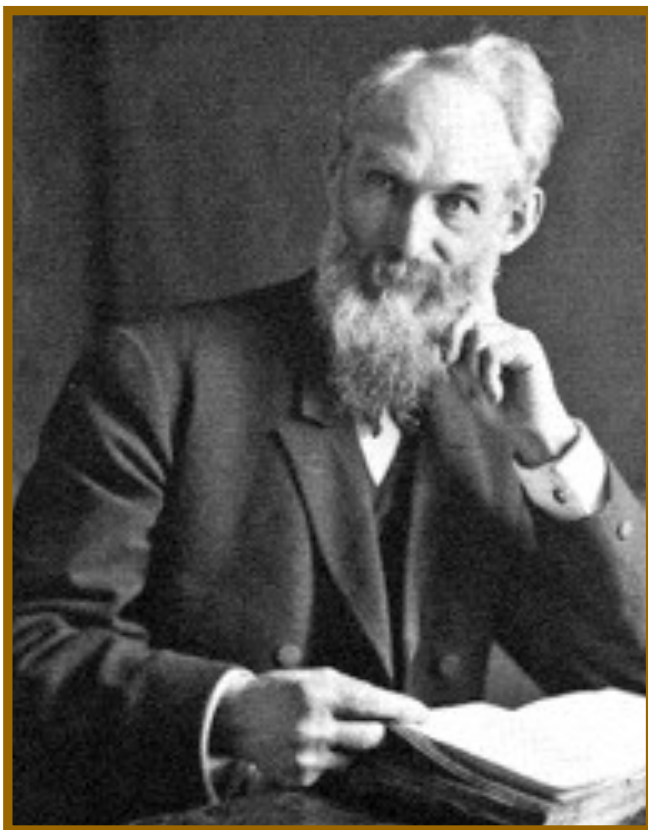


The **Christadelphian** **Advocate**

JANUARY 2018

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THOMAS WILLIAMS
His Teachings, His Leadership

A monthly magazine in defense of the "Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ" as embraced in The Hope of Israel with a view to "Taking Out A People For Yahweh's Name"

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PUBLICATION TEAM & CONTACT INFORMATION

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Function	Personnel	Address	Email & Telephone
Subscriptions and changes of address should be sent to the Treasurer.			
SUBSCRIPTIONS	Tom Carson Treasurer	8100 Three Chopt Road Suite 209 Richmond, VA 23229-4833	tcarsoncpa@earthlink.net (804) 673-7400
Material for publication, including ecclesial news, should be sent to the Editor.			
EDITOR	Jim Washeck*	12 Westwood Estates Drive St. Peters, MO 63376-1349	washecks@juno.com
Secretary	Josh Vest*	14156 Ivybridge Rd. Carmel, IN 46032-9256	joshvest@hotmail.com
Questions & Answers	Ken Wood*	3333 Kellys Corners Dr. Interlaken, NY 14747-9749	brokenwood@juno.com
Prophecy Special Projects	Art Sankey*	6303 South Starlight Drive Morrison, CO 80465-2708	awsankey@yahoo.com
BOOKSTORE	Casey King	1934 Taylor Rd. Crozier, VA 23029-2325	books@ christadelphian-advocate.org
WEBSITE	www.christadelphian-advocate.org		

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The Christadelphian Advocate

He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

Jeremiah 23:28

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Introduction



Those of us having come to the Truth aided by the pioneer writings have generally maintained a deep respect for them as instructive and inspiring sources for study and reference, able to assist us in *rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15). The primary pioneer works the Unamended household commonly turns to were written by Brethren John Thomas, Robert Roberts, John James Andrew, and Thomas Williams. These brethren were all prolific writers, and all produced and edited magazines in defense of the Truth. Many today believe the Unamended community owes its continued existence and doctrinal identity in the 20th and 21st

centuries to Brethren Thomas Williams – founder and first editor of *The Christadelphian Advocate* (March 1885 – present), and John James Andrew – founder and editor of *The Sanctuary-Keeper* (July 1894 – December 1902).

Our attention in this Special Issue is turned exclusively to Brother Thomas Williams and his legacy of adherence to the “*old paths*” (as expressed in the original 1877 Statement of Faith), through scriptural teachings and his calm, clear advice addressing the issues that then troubled the brotherhood. Brother Williams’ example truly epitomizes staunch adherence and defense of the Truth. He stood fast throughout his public life when other prominent brethren misspoke or faltered. His teachings and positions are recorded in the *Advocate* throughout the period of his editorship, which has served as the model that successive *Advocate* editors and committee members have labored to maintain throughout the years.

Brother Williams strove by pen and the eloquence of his voice to preach the Gospel – the “good news” of the Kingdom of God. He spoke out firmly against error while laboring to promote peace and unity within the brotherhood during a time of discord and division. His activities (i.e., his writings, his travels around the US, Canada and England, his lectures, debates, etc.) on behalf of the Truth and his brethren’s spiritual welfare established him as a faithful and trusted brother, an able teacher, a wise

counsellor, and a friend to all who knew him. As a Sister reminisced upon hearing of his falling asleep, “We esteemed him for his work’s sake. We loved him because he was clean, honest and true, with no mark of deception about him.” (*Advocate*, January 1914, p. 7)

We present this Special Issue in the form of an historical review focusing on Brother Williams’ writings, first-hand accounts, and written reviews reflecting Brother Williams’ many efforts to support and maintain the purity of the “doctrine” as an essential component of a united and peaceful fellowship. We trust this issue will constitute an opportunity to better understand and appreciate the role this exceptional man played in the defense and promulgation of the Truth in North America; that his commitment to the Truth, his love for his brethren, and his leadership might inspire and motivate us as our abilities allow.

We humbly suggest that Thomas Williams epitomizes the “old paths” as addressed in Jeremiah 6:16, Thus saith the Lord, 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. May we all be motivated to strengthen our efforts to *continue steadfastly in the doctrine* (Acts 2:42), and in the peace and unity to be found in the *fellowship of the Spirit* (Philippians 2:1), for surely the coming of our Lord is near.

The Christadelphian Advocate Publishing Committee



That the system of truths which is sometimes termed “the Truth,” “the Gospel,” “the Faith,” “the Hope,” etc., is a definable system, is evident from the fact that the faithful are exhorted to “earnestly contend” for it, to hold it fast, to not deny it, and to withdraw fellowship from such as, after the “first and second admonition,” refuse to abandon heresies which make it of none effect.

The meaning of the letters to the seven churches in Asia is that each church is held responsible for the existence among them of those “holding the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes,” “the doctrines of Balaam,” etc.; and that it is the imperative duty of these churches to remove from among them those who persistently hold to such heresies. The meaning, further, is that if the churches refuse or neglect to do their duty in this respect, the Spirit will extinguish the lights of the disobedient churches, which means that their lot would be that which ultimately befell the church of Laodicea. In many cases obedience to the Spirit’s requirements is an unpleasant duty, and with some persons a duty too severe for fleshly ties to bear; and the weakness (or perhaps the strength) of the flesh is seen in various flimsy excuses for shrinking from duty.

(Thomas Williams, “Truth and Fellowship,” *Advocate*, Vol. 24, May 1908, pp. 151-152)

Feature Article

Ten Things That Make for Peace

Experience is a great teacher from which we learn wisdom. Life's experiences cause us to appreciate the wisdom of the Word more fully. We see how accurately it characterizes our fallen human nature, as expressed in the apostle's declaration, *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out* (Romans 7:18 ESV). We see our need to be called to a higher standard in which the deeds of the flesh are put off. Not only must we deal with this flesh first in our own selves, but also in our interactions with our brothers and sisters in our ecclesias who are similarly challenged by the weaknesses and flaws to which the flesh is heir.

One brother who gained extensive experience in interpersonal and inter-ecclesial relationships among the believers in North America was Thomas Williams, the first editor of *The Christadelphian Advocate*.

Beginning in 1884 – the year before the *Advocate* began monthly publication, and continuing to the year of his falling asleep in 1913 – Brother Williams travelled tens of thousands of miles to minister to the needs of the ecclesias. In

The purpose of this writing is to summarize the principles (as much as possible in his own words) that Brother Williams urged upon his brethren ...

the course of these travels away from his family, often for months at a time, he stayed with brothers and sisters, getting to know them well. He was frequently called upon to conduct funerals and offer words of comfort to the bereaved. He rejoiced when he had opportunities to undertake baptismal interviews and to assist those in Adam in putting on the sin-covering Name in baptism. As part of the Christadelphian family, he performed marriages for the community. On occasion, he was asked by brethren in business together to mediate when a dispute had arisen between them. All these duties of service arose in addition to what he called “platform work,” by which he meant the responsibility for giving lectures, classes and conducting debates.

In addition to these extensive first-hand dealings with many brothers, sisters, and their families and children over a thirty-year period, he published a monthly magazine, an onerous task that led to carrying on correspondence with many others besides those with whom he met in person. As a result of this dedicated service, he interacted with hundreds of brothers and sisters in many places while developing warm affection for them, and they for him. His travels took him from Texas to Massachusetts, from Florida to Ontario, through New Jersey and upstate New York and many points between. He travelled west to Denver and California; he often visited Oklahoma, Kansas and Iowa as well as the annual gatherings in Kentucky, Arkansas, Virginia,

Illinois and Ontario. **Brother Williams encountered the wide spectrum of human personality across the hundreds of first and second generation Christadelphian families that he ministered to:**

“The Truth brings men together possessed of various characteristics. We must try and understand the different men we are brought in contact with, and adapt ourselves to their, to us, oddities, and they to ours. We have no right to separate from the body, nor to divide an ecclesia because of some natural reasons for dislike of certain personal characteristics...There are some men who are always ‘on the off side.’ If you say yes, they will say no and vice versa.

So long as the fundamental principles of the gospel are not denied nor nullified...we must adapt ourselves to the many and various forms which human nature assumes, remembering that we may appear to others as ugly as they do to us.” (July 1898, pp. 203-204, *Report on Editor’s Tour*)

Brother Williams observed that many kinds of fish were drawn by the gospel net. No man has the right to sort from the net those fish that are disagreeable to his own preferences. On the contrary, members of the body need to learn to set aside the peculiarities of our human nature, even those we dislike, for the sake of those whom God has called (1 Corinthians 12:18, 24). There is a need to understand one another, to exercise forbearance towards one another (Ephesians 4:31-32), and above all, to support one another in the race that is set before us.

From those writings in which Brother Williams shared his ecclesial experiences, there is counsel provided to follow after the things that make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another (Romans 14:19). When practiced according to the Scriptures, the things that make for peace provide no cover for compromising the Truth. The Truth is essential to the growth and prosperity of an ecclesia. The apostolic definition of the *ecclesia of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth* (1 Timothy 3:15). A thriving ecclesia which serves that purpose must cultivate peace and love as becometh brethren. In an ecclesia where strife and angry argument prevail, the truth will not prosper. Tender plants do not take root when there is intense wind and driving rain to undermine their strength and growth. They need peaceful days full of sunlight to establish themselves and bear fruit.

The purpose of this writing is to summarize the principles (as much as possible in his own words) that Brother Williams urged upon his brethren – may they provide guidance for those of us alive today. These principles are not derived from the wisdom of men. Brother Williams drew them from the Scriptures he loved so fervently. Brother Williams did not set them out as shown in the following chart – this way of organizing his principles is based on observations gleaned from his writings.

	Subject	Practical Application	Scripture
1	Approach in person	Meet face-to-face for discussion of differences, not by letter nor by tale-bearing	Matthew 18:14-17
2	Be genuine	Genuinely seek reconciliation in the form of an honorable solution to differences	Matthew 5:9 Galatians 5:13
3	Weigh both sides	Consider both sides of a disputed position honestly and carefully, not just one side	1 Timothy 5:19
4	Do not threaten	Do not make threats about fellowship in order to coerce an outcome to your liking	Ephesians 4:31-32
5	Do not reason that the end justifies the means	Do not reason that the end justifies the means when taking action	Romans 3:8 Romans 6:1
6	Discern between differences	Distinguish between core doctrines and uncertain details and do not apply the same measures to both	Proverbs 11:1
7	Lead by example but do not always compel	What you practice yourself, as a matter of your own personal conscience may not be wise to impose on your brethren, who may not be able to bear it	1 Corinthians 10:27-30; Romans 14:2, 5, 15, 21
8	Pause the argument	When a situation becomes heated and argumentative, pause, and by mutual consent, park the issue for at least one year, using the interval to focus on constructive things	Psalms 37:8 Proverbs 22:24; 29:22
9	Shine light into darkness	Do not become inwardly focused but rather maintain constant work to reach those without, not being discouraged when the response may be less than desired	Philippians 2:15,16 2 Timothy 4:5
10	Respect the limits of human judgment	Commit to Christ, as our righteous Judge in common, what is his to judge, not exercising authority where we ought not	John 5:22 1 Peter 4:19

One of the sobering warnings given to us by the apostle Paul is that those who do the works of the flesh will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Now the works of the flesh are evident: ¹sexual immorality, ²impurity, ³sensuality, ⁴idolatry, ⁵sorcery, ⁶enmity, ⁷strife, ⁸jealousy, ⁹fits of anger, ¹⁰rivalries, ¹¹dissensions, ¹²divisions, ¹³envy, ¹⁴drunkenness, ¹⁵orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21 ESV). The first three items in this list of fifteen specific things broadly fall in the category of exercising the flesh in ways contrary to God's marriage law. The next two relate to engaging in religious worship practices that are dishonoring to God. The next eight all relate to behaviors that could destroy an ecclesia if not held in check. The fact that over half of those specifically named works of the flesh relate to the divisive tendencies of human nature that can break apart the unity of ecclesias, as well as families and marriages, is a warning to all of us to guard against allowing the flesh to reign within our mortal bodies. The deceitful heart with which we are all afflicted makes it difficult for any of us to admit that the works of the flesh may be out of control in ourselves.

Is it possible to dismiss personal responsibility for strife on the grounds that it is simply a by-product of a sincere and honest desire to preserve the truth? Are we able to persuade ourselves that strife in the ecclesia was not in part caused by actions we took ourselves, but stemmed as the inevitable fallout from the lack of a correct spiritual response on the part of others? If we are able to convince ourselves that strife is always the doing of other brothers and never of ourselves, then have we not become deceived by our own heart? Let us seek to be *blameless and harmless as the sons of God* (Philippians 2:15) in all things, having *a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men* (Acts 24:16). **Brother Williams recognized that taking personal responsibility for difficulties that arise in an ecclesia is the first step towards improving them:**

“Many of our individual and ecclesial troubles are the result of our own faults, and by a little forethought and practical management may be obviated. Especially is this the case in many internal strifes in the disciplinary affairs of the Ecclesia.” (February 1886, p. 284, Editorial)

This touches upon another over-arching principle expressed by Brother Williams in this manner: “One who can pocket principle for the sake of policy might well be carefully watched.” (July 1891, p. 187) At that time in America, the word “policy” was used where today we would be more likely to say “politics.” In the particular case to which Brother Williams was referring, there was a brother who was willing to break bread with Christadelphians in Kansas but not in Iowa. Those brethren whose interest is in politics ahead of principle need to be urged to return to principle and shown that more excellent way by personal example.

What are the characteristics of acting “for the sake of politics”? The answer, sadly, can be provided by reference to the state of politics in this

world. A political spirit is manifested by overmuch concern with political things – with constitutions, votes, numbers in favour, numbers against, winners/winning, losers/losing, taking sides, and so on. The politics of this world are concerned with issues of power and control; the principles of the Truth are concerned with giving glory to God. An apolitical spirit in which principle is paramount is manifested by loving concern for the wellbeing of all the Lord's people, not this or that faction thereof, and upholding the principles of truth and righteousness without respect of persons. Principle is not partisan in the sense of loyalty to a party or to a faction, whereas politics is. In keeping with the wisdom which is from above, principle is “without partiality” and “without hypocrisy.”

The ten principles identified in the chart that Brother Williams urged upon his brethren through his writings remain relevant for our ecclesias today. They are:

Approach in Person

Brother Williams counselled against the use of letters to spread reports and against relying on such letters to draw conclusions about brethren.

He saw the need for direct, face-to-face discussion in order to understand what brethren truly believed and taught. On occasion, he found that the reports he had been given, laying grave charges against brethren, were not substantiated when he met with the brethren in person. (The wisdom of the need for approaching brethren directly is taught by the Master in Matthew 18:15-17.)

“In letters we had seen and in words heard certain brethren were charged with believing in partial inspiration, immortal emergence, etc. We made it our business to personally question the persons charged, and we were courteously and frankly informed to the contrary...Ah! My dear brethren, you are going beyond your jurisdiction and encroaching upon the rights of him whose prerogative alone it is and whose omniscience only can search the reins and hearts. When zeal outruns discretion it becomes a cruel tyrant, and one possessed of such zeal will be the greatest sufferer.

In spite of the discouragements, the brethren seemed determined to press onward in the work of the truth. They naturally feel keenly the injustice done them in the circulation of unfounded reports about their standing in the Truth. Smite them not. Allow not others to smite them. Letter writing as a means of sending out charges are witnesses of a tale-bearing spirit; and to receive such letters or in any way to countenance them is to partake of the ‘evil deeds’ of the talebearer (2 John 11). (March 1892, pp. 56-57)

Please pardon the apparent presumption, but another bit of good advice to every ecclesial scribe is: Do not write many letters. An ancient Scripture might be paraphrased pointedly so as to read, ‘O that mine adversary had written a letter.’ It is really surprising to note how many

errors are to be found in letters when written in times of trouble. Holy Scripture enjoins moral courage, prompts ‘face-to-face’ interviews when misunderstandings arise; pusillanimity [timidity, cowardice] has recourse to another line under cover of an envelope and a postage stamp...Pour out your heart’s affection when and where and as you will, but always keep in close reserve all that might offend or grieve.” (Practical Points, July 1894, p. 305)

One of the weaknesses of letters, emails, social media, etc., especially those written in anger, is that they often contain errors that are easy to put into print but hard to say when looking directly into the eyes of those condemned. Once an allegation of wrongdoing is committed to print and circulated, it is very hard for the issuer to retract it, even if there was a desire to do so. Pride can become an obstacle to retraction and retractions never have the same impact as the circulation of the original allegation.

Be Genuine

There is a responsibility to work for a solution to any cause of evil or blame. That work of reconciliation is immeasurably complicated if the weakness is first held up to “public gaze”:

“It is a mistake for brethren, as soon as they think an individual member, or an ecclesia is blamable in any particular, to hold them off at arm’s length; and shun them without trying first to remove the evil, if evil there be, and if not to find it out. Even a heretic is entitled to a ‘first and second admonition’ before we ‘turn away.’ Wherever there appears to be anything wrong – individually or collectively – with those of “like precious faith,” there is the place to go to work in a spirit of love, coupled of course with firmness, ever bearing in mind that ‘he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. Those who are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak’ and not hold up the weakness to public gaze. (April 1885, p. 31)

Brother Williams gained experience as a peace-maker in bringing estranged brothers and sisters together for different reasons at different times in different ecclesias. One such issue arose between the Doon and Galt ecclesias in Ontario. The issue itself was not disclosed, in keeping with the need for discretion, but in due time it was resolved. Brother Williams took note of one of the essential conditions for resolving differences:

“Where the Truth is paramount, and there is the patience and forbearance it calls for, it is not a hard task to settle the little difficulties that occasionally arise, and remove all obstacles standing in the way of hearty co-operation and fellowship.” (June and July 1888, p. 148, Editor’s Tour Through Canada and the East)

There must be a genuine and sincere desire to achieve reconciliation for the Truth’s sake, together with patience and forbearance. Where there is a

common desire to be reconciled and an earnest need for it, with goodwill the obstacles can be removed and full fellowship restored. Brother Williams expressed his feelings towards those for whom he wrote in this way:

“...in the hope that it may rescue a few, whom, God grant, he may be worthy to meet in the kingdom of God, and with whom he may be blessed with the power of endless life free from the pangs of sickness, sorrow, pain and death.” (From the original Preface to *The World's Redemption*)

If brethren deeply and thankfully seek this blessing for their brethren even as for themselves, then the way to remove “the little difficulties” should not be a hard task.

There have been times of controversy when the following form of question has been asked by one brother of another, “When did you stop beating your wife?” The question is not genuine because it is based on the presupposition that the brother was guilty of sin before the matter could even be heard. The question is intended to trick the respondent into a confession of guilt regardless of the manner in which the question is answered. In the language of Scripture, this form of question is Herodian in character because the Herodians joined the Pharisees in seeking to catch the Lord in his words by posing disingenuous questions intended to entangle him (Mark 12:13). When brethren ask this manner of question in seeking to resolve differences, they betray the same lack of sincerity and genuine dealing as those who questioned our Lord. **Brother Williams himself experienced this kind of antipathy:**

“...although detectives have been at work, as it were, stealing in on us in various ways, through letters in disguise, from different quarters and at different times, trying in every conceivable way to get us committed to something that might be used against us...” (June 1891, p. 155)

Weigh Both Sides

Brother Williams experienced many times the efforts of one side of a dispute to bend his ear and gain him as their ally. But he also recognized that listening to only one side of a dispute would never be sufficient if his goal was to act as a peacemaker and restore amity where enmity had arisen. Furthermore, he warned against the syndrome of judging from afar. Distant meddling is particularly prone to making mistakes in judgment when one is far removed from a situation and, at best, only in possession of partial information. It could be formulated as a Williams' law: **The further away from an ecclesia a brother is, the less reliable will be his understanding of the circumstances of the ecclesia:**

“Under few conditions is it wise to involve a brother at a distance or another ecclesia in local troubles. Ordinarily, it is in exceedingly poor taste to inform an outside party of inside infelicities...If you reflect a moment before you write to a person away from the scene of the action you will see how utterly impossible it is for him to render a safe

decision one way or another. Very often an error is made by those who are most intimately acquainted with every person and circumstance; how much more prone to mistaken judgment then must he be who has only your side of the matter as a basis for opinion. Do not ask for such an expression any more than you would give one under the same conditions.” (July 1894, p. 305)

“How can we be expected to publish in full such a mass of writing, all on one side of a matter? For it is never safe to decide a difficulty upon the hearing of one side.” (Editorial, March 1897, p. 309)

The following view was expressed at a time when there was intense controversy over how to handle cases of marriage outside the household of faith. There was a group in the ecclesias who called for those committing this transgression to be cast out of the ecclesia. Brother Williams himself did not counsel such a course and was the object of severe condemnation as a result:

“One side of the question having had a hearing, it is only right that the other should. We do not believe that everything pertaining to the Truth should be set forth with one-sidedness. It is to be feared that many have forgotten that it was by ‘looking at the other side’ we escaped from “orthodox” darkness into the light of the Truth.” (January 1897, p. 9)

Is it an act of weakness and vacillation to allow both sides of a question to be examined? Some believing strongly in their position might act as though it was. Brother Williams believed it was essential to look at the other side of a question. Doing so will mean that a paper that publishes more than one point of view is not uniformly rigid on all points, but is willing to allow brothers and sisters to consider a range of evidence and interpretation in order to reach their own conclusions. This method of conducting a paper requires that the editor have confidence in the intelligence and understanding of his readers, that they will make appropriate decisions of conscience having considered both sides of a question in the light of Scripture. Conclusions reached after such thoughtful consideration are more likely held with firm conviction and set forward with moderation.

Do Not Threaten

Those who differed from Brother Williams on the question of making marriage outside the household of faith cause for withdrawing fellowship (as previously noted, Brother Williams did not counsel such a course) ratcheted up the intensity of their criticism of *The Advocate*:

“Let the brethren do what seems to truth-enlightened minds best in each individual case, in advising, exhorting, instructing and reproving, but stop, do stop, this habit of threatening and inviting divisions over almost every question, small or big, real or imaginary. And to you who seem to be trying to make believe that the *Advocate* is championing a great

apostasy, please stop your house-top talebearing, and give THE ADVOCATE a chance to go on in peace..." (November 1897, p. 332)

The Lord's table is a precious gift to which we have been called as partakers. Because it is the Lord's table, we must not act as if it was *our own*. Threats are never made over something that one holds in honour and treats with dignity. If our fellowship together is precious – and the Lord's table serves as one tangible demonstration of our fellowship – then it will never be the subject of threats, being too highly esteemed to be so used. When it is necessary to suspend another believer's association with the Lord's table, that action is taken in the conviction that it is what the Lord himself would do, as set out in his express commandments, with the intent that it should bring the offender to repentance and restoration.

Threats are a work of the flesh that abound in the political discourse of this world. They are a classic bullying tactic intended to intimidate the recipient and coerce agreement through force of human will. It is good for us to always remember that *the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God* (James 1:20 ESV), and again, *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord* (Romans 12:19). It is the will of God that we must delight to follow and not the will of man. Brother Williams often cited the Scripture, *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good* (Romans 12:21). Rather than issuing a threat, is not a better alternative to direct attention to what is written in the Word and urge brethren to keep it? Let the word of God speak to compel action rather than the threats of man.

Do Not Reason that the End Justifies the Means

In "self-defense" of the Advocate's position on how marriage outside the household of faith affects fellowship, Brother Williams noted the danger of reasoning that the end justifies the means:

"There is no use beating about the bush, brethren, there is as much inconsistency in some Christadelphians as can be found anywhere in the world; and when a brother who takes a public stand, or a paper that fears no man stands in the way of what some imagine to be their rights, you will have to go a long way to find stranger methods to remove them than are adopted (perhaps, with sincerity, upon the dangerous principle that the end – supposed to be a good one – justifies the means), by some who ought to know better." (November 1897, p. 328)

The rationalization that the end justifies the means was a form of the reasoning falsely charged against the apostle Paul by those who slanderously reported that he said, *Let us do evil, that good may come* (Romans 3:8). There is no place for that kind of inverted reasoning among brethren.

As demonstrated in the Lord's parable of the "speck" in the eye (Matthew 7:3-4, ESV), it is much easier for us to see inconsistencies in our brethren

than it is to recognize inconsistencies in our own positions. The lesson, therefore, is to be less concerned about finding and pointing out the inconsistencies of others and working instead to address our own. Over the former we have little control and therefore we bear little responsibility for them; over the latter we have much control and bear much responsibility for them (Luke 12:48).

Discern Between Differences

“Toleration, therefore, must find a place among brethren. They must have patience enough to discuss differences without passion; and if they cannot agree on differences that do not affect their salvation they must learn toleration and in patience dwell together in peace. In matters of this kind it is often the case that the ‘weak’ are compelled to bear the infirmities of the ‘strong’ instead of the reverse.” (Editorial, July 1894, p. 314)

There can be a tendency to escalate differences that arise among brethren to matters affecting fellowship. Even in those instances where there is clear scriptural sanction for withdrawing from brethren, it is never the first and always the last step in a process in which every effort is made first to seek restoration of one who has erred. It is essential to avoid rhetoric that escalates a difference of view to the point where it is no longer possible to “discuss differences without passion.”

The Unamended ecclesias have reason to be particularly sensitive to acting patiently and kindly on matters affecting fellowship on account of our own history. Representatives of our ecclesias were on the receiving end of a deliberate initiative to withdraw fellowship at the time the 1898 amendment to the Statement of Faith was adopted. We have no desire to treat other brethren in the manner in which our ecclesias were treated by those who imposed block disfellowship from afar, or who stood by while others imposed it. The heavy-handed method used then, in wielding the Statement of Faith as a cudgel, was not how we have learned Christ. **In relation to the issue at the root of the 1898 division, Brother Williams wrote the following appeal for wisdom and moderation before it had escalated beyond the point of no return:**

“A. and B. agree that there will be a resurrection, both of the just and the unjust, and that both classes will be judged, one rewarded and the other punished. Very well. They agree, too, that all judgment has been committed to Christ. He knows who are the just and the unjust. Very well. Be thankful that you can agree so far; and if you should try to decide from the Scriptures where the Judge will draw the line as to the unjust and should not agree, don’t quarrel about it. Let the judge draw the line – He will do it anyway – have enough patience to allow a difference on a matter that can in no way affect you.” (Editorial, July 1894, p. 314)

There are certain questions over which brethren might have an inclination to quarrel that should be committed to Christ to determine, which we do not need to resolve ourselves. In this category also lie questions related to the exact sequence of events and alignment of nations at the second coming of Christ. As long as there is agreement that events will move forward to the great consummation in which the Kingdom of God is set up on earth and Christ will reign from Jerusalem, the exact order in which events unfold and the roles taken by each nation can be left as interesting matters for study, but not as matters of dogma affecting fellowship.

Lead by Example but do Not Always Compel

There are times when brethren might make certain choices of conscience that they believe are important to their life in Christ. One brother might not, as a matter of conscience, attend a wedding in which one of the couple is in the household of faith and the other is not; one brother might not partake of alcoholic beverages at any time or place (except for the wine on Sunday morning); one sister might strongly disapprove of any representation in her home that has to do with Christmas. All of these issues arose during the lifetime of Brother Thomas Williams. His own personal position on the first two was strict and his position on the third one more accommodating. The point is that he did not believe it was wise to press any of these issues forward and demand others follow his own conscience because he realized, according to the principle of Romans 14, not all brethren would be able to bear it. With respect to marriage outside the household of faith, he asked those who condemned him for his leniency (as they perceived it) on the question as to its bearing on fellowship...

“Is it not a fact that we have been asked in several cases to officiate at marriages of believers with aliens, where too, the alien was friendly to the Truth, as we had at marriages with believers, and that we refused? Is it not a fact that we have been invited to attend such weddings in a private capacity and that we have refused to go?” (November 1897, p. 328)

One’s actions can be the most appropriate way to bear witness to one’s understanding of the will of God. Follow one’s own conscience to do what is right. Lead by one’s own example; but do not compel all brothers and sisters to be so minded. This setting of example, on the one hand, is the best that can be done to uphold a principle; while on the other hand, it does not interfere with peace in the ecclesia in deference to the needs of those with different consciences.

Pause the Argument

Early in his work, Brother Williams observed that brethren could sometimes become so bogged down in controversy that it became an obsession out of all proportion to our calling in Christ. Consider the nineteenth century analogy he drew:

“In many cases it is the result of dabbling too much with the machinery to the neglect of the work it is intended to perform. Dr. Thomas’ advice at one time, in a case of this kind, was in substance, ‘Drop the subject for twelve months, and proceed with all your might to teach the truth to your perishing neighbors. We will venture to say that where there is plenty of work of that kind to be done, if it is attended to, internal squabbles will be reduced to a minimum, if they do not cease entirely.’

...Let those then to whom our remarks may apply try the experiment herein suggested, and we doubt not, experience will teach them its wisdom, and the fruit of the spirit will find better soil in which to thrive to the honor and glory of Jehovah’s name, and the salvation of those concerned.” (February 1886, p. 284, Editorial)

The advice, drawing on the counsel of Brother Thomas before him, was to drop the subject for a year and focus on the constructive work of teaching the Truth. This pulling back from dwelling on controversy was found to be an excellent cure for ecclesial strife and a source of strength to the ecclesia. Our human nature being what it is, it is possible to take hold of controversy like a dog with a bone, and refuse to let go. Brother Williams’ analogy, perhaps inspired by his own intervention with the printing equipment on which he and his family prepared the *Advocate*, was not to dabble with the machinery overmuch lest one forget the greater work at hand to be done.

Shine Light into Darkness

Brother Williams believed that the most important single antidote to ecclesial strife was keeping a keen focus on the responsibility to declare the ways of God to a dark and perishing world, a task to which he was personally devoted.

Ecclesias tend to follow a kind of “life cycle maturation” curve. A young ecclesia is filled with zeal and keen to declare its convictions to the larger world in which we dwell. As the ecclesia matures, the zeal begins to ebb, and looking after the affairs of the ecclesia itself appears all-consuming. An example of this early phase was provided by the Berlin and Waterloo ecclesias in Ontario:

“Several years have elapsed since any intelligence has appeared in THE ADVOCATE from here. Brother and Sister Renshaw and myself have been connected with the Doon Ecclesia, but becoming alive to the great responsibility that rests upon us in proclaiming that everlasting gospel to the dying sons of Adam, and which is our only balm in this day of universal darkness, we have formed an ecclesia to be known as the Berlin and Waterloo ecclesia, meeting every Sunday morning at 10:30 A. M. on the corner of King and Queen Streets, Berlin. Submitted by E.H.E. Chart, Secretary-Treasurer.” (July 1895, p. 163)

Did you catch the reason why this ecclesia was formed? To become “alive to the great responsibility that rests upon us in proclaiming that everlasting gospel to the dying sons of Adam...” A prominent intersection in the city was chosen as the rented site for meeting in order to be accessible to as many of the townspeople as possible.

Evidence of the ebbing process is provided by Brother Williams’ account of the ecclesia at Hamilton, ON. Over the fifteen years he had known the ecclesia, he noticed a change:

“The older ones, who had hold of the helm when I used to visit Hamilton, seem now to stand back, possessed of a feeling that it is no use trying to get the people to listen, and seeming to be saying to themselves, ‘We will give our attention to ourselves.’ This is a mistake. We have always found it so. Long after some have concluded that ‘it is no use,’ many have come out of darkness into light. It is ours to go on with the work, regardless of present visible results; and generally speaking, attention to ourselves at the expense of the alien breeds crotchets, discontent and, at last, serious trouble.” (July 1898, p. 203)

The point that Brother Williams observed is that when ecclesias lose fervor for their mission as evangelists (bearers of the good news), they have time to give attention to things within, that “at last” breed “serious trouble.” To what extent have the challenges our ecclesias face in this century arisen because our focus has become overwhelmingly inward with little attention to connecting the message of the gospel with a dark and perishing world?

Respect the Limits of Human Judgment

Brother Williams was poignantly conscious of his own weaknesses and those of his brethren. He therefore sought to avoid extremes and to let his *moderation be known unto all men* (Philippians 4:5). Synonyms for the word translated *moderation* in this passage are gentleness, fairness, patience and a mild manner. In the circumstances of America, in which there is increasingly sharp polarity among rival political parties, the greatest casualty of their relationship to one another is *fairness*. Fairness – the attempt to fairly represent one’s adversary’s position and speak of it in a balanced way – is sacrificed in undertaking communications in order to win the hearts and minds of the voters. “Dirty tricks” and attack ads are used to make them look bad through distorted, incomplete and/or inaccurate accounts as to what the opponent actually stands for or said. The impression of strength is conveyed through angry and forceful words. All of these works of the flesh are the antithesis of the meaning of the word “moderation” as used in the AV. Is there not a danger that we in the body of Christ could mimic the political methods of the world, being desensitized to their incompatibility to our calling in Christ owing to their prevalence in the media daily?

“There are two dangers confronting us in the sifting which seems to have been taking a fresh start the last year or two. One is that we are in

danger of being frightened from doing our duty by a fear lest the cause of truth will suffer in the eyes of the world and be brought into contempt, and the other danger is that in our zeal for what seems to us to be the purity of the Truth, and pure fellowship based upon it, we may go farther than the Truth permits us to go in this evil age. God is perfect and our ideal formed by what is revealed of Him might sometimes be too high and therefore impracticable for weak, fallible man in this evil age in which we live.

In striving to reach an ideal, we may create a standard too high for the majority of those who are called out ones, and who are expected to find place in the Ecclesia. Evidently the only course to pursue is one that will guide us safely between extremes. We are not allowed to compromise the fundamental principles of the Truth, and yet toleration is absolutely necessary to some extent among those who cannot be expected to reach to the heights that others can who have had longer experience and given closer attention to certain features of the Truth.

To those who seem to us to be going to the extreme in adding to and formulating new statements of faith, we would say, 'Be careful; you may strangle many weak ones for whom Christ died.' To those on the other hand, who are distressed with the controversies that have arisen from time to time, and are urging these as a reason for throwing the doors wide open, as it were, in the matter of the basis of fellowship, we would say, 'Beware: for you may compromise principles of truth, and thus become contaminated as the ecclesias were to whom the seven epistles were written.'" (Editorial, May 1897, p. 154-155)

One of the healthy things in any discussion over the question as to where a godly balance lies is to recognize that there are dangers in wrongly heading off in one direction as well as the other. If the danger of strangling weak ones for whom Christ died is openly acknowledged and recognized, it serves as a check on extreme tendencies in the direction of narrowing those to be received as brethren. Likewise, if the danger of the policy of "throwing the doors wide open" is grasped, it serves as a check on the extreme position of indiscriminate fellowship and the degradation of the Truth to which it leads.

"On the matter of fellowship many are dissatisfied with the uncertainty of things... So far as the late controversy is concerned, it is desirable that an understanding be had as to whether certain local withdrawals are to be considered universal, or is it to be understood that co-operation and fellowship be had on the same basis as obtained previous to the controversy. It is well known that the *Advocate* claims and always has claimed that the question whether or not a few Gentiles out of Christ are to be raised from the dead to judgment should not be made a test of fellowship.

Actions and words elsewhere, however, indicate differently, and this is one thing many would like a clear understanding upon, with the hope that what has been done is considered only to apply locally. While to make the test of fellowship different in one locality from that of another is quite inconsistent, it would not be so sweeping in its effects; and, possibly, if a clear understanding to this effect were reached first, it might lead to a removal of the obstacles locally. O that it might!" (February 1896, p. 42)

Indeed, one of the things that troubles some brothers and sisters in our age is "the uncertainty of things" as it relates to fellowship. They have a strong need to see clearly defined lines and boundaries and are agitated when they perceive lines that are blurred. Who has been given the authority by which fellowship boundaries shall be determined? The answer is, that the Father placed that determination in the hands of His Son. Brother Williams recognized that while a uniform and consistent fellowship practice would be the ideal, it was not always possible to achieve. One solution to this dilemma is to recognize the limits of human authority in matters of fellowship.

"Here is one faction demanding that before an applicant shall be received into fellowship he shall be expert in the Book of Daniel sufficiently to identify the man of sin and declare whether he is now historical or prophetic. Others, we are sorry to learn, are inclined to make the marriage question a test of fellowship and cause division because all cannot go to such a severe extent. It is time to stop and think, or we shall rend the body into pieces reaching out our hands to do what is the prerogative of the righteous Judge alone to do." (October 1896, p. 257)

The circumstances of fellowship in this age will always be imperfect because all partakers of fellowship in Christ are imperfect sons and daughters of God. There will never be pure fellowship until the marriage supper of the Lamb in the Kingdom of God. While that realization does not form an argument for willful imperfection, it does make us "stop and think." **There is no Scripture which conditions receiving one another as brethren on the practice of absolutely perfect fellowship in this age, for if there were, we could not fellowship even ourselves.** The issue then becomes, what degree of imperfection in fellowship ought to be allowed? While what Brother Williams practiced and urged on others is worth considering, it is only one man's judgment and, like all fallible judgments made by men, needs to be submitted to the authority of Scripture.

To the extent we are able to be honest with one another, it is necessary to admit that there is no single Scripture that sets out the precise parameters of fellowship. Nor is there an angelic messenger to tell us what ought to be done. Fellowship decisions are therefore matters for earnest Bible study and

fervent prayer, undertaken in humility and gravity, recognizing each decision impacts the little ones for whom Christ died. **To what extent can we extend compassion and understanding toward decisions taken by other ecclesias? Can we grant our brethren sufficient goodwill to acknowledge that they are seeking to do the right thing for Christ, even as we, and that their motives are honorable? This goodwill is the essential starting point for a healthy and honest discussion of fellowship principles and practices. God does not lay upon us a burden which we are not equipped to carry out.** We do not know the exact understanding of the Bible and degree of rectitude in the sight of God of each one who comes before the table of the Lord; nor are we required to. We do not know the exact moral condition of each one who comes before the table of the Lord and what sinful thoughts he or she may harbor; nor are we required to. What we are required to do is to examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28, 31) for the only heart we can know and change is our own.

Although they were written in relation to the division that occurred over hundred years ago, the words of Brother Williams have continuing relevance today as we consider the divisions that continue:

“The desired end, that of a united body, has not been obtained after all the earnest work in that direction; but a tacit agreement to differ has allowed both sides to go their way in an endeavor to do what they both believe to be right. This is not the best one could wish for, but it is the best that circumstances seem to favor us with, and since it might have been worse, we must be thankful, and do the best we can as we see the path of duty before us.” (Editorial, December 1911, p. 319)

Let us pray for and hasten to the day when perfect fellowship is brought to pass in the presence of the Lord Jesus when he reigns on the earth. The apostle Paul provided an excellent role model for lesser servants who followed, *And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat* (1 Corinthians 4:11-12). Brother Williams also was one who worked with “his own hands” in the production of the *Advocate*. As a measure of the stature of his fullness in Christ, when he was reviled, he blessed, and when he was defamed, he intreated. In 1897, after enduring many calumnies for his work in the Lord, Brother Williams was able to say from his heart:

“We pray (God) will grant us the mercy our weaknesses need, and the blessings His goodness in the gospel has promised to bestow.” (November 1897, p. 332)

James Farrar, Grimsby, ON

This material is based on Bible School lessons taught at the Kentucky Bible School in July 2017. All references are taken from The Christadelphian Advocate unless otherwise indicated.

Brother Williams – An Appreciation of His Work and Character

(Advocate, Volume 30, February / March 1914, pp. 25-27)

It is hard to realize that our Brother Williams is dead. We had trusted that he might be spared for the work of the Truth until the coming of the Lord, which seems so near at hand. It was our Brother's desire to live. He had no wish to die. He was a lover of life. And it appeared possible that he might live. He was of an equable and somewhat wiry temperament, accomplishing much with apparently little effort. Had he spared himself he might have been spared. But he felt the pressure of the Master's work. He saw how very much there is to do, and how few there are with proper qualifications for doing it, for it is the fashion of the flesh that everyone should seek the things which are his own, and not the things of Christ. He was unremitting in his labors unto the door of death.

There are some persons of whom it is hard to imagine as being locked in the cold stillness of death. So alert mentally, so active bodily, in whose countenances the sunshine of intelligence beams so brightly that it would seem

How often, how readily, and how effectively he has responded to the demands of the Truth – as an editor, as an author, as a debater and speaker, in public and in private, in season and out of season.

that it could not fade. So much alive while they are alive that it would almost appear that they must ever live. But like the sunset light upon the mountains it is soon gone, and the gloom of death's night settles over the valley of life. **Brother Williams was such a personality.** There were times when listening to his masterful expositions of Scripture that he seemed to be almost more than common clay. It was like listening to one of the holy prophets of old. But, "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." The flower intelligence, the flower eloquence, and the flower gracefulness, are touched by the finger of death and they wither as the delicate and fragrant flowers wither at the touch of the frost.

Brother Williams was a man of such ability that he might have passed among the world's favored ones had he been so inclined. He had the ability of a skillful, worldly advocate and natural scholar, eminently qualified to attain the world's success, to claim its honors and golden offerings, but he humbly and discreetly "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." His lot was cast among all sorts of odd and lowly people. Conceiving how "successful" Brother Williams might have been in a worldly profession, the sincerity of his self-abnegative devotion to the Truth's unpopular cause shines out with an admirable luster. Endowed with the ability to become a talented advocate at a worldly tribunal with its visible emoluments, he

preferred rather to plead “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” and to share in the present inconvenience that thereto pertains.

For many years he has scattered the Gospel seed far and wide. He has been instrumental in engendering in men’s hearts an intense love for the God of Israel. His work is written in the hearts of many. We doubt that there was a more sincerely loved man on earth.

As a defender of the Truth of the Deity, Brother Williams reminded one of David, the valiant warrior of Judah, the man after God’s own heart. As with David, his sling and his sword were ever ready for the enemy. He was a mighty yielder of the “sword of the spirit” against spiritual Philistia. His tongue was “coals of juniper and arrows of the mighty” against all the progeny of the harlot superstition. His critics were usually too slow of thought to keep pace with his keen and active intellect, and his very alertness and zeal for truth was made the occasion of his reproach.

I am strong in the conviction that the position Brother Williams occupied on Responsibility was the only consistent and therefore the only Scriptural and defensible one. And it is devoutly to be hoped that the light which he kindled on this subject may not be allowed to become extinguished, though it may have been given a somewhat disproportional prominence by our beloved Brother.

We are sure that our Brother has been a faithful steward. How often, how readily, and how effectively he has responded to the demands of the Truth – as an editor, as an author, as a debater and speaker, in public and in private, in season and out of season.

We have listened on so many occasions to his masterful expositions of Scripture and helpful exhortations; it is sad indeed to think that we shall hear his eloquent voice no more in this life. But let us so walk that to meet him in the Kingdom, with all who sleep in Jesus, may be among our happy anticipations.

And now our Brother sleeps a quieter sleep than he ever slept, and doubtless in the morning of the resurrection it will seem sweeter – a sweet and brief oblivion – free from the cares and the pains of a sin-cursed world, until the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in its beams. And then the exultant shout shall be, “O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?”

Berton Little

Thomas William's 1893 Position on the Emerging Responsibility Question

The "Responsibility Question" became a point of contention between brethren in the early 1890s, and as the following article demonstrates, Brother Thomas Williams was attempting to avoid compounding it as at that time it was not impacting fellowship. In the December 1893 issue, he explained that he had somewhat reluctantly addressed the subject in the combined August / September issue under the title of "The Responsibility Question," in which he wrote,

"The fact that the subject is now receiving considerable attention prompts us to say a few words by way of explanation of our attitude in relation to this subject since we have been publishing the Advocate. To do this we must go back nearly thirty years, when we learned the Truth principally by the aid of the 'Twelve Lectures.' We accepted the views therein set forth on the subject of responsibility and have seen no reason to change since... After a personal interview with Brother Roberts and an exchange of thoughts upon the responsibility question, it was made clear that while there was not perfect accord, no fundamental subject was affected... That all do not see eye to eye upon it is manifest. It is one of those questions upon which we may never perfectly agree till the Lord come to settle it. Still, with well-balanced minds and in the absence of a possibility of mischief by misrepresentation, no harm can now grow out of a brotherly exchange of thought and a careful examination of the texts that bear and are supposed to bear upon the subject. For that purpose the pages of the Advocate are open to a limited extent."

Brother G. T. Washburne contributed a semi-regular column to the Advocate in those early years under the heading of "Practical Points." The initial comments below have been taken from the December 1893 Practical Points article written in response to Brother William's "The Responsibility Question" article referenced above. Brother Washburne's comments are followed by Brother William's "Remarks by the Editor," within which he relates that he had received "...several letters, some fully approving of what we set forth [in the August / September article] and some disapproving." We trust readers will find his remarks revealing as to the Advocate's moderate position on the emerging responsibility question.

As the "Practical Points" article that follows below demonstrates, disagreements over whether or not "enlightened rejecters" would be resurrected for judgment became more contentious and began to seriously impact the Christadelphian community at large. (This was prior to the publication of Brother J. J. Andrew's "Blood of the Covenant," published in February 1894). The matter was considered an "open question" during those pre-Amendment years, and the Unamended brethren maintained that

position while those that accepted the 1898 Amendment to the Statement of Faith elevated their belief to a test of fellowship. As the separation grew more contentious, positions on both sides hardened. It became difficult for Unamended brethren to continue considering it an unqualified "open question" when Central brethren began to insist that:

- 1) The basis for resurrection to judgment is "light" and not the blood of Christ through covenant relationship*
- 2) God "will" (instead of "may") raise for judgment some not in covenant.*
- 3) The "responsible" rejecter – "namely those who know the revealed will of God," will "be judged according to their works, and receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad" – BASF clause 24 [whereas Christ said those who "believe not" were "condemned already" – John 3:18-19].*

We see that the preference of both Brothers Williams and Washburn was to not compound the debate, but rather to devote their time to proclaiming the Gospel. Unfortunately, the Central fellowship continued to press the matter. It was with sorrow, yet zeal for the Truth, that Brother Williams continued to expound on this subject that had divided the Christadelphian community over a non-essential matter that should have remained an open question.

– Editor

Practical Points

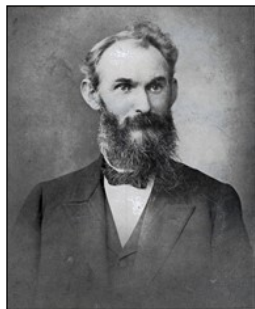
Current conditions among us force this "point" of iron into my soul, and I must send it away, praying God that it may prove of service in helping to preserve the peace and unity of the body of believers in which I am glad to find a place by the privileges afforded in the gospel of the kingdom of heaven...

As I understand the situation, all the brethren believe in the resurrection and judgment of two classes, called in the Scriptures "the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). **It is a pity that good men and true, who are so closely united in and identified with every other elementary principle of Spirit-attested truth, whose lives are in all respects lovely and desirable through daily contact with Jesus the beloved of the Father, are not content to stop there and labor together in love till the Master comes.** If we are to discuss the "responsibility question" again, where shall we find ourselves? Shall we agree any better after we go all over the old arguments, quoting at each other the familiar texts? Will our love for one another increase as we again wax valiant in fight? The promulgation and defense of the "things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" is the primary object for which the *Advocate* is published...

Dear Brother Williams, do not allow it. I know your views; perhaps you may remember that mine are not the same. Has this fact interfered in the

least with our hearty fellow-service for the Truth of God? You must answer, "Not in the slightest degree." Well, so my heart's desire is on behalf of my brethren. Do not open the pages of our magazine for further discussion of the question; do not print any rejoinder, but rather continue the advocacy of that grand and glorious proclamation, "Christ is coming to reign on the earth." With this as an inspiration we can press on in the good work. Discord in the camp is hurtful to us and an immense advantage to the enemies of the cross of Christ. Advertising our disagreements is a poor way to encourage the weak ones of the flock to persevere in the strait and narrow way. By this I do not mean that we are to allow error to come in to sap the foundations of our faith, and for the sake of peace keep silence and tolerate it. Far from it I assure you. **The present question as held by both sides leaves room for fellowship without impairing any fundamental principle...**

G. T. Washburne



Remarks by the Editor: The above just received this twenty-fourth day of November. It strikes the "point" exactly. It expresses the view we have taken for nearly thirty years. It pointedly sets forth the attitude we have strictly maintained editorially since we started the *Advocate*. It is the best plan to follow. It has been followed without compromising the Truth and can still be. There is plenty of good work on the main line and in the Truth's highway in the defense of the cross and the crown and in preparing the bride for the coming of the Bridegroom. **We do all believe in the resurrection and judgment of**

the dead, both of the just and the unjust; and what if we do not know and cannot all see alike just where to draw the line of responsibility? God knows and He whom God hath appointed knows and will do right. If He has not so revealed it as to make difference impossible, is not that a reason why we should not be dogmatic?

But why did we allow the question opened and thus deviate from a plan followed successfully for nine years? Importunity is probably the word that answers the question. Questions from here and from there that indicated a desire to hear the question of responsibility explained; rather strong grounds taken by some and criticized by others, in view of which silence on our part was liable to be misconstrued in a way humiliating to us... **Under this uncomfortable pressure we referred to the subject. Still, while we opened the door we did not enter. We simply stood at the door and gave a few words of warning against what dangers we saw growing out of certain actions.** But we did say the door was left open, and so some have entered, and what they have said we only have heard; and if it were allowed to be heard further it would to some be quite irritating. So we have only allowed to go into type what one good brother said to us. This has been in

type for nearly two months and our rejoinder is now in type. We are almost inclined to order it “distributed.” But it is a little brotherly talk, and our part has been more a correction of what seemed to us errors that are independent of the subject of responsibility. So we let it go; but, since “Practical Points” have proved quite practicable during our nine years’ editorial experience, we resume, and will press on with the good work of the Truth, leaving out all minor and unessential questions that have any tendency to cause unnecessary strife. Thank you, Brother Washburne, for “Practical Points.” The door is open for more, and the room will soon, God willing, be larger, to accommodate more of such welcome guests.

Thomas Williams

(Advocate, December 1893, Vol. 9, No. 12, pp. 273-276)



Resurrectional Responsibility

The four questions and answers addressing resurrectional responsibility below reflect Brother Williams’ positions and response to the Central fellowship’s adoption of the 1898 Amendment to the Statement of Faith. Brother Williams played a critical role in the resurrectional responsibility question, perhaps saving that portion of pre-amendment doctrine from disappearing entirely. We trust that brethren will appreciate the moderate yet frank tone of these answers in that they have direct application to our situation within the greater Christadelphian community today.

A number of questions have been submitted to me...questions asked by several persons that more or less cover the same ground... I have taken this course tonight in order to show how far I agree with the questioners – to see how nearly we agree first, before dealing with exceptional differences. So far, I have been dealing with the resurrection, which is dependent upon a fixed revealed law, and now, in answering these questions, I will try to show that there is no inconsistency in conceding possible cases of resurrection by God’s right and power outside of, and not predicated upon, the fixed and revealed law which includes only resurrection for probationers, predicated upon covenant relation under the law of the Spirit of Life...

Question 1 – In dealing with the texts advanced during the Responsibility discussion, you have shown that none of them teach the resurrection of those who are outside of the bonds of the covenant. Do we correctly infer from this that you believe that resurrection affects those only who are in the Name of Salvation?

Answer: Yes; but on account of other facts I must explain. In dealing with these passages of Scripture which have been given to prove resurrection, our brethren on the opposite side, by attempting to bring Gentiles into the same resurrection, have endeavored to prove it by using the same texts. An

intelligent brother said: “While I believe in a resurrection for some who are not in Christ, I am ashamed to see portions of Scripture which are used by brethren to prove the resurrection of Gentiles so sadly misapplied. I don’t believe there is a single passage of Scripture to be found that will prove it, but I think there is sufficient implication in the Bible to allow of forming an argument in support of it.” That brother... became so disgusted with the misapplication of Scripture to Gentiles that perhaps it has enabled him to see that the question of a third-class resurrection has a very slender basis to rest upon...

Question 2 – Would you fellowship any who believe or teach resurrection of any unbaptized Gentiles?

Answer: First, so far as belief is concerned – yes; if they come under the exception expressed in the address of the presiding brother. What is that exception? It is in harmony with Brother Andrew’s well-considered answer in the “Rallying Point:” “If it be recognized that Adam brought death upon the entire race by his sin, that baptism into Christ frees men from the permanent power of death, and that such baptized that die will rise through their relationship to Christ, but that it is possible God may, by His independent power, raise some others, I should not consider it a barrier to fellowship.” That is my position. I could not express it in better words.

Question 4 – How will you act toward those (both in England and America) who believe and teach that light is the ground of responsibility, and those who believe that unbaptized Gentiles will be raised to the judgment seat of Christ?

Answer: My “plea for unity” explains that. The Birmingham brethren having departed from the truth on Adamic condemnation, and tampering with the old Statement of Faith, and weaving into it resurrection for Gentiles for “good or for bad” out of Christ, on the same basis as those in Covenant relationship, makes fellowship impossible...

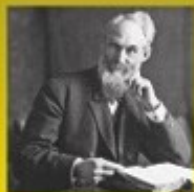
Question 7 – You state in your “Plea for Action,” page 4, “That God has the right and the power to raise and punish Gentiles without infringing upon the law of resurrection and judgment, which comprehends all those who are in Christ. What evidence is there of any freedom from the “law of sin and death” apart from the “Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus?”

Answer: Not any; and I am not admitting the resurrection of those in the past or in the future, should there be such cases, upon any revealed basis, but as a matter dependent upon God’s prerogative, and as a matter of miracle; not even confined to or based upon enlightenment. It is certain they are not raised upon the basis of “The Law of the Spirit of Life...” All in this law will be raised upon a basis of intellectuality and morality based upon the “Law of the Spirit of Life.”

(Life and Works of Thomas Williams, “Resurrectional Responsibility,” pp. 175-179)

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- 2 indexes (1885-1957; 1985-2001)
- a search file
- the *Fellow-Labourer Magazine* (all but one volume) – Britain's Unamended magazine produced from 1908 through June 1917 when it was combined with the *Advocate*
- a *Readme* file – offering a brief description of the contents

The Archive is a joint project between the *Advocate* and Brother Peter Hemingray of *The Tidings* magazine, who offered his services in scanning and converting the individual files and preparing the DVD. The quality of the files is varied as the quality of the original issues vary: some issues clearer than others; some scanning mishaps. The DVD is available from the *Advocate* Bookstore for \$12.00 (price includes postage and handling).

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