

What Does That Mean?

“Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?” (Mark 2:9)

Jesus was accused of blasphemy for saying to the man with palsy, *“thy sins be forgiven thee.”* His response to this was to ask the above question, but how does this question refute the charge of blasphemy?

In asking this question Jesus was trying to get the people to think through what they had just witnessed.

The scribes were upset by Jesus telling the man that his sins were forgiven. These scribes were the expositors of the law and it was their responsibility to keep the word of God pure. Their doctrine was *true* - it is blasphemy for any creature to undertake the pardon of sin; that is God's prerogative alone. *“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,”* Isaiah 43:25. Although their doctrine was true, their application was false. This was due to their ignorance and hostility to Christ which caused them to be blind to the obvious. It is true, *“None can forgive sins but God only;”* but it is false to conclude that, therefore Christ cannot forgive sins. He performed this miracle to prove that God was working through him. He was providing them with the evidence to accept that he had such God given authority.

It is easy for any man to say, *“thy sins be forgiven thee.”* How would we know if forgiveness really took place or not? It is much more difficult to say, *“arise, and take up thy bed, and walk”* to a patient so *completely* disabled that he was *“borne of four”* thus totally helpless and unable to function for himself. He not only *arose* out of his bed, perfectly well, but, to show that he had perfect strength restored to him, *“he took up his bed, and went forth before them all; and they were all amazed.”* If you had witnessed this, would not your thought have been, *“how could he have done that???”* That is what Jesus was attempting to have each one answer in their own minds.

There was nothing wrong with questioning whether a man had God's authority to forgive sins. But there was a lot wrong with such doubts when they rejected the clear evidence that established this authority. Jesus provided them with reason to accept that he had such authority. The evidence of healing could be tested by eye-witnesses so they should have concluded with Nicodemus, *“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”* (John 3:2)

This wretched, crippled man bespeaks of the calamitous state of human life. Jesus' touch and words brought peace of mind and comfort to the afflicted people who sought him out. Are we like the scribes who were hung up on technicalities, or like those who in faith, sought his help? We can be assured of his interest and concern for our welfare, if we develop a faith similar to the latter class.

Bro. Jim Sommerville

THE BEREAN CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIAL NEWS

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare, with the object of providing Ecclesial news, exhortations, articles and information of fraternal interest to the Brotherhood. Defending the original, foundation principles upon which the Truth was uncovered from darkness and upon which the Christadelphian movement was developed. Opposed to the dogmas of papal and protestant christendom. Upholding the Truth as Bereans since 1923.

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Please send Ecclesial communications to:

Bro. Fred J. Higham, 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, Mich. 48035 U.S.A.
Phone: (586) 790-2156 Fax: (586) 349-6304 e-mail: fhigam@gmail.com
Web Site: www.BereanEcclesialNews.com

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God Willing, The Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News will be published monthly as an avenue of providing information of Ecclesial interest to the Brotherhood. Ecclesial news and correspondence, Fraternal Gathering notices, special activities and upbuilding exhortations are encouraged. This is an effort to upbuild and prepare us in heart and mind for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

HENGOED, Wales, Breaking of Bread – 10.45am; Sunday School – 12.45pm; Lecture – 2.30pm; Bible Class and Elpis Israel Class – held alternately in the homes of the Bre. and Sis. in South and West Wales. Youth Evening – held every 2 weeks on Friday at the Cadoxton Village Hall at 6.30pm.

Beloved Brethren and Sisters in the bonds of the Abrahamic Covenant,

We are pleased to be able to inform the brotherhood of a new Berean ecclesia being set up in the UK. Bro. Andrew and Sis. Michelle Ford, Bro. Stephen and Sis. Vivien Ford have established an ecclesia in West Wales from which not only the Truth can be proclaimed, but the Berean position set forth to anyone in that area who may be interested. It will be an excellent opportunity to have another ecclesia in the country, and it will also ease some difficulties experienced by our brethren and sisters.

Traveling to Hengoed each week has not been easy with Bro. Andrew and a young family having to travel an hour each way, and Bro. Stephen and Sis. Vivien two hours each way. Added to this has been some acute health problems that have made traveling difficult. This is a loss to the Hengoed ecclesia, having so recently benefited by the additions. However, joint activities continue, and we hope that the opportunities to sound forth the Truth in that area may bring fruit. A public address was given in the area during the summer of 2006 after a large distribution of leaflets, and an advertising campaign. Some interest was generated at that time and it is hoped that further developments will take place. This is of course in the hands of our Heavenly Father and our prayer is as always for the speedy return of our Great High Priest and Mediator, and the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. Communication to West Wales should be sent to Bro. Andrew Ford, Caerwen, Broad Oak, Carmarthenshire, Wales, SA32 8QJ.

We would also like to take the opportunity of inviting anyone who can come to our Spring Study Weekend starting on 16 March 2007, God Willing (information available from Bro. Steve Male).

With love in Elpis Israel and on behalf of the brethren and sisters of the Hengoed Ecclesia, Bro. Phillip Hughes

WEST WALES, Wales, Breaking of Bread – 10.00am; Sunday School – 11.30pm; Afternoon meeting – 1.30pm; Monday First Principle Class; Thursday Book Class 7.00pm; Friday Youth Evening with Hengoed – held every 2 weeks on Friday at the Cadoxton Village Hall at 6.30pm. Bro. Andrew Ford, Caerwen, Broad Oak, Carmarthenshire, Wales, SA32 8QJ; Tel. +44 (0) 1558 668 678; Email westwalesecclisia@tiscali.co.uk

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Loving Greetings in our Master's Name,

As Bro. Phillip Hughes has announced, we now have a West Wales Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia. Some of the members who joined Hengoed at the beginning of last year have been finding the long journey difficult each week - hence the need to open an ecclesia over here. However, it is a particular regret that we will no longer be enjoying the company on a weekly basis with the Hengoed Ecclesia. Nevertheless, we hope to see them as regularly as is practicable, God willing, including occasions we can join together such as youth activities, gatherings, etc. Also, we enjoy meeting with some Hengoed members at a weekly book class, currently reading Nazareth Revisited.

They have forgotten, if they ever knew, that in the apostolic system, “*He is a Jew that is one inwardly*” (Rom. 2:29), even though originally “*a Gentile in the flesh, a stranger from the covenants of promise, and an alien from the commonwealth of Israel*” (Eph. 2:12). Even the blasphemers of the first century were more enlightened than the pious of the nineteenth.

A Forewarning

Jesus forewarns the Smyranean brethren that they would suffer, and that “*the devil would cast some of them into prison.*” This shows who the devil was in Christ's view of things. The authorities that wielded powers of imprisonment and death were, collectively, the devil. This was not the orthodox devil, but the diabolism of human nature incorporate in organized authority. The promise to faithfulness is expressed negatively: “*He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*” The second death is that repetition of death which will occur at the appearance of Christ in the case of those who rise from the dead to experience the shame and punishment of a divine repudiation. This will be a far more terrible visitation every way than the first occurrence of death. The second death is prefaced with the agonizing knowledge of a divine rejection publicly proclaimed. There is no hope in it, and it comes at last with violence and pain.

The Promise

The promise of exemption from it, coming from him who has power to inflict it, is a “*great and precious promise.*” It is a promise, like all other promises, to those who “*overcome*”, that is, to those who get the upper hand in the conflict created by the reception of the truth. This is a conflict with clamorous propensities within, and importunate interests without. That which overcomes, John says, is “*our faith*” (I John 5:4); and Paul tells us that “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). So that the man who overcomes is the man in whom the word of truth dwells richly by reason of its being caused to indwell abundantly through the constant reading and study of the Scriptures. A full conviction of the things written therein is faith, and faith gives power to “*deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world,*” and “*he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*”

Arranged from the writings of bro. Roberts by bro. Bob Widding.

As you find it politic, as well as Godly, to be liberal in business, so I am positive you will find it in ecclesial matters. Act [lazily] and you will, as a result, hide your light under a bushel; you will close the members' pockets, and the town will hardly know there is a Christadelphian Hall in the place. On the other hand, be liberal in God's service (with time and money), and He will abundantly bless you, and give you more than simply a name to live. Your ecclesia will be "a city set up on a hill."

But I must conclude, not wanting to tire you. Faithfully yours, in endurance for the joy ahead.

Bro. Frank G. Jannaway—1896

Analecta Apocalypticæ (10)

To The Ecclesia at Smyrna

The First and the Last

Jesus introduces himself as "*the first and the last, who was dead and is alive.*" In this, he presents his origin and history in a phrase. He is the First—the Father, the Eternal in manifestation. You say, "*That is intelligible, but how can he be 'the Last'?*" Well, if we realize that when God's purpose with the earth is finished, Jesus will be the occupant and possessor thereof for ever, at the head of ransomed mankind, we can understand how, in relation to the history of the earth, he is the final—the Last. His having died and risen are incidents in the history that leads from the "First" state to the "Last" state. It was natural he should place these in the foreground, because he was about to promise a crown of life for faithfulness unto death.

The Lord Knows

He tells the Smyrneans that, among other things, he knows their poverty, but immediately adds, in parenthesis, "*but thou art rich.*" The destined possessors of the kingdom of God may well be said to be rich. All things are theirs, as Paul says (1 Cor. 3:21). It is only a question of time, their coming into possession. Meanwhile, like Paul, they have to "*suffer the loss of all things.*" He accuses some of blasphemy in saying they were Jews when they were not (verse 9). This is not a form of blasphemy of which the moderns are liable to be guilty. They have lost sight of the fact that "*salvation is of the Jews*" (John 4:22), and are under no temptation to call themselves Jews.

The members are Bro. Stephen and Sis. Vivien Ford (Senior) and Bro. Andrew and Sis. Michelle Ford.

May we take this opportunity to thank our brothers and sisters at Hengoed for their fellowship and for their enthusiastic work with our youngsters. Also, we would like to express our love to the wider Berean Christadelphian Community, in our One Hope. It is our prayer that our Saviour will soon return, when through God's mercy, we will worship our Father through the ages of eternity.

Your brother in Jesus,
Andrew Ford

OWERRI, Nigeria; Sylvester Ebere, 191 Tetlow Road, Owerri, Nigeria; email address, seevester2020@yahoo.com; telephone, +2348038406173; web site, owerri.bereans.org

Dear Brethren and Sisters,
Loving greetings,

We are happy to announce to you that the Owerri Ecclesia has come to stay. This is as the result of the recent happenings. Many souls are added to the Ecclesia on a weekly basis.

Among our visitors are many people. Most marvelous was the conversion of a pastor who backed up his conversion with an action by donating three plots of land to the ecclesia and the several calls which I have received after my radio programs demanding the establishment of the ecclesia in the areas of the callers.

Again, a clergy of the Assemblies of God marveled after reading some of the booklets, especially, "The Evil One", "The Kingdom of God on Earth," "What Christ will do when He comes again." This man is now regular in the meetings.

Generally, we have now recorded attendance of over 300 within ten months. Moreover, we have established Berean Christadelphian doctrines as the leading issues of the day among Nigerians, for its antagonists no less than for its passionate followers.

With this progress made, I feel the ecclesia needs to have the BEREAN CHRISTADELPHIANS FACE like its counterparts anywhere in the world. This will be good, especially, to motivate members who are now not happy with the wrong Christian practices within the locality.

We are happy to present to you the names of our baptized members of the Owerri Ecclesia: **Regina Ebere**, my mother; **Bernard Ebere**, my Brother; **Patience Ebere**, my wife; **Helen Ukaegbu**; **Joel Nwaogazie**; **Francis Orisakwe**; **Osuagwu Chima**; **Moses Ogbonna**; **James Ebuzo**; **Victor Enwere**; **Raymond Okonkwo**; **John Uzoechi**; **Nicholas Chukwu**; **Augustine Nwoko**; **Ambrose Ebere**; **Godwin Nze**; **Augustine Ogu**; **Asoluka Charles**; **Joseph Okorie**; **Benjamin Anyasodo**; **Isaac Steve**; **Godiya Haruna**; **Josphin Okereke**; **Sylvia Nwadiuto**; **Namda Augustine**; **Love Joel**; **Musa Hamman**; **Nibboso Nicholas**; **Moses Kenso**. Many others of our visitors are studying baptism lessons now. There is the need to keep the members who have known the Truth, through your visit to the Ecclesia at least once a year.

Since the distance is much, this could be done by your sending in the needed materials, as we received from a generous Sister and others, for the increasing membership such as Bibles, Berean Christadelphian hymn books, cassettes and discs (audio and video) containing lectures on some controversial topics and mode

of worship, film projectors and we hope one day for a vehicle for outreach on the ecclesia planting in the areas that are calling for its establishment, mainly in the remotest part of the state. We currently get by with public transportation as far as it reaches. For now the Ecclesia has acquired a keyboard, public address system and a generator set to supplement our epileptic power supply.

Our address is as follows:

Owerri Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia,
c/o Sylvester Ebere, 191 Tetlow Road, Owerri, Nigeria

Love to all in the Truth,
Bro. Sylvester Ebere

January 8, 2007

Dear Brethren and Sisters;

The Key to Bible Truth program of preaching & teaching the Truth continues to go forward. Those who have received and responded to the KEY Lessons number in the hundreds. The KEY Committee has made every effort to ensure that we have a teaching medium that is interesting, easy to understand, and doctrinally sound. The purpose of the program is to guide a student to the knowledge of God's purpose, a position of responsibility to judgment, and a desire to act upon that knowledge and be baptized into the saving name of Christ, embarking upon a new life of service to our Creator.

Yahweh appears to have blessed this effort with a measurable level of success. It has been exciting to witness the response of several students who have already completed the lessons and followed through with baptism.

The process continues. More students have completed the lessons and requests for baptism are coming in. In America, these requests are being responded to by the nearest ecclesias.

Responding to requests for baptism from more remote areas is more difficult.

When an individual makes a request for baptism it is reasonable to assume that the individual may have acquired enough knowledge to be responsible to judgment. It is paramount, therefore, that that determination be made quickly, and the level of knowledge and understanding confirmed without delay. For this purpose an examination form is sent to the applicant containing the list of baptismal interview questions. The applicant is requested to write the correct answer to each question on a separate sheet of paper and return it to an individual or a panel preselected by the KEY Committee for marking and follow-up.

In early 2006, we were blessed with a request for baptism from a student named Sylvester Ebere located in a remote area of Nigeria. The answers he provided to the baptismal examination form was impressive and complete, requiring only one or two points of clarification. The clarification was accomplished by means of a phone call, and after extensive consultation among committee members, he was advised that he should be baptized for the remission of his sins, and that his complete burial in water should be witnessed and confirmed by one or two friends.

Since that time, Bro. Sylvester has been busy. He has introduced the Truth to hundreds and has brought 29 people to a complete knowledge of the Truth and acceptance of it through baptism. He informs us that he has read the Ecclesial Guide many times and uses the same baptismal questions for his applicants that we used for him. He has requested that a visit from here be made to the new Nigeria ecclesia.

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endured evil things *“FOR THE JOY set before him.”* Jesus commands us to *“make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when we fail they may receive us into everlasting habitations.”* Thereby we shall be *“laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come.”*

So we see that by manifesting liberality we are not only doing that which we ought to do, but laying the foundation for temporal and eternal blessings; whereas if we neglect the Divine counsel referred to herein what miserable creatures we are and shall be, for it is a Divine axiom that *“he becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand.”*

Before closing this letter, let me point out that these principles also hold good with ecclesial matters. Unless we sow bountifully it is very certain we shall not reap bountifully. For practical illustration: imagine an ecclesia which has decided to make “a special effort.” Now then: let that ecclesia manifest a parsimonious disposition—hire a hall in a back street—do with as few large bills as possible—engage the lowest-priced billposter—let the handbills be printed on the commonest paper—leave the distribution thereof to the children—advertise in the cheapest papers—apparently trifling duties, hope that others will attend to, or persuade yourselves that they will. And as to the lecturers, if they come from a distance, make them earn their railway fare—rake up all your ecclesial difficulties, especially personal ones, and thoroughly ply them with them, and if their judgment is different to your own, badger them with arguments until they see eye to eye with you, or you think they do. Keep them discussing during meal times, invite the crochety brethren to spend the afternoon with them, prolong the tea and suddenly startle them with the information that “there is no time for a wash and brush up, for it is ten minutes to lecture time and the hall is fully twenty minutes off.” Only an unreasonable ecclesia could expect that its special effort would turn out a success, whereas the ecclesia that deviseth liberal things, remembering it is God's work, will do its very best instead of seeing how little they can manage the effort for. It will strain every nerve to see how much it can righteously collect for the work. If it does realise that *proclaiming the truth is God's work* it will do it munificently; and if it remembers that the lecturing brother is its mouthpiece, and that out of the abundance of his heart he speaks, it will not cram his heart with polemical problems, but give him sufficient leisure between the meetings to refresh himself with rest, meditation, and prayer. By no means go to the other extreme by treating him as a god, but let all intercourse be of a pleasant and non-distracting character.

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To be practical—I have in mind one who, for years, passed as a rich and liberal brother, apparently ready to every good work, and willing to finance many a special effort, when, all the while, as his bankruptcy examination revealed, he had not a penny that could righteously be called his own. The suggestion: “Perhaps the brother was not conscious of the true state of affairs,” is met by the reply that a man ought not to (and scarcely could) owe many times more than what he possessed, and at the same time be ignorant of the fact. True obedience will prevent a man getting into such a muddle, and God requires obedience before sacrifice. Such cases as the one mentioned cause the enemy to reproach and the truth to be evilly spoken of. They need not, however, dishearten us; for thanks be to God, they are not frequent, and the proportion has not been greater than one Judas among “the twelve.” Don’t conclude that it will be better to say nothing about these sad incidents, for it is far better to treat openly with them, and accomplish the dual good of warning others and letting the world know how strongly the brotherhood disapproves of such conduct, than to pass over and thus tacitly wink thereat.

To stay now to deal with liberality between masters and servants, or buyers and sellers, would make this letter too long, but under those headings we shall, later on, have something to say on the subject.

Liberality should pervade all our commercial transactions. A “give and take” principle should permeate all our business affairs. Successful results will assuredly result there from. *“Good measure, pressed down and shaken together.” “Give and it shall be given you.” “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed.” “The liberal soul shall be made fat.” “The liberal deviseth liberal things and by liberal things shall he stand.” “He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.”* These, undoubtedly, have a future application, but the person who exclusively so applies them reaps only a portion of their comfort. Pray don’t say that is a mercenary way of viewing such texts, for if mercenary to apply them to the present, it must be to apply them to the future. Oh! yes; they have a present application as well as a future, for *“godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that NOW IS and of that which is to come.”* The idea held by some that “virtue is its own reward” is worse than a lie, being only half a truth. God asks no man to work for nought, and although when we have done all we are only unprofitable servants, yet He will amply repay us, for “he that giveth to the poor *lendeth to the Lord.*” Our Heavenly Father wants us to keep that truth in mind; He was pleased with His only begotten son, for the latter did always those things that pleased his Father, and yet of him it is written, he

Partly for the purpose of responding to this request, and partly for the purpose of confirming, on behalf of the brotherhood, that doctrinal integrity is in good hands in that part of the world, we have consulted with brother Epaphras Wekati who has agreed to pay a visit to the new Nigeria ecclesia in late January or early February 2007. After he returns, we will provide an update to this report.

On behalf the KEY Committee,
Your brother in grace, Ed Truelove

Berean Christadelphian Ecclesias - Corrections

LAS CRUCES, NM, Bro. Michael Morrell, 200 Cervantes Village E15A 88001
WEST WALES, UK Bro. Andrew Ford, Caerwen, Broad Oak, Carmarthenshire, Wales, SA32-8QJ

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

NORTH CAROLINA–VIRGINIA STUDY WEEKEND.....May 25–27, 2007
Bro. Dale Lee, 1-757-547-5816, dleecpa2@mindspring.com.

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 8–10, 2007
Bro. Jerry Connolly, 12609 Dessau #404, Austin, TX 78754 USA 1-512-251-5101

RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERINGJune 29 – July 2, 2007
Bro. Terry Readman, RR# 1, N. Battleford, Sask, S9A 2X3, Canada

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... July 23–29, 2007
Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1, Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868
Study Class Topic: 2Thess. and Titus; Bible Readings; Discuss. Zech. 8-12

NORTHEAST FRATERNAL GATHERING - DETROIT.....Oct 5–7, 2007
Bro. Fred Higham, 1-586-790-2156, fhigham@gmail.com

But Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?

“Wisdom is the principal thing, Get Wisdom”—Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is something we do not naturally possess - something we must have for salvation. Something we can never naturally possess. Wisdom is divine education, spiritual training, the learning, absorbing and practicing of eternal truth. It is a full-time occupation, a life-time job.

Wisdom is spiritual-mindedness. In his beautiful discourse on divine wisdom at the beginning of 1st Corinthians, Paul says—*“The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”* Wisdom is knowing and doing that which is for the best—living in harmony with eternal facts. The Bible says all others are fools.

Wisdom is wanting to stand right out in the bright light of the Spirit's revelation and thoroughly examine ourselves—within and without—by it;

then striving to eliminate all that is out of harmony with God, and develop what pleases Him.

Wisdom is the examining of every act and activity and asking, “has this any eternal value? Does it help in the way of life? Could I be doing something more profitable, more spiritually beneficial, more pleasing to God? Something more mature, less juvenile?”

The Scriptures continually contrast wisdom with folly, saying that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. There are many Scriptural words translated “fool” and “folly,” indicating different aspects of foolishness. The original meanings are; perverse, willful, boaster, self-confident, empty, senseless, thoughtless, unwise, witless, dull.

The Scriptures apply all these terms to those who do not have the wisdom to walk in the narrow way that leads to life—the spiritually enlightened way of wisdom—those who do not strive to bring every thought into captivity to Christ.

The principle word for “fool” in the Old Testament is KESEEL—self-confident, relying on self. Self-confidence, self-dependent, self-reliance, relying upon and being guided and motivated by natural thinking—considered maturity and wisdom by the world—is really the mark of the fool. The Scripture says: “*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool*” (Proverbs 28:26)

* * *

The Scriptures make it clear that naturally we have no wisdom. Our natural condition is folly and ignorance, regardless of how well educated in worldly knowledge. We may have a mechanical, animal cleverness, but never wisdom, for the Scriptures speak of all worldly knowledge as foolishness. The Scriptures measure wisdom and folly by the final result achieved. There is no other reasonable standard. By this standard only one thing is wisdom, and that is godliness, for all else—regardless of how clever or prosperous or spectacular in achievement—leads only to the devouring worms of the grave at last. Where is Aristotle? Where is Da Vinci? Where is Newton? Where is Einstein? They had tremendous animal mental power, far beyond normal - but no wisdom. They are wormy dust.

Only one path leads to life. All other activities lead to death. Therefore it alone is wisdom. And anything in life that does not contribute to this one purpose is folly—stupidity—idiocy: no word is too strong, the issues are so great! It will help us a lot if we will honestly give our every action its proper label. Classification is the beginning of Order. Face the facts. Face the Light. We may still DO it, but let us at least, frankly, face the facts and label

not make a “good account” in His eyes. He requires us to “use it,” and what that means ought to be patent to all. The field for such work is boundless, and the ravishing nature thereof is well set forth in those words, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” A kind of foretaste of what glorious work will be ours by-and-bye. But such will not be our lot *then*, unless we practice it *now*. The Divine maxim, “*He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand,*” has both a present and prospective application. Such an one will assuredly be poor now in more senses than one, and remain poor at Christ’s coming.

Of course these remarks are not applicable in any large degree to those “without means,” although there is a sense in which they do apply even to such. But God does not expect more than a man hath, and our liberality must be governed by that fact. Now and again we meet with some who are anxious to have “Special Efforts,” but with other people’s money; who are wishful to start in business, but with other people’s money; who are craving to launch a patent, but with other people’s money; who are desirous of granting a pension to some unsuccessful individual, but with other people’s money. This is not Bible liberality at all. The world is full of Samaritans who want others to provide the oil and furnish the twopences.

It is not within the province of this letter to deal with poverty—that later on—but in passing I would point out, that while careful that our liberality is not “played upon,” we must not be *over* careful, for “if we are never to do an act of kindness till we are perfectly sure that it will not be abused, and that it will really and fully accomplish the purpose we intend by it, we shall never perform any such act at all.”

The subject of insolvency will also need separate treatment, but this letter would not be practical enough did it omit reference to the liberality of insolvent people. God requires us, and will have us, to be liberal to the extent “He has prospered us.” Nothing beyond. If prosperity does not follow our commercial undertakings, then not only will “laying by” be wrong, but “giving away” will be criminal. What right has a brother, or a sister, who owes more than he or she has the means to pay, to give to others? No right whatever. The man who contributes to the collection box, or subscribes to a special effort, or gives to the poor, or lends to his neighbour, when at the same time he cannot liquidate his debts, is using what does not belong to him, and getting the undeserved reputation of being liberal—*with other people’s property.*

quoted. He says (because of the unseemly cries, “I am of Paul,” “I of Apollos,” “I of Cephas,” “I of Christ”)—he says, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised into the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptised none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; *lest any should say that I had baptised in my own name.* And I baptised also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptised any other. For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel.” Looking back, we seem to see in this a suggestion of the reason why “Jesus baptised not” before he was crucified. But the point now is that Paul also makes light of the personal agency in the work; the very opposite of priest craft. And coming down from ancient to modern times, Dr. Thomas himself was once situated in a precisely similar position to that in which friend P. now finds himself. After many years of controversy, he discovered that he understood the gospel but had not been baptised into Christ. What was to be done? A believer of the apostolic type was not to be found. What was done shall be briefly told from the book, *Dr. Thomas, His Life and Work*, page 204.

The Doctor asked a friend to accompany him to the water, and there addressed him in the following terms: “I desire you to immerse me. All I ask of you is to put me under the water, and pronounce the words over me, ‘Upon confession of your faith in the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, I baptize you into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.’ I do not ask you for any prayer or any ceremony. All that is necessary I will do for myself, except the mechanical part of putting me under the water, and your utterance of these words.” With this understanding the Doctor’s friend immersed him. The Doctor did not ask for re-immersion on the supposition that the administrator could add anything to its efficacy.

What can we say to friend P. more than, Go thou and do likewise, and may the God of Israel, who sent Philip to the eunuch (Acts 8.), send thee a man to “help.”

The Christadelphian—1904

The Liberals

How highly does God esteem a liberal man! The “fast” which He delights in is that which prompts to “deal one’s bread to the hungry.” God “gives to all men liberally,” and He wants His children to exhibit the same characteristic. “*Do good to all men*” is a command not yet abrogated, and if we possess the means to manifest this goodness by substantially helping others, we may depend upon it. It is a talent entrusted to us which we shall be called upon to account for, and all the taking care of it in the world will

it clearly as wisdom or folly, according to whether it contributes to godliness or not.

We shall find, if we are honest, that much of our activity we will have to call folly. If we have any depth of sincerity toward God, things will soon lose their appeal if we frankly recognize them as time and life-wasting folly. We are told that “The righteous shall scarcely be saved” (1 Pet 4:18). If this be so, it is surely folly indeed to spend any time and effort on anything that does not contribute to the attainment of salvation.

* * *

It is of utmost importance—yea, it is absolutely vital—that we perceive the clear distinction between true wisdom—the wisdom of God—and every aspect of that which the world considers wisdom. They are not only different, they are completely incompatible—diametric opposites, like light and darkness. They ARE Light and Darkness. All throughout Scripture, the thoughts of natural man are described as false, foolish, vain: “*It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps aright*” (Jer 10:23). And “*directing the steps aright*” is the very essence of wisdom.

The present world, the present generation of man, for all its cleverness, and ingenuity, and education and self-glorification—for all its computers, earth-orbits, moon shots, and space probes—is no closer to true wisdom, but rather further from it; for all these things—all these accomplishments—are detriments to the acquirement of true spiritual wisdom which must begin with a true estimation of man's natural ignorance and folly. Jesus said—“*I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, for so it seemed good in Thy sight*” (Matt. 11:25).

This is a divine principle of action that is vitally important to recognize—Wisdom is given by God only to those who fully realize the foolishness and emptiness of all natural man's thoughts, INCLUDING THEIR OWN, and who seek His guidance in love and faith and trust.

In the first 3 chapters of 1st Corinthians. Paul gives the divine estimation of all human thinking and natural attainment, and fully exposes its utter folly and emptiness. He completely clears the ground of all human fabrications and conceptions—“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. “*Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. The wisdom of this world comes to naught. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*”

And he finally sums it up decisively and conclusively, dismissing all human learning as a stumbling-block in the way of life—“*Let no man*

deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, LET HIM BECOME A FOOL, that he may be wise.” Let him put it all behind him as empty human folly, as Paul did all his human learning—CAST IT OFF as a useless hurtful thing—”For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

* * *

Let us, then, consider what the Scriptures say about wisdom. In the Old Testament, the word occurs about 100 times. It occurs 8 times in connection with those who helped build the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, then 26 times in the record concerning Solomon, 100 times in Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and a few times in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel—the 4 major prophets.

It occurs first in Exod. 28:3—”*Thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him.*”

In Exod. 35:26, they are spoken of as those—”*Whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom.*”

Here is illustrated that combination of God and man working together that is the key to salvation. Frequently we are told that wisdom must be hunted for as treasure, cried after, diligently sought and striven after, through study and meditation upon the Word of God.

* * *

TWO-THIRDS of all the occurrences of this word wisdom are in the life or writings of Solomon. Here was a man with every possible advantage, and he started out so well, and so wisely. God gave him wisdom beyond any before or since, save Jesus himself. And yet the record is that when he was old, his alien, worldly wives turned away his heart from God. For all his wisdom, he was led into folly, even though he writes so clearly and forcefully in Ecclesiastes of the utter vanity of the present, and the wisdom of serving God. It is very sad, very instructive.

We may ask, what is the value of wisdom if the man who had the most was a failure? Solomon's failure does not detract anything from the value of wisdom. What it does teach is the tremendous power of the flesh, that it could cause such a capable, well-blessed man to turn aside from wisdom. Perhaps Solomon's incomparable blessings caused his heart to be lifted up in pride, and pride is but a very small step to stupidity. Pride so easily blinds wisdom's eyes, and leads it helplessly captive. The proud are ready dupes for the most foolish and blatant deceptions.

God is just in all His ways. Where much is given, much is expected. “*We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom.*” Solomon's wisdom

who by loud and insistent criticism turn many away from his peerless expositions.

If what we deem to be error calls for notice, let us take it in hand, meekly and humbly, just as we should deal with a parent's fault.

The fruit of the doctor's teaching is to be seen in hundreds of ecclesias and in thousands of brethren rejoicing in the teaching of the Gospel.

What can the doctor's critics show as the result of their efforts? Time spent in handing on brother Thomas' instruction will make both ourselves and others wise unto salvation.

Those who occupy themselves thus are not likely to devote much time and energy to our Brother's shortcomings.”

Bro. Robert Roberts

Baptism And Isolation

Friend E. P. writes from India: “I occupy myself with reading almost the whole day. It is the Bible, Christadelphian books, or Josephus. I have lost relish for all other kinds of reading. . . . But, sir, my mind is troubled about baptism. What can I do? Without being baptised, after knowledge and belief of the truth concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, would I be found abiding in Him at His coming? This thought is very distressing to me, and I would be so thankful if you would kindly notice my case in the ‘Answers to Correspondents,’ if you cannot write.”

ANSWER.—”As many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Such is the apostolic word which our friend unhesitatingly accepts. He believes “the gospel of the kingdom of God,” and understands the nature of the “one baptism.” The only question therefore is, who is to baptise? As to this, the answer is that it does not matter much who. Anyone can bury a dead man. The great thing to be sure about concerning the man to be buried is that he is really dead. But this is dealing in figures (Rom. 6.). Literally the effect of baptism in “washing away the sins” of the person baptised, does not depend upon the administrator, but upon the state of mind of the subject, and the consequent state of mind of the Father in heaven with reference to him. It is true that Jesus was baptised by a special “prophet of the Highest”; but there were special reasons for that. It is said that Jesus “baptised more disciples than John” (John 4:1). Yet it is immediately explained that “Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples.” Thus the validity of the ordinance was not considered to depend upon the personality of the administrator even in so exalted an instance. Again, Paul makes a remark in 1 Cor. 1:14–17, that throws light upon the passage just

Lincoln church was in fellowship with all the 'reformation churches' in Britain. Its elder was unexceptionable in standing and character; had been one of their 'evangelists,' having surrendered for the purpose an endowment among the Baptists, but had been superseded by the management of Mr. Wallis.

Here Bro. Thomas acknowledges that he is in fellowship with the Campbellites in Lincoln, but he questioned whether or not Deity would consider him and Lincoln Church of Christ both of the one body. This really explains his fellowship position at the time. He could be in fellowship recognized by men, while he knew that fellowship was not possibly recognized by God.

Also, note his conclusion. He says that he is in fellowship with Lincoln, and Lincoln is in fellowship with all the Churches of the reformation. There is an important observation in all this. Even at this point, Bro. Thomas recognized that to be in fellowship with an organization of brethren meant that you were in fellowship with all those in that organization. This principle of fellowship is well acknowledged in the writings of Bro. Thomas, and in those of his enemies in those days. Bro. Thomas didn't question whether or not he broke bread with those who he said believed a "damnable heresy." He knew he did. He just didn't feel that he had any responsibility to do anything about it, or that he incurred any responsibility for it, at this time. As we shall show, this attitude will change greatly.

This is a very important point when examining his teachings at this time. Bro. Thomas did not deny that he was in close association with error. He recognized that in maintaining his relationship with brethren, like those in Lincoln, whose very baptism he openly questioned, he in fact was in fellowship with them. Where can this concept come from, but 2 John 11? He had no question as to the principle of fellowship, and how it was extended among brethren. He just refused to believe that he had any responsibility in being in fellowship with these men. *(to be continued)*

Bro. Jim Phillips

[Next month, God willing, we shall include "Bro. Roberts Sets the Matter Clear"]

Dr. Thomas' Mistakes?

As Paul begat Onesimus, so Brother Thomas, either directly or remotely, has spiritually begotten us.

His writings are as powerful to instruct us today as when Elpis Israel first appeared.

But what about Dr. Thomas' mistakes? These are not so likely to hinder anyone's obedience to the Truth as is the discouragement caused by those

served a divine purpose. He was used to record essential teachings, and to manifest a striking lesson, but it did not give him an unfair advantage. His testing was in accord with his privileges, and he failed, because he forsook the way of wisdom. We can never take salvation for granted. It is a matter of all-out effort, and fear and trembling.

Solomon's case is a marvelous illustration of the direct operation of God upon a man, combined with the wonder of responsible individual free-will. God's special gifts for certain purposes never affect or interfere with the individual working out of their salvation. This is a marvel we cannot understand, but must accept as essential to the justice of God.

* * *

The first Scriptural discussion on wisdom is in Job 28. Here is described in beautiful language the tremendous efforts men will put forth to extract the hidden treasures of the earth. No labor is too great, no danger too terrifying—man will seek treasures and fame with lifelong dedication—

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

After all this it enquires —"*But where shall wisdom be found? . . . "Man knoweth not the price thereof: Neither is it found in the land of the living." "The depth saith, it is not in me. The sea saith, It is not in me. "It cannot be gotten for gold. It is greater than all treasures. WHENCE THEN COMETH WISDOM? God understandeth the way thereof, and unto man He saith—BEHOLD THE FEAR OF THE LORD, THAT IS WISDOM, AND TO DEPART FROM EVIL IS UNDERSTANDING."*

* * *

IN THE well-known 90th Psalm, which is attributed to Moses, occurs this prayer—"*We spend our years as a tale that is told. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." This is the whole secret of life. So often these words are repeated on occasions of sorrow or loss, but how little we truly heed them!"*

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, and it shall be given him" - James 1:5.

We come now to the Proverbs, the heart of the subject. The Book begins —"*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel. To know wisdom and instruction: to perceive the words of understanding: To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice and judgment."*

The purpose of the Book is to impress us with the importance of wisdom; to teach us the emptiness and foolishness of our natural minds; to try and awaken us to the urgency of our need to search tearfully for wisdom—"To

be fleshly-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is LIFE and peace” Rom. 8:6. And only by the constant absorption of divine wisdom do we ever become or stay “*spiritually-minded.*”

The present is so real, and presses so closely upon us, that all things tend to encourage and feed the mind of the flesh. Attaining divine wisdom is slow and uphill and laborious for our mortal minds, and most of us are very lazy mentally. But only those who struggle all the night, and overcome, will gain the prize.

* * *

V.7: “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*” A recognition of the reality and authority of God is the very beginning of all true learning. The Scriptures say that anyone who does not recognize the reality of God, and make Him the center of all their thinking, is a FOOL. This is basic - there is no use sugar-coating it; no use going any further until this is learned.

Wisdom does not hide from man. Her advertisements are everywhere in creation around us, V 20—“*Wisdom crieth without. She uttereth her voice in the streets. She crieth in the chief place of concourse. . .*” The Scriptures tell us that God’s wisdom and power and divinity cry out continually in all the beauty and order of creation, and that any who cannot see His hand in it all are blind fools. And this testimony is true. The recognition of God is the very beginning of the opening of the eyes to Light. All wisdom, all true knowledge and understanding, must start there. Proverbs 1:22 continues Wisdom’s urgent plea—“*How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge?*”

Let us take what instruction is due us from these words. WE DO NOT STAND ABOVE AND BEYOND THEM. We ALL fall far short in our appreciation of, and search for, divine wisdom. We drift along from day to day, largely taking salvation for granted. These strong words of exhortation are to rouse us from such fatal self-deception. We are at school, with much to master, the time is short, and the judgment seat will determine with terrible finality, whether we have passed or failed. There will be much bitter weeping and gnashing of teeth then, for wasted time and lost opportunity, but it will be too late. Many parents who have berated their children for failing to study will find they themselves have failed far more grievously.

* * *

CHAPTER 2 emphasizes this theme that the attainment of the knowledge of God that alone is life eternal, is a matter of prolonged and intense yearning. We must go forth every day consciously determined to use every effort and opportunity TO KNOW MORE AND MORE OF GOD—of the deep things of His revelation and manifestation.

The first thing to note is that no Christadelphian body today, practices this belief as set forth by Bro. Thomas. No ecclesia in any fellowship, that we are aware of, will freely fellowship any Church of Christ, Baptist, or Reformer of any stripe who shows up Sunday morning. No Christadelphian, that we are aware of, will attend a local Church of Christ, Baptist, or other reformer meetings, till they are disfellowshipped by them. So the thing that must be clear is that no Christadelphian group truly identifies with these early teachings of Bro. Thomas.

The second point is found if we briefly consider Bro. Thomas’ comments about a convention in Glasgow in 1948 that he attended on behalf of the Church of Christ at Lincoln even after he had been disfellowshipped by the Campbellites. Bro. Thomas had understood that he was going to be singled out for condemnation by this assembly. He was therefore anxious to go to defend his name and his teaching against these attacks. The Campbellite meeting in Lincoln, England, then appointed him as their designate to this conference. Here is Bro. Thomas’ account of this event:

Bro. Thomas’ writings as recorded in “Life and Works of Dr. Thomas. “When the church at Lincoln was called, we presented its letter, which was received. The presentation of letters being over for the night, they were read in the same order. The Lincoln letter was also read, when a delegate and ‘evangelist’ arose, and moved that Dr. Thomas be refused a seat among them. This was cordially seconded by another. The motion was based upon the allegation that we were not a member of any reformation church in Britain. This objection was pre-eminently sectarian. One would have expected that a convention of ‘apostolic or primitive Christians’ would have taken higher ground than this, and have objected to us on the plea that we were not a member of Christ’s body mystical. Without examining the legality of the baptism of the Lincoln church, they had become of the same faith with us, and therefore, as stated in their letter, we were in fellowship with them in this matter: whether we and the church were recognized by the Invisible as joint members of the; ‘one body,’ is quite another question: for all conventional purposes we were members of their society, and recognised as such officially by their elder. We objected to their motion that our membership with the believers at Lincoln was no affair of theirs. This was an item they could not consider, having no jurisdiction in the case. It belonged exclusively to them at Lincoln. The real question before them was whether the church there was to be recognised as ‘a reformation church,’ or not; if they acknowledged it, and they had done so by officially inscribing it upon their list of churches, then no delegate of a sister church, be he ‘evangelist’ or layman, nor a plurality of delegates, had any right to say that they should not be represented there. The

our own part we pass not sentence, whatever we may think the party may deserve, “until the Lord come.” We show what the truth is, where it condemns and justifies, and leave the application to particular cases to the individuals themselves. We are not lords over men’s consciences; when these become sufficiently enlightened they will not rest until they do the truth, and then all will work well. That we do not “refuse” those who are immersed on Campbellite and Baptist principles, is manifest from the fact that the churches we visit are principally composed of such. We desire to enlighten and save them, not to anathematize and proscribe them, while at the same time we testify that no immersion is worth a stiver which is not predicated on faith in the things of the kingdom and the name of Jesus.” [End Quote: Our Underlining]

Note the following points from Bro. Thomas' pen in 1848-1851.

1). Bro. Thomas was asked directly by the Campbellite leaders whether or not he refused to fellowship Campbellites. He answered that he did not refuse them, neither did he refuse Baptists or other reformers. He felt that fellowship belonged to God, and he had no authority to include or exclude.

2) Bro. Thomas says he was not appointed by God to judge whether or not he could exclude Campbellite, Baptists, and other Reformers.

3). Bro. Thomas taught that he does not regard breaking of bread at the same table to be a test of fellowship.

4). Bro. Thomas affirmed that the meetings he visited (and the subject was refusing fellowship) are principally made up of Reformers, Baptists, and Campbellites, and he believed that it was not his position to exclude any of them.

5). Bro. Thomas affirms that he breaks bread and meets with individuals, to whom he testified that their immersion was not worth a stiver.

6). And finally, Bro. Thomas said that it was his intention to behave this way “until the Lord come.”

There is more that we could quote to show that Bro. Thomas had no problem in associating for breaking of bread with most any man who showed up at the same church as he did, in 1848, but this should suffice to show Bro. Thomas' mind at that time. In some of his writings, he affirms he breaks bread with congregations where 100% of the individuals believe in the immortality of the soul. (This doctrine was particularly singled out by the Campbellites for their attacks on Bro. Thomas, since he had called the doctrine “a damnable heresy” in “*Confessions and Abjurations.*”) Clearly, Bro. Thomas, in 1848, did not believe that his salvation was at all effected by those who he broke bread with.

We can never be content with shallowness; yea, we can never be content AT ALL. We must have a sense of pressing urgency—of knowing so little—of having so much to learn—so much to develop—so little time to spare. “*Great peace have they that love Thy law, and NOTHING shall offend them*” Psalm 119. Is not this an infinite desirable condition? Have we “*great peace?*” It comes only to those whose roots are deep in the knowledge of God. If we do not have peace, that is a danger sign. Solomon says here — “My son, IF thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding . . . “*If thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures , “THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. “For the Lord giveth wisdom*” Proverbs 2:1-6.

James says (1:5)—“*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . .and it SHALL be given him.*” But he warns (v.6-8) — “*But let him ask in faith . . . “A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways . . .”Let not that man think that he shall receive anything.*” It must be in pure singleness of heart. All other interests must be put away. “*If thine eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light.*”

* * *

Proverbs 10 speaks of—“*When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul.*” The way of life is not an arbitrary or mechanical set of rules. It is a glorious, personal, joyful, exciting relationship with the Father, the eternal Fountainhead of all glory, joy and love.

Beauty is that which is pleasant to the senses, and it is the opening up to our understanding of the beauty of holiness that makes knowledge pleasant to our soul. Who can desire the ugliness of the flesh when their eyes have been opened to the beauty of holiness? The flesh is ugly, terribly ugly; ugly in its self-centered and self-destructive stupidity. All its reactions are ugly, in ourselves and in others, and the more clearly we can see its ugliness, by comparing it with the beauty of holiness, the more we shall seek to overcome it.

* * *

Proverbs 3 gives further instruction in the way of wisdom (vs 5-6)—“*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.*” Here is a wonderful promise - “*In ALL thy ways acknowledge Him, and He SHALL direct thy paths.*” God will not “direct our paths” unless we on our part “*acknowledge Him in ALL our ways.*” There can be no holding back. Continually uppermost in the mind at all times must be the remembrance of God and a desire to please Him, which is stronger than any

other desire. If we do not have this, let us stick with it and think it through until we clearly see there is no other sensible or satisfactory way to live.

God said to Israel, and it applies to all—*“Be not as the horse or mule, which have no understanding.”* Most people live like the horse and the mule. They never do any real thinking. They live by custom, and desire, and habit, and emotion, and self-gratification. God's people must be different.

* * *

The end of Proverbs 3 gives two aspects of an important divine principle—just to whom God gives wisdom - v.32— *“His secret is with the RIGHTEOUS.”* v.34—*“He giveth grace unto the LOWLY.”*

Life-giving wisdom is a precious gift of God to those alone who seek to please Him and conform to His desires. The way of wisdom is defined in the words of Paul to the Philippians: *“Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule.”* If we truly seek divine wisdom, we must honestly and consistently walk according to what we already understand, and put away what we know to be out of harmony with divine perfection. Otherwise we mock God by asking for more guidance.

* * *

Proverbs 8 is a beautiful exhortation by Wisdom herself, personified as the ever-present hand-maiden of God in all His works. It would well repay daily reading and meditation. She freely offers to men ALL peace, ALL happiness, ALL well-being, ALL joy. She crieth everywhere, seeking men's attention, seeking to turn them from death to life, and from sorrow to joy, from natural poverty to true spiritual wealth. Why must wisdom and life cry in vain, while all the world flocks after folly and emptiness and death?

What a sad commentary on mankind! Are we so foolish as to join in these meaningless, juvenile pursuits of entertainment, pleasures, acquiring of wealth, and constant childish time-wasting play - rushing headlong to the eternal oblivion of the grave? Let us be men in understanding, and recognize the true divine, eternal values of life.

* * *

Wisdom says in this 8th chapter—Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold. *“For Wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.”* *“By me kings reign: I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.”* Here is an intimation that many leave the search for wisdom until too late. God is not mocked. When He decides we have had ample opportunity, He often closes the door and sends strong delusion. We never know when the door will suddenly be closed.

Churches were closed to him, Bro. Thomas went to a Church of Christ convention in Glasgow, as a representative of the Lincoln Church of Christ in England, as their representative, and he now claimed to be in fellowship with them.

This situation in England caused the Campbellites to accuse Bro. Thomas of a falsehood. They reasoned that he in fact had disfellowshipped the Campbellites with *“Confessions and Abjurations”* and was deceitfully seeking a building to preach his new gospel in, in order to divide them. Bro. Thomas later defended this fellowship action of 1848, in his magazine of 1851.

Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, 1851, pg. 82: We do not remember if Mr. Black invited us to speak at his place. A few days after, however, we received a note from Mr. King, dated July 6, 1948, requesting us to meet him at Mr. Black's the next day at half-past three; and stating that “in the event of our not being able to do so, he would thank us to send him a line appointing time and place, as they deemed some conversation requisite before the next First Day.” We accordingly went at the time appointed, and had an interview with Messrs. Black and King, and a third person whose name we forget. The object they had in view in inviting us to this conference, as stated by Mr. King in a letter to the Gospel Banner, was to inquire “whether we, when in the States, refused to fellowship those christians who had not been baptized while possessing those opinions which we held.” He meant by this to inquire whether we refused to fellowship those professors called Campbellites, who when they were immersed were ignorant or faithless of the Hope of Israel or Kingdom of God as expounded by us. To this inquiry we answered, that we did not refuse; which is well known by everyone to be the fact. We do not feel that we are called upon to do more than testify to and for the truth. We have not been appointed a judge in these matters by God or men; therefore whatever we may think of the christianity of persons called Reformers and Baptists, we feel at liberty only to show them the position they occupy in relation to the truth, and neither to refuse nor admit them into the fellowship of God. This is beyond our jurisdiction. We believe that God has admitted us into this fellowship through faith in the gospel of the kingdom in the name of Jesus. Having obeyed this gospel by immersion into the name of the Holy Ones, and continuing to walk in the truth, we have “fellowship with the Father and his son Jesus Christ,” and the apostles of the Lord. If others do this, then “we have fellowship one with another,” not else. We do not regard the breaking of bread at the same table as a test of fellowship, but the walking in the light as God is in the light.” We leave others, such as Messrs. Campbell , Wallis, and King, to cast men out of fellowship; for

The first two quotes by Bro. Thomas, are related to his “non-fellowshipping” of the reformists in 1847. Bro. Thomas was baptized for the final time in 1847, immediately upon the writings of “*Confessions and Abjurations*.” Following this, he travelled to Britain in 1848 to lecture there on the truth which he had uncovered from the darkness that make up the world’s religions. Bro. Thomas’ views on fellowship at this time, were such that he continued to fellowship with the Church of Christ (sometimes called Campbellites, or the Disciples.) In the United States, he regularly fellowshipped men who embraced all the traditional Christian beliefs. He did not believe he had the authority to exclude any man from fellowship, whether Trinitarian, or immortal soulist. He was also very interested to continue to remain associated with these congregations, in an effort to preach the gospel to them.

He had upset many of the ruling class among the Campbellites, with “*Confessions and Abjurations*.” He squarely attacked the new clergy being set up by them. These men seized on “*Confessions and Abjurations*” to reason that Bro. Thomas had disfellowshipped the Campbellites, and therefore, that the Campbellites should not make their Churches available to Bro. Thomas. But many of the common members of the Campbellites were anxious to hear him.

When he arrived in England in 1848, he was interviewed by David King, who directly asked him if he had disfellowshipped the Disciples in the U.S., or if any had disfellowshipped him. He answered that he had not, which was Bro. Thomas’ perception of the case. He hadn’t disfellowshipped them. He had “non-fellowshipped” them, though apparently he wasn’t real clear on this point to David King.

This doctrine of “non-fellowship” states that fellowship is between God, Christ and an individual. The individual has no authority to include or exclude individuals in fellowship. If the individual next to us at Memorial meeting is in fellowship with Christ, then we are in fellowship with him. If not, then we are not. We can exercise no control. Therefore, who we break bread with, and what meeting we attend has no effect on fellowship. This is the teaching, as we shall see, Bro. Thomas himself goes away from, but is the one our Nicodemite brethren cling to, in various forms.

Following his meeting with David King, Bro. Thomas then lectured in a few Campbellite halls, till some of the new developing clergy men of Campbellism advanced the copies of “*Confessions and Abjurations*” to argue that this document “proved” that he had disfellowshipped the Campbellites, and that Bro. Thomas was only lecturing with the purpose of dividing the Campbellite Churches. This led, ultimately, to his being disfellowshipped by the Church of Christ. But even after the Campbellite

Wisdom continues—“*I cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasure . . .*” “*Substance*” here is surely a well-chosen word. “*Substance*” implies permanence, solidity, reality, durability. Substance is what we want—not the vapor and froth and bubble of the passing world . . .

“*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.*” Here, perhaps, is wisdom’s greatest characteristic. It is eternal. It is divine. In the great scope of infinity, folly is but for a fleeting moment, but wisdom gives life for ever and ever and ever.

* * *

In every Scriptural subject we are finally led to the same point. All points forward and finds its fulfillment in one man—the only REAL man—the only COMPLETE man that ever lived—the embodiment and perfect fulfillment of the divine wisdom of the ages.

Isaiah declares (11:2)—“*The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*” Here are “*The seven spirits*”—the seven-fold Spirit of the “*Deity before the throne*”—The spirit of the Lord, of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of might, of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord. The seven pillars of Wisdom’s temple—all the aspects of Wisdom—understanding, counsel, knowledge, the fear of the Lord and might. And Paul says, in the chapters in Corinthians on wisdom to which we have referred—“*Christ Jesus is of God made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification and Redemption.*” Here is the true life-giving Wisdom before which all the wisdom of the world stands naked foolishness. “*Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.*”

Christ is our wisdom, and our wisdom is Christ—“*In him, and through him, and because of him, are all things.*” “*In him,*” declared Paul to the Colossians—“*Are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” Let us therefore live in him and for him—grow up into him in the wisdom of God through the Word, for “*Wisdom is the principle thing.*”

Bro. G. V. Growcott

Purity Of Fellowship Within The Ecclesia

The subject of our class today—Purity of Fellowship within the Ecclesia—is by no means one that is purely an academic one that does not touch the lives of every one of us. Whether within the household of faith or in our relations with those at work, or in our everyday relations as we go about living in the present order of things in the world as it now exists, we

are constantly confronted with the necessity of having to make decisions as to whom we will associate with and how that association will be handled. This association in the natural course of things is based on the choice of the individual.

Whether that choice is by desire or of necessity, it will be our choice. However, when we speak of spiritual things, as in religious associations, the guidelines are specific. As we will see in what follows, if we have ears to hear, this becomes a difficulty. For it is written, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, BECAUSE they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor 2:14).

The apostle Paul says, *“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the POWER OF GOD. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are PERFECT: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, THAT COME TO NOUGHT. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the HIDDEN WISDOM, WHICH GOD ORDAINED before the world, Brethren and Sisters, TO OUR GLORY”* (1 Cor. 2:5-8).

The theme for this years’ gathering, “BEHOLD, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE,” refers to our being called the children of God AND as we are admonished that *“every man that hath this hope in him—that is, to inherit immortality as Sons of Power—PURIFIETH himself, even as HE IS PURE.”*

In the Gospel of John chapter 1, we find that LIGHT and LIFE are inseparable—for in verse 4 we read that *“in him was life; and the life was the light of men.”* John further reveals to us this truth, *“And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”* SELAH!!! Verses 11 and 12 continue the thought that *“He came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the Sons of God, even to those that believe on his name”*

In the 8th chapter of John v.12, *“Then spake Jesus again to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”* The connection between the Gospel of John and the epistles are so intertwined, that it seems only natural to introduce the subject in this manner, since the Gospel of John emphasized the principle of God manifestation—in the Lord Jesus Christ Emmanuel. The epistle asserts the reality of Christ’s humanity—he came in the nature of those that he came to save—he partook of the same nature as his brethren. There were many who denied that Christ came in the flesh. The apostles, as stated in 1 John 1:1, declared what they heard, saw, and looked upon with their eyes and what their hands had handled. That was THE WORD OF LIFE.

in thee, that THEY ALSO MAY BE ONE IN US: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.”
Bro. David Lauck

John Thomas and Fellowship

A recent effort has been made by some Central brethren to claim that Bro. Thomas was in harmony with them in their policy of loose fellowship. They have published some of his very early writings on the subject which actually are even loser than their fellowship stand. Then, some of his later writings are advanced, tied with those earlier writings in such a manner as to suggest that *even while he was writing opposite things*, he still believed the things that he had written in those most early days of the Truth, before the ecclesias were formed.

We marvel that these early writings of Bro. Thomas are now being *advanced* in Central, where so many have worked so hard to discredit the sound foundation laid by Bro. Thomas on so many topics. When we appeal to Bro. Thomas' writings in support of doctrines like the nature and sacrifice of Christ, pointing out his sound logic that “Sin is a synonym for human nature” or “sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus, unless it existed there:” there is an apostate class of brethren who nearly scream at us that we are involved in “Pioneer Worship” as they term it. Yet now these same brethren find a few sentences which they think agree with them, and they themselves published these things from the housetops. Four different Central websites, and one Unamended web site, now carry some form of reference (all of them with wrong page numbers, obviously copied from the same source, belying their true lack of interest) to the earliest writings of Bro. Thomas on fellowship.

Do these modern brethren really believe they have found some long hidden writings which now justify their positions, and prove that their position is the foundation position of Christadelphians all along? They haven't! All who read the pioneer writings have known about these sections. They were even briefly advanced and then rejected as opposed to Christadelphian teaching, in the lifetime of Bro. Roberts. Frankly, that these quotes could gain such popularity recently is only possible because many Central brethren have ceased to read the pioneer writings.

There are three quotes from the 1851 Herald which are advanced as support of the Nicodemite position. One of them is advice given in 1851, and two of them are a recounting of events which took place in 1848, on his first speaking tour following his booklet *“Confessions and Abjurations”* and his renouncing of all held dear by Christendom.

WE ARE WARNED TO GUARD AGAINST.

In addition, when John wrote these epistles, many members of the ecclesia were second or even third generation believers, and this is also so today, in regard to the latter-day revival of the Truth. Then as now, the pioneering spirit was being set aside, and more and more time was being given to mere speculating and philosophizing upon the Truth. Jesus warned of this. He predicted: *“The love of many shall wax cold”* (Matt. 24:12).

By John's time, as today, the love of the Truth is waxing cold. This was Christ's warning to the ecclesia at Ephesus: *“I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love”* (Rev. 2:4). Therefore while John constantly reminded the brethren of their obligations in the realm of divine love, he also manifested a stern unyielding attitude toward those that would undermine the faith with their theories. In describing them, he did so in these terms, calling them liars, seducers, false prophets, deceivers, antichrists. John wrote in this fashion from the great love that he had towards them as his brethren, in the abundance of his love, in order to help the sheep whom, as a good shepherd, he knew *“by name”* (3 John 14).

It is worth noticing that John used the term “little children” often, and Jesus himself used it after Judas had left the upper room, as the Lord turned to the remaining apostles and addressed them as “little children.” In writing of the love of God and of the relationship of believers one to another and to the father and the influence of the Truth upon their lives, John was not merely combating the error of so-called “higher learning”—called Gnosticism—but was also expounding upon the words of the Lord Jesus in the upper room and immediately afterwards. The intercessory prayer of the Lord (John 17) emphasizes THE DIVINE NAME (v.6), THE RELATIONSHIP OF BELIEVERS TO THE FATHER (v.11), and the MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE LOVE (v. 26). Please read John 17.

In conclusion, John speaks to us with authority. He dictates a message and EXPECTS it to be received WITHOUT QUESTION. He is the shepherd speaking to the sheep whom he knows by name. He is the elder writing to the children and INSTRUCTING them in matters of BELIEF and PRACTICE. He is the last of the Apostles, speaking authoritatively—AS FROM CHRIST.

We are the sheep of this age—”the little children” of the present, the earnest followers of Christ—who LISTEN to the voices of His Apostles. We NEED TO HEED the WARNING WORDS of John as he would guide us in matters that AFFECT OUR ETERNAL DESTINY!!! For did not Jesus say as written in John 17:20-21, *“Neither pray I for these (that is the Apostles) alone; but for them also which shall BELIEVE ON ME THROUGH THEIR WORD; THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I*

The Gospel of John at 1:14-19 states, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) FULL of GRACE AND TRUTH. John bare witness of him, saying...and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but GRACE and TRUTH came by Jesus Christ. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, HE HATH DECLARED HIM.”

Brethren and Sisters, this denial that Christ came in the flesh seems almost ridiculous considering the eyewitness account of the apostles. Yet, that was the basis of the opposition—the error of thinking at that time.

In the first Epistle of John chapter 4, verses 1-3 we read, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but TRY the spirits.”* The Jerusalem Bible translation states it like this: *“It is not in every spirit, my dear people, that you can trust, TEST THEM to see if they come from God.”* Continuing in the KJV, *“...because many false prophets are gone out in the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh IS of God: And every spirit that confesseth NOT that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is NOT OF GOD: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have HEARD that it should come; and even NOW already is in the world.”*

The apostles countered this by asserting the tangible reality that one whom they had seen, considered, and handled—THE WORD OF LIFE. There was, as it were, no shadow of doubt as to the reality and tangibility of Christ's person. Brethren and Sisters, the Pharisees questioned both his testimony as from God, and that he said that God was his father. They were judging *“AFTER THE FLESH,”* as Jesus spake to them in John 8:15.

Continuing in John 8, verses 21-26, we read, *“I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? Because he saith, Whither I go ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that SENT ME IS TRUE; and I speak TO THE WORLD THOSE THINGS WHICH I HAVE HEARD OF HIM.”*

“As Jesus spake these words, many believed on him” (v. 30). Then Jesus makes this statement: *“If ye continue in my word, then ARE YE MY DISCIPLES INDEED; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (vs. 31-32).

The Jews respond with the challenge that they were of Abraham and were never in bondage. Jesus then says, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, WHOSOEVER COMMITTEH SIN, IS THE SERVANT OF SIN. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but THE SON ABIDETH EVER. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I speak that which I have seen of my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen of your father. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him”* (vs. 34-36, 38, 44).

The dialog continues, Brethren and Sisters, but what Jesus sets before them, is that he is from above—the things that he is teaching them are from the Father and speak of life. AND the KEEPING of those things which he heard of his Father, and which he gave them in his doctrine—they are the words that IF we keep, we shall be his disciples indeed. And not only that, but that these words are the words of life, that by these, we may have eternal life. He says that *“IF YE CONTINUE IN MY WORD, then ARE YE MY DISCIPLES INDEED.”*

We are called Brethren in Christ, Brethren and Sisters—Christadelphians. We are learners or disciples of Jesus. As well as this, Brethren and Sisters, we are also called Christians. There are and have been multitudes that have called themselves disciples and Christians. The distinction must lie in the words that we just read: *“IF YE CONTINUE IN MY WORD, THEN ARE YE INDEED MY DISCIPLES.”*

Jesus preached of the kingdom to come! The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, of which he would be the king. Concerning this Gospel, Jesus and the apostles preached. Reading from the Ecclesial Guide (Introduction): “The object of the Gospel, as taught by the apostles in the first century, was to take out a people for the Lord’s use, in the age that he will inaugurate at his coming. The mode in which the taking out was effected, was by the preaching of the Gospel. Whoever believed this Gospel, and yielded obedience in baptism, was, by that belief and obedience, CALLED to the kingdom and glory of God. BUT ALL THE CALLED ARE NOT TO BE CHOSEN. The choice is to be made at the Lord’s return. The reason of the choice will be faithfulness in the chosen, EXHIBITED during life, subsequent to their taking of the name of Christ in baptism. These things are all known to those who know the Truth.”

The idea of an Ecclesia, or as the meaning given in Strong’s Concordance of the Bible, is A CALLING OUT. The call to discipleship is a CALL to separation. If we answer it, we become members of the church, the ecclesia, the community of those who are called out. This was the aim of the teaching of the apostles in the first century. According to James, *“God at the*

common way of life. The word “doctrine” means teaching, and teaching concerns what we believe and what we do. The apostles’ doctrine therefore concerned a common faith and the life in Christ. GODLINESS is part of fellowship!!!

Unfortunately, all of us sin from time to time. What happens to the disciple when he sins? Does he leave the fellowship of Christ? Certainly, if he knowingly persists in his sin, and remains unrepentant, his fellowship is deeply affected and severance occurs.

In the mercy of God, provision is made for the disciple to receive forgiveness by seeking it through the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”*

There are nevertheless sins, which, because they are grievous and bring the body of believers into disrepute, need more open treatment by the congregation. The elders should seek to restore the offender, while also rejecting the sin, which he committed. *“Brethren, if a man be taken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burden, and so fulfill the LAW OF CHRIST”* (Gal. 6:1-2). *“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”* (James 5:19-20). And, *“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear”* (1 Tim 5:20).

Compassion and renewal in the right way are the twin components of this path of understanding and restoration. Tolerance of deeply offensive un-Christian conduct would do neither the offender nor the congregation any good whatsoever. However, a bitter and immediate rejection of the offending disciple would not be the method taught by our Lord and his apostles. Wisdom in the Word of God, a deep desire to uphold the godly standards of the Lord Jesus Christ, while keeping the fallen from destruction, and an awareness of our common frailty, are essential elements in this work of recovery.

The Epistle of John was written to correct the serious error that was developing among the ecclesias. John wrote to counter the influence of a so-called “higher form of knowledge” that challenged the foundations of the faith. The danger didn’t come from those who were set to destroy the Truth, but from those who thought they were improving it, and whose aim was to make it INTELLECTUALLY RESPECTABLE. It is significant that there is a tendency TO THE SAME END TODAY, which likewise THREATENS TO DESTROY THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH. THIS IS WHAT

Throughout history the community has suffered the ravages of false doctrine and the human lust for power over one's fellow men. This evil was already at work or threatened in the New Testament times. Reading from 1 Cor. 1:10,11 *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me... that there are contentions among you.”*

And from Acts of the Apostles ch. 20:29-30, *“For I (Paul) know this, that after my departing 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.”*

From Gal. 1:6-7, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”*

The first happy community became distressed by heresies and by men who liked to have the preeminence over others. This resulted in fragmentation and schism. The apostles made every effort to rebuke and educate those in error—sometimes with success and sometimes not. We might ask what happened to those who refused to return to their former belief. Such persons had already broken the fellowship based on a common belief, and when the position became intolerable or entrenched, the apostles instructed the congregation in which it occurred to exclude the delinquent person from their company. This would apply particularly to the breaking of bread, which was one of the highest expressions of fellowship!!!!

Note what is written in 2 John 9-11 – *“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”*

“A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject.” Or, as the NIV renders it, *“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that have nothing to do with him”* (Titus 3:10).

In other words, while the brethren strove hard to recover those who had gone astray in a matter of the faith, they also had a responsibility for the integrity of the fellowship itself, which they had to preserve when the recovery of the wayward proved impossible. This was secured by excluding the divisive person—the heretic—from their midst. Often, of course, the heretic—the divisive person—would leave of his own accord.

But fellowship is not only a matter of common tenets of faith, it is also a

first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.” The apostle Paul speaks of the hearing of the Gospel and the obedience to it in these words: *“Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you.”*

This act of obedience was, first of all, an individual act owed to God Himself. It is only secondarily that it ASSOCIATES us with all those scattered throughout the whole world and in all times, who have expressed their faith in the Lord Jesus in the same way. Amongst all such there exists a bond of fellowship, which in no way depends on nationality OR ANY OTHER HUMAN AFFINITY. Its ground and condition are the same now as in the first century. *“Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, And they continued STEADFASTLY in THE APOSTLES DOCTRINE AND FELLOWSHIP and in breaking of bread and in prayers.”*

This is the FELLOWSHIP THAT WE ARE CALLED TO. To remain in that fellowship, we must be faithful to the teaching of the apostles. Fellowship is thus a thing that in no way depends upon the thinking of the flesh, as the discourse we read at the beginning reveals to us. Jesus came with a divine message. Those that heard it or gladly received his words in baptism were brought into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles and with the Father.

Let us consider the word PURITY—the Purity of Fellowship in the Ecclesia. The word “purity,” as used in 1 John 3:3, says, *“And every man that hath this hope in him (that is, the hope of becoming sons of God) PURIFIETH himself, even as he is PURE.”* The word *purifieth* is a word meaning to be CLEAN; figuratively, to be INNOCENT, modest, perfect, chaste, clean, pure. *Purifieth* also means, to make clean, to sanctify, whether ceremonially or morally, to make oneself CLEAN. In addition to this, we find the meaning as sacred, physically PURE, MORALLY blameless, consecrated most holy, and lastly Saint!

The word *Fellowship* means shared by all, a sharer or an associate, a companion, partaker, partner. And further is added to the definition of fellowship: participation, communicate, COMMUNION, distribution. FELLOWSHIP, then, is then an important Bible word and in particular in the New Testament.

As we have shown, *fellowship* means sharing, partaking, having in common. Our calling out is a basic thing shared, as is the very exacting requirements and responsibilities associated with the Truth we hold as stewards. From the very inception of the Jerusalem Ecclesia in the first century, *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...and they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers”* (Acts 2:41-42).

Considering 1 John 1:3, *“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.”* This calling is further brought out in this passage from 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:16-17 – *“God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,”* and *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”*

Consider this passage found in Philippians 2:1-2 – *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit (or as is the RSV, participation of the Spirit)...Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same LOVE, being of one accord, and of one mind.”*

Another verse considering fellowship, *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness”* (2 Cor. 6:14)? and the admonition in verses 17-18 and 7:1 *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let US CLEANSE ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”*

Consider the teaching in 2 Peter 1:3-4 which reads, *“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES: that by these ye might be PARTAKERS of the divine nature, HAVING ESCAPED THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD THROUGH LUST.”*

And last in this series of passages representing the use of the word fellowship, partaking, or having in common is 2 Cor 13:14 – *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”*

Fellowship then, Brethren and Sisters, is seen to have many elements or parts, all of which are interrelated as these verses show. If we were to categorize these different, but related parts, we can see a foundation being set for us and a way of life that is set before us as a guide.

Concerning the Foundations, we have—

1. The apostles’ doctrine and teaching

2. The promises of God
3. The forgiveness of sins and the blood of Jesus Christ

Concerning the Way of Life, we have—

1. The body of believers
2. The Breaking of Bread—our communion
3. The unity of believers in love, purpose, and mind
4. The life of the individual believer in association with Christ, and
5. Living close to the Father and the Son.

In addition to this is the promise of ultimately sharing the divine nature by being blessed with immortality. Fellowship then, becomes a very practical and living thing when based on these principles. It embraces all that it means to be a disciple. We can then say that **DISCIPLESHIP IS FELLOWSHIP!!!**

The way to fellowship is through the apostles’ doctrine or teaching. When we learn of the great and precious promises of God, made certain by the sacrifice of Christ, we then must make the choice. The call of the Gospel is a call into the marvelous light of the Truth, as exhibited in Christ Jesus, who is not only the light of the world, which the world perceives not, but the Life of man. We enter into a fellowship in Christ. Fellowship comes by enlightenment and belief, by repentance and baptism, and by commitment to the new WAY OF LIFE. In this way the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, and we enter into the fellowship of God and His Son. We share the apostles’ doctrine and the hope they proclaimed.

The believers’ fellowship is both inclusive and exclusive—**HE DOES NOT CHOOSE HIS COMPANIONS IN THE FELLOWSHIP!!!!** They are chosen by the very process which brought him into a relationship with God. There can be no artificial barriers of sex, color, race, or class. All, who hold the same faith in truth and **SUBMIT** to its **DISCIPLINE** by **BAPTISM**, **SHARE A COMMON HERITAGE!!!** They are members of the commonwealth of Israel and have a common hope. The Lord makes believers **ONE IN HIM**.

From Gal. 3:28 we read, *“There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus.”* And from Eph. 4:4-6, *“There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* From these declarations it follows that there should be one united Christian community throughout the world!!!