible “Day of the LORD”. Control the flow of energy reserves and the rest of the nations are like puppets on a string. Russia’s intentions have been made clear in this arena.
- 4) The West and U.S.A. are helpless to stop Russia. We are seeing an amazing preview of the helpless condition of the Tarshish alliance when all they can really do when Russia comes down on Israel is protest – “art thou come to take a spoil?”
- 5) Israel is now more clearly in the cross hairs of Russia. Russia has pointed the blame finger at Israel as well, for their military aid to Georgia. Israel is already a thorn in Russia’s side for several different reasons: Russia lays claim to many “holy sites” in Israel, and Israel has stood (and continues to stand) in the way of Russian interests and control in the Middle East since its birth as a nation. And as in the case of Georgia, a major pipeline also passes through Israel (Trans-Israel Pipeline or “Tipline”). A major pipeline that was at one time a joint venture between Israel and Russia, but an agreement that has since lapsed.

Brethren, this should be at the very least a wake-up call. However the dust settles, this was not an isolated or unplanned event by Russia. Their Latter Day role is sure, and they are well on the way of fulfilling that role as revealed by the Prophets.