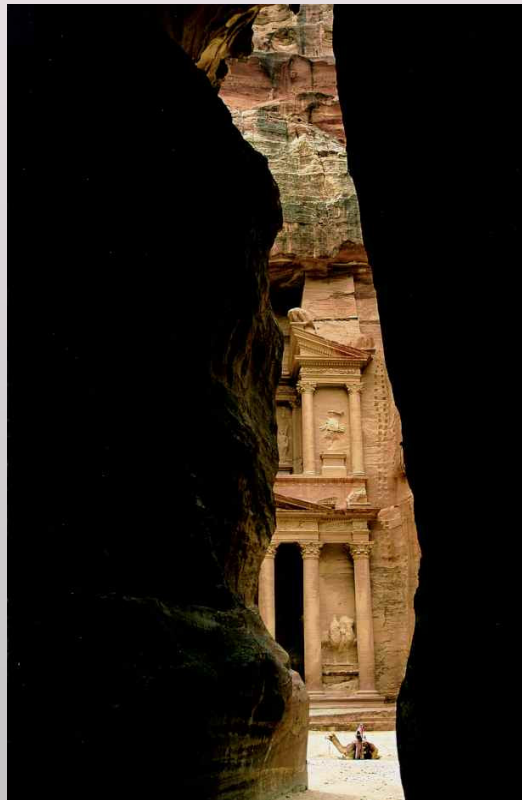


Research paper

THE 'PLACE OF SAFETY' DOCTRINE AND THE CHURCH OF GOD

By C White



**Psa 94:22 But the LORD is my DEFENSE;
and my God is the rock of my REFUGE**

***Petra awes me with its
splendid synthesis of
the hand of God and
the genius of
humankind.***

— Queen Noor

**I Shall Succeed
Regardless of Outside Circumstances.
You will either see me victoriously Pounding
My
Chest from the Summit of the Mountain or
Find Me Dead along the Way
Because I Refuse to Give Up.**

I Shall not be Defeated!

(author unknown)

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Introductory Remarks

It is a truism that **"The more you read and learn, the less your adversary will know."** (Sun Tzu, famous Chinese general and military strategist of the 6th century BC)¹

We must read, research, learn and study to be able to intellectually defeat the opposition to God's truths from both those within our midst and those without.

By way of background:

Many years ago I read with interest a reference or two in old WCG literature on a place of safety for many of God's flock during a time of great trouble which will strike the earth.

This made sense to me - what would become of Christians in the last days was often talked about in the Protestant Christian circles I was associated with at that time. One idea was that Christians would be raptured into the clouds prior to the Tribulation – a place of safety idea common to evangelicals and others.

The entire idea of protection for the people of God is not something unique to the old WCG nor is it even remotely cultic as some claim. It makes perfect sense and, as I shall prove, a Biblical principle. Yet some critics and dissidents claim that "The old scenario as pictured by the WCG is fading away. The picture painted so vividly in the Bible is as true today as it was when it was first penned."²

No, it is not fading away. How can scripture fade away? Many are still teaching this truth in the various Churches of God. Many more Messianics and evangelicals are now teaching it. And this paper will provide even more proof for it.

So, sorry, it is not fading away. It is merely taking a breather, waiting for an eminent restoration. In the meantime, Christians are being tested as to whether they accept and truly believe the place of safety and other neglected truths of the Bible.

This paper aims to answer questions such as :

- How did the concept enter the WCG?
- Is the term 'place of safety' used in scripture?
- Even if the term is not used, is it contained in prophecy or is it a principle?
- Will Petra be the (or a) refuge in the last days?
- Who else teaches this doctrine or something of similar nature?
- Will God faithfully commit to protect His people during the forthcoming distresses?

Scott Peck, in his famous book *The Road Less Traveled*, reveals that commitment and determination to undertake what one has promised to do, is absolutely essential to relationships. He remarks that, "... commitment is the foundation, the bedrock of any genuinely loving relationship."³ And so God will fulfil His promises of protection for us.

¹ See also "Study. The Highest Form of Worship" by Dr John Garr

² <http://livingtheway.org/imminent.html>

³ Peck 1978:140

I find it remarkable that over the past few years a number of books have been published on Petra; history and tourist websites have flourished; and documentaries have appeared on television. Strange isn't it? While some are forgetting, playing down or pooh-poohing the idea, there is an upsurge in interest from other quarters.

Evidently God is working in mysterious ways – He can utilise any method and means at His disposal to preserve truth. There is even a Christian band named *Petra*. One of their hits is *God is my Refuge*:

Chorus

**God is my refuge,
God is my strength,
He's my very present
help in the time of need.
He is my hope;
he's the source of all I seek,
nothing can compare to
all he's done for me (2x)**

Verse

**He's the rock that I hold
to in the storm
and in the pouring rain.
Through the night
and through the day,
what more can I do
what more can I say?**

Repeat Chorus (2x)

Strange, but true. And this merely offers further evidence to the concept of a growing global interest in Petra – a place which may afford Christians during the terrible days ahead.

For those that enjoyed Harrison Ford's trilogy, *Indiana Jones*, would have recognised that Petra was the location for the final film: *Indiana Jones and the last Crusade*. Indiana Jones had to enter the famous Siq (2km long) to find his way to the Holy Grail which was located inside the Khaznat-al-Faron.

Turn to a travel magazine, website or travel pages in a weekend newspaper and you will often find special tours and deals to visit Petra. There would have been little exposure to Petra in the media 20 years ago. But since the death of Herbert W Armstrong, the city has gained world fame and fascination.

Does God have a hand in this? Is He the guiding force behind all of this. Is He working out something in His usual circuitous and mysterious ways? That is something to ponder.

Before we enter this study, it should be noted that the I have employed a style that is neither scholarly (designed for high end scholastic journals and unintelligible to many) nor chatty and journalistic (styles used in novels and newspapers). Instead, I prefer one that straddles both areas.

Moreover, I also prefer to write succinctly rather than in a verbose manner. Life is too short to write 20,000 words when the same message could be expressed in 5,000. This will lessen the time needed by the already time-consumed reader. In addition, almost everything I write is from a new perspective, building upon the Church of God teachings – not undoing them. In other words, I prefer to value add to them with new research and thinking.

If a subject has already been written and researched, I prefer to avoid duplicating efforts, even if there might be some differences of opinion between me and the research, booklet or book. It is only if I can add value to the subject that I venture into the particular area and write on it.

For, what is the benefit of going over old ground that has already been explored? It may be self-serving and showing off. But adds nothing to our body of knowledge. Our corpus of knowledge must be expanded upon with more and more proofs, not rehashing someone else's writings.

But real research comes from pouring through libraries; analysis; critique; examining all points of view; knowing one's subject; cross-referencing; debating with others; contacting organisations and people for further insights/information etc. Such results in quality research and depth.

Then we have the oppressors: on the Left the 'liberal' who persecutes those following the 'old paths.' Similarly those on the extreme Right who are so over-board on church governance that they will harass a conservative just to 'get under their skin' or out of a sense of jealousy. They keep at it for years trying to annoy the loyal, holy and righteous children of God.

But, as my favourite poet, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), wrote:

"The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe.

To be your own man is hard business.

If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself."

One must sometimes stand to one side and objectively examine a matter. Otherwise one may be affected by impaired vision and not thinking through issues properly. Allowing one to go from one extreme of bias on the one hand and becoming independent on the other does not assist in honing the skills of righteous judgment (see John 5:30; 7:24).

Jesus Christ and, more recently, Herbert W Armstrong, set the above example of not permitting themselves to be overwhelmed by others viewpoints. And in 1833, Justice Joseph Story (1779-1845), US Supreme Court Justice, wrote:

"Republics [the principle applies to organisations as a whole] are created [or sustained] by the virtue, public spirit, and intelligence of the citizens.

They fall, when the wise are banished from the public councils, because they dare to be honest, and the profligate are rewarded, because they flatter the people, in order to betray them."

Similarly Albert Einstein warned:

“Great spirits have always met with violent opposition from mediocre minds.”

And to survive, according to Sun Tzu, famous Chinese general and military strategist of the 6th century BC:

"He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious."

Has anything changed? So, dare we study the Bible, seeking God's will and His truths? For it is a Biblical principle that we dig deep into issues. As the scriptures say:

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter but the glory of kings is to search out a matter. As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.” (Prov 25:2) [are not Christians kings in the making?]

Similarly, in Proverbs chapter we are instructed to search out God's treasures:

**“My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you,
So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;
Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,
If you seek her as silver, And search for her as *for* hidden treasures;**

**Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.
For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding;**

He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *He is* a shield to those who walk uprightly;

**He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints.
Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity *and* every good path.
When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul,
Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you,
To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things.” (Prov 2:1-12)**

Now notice some applicable words by Sun Tzu:

"All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved." [ie there are secrets to success]

"Now the reason the enlightened prince and the wise general conquer the enemy whenever they move and their achievements surpass those of ordinary men is foreknowledge."

"The general [read Church member] who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country [read Church] and do good service for his sovereign, is the jewel of the kingdom."

Wise words indeed. Christians are fighting a spiritual battle to inherit the kingdom. They are kings in the making – therefore let all of us take on the characteristic outlined in Prov 25:2. Eschew jealousy and the spirit of competition. Instead, unleash the Godly energies within you – demonstrate the spiritual gifts and natural talents God has given you. In other words allow the zeal within you to pour forth. Do not allow flesh and blood to suppress God's will for you.

Now remember, faith without works is dead – who knows what planning and liaison will be required for a place of safety to be organised. As John F Kennedy once said (January 20, 1961):

**"All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days.
Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days ...
nor in the life of this administration,
nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet.
But let us begin."**

Now that is explained let us explore this important topic and arrive at the correct Biblical conclusion.

A common proverb goes something like this:

**“What doesn’t kill you
only serves to strengthen you”**

The Increase in Biblical Knowledge (Dan 12:4)

The Scriptures indicate that knowledge shall increase in the end time (Dan. 12:4) – especially to (but not only to) the Philadelphia Era of God’s Work. This is often accomplished by building on the understanding, knowledge and research of predecessors. Not only is raw knowledge increased, but so is qualitative value-adding to doctrine with deeper and more meaningful insights.

Like a spiritual sifter, Mr Armstrong scoured through the works of many such as JH Allen, GG Rupert, EW Bullinger, AN Dugger and CT Russell.

It is indeed true that there were truths found elsewhere which were garnered and sifted by Herbert Armstrong – he said so himself. Further, the regathering and restoration of knowledge has increased rapidly, as prophesied and we sabbatarians have always utilised the works of others to fill in the details of our existing framework. Speaking of Darby, Miller and others, a Jehovah’s Witness, J Denton, notes that they were a part of “The Retrieval of Knowledge” and refiners of previous literature. With this we heartily concur. Mr Armstrong’s foundations and sources may be summarised as follows:

- the Bible
- the doctrines of the Church of God (Seventh Day)
- the writings of Greenberry G Rupert, leader of the Church of God (Independent)
- works of others who emanated from the Adventist movement, such as Charles Russell, various works of the SDAs and other pioneers of the Second Advent movement
- Bullinger’s works, Hislop’s *Two Babylons* and the *Scofield Bible*
- and works by others.

They were all helpful, but he examined what they had to say against the Bible. What was not upheld by scripture, he rejected. Other items he added to the foundational the doctrines of the Church of God (Seventh Day), in particular the annual Feast days and the truth about Israel’s modern identity. Other doctrines followed by further study or were brought to him via early WCG pioneers such as Hermann L Hoeh and others.

Later, his basic doctrines were summarised in the Fundamentals of the Radio Church of God and expanded in scores of articles, booklets and books. His final work, *Mystery of the Ages*, summarised these doctrines.

Herbert Armstrong was in the position to pour through the works of all of those men and others decades after they died, rather than being alive during the confusing midst of the Great Second Advent movement. This was particularly during the formative years, late 1920s-1940s. But after he had settled on the framework and foundational truths, he stuck mostly with the Bible itself. God indeed moves subtly in mysterious ways, and we must give Him credit for the way He revealed these concepts and doctrines to Mr Armstrong.

One doctrine which he taught beginning around the mid-1950s was a place of refuge during the Great Tribulation for God’s people – or a section of them.

How did this teaching enter the Church of God? Where did it originate?

History of the concept in the Church of God

A rumour doing the rounds is that the place of safety doctrine may be attributed to Loma Armstrong (HWA's wife). The rumour suggests that she read an article on Petra in a *National Geographic* magazine and that convinced her of a place of safety. She supposedly then took this idea to her husband who consequently adopted it. No evidence is forthcoming that this happened. However, a booklet titled *The Man from Petra* was published in the late 1940s. Notice what Nabataea.net says about this booklet:

“Introduction

For many years now, there has been a popular theory among some Bible believing people that Petra holds a special place in Biblical prophecy. This idea has permeated many sectors of Christianity, and has left us puzzled as to its origin. After some research we believe we have discovered the source of this interesting, if not somewhat controversial theory. It seems that it all began with a man in the USA, known as W. E. Blackstone. This man was so certain that Petra would be the secret hideout of Jews escaping from the Battle of Armageddon, that he invested \$8000.00 (in the 1940's) to place boxes of Bibles in all of the caves in Petra, so that the Jews would have some interesting reading when they were hiding from the ravages of war. This idea was picked up by Joseph Hoffman Cohn of the American Board of Missions to the Jews and published in a small booklet titled: ***The Man from Petra***. We have now obtained a copy of this book, and have reproduced it in full on Nabataea.net. The first part of the book deals with Cohn's theory of how the Battle of Armageddon will take place and how the Jews will use the ancient city of Petra as a hideout during the war. The most interesting part of the book comes on pages 16 and 17. I'm sure you will find it interesting reading. If you want to access all of this small booklet, please click here: ***The Man from Petra***.⁴

You can see the booklet at appendix 16 or download it from <http://nabataea.net/mfp.html>. As we shall see, the concept of a place of safety extends back much earlier. The Petra connection also probably extended back earlier, but the source of this disappears into the misty past.

Regardless, surprising as it may seem to critics, there is very little reference to Petra or a place of safety in WCG literature. To understand what was really taught (compared to the wild allegations), we should explore the WCG's own statements and articles on the subject.

Below is a list of articles published by the WCG which contained the word *Petra*:

- Mrs Armstrong's "Diary", *Plain Truth*, 1956
- *Coworker Letter*, 8 May 1956

⁴ The website continues: "Some Mistakes in the Booklet

Page 5: *The city of Amman is associated with Teman or Maan*, rather than with Ramath-Ammon it's ancient name. Teman is in Arabia. Maan is in southern Jordan.

Page 5: *Petra is a city set on a rock, nearly 1500 feet high, arising with sudden and sheer height from the surrounding desert*. Not so, Petra is located in a valley, not on a mountain top. On the east side you can look down on it from the hills. On the west side the valleys empty out into Wadi Araba.

Page 5: *Petra once had 267,000 inhabitants*. Wow, where did this number come from? No archeologist has ever set a number. Once a journalist suggested 30,000, and this number has been hotly debated. Since the main part of the city has not yet been excavated any guess is simply a guess.

Page 12: *The buildings cut from solid rock are still standing, enough of them to accommodate 100,000 people in comfort*. Sorry, but there are less than 1000 monuments in Petra, and most of them are small tombs, not buildings or houses."

- “We saw Petra!”, *Good News*, January 1958
- “This is Petra!” (part 1), *Good News*, April 1962
- “This is Petra!” (part 2), *Good News*, June 1962
- “This is Petra!” (part 3), *Good News*, July 1962
- “Petra!”, *Good News*, October 1963
- Entry on his Middle East tour in Herbert Armstrong’s “Autobiography”, *Plain Truth*, February 1965
- “We fled Petra!”, *Good News*, October 1966
- *The Pastor’s Report* 26 June 1978

The following is a complete list of entries containing the term *place of safety* or similar:

- *Plain Truth*, March-April 1942
- “How important is your physical life?”, *Good News*, March 1957
- “We saw Petra!”, *Good News*, January 1958
- “If World War Three comes – there is a way of escape”, *Plain Truth*, June 1963
- “Will you be alive when Christ Returns?”, *Good News*, April-May 1965
- “Q: How will we care for our children as spirit beings?”, *Good News*, October 1964
- “Is there a Place of Safety?”, *Good News*, May 1982
- “Will you be protected?”, *Good News*, May 1982

Here is the quote from the 1942 *Plain Truth*:

"This prophecy [referring to Luke 21:36] shows it is those who 'keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ' (Rev. 12:17), some of whom shall be taken to a place of divine protection, and some of whom shall be killed in religious martyrdom.

"But where shall those who escape flee for refuge - WHERE? And HOW shall they go? and when? These questions, only those who are praying earnestly, sincerely, constantly, without ceasing, fully surrendered to God - and WATCHING! - shall be able to answer. Will you be in that number?

"Some of us believe we are beginning to receive rays of light on this vital subject. Light on the PLACE we shall go - HOW we shall get there, as revealed in these marvelous prophecies. When God removes those accounted worthy to escape, there shall come a time of FAMINE - not of bread, but of hearing the words of the Eternal!"⁵

The year 1942 seems to be a pivotal year for it was that year that over 1,700 souls attended HWA's evangelistic outreach campaign in Los Angeles. It was that year that the World Tomorrow radio programme went nationwide beginning with a broadcast from the 50,000 watt WHO radio station in Des Moines, Ohio.

And in 1942 the very first edition of *The United States in Prophecy* went into print. What an important year for the Work that was!

Leroy Neff wrote the following information in his paper on the subject delivering to us some fascinating historical data:

⁵ After writing my paper, Mr Leroy Neff sent me his paper on the subject which allowed me to insert this valuable information. Thanks to him for this quote found in his paper *Where is the Place of Safety. Notes from a 1989 sermon*, page 11

"On April 23, 1955 Mr. Armstrong had a sermon on this subject at Pasadena. He also had a sermon on the subject at the Feast of Tabernacles about that time, but I do not have the date.

In 1956 Mr. & Mrs. Armstrong, and their son Dick visited Petra. Mr. Armstrong wrote about it in his co-worker letter dated 5/8/1956

"We later took a three-day tour down to Petra, the mysterious, awe-inspiring ancient city built in a Rock, called the Rose-Red City half as old as Time. We travelled in the comfort of a modern Ford automobile, but even so it was a slow, jolting, dusty journey---half of it over primitive dirt-and-rock roads, around narrow ledges on sharp "figure-8" curves on steep canyon-sides. The last 4 miles going in and coming out were ridden on horseback, thru the narrow single-filed Siq, with solid rock walls rising straight above us for hundreds of feet. I'll have much to tell you, later, about fantastic Petra---a now deserted city that was carved out of solid rock, in a recessed hide-away surrounded by its own impenetrable wall of mountains.

Some details were also written in Mrs. Armstrong's diary, published in the November 1956 PT. She wrote that the first night in Petra, she had refused to eat some of the cooked food for fear of becoming ill. She then ate an orange that had been given to her previously. Because of the cold she went to bed early in one of the caves. "With hunger and cold I began to see that Petra was **no bed of roses**, but a place to really rough it."

In 1978 *The Pastor's Report* dated 6/26/78 included excerpts from a sermon by HWA. Here is a part of what he said.

Speaking of a "place of safety," Mr. Armstrong said:

"Now where is the place? that's been a great contention. I used to preach the possibility that it would be at Petra. Well, I don't know that it will be at Petra, and I never said I knew it would be. But others say , 'Well, that's something we can get back at Herbert Armstrong. Let's just say that he was wrong about that.' And some very high in the church were saying that is a lot of rubbish and hodge-podge. I say to you now I don't know whether it's Petra. I don't know where it is or where it will be, but I know God knows. But I do know this much: there are many indications that it is Petra and if it isn't Petra, **then the Bible gives us absolutely no indication of where it will be.** Now I'll stand my ground with that and any of you who want to can come and face me with it. In any case, I've been to Petra and it's not a very pleasant place to be."⁶

In addition there were two *Coworker Letters* which referred to Petra (see appendix 2 for details).

From the above we can see little was written on the subject and that it was not an obsession at all (some individuals may have been obsessed by it, but most weren't.)

"**The heart is deceitful** above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9 – RSV)

"Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having **their conscience seared** with a hot iron" (ITim 4:2 - KJV)

⁶ Ibid: 12-13

Now, however it entered the Church, we do know that in the *Good News* magazine, Herman L Hoeh wrote about a trip that he and Paul C Meredith took to Petra:

"We do not yet know absolutely where the prophesied place of escape may be. But the recent trips to Petra have led to uncovering important new Bible evidence strongly indicating Petra to be the probable place of safety!"⁷

It would appear that Herman Hoeh developed the belief further in discussions, sermons and articles.⁸ For instance he wrote the article on *World War III: There is a Way of Escape* in 1963. It was republished as a reprint article *There is a Way of Escape* and became the most visible Church of God pronouncement on the issue.

Given that the Church was teaching the Church Eras doctrine and believing that it was the Philadelphia Era for years prior to adopting the place of safety doctrine, it follows that it saw what the scriptures plainly revealed in Rev 3:7-12:

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is set-apart, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts; and shuts and no one opens, says these things:

I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name. **[first phase – undertaking a Work]**

Behold, I give out of those of the synagogue of Satan, those saying themselves to be Jews and are not, but lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. **[second phase – apostasy]**

Because you have kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation which will come upon all the habitable world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. **[third phase – keeping His Word – including a revived Work and then Great Tribulation]**

Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast to that which you have, so that no one may take your crown. **[fourth phase – Christ's return]**

Him who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will go out no more. And I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from My God, and My new name." **[finally – the granting of rewards in His Kingdom]**

It would appear that we are in phase 3 at the present time. How long it will continue and how extensive the end-time Work will be remains to be seen. Cooperation between groups and extending the hand of friendship to demonstrate a brotherly love is needed now more than ever.

It was the Synagogue of Satan, referred to above, that threw out the place of safety doctrine and denounced it with evil fury and hatred. Tkach snr delivered yet another boring, lifeless and meaningless sermon – something he was renowned for - over many years. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania church on 25/8/90 he spewed the following bitter filth over the congregation:

⁷ "We saw Petra!", *Good News* magazine

⁸ It is interesting that in the 1940s he was familiar with the famous preacher Louis Talbot who wrote the book *I Saw Petra* according to Robert Macdonald who knew Dr Hoeh. See www.raptureready.com/vray14.html

"And **IF** God chooses and there is a place of safety, then it's up to Him to take us there **IF** that's His desire. If He doesn't, it doesn't mean we haven't been faithful ...

Maybe He has another job for us to do. To stand in the face of that kind of persecution. And then on to that faith He will give us the courage. Do any of our ministers or members believe Jesus promised that all the faithful at the end time would be physically protected from harm in a place of safety? The fact is, Jesus prophesied that His faithful people would suffer persecution, even that many of the faithful would be martyred. The idea that only the weak in faith will suffer persecution and that all the strong will be spared in a place of safety is simply not accurate" (*Worldwide News*, "Personal", 27 August 1990).

In a phone conversation between a Church of God member about 15 years ago, and David Hunsberger, head of the Personal Correspondence Department, he revealed the following:

Question: I no longer agree with the W.C.G. and the Bible says unless two agree they cannot walk together. Should I leave the W.C.G. then?

D.H.: That is, of course, your option...I would, however, be careful as to where I go.

Question: What do you mean?

D.H. SOME OF THE CHURCHES BELIEVE IN A PLACE OF SAFETY WHICH ONLY A CULT WOULD TEACH.

Question: What? Believing in a place of safety is a cult idea? Does that mean the W.C.G. no longer accepts the idea of a place of safety for the Philadelphia era of God's church?

D.H.: The idea is currently being re-evaluated...

Question: I am tired of being called a Protestant by people I know outside the church. And the bad thing is I really believe they are right. The W.C.G. does appear to be a Protestant group at this point.

D.H.: I see nothing wrong with being called a Protestant.

Well, that says it all!

Why a Place of Safety?

Arguments abound on why there shouldn't be a place of safety. All sorts of excuses by people who have not studied the subject properly – you just cannot take these people seriously. And then there are others who should know better – but have rejected this important truth.

On the other hand we have a responsibility to prove our case – to provide justifications and research that gives it further credence. Recall Sun Tzu: "The more you read and learn, the less your adversary will know."

Below are some reasons for a physical place of refuge from the horrendous times that await the global community:

- Christ Himself tells us that "**no flesh would be saved alive**" unless God intervened in world affairs. This indicates such absolute capacity for man to wipe the earth of all life – especially human life. Surely God would protect His people from such potential? See Matt 24:21. "For there will be **worse trouble** at that time **than there has ever been from the very beginning**, when God created the universe, **until now; and**

there will be nothing like it again. Indeed, if God had not limited the duration of the trouble, no one would survive; but for the sake of the elect, those whom he has chosen, he has limited it” (Mark 13:19-20 -- *Jewish New Testament*). In a globalised world system, full to the brim with people, disease epidemics and few places available to hide (unlike previous centuries), it will be essential to exit the large populated areas and flee into the wilderness. It will be a hard experience, but so be it.

- God **promises protection** for His people throughout the scriptures – this is a Biblical principle – trials, opportunities and protection. He affords them His fatherly love and extends this to include the times of deep trouble – especially the last days where no escape from total harm is possible without divine protection – either directly or via God’s agents – the holy angels. Do we pray for them to surround us and to protect us from wicked forces including ungodly behavior and slander of innocent victims with the Church of God? We should claim those promises and ask Him to grant them to us. See Ex 19:3-4; Deut 32:9-12.
- One factor that is often lost on many is the **future captivity** for the Houses of Israel and Judah. With millions dying of war, famine and disease epidemics, why wouldn’t you want protection? Millions would be taken in captivity in foreign lands – why wouldn’t you want protection from slavery, torture and premature death? God is ‘God of the living, not of the dead’ as we are told. Would He protect you in your house while every other house is invaded and the residents slaughtered? See Jer 30:3-7
- Does God act in accordance with **His laws of nature** or contrary to them? If a city is blown away with nuclear or other weapons, would yours be the only house standing? Would God supernaturally provide you with the fresh food, water, sewerage and electricity that you need in your house? What about mental health?: wouldn’t it be depressing holed up in a house or unit for 3 ½ years? What about meeting with others of like mind regularly? How would you exercise? The list of questions is endless. The fact is God is not silly and would not place you in a virtual jail situation in such circumstances. How on earth some come to the conclusion that God executes His will in such a way is impossible to fathom.

We are promised that if we have the word of His patience, we will be protected. But what exactly is this particular patience?

Patience includes a range of concepts such as keeping one unsoiled from issues and problems by enduring problems surrounding us; overcoming sin and continuing in a righteous life until one dies; not cursing others in frustration and anger (James 1:3-4; 3:10, 14); not contending with powerful men who are seeking after positions.

All Christians, including the Philadelphians, must be patient with their political maneuverings and persecutions of the innocent and needy.

David, the ‘Old Testament’ Philadelphian, concurs. In Psalms 73 he laments:

A Psalm of Asaph.

“Truly God *is* good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.
For I *was* envious of the boastful, **When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**
For *there are* no pangs in their death, But their strength *is* firm.
They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like *other* men.
Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them *like* a

garment.

Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish.

They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily.

They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth.

Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full *cup* are drained by them.

And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"

Behold, these *are* the ungodly, **Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.**

Surely I have cleansed my heart *in vain*, And washed my hands in innocence.

For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.

If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

When I thought *how* to understand this, It *was* too painful for me --

Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.

Oh, how they are *brought* to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.

As a dream when *one* awakes, *So*, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.

Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind.

I *was* so foolish and ignorant; I *was like* a beast before You. [ie I should have had patient endurance]

Nevertheless I *am* continually with You; You hold *me* by my right hand.

You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me *to* glory.

Whom have I in heaven *but* You? And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You.

My flesh and my heart fail; *But* God *is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry [ie spiritual fornication]

But *it is* good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works." (Ps 73:1-28. Cp Ps 49)

Turn to James 5:9-12 which provides further examples of patient endurance as a Christian. Romans 5 reveals even more and seems to parallel Philadelphian patience:

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience [like the sufferings of the Philadelphians at the hands of the Synagogue of Satan];

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

For when we were yet without strength [like Philadelphia], in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him [wrath of the lake of fire and, in the last days, wrath Satan – the Great Tribulation] (Rom 5:3-9) [... and by inference, be patient with others]

Similarly, in Hebrews 10 Paul states:

“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst **ye became companions of them that were so used.**

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Heb 10:32-39)

Speaking of a yet future time (typed by events in the first century) Christ told His people in Matthew 24:

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. [cf James 5:1-9]

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)” (Matt 24:5-15) (cp Luke 21:12-19)

This parallels the end-time Philadelphian and Laodicean experiences. The following charts seeks to simplify and clarify these events:

Figure 1 Chart Comparing Similar Concepts in the Books of the New Testament

EVENT	REVELATION 3	JAMES 5	MATTHEW 24	LUKE 21
Sixth era	7 " And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ' These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens:			
	8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.	James 5:1 Come now, <i>you</i> rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon <i>you!</i> 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.		
Evil-doers harassing the true believers	9 "Indeed I will make <i>those</i> of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie -- indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.	3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. (cp Ps 73)	10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.	12 "But before all these things [the Tribulation], they will lay their hands on you and persecute <i>you</i> , delivering <i>you</i> up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13 "But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 "Therefore settle <i>it</i> in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 "for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. 16 "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put <i>some</i> of you to death.

				17 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.
Endurance to the end	10 "Because you have kept My command to persevere , I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.	6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. 7 Therefore be patient , brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See <i>how</i> the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. Compare the above to Heb 10:31-38: "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience , that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if <i>any man</i> draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."	15 " Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.	18 "But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19 "By your patience possess your souls. 20 " But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22 "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.
Christ's return	11 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.	8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.	13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.	23 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 "And they will fall by the edge

				<p>of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.</p> <p>25 " And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;</p> <p>26 "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.</p> <p>27 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.</p> <p>28 "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."</p> <p>29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.</p> <p>30 "When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.</p> <p>31 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.</p> <p>32 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.</p>
	<p>12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New</p>	<p>9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!</p> <p>10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the</p>		

	<p>Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And <i>I will write on him</i> My new name. 13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '</p>	<p>name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end <i>intended by</i> the Lord -- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.</p>		
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Relevant Scriptures concerning Biblical refuges

The aim of this section is not to attempt to exhaustively discuss the concept of refuge given that my overall goal is to provide further information on the subject.

Notice:

“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered [by God].
Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matt
10:30-31)

He knows our every slightest need before we do. He is able to rescue us from all situations.

In the first instance, the Bible is replete with statements about God being our refuge and salvation. See Ps 33:17-21; IPet 3:13; Heb 1:13-14; Matt 10:29-31; Ps 23:4; 121:7-8; 61:3; 112:7

In any event, I list below the various Biblical concepts on the issue:

God as a refuge:

In the first instance, the Bible is replete with statements about God being our refuge and salvation. See for instance Ps 33:17-21; IPet 3:13; Heb 1:13-14; Matt 10:29-31; Ps 23:4; 61:3; 112:7; 121:7-8; Is 43:2; Rom 8:31-35; Heb 7:25. David, representing all Christians, cried out:

A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. (Ps 27:1-6)

Our God may choose to be a refuge in many diverse ways. For instance:

- By personally intervening by withdrawing a person or Church from a given situation (Prov 18:10; Is 43:1-2; IIThess 3:3; IPet 3:13)
- By saving them within a situation (Ps 121:7-8; Prov 3:24)
- Surrounding them with angels (see IIKings 6:15-17; Jos 5:13-15; Ps 68:17; 91:11-12. Ps 34:7: “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.”)
- Placing them in a situation or a place that saves them from a given crisis or danger

(Ps 4:8; 61:3; 112:7)

... the list of possibilities is almost endless. Therefore one might define “salvation” as a state of being saved by the Almighty. It is He who delivers us from negative situations and destruction, even death. The Hebrew is *yasha* which literally means safety or salvation. By extension God is our salvation and our place of safety.

The example of Noah:

Noah endured many years of harassment prior to the great flood. It seems that the pre-flood period was a type of the Tribulation during which time Noah and his family were protected. The flood, however, seems to have pictured the Day of the Lord.

Relevant scriptures: Luke 17:26-27; Gen 6:11-14; Ezek 14:14, 20.

The example of Lot:

Lot led his family to a place of refuge in Zoar.

Relevant scriptures: IIPet 2:6-9; Luke 17:28-37; Gen 19:17-22.

Even so it shall be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” (Luke 17:30)

The example of Israel in the Wilderness:

Israel experienced seven eras like the Church of God. During the Smyrna era the Church suffered immense persecution and martyrdom, especially during the horrific period 303-313AD for 10 years (Rev 2:10b). Similarly, Israel was held in captivity for about 215 years but inflicted with adversity for 400 years (Acts 7:6 with Gen 15:13-14). Note that 400 is 40 (for testing) x 10 (for perfect order).

Yet after the persecution the Church survived and fled into the wilderness. Likewise, Israel fled from the Pharaoh (type of Satan) in the Exodus and into the wilderness to be tested. The magicians (Jannes and Jambres – see IITim 3:8) were types of the Beast and False Prophet. The Church members were thus given a new lease on life (v10c).

“And Moses went up to God, and God called to him out of the mountain, saying, You shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.” (Ex 19:3-4)

“He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. {led: or, compassed}

As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

So the LORD alone did lead him, and *there was* no strange god with him.

He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.” (Deut 32:10-13. See also Ruth 2:12)

Prior to that time, many Israelites had already settled in the British Isles – a haven or refuge from the tribulation of Egypt. So, some of Israel experienced a Tribulation while others fled to

a type of place of safety.⁹

David (a type of the Philadelphia Era):

It appears that HWA was similar to David in certain characteristics. David planned for the Temple to be built. HWA planned (and had built) the famous Ambassador Auditorium (Rev 3:12b). The Temple in turn was a type of the spiritual Temple Christ is building.

A door was opened for David to proclaim the Gospel in his day to his subjects(v8). He fed his sheep like Christ fed the Church (IChron 11:2; John 21:7).

After the Judges and Saul, David restored administrative structure, like HWA did with HQ at Pasadena ("Crown City") in the Los Angeles ("City of Angels") metropolitan region (IChron 27:1). He had men filling various functions in administration (see IChron 27:25-31). David had several key 'pillars' around him (IChron 11:10-12; 27:32-34; see Gal 2:9; Rev 3:12a) as HWA had key evangelists around him. But he had little strength compared to Goliath (ISam 17:33), just as Philadelphia had little strength (Rev 3:8) - yet God was with him and gave him the help he needed at the appropriate times.

God protected him from the enemy (see IChron 17:42, 49; also ISam 26:24) as the Philadelphia Era will be protected from the Great Tribulation to come. Here Goliath is a type of Satan, the Philistines a type of the demons and David a type of the Philadelphia Era (see Rev 3:10; 12:15-16).

There may be more than one part of the Philadelphia nowadays, just as the previous eras consisted of various administrations. Not necessarily all Philadelphians listened to what the Spirit says **to the churches** over the years (although these scriptures refer to historical churches and to Christians as individuals, Christ wants us to ascertain what they mean to the seven churches today). This "he who has an ear, let him hear" is an Hebraic expression and means to understand, to be very perceptive, intentful and to be sensitive to what is being said. This can only be done when one understands the manoeuvrings and mysterious ways the Spirit moves. It is mostly subtle and not forceful - it needs to be within us urging us onward.

So with the church eras - some listen and some don't. HWA listened and as such doors opened up to him. Others of the Church of God did not listen, did not perceive the signs of the times (in the Church or the world).

The example of the Early Church:

The Church of God had scattered for a time in AD33 according to Acts 8:1. Later, after the Roman sacking of Jerusalem AD69-70, the Church at Jerusalem known as the Nazarenes, fled to Pella (or Petra as some suggest) and remnants were left in Britain and others may have scattered to become all sorts of sects. A certain number continued in the eastern congregations in Asia Minor and Syria, which observed the Sabbath alongside Sunday in the same churches, for a long time.

History records that the eastern churches in Asia Minor and Syria maintained the following beliefs for a long time, even after going into apostasy after leaving off Torah law observance:

- water baptism,
- the bodily resurrection,

⁹ More will be written on this once I locate my boxed notes.

- mortality of the soul (eg Arnobius),
- showing concern about the infiltration of paganism via icons and crosses etc into the church,
- knowledge about the evil works of Simon Magus,
- the 1,000 year reign of the Messiah (see for example the extra-biblical Epistle of Barnabas; the writings of Ireneaus, Hippolytus, Justin Martyr etc),
- and the new birth at the time of the resurrection.

All would have been reminiscent of the doctrines of an earlier primitive Christianity and the traditions of the Church of Jerusalem (under the auspices of James) and their descendants, the Nazarenes and others.

They fled from Roman Tribulation to Pella, Syria and Asia Minor. The following chart presents a comparison the early and last Church of God movements:

Figure 2 Comparison Chart of the Church of God in the First and Last Centuries

BIBLICAL EVENT	FIRST CENTURY CHURCH	LAST DAYS
Calling	God raises up early Church to undertake a Work	Church called to do an end-time Work
Place of Safety	Pella or Petra	Wilderness (Rev 12:6-7,16)
Tribulation	Fall of Jerusalem and sacking of the Temple	3 ½ years (Rev 12:6)
Day of the Lord	Unknown events after the fall of Jerusalem	1 year
Tests prior to Kingdom entry	The life of the disciples and apostles	Ezekiel 20:33-38
Resurrection	Resurrection to temporary physical life (Matt 28:1-7)	First Resurrection (Rev 20:4-6)
Entry into the Kingdom	Pioneered by Christ	Rev 20
Conquests	n/a	Conquering worldly powers through physical Israel
Enemies arising during the Kingdom period	n/a	Gog & Magog and no doubt others that would have to be put down (Ezek 38 & 39)

The example of the Church in the Middle Ages:

Rev 12 tells us that God's True Church fled from persecuting powers and scattered into various places, becoming ineffective for proclaiming a powerful message:

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days." (Rev 12:4-6)

For 1,260 years God's Church suffered terribly but survived the horrors of their tribulation.

Church in the last days:

Following are a selection of relevant scriptures concerning the flight of many of God's people just prior to the Great Tribulation:

Matt 24:

"Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand).

Then let those in Judea flee into the mountains.

Let him on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house;

nor let him in the field turn back to take his clothes.

And woe to those who are with child, and to those who give suck in those days!

But pray that your flight is not in the winter, nor on the sabbath day.: (Matt 24: 15-20)

Some interpret this to mean that only those that are at Judea at that time will flee. However, other scriptures show that God's people have traditionally scattered, so this scripture is a principle – flee at that time. Indeed, which component of God's Church will be in Judea at that time? Those that have figured out the times and the seasons?

This Tribulation is the time of Satan's wrath. Notice Rev 12:

"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and those tabernacling in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and in the sea! For the Devil came down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a little time.

And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who bore the man-child.

And two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman, so that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the serpent's face.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood after the woman, so that he might cause her to be carried away by the river.

And the earth helped the woman. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river, which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

And the dragon was enraged over the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev 12:12-17)

How like ancient Israel – God bore his people on symbolic eagles' wings as the armies of the Pharaoh pursued them. So Satan will pour waters against His people – symbolic in scripture of terrors and armies.

But the earth helped the woman – it provided her with refuge – even if it was a time of trial and hard work.

The armies of Pharaoh were swallowed up – so the earth will swallow up the armies that will

chase God's people – very likely a great earthquake will swallow them and cut off future access to them by sealing the place(s) where they have escaped to. This may well be Petra.

Following are some other relevant scriptures:

“And you, son of man, take a sharp sword to yourself, take a barber's razor also, and cause *it* to pass on your head and on your beard. Then take scales to weigh, and divide the *hair*.

You shall burn a third part with fire in the middle of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and you shall take a third part *and* beat around it with a sword; and you shall scatter a third part in the wind, and I will draw out a sword after them.

Also you shall take a few of them in number, and tie them up in your skirts. Then take of them again, and throw them into the middle of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for a fire shall come forth from them into all the house of Israel.” (Ezek 5:1-4)

“**He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High** shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings [like an eagle] shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.” (Ps 91:1-16)

“Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they happen, I cause you to hear.

Sing to God a new song; His praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and its fullness; coasts and their peoples.

Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voice*, the villages where Kedar dwells. **Let the dwellers of the rock sing, let them shout from the mountain tops.**” (Is 42:9-11)

“The Word of God came again to me, saying,

Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites and prophesy against them. And say to the Ammonites, Hear the Word of the Lord God. So says the Lord God: Because you said, Aha, against My sanctuary when it was defiled, and against the land of Israel when it was ruined, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity;

therefore, behold, I will give you to the sons of the east for a possession. And they shall set their camp sites among you, and put among you their dwellings. They shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk.

And I will make Rabbah a pasture *for* camels, and the Ammonites a crouching-place *for* flocks. And you shall know that I *am* God.

For so says the Lord God: Because you have clapped *your* hands and stamped the foot, and rejoiced in heart with all your spite against the land of Israel;

behold, therefore I will stretch out My hand on you, and will give you as a prize to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples, and I will cause you to perish out of the lands. I will destroy you, and you shall know that I *am* God.

So says the Lord God: Because Moab and Seir say, Behold, the house of Judah *is* like all the nations;

therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities, from his borders, the glory of the land, even Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim,

to the men of the east with the Ammonites. And I will give them in possession so that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations.

And I will execute judgments on Moab; and they shall know that I *am* God. (Ezek 25:1-11)

“Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, From Sela to the wilderness, To the mount of the daughter of Zion.

For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; So shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon. [cp Jer 48: 1-10, 47; Dan 11:40-41 where the Beast initially leaves Jordan alone]

Take counsel, execute judgment; Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; Hide the outcasts, Do not betray him who escapes.

Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, Devastation ceases, The oppressors are consumed out of the land.” (Is 16:1-4)

“Come, my people, enter into your rooms and shut your doors around you; hide for a little moment, until the fury has passed by.

For behold, God comes out of His place to punish the people of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall reveal her blood, and shall no more cover her dead.” (Is 26:20-21)

For further proof on the place of safety doctrine, please turn to appendices 3-7.

Others who believe in the concept

When I first came across Church of God literature I was aware of concepts of a place of protection for Christians during the dark days ahead. Several books maintained that Christians would scatter into the wilderness and dwell in caves or forests to escape evil forces or war and disease epidemics. Others stated that 144,000 Christians would be protected at Petra while still others were of the view that 144,000 Jews would reside there, perhaps with some Christians.

Following are believers in a place of refuge in one form or another:

1. Rapture theory:

However, the prevalent teaching on such a place was that Christians would be taken into the clouds prior to the Tribulation as the initial phase of the resurrection. The second phase being at Christ's return. The belief is commonly known as the 'secret rapture' and has no Biblical basis at all. I use to believe it, but after a thorough examination, rejected it. Others have written excellent critiques of this doctrine and, as such, there is no point in including a critique here.

2. Ellen G White:

Ellen G White herself wrote that Christians should dwell outside the cities in case they might need to flee. In *Testimonies for the Church*, she wrote:

"It is no time now for God's people to be fixing their affections or laying up their treasure in the world. **The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places.** As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains. And now, instead of seeking expensive dwellings here, we should be preparing to move to a better country, even a heavenly."¹⁰ [emphasis mine]

In *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* she claims: pg 56, 57

"The Lord has shown me repeatedly that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us **in the wilderness.** If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites.

"Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. Then they will be free in the time of trouble and have no clogs to weigh them down."

Also, in *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*:

"At the time of the siege [of Jerusalem by the Romans], the Jews were assembled at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, and thus the Christians throughout the land were able to make their escape unmolested. Without delay **they fled to a place of safety--the city of Pella**, in the land of Perea, beyond Jordan."¹¹ [emphasis mine]

¹⁰ Volume Five pg 464, 465

¹¹ White 1858:31

In fact, the term 'place of safety' may be found throughout early SDA literature. For example:

"After his first appearance to Ahab, denouncing upon him the judgments of God because of his and Israel's apostasy, God directed his course from Jezebel's power to a place of safety in the mountains, by the brook Cherith. He honored Elijah by sending food to him morning and evening, by an angel of Heaven."¹²

Refer also to a non-official SDA website on how to survive the difficult times ahead at *Adventist Wilderness Ministry* at www.hillcrestadventist.org/awm/shelter.html.

3. Mormons:

The early Mormons (Latter-day Saints) believed that America was a sort of promised land wherein the tribes of Israel were (American Indians). In 1832 Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon group, claimed to have had a prophecy about "**a place of safety** preparing for [the Saints] away towards the Rocky Mountains" (Esplin, p.90). [emphasis mine].

From that time forward the publications of the Mormons saw their destiny in the American far west. For Joseph Smith believed that they should prepare for the establishment of a latter-day Zion in the Rockies. Each time the group moved, it was drawn westwards.

In 1846, Brigham Young and some of his associates, fled the persecution of their enemies (mob violence, accusations etc). The exodus took them from Nauvoo toward the Rockies – their new Zion and place of refuge. According to the official Mormon website

"An 1840 letter first iterates Joseph Smith's vision that there existed "a place of safety preparing for [the Saints] away towards the Rocky Mountains." Joseph's view was colored in no small measure by a pronouncement of the ancient prophet Isaiah that "in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2)."¹³

4. Evangelicals and Sabbatarian Messianics:

A few evangelicals believe in the concept.

An example is Hal Lindsey, who obtained most of his information on end-time prophecy from Worldwide Church of God literature. In *The Late Great Planet Earth*, he asserts:

"The residents of Israel who believe in Jesus will flee to the mountains and canyons of Petra for divine protection."¹⁴

The website www.bible-prophecy.com: states:

"A hiding place: The Flight of the Remnant from Jerusalem at Mid-Tribulation ... The rose-red city of Petra, an ancient Edomite city, and later Nabatean capitol, may be the place God will protect the fleeing remnant of Israel during the Great Tribulation

... During the second half of the tribulation period there will be no safe place to hide anywhere on the earth--except in the refuge God has provided,

¹² *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 7, 1873 (Vol. 42, #17) "The Laodicean Church (Concluded)"

¹³ http://www.lds.org/library/pio_sto/Pioneer_Trail/40_Salt_Lake_Valley.html

¹⁴ Hal Lindsey, p. 56

probably at Petra. We gain glimpses of how terrible life will become for non-believers in those days from many passages in the Book of the Revelation ... Evidently Jordan is given special protection during the last great invasion of Israel which will in fact devastate the Land. Isaiah the Prophet instructs the believing remnant of Israel to find a safe hiding place during the time of Jacob's trouble when God's judgment will fall on the whole earth ..." - Ron Graff

Another site, www.exodus2006.com:

"Join the retreat into the Ethiopian mountains - near to the town of Aksum - where the Ark of the Covenant is kept. There is a prediction that a group of people will gather together from all over the world in a place of safety and that they will be the beginning of a new start. I have said where I think this place is: Axum in the Ethiopian Highlands. If I am right we will all gather there from 2006 onwards." - Ras Andy

Why do I mention the above?: To prove that a place of safety concept is NOT unique to Church of God folk. There are those in their blind fury and hatred that claim that the old WCG and its recent offshoots are cults because they believe in this. Not so! For many Protestants believe in it too.

5. EW Bullinger:

In Nahum 1:7 we are told that "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him."

Interpreted we can say that in the "day of trouble" (Tribulation), God will be our "stronghold". Bullinger's *Companion Bible* margin note on this verse (page 1262) has "stronghold" as "Place of Safety".¹⁵

Of course, whether he actually believed in a physical place of safety is another issue. But did this term transfer to the old WCG from here one wonders?

6. Church of God:

Many Church of God groups still believe in the concept of a place or places of refuge. Of the 150,000 people that attended the Feast of Tabernacles in 1985, only about 40,000 still observe the Law at the time of writing. The Synagogue of Satan has almost destroyed this particular era of God's Church, forcing it to form roots and branches all over the place: some have held fast to the truth; others have compromised or watered-down; some have obviously become Laodicean, thinking that they are superior to the Church under HWA; Scattering the people of God as a type or foretaste of what Daniel predicted in 12:7 and 7:25. Many of the remnants of this community¹⁶ no longer hold fast to many doctrines, including the place of safety, church eras etc.

Thankfully many still do. For example the Church of the Great God publishes the following on their site located at www.cgg.org:

"There are some who say there is no place of safety. These people say that the church has been wrong all of these years. It's been reported to me that some have even written to King Hussein, in Jordan, telling them of the Worldwide Church of God's plans. But, brethren, even if somebody did that, it

¹⁵ There might have been another reference to the term 'place of safety' in his side notes. Something I have to check

¹⁶ "Community" is a term I like to use. Dr Hoeh, WCG pioneer, used the term "Church of God fellowship"

would not be so unusual because we are not the only church that has their eye on Petra. Many, many churches of this world are looking to that area of the world — as a [possible] place of safety [site]. And with good reason, because the Scriptures seem to indicate that there is a place of safety and that the place of safety is in Petra.”

The Philadelphia Church of God also promotes it at www.thetrumpet.com:

"God promises a place of protection from the coming Tribulation in passages like Revelation 3:10 and 12:14-17. God has not yet revealed where that will be, or when to go. We are to watch and pray so we are counted worthy when the time comes (Luke 21:36). *The Trumpet* is an excellent guide on what to watch."

Others still holding to this truth include the Living Church of God, Eternal Church of God, Church of the Eternal God, Church of God, Faithful Flock, Church of God in Wales, Christian Biblical Church of God and many or most members of the United Church of God and some others.

Refer to Appendices 10-15 for further information.

What about Petra?

Could Petra be the place of refuge for God's people in these last days?¹⁷

In the first instance, let us take a brief look at its geography and history so that we might be provided with an overall context for this important study.

Petra is the Greek for 'rock'. Its location is in a great rift valley to the east of Wadi' Araba roughly 80km south of the Dead Sea, is situated 30° 19'N, 35° 26'E within the country of Jordan.

The city is located on the Edomite Plateau in area of faults (anciently volcanic eruptions occurred in the area and covered parts of Petra with molten basalt) – a zone that is only about 90 kilometres long and mostly 1600 metres (approximately 5,000 feet peaking at 5,688 feet just to the north of the city).

The city is enclosed by two ranges of sandstone mountains (these run approximately southwest and northeast. The eastern part of the ranges have been rendered asunder by es-Siq and the western by Wadi es-Siyagh. When the Wadi Musa floods, they waters pour through the openings and cascade from the Siyagh gorge. But the flood waters disappear into the ground or evaporate before they reach into the city to cause serious damage. (compare Revelation 12:13-16).

¹⁷ It was once thought in historical circles that Petra was identical to Sela. Nowadays most historians place Sela farther north (see II Kings 14:7). See "Petra" *Encyclopedia Judaica*. According to <http://nabataea.net/selah.html>: "Some historians feel that Sela was the place where King Amaziah of Judah took 10,000 Edomites prisoner and threw them from the summit of Selah. (II Kings 14:7) Since the ancient Edomite capital is only a couple of kilometers away, more and more scholars are now thinking that modern Selah was the site of this event, not Um al Biyara in the center of Petra as was previously thought ... Strabo (XVI.4.26) writes: "*The metropolis of the Nabataeans is Selah, as it is called, for it lies on a site which is otherwise smooth and level, but it is fortified all around by rock, the outside part of the site being precipitous and sheer, and the inside parts having springs in abundance, both for domestic use and watering gardens.*" Traditionally some historians have thought that this was a description of Petra, but it easily describes the hills and cliffs around Selah. Petra on the other hand is located in the middle of an open valley, and water was piped in from miles away as there were no springs inside Petra itself."

amazing hydraulic engineering systems. These systems were invented to conserve water. They also built dams which were used to divert the Winter flash floods away from the city. This brings to mind the imagery of Rev 12:15-16 which may have been the inspiration for this prophecy, as we saw earlier.

It grew up around its colonnaded street and grew rapidly as an urban centre. The city centre followed the Wadi Musa in an elongated manner between the theatre and the Qasr al Bint. Later, when the Persians invaded the region, the Edomites were forced out, but little is known about this mysterious place until 312 BC. By that time an Arabic tribe, the Nabataeans, were in occupation of the city and proclaimed it their capital.

Later still, during the Hellenistic period (the Seleucids and the Ptolemies) the city flourished and new towns grew up nearby (eg Philadelphia or Rabbath 'Ammon – Amman). There may be some significance to the name Philadelphia.

In course of time it came under the control of the Romans and became part of the Roman province Arabia Petraea. Emperor Hadrian (117-138AD) himself visited the area and he even named it after himself, Hadriane Petra.²¹

Eventually, as trade routes changed, Petra's importance declined and an earthquake in 551BC caused enormous damage.²² Petra eventually became a backwater and after the Crusades, was lost to European knowledge for centuries – it was only in 1812AD, that it was rediscovered by Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, the Swiss explorer.

The following graphic presents a 'big picture' overview of its location in Jordan.

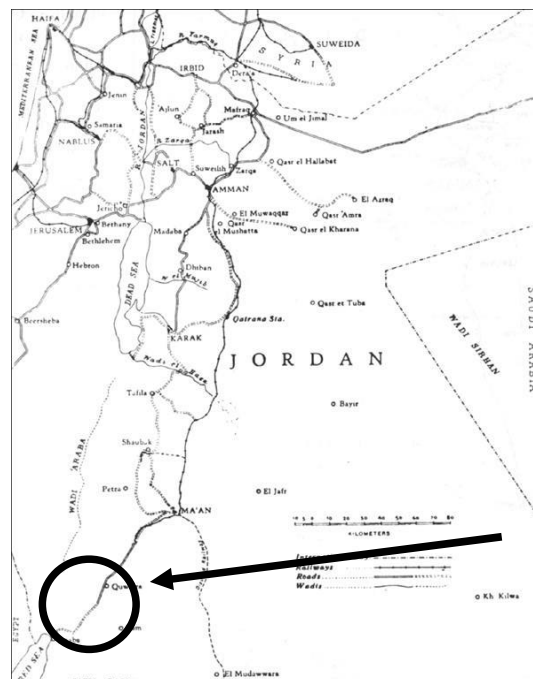


Figure 4 Location within Jordan

²¹ The following list of known sovereigns is found in the *Journal Asiatique*²¹: Aretas I (169 B.C.), Aretas II (110-96), Obodas I (about 90), Rabel I (about 87), Aretas III (87-62), Obodas II (about 62-47), Malichus I (about 47-30), Obodas III(30-9), Aretas IV (9 B.C.-A.D. 40), Malichus II (40-75), Rabel II (75-101), Malichus III (101-106)

²² Indeed, Petra has experienced many earthquakes, and one wonders if God will inspire one to seal it off (ie the Siq closing and the rear being closed in as well)

One can read a variety of works on the history of Petra – there has been a huge upsurge of interest in it with a large number of books, websites and scholarly journals reporting on various aspects of the site. Excavations have been undertaken and research on the site is intensifying. Why?

Approximately 19 years ago I wrote the following:

"I have before me a copy of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* [which I had read in the early 1980s and relayed the necessary information to others]. The authors discuss the background philosophy and history of a little known secret society called the Priore de Sion. Of course, it is one of many rival elite groups which sometimes fight, sometimes temporarily unite; have a few things in common, a lot in common, or nothing in common. Some are conservative, some liberal, others revolutionary, nationalist or internationalist etc. However there is no such thing as one united, conspiratorial group behind the scenes. Rather, there are a variety of groups which attempt to manipulate events in a very complex, divided world.

The authors attempt to prove that the Priore de Sion claim to have their ancestry in Christ himself through such lineages as the Merovingian dynasty. Today they claim that at least a dozen families in Europe are direct descendants of the Merovingians — including the houses of Habsburg-Lorraine, "present titular dukes of Lorraine and kings of Jerusalem", Plantard, Luxembourg, Montpezat, Montesquieu etc.:

In the late nineteenth century blue-prints were laid for a species of revived Holy League, which would have unified Catholic Europe — Austria, France, Italy and Spain — under the Hapsburgs. These plans were thwarted by the erratic and aggressive behaviour of both Germany and Russia. . . a revived and 'updated' Holy Roman Empire — a kind of theocratic United States of Europe, ruled simultaneously by the Hapsburgs and by a radically reformed Church. This enterprise was thwarted by the First World War.

According to the authors, the plans remain the same: this same group is working on establishing a U.S. of Europe — "A modern empire ruled by a dynasty descended from Jesus." They postulate that a future pope may also be a descendant of Jesus. This new Europe would be feudal in type and would challenge both America and Russia as world super-power. By its very nature it would tap into the collective psyche and needs of Europeans and thereby awaken their instant religious impulse. For Europeans desire a true leader, a "species of wise and benign spiritual figure, a 'priest- king.' " In a chilling last paragraph the authors state:

There are many devout Christians who do not hesitate to interpret the Apocalypse as nuclear holocaust. How might the advent of Jesus' lineal descendant be interpreted? To a receptive audience, it might be a kind of second coming.

Could a future European President/Emperor and also a future Pope both claim direct descent from Jesus? Of course, Christ never did marry nor have children. So who is this "Jesus" who they might claim descent from? Could it not be Simon Magus, that infamous founder of false Christianity? In 1986, the authors had published a sequel with the catchy title of *The Messianic Legacy*. Briefly, they discuss the "conversion" of Constantine, not to Christianity, but "the pagan sun god" and that much of early Christianity held Saturday as the Sabbath until Constantine's edict. Referring to Mithraism the authors concede

that "Christianity as we know it, is in many respects actually closer to those pagan systems of belief than it is to its own Judaic origins."

The authors correctly see a linkage between the line of Zadok and the Early Church, known as the Nazareans and Ebionites. They note that just before the fall of Jerusalem, that Church may have fled, not to Pella, but to Sela (Petra). They were basically entrenched in Old Testament laws, such as the Sabbath, dietary laws etc, and that the early Celtic Church was the legitimate heirs of the Nazarenes, observing the Sabbath, Jewish Passover, and various other Old Testament laws.

The authors slam the British-Israel doctrine believed by tens of thousands. They reserve their greatest criticism for the *Plain Truth* magazine with its supposed anti-U.S. of Europe line. When interviewing the leader of the Priore de Sion, they were bluntly told that

Everything was in place now ... All the pieces were aligned on the chessboard in the requisite positions. Nothing could stop 'it' now he declared ... a Merovingian restoration ... a United States of Europe ... a rapprochement had been reached with the Vatican. Rome would co-operate.

In addition, they were told that

... the Priore de Sion seeks a United States of Europe partly as a bulwark against the Soviet imperium ... a self-contained neutral power bloc capable of holding the balance of power between the Soviet Union and the United States. In this respect, the Priore's position would appear to be almost identical to that of Pan Europa, the organization for European unity currently directed by Dr. Otto von Habsburg which, like the Kreisau Circle and others, uses as a symbol a Celtic cross.

They plan to eventually occupy the Holy Land and to restore the Temple treasure which they claim to have! (Compare Daniel 8:11-14; 11:36; II Thessalonians 2:3-7; Revelation 13:15; Ezekiel 28:9, Matthew 24:15-16; Daniel 12:11).²³

None of the above may be verified of course, but it certainly makes one think! The following graphic narrows down the focus to Petra's specific location.

²³ Baigent 1986: 108-9, 183-6, 187, 345-6, 264, 300-01. NB I have collected and read a number of books and articles on this subject. Of course, there is not the slightest evidence for it. Rather, it is an attempt to popularize Gnosticism and to undermine Biblical truth.

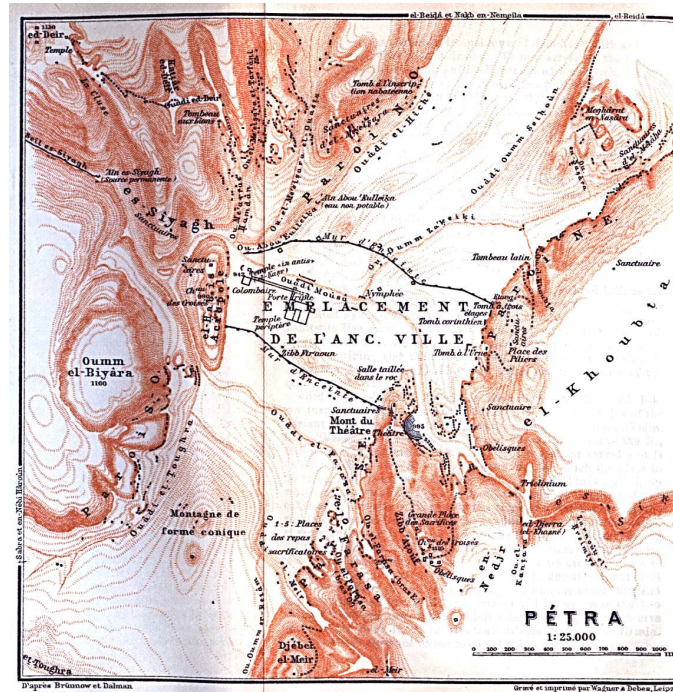


Figure 5 1912 map –a closer look

Finally, the following sketch plan gives us a clearer picture of Petra's layout.

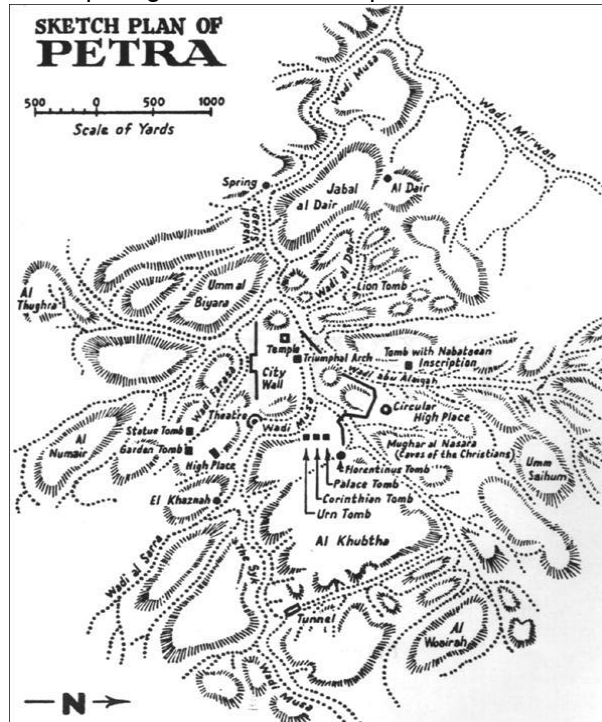


Figure 6 Sketch of Petra

Petra Archeological Park

The information below is a quote directly from *Heritage Newsletter*, English version No. 2, June 1993. It is fascinating to realise that Jordan has set aside about 100 square miles of territory as a national park which includes Petra. Other precious archaeological sites are

contained within the national park. Further information may be found below.

Why is this happening? Where will it lead?

A plan for safeguarding Petra and its surroundings

In 1991, UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor responded favorably to a request emanating from the highest level in Jordan for help with regard to the site of Petra, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985. For several years, even before its inscription on the List, Petra had benefited from international co-operation. During the period 1960 to 1970, studies were carried out by the World Bank, in collaboration with experts from UNESCO, with a view to establishing a new residential area to house the peoples living in tombs dating back to the Nabataean era and carved in the rose-red rock of Petra.

The French National Geographic Institute (IGN), under contract to UNESCO, had also made a number of photogrammetric surveys and restoration missions had been sent to Petra to try to consolidate the stucco decorations adorning the Qasr Al Bint, one of the principal monuments of the site.

In 1985, UNESCO had taken part in a seminar on Petra and the caravan-route cities organized jointly by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and a group known as LIMC (Lexique Iconographique de la Mythologie Classique). More recently UNESCO financed the scaffolding erected for the restoration of the Palace Tomb.

Petra, however, had become one of the favorite destinations of tourists visiting Jordan and the Holy Land and ad hoc restoration work was no longer enough. The nature and complexity of the problems arising were considered to be sufficiently important for UNESCO to give further consideration to Jordanian concern about the site as expressed in letters addressed to Mr. Mayor by Her Majesty Queen Noor.

It was evident that Petra, the ancient capital of the Nabataeans, was facing inevitable further deterioration if an overall safeguarding plan was not rapidly set in motion.

In December 1991, a mission was sent to Jordan to identify the problems and to suggest projects to remedy them. This was followed by the despatch of a multidisciplinary group of experts which stayed in Petra from 24th October to 24th November 1992.

This mission consisted of an architect/coordinator, A town-planner with specialist knowledge of problems of Saharan hydrology, an expert in ecology and the management of national parks, a geomorphologist, two experts on cultural tourism and touristic engineering, an anthropologist and an archaeologist with specialized knowledge of Petra.

Following completion of their mission, the members of the UNESCO team were received by their Majesties King Hussein of Jordan and Queen Noor to whom they presented the broad lines of action they proposed for the elaboration of a master plan covering the whole Petra region. Details of the analysis made and conclusions reached by the experts were laid out in a two-hundred-page report which was sent to UNESCO for reproduction in April 1993. A first working copy had already been sent, in March 1993, to the Jordanian authorities.

Like all visitors, the experts saw Petra as an archaeologically fascinating city,

unique both in its geographical situation and in the quality of its natural environment.

Inhabited since Neolithic times, Petra entered its golden age when the Nabataeans chose this site to be the royal seat of king Aretas in the second century BC. From that time onwards, for several centuries, Petra played a dominant role, flourishing as an economic and religious centre and as a sacred funerary city.

Scattered around the city are hundreds of tombs and funerary vaults, carved out of the rock and adorned with sculptures. The city also has its share of civic buildings for it was once a major cross-roads for the caravan routes that led to Sinai, the Red Sea, the Dead Sea, Egypt and Syria.

The climate, which appears to have changed little since ancient times, impelled the inhabitants to construct ingenious systems, veritable works of art, to control the water that nature dispensed with a parsimonious hand. Annual precipitation in the area averages between 50 and 250 millimeters a year, an amount characteristic of semi-desertic regions. These climatological conditions, combined with the abandonment of the ancient system of dams and irrigation channels has been one of the causes of erosion of the soil and of the amplitude of **the flooding when the area is at times subjected to torrential rain. Access to the site of Petra is through the narrow, two-kilometre-long Siq gorge, where, in April 1963, a group of tourists was carried away by floodwater.**

Two bodies, Electricité de France and SPOT Image, have offered to study the hydrological conditions and to supply the information which will enable the ancient system of dams and channels to be restored to use.

The monuments of Petra are under several forms of attack, not least from erosion by the wind which carries sand particles from the crumbling sandstone rock and which corrodes the lower sections of the facades of the tombs and funerary vaults: the water which infiltrates into the rock by capillary action and enables vegetation to grow in the interstices and to cause fracturing of the rock or even rock fall.

Nature, however, is not the only aggressor; human activities also play a preponderant role in the deterioration of the site.

The integrity and conservation of the site are seriously threatened by the uncontrolled flow of tourists and the lucrative sideline activities this engenders.

The first thing that strikes the visitor on arrival at Wadi Musa, a village through which one passes to reach the archaeological site, is the clear evidence of uncontrolled urban development.

Large numbers of hotels have sprung up, one of them located within an area that should be designated as a "no building" zone. Recent archaeological research shows that many vestiges of the ancient site have still to be uncovered in the area stretching from the existing site up to and including parts of the village of Wadi Musa, which, because of the tourist influx, is rapidly developing into a bustling small town.

One of the most lucrative activities is the provision of horse and camel rides to give tourists access to the ancient ruins. Exotic and attractive as this may seem to tourists, the dust raised by the animals becomes encrusted on the flanks of the Siq gorge and damages the excavated ruins.

The pervasive smell from animal dropping is also most disagreeable.

On emerging from the gorge and reaching the archaeological site itself, the visitor finds the path strewn with stalls selling tourist souvenirs. The vast number of these rudimentary, temporary stalls seriously disturbs the harmony of the site. Moreover, the pitches are shared out among the various tribes living in the area and any re-allocation would have to be equitable. This is why the master plan envisages a long-term strategy aimed at involving the local population authorities concerned very closely in the elaboration of a management plan for the site.

An initial solution could be the creation of a National Park within which a zone could be selected for specific purposes. The Park would be administered by a body having sufficiently broad responsibility and management autonomy to enable it to resolve the special problems peculiar to Petra.

The authors of the report put forward a number of proposals for action relating to the training of conservation personnel, protection against flooding, the restoration of the principal monuments (such as the Qasr Al Bint), the installation of a sign system, control of the flow of tourists and general supervision of the site.

It is to be hoped that the report will favour both the Jordanian authorities and with potential financial backers will be asked to support the implementation of the proposed programme.

Nothing short of a joint effort by Jordan and the international community will suffice to ensure the safeguard of Petra the delight of future generations.²⁴
[emphasis mine]

Do we see in this the initial stirrings of something HWA had in mind? Is God working something out? No one knows at the moment, but we should keep an eagle eye open on the situation. As well as an open mind.

Pray about it. Meditate upon it. Do what needs to be done. Remember the quote from John F Kennedy at the outset of this paper:

"All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days.
Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days ...
nor in the life of this administration,
nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet.
But let us begin."

²⁴ *The World Heritage Newsletter* is published by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, FRANCE. Fax: +33.1 45.68.55.70.

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Watershed Management

If Petra is to be the place that God provides to protect His sons and daughters, then what about water and other basics such as food and sewerage? There is a certain amount of shelter, but what about shelter for tens of thousands or even 144,000 as some believe? Perhaps it is already starting.

The following is from www.petranationaltrust.com:

“The proposed area for this study forms part of the World Heritage Site of Petra and falls within the protected area of the Petra Region. **This area is characterized by steep slopes that provoke heavy run-off, leading to torrential floods in the principal wadis of the area.** These wadis traverse Petra through the different geographical and geological units before spilling out into Wadi Araba. **The Nabataeans introduced a network of hydrological systems that spread ingeniously through the area and provided the inhabitants with their daily supply of water for personal, industrial, and agricultural uses. The system also protected the main spine of the city from the recurrent threat of flash floods, which endangered the inhabitants and their monuments.**

Over the years, this network was left to decline, and the once-thriving vegetation disappeared. The lack of maintenance to the ancient dams, agricultural terraces, water channels and cisterns, in addition to the deforestation of the catchment area, has accelerated soil erosion and destroyed the ground cover. The resulting increase in the volume of floodwater has carried water run-off and silt into Petra and harmed the historical monuments.

In 1996 and 1997, the Petra National Trust (PNT), in coordination with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and with funds obtained from the governments of Jordan and Switzerland, conducted two studies. One focused on the Nabataean hydraulic systems flanking the Siq, while the second was on the consolidation of the floor of the Siq, which also forms part of the water network in the area. In 1997 and 1998, in a separate project and with the same partners, PNT completed the excavation and restoration of the Siq. Also restored were a few of the hydraulic components identified in the studies—a dam connecting Wadi al-Madrass with the Siq; and the water channels on either side of the Siq. In a third project due to commence in 1998 and terminate in 1999, **PNT will construct three additional dams** where there are inlets in the Siq, a dam barrier in upper Wadi al-Madrass, and two sets of wadi and terrace barriers. Whereas the dams in the Siq will serve mainly to protect visitors from the threat of flash floods, the upper dam and the terrace and wadi barriers will serve as prototypes for future restoration works.

The present proposal aims to extend the studies previously conducted, to the entire watershed area falling within the protected area of the region. From this expanded study, the PNT plans a proposal to restore parts of the Nabataean hydraulic system. **The immediate objectives will be to protect the site from flash floods, to harvest water for use within the site, and to revive the indigenous vegetation.** [emphasis mine]

Is the Almighty working something out? We can only but patiently wait and endure this world and its sufferings for all to be revealed.

Further information on these sorts of incredible developments may be found on the PA Consulting website:

Wadi Musa pilot project: water re-use demonstration farm

Farmers given a future with re-use of water in a PA-managed project

With PA's help, Jordanian farmers in Wadi Musa, near the historic city of Petra, will be the first in the area to receive leases to irrigate with treated wastewater. These farmers are directly benefiting from the pilot demonstration farm, managed by PA to show that reclaimed water can provide safe and reliable irrigation for some types of agriculture.

The experiment has been so successful that almost 60 hectares will now be distributed among local farmers for cultivation using PA's water re-use methods.

The Jordanian government has always appreciated the vital role farmers play in the economy. However, agriculture consumes two thirds of the water resources of Jordan, which is among the 10 most water-poor countries in the world.

To encourage farmers to use reclaimed water for irrigation, the government is providing the know-how and latest technology through projects such as Wadi Musa. This pilot project is managed by PA Consulting Group in co-operation with the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation, and funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

The project exploits the Petra Regional Wastewater Treatment plant, using treated wastewater on a variety of agricultural crops with several different irrigation methods. PA has managed the design and planting in addition to the procurement and installation of a fully functioning drip irrigation system.

PA provides a site manager and site engineer, with specialists being hired as needed, such as Dr Nicholas P Cheremisinoff.

The farm grows field crops such as alfalfa, maize, sunflowers and Sudan grass, tree crops including pistachio, almond, olives, date palms, lemons, poplars, spruce and junipers, and many varieties of ornamental flowers including iris, geraniums, petunias and daisies.

The yield of maize is approximately 25 percent higher than for maize grown with fresh water, and the yield for sunflowers is approximately 30 percent higher.

More than 2,000 trees and 400 shrubs and flowers have been planted to date. The poplar trees in particular have demonstrated impressive growth, doubling in size in the three months since planting.

Business is blooming

PA even created a demand for the farm's cut flowers in several of Petra's tourist hotels. Hotel managers have said they will purchase all the flowers that can be produced at the site, demonstrating the economic benefits generated from the project and creating a market for the farmers even before they take control of the farm.

Funds from the sale of crops grown at the site will be used to establish a revolving fund for the farmers, including local Bedouin tribes, who will receive loans to help them establish and plant their leaseholdings.

“The land will be divided into plots of 1-2 hectares that farmers, after proper training, will begin cultivating,” says the Deputy Chief of Party for PA, Dr. Bashar Al-Smadi. “We will hold training seminars teaching farmers how to safely utilize re-used water in farming, as well as the best strategies for crop cultivation and the crops best suited for generating profits.”²⁵

So, is something beginning to stir? Should we ‘just have faith’ and wait for God to do it all for us? Or do we follow the basic Biblical rule and do all we can under His inspiration – then He will do what we cannot? See Prov 6:4-11; 10:3-5; 26:13-16; 30:24-28 James 1:22-24.

After all, faith without works is dead. Knowledge and subsequent action are also needed.

Patient endurance of Philadelphians without knowing what God has planned may turn out to be a futile exercise.

So, the place of safety will not be the proverbial ‘bed of roses’. It will, instead, be a time of hard work, testing, endurance and planning.

Concluding Remarks

From the aforementioned research, one can safely conclude the following:

1. the accusations that the old WCG was obsessed by the subject is false. Hardly an article appeared on the subject and very few sermons were given over the 40 or so years since the doctrine was accepted
2. nor can this be a doctrine of a cult. All sorts of Christians teach it including mainstream Protestants, Evangelicals, Messianics and alternative groups
3. the New Testament continues so many Old Testament themes, including the idea that God provides refuge for His people. There are many instances of protection for His people in both Testaments, including the Old Testament Church, Israel
4. It follows that God will provide protection for Christians during the most terrible global conditions ahead of us
5. and that place may be Petra; or at least Petra may be one of the places He will use to provide refuge and as a test of endurance.

Yet there are those that deny God will protect His people in the ways He often does.

Of these interlopers and interferers in the Churches of God the scriptures severely warn in 2Peter 2:1-22:

“But there were also **false prophets** among the people, just as there will **be false teachers** among you. They will **secretly** introduce destructive heresies [such as political correctness], even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.

Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;

²⁵ <http://www.paconsulting.com>, PA Consulting Group, 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington 20006, USA

if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of **Sodom and Gomorrah** by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— if this is so, **then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials** and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings;

yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.

But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.

With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they **seduce** the unstable; they are experts in greed--an accursed brood!

They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey--a beast without speech--who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to **the lustful desires** of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Of them the proverbs are true: "**A dog returns to its vomit,**" and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

These rail against Herbert Armstrong, spitting and spreading their vileness. The deny that God used him. They hate the spiritual roots from whence we spring and wish to reject our past. But notice:

**"When a Land [or Church] rejects its legends,
Sees but falsehoods in the past [eg the old WCG],
And its People view their sires[eg HWA]
In the light of fools and liars,
'Tis a sign of its decline,
And its splendours cannot last.
Branches that but blight their roots,
Yield no sap for lasting fruits." [is this not happening today?]**

(F R A Glover of England, 1861)

No wonder there are few fruits. Or imagined fruits by well-meaning people that just want to believe that all is well – they deceive themselves.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn is famous for his speech *A World Split Apart*, given at Harvard Class Day Afternoon Exercises, Thursday, June 8, 1978. The speech provides valuable insights into the mind of the liberal product of the 1968 revolution and which infects the Church today:

“If humanism were right in declaring that man is born to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature. It cannot be unrestrained enjoyment of everyday life. It cannot be the search for the best ways to obtain material goods and then cheerfully get the most out of them. It has to be the fulfillment of a permanent, earnest duty so that one's life journey may become an experience of moral growth, so that one may leave life a better human being than one started it. It is imperative to review the table of widespread human values. Its present incorrectness is astounding. It is not possible that assessment of the President's performance be reduced to the question of how much money one makes or of unlimited availability of gasoline. **Only voluntary, inspired self-restraint can raise man above the world stream of materialism.**”

He later states that

“A Decline in Courage [ie unnecessary fear] may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world [and so the Church] has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, each government, each political party and of course in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite [again, so with the Church. But certainly HWA could not be accused of such], causing an impression of loss of courage by the entire society. Of course there are many courageous individuals but they have no determining influence on public life. Political and intellectual bureaucrats show depression, passivity and perplexity in their actions and in their statements and even more so in theoretical reflections to explain how realistic, reasonable as well as intellectually and even morally warranted it is to base state policies on weakness and cowardice. And decline in courage is ironically emphasized by occasional explosions of anger and inflexibility on the part of the same bureaucrats when dealing with weak governments and weak countries, not supported by anyone, or with currents which cannot offer any resistance. But they get tongue-tied and paralyzed when they deal with powerful governments and threatening forces, with aggressors and international terrorists.

“Should one point out that from ancient times decline in courage has been considered the beginning of the end?” [be forewarned, Churches of God]

He then poses a warning which we, of all people, need to take heed of:

“Western society [read Church] has given itself the organization best suited to its purposes, based, I would say, on the letter of the law. The limits of human rights and righteousness are determined by a system of laws; such limits are very broad. People in the West [read Church] have acquired considerable skill in using, interpreting and manipulating law, even though laws tend to be too complicated for an average person to understand without the help of an expert. Any conflict is solved according to the letter of the law and this is considered to be the supreme solution. If one is right from a legal point of

view, nothing more is required, nobody may mention that one could still not be entirely right, and urge self-restraint, a willingness to renounce such legal rights, sacrifice and selfless risk: it would sound simply absurd. One almost never sees voluntary self-restraint. Everybody operates at the extreme limit of those legal frames. An oil company is legally blameless when it purchases an invention of a new type of energy in order to prevent its use. A food product manufacturer is legally blameless when he poisons his produce to make it last longer: after all, people are free not to buy it.

“I have spent all my life under a communist regime and I will tell you that a society without any objective legal scale is a terrible one indeed. But a society with no other scale but the legal one is not quite worthy of man either. **A society which is based on the letter of the law and never reaches any higher is taking very scarce advantage of the high level of human possibilities.** The letter of the law is too cold and formal to have a beneficial influence on society. Whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relations, there is an atmosphere of moral mediocrity, paralyzing man's noblest impulses.

“And it will be simply impossible to stand through the trials of this threatening century with only the support of a legalistic structure.”

In other words, following merely the bare essentials of the law and not reaching to its higher plain, the spiritual intent, leaves wide open the means to water-down even the basic letter!

Matthew Henry's *Commentary*, written in the 18th century has an excellent message for us in this regard:

“Lukewarmness [something Herbert Armstrong warned us against] or indifference in religion is the worst temper in the world. If [true] religion is a real thing, it is the most excellent thing, and therefore we should be in good earnest in it ... If religion is worth anything, it is worth every thing; an indifference here is inexcusable: Why halt you between two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal (be God), follow him ... Christ expects that men should declare themselves in earnest either for him or against him” (*A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol 6, p 1135).

We need to be earnest as Matthew Henry declares – fired up with real **ZEAL** to teach the full counsel of God's Word and to reach out to warn our peoples before it is too late! We should not be jealous of the zealous ones and denounce them – but supportive of them.

One could get the impression of a ‘don't care’ attitude today. Or a ‘the two witnesses will do the Work’ so ‘we can have a nice social club each Sabbath’ approach. We of all people **have a duty of care** and should have a burning desire to warn our peoples and to believe that God will preserve His people during the terrible times ahead. Otherwise our indifference will be noted by God and we will pay the consequences.

Like Churchill warned, so let us apply to the present day:

“Something quite extraordinary is afoot. All the signals are set for danger. The red lights flash through the gloom. Let peaceful folk beware. It is time to pay attention and to be well prepared”.

Allow me to quote from Cicero who wrote thus in 42 BC:

"A nation [read Church] can survive its fools and even the ambitious [and there are plenty of those again]. But it cannot survive treason from within [like those who water-down the truth]. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and he carries his banners openly.

But the traitor [like a leader who pretends to be a shepherd] moves among those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself. For the traitor appears not traitor! He speaks in the accent familiar to his victims and he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men.

He rots the soul of a nation [or Church]. He works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of a city; He infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist.

A murderer is less to be feared".

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