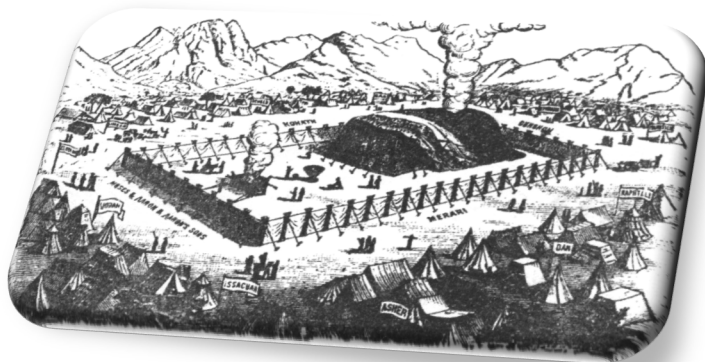


THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER

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



- ▶ What or Whom Can Separate Me From The Love of Christ?
- ▶ Lessons Learned From Providence
- ▶ The Time of Jacob's Trouble
- ▶ In Defense of The Prophetic Word
- ▶ The Doctrine of Fellowship
- ▶ The Three Stages of a Movement
- ▶ Editorial Flyleaf



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Front Cover: Geo-political tensions and rumors of war continue to heat up in the Middle East over Iran's nuclear ambitions.



EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

A TROUBLING DEVELOPMENT

As many readers are already aware, it is troubling to mention that the host ecclesia of another Unamended function has voted to allow the author of the “*The Judaizers-Another Gospel*” and the WCF “*Thoughts for the Week*” to fellowship at their recent annual Gathering. We find it disheartening that the proponent of false doctrines has gained even more acceptance within the Unamended community. We firmly believe that every Unamended Ecclesia/Gathering/Bible School should exhibit strength and courage and stop the erosion of the fundamentals of God's Holy Truth. However, the problem lies not just with hosting brethren, but with every brother and sister that support/attend these gatherings and ecclesial events and continues in fellowship with those that promote false doctrines. Apart from the *wishing of Godspeed* message towards gross error that this sends, when we consider the fact that the recent Gathering is attended by brethren and young people from around the continent – such further emphasizes the critical need for all of us to stand firm in the practice of sound doctrine and fellowship practices; for the things we do or do not stand for do have an impact that reaches much further than ourselves or our individual ecclesias. The principal of “ecclesial autonomy” does not give us license to practice or tolerate apostasy at will and think that there will not be negative influence or consequence upon the larger Christ Ecclesia.

A WORLD ON EDGE

We all are no doubt watching the ever growing tensions between Israel the U.S. and Iran with great interest. The world seems to be on edge as Iran continues to threaten to close the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation to signs of Israel or U.S. aggression. This would put a stranglehold on the free flow of oil and in affect would almost immediately grind the economies of the Western World to a screeching halt. New sanctions against Iran are presumed to further weaken the current Iranian regime, therefore the U.S. is putting a great deal of pressure on Israel to not attack Iran and let recent sanctions run their course. This has not put an end, to what everyone safely assumes, is Israel's covert operations in killing off Iran's nuclear scientists as the country continues to move ahead with their nuclear program. Russia itself has threatened that an “attack on Tehran will also be an attack on Moscow”. At the same time, Israel has worries with the virtual civil war taking place in Syria, and ironically fear the influx of Syrian refugees who are of the same minority Alawite sect as Assad himself as they flee the growing rebellion.

WORLD VIEW GRIM FOR 2012

As the world itself is on edge over geo-political developments, there are bleak views as to the future of the world economy in 2012. The *Purchasing Managers Index*, which charts demand and output, is even showing countries such as China and Brazil's economy are coming to a “screeching halt” as exports evaporate – signaling bad times for the world economy. The U.S. economy and industrial output is holding on, but due to its dependence on the vibrancy of world markets, it certainly is on shaky ground. The only real exception to world trends is Israel. And though Israel's own growth rates (forecasted this year at 3.5%) are affected by the larger world economy, they are being viewed as “a model” for the world. Though a “model”, no doubt Israel will increase as an object of great envy, disdain and coveting by the nations of the world.



RENEWAL NOTICE

The 2011, 4th Quarter edition of the SK Magazine marks the annual end of our 7th year of publishing the magazine. We very much appreciate the support received through subscriptions and donations as well as the continued contributions of articles, excerpts and quotes for the promulgation and defense of The Truth. If you wish to continue to receive these quarterly editions of the SK in 2012, please complete the enclosed subscription slip and mail to:

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THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

... “by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place or country, which HE should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and sojourned in the Land of Promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise; for he looked for a city, or state, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. These all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us – that they without us should not be made perfect.” Here, then, is an inheritance pointed out as the nucleus of a new world or order of things upon earth; for Paul saith “the promise that he should be the Heir of the World was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” From which it appears that the apostle considered the promise of Palestine to Abraham and his seed as equivalent to promising them a world. Yea! And what a splendid world it will be that has the Holy Land for its demesne, Mount Zion for its throne, Messiah for its High Priest and King, the whole earth for its territory, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the righteous from the dead for its subaltern rulers, under the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, its constitution righteousness, and its covering, knowledge as the waters of the sea. This world of which we speak is founded in Abraham and his seed, as sons of God, or angels, by “the adoption – to wit, the redemption of the body. For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

John Thomas, from the “*Investigator*,” 1844
and reprinted in the June, 1876 *Christadelphian*

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

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

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

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WHAT OR WHOM CAN SEPARATE ME FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?

WE find this question posed by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans. In Chapter 8:35-39, we find these words of Truth. *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

As I read these scriptures, I ask myself what love is being referenced – Is it the love that we hold for our Master and His Father or the love that they hold for us? In my opinion, it is both. We should constantly reflect back the love that Yahweh and His Only Begotten Son have for us. We love because God is love and first loved us. We are extremely blessed to enjoy this kind of relationship with the Deity on high and with Him who manifested the greatest

love that can be shown – giving up His life that we may be able to live with Him. However, we know and understand that although our Father is merciful and long-suffering, He will only put up with unrepentant evil for a determined duration. At that time, His judgments will be poured on the wickedness of mankind without regard to male or female, Jew or Gentile.

The Scriptures in Romans are presented to our readers in order to generate discussion on a way of thinking that currently exists within the Brotherhood in regard to the many so called strifes and divisions within the Body. It has been stated in my hearing and in current literature that the many divisions within the Body are causing some brothers and sisters to leave the Truth in search for an environment that gives them a sense of peace and tranquility. I truly do not wish to offend anyone, especially those of the Brotherhood, but there are some serious considerations that should be provided to anyone who believes that the troubles within the Brotherhood are driving away our brethren.

If Brethren truly love God and Christ; then the true reason that they may leave the Truth will never be Ecclesial contentions. We should never blame the Ecclesia or other individuals for one's lack of love for the Truth. If individual brothers or sisters truly loved the Truth, then they would be willing to stay in the Truth and help others through their trials and ordeals. Is this not the truest meaning of the agape love that we are supposed to have for each other? Brethren, please do not use the contentions within an Ecclesia as the reason that someone has left the Truth. There are deeper reasons as to why a brother or sister would want to leave the Truth.

Doesn't the scriptural teachings in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:18-23 apply to any who willingly leave the Truth? *“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

The primary reason that people leave one place to go to another is because they think that the second place has something better to offer. Where can we go that offers a better or more stable environment than the Truth? Can other religions and other churches offer stability when they do not even have the Truth? Can the world offer peace and stability? The world is described as a raging sea. How will that environment offer peace to someone?

Brethren, what other reasons may exist as to why some brothers and sisters will leave the Truth? They may be offended by the individual actions

manifested toward them by other brethren. They may think that it is easier to leave the environment where their pride has been offended rather than to possibly accept rebuke and suffering for the sake of the Truth. Maybe, the elders in their home Ecclesia have not been a good example to these young babes in the Truth. Maybe, the elders have chosen to bury their head in the sand and have refused to take a stand on the issues within the Brotherhood. Maybe, the elders have refused to teach the young that there is a line in the sand that must be taken in regard to the teaching and tolerance of false doctrine and immorality. It is always easier to blame others than to take a long hard look at ourselves, to see if we may be contributing to the problems of the Brotherhood. Maybe, our parents and Ecclesias have taught our young that it is OK to pursue new ideas regardless if they are provable within the confines of the Scriptures or not. Maybe, our spiritual and natural families have taught our young that we should get along with everyone regardless of what they believe. Maybe, we have let the world rush into our spiritual environment and we have been caught up in the ideas that if we are called Christadelphians that we all believe the same thing.

It has been stated that many of the differences in the Brotherhood are initiated and continued due to personality differences between the brethren. This may be true in some instances, but in most instances there are truly doctrinal, moral and prophetic differences that exist. I would like to ask any brother or sister who has ever stated that the only differences between Brother A and Brother B are personality differences to make sure that they have visited with the two brothers about the real difference that exist. It is easy for us to just lay all of our problems on personality differences. It is much easier to do this then to try to determine the root cause of the problem. Why is it easier? Because, if we say that personalities are the root cause, we don't have to get involved in finding out the real problem and possibly having to stand up for the Truth ourselves. Human nature impacts every man and woman, even the brothers and sisters that we dearly love. With our nature, we don't want to get involved in something that may cause us grief. Brethren, that should not be so in matters of The Truth. Why do we fear to take a stand when the truth is challenged? Do we really want all of our brethren to be in the Kingdom? Then why do we shrink into the background when there are times that we should be lending a helping, understanding hand and be willing and able to teach, to reprove, to rebuke, to correct and to instruct in righteousness (2nd Timothy 3:16)?

Brethren, the responsibility of one leaving the Truth lies squarely at the feet of the one departing. We should never blame the departure of a brother or sister from the Truth on others. If we return to our reading in Romans 8:35-39, we find that nothing or no one can make an individual lose their love for the Truth. It is their choice as to what they love and what they do not love. There are certain requirements that all in the Truth must perform. We must be obedient, we must teach, we must defend and we must do all things with a Christ like

spirit. Did Christ leave the Truth because of the strifes and contentions that existed in his lifetime? Brethren, instead of blaming others for the problems and issues existing within the Brotherhood, we should be asking ourselves these questions – “*What am I personally doing to help resolve the issues? Am I being strong for the Truth? Am I allowing certain false doctrines and immoral acts to exist in my Ecclesia? Do I try to find out the underlying causes for the contentions or do I prefer to just lay it off on someone else just so I don't have to get involved? Am I teaching the young people in my Ecclesia that we have a responsibility to spiritually discern between right and wrong, between good and evil? Am I teaching the young people in my Ecclesia about how to righteously contend for the faith once delivered to the saints? Am I teaching the young babes in the Truth that we are to be steadfast and unmovable in our walk in the Truth?*”

Brethren, I am convinced that those who are standing up for the Truth are not the culprits that are causing our young to leave. It is the existing Laodicean attitude and flirtations with the world around us that are causing these contentions and subsequent departures from the Truth.

Let us remember that nothing or no one can make us love less. However, a fervent study and application of God's Word can definitely help us learn to love more. *B.H.*

"Here we are at the end of the sixteenth volume of the ADVOCATE, having so far survived the onslaughts of those who have been compassing land and sea to end its existence. For this we make no boast. We have simply accepted the forced warfare as one of the inevitable evils which must be looked for by any editor who is fearless of men and bound to principle and bent upon the faithful performance of a duty.

In a sense we are sorry the Truth has had to face foes and pass through a warfare, but the fact that good has come and will come out of it takes off the keen edge of our sorrow. It seems that in the onward march of divine operations among fallible men some must fight, some must fall; but let it be remembered that it is 'he that continueth to the end shall be saved.'

If some have thought the ADVOCATE has given too much attention to the issues of the battle we have fought during this closing year, let them remember the injunction to "earnestly contend for the faith," and that a large part of the apostles lives, indeed of Christ's, too, was occupied in 'disputing and persuading'; and the disputes were on matters within as well as without.

Perhaps we can start the new year with the way of procedure clearer than we started the year 1900. But if anyone think the weapons of the Truth's warfare may be put away in a dusty corner and in the future we can sentimentally fold our arms and hold an uninterrupted lovefeast, he is destined to disappointment. Peace will not fully come till the Prince of peace is here with reins in hand." Thomas Williams, December, 1900 Advocate

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PROVIDENCE

Continued from the 3rd Quarter

WE will now turn our attention to the Apostle Paul, who is a wonderful and powerful example of one who patiently walked in faith throughout his lifetime after his conversion, always demonstrating complete trust in Yahweh's guidance though not always fully understanding it. When considering his calling and what Yahweh's ultimate intentions were for Paul, it becomes apparent that the Elohim were working many years before the birth of the one who was given the name Saul by his Pharisaic earthly father. Paul himself recognized this fact, writing in Gal 1:15 that God, "*separated me from my mother's womb, and called me to His grace.*" For instance, it would be necessary that Paul be born a Roman citizen to enable him to later utilize this status throughout his ministry to avoid situations that would cause him bodily harm and prevent him from accomplishing that which he was commissioned – to preach the gospel message to all of the Known World. Furthermore, it was necessary that his earthly father have the means to send Saul to the elite school taught by Gamaliel who is described in Acts 5:34 as, "*a Pharisee, a teacher of the law, held in reputation among all the people.*" This formal schooling that he describes in Acts 22:3 as being, "*taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers,*" provided Paul with great insight to the Pharisaical teachings, thereby enabling him after his conversion to refute them with such success and so convincingly, as demonstrated almost immediately after his conversion. In Acts 9:22 we read, "*But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.*"

Even his most shameful acts – being instrumental in the death of righteous Stephen and as he later admitted in Acts 22:4, "*I persecuted this way even unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,*" drove him to great acts of obedience and faith for the sake of the Truth because it haunted his memory throughout his life. All of these events were directed providentially. The stoning of Stephen in itself is a microcosm of the way in which Providence works, for what appeared to be a senseless and tragic event at the time of Stephen's death ultimately helped produce much fruit for the Name of Yahweh in that it had a profound effect upon Paul throughout his life, driving him to great accomplishments in the Name of Christ, as had been foretold. This lesson in itself is an important one for all Believers, young and old, to contemplate and understand – that our failures, which are unavoidable, can either destroy us, as was the case with Judas, or they can propel us to do

great and faithful works as in the case of Peter (after his denial of Christ) and Paul (after his persecution of the ecclesia). The profound effect that the death of Stephen had upon Paul's life is witnessed by Paul's very first recorded public dissertation while in Antioch. In an effort to convince those in attendance that Jesus is the Messiah, Paul used the same style and content of argument that Stephen did while addressing the Pharisees, on the same topic, before they stoned him. In yet another example of the hand of Providence at work, Stephen's death served to promote the spreading of the Gospel message in other ways, as Acts 8:1 records, "*And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the ecclesia which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*" As demonstrated, Saul's hatred and great persecution of the followers of Christ scattered them throughout various regions rather than allowing their sphere of influence to be limited only to Jerusalem, demonstrating yet again that what appears to be a curse is intended providentially to promote the Will of the Lord, though surely this was unrecognized by the Believers of the time. By being scattered to other regions, they exposed even more of the populous to their zeal, teaching, and behavior in the Ways of Christ. As Acts 8:4 states, "*Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.*" Brother Roberts writes in regard to this time that, "*The persecution was a providential diffusion of the word, though doubtless very unwelcome to the brethren. Many unwelcome circumstances may occur in our own experience which, in a way perhaps not visible at the time, accomplish the work of God.*"

Paul's Example

Let us now consider some other specific examples of Providence at work throughout the life of Paul. The Elohim had adequately prepared this vessel that would be used to, as stated in Acts 17:6, "*turn the world upside down,*" with his fervent efforts in preaching the gospel message. After Paul's conversion, Ananias is told through angelic vision regarding him that, "*He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the Children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*" Paul himself recognized this to be the case, as he discloses in 1 Tim 1:15-16 that, "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Nevertheless, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*" Indeed, Paul did suffer for Christ's names' sake until his death, being a great testimonial of faithful and patient endurance for those of us who have sought to follow in like manner, as is verified in 2 Cor 11:23-28 where he writes, "*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered*

shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the ecclesias.”

In *Seasons of Comfort*, a section entitled “Patience and Its Work,” Bro. Roberts writes the following in regard to Paul and those who followed in his faithful example, writing that he was, “*set forth a pattern of long-suffering for the benefit of subsequent believers. His warfare was arduous, his sufferings keen; his endurance great; his patience wonderful. These features of his case are commended to our consideration. They are intended by Christ for our profit; and profitable they are, if we let our mind rest on them.*” He goes on to write that, “*Our brethren in the first century fortified themselves by the reflection that ‘the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;’ and shall we look at them with a different eye who are seeking to follow in their footsteps? God permits suffering to His chosen for this very purpose, ‘that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Christ.’ He puts his children in the furnace to try them, as gold, that the dross may be consumed. No character is complete till it is tried.*”

The Stoning of Paul

Throughout all of these great difficulties Paul remained patiently faithful while working zealously – made possible because he was constant in prayer and always in thanksgiving to the Lord – a wonderful and powerful example to all of us during the present age who have not found it necessary to “*resist unto blood,*” as many before us have had to do for the Faith. In regard to Paul’s zeal in the Faith, his complete commitment to the Truth, and his willingness to endure persecution for it, we will be hard-pressed to find a more remarkable example than those events recorded in Acts 14:19-21 regarding Paul in Lystra. The verses read, “*And there came there certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, and drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Nevertheless, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again, to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch.*”

It is fearful that the words of the testimony may be lost if we do not take the time to carefully consider them in an effort to understand the magnitude of this account. First of all, **Paul was stoned and left for dead for preaching the gospel message!** His enemies had dragged him outside of the city, believing

that they had successfully killed him! As the disciples stood round about what they believed was his dead body, Paul rose up, and went *back into the city where he had just been stoned!* Why would a man do such a seemingly foolish thing? Because *he had more work to do* in the Name of Christ in that city and he refused to be deterred! He then left the following day to yet again preach the gospel message in another city before *returning to Lystra to continue his work in the Name of the Lord!* **This**, fellow Believers, is a man who was convinced of a coming reward and therefore zealously dedicated his life to doing the Will of Yahweh! Can we help but be encouraged by the actions of this faithful man who was, as referenced earlier in 1 Tim, given “*as a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting?*” As Providence would dictate, the trials and difficulty experienced by Paul indeed resulted in great encouragement and strengthening for the ecclesias who witnessed his zeal, as it is written in Acts 14:22 that Paul and his companions were, “*Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*”

Brother Roberts writes in regard to this subject that, “*trouble is a means employed in His (Yahweh’s) hands to lay the foundation of future joy and blessedness. Let His children then be comforted and strengthened to endure even the deepest and most inexplicable affliction. Let them learn to see God in the darkness and feel His hand in the tempest. Let them apply the consolation Christ has given them: ‘Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall be comforted.’*”

Strife between Paul and Barnabas

The unknown but divine ways of Providence in the life of Paul is also displayed in what would on the surface seem a petty argument between brethren. In Acts 15:36-41, it is recorded that, “*Some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being commended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the ecclesias.*” From Col 4:10, we understand that John Mark was Barnabas’ nephew and in Acts 13:13 is the account when John Mark left Paul and Barnabas during their ministries in order to return to Jerusalem, leading Paul to determine him unfit to accompany them during their second journey. Again, this may seem to be a petty disagreement that separated two beloved brethren who had together accomplished so much in the effort of spreading the gospel message. However, when considering the end result of this separation, it actually resulted in *twice* as many ecclesias being visited and strengthened by

the two groups! Of course, this is not to promote separation between brethren due to personal differences, but in this case it is interesting to witness how what could have been a hindrance to the completion of the work of the Lord was turned to a great benefit! The situation between these brethren becomes even more compelling when considering that later Paul reunited with John Mark, holding him in high regard and stating in 2 Tim 4:11 that, “*he is profitable to me for the ministry.*” As shown in this example, the Ways of Providence are difficult to understand during the time the events are taking place. However, when looking back on them in retrospect, one can then begin to comprehend and witness how the Elohim worked for the good of Yahweh throughout. It is our duty, fellow Believers, to only seek to act faithfully in the interim.

Events at Philippi

In *The Ways of Providence*, Brother Roberts writes, “*Where God is feared, His promises believed and His commandments obeyed, there is a providence at work, shaping natural circumstances to give them an appointed issue for good, though the road traveled may be apparently evil.*” This is certainly the case when Paul and Silas journeyed to Philippi, as referenced in Acts 16. After converting faithful Lydia and then finding the incessant rants of a mad woman to be a hindrance to further preaching the gospel in that city, Paul cured the mad woman who was thought by many in the area to possess a spirit of divination, therefore bringing a profit to her masters. Being angered that their source of income had been eliminated; the men caught Paul and Silas and brought them to their magistrates, where they accused them of troubling the city with their teachings and actions. Acts 16:23 states that, “*When they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely.*”

Having endured great pain from the beatings and scourging and then being cast into the depths of the prison, it would have been the fleshly inclination to question Yahweh for making them endure such difficulty and agony when they were trying to do His Will. One might even question whether they wanted to continue to follow Yahweh’s Will, if this was the result! This was not, however, the attitude or belief of Paul and Silas, who realized that, unlike what Christianity tells us, bad things *do* happen to good people – sometimes to perfect their character and other times, as in the case under consideration, to better promote the Will of the Lord, though unbeknownst to them at the time. Instead of lamenting their painful fate, Acts 16:25 reveals that, “*At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.*” What do you think their fellow prisoners thought of these two men who were *singing praises to God* after being beaten and scourged?! They likely believed them either insane or very pious; whatever the case, they were greatly influenced, as revealed by their actions in verse 26 which states, “*And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed.*” Having this fortuitous opportunity, we would expect to read in

the subsequent verses how all of the prisoners rushed out of their cells and gained their freedom. But this is not what happened. Verses 27-28 read, “*And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying Do thyself no harm; for we are all here!*”

Witness the great impact that the outward faithfulness in the form of prayers and hymns had upon these prisoners as they surely recognized that something supernatural had occurred and therefore restrained themselves from fleeing the scene. But they are not the only ones that were influenced by Paul and Silas’ faithfulness and character, as verses 29-34 states that the Philippian Jailer then, “*called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*”

What a wonderful and powerful example to the Believers throughout history, demonstrating the need to remain faithful and prayerful in all situations, because we do not know when Yahweh may be using us as an instrument to further manifest His Name to one (or a household) who He has Called. If we, like Paul and Silas, remain faithful and thankful even in great difficulty and trial, our actions may be the impetus for someone who has witnessed them to also seek the Lord and His Ways. If, while experiencing trial, we follow our natural, fleshly inclinations by sulking and acting angry while questioning why the Lord has treated us in this manner, then it is most likely that we will be an unfit instrument for his purposes and therefore frustrate the ways and purpose of Yahweh.

Jerusalem and imprisonment

The divine way of Providence was again put on display after Paul returned to Jerusalem, though he realized from various prophetic sources that doing so would result in his imprisonment. By this time in his life, however, Paul had come to recognize an important lesson that is learned from understanding the Ways of Providence – that many times it is necessary to experience great difficulty and trial so that ultimate good for the sake of Yahweh’s Name can be accomplished – a clarity that can only be gained by scriptural maturity and experience. In Acts 21:10-13, we read that, “*as we (Paul and his companions) tarried there (Caesarea) many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s belt, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews as Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this belt, and shall deliver him*

into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready, not to be bound only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Only a man who had completely surrendered his life and will to Yahweh could truthfully and with conviction state these words. And so it came to pass that when Paul returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, that Acts 21:27-28 records that, *"The Jews in Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and that polluted this holy place."* Verses 30-32 then reveal that, *"All the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple and at once the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar; who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them; and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, ceased beating Paul."*

Here was Paul, in the midst of the raucous mob that was intent upon murdering him and was seeking to tear him apart. Would he have wondered at that time whether it was indeed wise for him to return to Jerusalem? Could this really be the will of Yahweh? What possible good could come from this situation? If this scene was paused at this precise moment, it would be very difficult, from a human perspective, to find anything positive for either Paul or the promotion of the Plan of Yahweh, for the situation appeared dire for Paul personally, to say nothing of his continued efforts to spread the gospel message throughout the world. The Lord, however, knows the outcome of all matters beforehand, while mankind is forced to only see what is before our eyes. In the case at hand, the guiding hand of Providence was at work, though certainly not fully understood or comprehended by Paul at the time. An intended greater good was to come from this apparently dire circumstance that could not have been foreseen by the human eye.

In Acts 21:39, we read that Paul inquires of the chief captain who had rescued him from certain death saying, *"I beseech thee, permit me to speak unto the people."* What faith is put on display yet again in Paul's life, aptly demonstrating his incredible zeal for the Truth! Simple self-preservation would have been the only desire of most of us, hoping that we might, as they say, "Live to fight another day," and seek the safety of the holding cell that they had intended to put Paul into. This, however, was not the attitude of Paul, who always endeavored to make the most of all opportunities given to him by the Lord. He later instructed the Colossians to follow his worthy example, saying in 4:5, *"redeem (make full use of) the times,"* that are provided by Yahweh to bear fruit for His Name's Sake. Instead of viewing this situation as misfortune,

Paul saw an opportunity to promote the gospel message to a large and engaged group of people that he otherwise would *never* have the opportunity to reach. This, fellow Believers, demonstrates Paul's understanding and recognition of how Providence works in our lives – for when the situation seemed dire, Paul had faith that it was actually a great opportunity provided by Yahweh to continue his ministry efforts. He therefore delivered an incredibly powerful discourse to the Jews – relating the account of his own conversion from a Pharisee who, like them, persecuted and killed those who believed the gospel message that he now promoted before being converted. He was now ready and willing, for the sake of the Truth, to endure the same type of persecution that he previously performed.

Certainly this powerful testimony would have convinced at least a portion of the crowd who had come from all over the region to celebrate the Feast of Weeks and who now gathered to witness the spectacle at hand, and perhaps some believed and were baptized into Christ's Saving Name. The vast majority of the people, however, rejected his testimonial, just as they had rejected Christ himself, and called for Paul's death, so that he was spared only by the intervention of the chief captain of the Roman army. The chief captain, not understanding the Jews' malicious actions towards Paul and making the assumption that he must have grievously transgressed in some manner in order to deserve such furor, determined to beat the truth out of Paul, as it is written in Acts 22:24 that, *"The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the barracks, and bade that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what reason they cried so against him."*

It is at this time that, as mentioned at the onset of our remarks regarding Paul, the Elohim's Providential efforts many years before bore the fruit of their labor, for Paul was born a Roman citizen and therefore could not be punished without a formal trial. As Acts 22:25 reads, *"And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is Roman, and uncondemned?"* The exchange demonstrates yet again Paul's initiative, being a magnificent example of what is expected of the Believer during our lives. Brother Roberts writes of the scriptural principal that man, *"Adopt the course of action that appears wise. Human action is the basis of divine supervision in human affairs. If a man were to lie down in sloth, the angels would have nothing to work on, so to speak, as (in regard to) man's matters."* Paul made the best decision that he believed he could make given the circumstances and took action in accordance with that decision. Throughout our lives, we can endeavor to do no better.

He then took similar initiative when later addressing the Sanhedrin, as shown in the first part of Acts 23. As verse 6 of the chapter reads, *"When Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other part Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."*

When recognizing that the council who opposed him was made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees, Jewish factions that held contrary religious views, he took the initiative to cleverly manipulate them against one another in an effort to preserve himself from punishment or perhaps death. Not that he was afraid of death; rather, he understood that he had more work to do in the Name of the Lord. In chapter 23:7-9 we read, *“And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a great cry. And the scribes who were of the Pharisees’ party arose, and contended sharply, saying, We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”*

Paul’s intended outcome was therefore achieved, as the resulting argument and chaos that arose between the two factions made them completely forget about their issues with Paul. Again, the importance of this lesson and example to the Believer cannot be overly stressed – that we are expected to *take action* and to show initiative in accordance with what we believe is appropriate for the situation and so long as we do not violate the commandments of the Lord. Brother Roberts again writes of this concept, saying, *“God requires men to do their part as the condition and means of enabling Him to work out His purpose with and concerning them. It is a principle illustrated throughout the entire course of scripture, culminating in the command to work out our own salvation, coupled with the assurance that God works with and in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. God is the same today and forever. We must do our part with all the wisdom and diligence we can command, but we must commit and commend all our matters in prayer and constant fear of God.”*

Of course, all of our actions must be the result of a correct scriptural understanding of the Ways of Yahweh to ensure that these actions are in compliance with His proclaimed Will. Brother Roberts reiterates this point, writing that, *“Our only safety lies in the attitude of constant watchfulness over our tongues and our hands, that word and deed may be in harmony with the will of God. Practically, this is to be accomplished in the daily reading of the word, and continuing instant (or constant) in prayer.”* The appropriate pattern to be followed by the Believer as established in scripture and demonstrated throughout the recorded life of Paul is: 1) constant and diligent scriptural study leads to 2) earnest prayer to the Lord and 3) results in faith in His ways that is manifested in 4) thanksgiving and 5) patient endurance during trial while awaiting the glorious culmination of His Plan.

Paul continued to *“redeem the times,”* or make full use of every opportunity presented to him throughout the remainder of his life in an effort to bear fruit so that Yahweh might be glorified. Though he was held a prisoner in some capacity for the rest of his days, he continued to recognize the value of patiently enduring whatever situation in which he found himself, while constantly

seeking to find ways to glorify Yahweh. For instance, when he was forced to defend himself from the accusations of Ananias the High Priest, the Jewish elders, and Tertullus the Jewish Orator before the Governor Felix, he states in Acts 24:10 that he, *“cheerfully answers for myself,”* recognizing that it was a great opportunity to proclaim the gospel message to a very influential and high-ranking audience of whom he would never otherwise have the chance to address and influence. As a result, Acts 24:24-25 reads, *“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”*

Two years of imprisonment later, he again seized the opportunity to address King Agrippa, Bernice, the new Governor Festus and as stated in Acts 25:23, “the chief captains, and principal men of the city,” again stating in Acts 26:2 that he did so happily. He went on to relate the account of his conversion by taking the opportunity, as written in 26:22-23 to, *“witness both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.”* Knowing, as shown in verse 28, that King Agrippa believed the prophets of Israel, Paul sought to convince him of the gospel message, prompting Agrippa to respond by essentially asking, *“Are you trying to make a Christian of me?”* Of course, the answer to that question to Paul was a resounding “yes!,” being a powerful example of one who truly redeemed the time in an effort to enlighten all of those with whom he came in contact with the gospel message, no matter what situation he was in. In doing so, he demonstrated the lesson that he had previously sought to teach in 1 Cor 3:7 saying, *“So, then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”*

On to Rome

Even in the most difficult of circumstances that can be imagined – being shipwrecked after being tossed about by a turbulent and violent storm for two full weeks in which it is reported that they did not even see the sun – Paul’s faith and zeal for the Truth, even in time of great tribulation and difficulty, influenced the ship’s captain to save all of the prisoners for the sake of saving Paul, demonstrating yet again how our faithful action and character may influence those around us to good works and perhaps the acceptance of the Truth.

In concluding this section regarding Paul, the book of Acts leaves us with the depiction of a faithful man who has truly surrendered his will to that of Yahweh, accepting whatever circumstance in which he found himself and all-the-while seizing every opportunity to do the Lord’s Will. Acts 28:23-24 states

in this regard that while continuing under what was essentially house arrest while in Rome, that Paul spent this time productively, as *“there came many to him into his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.”* Verses 30-31 record that, *“Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”*

You see, this is how Providence works in the faithful Believer’s life. Having been commissioned by Christ to promote the gospel message to all of the world, Paul took every opportunity to do so, though he did not know the course of his life. As shown in his letter to the Colossians in 4:3, he petitioned them to, *“Include prayer for us, too, that God may open a door for us to proclaim the message about the secret of the Messiah – for that is why I am in prison. And pray that I may speak, as I should, in a way that makes the message clear (Complete Jewish Bible).”* He had assumed that in order to effectively preach the gospel that it was necessary for him to travel throughout the world, as he had previously, in an effort to strengthen the newly-formed ecclesias and to gain more Believers by his efforts. He was therefore confused when he found himself in prison in the final years of his life, mistakenly believing that he was being unproductive in the Truth. The truth is, however, that though Paul could never have known it, Yahweh had providentially determined that he would be much more useful under house arrest, spending this time in peace and great contemplation writing the various epistles to the ecclesias of the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, as well as to Philemon, Timothy, Titus, and the Hebrews that have served to teach and strengthen those who have been called for over 2,000 years!

Though Paul could not have known it at the time, his written letters enabled him to promote the Truth to more Believers throughout the subsequent centuries than he could have reached in ten lifetimes of doing so through his travels! Thereby is the Way of Providence clearly evidenced throughout Paul’s lifetime, demonstrating yet again that it is unlikely that the fullness of Yahweh’s guiding hand in one’s life will be understood until viewed in retrospect. All the Believer can do is, like Paul, seek to know the Truth, faithfully act in obedience to it, and patiently surrender ourselves to the process of being molded and shaped by Yahweh. This can only be accomplished by an understanding of the working of Providence in our lives, as did Paul. As demonstrated in the examples considered in his life, his understanding and acceptance of the unseen ways of Providence resulted in:

1. Faithfulness, though he did not know or understand the outcome of the events in his life,

2. Patience in trial, knowing that Yahweh would ultimately lead him to a favorable conclusion,
3. Prayerful Consideration as he sought to understand and determine the Will of Yahweh and how he should react to it,
4. Faithful Action, as he always took the initiative to “redeem the time,” in serving the Lord, all of which resulted in
5. Peace and the attitude that, “the Lord’s will be done,” and the reason why he could truthfully write in Phil 4:11-13: “Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, in this to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me.”

This is the understanding and resulting peace that we seek as Believers through our understanding of Providence in our lives.

Arthur Sankey

THE TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE

Jeremiah 30

THE time of Jacob’s trouble has become a point of contention among modern Christadelphians. Some brethren believe that this era is in the past and that the modern nation of Israel will no longer face any more severe trials; while others believe that this time is still future and the nation of Israel will still have to endure God’s judgments.

As we begin our studies of this event described in Jeremiah 30:7, we see the immediate outcome of this event – Jacob shall be saved out of it, i.e. the time of Jacob’s trouble. I believe that the salvation of the Jewish nation is the specific thing that we should remember as we piece together the pieces of the puzzle that make up the time of Jacob’s trouble. The salvation that is offered by Yahweh to the descendants of Jacob is not limited to just the protection and deliverance from their natural enemies, but this salvation also includes the act of bringing them back into the promised rewards offered to their ancestors and bringing them back to Yahweh. As we will find in many other verses, this salvation referenced in Jeremiah 30:7 requires that Jacob’s descendants must recognize and call on the God of their fathers and accept His Son as their

Messiah and Deliverer. Yahweh has protected the Jewish people over the last twenty centuries, but they have yet to accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Therefore, shouldn't we be able to conclude that the many deliverances of the Jewish people since the days of Christ does not constitute the final deliverance and salvation that can only be obtained through the Son of God?

Let us read these verses that are applicable to the subject at hand.

- **2 Chronicles 1:4** – “*But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.*”
- **Nehemiah 9:27** – “*Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.*”
- **Psalms 20:1** – “*The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*”
- **Psalms 27:5** – “*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.*”
- **Psalms 50:15** – “*And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*”
- **Psalms 86:7** – “*In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.*”
- **Psalms 102:2** – “*Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.*”

There are many verses that could be referenced in regards to this subject. Although the specific events and time periods that are referenced in the above verses are not the same as we find in Jeremiah 30:7, we are convinced that they teach the same spiritual concept. This is the same concept that we find in the book of Judges – **Sin, Suffering, Supplication and Salvation**. There must be true and honest supplication to the Creator before salvation is offered. We realize that the question that must now be answered is this – *Is the salvation offered in Jeremiah 30:7 the deliverance from their enemies in past historical periods or is the verse referencing the final salvation and deliverance that Yahweh offers to His people prior to the establishment of His Kingdom?* The answer to this question can be found in the events that are described in the remaining verses of the thirtieth chapter of Jeremiah.

Before we look at these remaining events in Jeremiah 30, there is another very important scriptural concept that must be remembered. In order to be heard by Yahweh and delivered from the day of trouble, one must first “know” Yahweh in the scriptural sense. In order to know Yahweh, the Jewish people throughout the ages must believe in the exhortation found in this verse - Acts

2:36 – “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*” To know Yahweh is to know His Son. The Jews must believe in the truth that is found in John 17:21 – “*Thou Father art in Me and I in thee*”. The prophet Ezekiel teaches us that this knowledge will only come after deliverance from the Gogian invader. Ezekiel 39:22 reads – “*The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.*” According to this verse, there is no true recognition and knowledge of their God until after they are delivered from the Gogian host. Therefore, they will not call on Yahweh in spirit and truth until that time, and thus they will not recognize their coming Saviour, Jesus Christ, until that time of deliverance from the Gogian invader and his associated host of armies. This reasoning tells us that the time of Jacob's trouble and the deliverance from the northern invader must occur at the same historical time.

It has been stated in various media outlets that there is an increase in the percentage of Jews in Israel that call themselves religious. Does this constitute a true calling on Yahweh for their deliverance from their enemies round about in this current age? To answer this question, we would have to know what religious doctrines are believed by the modern day Jews in Israel. Do they believe in and practice the law of spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Do they recognize the role of Christ in God's plan of salvation and redemption? If they do not recognize Christ, what do they know and believe about salvation? Do they believe in Christ as the seed of the woman as taught in Gen 3:15? Do they recognize Christ as the singular seed of Abraham? Do they recognize Christ as the son of David? Do they recognize Christ as the Son of God? Do they accept a scriptural baptism as the only means that one can come into covenant with God in this age? Do they recognize Christ as the great High Priest sitting on the Father's right hand waiting for that appointed time when he will be sent back to the earth? Do they recognize Gentiles as having an equal part in the plan of salvation as do the Jews? If the answer to any of these questions is NO, then, I do question their faith towards Yahweh. If they have no idea or belief in **THE TRUTH**, which was perfectly manifested in God's only begotten Son, then how can they be faithful to their Creator? If the answer to any of these questions is “NO”, then they are not religious nor can they call on nor know the name of Yahweh until they have a change of heart and recognize their resurrected Messiah. The spiritual truth that we find in Hosea 4:2 is applicable to the lack of faith that we find in Israel in these latter days. “*The LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.*”

Let us now turn to the book of Jeremiah and examine the events that are associated with the time of Jacob's trouble:

- **Verse 3 and verse 18**– The time of Jacob's trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time that Yahweh's people are returned from captivity.

- Verse 8 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time that Yahweh’s people will no longer be in servitude to any other than Yahweh.
- Verse 9 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time that the antitypical David will be raised and be set as a king over them.
- Verse 10 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time that the entire house of Israel, both Israel and Jacob, will be delivered from their troubles and set at rest in their promised land.
- Verse 11 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when Yahweh’s judgments are poured out on the Gentile nations of the world.
- Verse 11 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when the Jews will also be punished at the same time that the Gentile nations are judged by Yahweh.
- Verse 16 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when the Jews will see their enemies devoured and spoiled.
- Verse 17 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when the Jews will be healed and the city of Zion will no longer be an outcast.
- Verse 18 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when the city of Zion shall be rebuilt and will become the palace city of the coming King.
- Verse 22 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when Yahweh will call the Jews His people and they will finally recognize Him as their God.
- Verse 23 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when the furies of Yahweh will be poured out on an evil and wicked world.
- Verse 24 – The time of Jacob’s trouble and their subsequent salvation is associated with the time when the intents of the heart of Yahweh will be completely manifested in the nations that make up His Creation.

We also find a similar reference in Daniel 12:1, where we find these words of truth – “*A time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time.*” This is almost the same verbiage as we find in our subject verse of Jeremiah 30:7. The context of these verses in Daniel teaches that the time of trouble in Daniel 12 is associated with the time when the resurrection takes place. Therefore, we see the fulfillment of this prophecy is still future. The prophet Isaiah also speaks of this time in Isaiah 22:1-5. Here we find a prophecy of the burden of the valley of vision, which is a reference to the city of Jerusalem. In verse 4, the prophet speaks of the sorrow due to the spoiling of

the Israelites. Verse 5 tells us that this time is a day of trouble and of treading down, and of perplexity by the LORD GOD of hosts in the valley of vision. We acknowledge that this vision had an immediate fulfillment in the days of the Kings of Judah, but we see similarities in the language used and that when the future spoiling of the children of Israel will take place.

As the details of these events that are associated with the time of Jacob’s trouble are studied, contemplated and understood through the eye of faith, we ask this question – “Has there been any historical time or events that have already occurred that meet all of the criteria in the list above?” Did the judgments poured out on the nation of Israel in 70 AD fulfill these events? Hardly, for the surviving Jews of that age were sent from their country as opposed to being brought back to the land of their ancestors. Did the Holocaust events of World War II fulfill these events? This is probably the event that is the foundation of the differences in modern Christadelphian understanding regarding the time of Jacob’s trouble.

If the Holocaust was the fulfillment of the time of Jacob’s trouble, then we should not have any problem clearly seeing that all of the events of Jeremiah chapter 30 have already been fulfilled. Let us compare the judgments against the Jewish people during the Second World War to the list above.

- Did the return of the Jews to the nation of Israel at the end of WW2 fulfill the prophecy in verse 3 and verse 18? No – all of the worldwide dispersion of Jacob’s descendants did not return to the land promised to their fathers.
- Did the deliverance of the Jews in WW2 fulfill the prophecy in verse 8? No – Since WW2, the Jews have still been a hated and despised people. Do they currently serve Yahweh and place all of their trust in Him?
- Did the events of WW2 bring the return of the antitypical David as the King of the Jews as required in verse 9? Of course not.
- Have the Jewish people that have returned to the land of their fathers since the second war lived in an environment of rest and quiet and have they been free of fear from their enemies as required by verse 10? Absolutely not!!! In fact, we see just the opposite.
- Have the enemies of the Jewish people felt the fullest extent of the judgments of Yahweh as required by verses 11, 16, 23 and 24? These Gentile nations do not even suspect what Yahweh holds in store for punishment for their continual wickedness.
- Has the city of Zion been restored as required by verse 17 and 18 and many, many more verses in God’s inspired word? Not yet, for we all still pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
- Can the spiritual condition of the Jews living in modern Israel be defined as we find in verse 22 - “*Ye shall be My people and I will be your God*”? There is no way that we can answer this in the affirmative.

This student of God's Word thinks that the answer to all of these questions is a resounding "No". Therefore, we believe that the time of Jacob's trouble cannot be identified with the time of the Holocaust or any other historical event or past age. The only option that we have then is to believe that the time of Jacob's trouble is still in the future at the appointed time when the Son of God will be sent from the right hand of our Heavenly Father to save God's people from the grasps of the latter day Gogian invader. Ezekiel 39:8, speaking of the Gogian invasion, reads "Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the LORD GOD, **this is the day** whereof I have spoken." Isaiah 34:8 reads – "**It is the day** of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." Ezekiel 38:17 records this question from the LORD. "**Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time** by My servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?" This future invasion will constitute the time of Jacob's trouble when he will be saved out of it.

We recognize that there are brethren in the Christadelphian community that will disagree with the reasoning in this article. We have been asked why Yahweh would bring Israel back into their land of promise after the second war and then cause them to suffer much tribulation at the hands of the latter day invader. We could ask the same question in regard to their deliverance from the land of Egypt in the time of Moses. Why were the Israelites that came out of Egypt destroyed prior to being allowed to enter into the land that Yahweh promised unto them? Was it not because of their lack of faith and trust in the promises made by their Deliverer? Do the Jewish people of today have more faith and trust in Yahweh than their ancestors of many centuries ago? If so, where is the proof? Once again we must affirm that if the Jewish people, nationally or individually, does not believe in The Truth as manifested in the Son of God, then they do not have the faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. If God is not pleased with the lifestyle and beliefs of an individual, and if that individual refuses to change his or her ways, then what should we expect from Yahweh? Divine Judgments and punishment!!

If many of spiritual Israel, inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles, will be punished at the Judgment Seat, then how can we think that the natural Jew will not have to suffer similar trials and punishments due to their lack of faith? If covenanted Jews are punished and denied a place in the coming Kingdom, then why would the natural Jew, who demonstrates no faith, be allowed to have a place, even as mortals, in the Kingdom of God?

Are we suggesting that all Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora will be destroyed in the future? Absolutely not. However, we are stating that we believe that those who refuse to accept Jesus as their Messiah will be destroyed along with all in the world who refuses to accept Him as King over His Kingdom.

Questions

- Do we wish bad things to come to the Jews?
- Do the beliefs that are presented in this article place us in the camp of those who are cursing the Jews?

These two questions have been put forth in some discussions about this subject. We think that these two questions should not even have to be answered as they are so far from the truth. Would anybody in Christadelphia ask these same two questions to believers throughout the ages that have used God's word to understand that God's people would be punished because of their disbelief and lack of faith in God's promises? Probably not as none of us would think these questions are applicable to the understanding of brethren of ages past that we read about in the pages of Scriptural inspiration. Then why are these questions raised in prophetic discussions among modern day brethren of Christ? There is probably not a group of people that loves the Jews more and understands their special relationship to Yahweh than the Christadelphian community. Christadelphians should never manifest such a lack of respect and love towards our brethren as to throw these two questions in the face of our brethren.

"The Day"

The prophet Jeremiah proclaims in chapter 30, verse 7 that there is no day like "the day" that encompasses the time of Jacob's trouble. We understand that this is not a literal twenty four hour day. However, as stated above, we do believe that this time period must include all of the events that have been previously summarized from chapter 30. This chapter does not provide a lot of details about the specifics of the "the time of Jacob's trouble". We must turn to other parts of the prophetic word to obtain a fuller and more complete vision of these details.

This student believes that the primary chapters that we should turn to in regard to this time of Jacob's trouble are Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Daniel 11. This prophet teaches us that the Gogian invader will come against the entire country of Israel as a cloud to cover the entire land. They will certainly take a spoil as deduced from Ezekiel 39:10 and Zechariah 14:1. They will cause havoc and mass destruction in the land of Israel as foretold by Zechariah 13:8-9 and Zechariah 14:2. This will cause Israel to finally call on the name of their God for their deliverance – Zechariah 13:9. There will be mourning and wailing and gnashing of teeth amongst the Jewish people. The Jews throughout the globe will be instructed by Elijah that their Messiah has come and they must turn to Him in Faith and Truth. However, their human nature will be the downfall of those who will not accept the divine instructions. The prophet Ezekiel makes these statements in an earlier chapter. Ezekiel 20:33-38: "*As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people,*

and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD”.

Who are these rebels? What are the characteristics of these rebels? Are they faithful? Do they accept Christ as their Messiah? Their punishment is exclusion from the land of Israel. When will this occur if not during the time of Jacob’s trouble?

These divine judgments will not be the end of the Jewish people. There has always been a remnant that survives the righteous, but severe, judgments of a loving Father. This truth is evident in the time of Noah, in the time of the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, in the time of the great destructions in 70 AD and will also be evident in the time of the future judgments poured out in a day like none other. The remnant that will be saved out of the time of Jacob’s trouble will hear and see these wonderful words of prophecy being fulfilled. The words of Paul in Hebrews 12:11 are applicable to the Jewish remnant that survives their latter day judgments. *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”.* It will be at this time that the Jewish remnant will finally experience the true peace that is provided by the King of Peace. The city of the great King will finally enjoy the promised peace that all of God’s children have prayed for throughout the ages. Let us take note of these words of a future blessing on the saved remnant. Ezekiel 36:22-28 reads:

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments,

and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34 reads: *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

What a wonderful blessing and privilege this remnant from the time of Jacob’s trouble will experience. This Jewish remnant that will be settled in accordance to their tribal allotments in the land promised to their fathers will be part of that first dominion of the world wide kingdom of God. These are they who will have recognized and accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

The giving of a new heart to Israel

The verses quoted from Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31 may indicate that these Jewish individuals will automatically be given a new heart and a new spirit without any act of faith on their part. We know that this is not how God’s salvation is offered. Salvation is only offered to those who demonstrate belief and faith and an honest desire to serve the LORD God with all of the heart, soul and mind.

We find a very good scriptural example of the principle that faith and obedience are required to please God even when He may have given an individual “a new heart”. Let us read I Samuel 10:9 – “And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass”. This reference is to the first King of Israel, Saul. His “new heart” did not automatically cause him to accept the teachings of Yahweh or assist Him in continually serving Yahweh in faith and obedience. We may ask what the purpose of the new heart was. Was it not just to open his understanding regarding Yahweh’s purpose so he could use his free will to choose to be obedient or not to be obedient? We know the path that Saul took. He chose to be rebellious and disobedient and turned away from the Truth and salvation offered by Yahweh. The truth found in Hebrews 11:6 is applicable to the life of Saul, the lives of the modern day Israelites who will suffer through the latter day time of Jacob’s trouble and to everyone throughout the ages who has no faith. *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently*

seek Him". James 4:8 teaches us to draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to us." How much simpler can it be, brethren? If an individual will not draw nigh to God, that individual will not receive any spiritual benefits such as deliverance, protection nor salvation.

Other Scriptural references

There are many other verses that teach us of the latter day purging of the natural descendants of the patriarch Jacob. We do not have space to review these verses in detail, but we encourage our readers to study these and see if they are applicable to the time of Jacob's trouble. As these verses are studied, we should determine if they are in agreement or in conflict with all of the events that are associated with the time of Jacob's trouble as we have identified in Jeremiah 30. Let us briefly look at these. Let us notice and strive to understand how the events in these verses relate to the verses that we find in Jeremiah 30.

Malachi 3:2-3 – These verses teaches us that the sons of Levi will be purified and purged so that they may be able to offer righteous offerings to their LORD.

Ezekiel 36:33 – This verse teaches that there will be a cleansing of the house of Israel.

Jeremiah 46:28 – This verse teaches us that the descendants of Jacob will not go unpunished.

Amos 9:9-11 – These verses teaches us that the sinners of the people of Israel will die by the sword. This occurs during the same time period as when the tabernacle of David will be raised and rebuilt.

Isaiah 4:2-5 - These verses teaches us that at the time that the Branch of the Lord is manifested in the earth that the filth of the daughters of Zion will be removed and that there will be a remnant in Zion and Jerusalem.

Zephaniah 3:11-13 – These verses teaches us that the Israelites who trust in their own pride will be destroyed and then God's judgments will be taken away from the faithful remnant.

Isaiah 14:1-2 – These verses teaches us that the house of Israel are to be captives and shall be under the rule of others, but their outcome will be reversed and Israel will rule over them that once oppressed them. This is similar to what we read in Ezekiel 39:10 – *"they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD"*.

The time of Jacob's trouble – has this event already occurred or is it still in the future? This writer believes that the way that we answer this question lies in the strong love that the Christadelphians have for the chosen people of God – the natural seed of Abraham. Those brethren that believe that this day of trouble is still in the future do not love the natural descendants of Jacob any less than those brethren that believe that this event is in our past. Brethren who believe that the natural Jew must undergo extreme trials in the latter days are

not throwing Israel under the bus nor do they hate the Jews. We do not hold these beliefs simply because that is what Brother Thomas taught. We sincerely believe that there is ample evidence in God's Holy Word that indicates that the Jewish people of the latter days will have to suffer the severe judgments of Yahweh just as their ancestors have done and for the same reason – lack of faith in Yahweh and His Only Begotten Son. This time period that is the subject of this article is definitely one of contention during these latter days before the return of our Master. We pray that Christ's return is indeed nigh unto us and that all of the brethren of Christ will be granted a place into His Kingdom. We know that we will be judged for our actions, our faith and the ability to agape one another as Christ loved us. In the matters of prophecy, it is the opinion of this writer that the Christadelphian community has let our guard down and allowed our flesh to take over our thoughts and our opportunities for discussion between our brethren. May Yahweh direct our thoughts and give us wisdom and understanding in all matters.

B. Henderson

IN DEFENSE OF THE PROPHETIC WORD

In these latter days much discontent has arisen in the Unamended Christadelphian body with regard to our historical understanding of the Scriptures. With no element of the Scriptures is this discontent more widespread than with regard to the time-honored understanding of the latter day prophetic scheme. What at one time was clearly set forth, displaying with awe-inspiring beauty the harmony of the prophetic testimony, has been relegated to a grey area of viewpoints and opinions, regarding which none are to be dogmatic, lest they be accused of exerting undue pressure upon their fellow-laborers in the Truth.

Christadelphians understand the Scriptures to define the Gospel as consisting of the *"things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ"*. Now is not the prophetic word an intricate part of the *"things concerning the Kingdom"*? Should the prophetic word be handled as an abstract concept, the meaning of which is unable to be firmly ascertained until the events spoken of have transpired, or should it be a rightly divided element of the Truth, in which we can have confidence and faith? Do we have a *"more sure word of prophecy; whereunto [we] do well that [we] take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,"* or are we left to simply stumble about in this

dark Gentile night with no clear and understandable revelation concerning the days in which we live and those shortly to come? Must we wait “*until its day dawn*”, that is, the day of which the prophecy speaks, the day of which “*the prophets have inquired and searched diligently*,” “*searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify*” before we can recognize the significance of events taking place around us today? Are we to be counted among those spoken of by Isaiah when he says “*darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people*”? Are we to be among those whom the Lord comes upon “*as a thief*”, or should we be of a separate, unique class?

When reading some contemporary authors the question enters my mind: Do we believe any longer that the Word is capable of enlightening us adequately enough to understand the events presently taking place in the earth and things which must shortly come to pass? Are we as those who Paul speaks of who “*are not in darkness, that that day should overtake [them] as a thief*.” Are we “*the children of the light, and the children of the day*”? Do we have a “*vision*”, or perception, of the events around us and those soon to come, without which “*the people perish*”? Are we as Daniel who “*was grieved in [his] spirit in the midst of [his] body*” and “*troubled*” by “*the visions*”, desiring to understand them and prayerfully inquiring after their meaning? Are we as him who “*when [he] had seen the vision*” he “*sought for the meaning*”? Are we as him when he diligently studied the prophecy of Jeremiah until he “*understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem*”? Do we study the numbers as he did? Do not the 2520, 1260, 1290, 1335, and 2300 years concern us as much as the 70 years did Daniel? Would we be as John, who upon realizing that “*no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the [seven sealed] book, neither to look thereon*” “*wept much*” at the prospect of not having opportunity to investigate the prophecy or understand it?

I submit that we who claim to be the Brethren of Christ should be among the group who answers the latter group of questions with a resounding “Yes”. We ought to be familiar enough with the Word to discern the significance of the events transpiring around us and anticipate events yet to come. Are “opinions”, “viewpoints”, and “paradigms” conducive to the “*faith*” which is “*the substance*” (the very basis or confident assurance and anticipation) “*of things hoped for*”? Certainly not, for faith is based upon sound evidence, all articles of which complement each other. Where contradiction in the evidence is found, such faith is impossible. There is no need for opinion where such consistent evidence exists. In fact, where such evidence does exist, interpretations cease to be opinions! Those prophetic interpretations which are based upon sound, consistent historical evidence should be proclaimed with the clarity, forthrightness, and excitement that they once were among Christadelphians!

Some would have us believe that certain individuals circulate Christadelphia forcing Bro. Thomas’ works and words on the community, and requiring their acceptance despite abundant evidence that his interpretations are flawed. Such misinformation is intended to prejudice the ears of the hearers, rather than having to “*come*” and “*reason together*” out of the Scriptures. Evidence of such extensive error in his interpretation cannot be produced. If brethren would come and “*reason together*”, it would be found that there is no need for the exertion of any pressure from Bro. Thomas’ or any of the other original Christadelphians’ perspective. The pressure felt in such a conversation is not that of Elpis Israel, Eureka or The World’s Redemption, but the great weight carried by the undeniable facts of history; It is that of insurmountable proof which has been piling up for millennia; It is that of a conscience that cannot ignore the corroborating historical evidence, and is seeking any way to allow the mind of the flesh to continue its “*investigation*” of a matter already discovered. Whether we look at the last 10, 50, 100, 1000, or 4000 years, the evidence all leads to the same conclusion, that is, there is no reason for doubt. Christadelphians do not have to prove they are correct, history does this for them. All you have to do is examine the tried and true Christadelphian expositions and look at the history books. It is the detractors who must prove them wrong – a great endeavor to take upon oneself, for the Christadelphians have the armament of the Word and the entire cavalry of historical facts on their side. Some of the more recent evidence we hope to examine shortly.

Never before has there been a time when the facts of historical and current events on the world stage vindicated the accuracy of the historic Christadelphian approach to prophecy more than they do today. In 1848, Bro. Thomas wrote in *Elpis Israel* that the prophets required a colonization of Jews to be established in the historic land of Israel before the advent of the Messiah. He publicly proclaimed this 50 years before Theodore Herzl privately wrote in his diary in 1897 that he had “*founded the Jewish State*”. Mr. Herzl said he would “*guard against pronouncing publicly*” this statement, knowing he “*would be greeted by universal laughter*” if he did so. Bro. Thomas, and all subsequent Christadelphians, watched for this event and proclaimed and defended this interpretation from 1848 on, until the Jewish state was finally established. This was not always a well-received doctrine in the 1850’s, and Bro. Thomas was met with very stiff opposition from many quarters. Despite the naysayers he maintained the doctrine, and its accuracy was finally realized, though long after his death. This interpretation could have been argued against, as it was in the early days, until 1948 when the Jewish State was established, but the closer the day came the harder it was to ignore the magnificent evidence pointing toward this conclusion. With 1917 came the realization of great Christadelphian anticipation in the British liberation of the ancient Israelite territory, as well as the Balfour Declaration. In 1947 there was a significant colony of Jews in the ancient land of Israel, and the UN had prepared a plan to partition the land and provide a portion of it for a Jewish state. As 1948 drew closer, the evidence in

support of the interpretation seemed insurmountable, and finally on May 14 of that year, the independent Jewish State of Israel was born.

Such is the case in our day in relation to the general prophetic scheme of the prophets as historically understood by the Christadelphians. As we stand upon the threshold of Christ's return, even as he stands at the door and knocks, the historical and current evidence leads to an inescapable conclusion – the Christadelphians have rightly understood the message of the prophets! Let us not be lifted up with pride by this fact, but neither let us be ashamed of it. Let us rejoice as the wise men did when they saw the star in the east. We also have the *"sign of the Son of Man in [the political] heaven"*, yea, even *"signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring"*. As all these signs lead to the anticipated consummation, let us continue to unapologetically proclaim their significance and their foreordained conclusion. Below we outline some of the more recent events of significance.

Gogian Nations

With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, some feared that a great blow was dealt to the scriptural and historic Christadelphian understanding that Gog was to be identified with Russia. Time and the understanding that comes with it have proven differently. It appears now that the existence of the Soviet Union was more of a roadblock to the identification of Russia as Gog than its demise. So long as the Soviet Union existed, the *"many people"* and *"company that are assembled unto thee"* that Ezekiel speaks of (38:6,7,9) could not be described with these terms. The nations and people spoken of (Eastern Bloc countries) were all part of the Soviet Union at that time, and therefore not distinct peoples from the Russian nation needing to be *"assembled unto"* him. So long as the Soviet Union existed, Russia could not *"enter into the countries"*, as Daniel declares he will, because he was already in possession of them. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the *"many people"* and independent *"countries"* were established, setting the scene for Russia to reassert his authority in these territories, namely, Europe. It is now possible (and we believe it is in fact happening) for Russia to *"[gather] unto him all nations, and [heap] unto him all people"*, even to *"[spoil] many*



nations", as Habakkuk prophesied (2:5,8), in perfect harmony with Ezekiel and Daniel.

Russia has taken an increased interest in exerting influence throughout the European continent in recent years, and is doing so by manipulating nations with its abundant energy supplies. Russia supplies the primary part of Europe's oil and natural gas needs, and uses these as political weapons in Europe.

Russia also has adopted an increasingly antagonistic stance toward Israel in recent years. They have been defenders of Iran's (Persia) nuclear aspirations. More recently, they announced their intent to support the "Palestinian" Authority's bid for statehood in the U.N.

Of no little importance also was the anti-religious nature of the Soviet Union. This stood as a barrier to the Russian Empire being involved in a religious war justified by the Pope in Rome. All such barriers have now been removed, and the Prime Minister and President of Russia can now be found on an annual basis visiting the Russian Orthodox Patriarch in an effort to appeal to the religious element of the country. The "Man of Sin" himself, the Pope, has even re-established full diplomatic ties between the Vatican and Moscow in recent years, and both President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev have had personal meetings with the Pope.

Magog and Gomer's prominence in Europe

With extreme economic turmoil faced in the Eurozone (those nations using the European common currency, the Euro), Germany and France, scripturally called *"Magog"* and *"Gomer"*, have risen to prominence, with Germany taking the lead role in recent months. Until now, such a situation has been unthinkable. Europe has greatly feared a strong and dominant Germany, and careful to not be excessively assertive, but the German people are growing tired of paying for other European countries' unscrupulous behavior. As unsavory as the idea may be, Germany has the strongest economy in Europe, and if they permit the faltering countries to fail they suffer with them, for they share a common currency. With the German support, however, comes increasing demands and influence from Germany. So we watch with interest as they rise to preeminence among the European nations.

Iranian hostility toward Sheba & Dedan; The Islamic schism; Two Brass Mountains

The formation of a Pan-Arabic army with the united intent to destroy Israel has never appeared more unlikely. In recent years we have had reports of Saudi Arabia opening their airspace for an Israeli flyover to bomb Iran's nuclear installations. In recent months, we have seen the foiled plan of Iran (Persia) to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador in Washington DC, along with their plan to bomb both the Saudi and Israeli embassies there. Could this have been intended as retaliation against the cooperative deliberations of Israel and Saudi

Arabia against Iran?

When Gog, the “*King of the North*” of Daniel, descends against Israel and Egypt, we are told that a number of nations fall to him, others escape from him, and others yet protest, inquiring of him “*Art thou come to take a spoil?*” Does this not indicate that the offensive against Israel is not a universal one? There are some who, as powerless as they may be against the advancing Russian-led host, are nonetheless on the side of Israel. Israel, though not delivered by the hand of any of these friends, does not “stand alone”. Make no mistake—these few latter day friends cannot deliver Israel from the Gogian invader, but they are not to be confused as confederate with the “*King of the North*”.

Zechariah makes quite clear for us what we are witnessing in the world. He saw in Zech. 6:1-7 two mountains of brass. Brass, we know, is a symbol for sin’s flesh, and mountains for empires or kingdoms. Therefore, according to Zechariah, we have in the latter days two fleshly powers that are opposed to one another. Both must be subjected to the Lord at his return, but these two powers are antagonistic to each other. With recent events these mountains are becoming quite visible, along with their territorial lines to the north and south of Israel. One of these mountains is aggressive against Israel, the other cooperative with her. The northern mountain is identified by various scriptural epithets—“Gog”, the “*King of the North*”, the “*Assyrian*”, a “*Proud Man*”, etc. The nations making up the southern mountain are identified also—“*Sheba*”, “*Dedan*”, the “*Merchants of Tarshish*” and the “*Young Lions*” thereof, “*Egypt*”. Some of the nations represented by these names, such as “*Sheba and Dedan*”, are Muslim countries. If there were no divine revelation, we might conclude that because they share a common religion, Saudi Arabia (“*Sheba and Dedan*”) and Iran would unite with Iraq, Syria, Turkey and others in an offensive against Israel. This, however, will not be the case, as multiple prophets reveal. This scenario of latter day events can only be anticipated as a result of divine revelation and regulation. Natural circumstances, if not interfered with by the Elohim, would lead to a different conclusion, aligning nations that share a common faith with each other. So also we, if taking a natural look at the geo-political scene, will come to an incorrect assessment of the relationships of the nations in the latter days.

The United States’ inability to abandon Israel

The truth of the preceding Scriptural premise is witnessed by events of recent years, particularly when the United States is considered. The current President of the United States seems to hold a deep personal aversion toward Israel. Despite this fact, he is incapable of turning U.S. policy against Israel. This can only be attributable to the work of the Elohim in keeping with the prophetic plan. Regardless of the President of the United States’ attitude and actions toward Israel and its Prime Minister, he has in no way turned the sympathies of the general population of the U.S. against Israel. They do, and will continue to, support Israel as opposed to her enemies.

For examples of the hand of the Elohim guiding the rulers in the Kingdom of Men consider some months back when United States President Barack Obama gave a speech encouraging Israel and the “Palestinians” to initiate peace negotiations upon the pre-1967 war borders. This represented a change in the historic attitude of the United States regarding Israeli borders. This suggestion was not well accepted – in Israel or the U.S. The President was quickly abandoned by even those of his own political party on this issue, and the very next day he evidently felt enough pressure to reverse the statement, giving a speech before AIPAC that several in the Jewish community considered to be one of the most pro-Israel speeches given by any U.S. President. Would a government’s administration intentionally frame such a contradictory and confusing position? By no means. Such a self-contradictory position can only be attributable to the hand of the Elohim guiding an individual back into an official position in harmony with the plan of Yahweh.



Since this event the President’s administration has been considerably quiet regarding Israel and the “peace process”. Significantly, the President did address the issue in a speech before the UN this fall. In this speech he again reversed a previous position, this time regarding “Palestinian” statehood. Last year he gave a speech before that same body calling for a “Palestinian” state. This year he rejected the idea on the grounds upon which it was submitted, and has since taken diplomatic and economic action to prevent the unilateral declaration of a “Palestinian” state.

Apart from the recent accidental open microphone incident, little has been said about Israel since the UN General Assembly. This accidental incident reaffirmed our understanding of the President’s personal animosity towards Israel and its Prime Minister, but this personal view has been prevented from being implemented in policy.

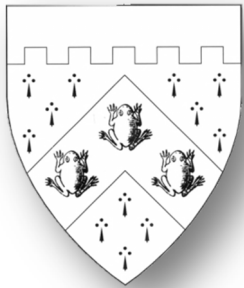
Revolutions & the unclean demonic frog-like spirits

We have reserved this example for last because it is the most profound, in our opinion, in recent times. In Rev. 16 we are informed of a vision given to John wherein he saw three “*spirits like unto frogs*” come out of the mouth of three specific entities. These spirits are said to be “*spirits of demons*” which go forth unto two distinct territories—“*The earth*” and “*the whole habitable*”.

These “*spirits*”, we believe, are policies, animating principles, and mental dispositions. Their frog-likeness signifies that they have their roots in France. The mental disposition of the French that is particularly intended by the symbol is that attitude that was developed over many centuries in those people, and

finally came out in open manifestation in the French Revolution. This spirit is summarized in the battle-cry of that revolution – “Liberty, Fraternity, Equality” – but there is much more involved in the mindset and the symbol than this, more than can be recorded in this brief article. Much can be learned on this subject from Eureka Vol. 5 Pgs 198-131 and Elpis Israel Pgs. 386-397 by Bro. Thomas, and The World’s Redemption Pgs. 201-202 By Bro. Williams. We will have to summarize what we understand by this symbolism briefly.

Those under the influence of the French spirit seek not individual “liberties, fraternity, and equality”, but collective “liberty, fraternity, and equality”. This is a real and important distinction to be made between the American and French Revolutions, along with the fact that the American Revolution included an acknowledgment of the Creator, while the French deified “reason”. These are in history the primary differences between the American and French Revolutions. The French spirit is one of true “democracy”—democracy to be obtained by any means necessary, particularly by riotous and revolutionary behavior. This is why the French Revolution was so much bloodier an affair than the American Revolution.



These facts concerning the unruly nature of the French spirits are further supported by their description as “*spirits of demons*”. In Matt. 8:28-32 we have the same Greek word for demon used to describe the man who identified himself as Legion. Look at the description of the man afflicted with this spirit.

*“And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two **possessed with devils**, coming out of the tombs, **exceeding fierce**, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine **ran violently** down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.”*

The word “*fierce*” in this passage means difficult, dangerous, furious, troublesome, harsh, and savage. In vs. 32 we see the effect of the demonic spirit upon the swine. We are told that once they came under this influence they “*ran violently*”. This phrase in the Greek comes from a noun root which is defined as “a violent impulse”. The verb form found here means “set in rapid motion”, stir up, incite, urge on, start forward impetuously, and rush.

Look also at Mark’s description of the event in Mk. 5:2-9:

*“And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an **unclean spirit**, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and **no man could bind him**, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: **neither could any man tame him**. And always, **night and day**, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, **crying, and cutting himself with stones**. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is **Legion: for we are many**.”*

Mark gives us a further description of the influence of the unclean demonic spirit upon an individual, and these are very pertinent to our consideration (as was Matthew’s description) when observing the modern effects of the unclean frog-like demonic spirit influence upon the nations. The demonic spirit in this place had a collective nature to it – “*we are many*” – as does the unclean French spirit. Consider the effect it had upon the swine: the whole multitude “*ran violently*”, ultimately to their death. The man under the influence of the unclean demonic spirit was “*exceeding fierce*” and unable to be restrained. Is this not at the very root of the French democratic mindset? The frog-like policy is that individuals may only be governed by those to whom they submit themselves. As an unclean, fleshly principle, it is opposed to constraint, for the flesh hates boundaries. The flesh is in its present constitution by nature a “crosser over”, or “Diabolos”, and therefore repudiates any attempts to restrain it. Can we not see this principle working in recent events in Egypt and other North African countries? What about “*always, night and day*,” “*crying*”? Does this language not bring to our minds events in Egypt of late, as “*Yahweh*” has “*mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof*”? (Isa. 19:14) How many were gathered for how long in Tahrir Square crying out night and day? We are given a clear picture of the nature of the unclean, demonic mental disposition in Legion. It is a collective/congregate spirit that is fierce and impetuous, unable to be tamed or restrained.

Also of great interest to us is the progression of the territorial infection of these spirits. John says they go forth 1st to the “*kings of the earth*” and then to those “*of the whole world*”. (Rev. 16:14) The “*Earth*” in Apocalyptic symbolism has reference to the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, as evidenced by Rev. 13:11. The “*World*” has reference to the “inhabitable”, or entirety of the Roman Empire. When being distinguished from the “*Earth*”, the “*Whole World*” represents the farther reaches of the territory of the former Roman Empire, those outside Central and Western Europe.

Has this not been perfectly fulfilled in history? Did not the unclean revolutionary democratic demonic spirit first infect the Central European

territory in the mid 1800's? 1848 is known as the "Year of Revolutions" in history, and has been often compared to the events of the past year in North Africa. The spirits worked throughout the European territory continually from 1848 up to 1989, which marked the fall of the Soviet Union. The entirety of Europe was essentially subject to the frog-spirit by this time. This appears to have been the going forth of the spirit to the "*Kings of the Earth*". In more recent years, particularly the past two, we have seen the work of this demonic spirit upon territories previously immune to it—former territories of the Roman Empire in Northern Africa. Tunisia, where the ancient city of Carthage is located, Libya, and Egypt had all been free from the frog-like principle, but all have violently fallen to this principle in the past year. This appears to have been the beginning of "*the whole world*" falling to the demonic principles.

We are told that these spirits, when they go forth, are "*working miracles*", but what does this mean? A brief consideration of other ways the original words are translated should give us great hope. The word "*miracles*" is frequently translated as "*sign*" throughout the New Testament, as well as "*token*" and "*wonder*". The word "*working*" is frequently translated "*make*", "*do*", "*bring forth*", and "*cause*". In Luke 12:33 it is translated "*provide*". From these considerations we realize that the infestation of the "*earth*" and "*the whole world*" with the unclean demonic frog-like spirits will **provide/bring forth signs**.

We might do well to establish what the purposes of signs are. If the reader would briefly look at Matt. 26:48, Mark 16:17, 20, and Luke 21:7, he would see that **signs are intended to identify and confirm things**. The frog spirits are bringing forth signs before our eyes – the only question in the matter is if we are able to recognize them. Such ability is directly derived from a familiarity with the word and an understanding of it. These signs identify the times in which we live as those of the latter end of the 6th vial, and therefore confirm our belief that we are living on the threshold of our Lord's return and our call to the Judgment Seat.

Conclusion

These are a few of the signs of the times visible in late 2011. They are coming to pass in accordance with the word of Yahweh's prophets, as well as the historic Christadelphian understanding of those prophets. Let us hold fast to clear thinking and understanding, and continue to "*look up, and lift up [our] heads; for [our] redemption draweth nigh*".

Adam Kuipers

"In times of universal deceit, just speaking the truth is a revolutionary act." – George Orwell

THE DOCTRINE OF FELLOWSHIP

Fundamental Considerations

Fellowship & The Breaking of Bread

IN our previous article we addressed the Scriptural framework for defining fellowship. As we continue a consideration of the Doctrine of Fellowship, there are a few questions that we wish to cover as we consider the relationship between the partaking of the memorial emblems and the Doctrine of Fellowship.

1. *What purpose does the Breaking of Bread serve?*
2. *Is the act just something between God and ourselves, or does it include something more?*
3. *Is the Memorial table open to anyone who wishes to partake, or are there restrictions on access to it?*

As was alluded to in our last installment, there is more to fellowship than the Memorial Service alone, but it should be realized that the Memorial service is an act of the utmost importance as it relates to the subject of Fellowship – our fellowship with God and Christ, as well as with each other. With this in mind we provide a few applicable quotes regarding the act of the breaking of bread in relation to fellowship before we proceed further.

- **Robert Roberts** – "*highest act of fellowship possible*"
- **Thomas Williams** – "*For the act of partaking of the memorials is a powerful and solemn way of giving expression to true fellowship with those with whom we partake. If it is not this it is meaningless*" Life and Works of Thomas Williams, p. 75.
- **Nov., 1957 Advocate, Special Edition** – "*We have said that the breaking of bread was not identical with fellowship. It was, however, the crowning act of fellowship. In fact, breaking of bread might be said to be related to fellowship in much the same way that baptism is related to belief of the gospel; namely, it is the public evidence of an inner conviction.*"

Why do we break bread?

In 1st Corinthians 11:23-29 we find the memorial instructions as given to Paul by the Lord as supplemental and clarifying information in regard to what is recorded in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In answering the question under our heading, we list the following:

1. **It is a command** – “This do” vs. 24.
2. **It is a MEMORIAL or “remembrance”** (Gr. *anamnesis*).
Understanding the forgetfulness of human nature, this weekly remembrance or recollection refreshes the mind as to this pivotal sacrifice in relation to the redemption of mankind and the ultimate glorification of Yahweh’s Name. It is here, by this physical act of remembrance that Christ’s brethren (those redeemed by the blood of Christ), that their minds are focused to “discern” (Gr. *diakrino* – to separate, make distinction, discriminate, prefer) with humble understanding and profound appreciation of Christ’s life (as representing the Adamic Race) of perfect obedience and atoning work in condemnation of sin’s flesh. As the long promised Covenant Sacrifice, we are to reflect on his sufferings and glory as pouring out the confirming blood of the Everlasting Covenant in confirmation of those promises made to Adam & Eve, Abraham and David – opening up a way out of sin and death and providing the surety of rescue from the grave, the hope of eternal life/immortality and future inheritance of the earth. Along with this, we ask a question in light of our present subject of fellowship: *How can one properly “discern” if they do not understand the Truth regarding the nature and purpose of Christ’s sacrifice?* We answer that such is not possible.
3. **It is to “shew” (i.e. “proclaim”) “the Lord’s death until he come.”**
The memorial is a token or symbol of the vital importance of Christ’s sacrifice and is a “proclamation” of our shared understanding, appreciation and love we have for Christ’s sacrifice and that Hope that we are connected to through his shed blood. Another question: *How can the Breaking of Bread be a true symbol and application of fellowship (koinonia/commonality) where differing views, discernments and applications are present in regard to Christ’s sacrifice and by extension in regard to the whole of the Gospel?* It cannot be such.
4. **It is in fact a symbol of our fellowship with Christ and with each other** – 1st Corinthians 10:17,17 – but more on this reference in a moment.

Who does the breaking of bread involve in regard to fellowship?

We wish to consider another question – *Is the act of fellowship (which includes the Breaking of Bread) only something between God, Christ and ourselves or is it something more?* We have heard it contended in recent times that the act of partaking of the memorials is something that “*is just between ourselves and God*”. To answer the question we need to go back to the words of the Apostle Paul in **1st Corinthians 10:16**, “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (koinonia) of the body of Christ? The bread*

which we break, is it not the communion (koinonia) of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are partakers of that one bread.”

Connected to this we read in **1st John 1:3,6,7** – “*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ...If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

The contention that the breaking of bread is something only “between ourselves and God”, is a false one. And, it is a contention that we perceive is not truly believed by those who make such an argument in that such who contend for such a thing also at the same time view it as very important that no one is excluded from the table, and that it is an act that is to be shared. It is interesting to this writer that such a justification usually accompanies the desire to break bread or for others to break bread when it is known that there is a problem with the beliefs or practices of some who are present. To take such a position provides the individual with a sense of justification that no responsibility of action rests in taking care of the problem by not allowing those in question to partake of the emblems, and therefore no act of wrongdoing can be charged against those who willfully choose to break bread with those in error. If the observance of the Memorial service was in fact something only between ourselves individually and God, then there would be no need or requirement for us to come together with those of like precious faith for such an observance. We could merely stay at home and partake of the emblems at our own leisure and privacy.

If we have fellowship with Christ, by walking in the “the light”, then we have fellowship one with another. The Breaking of Bread, though not the only aspect of fellowship is very much an activity that comes out of true fellowship. Consider the following quotes, which tie in very closely with our next article.

*“We have heard it claimed that one can partake of the memorials in an ecclesia and yet not fellowship one or more present from whom he differs on some vital doctrine or against whom he may hold a charge of wrong-doing. This can only be where the complaint has been made known and scripturally acted upon, and after that the person charged intrudes and defiantly partakes. But to break bread and drink the wine with a mental reservation that some present are unsound in doctrine or immoral practice is to act the part of a hypocrite. **For the act of partaking of the memorials is a powerful and solemn way of giving expression to true fellowship with those with whom we partake. If it is not this it is meaningless...To outwardly receive one in fellowship whom we believe to be unworthy is to partake of his supposed or real evil deeds; for by the act of partaking we***

virtually say, 'I partake with you.'" Bro. Williams, Life and Works, p. 75 (emphasis and underline added)

"And as baptism is fruitless unless it is preceded by belief of the Apostles' doctrine, so breaking of bread is not pleasing to God unless it is accompanied by fellowship, which means the holding in common of these same Apostles' doctrines and practices. This is clearly taught by Paul in 1st Corinthians 10:16-21." Nov. 1957 Advocate, Special Edition (expanded quote.)

From the provided Scriptures and clearly presented arguments from past Christadelphian views on the matter, we see that it is important for us to realize that the partaking of the emblems must be accompanied by a commonality of faith and hope in God's Truth and of those things required of us. As we come together to memorialize Christ's sacrifice, we do so as partaking of an act that does not stand alone, but it is to be evidence of something more profound – a declaration of our commonality, our shared hope in the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. The breaking of bread is the outcome and evidence of True fellowship or commonality – fellowship with God and His Son, **as well as with each other**. When breaking bread, we not only show our conviction and love for God in providing a sacrifice for sin and for Christ obediently carrying out His role as the Redeemer, but we demonstrate our common hope, acceptance and appreciation for one another by gathering together to jointly partake of the emblems. If such a thing is not the case then our efforts in coming together to partake in such an activity is without meaning and a mockery to the institution that has been established. Remember – we come together on each first day of the week to break bread with those of "like precious faith". Why is such a thing required of us if we are not truly breaking bread with one another in the scriptural spirit of fellowship?

When such commonality is not present or there is interference of some kind with that required commonality, then there is a serious problem that Scripture requires that we deal with so that fellowship is either restored and/or purity in fellowship is preserved. This will be the main object to address as we proceed (Yahweh willing) in additional articles, but as it relates to this present aspect of fellowship, how should breaches in commonality (koinonia) be handled when it comes to the breaking of bread itself? Understanding that the breaking of bread is the highest public demonstration of true fellowship, what is to be done when error and fundamental differences of belief and/or practice present themselves in our Sunday meetings? The answer may be obvious, but unfortunately there is growing confusion in how fellowship practices are to apply to the Memorial Service itself. Again, we reference bro. Williams:

"Others again we have heard say that the table is the Lord's, not ours, and therefore we have no right to dictate who shall partake. It is true it is the Lord's table, but it is so by reason of the fact that it is spread by His command and in accordancw with His laws – the laws of his household. Now the question is, Can we claim the right to spread the table of the Lord

and yet after it is spread allow it to be polluted? Is it that we are to eat and drink with the drunken at the Lord's table and plead the excuse that it is His, not ours? What folly some men can be guilty of! Whose are we if we have been bought with the precious blood of Christ? Are we not the Lord's? That being the case, is not the table the family table? What respectable family would think of allowing its house to become a den of thieves? In the world and in the church men are very particular to guard the sanctity of their homes and household, but it seems that some lose that concern when the household of God is in question. There seems to be an idea that much care must be exercised in protecting our own temporal things, while the things of God may be treated differently or indifferently as whims may decide. Let us never forget that the body – the ecclesia – is "the temple of God"; and "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

A possible objection considered

An objection that might arise is in regard to the restriction of certain ones due to error or doctrine or walk – "Does not the fact that 1st Corinthians 11:28 states that we bring "damnation" on ourselves indicate that the breaking of bread is a personal matter between God, Christ and ourselves; and therefore proves that the memorial table has nothing to do with fellowshiping each other?"

Our answer to this is that we must consider the context of the passage. We cannot get inside the minds of our Brothers and Sisters at the moment of the breaking of bread. If one partakes without the proper mindset, or with unjustified sins that are unknown to the ecclesia, then truly the consequences of that rest upon the individual. From that standpoint it is a very personal matter. But as a symbolic act, it is one that also involves the entire group that is assembled and is to be an open declaration of a **commonality of belief** and **mutual acceptance** among those present. From that standpoint, it is fellowship with not only God and Christ – but amongst fellow brethren as well. Instances where the "breaking of bread" occur in the Scriptures – previous to its institution in the remembrance of the Lord's sacrifice – clearly bear out its connection to mutual fellowship, association and acceptance.

Next Installment

Yahweh willing – our next installment will be "*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit*", where we wish to address the following issues as they relate to the Doctrine of Fellowship:

1. What creates a threat to such "unity" and therefore "fellowship"?
2. What is our responsibility in dealing with error?
3. What are the consequences (if any) for not dealing with error?
4. Once interfered with, how can fellowship (commonality) be restored?

A. Thomas

THE THREE STAGES OF A MOVEMENT

And its application to the spiritual rise and fall of Christadelphia

The history of a nation, or a movement, can roughly be divided into three main periods. Firstly the period of the pioneers, when foundations are laid down, and principles set forth. The path of action is clearly defined, the issues are all fundamental, for opposition is virile. At that stage, obstacles are so great, difficulties so immense, that little time can be spared for anything apart from essentials. The continuance of the Movement seems to hang by a thread, for its friends are few, and this demands the complete dedication of those associated with it as “their reasonable sacrifice” if it is to prosper. The spirit of such a period is that of “no compromise,” for the demarcation between enemy and friend is unmistakable. The history of the Christadelphian Movement entered that stage a little over one hundred years ago.

But pioneering days do not last forever. A movement establishes itself or goes out of existence. In the former case, it gathers to itself a little strength, and some results are seen for the heavy, exacting work expended and it then enters the second stage of its existence. There is time for things other than the mere essentials. It is the period of consolidation, when the principles established in the early days are given form and substance. Under wise administration, a nation or a movement reaches its greatest heights, and exercises its greatest influence, during this stage.

This is followed (inevitably as history shows) by a third stage – that of decline, when, as in Jeremiah’s time, the need for walking in the “old paths” is not so apparent. The line of demarcation becomes obscure; the complete dedication demanded in the early days now seems a little fanatical; the outspoken opposition then manifested now seems a little ridiculous. A more liberal outlook is urged in the attitude of members towards those who are not of the Movement or who oppose it, and impatience is manifested towards the pioneering spirit that at one time was responsible for its establishment. Desire for respectability, comfort and ease take the place of hard work, self-denial and constant effort.

The Lord Jesus warned that the Ecclesia would drift into such a state. He declared that “as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:37). The days of Noah were days of decline both for the world and the ecclesia (Genesis 6:1-3). They witnessed a spirit of tolerance

which proved fatal and ended in disaster. Prophet and apostle both warn that this will be repeated in the “latter days” – the days in which we live.

Trends within the Body indicate that Christadelphia has entered this third stage. The period of decline is setting in. The pioneering spirit is fast fading out. Earnest contention for the one faith seems a little ridiculous to many in these enlightened, liberal-minded days. To be too much in earnest is to risk one’s popularity with some. Instead of close study of the Word (to prepare our minds to live and preach the Gospel) and hard work in extending its message, there is demand for more social evenings, for more respectable preaching of the Word (do not be too sure, too forthright, too outspoken in prophecy or doctrine), a blurring of the sharp line of demarcation between the world and Christ.

There is nothing wrong in a social evening, or the desire to be respected, but too much of that sort of thing is not conducive to that self-denial which the true soldier of Christ is expected to manifest (2nd Tim. 2:3-4). The well-trained soldier needs to deny himself some of the luxuries of life. Things that may be lawful are not always expedient if he is training. He needs to discipline himself that he may the more effectually campaign on behalf of Christ.

If the decline mentioned above is not stopped, Christadelphia could, in time, become but another sect manifesting a “form of godliness but denying its power.” The antidote for the situation is supplied by the exhortation of Jeremiah to Jewry: “Seek ye the old paths”. Let us revert to the spirit of the pioneers; let their uncompromising attitude to the world, their unceasing “contention for the faith,” their repudiation of shams and evils, be emulated by us today. The appeal of Jeremiah was to the individual, and that remains the basis of appeal today. The individual can assist himself, his brethren, his ecclesia, by his personal attitude towards the Truth, and the Word of God on which it is based. In that regard “the old paths” can help him. Such works as *Elpis Israel*, *Eureka*, *The Ways of Providence*, *Nazareth Revisited* and so on can aid in the better understanding of the Word of God. The faith-invigorating first volume of “Eureka” packed full of warning and exhortation – its outline of the prophetic message, its tracing of the growth and decline of the early ecclesias – will well repay constant reading and meditation. The record is there, showing how the Truth was slowly but surely submerged by apathy and error in the early centuries until the lightstands of the seven ecclesias in Asia flickered out – and we live in similar days.

The preceding italicized comments are from the forward section of “Christadelphian Standards” and written by H.P. Mansfield in 1961. In regard to where Christadelphia is now (more specifically Unamended Christadelphia) some 50 years later, it is safe to say that we have become well entrenched into this 3rd stage of decline. Though we have always felt that the decline experienced in the Amended community as a whole has always been a few paces ahead of the Unamended community – due to their fundamental problems with the atonement, much larger size, conversion rates, global span and

diversity of thought and culture – the Unamended community has not been far behind in the process of deterioration. Though in the 1980's there was a little strength valiantly demonstrated throughout the Unamended community to spurn liberalizing and ecumenical influences (e.g. "Unity" efforts, the Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation, Operation Onesimus, etc.), since then the intoxicating and apathy breeding comforts, concerns, philosophies, entertainments of this world and the overpowering desire to be liked and respected has made the zeal, passion and self-sacrificing spirit for The Truth, and its promulgation and preservation, seem to be nothing more than a distant and fading dream; belonging to the dusty pages of forgotten, irrelevant history rather than a present and invigorating reality.

As fundamental errors in belief and practice continue to grow and expand in influence, such are finding protection under a culture where the preservation of Christadelphia as a **social club** trumps all – The Truth has in essence become a cover if not an excuse to give justification to what is being demonstrated as more important – **social connectivity, personal relationships and family connections**. Though these are things that have value, they only have value where the Truth itself is vibrant, pure and is the **absolute center of concern, conversation and activity**. Our associations with another are to be entirely based and practiced upon fellowship as those who are called out from the world and not upon attractions based upon similar social interests, personalities and likes.

As the fundamentally apostate influences that have arisen from "The Judaizer" doctrines continue to be overlooked; as we become disinterested with fundamental doctrines rooted in the Covenants of Promise; as we lose touch with the vital nature of atonement related subject matter; as we lose clarity in prophetic vision; and as worldly practices, careers, ambition and amusements become the accepted norm of our Christadelphian culture – **One thing THAT IS vehemently defended** is maintaining the Social Network and organization of the Christadelphian community at all costs, to the ignoring of the principles of scriptural fellowship (whether it be face to face associations or the Virtual Ecclesia found in the narcissistic realms of Facebook and blogs.)

One dare not take an uncompromising stand against doctrinal/moral declension or falsehood lest our *"fragile" community be cracked and divided, "fellowship" hindered and the young be offended*. Do not dare put up *"fences" that prevent brethren and the young people from enjoying each other's company and fellowship* even though such fellowship may be carried out at ecclesial/fraternal or purely social events where error is promoted or tolerated. Dare not stand in the way of the opportunity to be with others where fun and games and personal friendships are the center of attraction. Others may defend the use of social activity as a way to lead into what they think will be the positive influence on others for the good (leading with the flesh rather than purity of the Word.) All of this unfortunately has become the nature of Christadelphian culture in this "Third Stage" or rather "Laodicean" time.

And, there seems to be a sense of justification that by being involved with purely social amusements and activities with other Christadelphians (even though the activities themselves may not necessarily be evil) that by doing social things with other believers that this somehow makes it a good and wholesome thing, if not a "holy" thing. *"Better to do it with other believers than those of the world...right?"* Not necessarily. "Friendship" with the world is certainly prohibited, but do we really think that friendship (phileo) with our fellow brethren based upon worldly interests is any better? Now, we are not condemning when believers get together in a more relaxed, enjoyable social setting – but we must take great care that the pursuit of "fun" does not become the glue and object of what is to bring us together, nor can it dominate our time when we do come together. Remembering Christ's words – *"where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them"*; we certainly cannot expect such to be true when our coming together involves things such as a movie, lady's/guy's nights out, shopping, games, gossip, etc.

Division of belief and practice do in fact exist within our small Unamended community and the very foundations are crumbling. Putting a coat of paint over cracks in a wall do not make the cracks go away, they just continue to worsen. Likewise, when we cover the cracks and crumbling of the spiritual Household with a veneer to preserve social friendships and niceties, we ensure the continued deterioration of that House. We must face up to the issues that threaten the very Lampstand; the Truth must be clearly spoken and defended without compromise for the purpose of fortifying the House – not destroying it.

Salvation does not come by the name of "Christadelphian" and its social network, but by our understanding and faith in the Promises of Deity through the atoning work of Christ, and subsequent and continued manifestation and obedience to the commands given. Our associations with one another and the character of the Christ ecclesia is to be dominated by shared Hope, the One Hope (Eph. 4:1-6) – being *"first pure, then peaceable"* (James 3:17). Though our connections to one another may have in the past been based upon these all-encompassing principles, we have seen and continue to see a drastic change in priorities. The Christ Ecclesia is not a social organization, but made up of individuals who are called out of Gentile darkness as servants (more accurately "bond-slaves") to a life of self-sacrifice and service to the glory and manifestation of the Yahweh Name.

These are not pleasant observations to state or share, but they must be declared while it is still today. Though many may pretend to the contrary, true fellowship is being hindered by our very apathy and tolerance towards those things that stand in the way of salvation itself and the joyous and spiritually incorruptible relationships we should hope to be a part of that will be forged among the Saints of The Coming Age. And though we certainly live in an age of decline, and the pressures to *"go with the flow for the sake of peace and friendship"* are extremely powerful as they have always been - we must remain steadfast upon the principles of belief and action of the "old paths" to *"make our calling and election sure."* Be strong brethren, be strong! A.T.