

A Critical Look at the WCF

An overview of the apparent philosophies and practices of the organization known as the Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation

This article was originally written in 2000 for the Truth Gleaner web site. We have added some editing and updates for this posting on the Republic, Missouri Christadelphians web site in February 2007, but most of the original content remains the same. Though seven years have passed, we believe that what is stated in this article is still extremely relevant, and by developments that have transpired during the past few years, WCF has only helped to further confirm the concerns that are summarized in this article.

Introduction

For many years now (since the 1970's) a group known as the Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) has operated in the midst of the Christadelphian community. This is an organization whose recent stated focus (as of July 1999) is summarized by two main objectives:

1. **"Helping the Household of Faith,"** and
2. **"Preaching the Truth to the World."**

Many of us have received the occasional "WCF BULLETIN" in the mail that outlines the various activities of the organization, such as "seminars," missionary work, a tape library, and other various odds and ends. The information found in the bulletins gives a professional and authoritative appearance. But despite the attempt to come off as a valid and a sanctioned service, the things that are stated as well as not stated in these "bulletins" have been very troubling to this writer. As one considers how WCF chooses to package itself and what the group has to offer, the conscientious believer should be struck with the feeling that what this organization represents is not according to traditional Christadelphian beliefs and practices.

As this writer has kept track of the information that Williamsburg has offered about itself (through bulletins and also their Web Site), we have been struck by the extreme "churchiness" of this group. What do we mean by churchiness? The activities that Williamsburg has involved itself with as well as the way it chooses to administer such practices are identical to the way that the apostate churches around us work. WCF offers "*seminars*," family counseling clinics, "*career planning*," and teacher training programs patterned after modern religious and professional methods. These are not activities that were ever practiced or promoted by our earlier brethren nor do they find scriptural example. As a central organization they consider themselves to be experts on the above mentioned subject matter and proclaim it to be within their ability to go into other ecclesias and "*equip*" the members of the ecclesia "*with the skills and tools that enable them in the doing of good works*" (quote from the July 1999 "WCF BULLETIN").

When this writer began to consider speaking out against this organization he thought that what he was about to do was a "new thing". Though we have had many conversations with others who are opposed to the existence and practice of WCF, we have seen very little in the way of open discussion and opposition to WCF. While growing up as a teenager in the 1980's I was aware of certain efforts by what was then known as "The Concerned Brethren," but I paid little attention to what was being said and who was saying it. I recently went through several volumes of "The Sanctuary Keeper," edited by the late brother Jim Stanton, in which I found that there in fact was once open and zealous opposition throughout the Unamended community to what was considered to be "the problem of WCF."

Addressing the issue of WCF, bro. Stanton made many note worthy statements, one of which we would like to quote at this time. *"It is a task that we do not particularly enjoy, one that brings regret and disconsolation. We would much rather publish material which is uplifting and instructive. Controversy is unsettling and destructive to some. But we are determined that we shall not be among that "few good men that do nothing". The truth that we as Christadelphians hold is being sacrificed on the altar of churchism. WCF is not contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints in apostolic times; it is contending for social organization, sliding to the practices of the church, choosing to obliterate sound and vital doctrines which really define us as a community. Rather than boldly affirming our faith, WCF, in acting as a blind leader of the blind, taking us further and further away from the singular and peculiar beliefs which marked the birth of the Christadelphian faith in the mid-1800s."*

What was true when bro. Stanton penned these words is even more so now. Since periodicals such as "The Sanctuary-Keeper" and "The Voice of Truth" have ceased from publication there has been a lack of attention, or spotlight, to boldly expose the unscriptural influences of WCF and other related activities. Where have such elder brethren gone? - Who after the manner of Paul, are not afraid to speak "boldly" concerning the matters of our faith. Without the presence of such criticism, WCF has been able to grow, prosper, and influence a very impressionable and uninformed younger generation. With the current "Laodicean" attitude that exists in the Brotherhood towards controversy, nothing stands in the way, besides the return of our Lord, of the continued growth and influence of what this writer considers to be as an apostate influence.

As we continue with this overview, we wish to address our concerns with WCF under three main headings:

1. Doctrine & Fellowship,
2. Organization & Practices, and
3. Interpretation of the Apocalypse.

We believe that the above-mentioned headings involve critical problems on the part of WCF that cast serious doubt as to whether the organization truly is a "*Help to the Brotherhood*," and if they really are in fact "*preaching the Truth*." It is our contention that upon serious thought and investigation that WCF will be found to be just the opposite of what its intended goals comprise.

1. Doctrine & Fellowship

The word "doctrine" defines teachings or a principle of position taken by a group or body. When we consider WCF, they have done well to skirt the issue as far as direct statements are concerned. Do they exclusively claim to be Unamended, Amended, or do they endorse the principles of belief held by the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith? When one considers the list of seminars offered by WCF we see little emphasis placed upon doctrinal issues (i.e., first principles of our faith) but great emphasis placed upon social issues such as "Family Living", "Marriage", "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Believers," "Career Planning," etc.

We will deal with the problem of such subject matter and the use of "seminars" later, but if one even casually considers what WCF has to offer the Christadelphian community it is far from being related to the strengthening of "Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ". This writer could easily go down the street to our neighborhood Baptist Church and get the same things. They offer little if any doctrine, but plenty of advice on "good living." Where does WCF stand on matters of the Atonement, Baptism, "immortal emergence", what is their position on the "Enlightened Rejecter", and other such beliefs that define the historical stand of the Unamended Community? We have also not seen promotion or mention of the writings of our earlier brethren (such as Thomas Williams or J.J. Andrew) in their teaching efforts. WCF has done little over the past twenty plus years to define themselves on these issues and we should recognize that this is **no doubt by design**.

Though we have little written to go on as far as understanding WCF doctrinally, it is through their dealings with fellowship and whom they involve with their teaching duties that speak to us louder than words ("*judge them by their fruits*"). If you review the teachers who have been chosen to participate in their WCF seminar programs you will notice quite a potpourri of individuals representing differing fellowships have been involved. This writer has recognized several names, noticing a few participating members who are Unamended, many from the Amended community, as well as a well-known member of the CGAF.

Some may find this a beautiful example of "interfellowship cooperation". One that is "*earnestly contending for the faith as it was once delivered unto the saints*" and "*holding fast to sound doctrine*" can only find such a practice confusing and a direct threat to purity of faith, doctrine, and fellowship. Brother Stanton referred to those who promoted such practices as "*The Christadelphian Church of the Open Door*". This writer feels that both the use of the word "church" and "open door" are currently very fitting. If we are truly educated in the differences that exist between these fellowships how can we endorse such open disregard to purity of doctrine and fellowship? Are we to believe that these individuals do not break bread with each other when they meet together? Does not true fellowship go beyond the breaking of bread by who we associate and work with in the name of the Truth?

“The Judaizer’s – Another Gospel”

Though WCF as an organization has provided very little information or insight to their doctrinal positions in the past, the recent publishing of the book – "*The Judaizers – Another Gospel*" (by Kyle Tucker – a member of the WCF committee) by WCF has revealed a great deal of the apostasy that is tolerated and now is being promoted by that group. Some of the doctrines promoted include:

- ◆ An overemphasis of the subject of grace in opposition to the true balance of faith, grace and works.
- ◆ That all that has been done for us in the way of salvation occurs at our baptism.
- ◆ That we have “eternal life” now.
- ◆ That we are in the Kingdom now.
- ◆ That God’s Kingdom started at Christ’s resurrection – therefore is already in existence.
- ◆ That Christ is does not now fulfill the role of High Priest to the Household.
- ◆ That we do not need to pray in Christ’s name when offering up our petitions to God.
- ◆ The labeling and misrepresentation of those who hold to traditional Christadelphian beliefs and practices in opposition to the new things being promoted by individuals such as Kyle Tucker as “legalists” or “Judaizers”.

We can go on and on here, but these are the kind of heinous doctrines being promoted by the publishing efforts of WCF. Though they have in the past offered very little regarding their position in relation to the Unamended community we would hope that by this short listing of errors contained in the mentioned book shows a distinct and clear move away from the teachings of traditional Unamended or Amended Christadelphians. As we mentioned earlier, the listed doctrines are what we think of hearing at a local church rather than what is taught by Christadelphians.

An Ecumenical Movement

Concerning the use of the word "church" to describe these practices, brother Stanton also referred to WCF as an "Ecumenical Movement". What is meant by such a term? "Ecumenical" describes, as defined by Webster's, a "*promoting or tending toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation*". Such a thing was never a goal of our earlier or "pioneering brethren". They did in fact teach and promote the "Truth", but they did not participate in efforts to bring together differing sets of beliefs under the umbrella of "brotherly love and cooperation", or the popular rallying cry we hear stirring among the Christadelphian community - "UNITY". No doubt the scriptures teach "unity", but unity on what basis? Is holding to the name Christadelphian enough to qualify unity? WCF and other liberal portions of Christadelphia have even stepped across that barrier by openly endorsing those of the CGAF. Or, is not unity based upon **believing the very same vital principles** and putting such beliefs into practice through the bonds of brotherly love and cooperation. We believe the latter definition of unity to be both scriptural and historically sound, not the former. Unfortunately, many may agree with our definition of unity but at the same time are willing to compromise what constitutes "vital principles".

Those of WCF who put together such an effort may in fact see "eye to eye" on matters of faith and practice, but is their version of the "Truth" so watered down that they can find nothing to disagree about? And if they do disagree, is their no sense of shame in that what they are participating in (a compromise of the Truth) is very similar to the apostatizing that took place in the early ecclesias? No doubt the main concerns of the early ecclesias did not come from outside but from those within who were "*wolves in sheep's clothing*". How did these "wolves" operate? Did they immediately bring in blaring "false doctrines" or did they work subtly under the protective camouflage of "peace and love"?

When we consider chapters two through three of Revelation (letters to the seven ecclesias) when do we find them condemned for lack of unity? If one admits that they are a lesson for our day as well, it will be recognized that those who were condemned were mainly rebuked for allowing false beliefs and practices to exist in the ecclesia and/or allowing a "luke-warm" attitude concerning a zeal for the Truth. The condemnation and rebuke that was directed to a few of the Ecclesias was based upon the fact that some of them were allowing false beliefs and influences to exist in the ecclesial setting. *"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam....so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly"*.

WCF is not "boldly affirming our faith" but merely introducing confusion on the importance of doctrine and proper fellowship practices by what they conveniently do not say (as well as by what they promote) and by who they choose to represent their interests through seminar and missionary work. Members of WCF themselves have stated that it is not the intended purpose of the organization to deal with doctrinal issues. Such a position is not excusable if they truly wish to be a service to the brotherhood and a light stand to the world. How can they avoid serious doctrinal issues if they claim that they wish to preach the Truth to the world? Do we wish for WCF to represent the Christadelphian community in "Preaching the Truth to the World" if they are not willing to take specific doctrinal stands? Are we willing to let WCF represent us by their promotion of the apostate beliefs as found in the "Judaizers" book and their opposition to tried and true Christadelphian beliefs? It is clear they desire unity and have taken it upon themselves to cross those barriers regardless of what the rest of the Unamended community believes, or even the desires of the conservative portion of the Amended community for that matter.

We should not see WCF as holding to any specific set of beliefs (though they give strong evidence of their apostate leanings by their promotion of the "Judaizers" book) but a melting pot of this and that. If a little common sense were used here, it will be seen that such tactics are what cause more division, rather than the fault being placed upon those who zealously oppose an "Open Door" approach to doctrine and fellowship. WCF's obvious goal is unity among the differing Christadelphian fellowships as well as the CGAF (this is further seen by WCF having in the past offered a seminar "The One Body", taught by one who claims to be of the Amended fellowship.) Do the Unamended, Amended, and CGAF communities collectively represent "The One Body"? For those who answer "NO" to the question, our point is understood.

Missionary Efforts

We continue to receive pieces of information from WCF regarding the various "missionary" projects that are being promoted under the Christadelphian name. One of particular note is from the Williamsburg Foundation for Spring 2005. It is clear that nothing changes with WCF as it continues down the path of open fellowship, professionalism and ecumenicalism. On the back of one of the flyers we noticed that donations to WCF can now be made through *The United Way*. We find it very difficult to comprehend how any group under the name of "Christadelphian" can justify such an association.

Along with the newsletter came a DVD called "A Thousand Tongues to Sing!" – a 50 minute long documentary of preaching efforts in Nigeria. It is an extremely professionally done effort – even with a background soundtrack to reflect the mood. We see little or no difference between this and the procedures used by the Evangelical groups whose bottom line is a plea for funds by

the manipulation of emotions; for those who have seen previous WCF presentations (e.g. Russia, India, Ireland) what we speak of will be clearly understood. It is difficult to tell how much or how little these “converts” know of the Truth in that much time is spent watching and listening to the Nigerian Christadelphians sing and little exposure as to what they understand regarding the Faith of Abraham.

The presentation actually is documenting and promoting the efforts of the *Christadelphian Bible Mission* (CBM) – an Amended organization. An interesting moment comes on the video when one of the “missionaries” comments on their need for young people to help in their preaching efforts. The comment is made that all you need to know is a “basic understanding of first principles” to be a CBM missionary. It should be understood that it takes much more than knowledge of a few basics to teach and nourish others upon a firm and sound foundation – especially those of an entirely different culture and educational background.

In regard to the doctrinal soundness of the CBM we have one of their newsletters that document the sad death of the child of a Gambian couple. It should be noted that the CBM offered comfort that the dead child (not baptized) would be resurrected to “*enjoy a full, healthy and active life in the Kingdom, free from the suffering he experienced in his so short and tragic life.*” But yet WCF wants us to donate our money to support this kind of teaching – the promotion of false hope?

Due to the connection these “converts” have with CBM/WCF one has to feel sympathy for them as to what kind of “truth” they are being exposed to. This is only a small sampling of some of the issues with WCF’s “missionary” work but this should be enough to show that WCF seems to hardly have the best interest of the Truth in mind.

2. Organization and Practices

Does the Christadelphian community need a central organization such as Williamsburg to offer "help" to individual ecclesias? We wish to quote a statement made by the brothers and sisters of the North Little Rock Ecclesia in the September of 1986 and one that we think is still pertinent today. Under the title of "An Open Letter to the Unamended Christadelphian Community" we quote, "*Some other WCF activities also suggest a desire on the part of its directors to make major changes in Christadelphian practices which have served us very well for nearly 150 years. We refer to their offerings of seminars, family counseling clinics and teacher training programs patterned after modern religious and industrial methods. Brethren, this seems to be getting dangerously close to "professionalism" and centralization of influence, which Christadelphians have avoided like the plague since our inception. We are convinced that the Master did not intend for his household to become a highly organized, centrally financed and directed machine. This kind of centralization is precisely what led to the development of the Roman Catholic Church. We submit that a doctrinally united community of autonomous ecclesias, served by brothers who have developed their knowledge by personal study and experience is the Scriptural basis (II Tim. 2:15; 3:14-17).*

This writer finds the organizational practices of WCF frightening. They do not reflect the ecclesial independence modeled by the first century ecclesias. By it's self appointment of "experts" to teach "seminars" it is an exact duplication of methods used by both the corporate

world and the churches around us to establish "trained professionals" and "clergy" who are considered to be experts in their field based upon their "official training" through universities, seminaries, and workshops. Do such worldly methods have any place in the brotherhood?

First of all, the use of "seminars" is a very dangerous concept to this writer. The use of the word itself is reflective of professional and official training, and directly connected in meaning to the Seminary, which represents a school for religious training. As a former schoolteacher, this writer was required to go through all kinds of "seminars" and "workshops" as a part of our required "professional development" training. This "training", both in its subject content and in the way it is organized through "brain storming", "group discussion", "motivational exercises", "sharing of personal experiences", etc., is impregnated with humanistic philosophy and problem solving techniques. These techniques are fundamentally flawed and do not fit the direct and clear way that the Scriptures teach us that matters of Truth are to be dealt with. These are the very same techniques that WCF has adopted. One WCF bulletin (December 1999) gives basic outlines on how their seminars are to be conducted, and the very same techniques that this writer has seen through our own personal work experience are found in the outlines that WCF gives.

Such an activity also implies that ecclesias are not capable on their own to use the Word of God as a guide to solve whatever problems may and do arise in the workings of any given ecclesia. There is nothing wrong with ecclesias seeking help from an outside source when problems or questions seem too big to handle, but historically we have seen that ecclesias could find help from other brethren whom they trusted as capable workers in the Master's vineyard because of their own study and demonstration of a Godly life, and not because they were officially trained or experienced in the art of "family living", "leadership skills" or other worldly "feel good" concepts.

As Christadelphians, we have historically described ourselves as a "lay movement". This means that we are not officially trained in our learning of the Scriptures, nor do we have a trained clergy to teach the community. As a group, amazingly we have needed very little organization in the putting together of all the various activities that our community has been blessed with. From the yearly establishment of Bible Schools, to the weekly Sunday School class, brethren of all walks of life and ability have carried out these activities. From farmers to doctors, brethren have combined their collective talents gained from their personal devotion to the scriptures to keep the work of our Master going. This has worked very well for our community since its inception, in the absence of any centralized organization. We have never had an "elite" group of teachers who profess expertise in any given field. Our Bible Schools, gatherings, and weekly classes typically use a variety of teachers as they have the opportunity to do so. These teachers have never been officially trained in matters of the Truth, their only qualification being a self-motivated acquaintance with the scriptures.

Worldly Credentials

WCF openly promotes the worldly "expertise" of its seminar teachers (or "facilitators") by including a summary of qualifications with every person. For example, this brother is a "facilitator" for the latest (Dec. 1999) "Ecclesia Building" seminar:

"Brother _____ is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, who has worked Professionally in the field of counseling for 14 years. Areas of experience include Family therapy, individual therapy with adults, adolescents, and children, group therapy, treatment of depression, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), domestic violence and alcohol and drug problems."

For those who are familiar with the psychological training that goes into such a profession as a Therapist, know that it is completely humanistic in how it deals with modern day problems. It is totally incompatible with how Christadelphians are to view human behavior. What does such training have to do with the Truth? NOTHING. The scriptures very plainly teach us how we are to deal with such problems. A "thus saith the LORD", is a definite and speedy answer to our problems, not "let's work out our feelings through counseling and discussion". If one depends on a "thus saith the LORD" then we should see little use for one who is trained in humanistic therapies.

Do we now need the "*wisdom of this world which is foolishness with God*" in order to be "qualified" to help brethren that may be dealing with these issues? What was the official education and occupation of Jesus who was by far the best in understanding and teaching how to deal with the problems that the fleshly mind creates? He was simple carpenter by profession. Speaking on similar terms, brother John S. Peake once stated about Jesus, "*He was the greatest practical psychologist who ever lived, for he knew what was in man*". But, by the trend that WCF is promoting in the providing of worldly credentials for their teachers, we see that based upon resume alone Jesus and all other worthies of old would not even compare to the worldly prestige that WCF seems to hold so high. We would like to give another example taken from one of WCF's seminars called "Career Planning Workshop":

"Sister _____ has over twenty-five years of experience building relationships in the software consulting, business brokerage, retail sales and software industries. In her consulting practice, she has coached small business owners in all phases of business management. She received her MBA from Simmons College Graduate School of Management. _____ is currently Vice President of Marketing at an established career management firm helping a diverse client base meet their long and short-term career goals."

This is all very sad indeed. To think, that in order to be qualified to help others we must hold a degree and have lived a long and successful career in our chosen profession. IS THIS SCRIPTURAL? "*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*" and, "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*". Why? "*That no flesh should glory in His presence*". (I Corinthians 1:19,27,29)

What qualified David to be King of Israel? He was nothing more then a lowly shepherd. What qualified several of the apostles to teach the Gospel message to the then known world, men who were nothing more then uneducated, rough cut fisherman? What qualified John Thomas to revive apostolic Truth, he who had no initial interest in religious matters but was a medical doctor by profession? Brethren, we know what qualified them. "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*" is the answer given and is what these men had. The scriptures do not state "a thorough understanding and prestigious degree in the wisdom of this world is the beginning of

knowledge". The answers to our problems are not found in worldly wisdom, which has created all of our modern problems in the first place, nor is it found in the poisonous mix of man's wisdom and God's wisdom, which is what WCF is blatantly attempting to push on us.

Instead of WCF's promotion of worldly credentials having the desired effect of impressing us, it should make us run the other direction.

Women "facilitators"

It should also have been noticed, by our last quote from the WCF bulletin, that Sisters are being used as "facilitators" in charge of various seminars. How can this be reconciled with the teachings of Paul concerning the place of women in the ecclesia? *"Let your women keep silence in the ecclesias: for it is not permitted unto them to speak...and if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the ecclesia" (I Corinthians 14:34,35)*. In this day and age of "liberated women", we see that such ideas are not popular. The Christadelphian community has followed this command, not in the attempt to make sisters "second class citizens", but providing the decency and order required by restricting the speaking and teaching duties of the adults and young adults to be handled by the brethren.

Now WCF might think to fool themselves and us by not calling these women "teachers" but instead using the term "facilitators", but let us call it for what it is. They are the leaders of these seminars, and as leader they no doubt are responsible for the organization and presentation of teaching material. And if the scriptures are quite clear on the duties of the sisters in the individual ecclesia, what scriptural right do these sisters have in promoting themselves to other ecclesias outside of their own? This only seems to compound an already very serious breach of scriptural commandment.

Seminar Subject Matter

As we have already mentioned, very little can be found among the WCF seminars concerning issues surrounding definite doctrinal positions (besides their promotion of "The Judaizers". If they did, we no doubt would have even more to be concerned about considering the way that WCF has aligned itself with the Amended and CGAF communities. But the very fact that WCF is virtually silent on specific matters of the Truth is a problem in and of itself. What we believe defines who we are and the less we are allowed to understand one's beliefs the less we truly know about them individually or collectively. WCF understands that there are definite doctrinal positions that separate the different fellowships. By saying less, an attempt is made smooth over the differences, giving the appearance that we are all one big happy family.

Much of the subject matter that WCF does cover with their seminars is just as disturbing, if not more so, then what they do not teach. Some topics include (according to the Dec. 1999 bulletin):

1. *"Adventures in Family Living,"*
2. *"Spouse Building,"*
3. *"The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Believers"* (title borrowed and slightly altered from a best selling book found in the business world), *and*
4. *"Resolving Conflict in home, workplace or ecclesia."*

These are some of the very same classes that are dealt with at the Baptist Church that is only three blocks from our home. What do these things have to do with "THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST"? Where in such subject matter do we see the Promises made to Abraham, or help in coming to a better understanding of our relationship to Deity through the workings of the Atonement? Is it not the foundations of our faith that give us the proper perspective and conviction to face the wickedness and uncertainty that plague this world in which we live? No doubt, if the foundations are weak then some of the issues mentioned above will be a problem. But such worldly style seminars only deal with the symptoms and not the root of the problem, the real problem being a lack of conviction in the strength of the Gospel message.

There is absolutely no question that our moral walk in the Truth is of the utmost importance, but do we need these kind of "workshops" which are based upon humanistic concepts to help us better exemplify the character of Christ? A simple reading of the Sermon on the Mount, or a study of the lives of the faithful who are outlined in Hebrews 11 will no doubt do us much more benefit. Even a consideration of how our earlier brethren 100 years ago lived the Truth will better equip us to overcome the problems that this world creates for us. Do we not also have excellent books and monthly periodicals that give us strength and direction?

The newest seminars offered, as of December 1999, are:

1. *"Ecclesial Building - two hearts at a time,"*
2. *"Biblical Leadership Workshop," and*
3. *"Career Planning Workshop."*

Why do we need "leadership" training when we are to humble ourselves and be servants? If one is truly founded in matters of the Truth, why is it necessary that they receive "Career Planning" in order to help them decide if their career is compatible with the Truth or not? Are not these issues and questions that can be dealt with by parents, or by the advice of other members of an ecclesia? Are Christadelphians now so lost that we can no longer make decisions for ourselves, but need someone "qualified" to help us deal with these issues? If we are that lost, then our problems are much more fundamental than what a counseling session workshop can solve.

WCF Survey

According to a survey sent out by WCF in the December of 1998 to the "Christadelphians in North America", one in which this writer was never asked to respond, some other suggested topics were: *"Sexual Problems"*, *"Parenting"*, *"Financial Survival"*, *"Substance Abuse"*, *"How to improve nurturing skills"*, etc. Interestingly enough one of the suggested topics *"Apologetics- a defense of the Christian Faith"* received 7 votes total on the lower end while *"Resolving Conflict in home, workplace, or ecclesia"* and the *"Seven Habits of Highly Effective Believers"* tied at the top with 15 votes (votes were a combination of individual voting and ecclesias as a whole).

What do the results of this survey say about the importance placed upon the fundamentals of the Truth? Out of the 47 topics suggested, the "Apologetics" seminar did not even finish in the top ten. Where in all this do we see ourselves separate from the churches around us? No

longer do the churches concern themselves with "doctrinal matters." They know what the people want, they want to feel good and so in order to preserve their memberships they are giving the people what they want, and the churches are thriving right now because of it. Is WCF following their lead? Actions speak louder than words!

WCF uses interesting sales tactics in their attempt to make us feel that everyone is on the WCF bandwagon. According to the survey provided, we are told that "Responses came from Brothers and Sisters across the continent." We never received one, nor did anyone else that we are acquainted with. WCF would like to make us think that positive support is coming from all quarters of the Christadelphian Community concerning the programs offered. As to what specific community or fellowship they do not say. This is common to any good sales strategy. You want to give the appearance of professionalism, organization, size, and the "everybody is doing it" line if you wish to sell your product. You could have one person in New York, another in Kansas, and one other in California and you could truthfully say there was response "from across the continent." No doubt the support for WCF is much higher than that, but not as great as they would have us believe.

3. Interpretation of the Apocalypse

Unfortunately in these last days before the Return of our Master there is much disagreement among brethren concerning latter day events. It is a subject that should strengthen us to lift up our heads for truly our redemption draweth nigh. Though this writer thinks that much of the disagreement concerning the exact order of latter day events is not enough to justify a division between brethren who are united on fundamental truths, there are portions of the prophetic record that we strongly maintain are not open for debate.

What we make reference to is our understanding of Revelation or the Apocalypse. Since the establishment of the Christadelphian community, the Christadelphian body, until recent years, has unanimously supported the Continuous Historical Interpretation of the Apocalypse as clearly expounded by brother John Thomas. What we understand by "continuous historical" is that shortly after the visions were revealed to John in 96 A.D., the mysterious symbols and signs revealed to John by Christ shortly began to come to pass, being manifested in the transpiring of specific world events in relation to Yahweh's plan and purpose. That these events on a gradual and continual basis, over the course of the past 1,900 years, have been fulfilled, leading us up to the great and terrible "day of the Lord" when He will judge the earth in righteousness. We also see a continued revelation of life during the millennium up to the 8th day when all flesh is cut off and God will be "all in all." Though believers may differ concerning the interpretation of details surrounding certain events and symbols, it has been agreed that the general framework of the continuous historical interpretation allows us to harmonize it with the "The things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ."

In recent years there has been a promotion of differing theories as to the proper framework in which to interpret Revelation. Individuals such as the late Harry Whitaker and A.D. Norris introduced their own ideas as to what they thought was a scriptural basis of understanding the Apocalypse. Whitaker was a voice for the Pretorist theory, which advances the thought that the Revelation was revealed to John previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the symbols

found in Revelation refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. A.D. Norris presented the "Futurist" interpretation, which claims that most of what is found in Revelation will be fulfilled in the future leading up to the return of Christ.

What does this all have to do with WCF? One of the seminars offered by WCF was called "A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE APOCALYPSE." The description given by the bulletin concerning this seminar was vague at best, but upon further correspondence with one of the facilitators of this class we were able to better understand the approach that would be taken. It is no real mystery that WCF has offered tapes through their Tape Library that have supported alternate views of Revelation, but we felt it best to get an idea on this specific seminar based upon direct communication with its teachers. The teachers of this class graciously offered us further reading material to help us understand the viewpoint that would be given. We appreciate the attention given to us by the teachers of this seminar, but what we found was very disturbing in relation to the traditional viewpoints of Revelation.

The main line of thinking promoted is that the thrust of symbols found in Revelation is in reference to the Arabs. For some this may not seem like a problem, but the scriptures clearly indicate that many of the symbols used in the Apocalypse have direct reference to the development of Apostate Christianity (The Catholic Church) out of the Pagan Rome system, her rise to religious and political dominance, her persecution of the saints over the centuries, and her final destruction at the hands of Christ and the saints.

The teachers of the seminar under consideration have in the past taken a blend of ideas from the Pretorist and Futurist views to come up with different theories and "suggestions" that make a confusing mess out of the intricate structure of the Apocalypse, raising the Arab nations as the main subject, to the exclusion of the Roman System (in various manifestations) as being the primary focus of the symbols given to John. We must admit that they are never dogmatic in their theories and only officially provide them as "suggestions" while at the same time giving absolutely no credence to the "continuous historical interpretation". To provide "suggestions" that are false is just as bad as providing a firm statement when they are in clear opposition to the Truth of the matter. Some of the "suggestions" are as follows:

- ◆ That the beasts and horns of both Daniel and Revelation are Arab
- ◆ That the "Man of Sin" cannot refer to the Papacy
- ◆ That the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt before Christ's return under "a corrupt and evil Jewish temple leadership, propped up by Arab overlords"
- ◆ That the "mark of the Beast" is in reference to identifying characteristics of a great Arab force that will take over Israel just before Christ's return
- ◆ That the number "666" is also an identification of an Arab force
- ◆ That the Babylon of Revelation is symbolic of the Arabs, probably Iraq
- ◆ That the time periods referred to by the prophets (1260 days, etc.) should not be represented by the "day for a year principle" but should be taken literally giving much shorter time periods

These are only a few of the "suggestions" offered in previous publications that were put out by the teachers of the WCF seminar on Revelation. For those acquainted with the traditional

viewpoints concerning the symbols mentioned, this should be very disturbing. Some may think that it is all "just prophecy", but that is a very false assumption. Much of what we understand in the scriptures is fulfilled history. We have been able to witness the rise of Roman Apostasy (the "little horn" of Daniel 7, the help provided it by Constantine in Rev.12); we have seen the decline and destruction of Pagan Rome by false Christianity (Revelation 12) and the rise of the Holy Roman Empire (Revelation 13). We have the countless testimonies of the persecution of the saints of old by the ruthless and false zeal of the Pope (Dan. 7:21; Rev. 11:7-11; 13:7). We have witnessed the unification of Europe under the helpful hands of the Vatican to create the "beast" of Revelation 16:13 (a revival of the beast of Rev. 13) with the Roman Church as the "Harlot" of Revelation 17 rides upon.

To deny these events, as being revealed by Christ to John in symbol form is to deny the Truth itself and to make brethren who would easily follow such lies be totally unaware of the true Enemy of Christ and His saints. Our traditional understanding of this great enemy of Christ's ecclesia is not up for debate. If we do not admit or understand that the Babylon of Revelation is in fact Rome in all her wicked glory then how can the believer understand the Spirit's plea to "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues?"

[For further investigation concerning the alternate theories of the Apocalypse, the reader is encouraged to read "**The Revelation- Which Interpretation**" by Graham Pearce]

During the time of the Reformation (16th century), those who broke away from the Catholic system easily recognized that the Papal system, both religious and political, was identified by the symbols of Daniel and Revelation. This was openly declared by the Protestant movement and resulted in the horrific persecutions of the Inquisition. The Catholic church found itself exposed and needed an alternate explanation of the Apocalypse in order to take away the bad publicity and to quiet growing discontent. Quoting from the booklet "The Great Delusion," p.30:

*"The first one to come up with the solution was Ribera, a Spanish Jesuit Priest, who published his Apocalyptic Commentary in 1585 AD. Ribera solved the problem by applying the majority of Revelation to a seven year period in the future, just before the second advent of Jesus Christ, during which a 'future Anti-Christ' would rule for 3 1/2 years. **This interpretation purposely left the Papal Church out of the picture and allowed Protestants to once again look favorably upon the Catholic system.**"(Emphasis added)*

For a time the Protestant movement strongly held to the understanding that it was the Catholic System that dominated the subject matter of Revelation, but since have slowly slipped back into the lies of the Apostasy and no longer recognize the Papacy for what she truly is. Are we comfortable that such similar ideas are being promoted by WCF under what appears and what they claim to be "*a biblical framework for individuals to use in their study of the Book of Revelation*"? Are we willing to follow WCF and the churches around us back into the lies and deceit of the "Mother of Harlots"?

The description of the seminar states that the students will then be able "*to derive an individually sensible and personally applicable interpretation.*" We refer the reader to II Peter

1:20, "*that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*" And also the warning given in the Revelation, "*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*" Do not the unscriptural theories obviously being condoned by WCF both "add" and "take away" from the Apocalypse? They add their own vague theories while canceling out those things which have withstood the test of time.

Concluding Thoughts

Brethren, if we are not willing to put our foot down on such clear and dangerous error then what will we be willing to stand up against? There is probably nothing we can do to put a stop to WCF; they are too entrenched within the community to be disbanded. But by clearly expressing our disapproval of this organization we may at least be able to preserve what we have left and prevent such humanistic and apostate influences to further infiltrate our weakening community.

If there in fact is nothing wrong with WCF, then let us support it with all our might. But if we recognize that there is a serious problem with the presence of such a group, then we need to make it known. Let us not sit on the fence on these matters and may we all heed the advice of the Spirit Word through the prophet Jeremiah:

"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."

WCF wishes to vary from the "old paths" and offer a new course to the Kingdom – even going so far to say that we already are in the Kingdom. Are we willing to follow them?