

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

The Living Way

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**Upholding the Original Christadelphian Faith concerning:
“The Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12)**

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“I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat up on him had a bow: and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2)

“The Acceptable Year” and “The Day of Vengeance”

The closing chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah are as it were a revelation of Jesus Christ some 700 years before his birth. They are like a little preliminary Apocalypse, that points forward to that great and glorious crisis on which our hearts are set.

If we commence, say, at the 61st chapter, we have Christ himself as it were speaking by the Spirit in the prophet the words he quoted in the synagogue at Nazareth, “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” And there he stopped, and gave the scroll back to the attendant, and said to those in the synagogue, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” But the next words written in the scroll were these: “And the day of vengeance of our God,” and that is the theme that is before us in the 63rd chapter.

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?” The answer in the 4th verse by the Saviour, the Mighty One, is this: “The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.” For that we still look forward; but looking backward now for these 2,600 years and more, we note for our comfort and instruction and admonition that the purpose of God has so far been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ from that day forward; from that day when he said in Nazareth, “This scripture is this day fulfilled in your ears”; and that though the purpose of God has been thus fulfilled, it has for the most part been met with the same incredulity as that which greeted the Lord Jesus in Nazareth.

“All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth,” yet within a few moments they were seeking to throw him over the precipice. Foreseeing that, he had said to them, “You will say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself; what things we have heard in Capernaum, do here in Nazareth.” “I tell you,” he said, “many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, but to none of them was the prophet sent but to Sidon, to a woman of Sarepta. Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was healed but Naaman the Syrian.” And what if, similarly, outsiders should hear and receive the Prophet of the highest, whilst his own citizens should treat him as Elijah and Elisha had long before been treated in that same countryside? So it very speedily came to pass. They recognised that he was “the carpenter”—a pleasant, engaging young man, but as for anything higher, they could not see that.

But now we look back for all that long space of time, and contemplate the context of that sixty-first chapter. What was then fulfilled causes confidence in the future; and what is that future? The prophet goes on to speak of a time of comforting for Zion’s mourners, of giving them “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the

garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" and he adds, "They shall build the old wastes, they shall restore the desolations of many generations." And there are the "old wastes," and there are the "desolations," and even the "city of the great king" is in the hands of the enemy, and defiled. Shall the word fail? By no means; what has been accomplished is the earnest of what will come.

And what more did the Spirit of Christ in Isaiah say of those who, like himself, should be rejected—like the prophets, like Moses, like David in the land beforehand—all outcasts in their day and generation? Here is what he said of them, "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double"—that is, a corresponding recompence in glory—"and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them."

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Now the Lord himself is the earnest of this, for the Spirit of Christ in Isaiah, speaking of Christ's preliminary realisation of these things, said, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with a priestly crown, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Is he not that "clothed" One in the Apocalypse who is so revealed? Has he not entered into "salvation"? Is he not that heavenly "bridegroom" of whom John the Baptist spoke beforehand, saying, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; I am the friend of the bridegroom?" Did he not say himself, "Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days." And did they not? But *he* was clothed with salvation—with righteousness. *He was* dead, but *is* alive for ever, and has the keys of *hades* and of death.

So we see how the past and the present converge in Christ in these prophecies. He is the firstfruits, and because he lives, this purpose of God will most certainly be fulfilled to the letter. He will return, and there will be revealed that "marriage of the Lamb;" and not only so, but as we read in the succeeding chapter (62nd), that marriage of the land. These two ideas are united, and in the 62nd chapter there is a most interesting and beautiful play upon the names of the Queens in the royal history of Judah. "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem in the hand of thy God," that is, Zion and her land. Thou shalt no more be termed *Azubah*—Forsaken—neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called *Hephzibah*, and thy land *Beulah*, for the Lord *delighteth in thee*, and thy land shall be *married*."

Now these names were in the history of Israel; *Azubah* was the mother of Jehoshaphat, and *Hephzibah* was the wife of Hezekiah, and mother of Manasseh. So these names

would challenge Isaiah's contemporaries; they were as well known as King George and Queen Mary are to us. And now after many years we find ourselves looking forward for this return of glory to the land—the marriage of the land, as well as of the Lamb. We find ourselves by the call of the gospel in the position of those watchmen of Zion, of whom the prophet speaks, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; give him no rest until he establish, until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." We obey that. Whatever may be the case in the conventicles of Christendom, in Christadelphian meetings you will hear that prayer, and it is based upon the promise of God, and will most certainly be answered. It is for us, dear brethren and sisters, to remember our Lord Jesus Christ as the type to which all watchmen have to conform, that they may have part with him in the courts of Yahweh's holiness.

THE VISION

Here is the vision—Christ returned, the bride united with him in immortal divine nature—one spirit, as Eve and Adam were one flesh, by the hand of God, and they are revealed as the Bride and the Messiah, in the courts of Yahweh's holiness. That necessitates a revived temple in Jerusalem. We know that the prophets give us that picture: "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." That is the prophecy: it does not look like it now; all flesh is divided into followers of many superstitions, I suppose numerically the Buddhists have it—or the Moslems, I do not know. The Roman Catholics largely outnumber the Protestants; the Jews are a very small quantity, and as for the believers of the truth of God, they are not discernible. But that will all be altered. A little while ago, you know, and all existing generations were merely potentialities in the loins of their fathers. "All flesh" is a mere passing cloud, and when God arises in Christ, he will reduce the earth to submission to himself, as these prophecies by Isaiah declare: "Behold the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him."

About 800 years after Isaiah Christ said that of himself, when he revealed to John in the Isle of Patmos things that must come to pass thereafter; and the Revelation of Jesus Christ concludes with this same promise, "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." And when he comes again, then will be that "day of vengeance of which we read in the prophet.

EDOM

"Who is this that comes from Edom?" Why Edom? We know that in old times God was revealed in this country. In the days of the Exodus God brought His people out of Egypt by Moses, who was a type of Christ, and he said, "The Lord your God shall raise up unto you a prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me." God would put his words in his mouth, and would require obedience thereto, under pain of the divine displeasure. Moses bringing Israel out of Egypt through this countryside,

into the land of God's choice, which he sware to Abraham, was but a type of Christ, who, as a second Moses will bring Israel out, and as a second Joshua will give them "rest" in the land, upon the basis of the New Covenant; so that when we read these things, there is both a historical and prophetic aspect of the matter, and in both cases God makes himself "an everlasting name."

What a tangible thing the truth is! These countries have a history; and we can study it, and their monuments convince us of its truth. Why, upon the borders of Edom, in Moab—it is not far away, you know—a while ago they unearthed "the Moabite Stone"—Mesha's records of his exploits in the days of this prophet. It is a reality, not a mere myth or fable. Yet only the other day *The Christadelphian* was handed to a young man wise in his own conceit, and he made a comment on some of its pages, on "The Signs of the Times," that they were quite interesting, they were "equal to *Punch*." That is the state of the public mind; and there is even worse. Someone handed me a clip the other day, which gave "the Socialist creed," actually said to be taught in many Socialist Sunday schools, and it consisted of a series of negations, compiled by Robert Blatchford: "I do not believe in a heavenly home; I do not believe in God the Father," and so on. Very well; what does that matter? Shall their unbelief make the promise of God of none effect? Can they fly in the face of facts? Is not Edom there, with its monuments? Is not the nation that sojourned there still with us? Are they not, as the prophet said they should be, "desolate," and in dispersion, and is not the country "old wastes" and "desolate"? It is so: it is flying in the face of facts to ignore and deny. No man can excommunicate God from His own world. There may be some slight excuse—not for the extreme form, but for the lesser forms of unbelief; for the truth has been so corrupted, and flesh and blood is naturally so oblique, that it is not to be wondered at. It takes the word of God strongly applied, to hew the human heart into anything like a similitude to the divine pattern; what wonder, when this is not applied, that flesh and blood is what it is?

FUTURE DAYS

The time will come when they will "know." Egypt was not overcome by argument, but by fire, and pestilence, and sword. The greater "Sodom and Egypt" is not to be subdued by argument, but by the "blood of the wine-press." "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Stained garments—stained with blood, not his own blood, as some hymns have erroneously interpreted it, but the blood of the peoples, his enemies—not "people" in the singular, as the A.V. has it. Not the people of Israel—they have been in the wine-press long enough, it is the time of the Gentiles; it is that wine-press spoken of in the Apocalypse, out of which blood comes "to the horse bridles." It is "the peoples"—"I will tread down the peoples in mine anger," and they are getting ready for it; they are all burdening themselves with the Lord's land; they have their schemes of empire and dominion, based altogether upon another idea than the divine. It is not "glory to God in the highest," and then on earth peace and goodwill among men, that animates the policies of Russia, Britain, Germany, France, and Austria—not a bit of it; it is the lust of dominion, pure and simple, and of wealth. This

is a mercantile empire; “the merchants of Tarshish” say, “Go to, let us buy and sell, and get gain; let us build the biggest ships that earth has ever seen, and scour the remotest corners of the earth, and wax fat and kick, and ‘Britannia rule the waves’ for ever and ever, Amen!”

But that is not to be so; God has told us that He will “stain the pride of all glory,” and “the ships of Tarshish” among others, shall be humbled, and the remnant shall wait for God. That is the vision, then, that we have before us. Christ, who spoke in Nazareth all those hundreds of years ago, is now exalted to immortal nature at the Father’s right hand, awaiting the end of the vision in the “day of vengeance” which he would not *then* mention, but only the “acceptable year of the Lord.”

WHAT DOES IT SAY TO US?

Now to us, what does it all say? The apostle Paul afterwards writing to the Corinthians, and quoting another passage of Isaiah, says, “In an acceptable time have I heard thee,” and then says to the brethren, “Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” And, dear brethren and sisters, it is not closed yet. “Behold, now is the accepted time,” it is for us now to rise up to a comprehension of these things and to obey the commandments of God in Christ, and look toward the day of recompense—the day of reward, and of vengeance upon the peoples who oppose the Lord Jesus Christ; and the type of it all is in the history of the Exodus of old, when God made himself an everlasting name in the days of Moses, which yet was but a type of those mightier works in Christ by which he will make himself an everlasting name on a greater scale, and reveal the kingdom of God which the Lord Jesus Christ preached.

Now in view of all these things, the remainder of the prophecy is made up of prayers and praises, and further revelations concerning this kingdom of God. The prophet prays: “O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.” In the 5th verse of the 64th chapter: “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.”

WORKING RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness;” what is there in that? We look back to the days of Moses, and we see an interesting type. Moses had been away in a far country, but the day of vengeance upon Egypt drew on, and God sent Moses back from that far country to deliver Israel, and said, “Aaron thy brother shall *come out to meet thee*, and will be *glad to see thee*.” And so it was, that Moses being sent back to Aaron his brother, who was overjoyed at the sight of Moses, returned, and together they went back to Egypt, and proclaimed the name of God to Pharaoh. He would not receive it, but he was compelled to, so that at last, by reason of mighty judgments he let Israel go. Is not that a beautiful type? A greater than Moses is coming back again,

and there are those who will be “glad to see him,” and whom he will be glad to see. He will make them “kings and priests unto God,” and with them he will proclaim the name of God to the nations, who will not hearken, but will be compelled to. And so Israel will be delivered, and at last the very Gentiles themselves.

And then in Christ’s own times and experiences there is another parallel—after he was crucified and raised from the dead. After he was raised, he met two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and they were “glad to see him,” and how glad was he to see them, after having passed through that bitterness of death. And he commissioned them to bear the Father’s name—not particularly before old Egypt, but before Jerusalem and Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth, a new “Sodom and Egypt” (Rev. 11.), and they did so. They proclaimed “the acceptable year of the Lord,” also warning all men that there was a day of vengeance to come; that God had appointed a day, as Paul told the Greeks, at Athens, in which he will “judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

TESTIMONY OF ISAIAH

And so they preached, and went their way, and died in the hope of these things; and their word, reduced to writing, has come down to us, and so we have, though they be absent, the very words of God calling to us instead. This was foreseen in the 65th chapter of Isaiah: —

“I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.”

That is, the Gentiles. What had we to do with it all? We were “without God, without hope, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,” and God revealed himself to such; but to Israel, “All day long have I spread forth my hands unto a rebellious and gainsaying people,” says Paul, quoting these things to the Romans.

And so it came to pass. While Israel was scattered the call of the Gentiles came, and so we find ourselves, dear brethren and sisters, gathered by this call to God’s kingdom and glory, looking for the new heavens and new earth of this same promise; waiting for the Father’s house of many mansions with which the vision of Isaiah the prophet closes, and of which our Lord Jesus Christ himself spoke. Could we have, as we thus gather together round this memorial bread and wine, stronger incentives than are presented in these glorious things, to hold fast the hope of everlasting life? We could not.

(1916). CC Walker, The Christadelphian, page 535–539.

Tobiah – the infiltration of an enemy (2)

In the last issue, we considered how Sanballat, Tobiah and their accomplices who sought to frustrate the work of the faithful builders of Jerusalem, adopted very specific tactics. They sought to discourage the people by deriding the efforts of those who were raising up the city wall (Neh 4:1-3), and when this failed to weaken the hands of the labourers, they resorted to physical violence, attempting to infiltrate the camp, and cause the work to cease by force: “our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease” (4:11). Vigilance was crucial at this time; it was vital to watch and be ready lest the enemy should succeed in entering in unawares, and thus have opportunity to strike. And it is even so with the labourers today who are engaged in the work of building up the ecclesia of Christ. They also will inevitably face opposition by the fleshly-minded, yet whose designs will inevitably be frustrated if the Ecclesia be firmly founded upon the precepts of righteousness and truth. In our day, there is not the same threat of death at the hands of the enemy as there has been in times past, it is true; but the opposition is there all the same, as the diabolos, or sin incorporate in the flesh, employs many tactics and means to frustrate the work of those who seek to raise up walls of defence, and strengthen the foundations of Truth.

The Apostle gave words of warning to those who were being built up to become the bride of Christ (cp Gen 2:22; Rev 22:9-27), “I 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. Therefore watch ... and now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up ...” (Acts 20:29-32). These wolves do not openly manifest themselves to be wolves. They rather have the same resemblance as sheep, for as the Master himself taught, they wear an outward appearance of righteousness, as if they are clothed with the skin of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits ...” (Mat 7:15-16). This class of men are evidently comprised of prominent, popular members, for they are in such a position to “draw away disciples after them.” They have a name, or reputation that they are spiritually alive and active (cp Rev 3:1) but are, in fact, dead in the Spirit’s estimation.

But if they are in sheep’s clothing, how can other members of the flock identify them? How can those who “watch” discern which are inwardly ravening wolves, that they might cry out a word of warning? According to the master, his disciples “shall know them by their fruits.” Is the spiritual sustenance which their fruits impart wholesome meat in due season, after the pattern or shape of the Hope of Israel (i.e. grapes and figs) or is it wild fruit that is unpalatable to those whose senses are exercised to discern the good from the evil? “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” By no means. “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Mat 7:16,17). Ye shall know them by that which emerges from them, and after the pattern of old times, such men, being evil, can only bring forth evil fruit which cannot be eaten (cp Jer 24:8, Is 5:2), and thus prove to be unable to meet the dietary requirements of those wishing to be fed with the things of the Spirit. Corrupt minds

bring forth corruptness in both doctrine and behaviour, neither of which are of any use in the ecclesia of Christ.

“COME, LET US MEET TOGETHER”

Just as these “wolves in sheep’s clothing” sought to devour the flock of God in the mortal days of Christ, even so the adversaries who contended against Nehemiah sought to enter in among the people unawares, in order to slay the people, and cause the work to cease. They would appear to be no different from any other of the people, speaking and behaving in the same way, until the time appointed for them to strike. In fact, as we saw in the last article, Sanballat and Tobiah had already infiltrated the people through marriage (Neh 6:18, 13:28) as their families had become joined to families in Israel – they had in fact, become part of the congregation, even though to do this was specifically forbidden under the Mosaic Law (Deut 23:3). And with the appearance of sheep, these wolves changed their tactics from open hostility to a semblance of righteousness, involving a show of good works (6:19), and an outward show of reasonableness, with a willingness to discuss the situation. They sought to draw Nehemiah away from the safety of the city and the people for a meeting: “Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief” (Neh 6:2).

Although they spake fair words, these men laid up deceit within themselves, and Nehemiah believed them not (Prov 26:24,25). They covered their hatred with smooth words of deceit (Prov 26:26), yet Nehemiah was not beguiled by them. He knew their objectives, and that their carnal minds were at enmity with the purposes of the Deity in whose service he was labouring, and therefore gave no heed to the veneer of reasonableness they displayed in secretly laying such a snare before him. “I sent messengers down to them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?” (Neh 6:3). Here is the most effective method to employ when faced with those who would desire to channel our energies away from the vital work of edifying those with ears to hear, to unprofitable debates with no purpose.

We are engaged in a needful work – why should it cease whilst we have talks with the adversary? If they are of the right disposition, they will assist our work, and abide by the principles of righteousness and uprightness that govern that work. If they do not abide by those principles, and prefer rather to adopt carnal methods in opposition to us, what profit is there in discussion with them? What fruit can be had in being drawn away into the tangle of worldly debates and confused philosophisings of those who reject the wisdom which is from above?

There can be none, and so in following the examples of both Nehemiah and the Apostle Paul, we ought not give place to them for one hour (Gal 2:5), lest time and energies be wasted on things that do not profit – and we ourselves fall into a snare. This was Nehemiah’s approach; to refuse peace-talks with the enemy, in the full knowledge that their only motive for having them was that they might do him harm: “yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.” He refused to be moved.

THE MAKING OF FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Simple requests for discussions having failed to draw Nehemiah into their snare, the adversaries through Sanballat sent another letter, this time an open letter raising a certain false accusation. Evidently, the intention was that this time Nehemiah would meet with them in order to defend himself:

“It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu (an arabian accomplice, see v 1—CAM) saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together” (Neh 6:6-7).

Here was the new tactic exposed, one commonly employed against those who uphold the righteous principles of Yahweh in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. This is the tactic which it is our experience to find employed most often – that of Character Assassination; the imputation of questionable motives and behaviour, yet with no proof, or even evidence offered, but mere assertions, and the testimonies of others (cp Acts 24:13; 25:7). This was an open letter, meaning any party handling it could read what was written. No reasoning was given, no logical argument was employed; it was simply a suggestion— a false accusation – allegedly being put by others.

Notice, the accusation was not made outright – “it is reported” that it is so. “We have heard that it is so; we are not personally accusing you of anything, just repeating what we have heard ... let’s talk about these things, you can then give your side?” The claim was that Nehemiah sought some personal advantage, that in fact, he was wanting to exalt himself to be a king over the people, and so challenge the authority of the Persian king, Artaxerxes. Indeed, it was a similar charge that was brought against the Lord Jesus Christ: “we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king” (Luke 23:2). And again, when Pilate sought to release him, “the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar” (Jno 19:12). In both cases, with a marked inability to find any fault, the Adversary found it necessary to raise a false charge of self-exaltation, and rebellion.

NEHEMIAH’S RESPONSE

Nehemiah’s response to the accusations of the adversary is again most instructive: “Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.” (Neh 6:8). He wasted neither time nor energy in composing lengthy rebuttals of the allegations made against him. He did not seek to justify himself in the denial of what was being claimed; his words were short and to the point. The allegations were not true, but were devised through the counsels of the hearts of wicked men. Again, he refused to be distracted from the work in which he was engaged.

Lovers of Truth will give an impartial examination to the evidence of charges raised against builders in the Household of faith, and soon finding the evidence lacking, will reject the allegations as being no more than the evil fruits of evil men. Rather than to be distracted from the vital work of building up the ecclesial walls, by spending time and energy in self-justification and self-defence, it is more profitable for all for the builders to keep building, and leave the adversary to froth out great and swelling words as it pleases them, yet to eventually die down to nothing; foaming out their own shame (cp Jude 16,13).

Perceiving that they would be unable to influence Nehemiah by direct communications with him the next tactic employed by Tobiah and Sanballat, was to employ the services of others. Using the age-old device of finding someone Nehemiah would respect and listen to, to speak with him, they hired Shemaiah to give a report to him, which would put him in fear:

“Afterward I came into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee” (Neh 6:10).

It would appear that it was as evidence of his own fear of being slain by the devices of Tobiah and Sanballat that Shemaiah had shut himself up in his own house. He appears to have been previously respected by Nehemiah, for he went to Shemaiah, rather than vice-versa. Perhaps it was that Nehemiah had frequent discourses with the man, hence he was the one selected to lay another snare before Nehemiah.

The proposition was that the danger being so great, to avoid being slain Nehemiah and he ought to retreat into the Temple, into the area normally reserved for the Priests and Levites only; hidden there, with the doors closed, they would be safe. What may have given weight to the suggestion, is that in previous times others had done just this; Joash was saved from destruction at the hands of Athaliah by being hidden as a child in the house of Yahweh for six years (2 Kings 11:3). But Nehemiah recognised that to do this with no Divine authority would be sin. And in his position, there was a vital need for him to provide a leading example of faith and courage to the people, rather than to simply disappear from their sight through fear for himself. He recognised that though this suggestion was being presented to him by one purporting to be a prophet, that it could not be genuine, for if he were to hearken to it, the work would cease, rather than be advanced. He answered accordingly:

“I said, Should such a man as I flee; and who is there, that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And, lo, I perceived that Elohim had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and so do, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me” (Neh 6:11-13).

THE HIRING OF FALSE PROPHETS

We notice, that it was Tobiah, and Sanballat, that hired the false prophet to testify before Nehemiah; an Ammonite and a Moabite (Neh 2:10), who followed the pattern of the earlier enemies of Israel, in seeking to ensure their downfall. Indeed, it was precisely because of this same action that Ammonites and Moabites were strictly forbidden entry to the congregation of Israel. So it was commanded:

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of Yahweh; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of Yahweh for ever; because they met you not with bread and water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. Nevertheless, Yahweh thy Elohim would not hearken unto Balaam; but Yahweh thy Elohim turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because Yahweh thy Elohim loved thee. Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever” (Deut 23:3-6).

The Ammonitish involvement with the hiring of Balaam is not recorded in the record in Numbers, but the Law specified that because of this particular matter, both Ammonites and Moabites were to be excluded to the tenth generation – which Nehemiah expounded to signify a complete exclusion “for ever” (Neh 13:1). The entry of Tobiah and Sanballat is the first recorded breach of this command, where both the Ammonite and Moabite were welcomed into the congregation, who permitted these men to marry into Israel. And so, history repeated itself as they sought to hire, not just one prophet, Shemaiah, but many, including a prophetess. So Nehemiah prayed before the Father: “My Elohim, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear” (Neh 6:14).

SECRET COLLUSION

In addition to presenting false prophetic words before Nehemiah to cause him to fall, Tobiah sought to gain the favour of the people. So, we find that he was able to organise a secret collusion against Nehemiah: “in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah (which Nehemiah had refused to do—CAM), and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshuallam the son of Berechiah. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear” (Neh 6:17-19).

“there were many in Judah sworn unto Tobiah”; thus they had made a covenant, a pact with him, against Nehemiah. These were those of the people who had been seduced by the false prophecies, and false accusations being levelled at their Governor. They “sent many letters” to Tobiah, which is suggestive that they were utilised as spies, to provide intelligence on what Nehemiah was doing. Even so, the adversaries of the Lord Jesus Christ did likewise: “they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, so that they might deliver him to the power and authority of the governor” (Luke 20:20).

A SHOW OF GOOD WORKS

Tobiah was himself a prime example of a wolf in sheep's clothing; one who had crept in unawares, forming his alliances, and feigning himself to be a just man, by doing "good works" before the people. They testified of those works before Nehemiah, and uttered Nehemiah's words to him. How could Tobiah be an enemy of the people, when he was doing so much good towards them? Just look at what he was doing, and how much we have benefitted from him – surely you are being unjust towards him; why not just give him the benefit of the doubt, and accept him for his work's sake?

Human nature never changes, and so it is today that when lovers of the Truth testify against those whose fruits are not after the shape and pattern of the Israelitish hope, but wild fruit unable to be eaten by the children of light, a testimony of "good works" is produced. Just look at all the good that man is doing travelling about all the world preaching the Gospel, enduring much hardship for Christ's sake, we are told! You are being "unloving" and "unChristlike"! You are "jealous" of my success, says the man himself. Why don't we see you doing as many "good works" say his followers – it is easy to criticise from your armchair, but show us your good works!!! The fact that it is not the Gospel believed by Paul that is being preached appears to matter little; the "good works" attracts the admiration of men. The reason why the critics do not behold our 'good works' performed before the Deity, is that rather than seek present popularity, we desire to follow Christ, who taught "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward" (Mat 6:1-2).

They have their reward. The critic is gravely mistaken in imputing the motive of Jealousy for our exposure of a wolf's real identity, demonstrated from the Word. They have their reward, a reward which we do not desire. Rather, we desire the reward from our Father in Heaven, who sees those things that the critics, wilfully ignorant of these words of Messiah, claim we do not do.

TOBIAH'S REWARD

Tobiah had his reward. Temporal advantage, and the favour of men for a season. During the period of Nehemiah's absence, when he went back to Shushan the palace, Tobiah took every opportunity to grasp as much of his reward as he could lay his defiled hands upon. The meat offerings ceased to be offered, and Tobiah was given the room in the Temple where they were prepared, to dwell there. "Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our Elohim, was allied unto Tobiah: and he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the offerings of the priests" (Neh 13:4,5). This was Tobiah's reward; a place obtained by deceit and iniquity in the House of the Most High. But the Deity is not mocked. A time of purging was at hand, when at the Return of Nehemiah, the defilement of Tobiah

would be cast out, that the offerings could be made in sincerity and truth: “Behold, he shall come, saith Yahweh of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and life fullers’ soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purge the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto Yahweh an offering in righteousness” (Mal 3:1-3).

Even so, Nehemiah as a Type of the Lord Jesus Christ returned to cleanse the house, and judge the members thereof after the commandment of the Most High.

JUDGED BY THE WORD

The word of Yahweh was read; words of judgement against the infiltrators, before all the people:

“They read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of Elohim for ever ... now it came to pass when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude ... I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of Elohim, with the meat offering and the frankincense” (Neh 13:1-9).

Tobiah had his reward. A temporary reward, popularity amongst the people, as he sought to display a show of good works to further his own ends, of sowing the seeds of discord against Nehemiah, and against those who put their hand into making the foundations sure, in building up Jerusalem. But the reward was cut short. Nehemiah returned as One appointed by Yahweh to purge the household, and so Tobiah was cast out, never again to be mentioned in the annals of history, his name having fallen into shame and age-lasting contempt as a defeated enemy of Yahweh’s people.

(Concluded)

Christopher Maddocks

“The fact is that the very best experience at present is only a state of divinely regulated evil, and that the occurrence of evil is one of the necessities involved in the development of saints from a race of unjustified sinners. All are sinners more or less, and, ‘Wherefore doth a man complain for the punishment of his sins?’ (Lamentations 3:39). While all are sinners, more or less, some are forgiven sinners — those who fear and obey God, confessing their sins and forsaking them. All things work together for the final good of this class; but amongst these ‘all things’ evil itself has a place. God is the judge of when and how much it is needed.”

(RR, Nazareth Revisited)

The Prophecy of Amos

The Lord taught that those who are rich have an added difficulty in entering the kingdom:

“... Verily I say unto you That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God, all things are possible” (Mat. 19:23-26).

It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom, because it is very easy for him to trust in his riches, and not in God, as the record in Mark 10:24 states. Paul also spoke of this:

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17).

With God all things are possible, and so those who, like Abraham, are rich in this world’s goods, can be saved by their trust in God, and not the uncertainty of their riches.

A PROPHECY AGAINST THE RICH

This is relevant to keep in mind when considering the prophecy of Amos. His words were directly aimed at those who were rich and prosperous in terms of worldly wealth. To give just a few examples:

“But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour ***the palaces*** of Ben-hadad” (Amos 1:4).

“... And I will cut off ***the judge*** from the midst thereof, and will slay all ***the princes*** thereof with him, saith Yahweh” (Amos 2:3).

“I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and ***the houses of ivory*** shall perish, and ***the great houses*** shall have an end, saith Yahweh” (Amos 3:15).

The prophecy begins by describing the judgments which were to come upon 5 nations, from chapter 1 verse 3, to chapter 2 and verse 3. Then the rest of the prophecy deals with Israel – and it is this aspect that we are primarily concerned with in this paper.

From the beginning of Amos’s pronouncement against Israel, he defines the reason why they are to be so judged:

“Thus saith Yahweh; for three transgressions of Judah and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; ***because they have despised the***

word of Yahweh, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked” (Amos 2:4).

This is the primary failure of Israel: “they despised the word of Yahweh”. This is ironic, because it was to Israel specifically that the Word of God was sent: “unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). Therefore, they had a unique opportunity to learn the Will of their God from God himself. But, as Hosea has it, they were “destroyed for *lack of knowledge*: because thou hast *rejected knowledge*, I will also reject thee ...” (Hos. 4:6). In an age where studying the Bible is disparaged and is seen to be for the academically minded only, we must take heed to this example. Unless we know the Word of God, we will not be able to “discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14), and our lack of such knowledge will inevitably have a detrimental effect upon our walk in life.

This can be seen in the way in which the prosperous in Israel treated the poor. It is written that: “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction ...” (Jas. 1:27). But the rich oppressed the poor:

“... your treading is on *the poor* ...” (Amos 5:11)

“... they turn aside *the poor* in the gate from their right” (Amos 5:12)

“hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, *which oppress the poor* ...” (Amos. 4:1).

“I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and *the poor* for a pair of shoes” (Amos 2:6).

This last reference is interesting – they were involved with slavery, and “sold the righteous for silver”. This brings to mind the Lord Jesus Christ, who was betrayed for the love of money and specifically 30 pieces of silver, the price of a Hebrew slave (Exo. 21:32). “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken of Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom the children of Israel did value” (Mat. 27:9).

WALKING IN FELLOWSHIP

Amos chapter 3 describes the whole family of Israel, and their relationship with their God:

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Can two *walk together*, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:2-3).

The principle is that because of the exalted position of Israel as compared with the other nations, therefore they were to be punished. They were not agreed with their God, and therefore could not “walk together” with Him.

Ancient men of old did walk with God – compare Noah (Gen. 6:9) and Enoch (Gen. 5:22) for instance. And the encouragement is given through Michah:

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to **walk humbly with thy God**” (Mic. 6:8).

In order to so walk with God, we need to walk in the Truth, because He is Truth. Hence the Apostle gained great pleasure in beholding men and women walking in the Truth:

“**I rejoiced greatly** that I found of thy children **walking in truth**, as we have received a commandment from the Father” (2 Jno. 4 also 3 Jno. 4).

And as we saw above, we cannot walk in the Truth unless we understand that Truth, and walk in a state of enlightenment and knowledge of the Will of God.

SEEKING

The word “seek” is used 5 times in Amos chapter 5, which means that it is an important theme. The primary application is to seek God in order to live:

“thus saith Yahweh to the house of Israel, **Seek ye me**, and ye shall live” (Amos 5:4, also vs 6 and 14)

The Lord Jesus Christ taught: “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mat. 6:33). There are therefore two aspects to seek for: 1. The blessings of the Kingdom of God, and 2. His Righteousness. Our desire must not be for the blessings only, but we must also seek after the Righteousness of God. As Zephaniah said: “**seek ye Yahweh**, all ye meek of the earth which have wrought his judgment; **seek righteousness**, seek meekness: it may be that ye shall be hid in the day of Yahweh’s anger” (Zeph. 2:3).

However, in Israel, it would seem that they sought the blessings of the coming day of Yahweh, but not the righteousness. Hence the words were pronounced:

“Woe unto you that **desire the day of Yahweh!** To what end is it for you? The day of Yahweh is darkness, and not light” (Amos 5:18).

Malachi spoke in a similar vein:

“the Lord, **whom ye seek**, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, **whom ye delight in**: behold, he shall come, saith Yahweh of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers soap” (Mal. 3:1-3).

Notice that here, the people professed to be seeking and delighting in the promise of the Lord coming – but when he was to come, it will be a day of judgment not blessing to them. So it was that as Amos declared, that day would be one of darkness, and not of light.

The language used here, is reminiscent of Israel's departure out of Egypt. Consider these passages:

“And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for ***I will pass through thee***, saith Yahweh” (Amos 5:17).

“I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, ***Smite the lintel*** of the door, that the posts may shake” (Am. 9:1)

“... it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, ***as by the flood of Egypt***” (Amos 9:5)

It is also interesting to note in this context:

“seek ye him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning ...” (Amos 5:8)

When Israel left Egypt, they did so in the darkness of the night, after the Angel of death passed over their houses - the doorposts of which were smitten with the blood of the Passover Lamb. They were taken out of Egypt, to become the kingdom of God in the earth. Even so, for the believers it can be said that the Lord “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13).

Again, there is a contrast to the smiting of the Egyptian firstborn, which secured the release of Israel from slavery: Messiah is Yahweh's firstborn, through whose resurrection He has secured our release: “he is the head of the body, the ecclesia, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead ...” (Col. 1:18).

The central focus in Amos, as stated above, is against the rich and prosperous. They despised the poor in the land, and they also despised the Word of their God. We must learn from their example: we must study the Word, to be workmen that need not be ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15). We must help, rather than downtread the poor in our midst. And in seeking first the kingdom – and righteousness – of God, we can then look forward to the future in hope, walking with God, and trusting in His Power to save.

Christopher Maddocks

Criticism

*A Subscriber has forwarded the following letter from the **Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come** of January 1856, which we reproduce for the benefit of our readers:*

In relation to the phrase, “*hath translated us into the kingdom*”- (*Col 1:13*), I observe that the key to the difficulty is recognised by you in *Elpis Israel*, p. 208, *London Edition*. The three verbs in verses 12 and 13, rendered “*hath made us meet*,” “*hath delivered*,” and “*hath translated*,” in the common version, are made to appear as if they were in the perfect tense; whereas the fact is, that not one of them is in the perfect. They are all in the *aorist*, or indefinite tense; and may have a reference to past, present, or future time, which can only be determined by the subject treated of. The case referred to in *Elpis Israel* is clearly an illustration. The word rendered in the common version “*hath prepared*” is in the *aorist*, and is indefinite as to time, and appears to require the future – he *shall* prepare, see *Heb 11:16*. The late Professor Stuart, of Andover, in the introduction of his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* speaking of this use of the *aorist* tense for the *future*, thus writes, page 197: “nor is this use of the aorist strange. Homer, Plato, Euripides, Demosthenes, and others employ the aorist (and also the perfect) to designate with intensity the certainty of future events. Kühner has given abundance of examples to illustrate this. The aorist is even more intensive than the perfect for this purpose, inasmuch as it denotes completed action in distinction from continuance, which the perfect more appropriately attaches to itself as an ad signification. Virtually do we find the same use of the aorist in *John 13:31, 15:6,8*. Whatever difficulties may have existed among critics in times past with respect to such a usage, it would seem that there is now no more occasion for them.”

Numerous instances might be selected from the New Testament of this usage. So much is this the case, that I always suspect the translation where the English perfect is used. I may give an instance or two which occur to me. *1Thess 1:10*, “*Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come*.” This, as it stands, carries absurdity on its face. But take Dr. MacKnight’s rendering, in which the English *present* (which is indefinite) is employed, and all is plain – “*Jesus who delivers us from the wrath which is to come*.” Again, *Hebrews 11:22*, “*Ye are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, &c.*” This, as it stands, was not true; (*Not true as to time; but quite true as to faith; for “we walk by faith, and not by sight”*- *Editor*) but Dr MacKnight, determining the time by the facts of the case, does not hesitate to employ the future in his translation, thus: “*But ye shall come to mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to ten thousands of angels, &c.*”

In *Eph 2:5,6*, “*Even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ*.” Now the verbs, “*hath quickened*,” “*hath raised*,” and “*hath made us sit together*,” are all in the same indefinite tense, and may be translated in the past, present, or future to fit the facts in the case. And what are these? In what sense

were Paul and the Ephesians quickened together *with* Christ? In what sense were they made to sit together in the heavenlies with Christ? Were the thrones promised to the apostles already erected (*Mat 19:28*)? Had the time arrived when they who were asleep in Jesus would be brought *with him* from the dead (*1Thes 4:14*)? I trow not. What then does the passage mean? I venture to suggest the following translation: “Even being dead by sins God shall quicken us together with Christ, and shall raise us up together, and make us sit together in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus.”

To return to the passage in Colossians, I might ask, what are the facts in this case? Were Paul and the Colossians made meet for the inheritance? Were they delivered from the power of darkness, or were they translated into the kingdom? If they were “made meet for the inheritance,” how does that agree with Paul’s declaration that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God?” (*1Cor 15:50*). If they were “delivered from the power of darkness,” how does that harmonise with the fact that Paul had to wrestle with its rulers (*Eph 6:12*)? The adoption of the plainly recognised principle found in the usage of an indefinite tense to denote past, present, or future time, appears to me to be the true solution of this hitherto supposed difficult passage. It might then read as follows: “Giving thanks unto the Father, who maketh us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivereth us from the power of darkness, and translateth us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Or, to bring out the future more distinctly: “Giving thanks unto the Father, who shall make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; who shall deliver us from the power of darkness, and translate us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”

That such may be our experience, as it is our hope, is the earnest wish of
Yours, in the Hope of Israel, James Cameron

“Blessed,” says Jesus, “is he that watcheth.” Now no one can watch without light. If the heavens be dark, the watchman must be provided with a light, or he cannot watch. By gazing at the natural luminaries as some professors are accustomed to do, no light can be derived, nor signs observed premonitory of the coming of the Lord. This is “the way of the heathen,” and “a custom which is vain” (*Jer. 10:2-3*). The natural heavens are impenetrably dark in relation to his appearing. The believer, or spiritual watchman, must take “the sure word of prophecy,” which is the only “light” capable of enlightening him in the surrounding gloom. This world is “a dark place” and its cosmopolites who understand not the prophetic word mere embodiments of fog. If we understand “the word of the kingdom” we shall “shine as lights in the world,” and be enabled to rejoice in the approach of “the day of Christ.” By the “shining light of prophecy” we shall be able to interpret the signs which God has revealed as appearing in the political heavens and earth. Events among the nations of the Roman habitable, and not atmospheric phenomena, are the signs of the coming of the Lord as a thief; whose nature, whether signs or not, can only be determined by “the testimony of God.”

John Thomas, Elpis Israel

The Duties of a Watchman

*“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,
but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11)*

There is a particular feature common to both our Old and New Testament readings for the day, following the *Bible Companion*. It is a feature of the Gospel that would sit very uncomfortably with many of our contemporaries, who choose either to ignore it, or to regard it as being outdated, and no longer relevant to a multi ethnic civilisation whose overriding doctrine is toleration for all – all that is, just so long as they do not attempt to foist their beliefs upon others. This aspect of the Gospel is to do with its exclusiveness - that being Yahweh’s word, it is therefore Truth (Jno. 17:17) – and by definition therefore, those notions and philosophies that are not in accord with it’s principles are not Truth, or, False. The aspect to which we refer, as indicated in our opening citation, is that of *Reproof*. Though it be considered to be politically incorrect by the Humanistic civilisation in which we sojourn, if we are to be like Paul, standing with all good conscience in declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) before men, it is an aspect of our preaching that *reproof* must be given. It is part of the gospel that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 2:16), and it is therefore part of the disciples’ duty to inform men of their true standing in the sight of God, that they might therefore repent before that day comes.

Ephesians 5:11, cited above indicates that the true believer in Christ, being a child of light (1 Thes. 5:5), cannot mix with a world of darkness. Separation is called for, but not only separation: a form of reproof is also needed, so that those who walk in darkness might have the opportunity to turn to the Light by way of repentance and baptism. And our reading in Ezekiel 33 likewise describes and emphasizes this responsibility of the Watchman:- the issuing of a warning of impending destruction upon the godless. Ezekiel was told concerning the Watchman’s responsibilities:

“If the Watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand. ***So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a Watchman unto the house of Israel;*** therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me” (Eze. 33:6-7).

Here we see the principle lying behind the required “reproof”. It is not so much for the condemnation of the wicked - although that be an involved element - for in this same chapter Yahweh states: “As I live ... I have ***no pleasure*** in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (verse 11). The purpose of reproof then, is to enable the wicked to perceive their true standing, and by so doing, bring them to repentance.

Again, Ezekiel chapter 3 provides the same instruction:

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezek. 3:17).

For Ezekiel – as with all the prophets of Old, his duty was to declare the whole counsel of God, however unpalatable it may have been, but with the prime objective being that individuals might repent before the day of judgment come.

PRINCIPLES FOR US

Although in the present dispensation, there are no divinely appointed Watchmen, we can be sure that the principles hold true in our situation as with theirs. There is a vital need in the benighted age in which we live to “hold forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:16), shining as a lampstand to enlighten any who may yet open their eyes to the things of the Spirit. There is a need, as our reading from Ephesians indicates, to give reproof to an evil and adulterous generation – and if the Truth-holders do not fulfil that task, who will? It is not enough then, to say that we believe the principles of the Gospel, and let the matter rest like that. We have a duty to fellow man to show them the way of salvation, and thereby reprove them of their sin, that they might find their way to repentance, and join us on our journey down the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. And if the duties of the Watchman are anything to go by, should we not fulfil this task, the consequences of such neglect shall be required of us.

But involved with this, is the need to give a clear and unequivocal trumpet-blast of a warning that no man can mistake: “for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. 14:8). To speak frankly in such a manner is most frowned upon in today’s generation, yet it is deemed by our Master to be a necessary work in His Service.

The aspect of *watching* is something that the Master refers to on a number of occasions. Matthew chapter 24 records his words:

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Mat. 24:42-44; see also Mark 13:34-37).

Again, the context is to do with a coming day of judgment, and the need to remain alert and ready for that time to come. But there is another sense in which Christ’s brethren need to “watch”. Not only is it to sound a warning before the coming Day of Yahweh upon all the nations – it is also to watch over the wellbeing of the flock. So the Apostle exhorted the believers at Ephesus:

“also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. **Therefore watch**, and remember, that by the

space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:30-31).

Here, the idea is that of watching over the ecclesia like a shepherd caring for the flock under his charge. Again, we do not have divinely ordained shepherds in the way that the 1st Century believers did, but the principles remain the same. There is a need to watch over, and care for the affairs of the flock of God. There is a need to stand against the wolves, whether they arise from within, or without, for the ultimate wellbeing of the flock. The task is a thankless one so far as men are concerned, for to dare to wield the Spirit's Sword against the imaginations and vanities of the flesh will invariably attract the wrath and reprobation of many who hold such things dear to their hearts. Even undiscerning elements of the flock may criticise the actions of those who withstand the inroads of apostasy – yet such a work is necessary to preserve a people ready and waiting for the appearance of their Master, the Great Shepherd. Those who refuse to withstand the wolves are but "hirelings" according to our Master (Jno. 10:12-13), who do not care for the flock, but who are solely concerned with their own self-interest.

Again, the Apostle writes

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but **let us watch and be sober**. For they that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thes. 5:5-8).

The exhortation is clear and plain: the world around us slumbers in spiritual indolence and slothfulness, and there is a real danger that members of the household of faith fall into the same position of apathy. Those who are not alert and watching, by definition, are those who sleep and are drunken, having their senses obscured by the wine of the Romish harlot. We must therefore consider our own standing in the light of these testimonies, and take any remedial action necessary.

Returning to the days of Ezekiel and other prophets, we find that though the Watchman's trumpet sounded loud and long, it went largely unheeded by the general populace:

"Thus saith Yahweh, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. **But they said, We will not walk therein**. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. **But they said, we will not hearken**" (Jer. 6:16-17).

Notice the parallelism here: the sounding of the Trumpet is equated with the exhortation to seek out the "good way", to walk therein. The ways to be sought after are "the old paths", not the new innovations devised by man. In an age which has seen ever so many so-called "advancements" in many areas of life, there are (so it appears),

a dying few who long after the “old” ways. Men are constantly striving to ‘advance’ further, both in terms of new technologies and innovations, and also in new interpretations of religious texts and their relevance or otherwise to daily living in the 21st Century. The Way of Life however, does not change either in its destination or its width. Not being designed for the hoards who seek after their own affairs and the fulfilment of their own desires, “the good way”, according to our Master is a “strait,” or “narrow” way (Mat. 7:14). It is so by design, and though men may speak evil of us for upholding the principles that define it, the narrowness is not of our making, but God’s – and His Wisdom is greater than man’s.

In Israel, as in our generation of today, there were few who hearkened to the voice of the prophets. “They said” concerning “the good way”, “we will not walk therein,” and so they remained on the broad way that led them to certain destruction. So it was written of the cry of the Watchmen:

“They have blown the Trumpet, even to make all ready; **but none goeth to the battle**; for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof” (Eze. 7:14).

Yahweh’s wrath rested upon the entire multitude that refused to hear – and how much more will it rest upon the indolence of our day? Notice also, the trumpet call of the prophets were designed to prepare the people for “the battle”. We saw this earlier in 1 Corinthians 14:8. We also are called upon to engage in the warfare of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). But how many are there amongst us who would willingly contend against the spiritual wickedness in high places, a contention which will only bring the reprobation from man?

But it was not only the people at large who refused to be moved; those who had the dominion over them also failed in their duty as watchmen:

“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber” (Isa. 56:10)

We would ask the question: What of the Watchmen of today’s generation? As we have said, though it be true that there are no divinely appointed Shepherds or Watchmen in our day, the duties remain to be fulfilled. From whence comes the trumpet-soundings of our day? Where are the contenders for the faith, girded with the armour of light going forth and wielding the Spirit’s Sword against the high pretensions of men? In previous ages, such men were moved by the Word into action, by way of “reproof” and exhortation to repentance. Can this be said of the days in which we live? It behoves us all to consider our own individual circumstances by way of comparison to the pattern revealed to us in the holy writ. We can either be the children of light, or the children of darkness – there is no supposed “middle ground”. We are either engaged in the warfare in which our Master and Redeemer was engaged, or we are amongst those who sit on the sidelines sniping at those who contend against the wolves. The choice is ours, for only we can decide for ourselves where we stand on such matters.

Christopher Maddocks

Knowledge Puffeth Up, but Charity Edifieth

The reading from the apostolic writings this morning (1 Cor. 8.) deals with a state of things to which we have no relation; but, nevertheless, develops principles that as much affect the life of saints in the nineteenth century as in the first. We have nothing to do with "things offered unto idols," but we have much to do with the things that enter into Paul's argument about them. He speaks of "knowledge" and "charity" (or love). We all, he says, have knowledge; but he gives us to understand that this is not all-sufficient in the regulation of the inner man. Knowledge, he says, puffeth up.

Every man of observation and reflection must agree with Paul as to this. Knowledge undoubtedly by itself, has the effect of inflating the pride of the natural man. You see it in childhood in its most naked form. As soon as a child knows a little more than its neighbour, it exhibits the propensity to glory over its neighbour, and feel important on that account. It makes no disguise of its feelings. The puffing up is quite manifest in its own little swelling, and in the puffs of scorn that escape its poor little windbag towards its less favoured comrades. The feeling and the manifestation moderate somewhat with the advance of life; but they both remain if no counter current of wisdom set in. Wisdom will come with adversity, and modesty and consideration for others, with Scriptural enlightenment. But if these are not brought to bear, the pride of nature will continue, as we see in the world.

There is no more prominent characteristic of the worldly mind than this puff-upedness on various grounds. The pride of intellect stands foremost perhaps—the pride of knowledge—the self-consequence of knowing more than men in common. It is a poor, beggarly, contemptible, irrational sentiment, which lowers its possessor in the ratio of its height. Nothing more thoroughly reduces a man's consequence in creation than self-assessment. It is not what a man thinks of himself, but what he is to others—what he is to God—that determine his measure; and this measure it is not he that can estimate or proclaim. Yea, no one's reckoning of it is so low as his.

Knowledge is good as the foundation, but, by itself, it is as naked and useless as a foundation would be upon which no house was built. It appeals to only one department of the mind—a department essential in its right relation, but waste and without function if not adjusted to the end it is designed to serve. The mental structure is more largely occupied with other powers and capacities; and if these are not served by knowledge, knowledge is only so much inflating gas, escaping in noxious puffs into the surrounding atmosphere instead of giving a benevolent flame of light in the darkness. "We all have knowledge," in the common and average sense: yet what is our highest knowledge that any man should be puffed up by it? Here Paul makes a statement which has mystified many people, and yet which expresses a profundity of philosophic truth that the human intellect has only in modern times begun to reach. "If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." It is a maxim of the German philosophy that "all that we know is that nothing can be known." This is a little like Paul's statement. There is no particular weight to be attached to the German maxim. I refer to it only to show that the wisdom of this world, after the deepest metaphysical borings, is obliged to call a halt at the impenetrable adamant of primeval truth, which, in still more modern phrase, it pronounces "unknowable." Paul and modern science

stand on common ground here, that they both recognise that that man only has attained true knowledge who has come to see that below a certain point nothing can be known.

But the simpler mind will say, "What is the meaning of it? Surely knowledge is the great and the attainable and the valuable thing we are to seek? Surely knowledge of all kinds abounds on the right hand or on the left:—knowledge of language, knowledge of history, knowledge of the human frame, knowledge of the earth, knowledge of the stars, &c. Surely we can seek knowledge and find it. What then is the meaning of this strange talk of nothing being knowable? It is strange to us. We cannot understand." Yes, it will seem very strange to those who look only on the proximate forms of knowledge referred to. That is not the knowledge Paul refers to, or that modern philosophy refers to. Such things as these can be known; but these are all on the surface of things. There are questions underlying all these—untouched by all these—questions as to the nature of all things in the abstract, how things exist; how they originated, what they are in themselves, after what principle or plan they are regulated, with what object they have being, &c., &c. On these questions the ancients speculated and formed theories, which were known as philosophical. Paul pronounced them "vain deceit;" and time has demonstrated the truthfulness of Paul's condemnation. Ancient philosophy is now rejected as a mass of fable. Paul declared the impossibility of knowing anything in the philosophical sense, and modern science has endorsed his position, and every man of any reflective power must see how inevitable the conclusion is. All that we can know is the class of knowledge comprehended in the term *phenomena*. We may know things and occurrences, and their mutual relations; but below this we have no capacity to go. We know there is a universe: the cause of it, the nature of it, the origin of it, the purpose of it, we cannot know. Even the extent of it is beyond our conception. We know it is related to space and constructed on a definite scale, of which we ourselves are part. We know something of the relation of some of its cunningly-adjusted forces: but this knowledge is dim and on the surface. Any man with eyes to see stands bewildered in the contemplation of immeasurable immensity on the one hand, and the inscrutable essence of the smallest objects on the other.

You may think there is little value, one way or other, in this recognition of our intellectual impotence in the presence of the mystery of creation. Experience will show you a different view on this point. It is of great practical value to know that in the old philosophical sense, a man can know nothing. It helps to inspire that true, and beautiful, and rational modesty which is at the other extreme from that puffing up of which Paul speaks. It puts a man into the child-like position of asking simply what is true, and unburdening himself of all impossible and insoluble problems as to the whys and wherefores. It clears the ground intellectually for the reception of all facts—not those only that we can see, but for those otherwise demonstrated to exist; not only for those that nature exhibits to our senses, but for those that come to us through the authenticated testimony of other men of other ages; not only for those that relate to the proximate aspects of nature, but for those that concern Nature's inner and moving Power, whose purpose is confessedly as yet unfinished in the state of things now existing on the earth.

It is here where Paul's application of the know-nothing principle differs from the polite agnosticism of the age in which we live. While Paul says you cannot know the universe philosophically, he says you can know its proximate bearings on you in a practical way,

whether those relate to the life you now have or to that which is to come. But modern agnosticism limits this position to life that now is: and says "I know nothing and can know nothing; but I know I require money and mutton for present convenience, and these I shall do my utmost to obtain. As for the life to come, I know nothing about that." Here it is inconsistent. We have just the same means of knowing of the life to come that we have of knowing the present life. It is a question of experience, and not all our own. We know the present life by personal experience, but we know much of it by other men's experience, whose testimony under conditions we receive: and we may learn of the life to come in just the same way. It comes to us in the personal witness of Jesus and the Apostles, of whom Paul was one—though "born out of due time." The nature of it can be no bar to our reception of it; it is fact, not theory, that is the guide. But modern agnosticism is invincible to facts that lie in an uncongenial direction. It is in fact the pride of human intellect agnostically manifested in opposition to God.

Paul's application of the true agnosticism is beautiful and comforting. Though a man may not know anything in the sense vaunted by philosophy, he may attain this high distinction that "if any man love God, the same is *known of Him*." We cannot know God in the sense of understanding him, any more than the scientists can understand their "force." But we can know that He exists, by the witness He has given of His existence in Jewish history, as well as by the manifest impress of His wisdom, and display of His power in creation. Knowing this of His existence, it is an easy step (more particularly when we make His acquaintance in the reading of the Scriptures), to reach the point of loving Him; for there is everything in Him to create love. We love that which is lovely: and there is no form of loveliness conceivable to the heart of man that does not exist in a bounding fulness in the Father of the Universe, as exhibited to us in nature and revelation—light, wisdom, power, goodness, excellence, beauty—ineffable. The love of God is the highest and most delightful exercise of which the human mind is capable. The faculty of reverence is at the very summit of the cerebral organization. It is highest in position—highest in nature—of all the faculties with which man is gifted. It is but poorly developed in the bulk of mankind. The present circumstances of the human race check its exercise and blight its growth. Like every other faculty—whether of music, knowledge, numbers, or what not—it requires culture to bring it out, and this culture is, as yet, among the world's unsupplied needs, and will remain on that list till the appointed revolution will give the world everywhere the right government, with power and wisdom to supply all that is needful for the blessing of mankind. Meanwhile, its culture lies in the truth. If a man will submit himself to this, the Scriptures are able to develop in him the new and glorious inner man, which is fashioned in the image of Christ. He will "love God," and "if any man love God, the same is *known of Him*"—noted by Him—recognised by Him—valued by Him—directed by Him. This is the highest position to which mortal can meanwhile rise in the universe—to be favourably regarded by the Upholder of the Universe. To some it may seem even too high for belief. Brethren and sisters, open your minds to it. It is a fact—a fact revealed—a fact attested—a fact that is true, independently of our capacity to realise it. It is a glorious fact; a fact full of power and comfort. David himself laid hold of it: "I am small and despised: *yet the Lord thinketh on me*." Christ pressed it on the attention of the disciples. "Have faith in God: He careth for you." "The Father himself, from His high and lofty throne in the heart of heaven's boundless realms, invites us to

receive it." "Look unto Me . . . to this man will I look, that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

"If any man love God, the same is known of Him." A man might formulate sublime theories of God; but this could be no ground of God's regard. What are the highest efforts of human reason in the presence of the stupendous verities of the endless ages, and the measureless immensities? "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain." His profoundest theorisings must seem pitiful to His calm and universal and unsearchable power—the mere phosphorescent flicker of dead fish in the night—ghastly creatures when the sun rises. The mortal and the finite cannot compass the eternal. When man has put forth his highest efforts, he is compelled to give in—and to sink discomfited—weary and fatigued, hopelessly baffled in the unavailing endeavour to conceive to his mind the eternal abstraction upon which the universe is built. What pleasure can such human floundering yield to God? But the love of God, God delights in. "The Lord taketh pleasure in the righteous. . . . He taketh pleasure in them that fear Him; in them that hope in His mercy." This is enough. Here is ground on which the simplest can stand with the wisest: "I cannot grasp God: but I love Him." This is the attitude of true wisdom: the place of all comfort: for, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" And God is for us if we are for Him. To be for God is to submit to what He has revealed, and choose the things wherein He delights, and to carefully walk in the way of His commandments. Abandon, then, the bootless and aching search after the unsearchable. Accept the fact—attested glorious, and all-sufficient, that God is, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—the method of which He has revealed to us in His glorious Son, the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth.

"Knowledge puffeth-up, but charity edifieth." It is edification we want,—building up in the fortitude that comes of conviction—in the noble resolves that come of faith in Christ—in the enlightened policy of life that comes with the full assurance of understanding of the truth concerning Him. Charity aims at this and tends to this, one among another—not the "charity" of modern English phrase; but the charity of Paul's language. This charity he defines, so that the subject is free from mist. It is in reality a state of mind that incorporates in itself a variety of excellent features. "Charity," he says, "suffereth long and is kind: charity envieth not: charity vaunteth not itself: is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." A state of mind like this does edify and build up and strengthen. Metaphysical hair-splitting has the opposite effect—pulls down, weakens, and distresses. Paul's advice is—cultivate one and avoid the other. He practically indicates what he means in the application he gives it. The application is, as I have already said, to something we have nothing to do with it,—the eating of the things offered in sacrifice to idols, but the principle belongs to many things. He sums it up in these words: "Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak." The essence of this counsel lies in another precept, "Consider one another." Apostolic charity kindly takes a neighbour's well-being into account in deciding its own actions, especially in the case of those whom he describes as "them that are weak." This is just the class, as a rule, that men leave out of account, and they do it on the very ground of their weakness. Well, we are to go by apostolic, and not by worldly, precept. The apostolic precept is, "Don't deal with brethren merely on the basis of knowledge: knowledge is good, but let charity

have a large place. We that are strong ought to bear with them that are weak and not to please ourselves!"

The weakness in the case refers to questions of conscience. Brethren may think things wrong that are not wrong; and if such see others do these things, they may be led to the doing of them against their own consciences, and therefore to the doing of other things that are really wrong—for a man who does what he thinks wrong, even if it may not be wrong, is liable to throw overboard scruples about what is really wrong. Paul's argument is that the example of strong-minded brethren in matters of liberty in things not wrong, but by some considered wrong, may operate hurtfully on those who are weak—even to their destruction: for he adds "through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." And his own resolution in the case is thus expressed: "Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." This is the kind of resolution to which "charity" would lead to as defined by him; and without this charity, he says, a man is nothing, even if he "understand all mysteries and all knowledge" (1 Cor. 13:2). The modern form of this circumspection will be suggested by experience. There are many things in which a man of understanding would feel at liberty as between himself and God, in which if he be a man of charity, he voluntarily curtails his liberty by a consideration of the hurtful effects liable to result to others from its exercise. His circumspection is strengthened by a contemplation of Paul's solemn words "When ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." Whatever we do, whether in eating or drinking, or going out or coming in, a man of charity will consider his neighbour, and do all to the glory of God, that the name of Jesus may be glorified and the precepts of Christ prevail. The man who pleases only himself is not a man of charity, and we have Paul's authority for it that such a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God to whatsoever degree of intellectual enlightenment or spiritual gift he may have attained.

RR Christadelphian 1883 page 253–257.

"The fact is that the very best experience at present is only a state of divinely regulated evil, and that the occurrence of evil is one of the necessities involved in the development of saints from a race of unjustified sinners. All are sinners more or less, and, 'Wherefore doth a man complain for the punishment of his sins?' (Lamentations 3:39). While all are sinners, more or less, some are forgiven sinners — those who fear and obey God, confessing their sins and forsaking them. All things work together for the final good of this class; but amongst these 'all things' evil itself has a place. God is the judge of when and how much it is needed."

(Robert Roberts, Nazareth Revisited, page 77)

Secretary's Notes

The Living Way Website:

As per the request of some of our readers, we have optimised the website to display properly on mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablet computers. We have also adjusted the formatting and appearance of the site for clarity and greater ease of use.

As a trial, we are adding Audio MP3 recordings of The Living Way magazine articles, designed for those with poor eyesight, or who for other reasons may prefer to listen to the items therein. As a reminder, the website address is: www.bibleonline.uk. We also provide weekly Sunday Exhortations, designed to instruct and edify. Latest and previous exhortations are available here: <https://bibleonline.uk/archives/20573>

Bible Bites:

We continue to present first principle doctrines as “Bible Bites” videos, accessible on our website here: <https://bibleonline.uk/archives/25189>. So far we have 27 such videos uploaded, dealing with a range of aspects of the Gospel that saves.

Youtube channel:

Our Bible Bites, and other videos on First Principle doctrines are available on our YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/@BibleLightstand>. We currently have 76 videos uploaded, each looking at various aspects of the True Gospel: all are available for free viewing, and many of the videos have accompanying booklets, available here: <https://bibleonline.uk/archives/22852>

Instagram:

We continue to provide “thought for the day” style brief comments on the daily readings, following the Bible Companion reading planner. There is one post a day, on some aspect of the readings, focussing on doctrine, but also exhortational in nature. To date, we have produced 1,223 posts, which are all freely accessible online. The link for the Instagram posts is: <https://www.instagram.com/biblelightstand/>

TikTok:

On our TikTok page, we present daily chapter and verses from our Instagram posts, in verbal format. We also host our Ecclesial Live study sessions at Liverpool library, given on alternate weeks, for further details please go to the TikTok feed here: <https://www.tiktok.com/@biblelightstand>, or contact myself at: chris@bibleonline.uk.

As always, all our activities are subject to the overriding Will of our Heavenly Father.

Christopher Maddocks

The Efficacy of Prayer

A reader forwarded this piece, source unknown, although we have found a similar report in The Daily Telegraph dated 15.10.2003:

“The biggest scientific experiment on prayer has failed to find any evidence that it helps to heal the sick.

Doctors in the United States have disclosed that heart patients who were prayed for by groups of strangers recovered from surgery at the same rate as those who were not.

The three-year study, led by cardiologists from Duke University Medical Centre in North Carolina, involved 750 patients in nine hospitals and 12 prayer groups around the world, from Christians in Manchester to Buddhists in Nepal.

Earlier, less extensive, research suggested prayer could have a measurably beneficial effect.

The new research, dubbed the Mantra project, was led by Dr Mitch Krucoff, a cardiologist, whose pilot studies had led him to believe that prayer could have measurably beneficial effects.

Over three years, 750 patients awaiting angioplasty, a procedure to clear obstructions from their arteries, were recruited for the experiment.

Names selected at random by a computer were sent to the 12 prayer groups, who began praying immediately for their recovery. Neither the hospital staff nor the patients and their relatives knew who was being prayed for.

The prayer groups included American Christian mothers, nuns in a Carmelite convent in Baltimore, Sufi Muslims, Buddhist monks in Nepal and English doctors and medical students in Manchester. Prayers were even e-mailed to Jerusalem and placed in the Wailing Wall.

An analysis of the results found that there were no significant differences in the recovery and health of the patients who were prayed for and those who were not”.

Comment:

There are several fundamental flaws in this study, which render its conclusions to be valueless. Firstly, the underlying assumption is that “God” will always answer all

prayers, with the unstated yet inferred conclusion that if He does not, He cannot. Secondly, it is considered that prayer can only be deemed answered if the answer is the one desired. Thirdly, it is assumed that prayers of a variety of different social groups will increase the likelihood of prayers being answered. And Fourthly, it is assumed that “God’s” purpose is to do man’s bidding, providing for the requirements of mortal men.

1. The Scripture declares that there are prayers that Yahweh will not hear:

“Yahweh is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Prov. 15:27).

“he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9)

“when ye make many prayers, I will not hear” (Isa. 1:15)

“therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble” (Jer. 11:14).

The Apostle John wrote: “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to His Will, He heareth us” (1 Jno. 5:14). The only way that we can determine whether or not our prayers are in accord with “His Will” is by comparing them with Scripture. So whilst the Scientist may draw certain conclusions from not being able to perceive a response to prayer, in actual fact, the prayer may not be in harmony with His Will, and will therefore go unanswered.

2. It is a mistake to assume that prayer is unheard solely because the answer is not what we want. The pattern of our Master is one for us to emulate:

“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: **nevertheless not as I will**, but as thou wilt” (Mat. 26:39).

Notice, the Master submits his request to the overriding will of the Father – and he does not assume that because the outcome may differ from his will, that the prayer has gone unheard.

Again, Daniels’ friends, when being faced with a fiery trial spake before the king of Babylon:

“our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. **But if not**,

be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods ..." (Dan. 3:17-18)

Notice again, these men of faith did not anticipate the outcome; rather they remained firm in their resolve to refuse to bow before pagan deities whatever the outcome.

3. The study in question makes a point of stating that out of 12 prayer groups there were included:

"American Christian mothers, nuns in a Carmelite convent in Baltimore, Sufi Muslims, Buddhist monks in Nepal and English doctors and medical students in Manchester. Prayers were even e-mailed to Jerusalem and placed in the Wailing Wall."

It is apparently assumed that the more groups, and the greater their diversity, the greater the likelihood of prayers being heard. However, this is not the case: all of the groups named are in the darkest apostasy so far as their relationship to the Truth is concerned, with all of them holding beliefs that contradict each other. Why should the God of Israel heed the petitions of disbelieving Gentiles – whose sole purpose is to challenge His Existence?

4. Why should the Eternal Uncreate do the bidding of mortal men, who are but dust and ashes? The Almighty is to be served by man, whereas man supposes that He is there for their convenience, to do their bidding! "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Is 66:2) says Yahweh. He will not look to men who despise the holy things contained in His Word, whose thoughts are raised no higher than the grovelling instincts of the flesh permits, and who believe that Almighty's purpose is to pander to their wants and desires.

In short, all that the study proved was that God does not pander to the desires of disbelievers – which is what some of us knew already.

Christopher Maddocks

They are unfaithful to the doctrine of Christ, who from any motive of personal interest would weaken the point of doctrine, or soften it for the gratification of their natural feelings, or for fear of hurting the feelings of the enemy, and so affecting their popularity with him-

John Thomas