

Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart
Toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest (Jer 31:21)

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN *Waymark*

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*Devoted to the Defence and Proclamation of the Way of Life
in Opposition to the Dogmas of Papal and Protestant Christendom*

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*“Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that
is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let
us hold fast our profession” (Heb 4:14)*

“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable ...” (Jas 3:17)
“Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)

ADDRESS TO THE READERS OF THE HERALD

(And reproduced for the benefit of our readers also – CAM)

DEAR FRIENDS:- The time is short, and the days are few and evil. A voice has resounded throughout the world, calling your attention to the fact, that the dispensation of the times under which we Gentiles live, is fulfilled. Whether it be consummated immediately, or within the life-time, at most, or the generation now existing, is a question, which, at present, we intend neither to discuss nor determine; but, from the events, which we see transpiring in relation to the ecclesiastical and secular affairs of men, collated with the things noted in the scriptures of truth, we are satisfied that the time which remains is brief, and that our eternal well-being demands that we not only believe that He will come, but that *we PREPARE to meet the Lord.*

THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIAS

DEAR FRIENDS:- Eighteen Centuries have rolled away like a vapour since the banks of the Jordan resounded with the proclamation, *PREPARE ye the way of YAHWEH, and make his paths straight!* This was *the voice* of the Elijah, whose appearance was predicated by Malachi, *crying in the wilderness* of Judea; whose mission was of God, who sent him to revive the fathers' dispositions in their descendants, (*epistrepsai kardias pateroon eip tkna; Luke 1:17*) and to bring back the disobedient to the wisdom of just persons; and thus, *to MAKE READY a people PREPARED for the Lord.* To carry this into effect, John, the son of Zecharias, commonly called *The Baptist*, and by the Prophets *Elijah*, because he came *in the spirit and power of Elias*, made his appearance in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. The grand purpose of his mission was "to make ready a people prepared" for the reception of the Lord Messiah *at his first coming.* This he accomplished by traversing "all the country about Jordan," announcing "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," in consequence of which, multitudes flocked to him from Jerusalem and other cities, "and were all baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." (*Mark 1:5*).

DEAR FRIENDS:- This is the manner in which that "burning and shining light" prepared Messiah's way; and made ready "a people" to receive him, giving them *the knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins.* Now, ponder well, we pray you, this question; *if such a preparation were necessary to make ready a people prepared to receive the Messiah at his first coming; is not a preparation equally demanded, but which to make ready a people prepared to receive him at his second appearing?* This is our firm conviction, and, believing assuredly that "the day of Christ" is at hand, we

address you all, without distinction of name, party or denomination, in the words of sacred text:

“Come out of Babylon, my people,
That ye be not partakers of her sins,
And that ye receive not of her plagues.
For the sins have followed her into the heaven,
And God hath remembered her iniquities.”

Say not to yourselves, we are Protestants, and therefore not in Babylon. Dear Friends, Babylon is a system of things, made up of every departure from the positive institutions and practices of the New Testament. Original Christianity, which is as pure in the sacred writings as when first delivered to the Jewish nation by the Apostles, recognizes only “one Lord, one Faith, one Hope, and one God and Father of all,” but, if you lift up your eyes, and contemplate the aspect of the ecclesiastical world, you will behold lords many; faiths or gospels, without number; baptisms seven; as many bodies as there are sects; spirits of all kinds but “the Spirit of Christ;” and more fears than hopes. The present religious system of “Christendom,” in whole or in part, can nowhere be found in the Scriptures, except as “the Apostasy,” which they declare would arise, and cover the face of the nations as with a veil of “strong delusion.” The morality of the social system is vicious, giving countenance to all unrighteousness, viciousness and malice; and judging from what comes out of their mouths, the hearts of all kinds of religionists are full of envy, deceit and malignity; being whisperers, backbiters, slanderers, haters of truly good men, spiteful, proud boasters, volatile, and so forth; being lovers of trifling more than lovers of God. Upon such, his law pronounces Death.

PREPARING TO RECEIVE MESSIAH

This being the obvious condition of the world, *is it prepared to receive Messiah?* The Scripture says, that “the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Now, when He appears, it is to introduce that kingdom in all its glory; therefore, the “unwashed, unsanctified and unjustified” will have no share in his dominion, for it is such only, whose characters are defined in the Book of Eternal Life, who will partake in the honors of the Age to come.

DEAR FRIENDS:- Do you inquire what you must do, that you may inherit eternal life? That you may be prepared for Him at his coming? We answer, that the Scriptures teach, that we must *return to first principles*: to those institutions which are sanctioned by the Apostolic writings. We must obtain “the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins.” This is the first step; for having before proved, that by practice, as well as nature, all are under sentence of death; it behoves us first, to be released from sin, that, in the act

of release, we may pass from the sentence of death to that of life. The instant therefore, that a man obtains the remission of his sins, he acquires, in that set, *a right and title* to eternal life.

DEAR FRIENDS:- Do you inquire what you must do to obtain his right, and title to eternal life in the remission of sins? Permit us to quote a few passages from the New Testament in reply to this question. First, then, it is written in Mark 16:15,16, "He that believeth (the gospel) and is baptized shall be saved" (from his sins); again, in Acts 2:38, "repent and be baptized every one of you upon the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;" verse 40, "then they that gladly received his word were baptized;" again, in chapter 3:19, "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" again, chapter 8:12, "when the Samaritans believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women;" again, chapter 8:38, "through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses;" again, in Chapter 18:8, "Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized;" and again, lastly, in chapter 12:16, "Arise, Saul, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Why should we darken counsel by appending comments to these simple and emphatic replications; we will only add the reply of Jesus to the young rich man, who demanded of him, "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus said, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" these are contained in the passages we have quoted, and in the "all things" which Jesus commanded his Apostles to teach those who were baptized in his name.

DEAR FRIENDS:- If you inquire, is this all that is to be done to acquire a right and title to eternal life? We answer, *it is*. But you will observe, that to obtain a right and title to an estate is not the same thing as to obtain possession of it; a right and title may be acquired, but, under certain conditions it may be forfeited. No one can enter the Kingdom of God, or possess Life Eternal, without first obtaining a right and title; though vast numbers, it is to be feared, who have acquired a right and title, will forfeit them; and consequently, never realize any share in the glory and renown of the future age. You will perceive, therefore, that in order to enjoy or possess the things to which we obtain a title by obeying the Gospel, we must also patiently continue in well-doing till the Lord comes, be that event sooner or later; in other words, the interval between believing the Gospel and being baptized, and our departure hence, must be occupied in forming our characters after the model of Jesus; "who is the exact representation of the character of God," and therefore, the very best after which we can aspire. Character and not opinions will be the test of our admission into the Kingdom of God; let us form, then, such a character as we have delineated in

the Lamb's Book of Life – the New Testament; and be assured, whether our names be repudiated by our contemporaries, or ourselves persecuted to the deprivation of the means of subsistence, we shall be invested with incorruptible life, and crowned with glory and honour in the future age.

THE CHARACTER OF SAINTS

DEAR FRIENDS:- The character we are required to form, that we may realize the “one hope of our calling,” must be inspired by the truth; that is, the law of the Lord must dwell in us, with the courageous determination to obey it, or live in conformity to it, and to contend earnestly for it, at all hazards. God must be in all our thoughts; and our actions must be shaped with a view to his approbation alone. How will this or that be approved by our Father in Heaven, and not what will the people or their leaders say, should be the only question permitted to stand up between our conceptions and the practice of them. In short, “the grace of God that bringeth salvation,” teaches us, that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world: looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works:” – it charges “them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, *that they may lay hold on Eternal Life.*” Such are the things which constitute the character of the man, whose religion is pure and undefiled, and who will be accepted when the Day Star shall illuminate the world.

DEAR FRIENDS:- When the Ancients had obeyed the Gospel, they did not insulate themselves; on the contrary, attracted to a common centre by the love of the truth, they associated themselves together into communities, that they might continue in all the things enjoined upon them by the Apostles. They met together every first day of the week, termed the Lord's day, because he rose from the dead upon that day. Being assembled, they sang his praise, celebrated his death, supplicated his favour, exhorted one another to love good works, and a patient continuance in well-doing; they searched the Scripture and in proportion to the strength of their affection for the common truth, so they were knit and compacted together in the bonds of love and brotherhood in Christ. Their hope was one. They earnestly desired the appearing of Jesus Christ, because they expected then to be raised from the dead; or, if alive at their coming, to be transformed into the similitude of his glory. Their love was perfect; and they loved one another in the ratio of their love to God, who first loved them; there was no fear in their love, “for

perfect love casteth out fear;” and, unlike the worldly-minded and false-hearted religionists of this Laodicean age, as they conceived in their hearts, so with their tongues did they the truth express. In those days of primitive simplicity in the faith, they did not worship God by a proxy, whom they hired so much per annum to preach the traditions of men; nor did they masquerade, or “trip it on the light fantastic toe,” like an opera *danseuse*; but they walked as becometh saints, ennobled by the truth, and destined for the good society of the Messiah’s age.

DEAR FRIENDS:- In the Scriptures of truth, God has set out our destiny before us in most intelligible terms. He pronounces us *sinner*s by nature and practice; and because sinners, corruptible and mortal “in body, soul and spirit, the whole person;” as it is written, “*the wages of sin is death.*” This life is probationary. We are placed here to prove ourselves worthy of the destiny we may choose. “The gracious gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ the Lord.” Which will you? *Life* and *Death* are set before you; will you strike for freedom from the law of sin; or choose ye rather to fret out the “few and evil days,” which may remain to you as the bond slaves of this perishing state, and “die accursed?” God invites you to reconciliation, “come unto me,” says Jesus, “all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Have you no ambition beyond the mean and grovelling aspirations of this animal life? Are the glories of personal decoration with silks and velvets, and gold, and precious stones, &c., the choice brilliants after which you sigh? Is the honour which comes from vain and foolish man, corruptible and defiled in all his parts, your highest aspiration? Is the immortality of fame with future generations, the most renowned for which you long? Fellow mortals! Of what values are baubles, such as these, to tenants of the tomb? Are the particles of dust which once rejoiced in the glory and renown of a Nebuchadnezzar, a Cyrus, an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon, more happy or estimable than those of a Lazarus? All these things perished in the using, and now are equally valueless to all; both of high and low degree.

THE INVITATION OF THE GOSPEL

DEAR FRIENDS:- Being destitute of all true riches and good things by nature, our Benevolent Creator has offered us “glory, honour, incorruptibility, and Eternal Life,” with an “inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that shall never fade away.” He invites us in the Gospel to become *heirs* of these things; and, by our future conduct, to prove ourselves worthy to possess them. Would you not be arrayed in splendour which will excel the glory of the Sun? Would you not be exalted to the dignity of “associate kings,” with the glorious monarch of the Future Age? Would you not be invested with an incorruptible life, that you may eternally enjoy “the inheritance in the light” which is to be revealed at the appearing of the “bright and morning star?”

Let, then, the dispositions of the ancient Christians be revived in us, their descendants; and let us forsake our disobedience, and return to the wisdom of just persons; and thus the Truth will make of us “a people prepared for the Lord”.

DEAR FRIENDS:- Forget the things which are behind, and press forward to the things which are before. Though you may belong to *the strictest sect* of popular religion, and in all good fame with its officials, “*come out from it*” and obey the Gospel for remission of sins, and a right to the promised kingdom. Romanism and Protestantism are forms only of “the Apostasy” from original Christianity. There is but one true and genuine religion; all others are counterfeits. You can only be “accounted worthy” to attain to the resurrection of the just, by a right and title derived from that religion. The Old and New Testaments are the only documents in which it is found pure and undefiled by the traditions of men. If you would become Mohammedans, you would study the Koran, that you might learn in what Mohammedanism consisted: even so, if you would become Christians, you must study the religion of the Christian Scriptures in these oracles, which alone contain it. The motive then, presented to you, by which you may be induced to “count all things but loss,” is the excellency of the things to be brought to you at the coming of the Lord. If you invest yourselves with the wedding garment, in the way the Scriptures direct, and we have endeavoured to point it out in this well-intentioned address, you will be honoured to “sit down with Abraham,” the Prophets, Jesus and his Apostles, “in the Kingdom of God;” but if the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches should unhappily lead you to put away these things from you, and to “*judge yourselves unworthy of Eternal Life,*” there is but one thing for you; as it is written, “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire; taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that *obey not the gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired by all them that believe” (2Thes 1:8).

But that it may be your part to eschew the evil coming upon the world, and to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel, is the sincere and humble prayer of yours, in all philanthropy and benevolence,

THE EDITOR

(Bro John Thomas, 1860)

CORRESPONDENCE:

The North American Statement of Understanding (NASU)

In response to a correspondent, we examined in the last issue the reunion documentation (NASU) which is proposed to form the basis of the Unamended group in America being accepted into fellowship with Christadelphians (Central Fellowship) worldwide. Following the publication of that item, we have received communications from a number of those who are desirous of peace with the Unamended group on that basis. The following are but a sample:

“Please check your facts before you try to stir up trouble. To set people at odds who are at peace is wrong ...”

“I will turn the other cheek, forgive you, and shake the dust of my feet ... let the Lord deal with you from here on out ...” *(RB)*

“Because it does not use the words you want to use, it appears that you condemn the document absolutely. The document is, after all, only an explanation. Further, you are redefining what brethren believe, by now condemning them for not using the words you use. I admit that I cannot tell the point at which a person is responsible, so we generally rely on ensuring that a person knows the complete truth. At what point in your life did you become “responsible?” Do you know of all those to whom you have spoken the Truth as to whether they are responsible or not? Responsibility has to do with an understanding of what God requires, not a knowledge of what the Bible teaches. The trouble is that you are dissecting each word and putting some application to it, which I am sure is not the intention of those compiling the document” *(GM)*

“Instead of wasting time lamenting and causing unnecessary division and unnecessary stress in an overtaxed group of brethren why not step back from your demonstrably wrong path and better educate yourself as to the facts of the case? Under the idea you are upholding the unity of the BASF you are only sowing division amongst yourself and other upholders of the BASF”.

“I sorrow because of the blindness of your heart. I suggest you spend some time with self-reflection and not pitched in battle” *(SG)*

“I helped write the thing. I have no need to ask any man about the NASU, because I know what is in the NASU. I was one who put it there, and I've already been through it as carefully as anybody on the planet.....we are brethren as knowledgeable and as zealous as yourself (polite cough), and we are acting with the authority of Christ under the guidance of the word.

... you WILL stand before God one day. And if, in your creditable zeal, you made over-hasty attacks which helped ruin the uniting of the body ... then you will Answer for it ...”

Your wisest course, given that you have limited knowledge of what's going on, is to stay out of it. Your second wisest course is to put a knife to your throat” (LB)

This last item is a most interesting specimen, as it comes from one directly involved with the production of the document in question. It is quite true that the Master taught “Blessed are the peace-makers.” And here is a self-confessed peace-maker - and that “with the authority of Christ”. But nevertheless, we respectfully declined his advice:

“You will understand, I am sure, if I do not act upon your advice of my putting a knife to my throat”

To which came the response from a “knowledgeable” and “zealous” brother of Christ:

“Aw ... don't get your undies in a bunch!”

Blessed indeed are the peace-makers!

However, as the above proves, the proposed peace is a discriminatory peace, based not on union of belief, but rather social niceties. The peace, we observe, appears not to extend to those who dare question that which is to form the basis of fellowship, and who suggest that the doctrines contained within the BASF, being by definition the basis of Christadelphian fellowship, be unreservedly agreed to instead. It is written, “if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (*1Pet 4:11*), and as we can find no such form of speech as our self-confessed “knowledgeable” brother uses, with “the Authority of Christ” in any place of the Oracles of God (although it is common amongst those who speak the language of Canaan), we are left with no option but to conclude that he, and his colleagues who construed this document had no such Authority as is claimed, and that their pretence to have such is a presumption in the extreme. Indeed, given the kind of communication as the above, posted in public on an Internet discussion group, an observer could be forgiven for thinking the writers themselves did not treat the issue with the seriousness and sincerity it deserves.

But the issue is a serious one, if such remarks do not make that apparent, and so we now proceed to examine some of the more serious objections that have been presented:

1. *The matter is one affecting North America. What does it have to do with those in other countries—why should the matter not be left for the North American ecclesias to decide; why have you written about it?*

Of course, it is for North American ecclesias to decide who they should fellowship. But the decisions they are making do not affect only North American ecclesias. Those

brought into fellowship on the basis of NASU will not be merely brought into fellowship with ecclesias in America, but with ecclesias worldwide. They will expect to be able to come to the UK and enjoy fellowship with Christadelphians in the UK. In short the North American ecclesias will be expecting other ecclesias worldwide to abide by their decision, and fellowship their members wherever they may go. Hence our correspondent's question which prompted our reply in the last issue, what will be the situation with those who do not abide by that decision? Will they themselves be extruded? The reason for our writing about the situation was because our correspondent's question is a reasonable, yet is one that others have refused to address.

2. *Your article reflects a lack of understanding of the North American situation. The articles you quoted are produced and supported by only a small minority, who are not speaking for the Unamended fellowship. You fail to understand that there are many in the Unamended fellowship that do believe the BASF.*

Of course, it is perfectly true that there are many in the Unamended group who do believe the doctrines described in the BASF, as correspondence over recent years has shown. That has never been in question, and has not been denied (in fact, so far as we have been able to ascertain, there have always been those in the Unamended group that accept the doctrine described by Clause 24). But there is a reason why the Unamended group call themselves "*unamended*." That is, historically they have not accepted the *Amendment* to the Statement of Faith as being a matter of fellowship, which the BASF claims it to be. Therefore those who do believe the doctrines described by the BASF will break bread, and otherwise fellowship those who do not. Several particularly scathing correspondents from the Unamended group who are fully supportive of the NASU have cited examples of co-operation between members of both persuasions as evidence that the proposed peace and fellowship is quite workable ... yet is actually evidence of the very objection made in the last issue, the basis is not one of identical belief.

The articles by members of the Unamended group specifically attacking the BASF may well be produced by a "minority," but that is not the point at issue. At the same time as desiring fellowship with those who believe the BASF, the Unamended group as a whole also fellowship those who launch open and direct attacks on the BASF. The point being emphasised was that this is inconsistent, and that this inconsistency remains as a fact that has not been denied by the most ardent supporters of NASU. The BASF presents all the clauses therein as the basis of fellowship for Christadelphians ... if the Unamended group wish to fellowship Christadelphians, to be consistent they would need to repudiate association with those who attack Christadelphians. How can one party seek terms of peace with another, whilst at the same time embracing their enemy?

There is another very much related issue. As it is the case that there are those in the Unamended group that believe the Christadelphian statement of Faith, why then do they not join Christadelphians themselves? Why instead devise a document that permits them to take as many others with them as they can (although it is recognised on all sides

that there will be those who refuse to join the reunion)?

3. *Why is the issue of difference so important anyway? Why should Christ's brethren be divided over what happens to the disobedient?*

We would refer enquirers to an item written by Bro Thomas on the issue, reproduced in the December 2001 issue of this magazine (further copies of this article are available on request). His exposition of the Scriptures on this subject is most clear:

“If a sinner come to the understanding of the truth ... he is held accountable. An enlightened sinner cannot evade the consequences of his illumination. I have known some of this class flatter themselves that they would not be called forth to judgment; but would perish as the beasts, if they did not come under law to Christ. Such reasoning, however, is simply ‘the deceitfulness of sin’.

The dogma provides for men who despise the light to know it, pour scorn upon their responsibilities it requires of them, and mock the arm of Salvation graciously laid open before them. It denies the righteousness of the Father in raising them to bear the consequences of their deeds. It teaches men that they can mock God with impunity without facing the consequences. As one write expressed it, “It is a very potent way of teaching men to break all the commands of God: for whoever is not responsible to God is not responsible to man. Such as are not bound by a duty towards God are surely not bound by a duty towards neighbours ...” (*The Christadelphian 1894*). Bro Robert Roberts also spoke of the gravity of this:

“The reception of the truth is the first basis of fellowship. An important element of it is rejected when it is maintained that enlightened rebels against the law of God escape resurrectional punishment by reason of their omission of the preliminary obedience called for in baptism ... the idea that refusal to submit in baptism will save them from the consequences of their rebellion against the light is “another gospel” which we dare not receive” (*Diary of a Second Voyage, p 84*).

4. *The NASU does state that: “Based on the intrinsically interwoven factors of knowledge and calling, God will raise to condemnation those rebels and unbelievers whom His justice demands. As humans, none can determine who has been called according to knowledge to submit to His will” As it therefore is plain that men “will be” raised on the basis of knowledge and calling, how can you claim that it is doctrinally incorrect, and not in harmony with Clause 24 of the BASF?*

The original enquiry was phrased in far more robust and condemnatory terms than the above, which nevertheless expresses the sense of what is being asked. The above matter was specifically dealt with in the last issue. In fact, we have never stated that NASU is doctrinally incorrect. Neither have we stated that it is not in harmony with the BASF. What we have proved, however, is that whilst it accommodates the BASF, it

also accommodates the Unamended position. To quote from our item from the last issue:

“Notice the reference to Baptism; the words are very explicit that those who are baptised will definitely be raised. But also notice the reference to 'knowledge', which nowhere near as definite. God will raise those “whom his justice demands”!!! No-one but those in the darkest of apostasy would disagree with the fact, that Yahweh can raise anyone whom His Justice demands to be raised. But the BASF is far more explicit in stating that His Justice does indeed require the "Responsible, **namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it**" to be raised to judgement. Those words are echoed in the NASU above, but in a much diluted form that allows for the enlightened rejecter not to be raised.”

The Re-union documentation does not exclude the fact that knowledge (light) is the ground of judgement, but it does not teach that it is so. It teaches that it is so if God's Justice Demands it. That “God will raise to condemnation those rebels and unbelievers whom his justice demands” The BASF however, does state quite categorically that the Justice of God does demand it (*Clause 24*). As we wrote:

“The re-union documentation does not exclude the belief that God's justice might be that enlightened rejecters will never be raised - not that "His hands are tied" from raising them, but because his justice does not require it, which is the very historical position of the Unamended fellowship that has been the reason why Christadelphians do not fellowship them. The BASF does exclude it.”

CAM

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CAM

THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Heb 13:21)

In the above passage, reference is made to the Lord Jesus Christ as being a “Great Shepherd,” who was “brought again from the dead” by, or through “the blood of the everlasting covenant”. But how is this so? This passage is a key verse utilised by those who believe that a man either cannot, or will not, be raised to judgment unless they first come into contact with the blood of Christ. Christ, it is argued, was raised by his own blood - and how can his brethren be raised upon any other basis than that upon which Christ himself was raised? And how can they be raised through his blood, unless they come into contact with it through Baptism?

The answer to this problem is presented very succinctly by Bro Ron Abel in his book, *Wrested Scriptures*:

“*SOLUTION*:

- 1 This theory distorts the significance of the blood of Christ and the scriptural teaching on the resurrection which is a means, or an instrument to an end - the distribution of rewards and punishments. The actual rising forth out of the ground is only an incidental event. This is proved by the fact that at the appearing of Christ, saints will go into the kingdom without experiencing death at all, (*1Thes 4:15-17*), yet all these have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (*Rev 5:9; 7:14*).
- 2 When the writer to the Hebrews declared that the Lord Jesus was brought again from the dead, he was not referring *merely* to the rising forth of the ground but of the whole great and glorious bestowal of immortality. To confine the meaning of this verse to a mere rising out of the ground is a narrow, mechanical, and erroneous view of the whole process.

- 3 The following two passages indicated the way in which resurrection is not confined to a mere emergence from the ground, but rather a means to what follows thereafter:
- a) When Paul declared, “Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” (*Acts 23:6*), he was not confining his hope to a mere emergence from the ground, but rather he was looking forward to being bestowed with the crown of life which fadeth not away (*cf 2Tim 4:8; Phil 3:20-21*).
 - b) “In the resurrection whose wife of them is she?” (*Luke 20:33*).
- Would any assert that the meaning here is only the rising from the ground? It is obvious that the meaning here has to do with conditions *after* the actual raising from the dead has been accomplished.
- 4 Whatever interpretation is given to explain the blood of Christ as the agent for bringing again the *dead*, must also be the same explanation to apply to the *quicks* (living). On the day appointed for the appearing of the Lord two classes of saints will be gathered at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God:
- a) First - the dead.
 - b) Second - those who are alive and remain (*1Thes 4:13-17*).
- Whatever efficacy the blood of Christ has, it is just as efficacious for the *quicks* as it is for the dead.
- 5 Even if it could be proven (which it cannot) that this passage means that all those touched with the blood of Christ will come out of the ground, it does not necessarily follow that *only* those touched with the blood of Christ will rise out of the ground. The logic involved with this theory is:
1. All baptized will be raised.
 2. Therefore, all the raised are the baptized.
- Which is like saying:
1. All crows are black birds.
 2. Therefore all black birds are crows.
- (obviously not all black birds are crows, some are pigeons)
6. This legalistic theory of the blood of Christ which in fact means that God cannot (or will not - CAM) raise those not baptized must be rejected as infringing on the sovereignty of God. It allows that mortal men can decide by his own act (or failure to act I.e., to be baptized) whether or not he will make himself accountable to his Creator. What more pernicious and erroneous theory than that which teaches a teenager that it rests in his own hands whether or not he *makes himself* accountable to God?”

THE INTERNAL HARMONY OF THE APOCALYPSE

AND PRINCIPLES ESSENTIAL TO IT'S CORRECT UNDERSTANDING WITH WARNINGS OF MISDIRECTION

The Apocalypse was given for believers in Christ Jesus, sent to Gentile ecclesias at a time when spiritual decline had reached such a stage that the Lord Jesus makes demands for reformation. Before the Apocalypse was given the spiritual standing was commendable in Ephesus, Colosse and Laodicea, when Paul writes to them in approx. AD62. To project an interpretation claiming the Apocalypse was written in AD 66 as a warning regarding Israel, and that Jerusalem is represented by Babylon, and making the spiritual decline of the seven ecclesias in about 4 years is all against reason. Clearly a period of about 30 years for the decline to AD 96 would accord with all the circumstances. On this basis alone, the Preterist Theory falls down completely.

With regard to the Futurist Theory: to place the prophecies from Chapter 6 of Revelation with all the symbols, (so clearly identifiable with Daniel 7 and it's historical unfolding), all within a short period at the advent of Christ, reveals a lack of insight into the great Roman deception.

If you don't know the enemy he will defeat you.

The Apostasy, the ecclesiastical system, embraced by the kings of the Roman world, is the great enemy resisted through the centuries by the witnesses revealed in the Apocalypse.

“No one can question that Daniel's prophecy is about progressive historical developments. The simple appreciation of the basic fact should set one's mind along the right course of understanding for the book of Revelation (Apocalypse). (Preface of “Which Interpretation?” By Bro G Pearce, page 6.

THE PROGRESSIVE HISTORY OF DANIEL'S PROPHECIES

1. The Fourth Beast of Daniel 7 is the Roman Pagan Empire merging into the Roman Catholic (Pagan) Empire in developing stages to be destroyed by Christ at the saints at his coming in glory and power. The Beast is a Roman Power to the end. It is the focus of Great Babylon of the Latter days. See:- Dan 7:7-11, 15-22, 23-27. “... the judgement shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion (the fourth beast) to consume and destroy it ... and the kingdom and dominion ... shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High ...”.

2. See Dan 8:23-25.

Out of the Grecian Power “a king of fierce countenance (the Roman) ... he shall ... destroy the mighty and the holy people ... stand up against the prince of princes but he shall be broken without hand.”

3. See Dan 9:26,27

Confirmation of the Covenant at the end of seventy weeks by Messiah the prince. “the people of the prince shall come (the Roman armies) shall destroy the city ad the sanctuary ... unto the end of the war desolations are determined ... and for te overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolator” (the Roman power at the time of the end.) NB Mat 22:7; 24:15; Luke 21:20-24; Jno 18:36.

4. See Daniel 8:13,14, 17

The vision of the daily sacrifice, the transgression of desolation to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot, two thousand three hundred years. Then shall the sanctuary be avenged (BC 333-AD 1967).
“understand O son of man; for at (or to) the time of the end the vision.”

5. See Dan 11:36-39

A change of religious worship of a God whom his fathers knew not, magnifying himself above all, establishing protectors (demons, idols, “Saints”) in fortresses (churches, temples, cathedrals). Pagan Roman merging into Catholic Roman.

THE APOSTASY – IT’S SOURCE AND DEVELOPMENT

“If Daniel records such prophecies of Roman history and its development of a new religion and enmity against God, it surely is not strange that God shold alter fill in the details. Here is a Biblical warrant for the interpretation of the Revelation” (*Which Interpretation, Bro G Pearce, p. 39*).

The Apostle Paul warned of such a development in the Roman world of his day emanating from believers who had fallen away from the love of the Truth.

See Acts 20:29,30 (His words to the Ephesians)

“for I know this, that after my departing (i.e. AD 67-68) shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock”

“also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”

The Apostle Paul also warned not to be deceived from seeing where the enemy of the Truth lies.

See 2Thess 2:3-8.

This shows a certain opposition, which will develop into a dynasty, establishing itself into an object of worship. It is withheld till something is removed out of the way (the Pagan).

It is a wicked system with signs and lying wonders which will be destroyed at Christ's coming to establish his Kingdom. There will be a strong delusion sent by God that all who receive not the truth, shall believe a lie.

DELUSIONS, MISREPRESENTATIONS AND TRUE DIRECTIONS

There can be no doubt that the 'strong delusion' lies within Christendom at large. We will be greatly misled towards such delusion if we follow such reasoning as:

“there can be no question that the Gospel's biggest enemy in the very earliest days was not Rome but Jerusalem” (*Revelation, HA Whittaker, P 75*).

The danger of this statement is that it is being made to turn the mind to Jerusalem as the enemy of the truth in the Apocalypse.

“it must be obvious,” that the Apocalypse was sent to Gentile ecclesias, in later times of the Apostolic era, under no influence from Jerusalem. Two problems existed very apparent from the opening chapters of the Apocalypse: “severe persecution from Gentile sources, and a growing apostasy.” (*The Apocalypse – A Background Study, Bro J Banta, p 45, 46*).

“The apocalypse was not given to Jews in Israel, nor was it written to the ecclesias in Jerusalem. It was addressed to Gentile ecclesias.” (*Page 45*)

“It is impossible to accept that all the elaborately symbolic visions of the Apocalypse – chapter after chapter – refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Inasmuch as this event had already been foretold by Jesus himself in plain simple language, such a revelation was not required” (*Page 47*).

It has been further said that:-

“Babylon is Jerusalem” (*Revelation, HA Whittaker, P 209*).

Also:-

“Does the Papacy really speak great words against the Most High? ... the words are more appropriate to modern atheistic Communism than to a church which does

worship God, if only after a fashion.” (*The Last Days, HA Whittaker, p. 180*).

Rome, The papal centre, is the intoxicator of the kings of the earth, not Jerusalem. It is an ecclesiastical centre which speaks blasphemous words; which are anti-Semitic, anti-God, anti-Christ. It’s worship is pagan, mother and son idolatry. It does not worship God; it apes worship to God.

“That Babylon is Rome is evident from the explanation given by the angel in Rev 17:18, where it is expressly said to be that great city which ruleth over the kings of the earth: no other city but Rome being in the exercise of such power at the time when the vision was seen.” (*Eureka, vol 3, Bro J Thomas*)

“A correct application of Revelation, chapters 17 and 18, must depend upon a right understanding of the first chapters of the prophecy. Approaching the book carefully from its beginning we are led to consider it as a message to severn Gentile ecclesias – believers whose ties to Judaism and contemporary Jerusalem had been disconnected. The book must be seen as having primary relevance to this community, the Ecclesia in the Gentile Roman world in the latter part of the first century. Thus, expositors have most often viewed the Revelation as unfolding history relating, not to Israel, but to that community which is represented in Rev 1:12,20 by the seven golden lampstands. These represent the household of faith – the ecclesias (*The Apocalypse – A Background Study, Bro J Banta, P 51*).

THE ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST THREE CHAPTERS OF THE APOCALYPSE

“The foundation laid in these early chapters direct us to a consideration of what is to take place from that time forward with respect to the Christian community. Significantly, the Preterist view (the idea that the Revelation was given to John AD 64-68 and that the seals and the trumpets apply to the nation of Israel in AD 70) almost passes over the first three chapters of the Apocalypse. But they are essential as the groundwork of our consideration of the book as a whole. These chapters focus our attention upon the conditions of the ecclesias along with exhortations and warnings directed to them – rather than leading us to consider the Jewish nation or the judgement of Jerusalem.

“These things which must shortly come to pass” concern the first century Ecclesia. Thus when we come to Revelation 17 & 18 we see a connection with what has come before.

As Israel “played the harlot” and forsook Yahweh, so the betrothed of Christ followed the same tragic course. What is first revealed in the early chapters of the Apocalypse is the elect woman. She is given warnings of her precarious position before God, and she is told that she will be rejected unless she repents. Then we see in Rev 12 a further stage of development, for there is depicted a compromised

woman delivered of a man child of sin. Finally there are the visions of a woman abandoned to sin – a harlot. From the vision of the Ecclesia we have been led to a picture of the Apostasy – fully developed and targeted for destruction. (*The Apocalypse – A Background Study*, Bro J Banta p 51,52).

A Central theme in the Apocalypse is the development of the pernicious enemy of the saints. A correct identification of the symbols of Revelation which pertain to this great adversary is requisite to a satisfactory comprehension of the book. It is all the more imperative because the arch-enemy almost always takes on the guise of a friend. The counterfeit employs every means at his disposal to resemble the true, so that, if possible, even the elect might be seduced. See Matt 24:24; 2Cor 11:14; 2Thess 3:9-10 (*Ibid* p 65,66).

“Our pioneer brethren were familiar with both the Preterist and the Futurist interpretations of the Revelation, and they considered it necessary that they be rejected. A wrong understanding, they believed, would leave us vulnerable to the false teachings of the enemy whom the Apocalypse reveals.

“A correct understanding of the Apocalypse is of more importance than at first sight appear.

1. It was given ‘that his servants MIGHT KNOW’ the things it speaks of; and if a wrong view of it prevails, the object of its communication is to that extent frustrated.
2. The Spirit pronounces a blessing upon those who understand it . . .
3. Jesus pronounces a curse on those who take away from its words: and no one takes away from them more effectively than the man who misrepresents its meaning” (*Bro R Roberts, The Apocalypse and the Obedience of Fatih, The Christadelphian, August 1872, p 380-381, cited by J Banta Ibid, p 66*).

“As latter day prophecy is fulfilled, we see that our brethren of the last century could not anticipate all the details of unfolding events nor the length of time that would be required for their fulfilment. Nevertheless, the general theme of Bible prophecy, as it has been understood in our community from its inceptio, remains unchanged.

One of the significant signs, which we may overlook, is the perpetuation of the Roman system. The papacy survives intact to play out its last scene, but its appearance in our day is so benign that we are apt to disregard its ominous presence along with its Protestant daughters. But the apostasy, which was so distinctively Roman, persists in its influence today, not only in the papal system itself, but in the spiritual darkness of our day in all its forms. Brethren in Christ must continue to resist its teachings and its influence. It is Daniel’s fourth (Roman) beast which speaks great words against the Most High and wears out His saints . . . until . . . “the judgement shall sit, and the saints shall take away his (the fourth

beast's) dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end" (*Dan 7:26*) (*Ibid*, p 70).

Against this clear identity of the truth, and its historical development; it has been suggested, because of such statements as "the Lord is at hand" that Yahweh alters His predetermined time scales (his set times), saying that:

"the conclusion seems to follow that the divine intention that Jesus should come again some time in the first Century suffered a drastic postponement because of the general rejection of the Gospel, especially by Israel (*Revelation, HA Whittaker, p 269*).

"There are no indications in Scripture that God's Time periods, with respect to his overall purpose are variable according to man's response to Him. In Old Testament prophecies and in the Revelation there are "set times" with relation to the fulfilment of his purpose. Four times in the book of Daniel the phrase a time appointed occurs. In Psalm 102:13, it is declared: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come."

The Apostle Paul, in his speech on Mars hill, makes it clear that God's appointed time schedule for manifesting His glory in the earth does not vary significantly (*see Acts 17:24-26*). The phrase "things which must shortly come to pass," must be seen in the light of other Scriptural usage of the same expression. That which Daniel declared would occur "in the latter days" is described in the Apocalypse as coming to pass "shortly" (*Gk en tachei*). The expression is literally "in haste" (quickly, suddenly), indicating that the events are to be fulfilled rapidly. As the events are unfolded they are spoken of coming to pass quickly (*Rev 11:14*), and a form of the word occurs in Rev 22:20 "Behold I come quickly". The things foretold include the decay and fall of empires, conflicts among nations and the development of the apostasy." (*The Apocalypse a Background Study*" Bro Joseph Banta, pages 62-63).

To suggest that, because the Apocalypse begins and ends with: "the things which must shortly come to pass" and "behold I come quickly" that "it can only be that God Himself has brought about a wholesale deferment of the consummation of His purpose ... and ... "the the divine intention that Jesus should come again some time in the First Century suffered a drastic postponement because of the general rejection of the Gospel, especially by Israel ..." (*Revelation, HA Whittaker, P 254,269*) is an attempt to bring all into the confines of AD70 and thus putting a construction upon words and phrases which do not accord with the rest of Scripture. It will mislead and deceive.

"The term *en tachei* occurs in Acts 12:7 (*rise up quickly*), Acts 22:18 (*get out quickly*) and Acts 25:4 (*depart shortly*).

In these passages the meaning is clearly "within a short time." In Luke 18, however, the expression is used in a somewhat different sense. There is a long-

range implication similar to that of the Apocalypse.

“And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry unto Him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, He will vindicate them speedily (en tachei). Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (*Luke 18:7-8 RSV*) (*The Apocalypse, a Background Study, Bro Joseph Banta, p 64*).

“Henry Alford, in his commentary on the Revelation, gives an exposition of these expressions. He writes in part:

“What things must shortly come to pass (i.e before long). This expression must not be urged to signify that the events of the apocalyptic prophecy were to be close at hand: for we have a key to its meaning in Luke 18:8 ... Here long delay is evidently implied, though the term en tachei is used, as in Rev 1:1 ... so that we are driven to the very same sense of en tachei as that of Luke, viz., to God’s speedy time, though he seems to delay ... it remains to observe that these words cannot with any fairness be used as furnishing a guide to the interpretation of the prophecy. They are far rather to be regarded as a prophetic formula, common to Him to whom a thousand years are as one day, and used in order to teach us how short our time, and the time of this world is” (*Ibid. p 64*).

Finally we note the conclusion of a series of articles by Brother LG Sargent, Late Editor of The Christadelphian:-

“The Apocalypse is the essence and crown of all the prophets; but it is in a special degree a sequel to the book of Daniel covering in more detail a part of the ground of his prophecy. Whatever principles are applied to the interpretation of Daniel must also be applied to the Apocalypse; and one would think it could hardly be in doubt that both portray continuous historical developments up to the time of the end.” (*Which Interpretation, Bro Graham Pearce, p 124*).

Bro D Rhodes

For a further grasp of the principles involved enabling a correct interpretation, the further publications are highly recommended:

Revelation - Which Interpretation? - Bro G Pearce
The Revelation of Jesus Christ - Bible Truth vs Catholicism - Bro C Maddocks

Eureka - Bro J Thomas
Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse - Bro R Roberts
Apocalypse and History - Bre WH Boulton & WH Barker
An Exposition of the Apocalypse - Bro F Bilton
The Apocalypse - A Background Study - Bro J Banta

THE SPIRIT, THE WORD —AND THE ANGELS

It is an often quoted, yet little understood teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, that men are drawn by the Father to him:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (*Jno 6:44*).

Speculations abound amongst men as to the precise mechanism by which a man becomes “drawn” to Christ; from theories of a mystical and magical invisible force turning a man’s mind towards the things of God, influencing his thoughts and directing his desires; to a conviction that such things are unknown and unknowable, and that it is best not to enquire or probe too deeply into such affairs.

But whilst it is a truth that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the Deity’s ways higher than man’s ways, and His thoughts higher than man’s thoughts (*Is 55:9*), it would be a grave error and folly in the extreme to disregard what the Father has revealed as being unknowable. Wisdom that is from above (*Jas 3:17*) has been revealed to man, so that he can make Yahweh’s ways his ways, and Yahweh’s thoughts his thoughts. Whilst the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God which therefore remain unknown to him (*1Cor 2:14*), those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern spiritual things ought to be able to see and hear the things revealed by the Father by His Spirit through the Apostles (*1Cor 2:7,10*). We must not therefore dismiss a matter as being “unknowable” purely on the basis that we have not searched the Scriptures adequately enough to gain personal knowledge of it. As Bro Thomas wrote:

“no man has any right to set up his own ignorance as the limit of what God hath revealed. A thing may be unknown to such a man, but it doth not therefore follow that it is either absolutely unintelligible or a secret. He may not know of it, or, if explained to him, he may not have intellect enough to comprehend it, or his prejudices, or sectarian bias may darken his understanding - this by no means makes the thing unintelligible or mysterious to other people. All that such persons have a right to say is, “We do not know anything about it.” They may confess their own ignorance, and resolve to look into the matter, or not; but they are presumptuously overstepping the bounds of propriety to venture to do more” (*Elpis Israel*).

To the Word then, and to the Testimony must we go to be enlightened as to the Ways and Thoughts of the Father, leaving those in darkness to amuse themselves with their abstract thinking and self-confessed ignorance. And to begin with, we ought to examine more carefully the *context* of the Master’s words, for in the discourse which follows, the Master expounds his own saying and thereby relieves the learned theologians of their difficulty - if only they had eyes to see and ears to hear - by presenting the matter in great plainness of speech:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. *It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God.* Every man therefore *that hath heard, and hath learned* of the Father, cometh unto me . . .” (*Jno 6:44,45*).

As the prophets declared, men are “taught of God” (*Is 54:13*). But how? By some mystical influence filtering into their brains and directing their thoughts and inclinations Godward? Not according to the Master, for in his words, they who are taught are they who “hath heard,” the implication being that those who do not hear do not learn. Passive receipt of miraculous power is not what Christ describes in this place, but rather a *listening*, or *hearing* on the part those who would learn. But what do they hear? Words from the Father, words that proceed out of His mouth, which do not return to Him void (*cp Is 55:11*), but rather accomplish that which He pleases, namely the drawing of men to His Son, for thus the wrote the Apostle:

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And *how shall they hear without a preacher?* And how shall they preach, except they be sent? . . . So then, faith cometh *by hearing*, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, *their sound* went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (*Rom 10:13-18*).

The matter is therefore laid plainly before us; a man becomes called, and “taught of God” by hearing the “sound” of those sent by him, namely the Apostles (ones sent), or of those who preach the Testimony they taught. Accordingly, it might be written to them, as it was to those believers at Thessalonica, that they were chosen unto salvation through “belief of the truth; whereunto ***He called you by our Gospel***” (*2Thess 2:14*). This is how they become “drawn” of God - by the Gospel of Christ heard, understood, and believed. So it is by this means that many become “called according to His purpose” (*Rom 8:29*), to be conformed to the Image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, ultimately forming single family of men and women who, by carrying their cross and following him, through being partakers of the likeness of his death by obeying the Gospel through baptism, shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. They shall “be like him” (*1Jno 3:2*), both morally and physically, having their bodies changed that they become “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (*Phil 3:21*), immortal, free from sin and death, and fitted for the Kingdom of God.

But not all who are “drawn” by the Father to the Son will be granted the glory, honour and immortality for which the faithful seek. Though many be drawn to Christ, some cannot endure the straitness of the Way he requires them to walk along, and they allow themselves to be tempted, and drawn *away* of their own lusts, and enticed (*Jas 1:14*). So it is, that “many be called, but few chosen” (*Mat 20:16*). Many are called to be partakers of many things; they are called into Grace (*Gal 1:6*), into Liberty (*Gal 5:13*), unto a kingdom and great glory (*1Thes 2:2*), unto Eternal Life (*1Tim 6:12*), out of darkness into light (*1Pet*

2:9). But they are also “called to be saints” (*Cor 1:2*), Holy ones unto the Deity who gave His Son that they might have life. And that is something many cannot be. As dogs, they return unto their own vomit, and as swine to their wallowing in the mire (*2 Pet 2:22*). They cannot abide life in the Light, as their works become manifest by it and open to reproof (*Jno 3:19*). They cannot abide the constant washing of the water of the word whereby their way might be cleansed, for they take too much delight in the defiling ways of the flesh. So it happens unto them according to the true proverb; they turn back into the darkness and defilement of the world, and so judge themselves to be unworthy of eternal life.

But why is this? If it is true, as some claim, that the believer’s life becomes governed by direct Holy Spirit operation upon the brain-flesh of men, why is it even possible for some to fail? Why do some fail, whilst others do not? There are those who claim that some inscrutable influence renews men’s hearts, causing them to believe, and that unless they have had an “experience” of the sudden swooping of this power upon them, they cannot believe. But such a magical excitation finds no place within the pages of Scripture, which declares that a man becomes “renewed by knowledge” (*Col 3:10*). As Bro Thomas wrote:

“When a man is renewed by the truth, he is renewed by the spirit, and not before. There is no such thing in the scriptures as a renewed ignorant man. Ignorance of the testimony of God, and regeneration, are utterly incompatible. The truth is the purifier to those only who understand and obey it (*1Pet 1:22*); and there is no moral purity, or sanctification of spirit before God, without it (*Elpis Israel*).

Another idea held by some, is that at the time of Baptism, men are given a dose of strength from the mystical influence they call the Spirit. For instance, in his book entitled *James and Other Studies (1st Edition)*, Duncan Heaster postulates that at the time of Baptism, believers are endowed with “a gift of heavenly health”, a “once off gift of the Holy Spirit”, and are later given the further opportunity of drawing upon the Spirit in order to receive Divine help in their Bible Study. Thus, under the heading, *Holy Spirit at Baptism?* he writes:

“... this approach to the subject makes more sense of the passages which imply that ***there is a once off gift of spiritual strength in our lives***. Israel's passage through the Red Sea was a clear type of our baptism and subsequent wilderness journey (1 Cor 10:1). Miraculously, "there was not one feeble person among their tribes" (Ps 105:37) - of about four million people. ***This gift of physical strength after their Baptism surely prefigures our 'gift of Heavenly health' after our immersion ... Grammatically this must imply a once off gift of the Spirit to each believer ... Despite having had this Spirit gift at baptism, the utmost personal effort is still required in responding to it***”

Again he writes:

“Surely there is no point in praying to understand God's word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (Ps 119:18). ***Such prayers are surely for God's help***

to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand. Seeing that all God's work is accomplished through His Spirit, it follows that we are asking from the help of His Spirit to understand the word."

Here then, is the claim presented in clear and unambiguous terms; when they are baptised, believers are given the Spirit of God as a "once off gift" of "spiritual strength". And further, this Spirit may be also drawn upon as required, to give assistance in understanding the Father's Word. But what saith the Word?

In order to describe this idea, which is not in itself taught in Scripture, expressions not from Scripture are employed. For instance, there is no passage in Scripture that speaks of "heavenly health," let alone a "once off gift" of it. Neither does the Scripture speak of "spiritual strength," the term is not used at all, let alone in this connection. Nor does any passage of Scripture state that a believer ought to ask the Father to use His Spirit in order to give them understanding of the Word. As the writer himself admits, at best, the 'proof' texts he advances can only 'imply' the points he makes. And in actual fact, whilst the writer considers the physical provision made for Israelites in the desert as being a "prefigure" of each believer being given a "once of gift of the Spirit," Scripture itself does not make that comparison. Rather, in it's plain teachings, it refutes such an idea.

THE POWER OF THE WORD

Rather than speaking of some mystical endowment of "heavenly health" at Baptism, the Oracles of the Most High declare that the Word itself gives strength to believers, being a power in it's own right:

"the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are (being) saved, *it is the power of God*" (1Cor 1:18).

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for *it is the power of God unto salvation* to everyone that believeth" (Rom 1:16).

"wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted (implanted) word, *which is able to save your souls*" (Jas 1:21). "when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, *which effectually worketh* also in you that believe" (1Thes 2:13).

The power, that works within the believer, most "effectually", is therefore the influence of the Word itself. As Bro Roberts expressed it, the Word:

"lays hold of the entire mental man, creating new ideas and new affections, and, in general, evolving a "new man". In this, the Spirit operates through *the written*

word". This is the product of the Spirit—the ideas of God reduced to writing by the ancient men who were moved by it. It is, therefore, the instrumentality of the Spirit . . . by this men may be subdued to God—that is, enlightened, purified, and saved, if they receive the word into good and honest hearts, and “bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some a hundred” (*Christendom Astray*).

The Psalmist prayed, "my soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me *according to thy word*" (*Ps 119:28*). That is the prayer of the faithful; to pray for strength to be given in accordance with what the Word teaches. To pray for a strength which the Word does not promise, or to look for power in a different place to where the Creator has provided it, is bound only to leave the petitioner weak and in need of true spiritual strength.

The Master, in his Parable of the Sower clearly described what source of spiritual growth and health is sown in the believer's heart. “The seed is the word of God” (*Luke 8:11*). Notice, the seed is sown *alone* in the heart, the onus being on the individual to allow it to germinate and take root there. The Master describes no additional element being sown with the seed to help the recipient in some other way, it is down to the nature of soil, and disposition of the individual as to whether, and how that seed grows. Neither does the master describe the soil being especially prepared to receive the seed; but rather it falls on both good and bad ground, and grows where the conditions are right.

This seed so sown is that “implanted word” which “effectually worketh” within the believer, an “incorruptible seed” (*1Pet 1:23*) which, is the germ of a new Spiritual life—a “new creature” (*2Cor 5:17*), and is a virile 'power' mighty to save. Indeed, it is that seed which is able to strengthen the believer to resist sin (*1Jno 3:9*), and which is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: *that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*” (*2Tim 3:17*).

"THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT"

This latter passage is most instructive for our present considerations – the Word is a power able to reprove, correct, and instruct “that the man of God *may be perfect*”. Why then, do some consider there to be a need for an additional influence/strengthening power from elsewhere? Are we to suppose that the man of God may become more perfect than “perfect” by such additional “spiritual strength”? Nay, the word itself, after the pattern of the Manna of old is sufficient for the believer to feed upon, even though it may be but "light bread", and insufficient for the murmurers.

Contrary to the claims with which we are being presented, possession of the Holy Spirit was not in any case, a source of “heavenly health” strengthening the possessors to be obedient. This we know, for though it gave the 1st Century possessors miraculous powers and abilities, it was still needful for Paul to exhort and warn the spirit-endowed elders at Ephesus that:

“of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, **and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up**, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (*Acts 20:30-32*).

The arising of apostate leaders was certain – but what was needed to edify the body to remain faithfully resistant to these? Mystical supplies of "spiritual strength" from above? No – the Word itself. These were men who certainly did possess the Holy Spirit already, but it was not that Spirit which gave them strength to resist the apostates, but the Word, understood, believed and acted upon. It is a power of construction, able to build a firmly founded edifice which cannot be shaken in the day of evil. The Spirit, whilst it gave miraculous powers, did not in itself impart an moral awareness, or cause a moral regeneration for the recipients thereof, as witnessed by the manner by which certain at Corinth abused their miraculous ability to speak in tongues (*1Cor 14*). Judas is another case in point, he, as the other disciples were sent forth with the Holy Spirit to cast out demons and perform miracles in the name of Christ. And again, there will be many recipients of the Holy Spirit power rejected in the coming day of judgement:

“Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And they will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (*Mat 7:5*).

Only a Divine power impressed upon the fleshly tables of the heart can achieve moral results, and it has so pleased the eternal Creator to have that power contained within the written word.

Bro Thomas was quite plain in his exposition of these things:

“For myself, I believe that the Holy Spirit is the only Authoritative, infallible, efficient and sufficient teacher of the Christian religion, in all its parts. If I be asked, what is the manner in which He teaches this religion? I reply in the same way that all teachers convey instruction to their pupils; by words, either spoken or written. Hence, it is by the sacred Scriptures that he convinces men of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come in these times, and indeed , in all the times subsequent to the apostolic age. God is simple in all His plans.”

He goes on to say (quoting 2 Tim 3v15):

“What more do we want than wisdom in relation to this matter? If the sacred Scriptures are able to make us wise, we need no other instrumentality. The Holy Spirit by the word, without infusing a single idea into it more than it actually and ordinarily contains, and without any collateral influence, teaches us all wisdom and knowledge that is necessary... Why, then, my friends, can we not be content

with the means within the grasp of everyone who owns the volume of inspiration? If the ecclesiastical world were content to learn the truth from ‘the Bible alone’, and it honestly desired to obey the Messiah, there would soon be an end to Presbyterian and every other ism, by which ‘Christendom’ as it is called, or ‘anti-Christendom’, as it should be termed, has been for ages desolated.” (*The Apostasy Unveiled*).

HELP IN UNDERSTANDING

We saw earlier how it is claimed that believers ought to pray for the Father to give them Spirit help to understand: “Surely there is no point in praying to understand God’s word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (*Ps 119:18*). *Such prayers are surely for God’s help to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand ... it follows that we are asking for the help of His Spirit to understand the word*”. Such are the sentiments of many.

“Surely” it must be so – but why? No verse of Scripture states that believers should pray for the Holy Spirit to aid their Bible Study – those terms are not used. On the contrary, even prophets to whom the words of the Spirit came direct, had to exert much effort themselves in seeking out their meaning: “Of which salvation the prophets have *enquired and searched diligently*, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (*1Pet 1:11*). These inspired prophets received the Spirit – it operated through them to give us the words of Scripture, yet they did not understand the import of those words, and how they testified of the coming Messiah. The Spirit did not give them understanding of what they themselves wrote. They had to show themselves to be “workmen that needeth not to be ashamed”, seeking to rightly divide the Word of Truth – as do we. The way to understand the Word, is to “search diligently”, following the example of the prophets of old, not to pray for a source of understanding they did not have, and which the Father has not promised. And why should it be otherwise? “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter” (*Prov 25:2*). True, it may be attractive to the flesh to suppose that though we be workmen, we do not have to work hard, that we are, in some mysterious way, “helped” to understand, so saving us hours of thoughtful meditation, but that is not the revealed way of the Most High.

AN UNVEILING

One passage of Scripture, which is often employed as a prop to sustain the argument as in this case, is Psalm 119:18: “*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law*”. But much is assumed regarding this passage that is not stated. For instance, the Holy Spirit itself is not directly spoken of. David does not pray for the Holy Spirit to help his understanding – those are not the terms he uses, even if others may assume that to be his meaning. David simply besought Yahweh to “open his eyes”.

Interestingly, the Hebrew for “open” used here by the Spirit literally signifies, *to uncover; to reveal*. The idea is that of the eyes being covered over, David’s prayer being that this covering may be removed, so that the “wondrous things” contained within the Mosaic Law might be seen. Hence, Rotherham renders the verse thus: “*unveil thou mine eyes that I may discern wondrous things out of thy law*”. But what are those wondrous things? David certainly knew and understood the Law very well, for later in the same Psalm he says: “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. *Thou through thy commandments hast made my wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me*” (*Ps 119:97,98*). Already having been given understanding and wisdom (notice, from the commandments, not Holy Spirit bestowal), there was yet something contained within the Law which was veiled from his sight, and which he sought to “see”.

The Apostle speaks similarly of Israel, and their inability to see the wonderful things testified of the Master: “seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put *a veil* over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished: *But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament ... even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart*” (*2Cor 3:15*). That which is veiled from Israel even today, is an appreciation of how the Law spoke of the Lord Jesus. Their minds are blinded to this; there is a need for them to have their eyes opened, and their hearts unveiled in order for them to recognise the Messiah who came to fulfil the Law. Even so with David; yet he sought to have that veil removed.

This is something which was indeed revealed to David by Divine Revelation, for he was a prophet: “*being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ*” (*Acts 2:31*). But Bro Heaster is not a prophet, and neither is anyone else today! Why then should it be supposed that we can pray for the same manner of Revelation as David? When we cite a verse, we must pay attention to its historical context, or we become no better than the Apostasy who pick out verses to wrest to their own destruction.

Here then, we see the prayer and its fulfilment. David prayed that he might *see* wondrous things; and being a prophet those things were shown to him, that “seeing this before”, he might speak of the resurrection of Christ. The revelation which he sought came both in the “oath” sworn to him through Nathan the prophet, as recorded in 2Sam 7, and also through prophetic vision which he received himself – *which things we do not experience today*. David, as other men of old had direct communication from the Most High, whereas we do not. He then, was placed in a unique position greatly different to ours, whereby he could pray to have things revealed to him. For our part, we must be content with the Divine injunction to use personal effort, to “search diligently” that we might show ourselves workmen that need not be ashamed.

THE WORD – A SPOKEN, THEN WRITTEN REVELATION OF THE SPIRIT

What we have endeavoured to show, is that the power of the word itself imparts understanding to the hearer. As the voice of Wisdom crieth: “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ... *then shalt thou understand* the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of *elohim*. For Yahweh giveth wisdom: *out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding ...*” (*Prov 2:1-6*). Out of the mouth of Yahweh, that is, via His Spoken Word, understanding and knowledge was given to his prophets, and they wrote it down for others. We obtain knowledge of the Most High by heeding that revelation, not by seeking another spirit-revelation to, in some way clarify the first. But the word itself is a power of the Spirit because it is the product of the breath, or Spirit of Yahweh, as we touched upon earlier. Thus Paul spake to the Corinthians of the formerly concealed mysteries of the Gospel: “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ... for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (*1Cor 2:10,11*).

So then, “no man” can know the things of God, but by the Spirit of God. But how? By a mystical impartation of understanding? By no means, as we have already established, it is by the *words* taught by the Spirit, for this is how the Apostle spake of the revelations given to him, and committed to paper: “now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in *the words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual” (*v 12,13*). So, true, we can only know of Divine things from the Spirit. That is, through the words which the Spirit teaches in the pages of our Bibles. What we must do therefore, rather than to give petition for additional power from the Father, is to attend to that which He has already imparted by the Spirit, and encapsulated within the word. We must shun the words which man's wisdom teaches, and give ear to the oracles of God, that showing ourselves “workmen” who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth, we might be given a spirit-nature, being heirs of the promises contained within that word.

There are those who glibly dismiss the above as “Word-Only Extremism”. That scoff at the idea that in these evil days of darkness when the love of many waxes cold, and iniquity abounds, that the only source of help we have been granted is words in a printed book. But such remarks merely serve to demonstrate the point made earlier, that natural men receive not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them (*1Cor 2:14*). Rather than to address the points of Scripture raised, instead an attempt is made to discredit particular teachings by bestowing inaccurate and derogatory labels upon them.

MINISTERING SPIRITS

The Scriptures do not teach that the only source of help provided to those who would be heirs of the kingdom is the Word, powerful though that be. Indeed, such a dogma, were it to exist, ought to be resisted with equal force as belief in possession of a Divine Power

that the Father has, in fact, not granted, for it would be to deny another vital source of aid to the believer, namely the work of the Angels. It is a source of much comfort and consolation to the faithful that as they walk on their weary journey through the wilderness of life towards the city that hath foundations, they are not alone. They have Divine Ministers to attend to their needs, for concerning the immortal messengers of Yahweh, it is written, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (*Heb 1:14*). Indeed, the Master himself referred to the presence of these, as a reason not to speak evil of his little ones: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven” (*Mat 18:10*).

The patriarch Jacob, father of the 12 tribes recognised the help granted to him by the Angelic hands moving in the circumstances of his life. Accordingly, he bestowed a blessing upon Joseph’s sons: “*Elohim*, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the *Elohim* which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads ...” (*Gen 48:15,16*). Here is a most striking example of a man who recognised the hand of Yahweh in his life. But notice, rather than to speak of spirit-bestowals giving him understanding to direct his ways away from, and out of evil, he spoke of the direct intervention of the Angel, the ministering Spirit sent forth to minister to him. It may be argued that our circumstance differs from his, in that men today do not personally see their divine ministers. But though they go unseen, the reality of their presence and actions is readily seen by those who possess an eye of faith. There are those, like Elishah’s servant who will not believe until they see, and who are therefore fearful at the troubles which might come. Others, however, like Elijah go forward in faith, trusting that what Yahweh has promised, he will give - trusting in the promised angelic ministration. “Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (*2Kings 6:18*), is the spirit of those who trust in the deliverance of Yahweh. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (*Rom 8:31*).

True it is, that times of difficulty, tribulation and evil come upon the Sons of Yahweh, for such are brought upon them for the purposes of their chastisement and refinement (*Heb 12:5-7*). As it is written “many are the afflictions of the righteous ...” (*Ps 34:19*). It is through much tribulation that the Sons of Yahweh shall enter the kingdom, for as gold is tried in the fire, even so their faith must be tried and purified by trial (*Acts 14:22; 1Pet 1:7*). But they are not alone in their trials, for the Psalmist continues “... but Yahweh delivereth them out of them all”. But how? By imparting His Spirit that they may be in some way strengthened, and helped by it’s influence? By no means; Yahweh knows how to deliver them that trust in Him (*2Pet 2:9*), and this same Psalm reveals how He is pleased to do such a thing, in response to their cries:

“This poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The Angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (*Ps 34:6,7*).

That is where David's trust, as with Jacob. Not in an unknown and unknowable mysterious influence, but in the reality of Angelic activity. He trusted in Yahweh, he cried unto Yahweh, and Yahweh saved him out of his troubles.

DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL

There is another principle we would do well to note, from Psalm 34. Notice, the Angel did *not* prevent evil from coming. There are those who suppose that if believers have Angelic ministers with the power of the Almighty watching over them for their good, that therefore no evil should come. We have even heard it taught that the fact of brethren in many cases enduring many hardships is evidence that it is a mistake to assume the Angels are with us. However, again, such reveals a lack of familiarity with what Yahweh has promised; as we have already seen there is no promise that tribulation will not come; on the contrary, if we do not experience such, the Scriptures declare that we are illegitimate, "and not sons" (*Heb 12:8*). However, the promise is that when troubleous times are upon us, there will also be deliverance: "There hath no temptation (*trial*) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted (*tried*) above that ye are able; but will with the temptation (*trial*) also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (*1Cor 10:13*). And this, as seen in the examples of David and Jacob, is work which falls within the scope of Angelic ministration.

By way of conclusion then, when consulting the Word of the Most High, we do not find prayers for Holy Spirit help and guidance, or exhortations for believers to offer such prayers. Literally all of the passages employed to suggest this (we have considered but one in this section) do so *by inference only*. But by contrast, we have shown that the Word itself is a living power, able to impart wisdom from above, able to draw the hearer to the Christ, and make him "wise unto salvation". And deliverance from evil is not from some unknown and unknowable, undefined and undefinable influence imparting an armchair injection of 'strength,' but is via Angelic ministration. This highlights the vital importance of giving heed to the power Yahweh has given unto us via the Word. Should a man fail to heed it, believing in some other source of power that is not given, for it is not promised, he will not be found labouring in the Word and in the Doctrine to build for himself a foundation that can withstand the stormy blasts of life's turbulent periods. Not heeding the exhortation given, he will not know enough of the word to perform it, and act upon the wisdom of it's ways. Being founded upon the uncertainty of sandy foundations instead of the Rock of the word, his house will not stand: "and great was the fall of it".

Brother Chris Maddocks

The above article is taken from a 32 page booklet entitled "Prayer and the Holy Spirit," currently being prepared for distribution. If Yahweh wills, copies will be sent to all recipients of The Christadelphian Waymark with the next issue. Further copies will be available at 50p each, or free to any who cannot remit the requested amount

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

A servant owes a large sum to his lord, which he is unable to pay. He entreats his lord to give him time, promising to pay all. His lord forgives the debt altogether. The servant afterwards demands of a fellow servant the payment of a small debt. The servant refuses to wait or to forgive, and has the fellow-servant imprisoned. The lord of the servants hearing of it, sends for the first servant, reinstates the forgiven debt, and orders him into prison and affliction till the debt is paid.

The application of this is both clear and important. Its meaning is established by the occasion of the parable, and by the commandment which Jesus makes on the action of the lord of the servants in reviving the debt and imprisoning the man who had shown no mercy. The occasion was a question of Peter's: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." A parable intended to illustrate a saying like this must be a parable enforcing mutual forgiveness as a paramount duty among the servants of Christ; but it goes further than this, and shows that a failure to render this duty will be a very fatal affair to the offender. His own forgiven sins will be revived against him if he assume an exacting and unforgiving attitude towards others.

The importance of the matter is shown by the way Christ binds it up with the petition he puts into the mouths of his disciples for the forgiveness of trespasses: "Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive them that trespass against us.*" By this association of words he confronts us with our duty to others every time we ask forgiveness for ourselves. It is a good test of our standing in the matter, whether we are able to make our forgiveness of others the measure of the forgiveness we request for ourselves. The remark with which Jesus concludes the parable is decisive. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you (as the lord of the parable did to the servant), *if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.*"

(Bro Robert Roberts, 1897)

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