

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN  
**TIDINGS**  
of the Kingdom of God

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# The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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## The Bible Companion

*The Bible Companion is not a divinely inspired work as is the Bible itself; yet, repeatedly, we find an amazing theme running in all three portions for a specific day. Sunday, 01/06/13, the first Sunday of the New Year, is a wonderful example of such identifiable theme. In Gen 11 and 12, we are looking at Babel and the Canaanite, SIN at the institutional level; in Psalms 14 to 16, it is SIN at the personal level and in Matt 8 the personal level of SIN is symbolized as leprosy.*

*Babel with its origin in Nimrod, grandson of Ham (or Egypt Psa 105:23) has developed into a global organization described as "Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots....."; the Canaanite in the land (Gen. 12 :6) originated from Canaan, son of Ham and their borders came near to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 10:19): SIN at the national level! In all three portions there are the faithful/righteous who, recognizing the danger, escaped the eternal fatality. There were Abram and Lot, the saints of Psa. 16:3, and the true disciples of Jesus (Matt 8:22,23).*

Clement Drepaul (Brooklyn, NY)

## Editorial

### An Open Letter to North American Christadelphians

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our community is at a crossroads. The decisions we make over the coming months will determine the makeup of our fellowship. We are being pulled in opposite directions. Two factions, one more inclusive, the other more exclusive, are promoting their positions amongst us and insisting the rest of us chose between them. At present these two factions combined represent less than 20% of our community in North America. These factions are sincere; they are driven by their consciences; and they both claim Scriptural support for their positions. Having listened carefully to all sides we have come to the conclusion that choosing between these two positions is a mistake. They form a false dichotomy; neither position is complete by itself. Rather, they are like two sides of a coin: both perspectives are essential to a fair representation of Bible Truth. Choosing one of the positions alone fails to account for the whole counsel of Scripture.

#### Scriptural basis for the two positions

The more inclusive faction emphasizes passages like the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, in which the King's judgment of his servants is determined by their treatment of the least of his brethren:

*“Then shall the King say unto [the sheep] on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.***

*“Then shall he say also unto [the goats] on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.** And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt 25:34-46).*

The inclusive faction is deeply moved by the lesson of this parable, and so they fear leaving anyone out of fellowship who should be included. Their view here is right: all of us must embrace our obligation to include those who should be included.

In contrast, the more exclusive faction bases its position on passages like this warning against supporting those who teach false doctrine:

*“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2John 10-11).*

The exclusive faction is significantly influenced by this Scriptural exhortation, and so they fear including anyone in fellowship who should be excluded. Again, their view is right: all of us must embrace our obligation to exclude those who should be excluded.

So both factions are at least partly right; but if they do not simultaneously embrace the position of the other, both extremes will wind up being wrong in the end, with potentially devastating consequences for us all. The danger of the exclusive faction’s position is that it can cause us to exclude some who ought to be included. On the other hand, the danger of the inclusive faction’s position is that it can cause us to include some who ought to be excluded. The answer to this dilemma is simple to articulate, but difficult to implement: we must include those who should be included and exclude those who should be excluded.

### **Avoid being too exclusive**

Scripture provides examples to help us understand the dangers of being too exclusive, including these four.

(1) Jesus rebuked the Apostle John for “forbidding” someone who did not follow them:

*“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and **we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part**” (Mark 9:38-40; Luke 9:49-50; cf. Num 11:26-29).*

(2) The Pharisees threatened to “disfellowship” (and worse) anyone who confessed that Jesus was Christ:

*“[The parents of the blind man Jesus had healed] **feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue...** Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but **because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue...** **They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service**” (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).*

(3) John condemned Diotrephes’ exclusivity:

*“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbid-deth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3John 9-10).*

(4) The first century ecclesia faced a difficult time determining, for example, whether or not Gentiles were required to keep the Jewish dietary and calendar laws. The situation was in many ways comparable to ours in that it was a time of transition and those on opposite sides of the question were condemning each other. In response, Paul gives a powerful exhortation for inclusivity, arguing that believers should not judge each other, but that instead everyone should be persuaded in their own mind:

*“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind... Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way... For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom 14:1-5, 13, 18-19).*

The exhortation for us is plain; we are commanded to:

- Receive the weak.
- Avoid doubtful disputations.
- Not despise or judge those who decide differently than we do.
- Let everyone be fully persuaded in their own mind.
- Not judge others in order to avoid causing them to stumble or worse to fall.
- Serve Christ.
- Follow the things that make for peace and that build up others.

The reasons for these required behaviors are also given:

- For God has received them.
- For God is able to make them stand.
- For they are acceptable to God.

All of these lessons apply to our situation today: we are to receive our fellow brothers and sisters, *because* God has received them.

### **Liberty constrained by the consciences of others**

On the other side of the coin, we must be careful not to exercise our liberty to the extent we cause others to be offended. In addressing the issue of meat offered to

idols, Paul explains that our liberty is judged not by our own consciences, but by the consciences of our weaker brethren:

*“But take heed lest by any means this **liberty** of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak... But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend... All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s [well-being]... But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my **liberty** judged of another man’s conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1Cor 8:9, 12-13; 10:23-24, 28-33).*

Both extremes today, the inclusive faction and the exclusive faction, need to understand that they are causing offense. Their extremes are begetting further extremes, in a vicious cycle that is pulling apart brothers and sisters on all sides. Offending one’s brothers and sisters is a sin (1Cor 8:12), and the judge himself says that the punishment for doing so is severe (cf. Matt 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:1-2). As we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, it is incumbent upon each of us to avoid giving offense to any; instead we are commanded to seek not our own profit, but that of others (1Cor 10:32-33), to seek not our own, but each other’s well-being (1Cor 10:24 NKJV).

The importance of this exhortation to constrain our behavior for the sake of others is made clear by its repetition in Paul’s other letters:

*“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2Cor 5:14-15).*

*“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal 5:13-14).*

Constraining our actions so as not to offend the consciences of others is perhaps the most difficult of the commandments of Christ. We must follow Paul’s Christ-like example: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1Cor 11:1).

### **Summary: The middle path is the right path**

For the first time in many decades we are in a position to bring unity to the body of Christ. The transition from division to unity faces many hurdles. Though the

current disharmony we are experiencing is temporary (God willing), we need to do everything we can to minimize it. Two conflicting paths have been laid out before us. Each path seems right and easy to those on it, but causes serious concern to those who are not. Both paths have merit, but neither will get us to the finish line. The proper path, the one that will get us back to equilibrium, requires aspects of both positions in order to avoid the offense of a significant portion of our community. We must embrace the essence of both positions by following a third path that avoids either extreme. This middle path respects the consciences of others. It requires us to include everyone who should be included and to exclude everyone who should be excluded. By following this path, we avoid causing offense to the inclusive faction by making sure we include the least of our Lord's brothers and sisters, and we avoid causing offense to the exclusive faction by making sure we do not allow false doctrines or their teachers into our midst. This third path incorporates the whole counsel of Scripture by defining our fellowship community to be the whole body of Christ, and nothing but the body. We encourage the ecclesias in Ontario, the Midwest, and the rest of North America to pursue this middle course.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

*The Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee*

## **Postscript**

This article has already been widely circulated. It has received a mixed response: God willing, we hope to share some of the replies and comments next month. Many commented very favorably, especially those from ecclesias local to the situation. Others have raised areas of concern. The only point mentioned that we would comment on here, is that some have misunderstood which community is being addressed. The one intended is, as always, the Central community in North America.

We are working with those involved to define the middle path described in the article. We must avoid those who bring false doctrine, or who seek to permit false doctrine to enter our fellowship. Similarly, we must ensure that "uncertain details" are not used as a reason to exclude some. Our community has drawn the line at the Scriptural principles conveniently summarized in the BASF. Our aim is to achieve the true unity of the body of Christ, based on these principles, which all accept, and to reach a situation in which nobody's conscience is troubled by any in our midst.

We ask for your prayers on behalf of our community.

*Peter Hemingray and Joe Hill*

**Letters to the editor can be sent to [letters@tidings.org](mailto:letters@tidings.org). Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged and may be edited for length and clarity.**

## Exhortation

### Longing for the Kingdom

#### **Few and evil are the days**

We often, on a Sunday, read *“for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come”* (1Cor 11:26). And so our Master will soon return and this transient, temporary life, that we are so bogged down with, will be a thing of the past. After all it is, as we know, only temporary. Something we all intellectually are aware of: but do we really live in the light of this reality?

We are told to be a people watching and waiting for our Master’s return. And more than this we are to be a people earnestly desiring or longing for that day. Paul told us *“For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven”* (2Cor 5:2). The Psalmist David speaks of *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power”* (Psa 110:3), and for this to be true, we need to be willing now, prepared at any moment to welcome our Lord with gladness and joy.

Do we each yearn for the millennium, for the fulfillment of the next stage in our Heavenly Father’s purpose? Are our minds focused as often as possible on the return of the bridegroom, or do our minds fall into thinking only of the approaching judge and the specter of the judgment to come?

Is our desire for the glorious age to come growing, as we see the day approaching? Or is our desire being clouded over by the rising spirit of fear felt all over the world? Or perhaps this desire for the millennium is only being felt by the older members, or those who have been around for a while, those who have lived long enough to have fully experienced the harshness of life? As Jacob said to Pharaoh *“the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been”* (Gen 47:9).

Such a longing should not be just the feelings and emotions of those that have been in the truth a long time. Of course those experiences of life should develop a longing, and that desire ought to grow in intensity with age and experience of life. But it must not be solely the experience of who have walked for a number of years in the way of life.

And so those who have been around for a while, and who feel the intensity of such a longing due to their experience of life with all its evils and trials, must convey this yearning for the Master’s return to those that are younger. To those who have not yet had the breadth of life’s experiences, and who may be still filled with all of life’s hopes, joys and dreams i.e. the promotions, the perfect marriage partner, the adorable kids (so brilliant that they top MIT); the huge mansion and a couple of cars to park there! Nothing evil about any of these things, so long as they do not take preference over our groaning for the millennium!

You see there is a danger here, that we can be overtaken with the cares of this life. Those cares, which may increasingly become much more pressing as we approach

the time of the end and the increasing instability of these last days, such instability, as we have been experiencing in the credit crunch and the global economic downturn, the housing market, etc.: surely these turn of events stimulates our faith

How can we not be sitting on the edge of our seats elated that the day is approaching? Accepting with gladness and joy the possible short-term hardships, which we may experience, both individually and ecclesially, before we are delivered from this evil and dark age.

Of course we know that as the hard times get more and more widespread, men's hearts will be failing them for fear, because of the distress and the perplexity affecting all nations.

*“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:24-28).*

For our redemption draweth nigh...: our lives are not based in the here and now. But rather are *“hid with Christ in God and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:3)*. Now in those couple of verses from Luke, we have a powerful contrast between those not in Christ and those in Christ. Those whose hope is lost, such as we see every day.

*“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2Tim 1:7)*. We are those who are called upon to *“look up and lift up our heads.”*

And again in the Greek when it says, “look up and lift up”, both are ongoing daily commands that the Eternal Spirit urgently exhorts us to perform. This is in order that we too might not become paralyzed by the spirit of fear, that is so much present all around us, in every part of the world. We only have to think of the Apostle Peter when he walked upon the water. He took his eyes off the author and finisher of our faith and began to sink, being overcome with his temporal circumstances. It's an example for us to keep our eyes on our Lord!

And so in the first picture we see those overcome by the troubles of our times, their heads hanging down, undoubtedly unable to see a way out of what is before them either individually or collectively. And then in the second picture we have ourselves, who are living through and experiencing the very same set of circumstances, but we are not bowed down by those events. Rather, as verse 28 indicates, this second group is on their feet with expectation, elated that the fulfillment of all their hope is at hand.

## **Our eternal focus**

*“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Cor 4:17-18).*

There is a great need amongst us to keep an eternal or a vertical focus, especially if we are to go through a harsh time of economic testing, as a number of our brothers and sisters endured in the 1930s. We have heard a lot about that decade... the great depression. The Wall Street Stock Market Crash of October 1929, also known as the Great Crash, was the most devastating stock market crash in the history of the United States. The crash signaled the beginning of the 12-year Great Depression that affected all the Western industrialized countries and did not end in the US until World War II at the end of 1941.

Our society is now very different from the 1930s, for there is not the sense of community at large as there once was, and sadly this is also true of the brotherhood. When you look at shows such as “Little house on the prairie” you get a sense of how communities lived and struggled together. I know in big cities this is rare, but as a Christadelphian community it doesn’t matter if we are in a big city or small town, we need to keep our focus upon our hope and we need to do everything in our power to strengthen each other. Not only that, but also to strengthen the bonds of fellowship between us practically, as far as we are able. An example is prayer meetings, a practice that is perhaps not very common in the US, but in the Caribbean, brethren call each other to their homes regularly for a prayer meeting, it doesn’t always have to be for a specific reason. And brethren also just invite each other to spend some time together, hang out as we say. Instead of spending time virtually, we do it the old fashioned way: in person! Can you imagine that? You know with all the research on cell phone waves and their effects on our brain, and the computer screens of all types, and their effect on our eyes, there has never been any negative findings for face-to-face encounters. Isn’t that something: it is still safe to talk to each other in person!

It’s one way we can show support to one another, especially with difficult times ahead. I know our love comes out when ever one of us is in dire need, and not just here in Brooklyn, but throughout the world. Whenever we hear of a situation, first we find out if anyone has been hurt and then we offer financial support. As was the case with Haiti, a year ago, and recently New Zealand, (and still more recently in Brooklyn itself), these events are just the beginning of sorrows. One brother suggested that things may get so bad, that we will have to pool our monetary resources in a similar fashion to the first century to care for those in need.

Such times of distress are also a means that our Heavenly Father uses positively to develop our love and our hope, even our yearning for the age to come. And there is nothing like disaster, natural or man-made, to bring people together: even enemies sometimes come together to help each other in times of emergencies.

## The trials of Joseph

*“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtly with his servants” (Psa 105:17-19, 23-25).*

First we have an individual, Joseph, who was sold into Egypt by his brothers and so experienced the harshness of life, that our Heavenly Father might both prepare him and also try him. (The Hebrew word there is smelted him, the way silver is refined, so that the dross might be removed in order to make Joseph pure.) And that took some thirteen years, so when we read, the phrase “he was laid in iron” in verse eighteen, think of “iron entering his soul”.

So the trials of his life made Joseph fit for the Father’s purpose, and more than this, it purified him. Do we not read elsewhere *“every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure”!* (1John 3:3). So Joseph’s faith did not collapse through this trial: his hope increased and he would undoubtedly have been sustained by focusing upon the eternal.

And so the very trials, which destroy those who are not in the Truth, are actually a means of generating our hope for the age to come, for that new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

## The trials of Lot

Think for a moment of the trial of Lot, dwelling in Sodom, and you can see our Heavenly Father used the mistakes of this righteous man to fulfill this same purification process in his life.

*“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished” (2Pet 2:7-9).*

Now it’s interesting how those two occasions of the word “vexed” here are different words. The first when it says, *“vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked”* means to be bowed down with the toil or the effect of the culture he lived in. So the wickedness of Sodom wore him down and afflicted him daily, as the Greek implies, because of the blatant wickedness of Sodom. Now this is how we should be today. Vexed with all the immorality going on, not joining in glorifying it! After all we, like Lot, choose to live wherever we are living!

Glorifying immoral behavior, we don’t need to be involved in it ourselves, we don’t have to be out fornicating ourselves, by being entertained by those who do is just as evil! If we are not vexed by the happenings around us, the practices of our friends, our wayward relatives, our neighbors, then how are we different from them?

It's amazing that our younger members may not be aware of the breakdown of morals, because this is all they have seen growing up over the past 15-20 years. So society doesn't really look any different to them, whereas those who have been in the Truth many years can more readily appreciate the decline of our society

Now when we consider the second word "*vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*" in verse 8, it is speaking of the testing of metals, especially of silver and gold to make it pure. We see then how life the Father can turn around even our bad choices in life, and teach us lessons through those experiences to develop our faith, our love and hope for the age to come.

*"He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm"*  
(Psa 105:14-15).

### **Faithful men of old**

Both in the lives of Abraham and Isaac we find this situation taking place. Their weakness, because of their unbelief, in their inability not to understand completely the promises made to them, led them to make foolish mistakes. They were focusing upon the temporal situation at the time. Yet our Heavenly Father in His providential care not only protected them, but also blessed them through those experiences, even though Abraham and Isaac were both reprov'd by kings for their folly.

From these examples, we can take great comfort, that these faithful men of old, even in their failures and apparent weaknesses of the flesh our Heavenly Father turned those events to work together for their eternal good.

Now within Psa 105 we see this same principle in the life of Joseph worked out collectively in the life of the whole nation of Israel in the persecution of the people after Joseph. Note carefully the record states that, "*He (that is the LORD) turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people, to deal subtly with his servants*"

So in this Psalm, we see our Heavenly Father trying to develop faith, hope and love in His promises in both the individual Israelite and collectively in the nation. Now since our God does not change, can we think of any reason why He need be any different today?

This is a Psalm recognizing the initial and partial fulfillment of the promise of the land to Abraham's seed — the nation of Israel. It shows to us the very faithfulness of our Heavenly Father that what He has promised He is able to deliver. The same way He has provided the necessary sacrifice for our sins represented by the emblems upon the table. It brings out the faithfulness of our Father in making this provision.

Now this Psalm powerfully highlights for us the providential care of our Heavenly Father in the life and development of the nation. Take note of the number of times it states "He" did something to move forward His purpose. So our Heavenly Father began with Abraham, in a sense, and brought to fruition the redemption of the nation of Israel at the time of the Exodus, caring for them through their wanderings until He brought them into the land of promise.

The same is equally true concerning our redemption in the Lord Jesus, as is witnessed with the bread and wine upon the table. That all of the purpose and its process is of him, and to the Father must the glory be given. So when we read Psalm 105, which takes us through the redemption of the nation, we are being told that the same God, who performed the Exodus, is equally at work in each of our lives and collectively in the life of our ecclesia's through His Son to bring us unto His rest.

*“Being confident this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6)*

This is exactly why Psalm 105 stops at the point that the nation enters the land of promise and inherits the land. We are to see in it a type and the surety of our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

And so we go back to our question, are we longing for the kingdom? Are we even sighing, as this word groan indicates, are we like vexed Lot? Day to day shaking our heads at the world around us or are we entertained and amused and join in the frivolities that everyone else is enjoying. Are we secretly or openly wishing that we can be part of the “mardi gra”... to borrow that term?

And so as we come once more around these emblems, Let each one of us clearly see the bread, which speaks here of the love of our Heavenly Father in Christ, expressed in His word. That word, which is able to transform and renew our minds and characters to be like our Lord Jesus.

That word, which is able to give us a yearning for the glories of the age to come, that we might have a Holy dissatisfaction with the here and now. Vex our righteous souls! Hopefully they can be classed as righteous!

Likewise with the cup, for the wine speaks to each one of us, of the outworking of that word in a life poured out. Firstly in the Master's sacrifice and secondly in his ongoing High Priestly intercession on our behalf and for our good, for our eternal wellbeing. Through the Father's mercy and ultimately to our Heavenly Father's glory.

In the wine then we see the example of how we are to live out our faith, our hope, and our love. In sacrificial service in stirring up one another unto love and good works, exhorting one another concerning the kingdom, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Let us eat this feast with our loins girded, our shoes on our feet, and our lamp in your hand. Ready, willing and longing to go out and meet him, when the cry comes.

*“Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore: Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD” (Psa 105:3-4).*

*Gideon Drepaul (Brooklyn NY)*

## Bible Study

### “Before Abraham was, I am”

*(And other similar declarations in the Gospel of John)*

The Old Testament is the foundation on which the supremacy of Christ is established in the Gospel of John. It is the frame of reference to which John takes his readers to demonstrate that Christ is *first* and *foremost* in the purpose of God and among all men. The Old Testament was authoritative with the Jews and it needs to be so with us as well. It is Christ in the Old Testament that holds the key to understanding the so-called “preexistence passages” in John’s Gospel.

When John writes, “*In the beginning was the word,*” he has Genesis 1 in mind. In fact, he has the Christ of Gen 1:26 in mind, the one who is portrayed with God in glory and through whom God will bring many sons of Adam to glory — “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion ... over all the earth.*” Gen 1:26 introduces one who is with God and is (like) God.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Christ has first place in the Old Testament. He is there before Adam is created. He is there before Abraham is born. He is the one of whom Moses writes. And John the Baptist can say of him, “*He is preferred before me: for he was before me.*”

#### **John 1:15, 30 — “he was before me”**

The earliest confession concerning Christ, recorded in the Gospel of John, is that of John the Baptist:

*“John (the Baptist) bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, **He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me**” (John 1:15).*

*“And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, **I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias**” (John 1:19-23).*

John the Baptist declares that he is the forerunner of Christ spoken of in the Old Testament. Thus he cites Isa 40:3 to the Jews who come to him (v.23). But John is only the forerunner. A mightier one is coming who is greater than he and who has precedence over him in every respect!

*“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. **This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me**” (John 1:29-30).*

Even though Jesus would come *after* John in point of time, he was *preferred before* John in the purpose of God and *was before* John in terms of his place in the Old Testament. In other words, very simply, John understood that the God-ordained role of Christ was vastly more important than his role, and accordingly it was defined well in advance of his role in the Old Testament.

To be sure! The life-giving role of Christ is defined in Genesis 1:26 *before* Adam was created. And the life-saving role of Christ is defined in Genesis 3:15, long *before* the Old Testament says anything about the appearance of a forerunner.

### **John 6:62 — “where he was before”**

John 6 ends with the tragedy of defecting disciples. Many were having difficulty understanding the parabolic nature of Jesus’s teaching, and when he demanded, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,” the literal sound of his words cut forcefully against the grain of their Jewish scruples.

*“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?” (John 6:60-61).*

But before these disciples walked away from him and turned their backs on eternal life, Jesus gave them something to think about. Something was soon to happen that would surely give them second thoughts:

*“What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” (John 6:62).*

For this argument to carry any weight at all, it had to fit into a framework of thought that was familiar to his disciples. Jews had no concept of a preexistent Christ — then or now. Jesus would not have expected his Jewish disciples to think in terms of preexistence, nor would he have tried to induce them to second thoughts with an argument based on it. The frame of reference for the Jews was the Old Testament, not post-Nicene Christology. The way for them to understand the concept of *before* was in terms of what their Scriptures had to say about Christ. The Old Testament ordained Christ for glory with God *beforehand*; in fact, *before* Adam drew his first breath — Gen 1:26. The glory, foretold in their Scriptures, was soon to become historical reality in the one they were about to turn their backs on. Surely this ought to give any disciple reason to reconsider the wisdom of defecting from him.

Of added interest in today’s religious climate is the fact that Jesus declares that it was *the Son of man* who was in an ascended state *before*. Does anyone believe that Christ preexisted in *human* form?

Is Jesus not rather telling his disciples — and us — that when he read Gen 1:26, he not only saw Christ portrayed in glory with God, he understood that the one whom God invites to join Him in bringing many sons of Adam to glory is, in fact, *a glorified son of Adam*.<sup>2</sup> And *he* was that son of Adam soon to enter into glory with God.

### **John 8:58 — “before Abraham was”**

*“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am**” (John 8:58)*

Several versions read as follows or in similar words:<sup>3</sup>

*“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was born, I am**” (John 8:58).*

This statement by Jesus is a straightforward declaration of his supremacy over Abraham, of whom the Jews were boasting that he was their father. The Lord's declaration is intended to be understood in terms of the Old Testament, and so it can be. Its meaning is evident from the fact that Christ is written into the earliest chapters of Genesis, *before Abraham was born!* That is, before Gen 11:26.

Christ is first and foremost in the saving purpose of God; he is first and foremost in the Old Testament. Thus from a Biblical frame of reference he is *before* all men.

In John 8, a debate about fatherhood has arisen between Jesus and the Jews. The Jews have asserted their descent from Abraham, and it is in this context that Jesus declares his supremacy over Abraham:

*“I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” (John 8:38-46).*

The disdain that the Jews were showing for Jesus and the aspersions that they had cast on the nature of his birth (v.41) called for stern Scriptural redress: he was the sinless seed of the woman promised in Gen 3:15 (cp. v.46), and God was his Father (vv.38, 42). Meanwhile, quite apart from them being faithful children of father Abraham (v.39) or of God (v.41), Jesus tells the Jews that they were seed of the serpent (v.44).

The Gen 3:15 background is clear and becomes the frame of reference in which to understand the declaration of Jesus in John 8:58. If we feel a need to probe the Lord's declaration further, by asking, “Before Abraham was, I am *who?*”, then a Scriptural answer can be phrased this way:

*“Before Abraham was born (Gen 11:26), I am (the one spoken of in Gen*

3:15).” Or “*Before Abraham was born (whom you claim to be your father), I am (the promised seed of the woman whose Father is God).*”

Jesus would never have expected the Jews of his day to think in terms of a pre-existent Christ. Rather, he required them to understand the supremacy of Christ from the promises and structure of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was their frame of reference, and it must be ours as well when it comes to understanding Christ.

### **John 17:5 — “before the world was”**

*“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee **before the world was**” (John 17:5).*

John 17 brings us to the eve of the crucifixion. In less than a day’s time, Jesus will sleep in the dust of the earth, awaiting the resurrection and the glory that must follow. The history of mankind has arrived at the time when the eternal glory that God ordained for Christ before the world began is to become living reality in the man Jesus.

Jesus knew it, and he prayed for the fulfillment of that which God promised for him in the beginning. The Old Testament foundation for his prayer is not hard to identify.

The world is the *kosmos* <Strong’s Number 2889>; it is the world of mankind. The history of the world goes back to the creation of man in Gen 1:27. “Before the world was” takes us back to the declaration that God made in Gen 1:26, before the creation of Adam; and the prayer of Jesus picks up the prophetic implications of God’s words.<sup>4</sup>

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” portrays someone who is *with God* and is *like God*; someone who cooperates with God and shares His eternal glory. Historically speaking, of course, that *someone* was the angels who were God’s agents in the creation of this world. Prophetically speaking, the *someone* is Christ, through whom God will bring Adam’s faithful children to the same eternal glory and give *them* dominion on earth.

Such was the declared purpose of God at creation. Jesus understood the full implications of God’s purpose, and on the eve of his crucifixion he prayed for its fulfillment. John also makes it clear that the prayer of Jesus went beyond himself:

*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: **for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world**” (John 17:24).*

Prophetically speaking, those who will behold Christ in glory are the *them* of Gen 1:26. When Jesus read Gen 1:26, I believe that he saw *them* as the disciples whom God would give him, and he saw *them* as the expression of God’s love for him, declared in the Old Testament “*before the foundation of the world*” — *kosmos*.

The ideas are breathtaking, and we are there.

*Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)*

**Notes:**

1. The historical and prophetic applications of Gen 1:26 are distinguished in “In the Beginning was the Word”, *The Tidings Magazine*, December, 2012. Gen 1:26 is used in its *prophetic* sense in this paragraph, as introducing Christ to us in the Old Testament.
2. It follows from the prophetic significance of Genesis 1:26 that Adam had to be created in order for Christ to come into being. The foreordination of an ascended son of man also adds significance to the joy expressed in Genesis 4:1 when Adam’s firstborn son comes into the world.
3. See ASV, *Diaglott*, NAS, NIV, Rotherham, *Young’s Literal Translation*.
4. “In the beginning was the word” — John 1:1.

## Youth Speaks

### Major Decision # 3 — Relationships

As human beings, you and I are all about relationships. This should come as no surprise since our Heavenly Father, in whose image we are made, is all about relationships. So much so that for all the wonderful things He created in 5 days of handy work, He thought to Himself there was still something missing so He created someone He could call a son (Luke 3:38). Not surprisingly, since Adam was created in God’s image, God saw that he too was in need of companionship, hence He made him a wife (Gen 2:18). Basically, not much has changed in 6000 years and 200ish generations. We are still all about relationships! From Genesis to Revelation we discover there is every kind of relationship imaginable, from the wonderful example of Abraham and Sarah as heirs together of the grace of life, to Abigail and Nabal who is so foolish, we cringe just reading about him!

The hallmark of a successful relationship is when two people are growing closer to God and in the process growing closer to each other — just as two arrows flying towards the same target inevitably meet. At any point before or during a relationship, when one or both people stop striving for this model, heartache will eventually result. Turn to God, the inventor of relationships, for advice before the hurt happens. This simile is true of all relationships — friendships, parent and child, brother and sister, as well as romantic relationships. For the sake of being brief, romantic relationships will be the prime example used.

The Bible is full of advice on what a relationship between a man and a woman should look like: in terms of examples (Abraham and Sarah), types (Christ and the Ecclesia), and explicit verses (1Pet 3:7, Eph 5:22-25, Col 3:18-19). Just as all of the law and the prophets hang on a two part golden rule, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,*” and “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*” (Matt 22:36-40); so does all of the Biblical teaching on relationships hang on God’s reason for creating woman — “*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*” (Gen 2:18). God has never modified His intention; in fact everything the Bible subsequently has to say on the matter is an effort to guide us to harmonizing our lives with what He originally intended. The litmus test of a relationship for a Godly man then, is the question “Is the woman I am with (or want to be with) a help towards Godly

living?” and likewise for a Godly woman to ask “Does the man I am with (or want to be with) appreciate the help towards Godly living I am offering?” If the answer to either of these questions is “No”, our lives are out of step with God’s intentions, and we are candidates for heartache.

Some questions a Godly man can ask himself are:

- “Does being with her help or distract me from the readings every day?”
- “Does she help me develop self-control, or is she the temptress in my life?”
- “Does she have an interest in spiritual things that helps me in my existing Bible studies?”
- “Will she help me live within my means, or will she always be wanting more?”
- “Does she help with my commitment to those who God has graciously put in my care, or does our time as a couple come at their expense?”

Some questions a Godly woman can ask herself are:

- “When I help encourage us to do the daily readings is it welcomed, or met with indifference and/or opposition such that I feel like I am the one having to lead us spiritually?”
- “Does he appreciate the help of having physical boundaries, or is there constant pressure to go beyond them?”
- “Do my own Bible studies help compliment his, or are they a substitute for them?”
- “Is my help in the ecclesia appreciated?”
- “Is this man a Christ-like leader that I can help, or am I often, not just helping, but leading in the absence of his Godly leadership to set physical boundaries, learn of God’s ways, and serve others?”

Above all else make relationships a matter of prayer. Out of all the major decisions of life this is especially true in this case, since you can choose for yourself to be transformed (Rom 12:2); but you cannot choose for the person you are already with to be transformed! You can only pray that God will lead you to someone who likewise wants to be transformed, or alternatively have it put in their heart to want to experience the transformation of His Word. Either way, by definition the free choice of the person you care about is something you cannot force, so one is left to rely on the power of God to do what is impossible with man (Matt 19:26).

*Joey Marple (North Battleford; SK)*

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## ***The Way of a Man with a Maid***

*“There are three things that are hard for me to understand — really, four things that I don’t understand: an eagle flying in the sky, a snake moving on a rock, a ship moving across the ocean, and a man in love with a woman” (Prov 30:18-19, Easy to Read Bible).*

## Reflections

### Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (12) Guideline Number 11: In-laws and Out-laws!

#### **An independent household**

We have emphasized the point several times in earlier chapters that it was the intent of the Lord God that once married a husband and wife were to form an independent household separate from their respective families (Gen 2:24 and Psa 45:10). This doesn't mean that the newlyweds are to ignore or cut off their family relationships, indeed, ideally it should lead to a broadening of experience and a deeper circle of friendship and love. However, it does mean that married couples' first consideration and loyalty must be to each other. It goes without saying that there is a plethora of hostile *in-law* jokes precisely because there is a kernel of truth that interfering *in-laws* can make a happy marriage difficult if not impossible to sustain. The humorous Mark Twain is said to have remarked that "*Adam was the luckiest man; he had no mother-in-law.*" That thinking can equally well be applied to the wife, for many a woman has found that her husband's mother was difficult to handle and fathers-in-law, in my experience, are not exempt from, at times, also being overbearing.

Other external relationships that can interfere in a marriage are friends, colleagues, and especially prior relationships in which one had an emotional attachment such as an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend. I call these parties *out-laws* for convenience to distinguish them from blood relatives.

In either case, whether *in-laws* or *out-laws* when two people wed they buy the whole package. His family becomes your family and vice versa. Her friends become your friends and vice versa. His past relationships, and yours may be history, but they still happened and both parties in the marriage need to understand this reality. Naturally, over a period of time friendships do ebb and flow, but adjusting to which past relationships to keep and which ones to discard must be done without rancor.

#### **The *in-law* relationship**

The first rule of *in-law* relationships is don't be judgmental. This works both ways, a wife or a husband need to remember that their spouse lived with their parent(s) or guardians for many years prior to knowing them. These years formed almost all their good habits, and also their quirks for that matter, which now conceivably become part of the married relationship. If his parents were slobs it's a good bet you would go crazy trying to make him clean up after himself. You are also likely to find that his parents cannot understand why you make such a fuss about neatness — this can become a source of conflict if you let it. Naturally, the opposite equally applies; if her parents were neatniks they will frown on any indication that their son-in-law is not so inclined.<sup>1</sup> In my case since I didn't marry an Italian girl my grandmother was certain I would starve to death! However, she had enough

graciousness not to say such a thing directly to my wife. The rule to avoid being judgmental also applies to far more serious potential conflicts that can arise with *in-laws*.

Some excellent guidance on *in-law* relationships can be gathered from the book of Ruth. Almost all married couples have to relate to their spouse's families and the more pleasant that relationship, the happier it will be the marriage. Naturally, Lord willing, someday it is entirely possible that a happily married couple will become *in-laws* themselves when their children grow-up and find a mate. This essay may have some lessons to keep in mind for the future in that eventuality. Either way the story of Naomi, and her family, presents us with some very excellent models to emulate if we face similar situations in our lives. Let us consider the connection between Naomi and her daughters-in-law.

In an age when it was the norm for parents to arrange their children's marriages, apparently this didn't happen when Mahlon and Chilion wed the Moabites, Orpah and Ruth, respectively. I think it is reasonable to assume that if this were the case a woman as faithful as Naomi would have wished her sons to marry Israelite women who were within the household of faith. I suggest that Naomi accepted the situation as best she could and did everything to display by her love and concern for her daughters-in-law in the spirit of righteousness. By her character, her sons' wives could appreciate the faith Naomi had in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There is no hint in Scripture that Naomi was a bitter or a nagging mother-in-law. From the account in Ruth it is obvious that both her daughters-in-law deeply loved her, for we read:

*"Then they (both) lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her" (Ruth 1:14 ESV<sup>2</sup>).*

The fact that Ruth clung to her is a testimony to the quiet faithful teachings of truth that she must have heard over the years from Naomi. Sadly these lessons did not instill in Orpah the same willingness to sacrifice worldly security in exchange for following the religious faith of her mother-in-law.

We can observe another apt rule for happy *in-law* relationships, namely, to treat the married couple as adults and let them make their own decisions without threats or laying on guilt. Note this in the alternative that Naomi presents to Ruth and Orpah:

*"But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go, return each of you to her mother's house'" (Ruth 1:8).*

It was a *no pressure* statement and it is precisely what one would expect given the cultural norms of the time. If her daughters-in-law were going to follow her back to Israel they would have, of necessity, been expected to worship the LORD God of the Patriarchs. The decision where to spend her future, and what God(s) to worship, was not forced on Ruth, she made it of her own free will.

There is another *in-law* lesson to be learned from the story of Naomi and her Moabite daughters-in-law. One can be reasonably certain that Naomi was a faithful follower of the LORD God otherwise there is no way Ruth would have been able to say: "*Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.*" Neither would Ruth

have displayed such love for Naomi if she had been a shrewish mother in-law. If we find ourselves in a situation where one of our children marries out of the faith, or if you are in a situation where your spouse is not in the Truth, then the road to maintaining a happy relationship needs to be paved with love, kindness, consideration and by letting your faith show by your works. The apostle Paul gave some advice on how to have a happy relationship in these circumstances when he said:

*“For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband” (1Cor 7:14).*

I believe the same advice applies to *in-laws* issues, namely accept the situation you find yourself in and do your best to inspire holiness by your behavior as we are commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

*“...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16).*

Surely, it was that light that shined forth from both Naomi and Ruth that made for a very loving *in-law* relationship and so should it be with us.

Now what should one do if in spite of all your loving efforts your *in-laws* continue to be overbearing, critical and sometimes even downright hostile. There is a passage that the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians that is well worth remembering in such a situation:

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...” (Gal 5:22).*

The AV, ESV and Diaglott translations uniformly agree that the first three attributes of the fruit of the Spirit are love, joy and peace. However where the ESV follows with the word “patience” the AV uses instead “longsuffering” and the Diaglott “forbearance” in translating this passage.

- Patience = capacity for waiting
- Longsuffering = patiently enduring lasting offense or hardship
- Forbearance = refraining from action

The Greek word here is subtle and encompasses the emotions of all three of the English words used in the three translations cited above. There are many quandaries in trying to translate a complex set of emotions that are embodied in a single word in one language, but are attributed to multiple expressions in another language. Most Bible students are familiar with this in the reverse sense since the word “love” in English has many different shades of meaning when expressed in other languages, such as Greek and Italian, to cite a couple of familiar linguistic examples.

Now to focus on the main practical point of this diversion — if you want to win over a hostile *in-law* (and anyone else for that matter) one needs to apply all three of the attributes noted above. Some rules to remember:

- Be patience: don’t give up. It may take time to develop a lasting friendship with your *in-laws*. In fact it may take years.
- Be longsuffering: you may need to overlook a lot of unpleasant things that are said and done to you and/or your spouse.

- Be forbearing: whatever your feelings don't overreact, avoid the temptation to repay kind for kind. Refraining from action in the face of unpleasantness is the ultimate example of applying the teaching of our Lord Jesus (Matt 5:39 and also Luke 6:29).

I can personally testify that these maxims work having faced this type of situation in my own life, and been a witness to it in the *in-law* interactions of a number of other brothers and sisters. Applying these Scriptural principles eventually resulted in having acceptable relationships with *in-laws* in almost all instances.

It is also a good rule that each partner in a marriage should be the primary person to handle difficulties with their side of the family when a conflict with their spouse arises.

*“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth...” (Prov 27:2).*

By dealing with my own family on the rare occasions when there was some criticisms of my wife's homemaking or child rearing skills, I found that the situation defused immediately. I made it plain to my Mom and Dad that I loved my wife and she was the best possible daughter-in-law that they would ever have. After that what could Mom or Dad possibly say?

### **The situation with *out-laws***

Conflict in a marriage can arise in many ways from past relationships, we will give a few examples, but by no means is this intended to be comprehensive. The situation often arises that prior to being married a couple each traveled in different friendship circles. Suppose the husband had previously been accustomed to going out frequently with his male friends several nights per week, bowling, to attend sporting events or on long solitary hunting or fishing trips to cite a few possibilities.

The wife may have cultivated a set of close interests with her female friends that don't appeal or relate to her husband. I don't particularly like spending a day shopping with my wife. To me shopping for clothes or shoes is sometime done only for a replacement when an item has worn out, and then it is time to get another one exactly like it. The whole process shouldn't take more than 15 minutes of my time. Obviously, my wife (maybe it's a gender thing, because my mother was just like my wife) needs a whole day to buy a pair of shoes and deciding on a dress could take weeks. Hence, long ago we came to an understanding — go shopping for clothes by yourself, or with your girlfriends, daughters-in-law and more recently granddaughters, but I am perfectly content to spend that time alone reading a book or writing one! However, this can become a problem when the *out-law* association becomes obsessive and extends to such lengths that the marriage relationship is neglected. It is even possible that we can make the “Truth” a cause for neglect that can harm our chances of having a happy marriage. How can that be? A brother can become so engrossed in Bible study, missionary work and being away from home for extended periods of time to speak at Christadelphian venues, that his wife and family rarely occupy his time and energy. While being a dedicated follower of the Lord Jesus, by doing community service, is a good thing, it should not be done at the expense of shepherding one's own family into the Kingdom.

An even more serious a problem occurs when *out-law* relationships become destructive.

*“Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat” (Prov 23:20, also cp. Rom 13:13 and Eph 5: 18).*

I believe the words of Solomon given here in Proverbs are good general advice to avoid all outside relationships that head in destructive directions. This applies not only to drinking buddies, but to all *out-law* relationships (*gluttonous*) that lead to excess or emotional interference in one’s marriage.

Husbands and wives will find that with time they will themselves have a much happier marriage if each one is willing to adjust past friendships that may not be to the liking of their spouse. Sometimes that will mean letting that past relationship wither, or it could also be that with time the offended partner might learn to adjust and recognize what his/her spouse appreciated from their past association. Either way, to have a happy marriage the bottom line is to realize that it is important not to let *out-laws* get in the way of the bond between husband and wife. If they do, such a relationship needs to be discarded.

*John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)*

**Notes:**

1. The “him” and “her” in these examples should be considered interchangeable, i.e. every example I have given for a man applies equally for a woman.
2. All references are from the ESV, except as noted.

## **Book of Mormon (3)**

### **The after life**

One of the great questions humans want answered in any set of religious beliefs is: *“What happens when we die?”* In the *Book of Mormon*, ideas regarding the after life are dominated by two beliefs:

- 1) That every human being has an immortal soul.
- 2) That every person’s body will be raised from the dead, reunited with its soul, made into an immortal person and will stand for judgment. The end result will be either endless happiness or endless torment.

We will first review unambiguous statements from the *Book of Mormon* on these two topics and then note the implications they have for other aspects of religious teaching. However, before doing so we should note that these two teachings stand in sharp contrast to Biblical revelation. The Bible is perfectly clear:

- 1) The whole person is a “soul” and is never said to be immortal. The “soul” is not a separate, thinking, conscious part of the individual:

*“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul...[the punishment of death is] dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; 7:22-23; etc.)*

- 2) The only persons who are raised from the dead **to receive immortality** are

those who believe in God and are faithful to Him. Some of the unfaithful, or wicked, may be raised from the dead but their end is to perish for ever: “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor and **immortality**, eternal life...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 2:7; 6:23). Living forever is thus not an inherent quality for every person. It is **the special gift of God** to the faithful. Look also at the most familiar of verses: “[God] gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth in him** [that is, only believers] *should not perish* [the natural end of all mankind], *but have everlasting life* [which only comes to the faithful]” (John 3:16). This is clear: God has placed before us life or death, not life or eternal life in torment.

### **Book of Mormon statements on the immortality of the soul**

Speaking of the person who “cometh out in open rebellion against God” we read “if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his *immortal soul* to a lively sense of his own guilt... mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a *never-ending torment*”. By way of contrast are those “that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed...to dwell with God in a state of *never-ending happiness*” (Mosiah 2:37-41). In this teaching, the alternatives are not life or death as everyone lives forever. According to Mormon theology the alternatives are eternal happiness or eternal torment.

These words are recorded as being from King Benjamin to his Nephite subjects in 124 B.C. He goes on in a further description of the fate of the wicked: “If they be evil, they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and *endless torment*, from whence they can no more return...And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever” (Mosiah 3:25-27).

Such references to the inherent immortality of all human beings is a fundamental idea throughout the *Book of Mormon*: : “Therefore as the soul *could never die*...” (Alma 42:9, also Alma 12:18; 41:4). “And land their souls, yea their *immortal souls* at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven...” (Helaman 3:30).

### **Universal resurrection and judgment**

Because everyone is said to have an immortal soul, some everlasting fate is said to be in store for every human being who ever lived. In fact, what is described is that every person’s soul and body is reunited at the resurrection, all bodies are made immortal and everyone stands for judgment as to his/her fate from that point onward.

Probably the most succinct description of the teaching is found in Alma 11: “... the day cometh that *all* shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works... The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form both limb and joint shall be restored to it’s proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God...Now,

this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame... I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an *immortal body*, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, *that they can die no more*; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, *that they can no more see corruption*” (Alma 11:41-45).

A similar detailed picture is drawn in 2 Nephi 9:11-19. There a few details are added: “they who are filthy...shall go away into everlasting fire...[which] has no end [and] is endless torment” while the righteous “inherit the kingdom of God...” (vv. 16-19).

### **Some questions answered and others left in confusion**

The picture drawn above leaves some rather obvious questions. The answers we find in the *Book of Mormon* are sometimes clear and sometimes confusing.

What happens between death and the resurrection? “This much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works” (Alma 40:21).

Does “all” really mean ALL in the sense of a *universal* resurrection and judgment? Yes, without question it does as is made clear in several places.

“And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, *every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam*; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil” (Mormon 3:20).

One can't get much clearer!

Mosiah 27:30 adds: “...and that he remembereth *every creature of his creating*, he will make himself manifest unto all.”

*What happens to children who die young, too young to intelligently obey God?* The matter is extensively dealt with in Moroni (the last book in the *Book of Mormon*) chapter 8. (V. 8) “Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God... ‘little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me... (v.11) little children need no repentance, neither baptism... (v.12) little children are alive in Christ... (v. 13) if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell. Behold I say unto you, that he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness [a very strong rejection of infant sprinkling/ baptism]... (v.17) all children are alike unto me; wherefore, I love little children with a perfect love; and **they are all alike and partakers of salvation**” .

The same point was made earlier in Mosiah 15:25: “And little children also **have eternal life.**”

The teaching is thus clear: the *Book of Mormon* contends there is **universal** resurrection, immortality, judgment to endless paradise or endless torment, and universal salvation of children.

*But what about those who have lived without coming under the word of God?* This would include the vast majority of mankind during the generations from creation to the present. Scripture reveals they enjoy this life for a season and then are “like the beasts that perish” (Psa 49:12, 20; 146:4, etc.). Of course, believing in an immortal soul and universal resurrection, the Mormon prophets can not state the Biblical truth. So what does the *Book of Mormon* say?

“Wherefore he [God] has given a law; **and where there is no law given there is no punishment**; and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation; and where there is no condemnation the mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them, because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of him. For the atonement satisfieth the demands of his justice upon all those who have not the law given to them, that they are delivered from that awful monster, death and hell, and the devil, and the lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment; and they are restored to that God who gave them breath, which is the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 9:25-26).

Mosiah, who had comments regarding children, also comments on “the ignorant”: “For behold, and also his [Christ’s] blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died **not knowing** the will of God concerning them, or who have **ignorantly** sinned. But wo, wo (*sic*) unto him who knoweth that he rebelleth against God...” (Mosiah 3:11-12). Mosiah’s depiction of the fate of the ignorant is left incomplete at this point but later in his book we find: “these are those who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance not having salvation declared unto them. And thus the Lord bringeth about the restoration of these; and they have a part in the first resurrection or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord” (Mosiah 15:24).

### **Some reasonable conclusions**

So what do we make of this? We can only conclude the *Book of Mormon* teaches that the “ignorant” do not experience endless torment and are given a blessing of endless peace with God. If this is the case, why preach? Why not leave people in ignorance where they are guaranteed an eternal existence of blessing? This, of course, is just one more problem of believing in an immortal soul.

There are additional problems: the *Book of Mormon* includes Isaiah 2 and 11 both of which speak emphatically of the kingdom age when Jewry is restored amidst great blessings. When does this happen? If before the resurrection, Christ has no saints to rule with him yet a universal resurrection and universal immortalization leaves no mortals to be the subjects of the kingdom!

Lord willing, these and other issues will be addressed in future articles. Next “The Restoration of Israel”.

*Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)*

## Letter to an Exhorting Brother

Dear Brother \_\_\_\_\_,

Greetings in Christ's Name.

Back in the old days, lots of ecclesias had what were called *Mutual Improvement Classes*. In these classes, brothers critiqued one another's exhortations, Bible classes and presiding in what was called *constructive criticism*. Sometimes it worked better than others. Very few ecclesias have done that for a long time, and nobody has ever critiqued me, unless it was informally or behind my back. But I'm going to go way out on a limb and offer what I hope will be constructive criticism of your last exhortation here. I hope you will accept it in this light.

Certainly, as you said, we would do well to look at what is happening in the world and to "*lift up our heads*" (Luke 21:28) and "*watch and pray*" (v 36). As you also said, it is true that "*we don't know the day or the hour*" when Christ will return (Matt 24:36; 25:13; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). I believe, as you do, that we are living near the end, but I do not believe it is because of any single incident. Rather, it is because of the general tenor of world affairs.

Your reference to Christ's words in his Olivet prophecy (Luke 21) is quite appropriate here. He mentions wars and revolutions, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and other fearful events (vv 9-11). Those are very general statements, with no specifics whatsoever, and I think Jesus spoke in such generalities for a very good reason: If we allow ourselves to get too specific, we run the very real risk of guessing wrongly as to which events are important, and which are merely passing and essentially meaningless. Thus, our guesses may be proved wrong by the passage of time.

This happens much more often than we like to admit. I'd suggest you find some of the old Christadelphian booklets that sought to document each year's important "milestones" on the road to the Kingdom of God. If you can find them, they go back at least 30 years. Try to get your hands on a copy that's 20 or 25 years old. (They can be found on Steve Genusa's "Christadelphian Bookshelf 2009" DVD, back to 1977.) Check out the events that the brother felt were very significant in 1985 or 1990 as the fulfillment of Last Days prophecy. Then compare those events with the passing years since that time. I think you will find that much of what the writer thought were wonderful then-current "signs of the times" turned out to be perhaps overstated in their significance.

My problem with this 'speculative' approach is: How many times can we cry "Wolf!" when it turns out that there is no wolf? If we do too much of this, then our listeners — brothers and sisters, young folks or friends — may conclude that we don't know what we are talking about. Their assessment may be unfair, but they will have a point. After all, we very confidently quoted Bible passages to "prove" what we were saying, didn't we? We sounded so absolutely certain when we said that such-and-such was a wonderful sign of Christ's imminent return.

And when we let ourselves really get carried away with that confidence, we actually sounded like we possessed the "gift of prophecy," which we most certainly

did not have, or perhaps the “gift of discerning” prophecy, which we did not have either (1Cor 12:10).

A few months or years passed, however, and circumstances changed. The expected threat never materialized. Might it have been better if we had waited, and “watched”, a bit longer before jumping to what proved to be a wrong conclusion?

Because our confident predictions did not come to pass, some of our listeners might even conclude that we are “false prophets”, and that Christ isn’t coming after all. That’s the danger, and it can be a real tragedy. Christadelphian history, over more than 150 years, is littered with quite a number of false or premature predictions, especially when the speakers or writers tried to set dates and to identify which world leader or which nation was about to do something very important to trigger the return of Christ.

I think there is one very big exception to what I said earlier about Jesus prophesying in generalities, and it is also found in Luke 21 (and the other references to the Olivet prophecy). It has to do with Israel: “*When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies...*” (v 20). This is a very specific statement, but only specific about Jerusalem (and by implication the Jews). It is definitely not specific about exactly *when* this will happen, nor is it specific about precisely *which* nations will be involved.

I think there are important reasons for this. Jesus seems to be saying, ‘Always be on the alert for general unrest and trouble in the world, and especially regarding Israel and Jerusalem being threatened by neighboring nations, but don’t get caught up in trying to guess all the other details.’

Following Christ’s example in this would allow us to “watch and pray” for Christ’s return, as we should, while at the same time avoiding the wrong guesses that might bring discredit upon the gospel we believe.

### **One more thing**

I believe we have an obligation, above and beyond watching the “signs of the times” and exhorting one another, to always tell the truth. This is fundamental. If we make assertions, or if we repeat others’ assertions, we are obliged to use every prudent means to prove that what we are saying is a fair representation of the facts. And we are obliged not to pass along anything which is not accurate.

While a number of things you said in your exhortation are indisputably true, I think I heard some assessments that came directly from highly partisan political groups. I must say two things here: Firstly, I take it for granted that, as Christadelphians, we take no active part in the political process of this country. Secondly: Even if we do pay attention to political analysis, I do not think personally that exhortations are the place for anything resembling that sort of discussion. Nevertheless, since you have introduced it on Sunday morning, the following should be said also.

As with many such political attacks which pass for ‘news reports’, they are biased — sometimes extremely biased — for one side of a political campaign, and against the other side. As far as I can see, this is more or less equally true no matter from

which side of the political divide we take them. A 30-second *sound bite* that distorts the truth, at least slightly, or omits some of the facts, is plainly the most efficient way to get one's political message across to the electorate, even if it is not 100% truthful. In such an environment, it is not sufficient for us to choose the side we subjectively like the best, and then assume that side has a monopoly on truth.

In the last 20 years or so, the political scene in America has grown so partisan that neither side really wants to engage the other. Both sides talk **about** the other but not so much **to** the other. The unfair, slanted political attacks have gotten so bad that objective, non-partisan groups have started checking the so-called facts in many negative political statements. Here are the websites for some of the most prominent: FactCheck.org, Politifact.com, and Snopes.com.

Practically any report that comes from a political source needs to be *fact-checked* before it is passed along. If you (or someone you know) feels the need to cite "the facts" about any event in the political arena, you really should go to one or more of the reputable fact-check websites and see what they have to say about that. And if there is nothing on those sites, then you still don't need to accept something just because you read it on the internet or hear it in other media or by word of mouth. There are other means of checking the facts yourself. Based in the USA alone, there are websites for CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, AP (Associated Press), and UPI (United Press International).

### **What's the point?**

Why is this important? Why should we even bother? Because, above and beyond watching the "signs of the times" and waiting for the return of Christ, telling the truth is one of the most important things we can do. The Bible, from the Law of Moses to Proverbs to the teaching of Christ and the apostles, tells us that bearing false witness and slander are sins. It is possible to slander even national or international political figures. And if we pass along what proves to be slander, even if spoken or written by others, then we ourselves become gossips and talebearers. There is absolutely no reason for us to run the risk of being guilty of these shortcomings. We should be able to consider the signs of Christ's coming without resorting to half-truths and distortions about any single group and any political leaders. The apostle Paul had this to say about the rulers of this world:

*"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. **The authorities that exist have been established by God.** Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves... He [the one in authority] is God's servant... Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience" (Rom 13:1,2,4,5, NIV).*

It has always been true, and a fundamental principle for Christadelphians, that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan 4:25, 32). Therefore, the LORD God and He alone is in absolute control of the affairs of the world. We look for, and eagerly hope for, the coming of the Lord Jesus

Christ to rule over this earth. But in the meanwhile we must always remember that the rulers of the nations, whoever they may be and whether we personally approve of them or not, have been ordained by God Himself for specific purposes. Indeed, we are commanded to pray for them:

*“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority” (1Tim 2:1,2, NIV).*

Certainly we should not disparage them, mock them, or call in question their authority. In their own ways, they are also “God’s servants”.

Paul also tells us that “*God works in all things for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*” (Rom 8:28). Later in the same chapter, he says specifically that “all things” include “any powers” (v 38). This means of course that, no matter which leaders are elected or otherwise chosen, God will work in and through them for the ultimate good of His children — and **we** are those children! We need to remember this, and remind ourselves of this, much more often than we do. While others may look at the world or our nation, or the political leaders, with uncertainty, alarm, anger or fear (Luke 21:26; Matt 24:6), we do not need to do so. No matter what happens next, our heavenly Father is still in control, and everything will turn out right:

*“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).*

*Yours in Christ,  
George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)*

## Controlling the Tongue

Words are so extremely powerful. The ways in which they can be used to build a person up or tear them down is astonishing. To be able to have perfect control over the things we say in effect does a lot to show our control over the impulses that can lead us to sin. So much so that the Lord’s brother tells us, “*For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*” (James 3:2).

The truth is, brothers and sisters, not everyone has been successful in taming this “unruly evil, full of deadly poison”, that is, the tongue. Especially in these later days when our focus as a community should be centered on the imminent return of the master, we still have those who regard not their words; words which, like an uncontrollable fire, spread rapidly across the globe having a trail of scorch marks on the very brethren who are devoting so much time and effort for the sake of the truth.

It is always much simpler for unwise accusers to spread rumors first, ask questions later. This shows such a lack of wisdom being demonstrated, for Solomon tells us, “*The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips*” (Prov 16:23).

However, Scripture is abundant with examples of how the wicked snare themselves and fall into their own pit, judged by their own words. For example, Psa 7:15 — *“He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch [which] he made.”* (see also 9:15; 57:6; Prov 26:27; 28:10; Ecc 10:8). When we use the tongue to spread ill rumors then the principle is clear: that from our own words we will be judged. We are in fact snaring ourselves rather than it being Yahweh who does the snaring.

It is so vital to keep our mouths from evil speaking; in fact, it is a matter of life or death. For *“every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”*. For *“by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”* (Matt 12:36, 37). The wise know this and strive desperately to counter the impulses that can lead to ill speech — *“He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: [but] he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction”* (Prov 13:3).

It matters not whether we are speaking behind others’ backs or out in the open. The result is the same. The Lord hates hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is like leaven. It grows and grows, corrupting along the way. Once one person starts being hypocritical, someone else does and so forth. And whether or not we feel justified in our remarks against another person, let us remember that it is not whether we are right or wrong in our statements, it is about keeping that which we are commanded.

It is about our character development. Yahweh wants the *“fruit of our lips to be praise”* (Heb 13:15). We are instructed to *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”* (Eph. 4:29). By doing this, we follow divine instruction, we develop Godly and acceptable characters, and we leave the prerogative of judgment to Yahweh and His son, where it rightfully belongs.

We must be careful in what we hear as well, as man cannot determine the intent of the heart. Words can come across so smooth from certain individuals, yet a heart of stone can be underneath. Consider the man of Psa 55:21 — *“[The words] of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war [was] in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet [were] they drawn swords.”* The point is that a godly man will never use rumor-spreading, ungodly speech, yet a corrupt individual can cloak his true intents with buttery speech. This is why we must learn to crush rumor spreading at the point of interception. This takes practice, and a development into being no “respector of persons”. *“Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow [him]”* (Psa 140:11).

## **Tale bearing**

We have all heard of the term “tattletale”. The Scriptural term is “talebearer” from the Hebrew word “Rakiyl”. A talebearer is easy to reveal. *“A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter”* (Prov 11:13, see also 26:22). Under the law, the activity of a talebearer was forbidden; *“Thou shalt not go up and down [as] a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: I [am] the LORD.”* (Lev 19:16). The damage of talebearers is far reaching, with words as wounds (Prov 18:8); enticing lips (Prov 20:19), and that which soweth strife (Prov 16:28). Jeremiah translates these corrupt people as slanderers (Jer 6:28; 9:4). Ezekiel’s condemnation of those of corrupt mind liv-

ing in Jerusalem at the time, speaks of those who are “*men that carry tales (same word) to shed blood*” (Ezek 22:9).

From these Scriptural examples, and many others could be offered, we can readily see why James concentrated so highly on bridling the tongue. Drawing our thoughts to a conclusion, I would like to quote a very practical example for us all to consider as recorded by Bro. Edward Johnston in the *Christadelphian Magazine* of 1967 (Vol. 104, pg 123):

“Let us imagine a modern situation, and if the picture is a little overdrawn, it is only to make sure the point gets home. A certain Meeting quietly maintains a steady “Lightstand” for a number of years, all members seem to function in harmony, and even with enthusiasm, when suddenly a brother (perhaps the quietest and most inoffensive one, or even one known as a “Pillar of the Truth”) would appear to have gone “off the rails” in conduct. This may only be known to one person, but what happens? This one person whispers his criticism (or suspicions) to his close friend in “strict confidence”, he in turn passes it on to his best friend with even greater stress on its confidential nature. But in spite of the sincerity of the affirmation that they have no intention of passing on gossip, in a short while “the whole cycle of nature is set on fire” (R.S.V.).

“Even if this is a real case of departure from the high moral standard in Christ, yet the brother (or sister) in question may quickly realize his folly, and with repentance make every effort to get back on the “narrow path”. But what happens now? Besides his original lapse — now repented of (and a lesson well learnt!) — he has a new load to bear, a scandal that descends upon him like a blight that turns all the green foliage to a distressing grey! It may well be that at this stage he (or she) is approached by the Arranging Brethren, for it is too late now to follow the Scriptural procedure for such a case so clearly outlined in Matt 18:15–18 (See also our Constitution). Let us suppose he freely admits his folly, yet after being accepted back into the bosom of his beloved Ecclesia, he may still have an aching heart, for the occasional inquisitorial question, “Whatever made you do this?”, not only keeps the matter simmering, but cannot be answered, for to do so may involve another member of the Meeting who was the indirect (or even direct) cause of the “fall from grace”. And so to prevent the fire spreading in new directions, he offers no mitigating circumstance.”

May we all take wise action in our personal walk towards the Kingdom by watching our words very carefully, for truly “*death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof*” (Prov 18:21).

*Matt Drywood (Hamilton Book Road, ON)*

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*THE tongue is a small member of the human body with large responsibilities. It is controlled directly by a set of muscles in the throat, but, ultimately, control lies in the mind. So that, whilst we may speak of controlling the tongue, it is important to realise that control must be exercised over that which causes it to move.*

*(J.B. The Christadelphian 1935 Vol 72 p 214)*

## Letters

### Welcoming those of another Fellowship

To the Christadelphian Tidings:

(As noted in the footnotes certain parts of this correspondence have been redacted to preserve the privacy of the parties involved)

I had an interesting visit this week that reminded me of your September editorial in the Tidings. As a member of a UA08<sup>1</sup> meeting (Chicago), I travel a bit for work and do get to visit different churches and experience the differences. Last year my family visited a mid-size East Coast Central meeting and was pleasantly surprised to be welcomed in fellowship, for our home church is part of UA08. That was a positive change from what I expected, as normally larger churches haven't taken that stand.

Anyway, today I was in another larger Central meeting<sup>2</sup> and one brother gave me a Freudian slip when he asked, "if I am in the Truth, or am I Unamended." I didn't realize that there is a difference, and responded that I think I am part of both. I found this comment partly unsettling and partly humorous, and am still not sure what to make of it. I already knew about 1/4 of that meeting personally, having grown up with a few, fellowshiped with some for years elsewhere and others being relatives. Anyway, I found it equally curious when the recording brother announced my wife and I as visiting "Brother and Sister" - although we were not welcome in fellowship. It was nice to be announced as Brother and Sister, but striking that fellowship didn't follow. Isn't that a conundrum and problem in much of our community? How can it be that we consider each other to be "brethren in Christ" and yet not be in fellowship? One would think a person is either "in Christ" or not, but some fellowship policies don't seem to follow that.

I talked about our situation this summer with a Brother from overseas<sup>3</sup> and asked how they conduct fellowship there. He said it's pretty simple: they welcome in fellowship all who have a valid baptism, meaning all those in our entire community and related ones such as Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. I found this answer simple and satisfying. It seems to follow the Biblical model and also seems to fit much of what we try to follow from the Ecclesial Guide. Anyway, I thought you might find this example useful for your future articles, so feel free to use any of this as an example.

*Your brother,  
Dan Richard (Chicago, IL: Unamended)*

#### **Response from *The Tidings***

Dear Brother Richard:

Your letter raises a number of commonly misunderstood situations that unfortunately arise because of the unique fellowship conditions that exist in North

America. These conditions arose due to the division that happened in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Let us address each of the points you refer to in your letter.

First, while you may have been surprised by being welcomed at the memorial table at a mid-sized Amended Ecclesia on the East Coast. Here are some possible reasons: a) That ecclesia treated you as an exception for that particular Sunday in order not to cause offense since you were well known to them personally, b) That ecclesia may be unaware of the general communally accepted Central Fellowship practices, c) Some small minority of Central ecclesias are not familiar with the issues that have caused, and are causing, the division and therefore do not take that into account in welcoming visitors. Unfortunately, the fellowship situation in North America is at present inconsistent and Ecclesias are choosing to welcome visitors, as they best understand their Scriptural responsibilities to be. *The Tidings* Committee, along with other Brethren and Ecclesias, are currently working to promote a unified approach to Fellowship.

As far as being recognized as a Brother at a particular ecclesia, but not being offered the emblems, we might note that this is most assuredly the procedure that the overwhelming majority of Central ecclesias would have followed. If someone in your home ecclesia is put out of fellowship, whether by ecclesial action or resignation, it does not stop that person from being a brother or sister, yet you would not normally offer them the emblems until the issues that resulted in the separation were resolved. The same analogy applies here — you are a brother by virtue of a legitimate baptism, but since you come from an ecclesia that is not presently in fellowship with the Central Community at large (because an unresolved separation still exists), there would be a barrier to offering you the emblems. Until the issues for the separation have been resolved, similar to the above ecclesial situation involving an individual, offering the emblems would only create confusion and discord, and, would not respect the Scriptural basis of oneness on which our community is based.

Finally, citing the fellowship situation overseas does not constitute a valid argument that the same conditions apply here in North America. The extreme “Advocate” view on resurrectional responsibility being limited only to those in covenant relationship is virtually unknown outside of North America. For example, when the English Reunion was accomplished in 1957 there had been no “Advocate” ecclesias in the United Kingdom for almost two generations. We doubt that there are any “Advocate” ecclesias anywhere else either. Therefore, you could be welcomed as an exception at places overseas that do not have the issue that exists in North America. With regard to the situation here in North America, the fellowship practice of Amended community of ecclesias is well summarized in a December 2008 article in the *Christadelphian Tidings* and deviations from that practice make many in the Central Fellowship uncomfortable.

*Your brethren in Christ,  
Christadelphian Tidings*

Since the letter from Brother Richard mentioned specifically a second larger Central ecclesia we invited comment from them, which follows:

## **Response from Central Ecclesia**

To the Christadelphian Tidings:

Because Bro. Dan Richard referenced his recent visit to our<sup>4</sup> Ecclesia, the Tidings has provided me, as recording brother, an opportunity to comment. I appreciate both Bro. Dan's candid account and this opportunity to offer my perspective. In my opinion, Bro. Dan's experience is well worth discussing as a community and should not be ignored because it touches upon issues often viewed as controversial.

Before addressing the issues raised by Bro. Dan, let me share a little background our Ecclesia. Our Ecclesia has concluded every Memorial Service for close to four decades with what we term the "Special Prayer." This part of our worship is dedicated to seeking the Lord's assistance in bringing unity to the household of faith. The focus of the Special Prayer has sometimes varied based upon a current issue or distress faced by the membership. However, over the years this prayer has served to keep the need for unity ever close to our hearts. Our ecclesia counts among its ecclesial members some who were baptized in different Christadelphian fellowships, some with family experience of the pain caused by division, and many who simply yearn for a united community in these last days. It is in this context that I make these comments.

First, on behalf of our ecclesia let me apologize that Bro. Dan was questioned whether he was "in the Truth or Unamended." I have no idea which brother said that, but I have no doubt — knowing the character and spirit of the brethren in our ecclesia — that no disrespect was intended. It is quite possible that the tongue-tied brother made an awkward attempt at small talk and nothing more. However, the experience does illustrate how easily our choice of words can be misunderstood or cause uncertainty. With more consistent interaction we can better interpret the intent and spirit of our fellow brethren.

Second, Bro. Dan is correct in describing the conflict between recognizing a visitor as a brother or sister in Christ yet not offering the emblems. In fact, I purposely referred to the Richard's as "Brother and Sister" when formally welcoming them to our ecclesia during the Memorial Service. It had been recently brought to my attention that I had not done that when another brother and sister from a non-Central ecclesia had visited not too long ago. In that instance, the omission of "Brother and Sister" was completely unintentional and I was disappointed to learn that my inattentiveness sent the wrong message. Mindful of that lesson, I very much wanted the Richard's to know that they were considered brethren in Christ in the our Ecclesia.

At the same time, our ecclesia is part of the Central Community. We cherish those relationships as well. There are practical barriers to fellowship that are not of our making. While we wish those barriers did not exist, and pray consistently that they be removed, we do not want to cause further problems by not respecting the fellowship practice of the larger community.

I do not have the answer to resolving this conflict. Our ecclesia readily acknowledges that all is not right within the household. We pray that the Lord will provide

us the wisdom needed to change the situation. In the meantime, we also hope that likeminded brethren will be patient and understanding of these circumstances.

*Yours in Christ,  
Recording Secretary*

**Notes:**

1. UA08 is shorthand for “Unity Agreement 2008”, by which a group of both Central and Un-amended Ecclesias established a joint fellowship.
2. Name of ecclesia has been omitted to preserve confidentiality.
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.* (and all similar occurrences in this letter)

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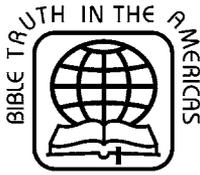
## ***Called To Be Saints***

*It will be urged that our beliefs are of great importance and we cannot walk together unless we are agreed. This is true, and it offers an excellent reason why in our questioning of each other we should first seek to find out how far we are agreed. That will supply the best basis for argument if discussion of differences should become necessary; and we might find that the agreement was so substantial as to rule out the need for contention. Putting questions is one of the easiest of tasks, answering them is often one of the hardest. It is possible that in a zeal to discover any lurking element of error, brethren may resemble the Scribes and Pharisees of the first century who laid snares for Christ that as the result of their subtle questioning they might find something by which they could accuse him.*

*The attitude of this magazine has for many years resembled that of the wise conductor of an orchestra. If the musicians are trying to play well, a few false notes may be excused for they are lost in the general ensemble. If, however, a member persistently accentuates false notes or even if he continually over accentuates right ones, he may so spoil the work that he must be asked to go. Or if there are some who do not quite agree with the interpretation of the work being performed, they may be treated with consideration so long as they are not subversive, but unless they are reasonable there may come a time when they must be asked to go too, for a certain standard must be maintained or all efforts are futile.*

*The advice of an elder to students and writers is that they should be their own severest critics. That which they have regarded as their best effort may be so unacceptable to others that the best course is to put the work away in a drawer and not look at it again until several years have passed. Then a re-perusal may make it clear why it was misunderstood and how a little revision might convey the intended message without giving offence to anyone. To elders who have the task of sustaining the truth in its purity, the only counsel possible is that they should remember the Lord Jesus and the patient way in which he dealt with faulty men and women. It is only by a very great effort in this direction that further division may be avoided and possibly old wounds healed.*

*Islip Collyer (The Christadelphian: vol 88, 1951 p 331)*



## Bible Mission News

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### Puerto Rico — Few in Number

*Bro. Don Luff (Linkman) shares his recent experience in Puerto Rico in the following article.*

Due to advertisements in the *Readers Digest* during the *Year of Witness* efforts in 1976, individuals in Puerto Rico have been receiving Christadelphian correspondence courses and literature since the late 1970's. Baptisms resulted from the efforts of missionaries and short term field workers during the 1980's. Nevertheless, due to a variety of circumstances, it has been a challenge to establish an ecclesial base in this country. At present there are four members on the Island. Three members are in the city of Ponce and one in San Juan. Sis. Jean Hunter in California handles all the correspondence work for Puerto Rico and indicates that there are many postal students, and quite a number answer their lessons extremely well, but when they are phoned, they respond to personal contact with little enthusiasm.

The churches in Puerto Rico are big business and provide entertainment. The Evangelical and Pentecostal style churches, along with many others, demand tithes of their congregations, promising wealth and personal prosperity from God, if they give their money to the church. Very little commitment is required as far



**Bro. Edgardo Saldaña, Sis. Aida and Bro. Miguel Robles**

as Bible study. Plus, religion and politics are mixed together as natural partners. Commitment to the Truth is extremely foreign and not acceptable in this type of culture and materialistic environment.

Bro. Edgardo Saldaña never felt easy in the evangelical "happy-clappy" churches. He is in the photo with this article (left side) with Bro. Miguel and Sis. Aida Robles at their home in Ponce. The Robles were baptized over 25 years ago. Several years ago Bro. Edgardo found us on the Spanish website *labiblia.com* and started answering questions. After a few years of correspondence courses and phone lessons, he was baptized on April 30, 2011 in Los Angeles. During a recent visit to Puerto Rico at the end of September, Bro. Edgardo introduced me to Angel Garcia (one of the postal students he

had looked up), from Canóvanas. During the course of three days, Edgardo and I spent about 15 hours studying with Angel. He had all kinds of good questions. He said he did not want to debate; he just wanted his questions answered from the Bible and to learn. This was a very pleasant task indeed! Bro. Edgardo will continue to meet with Angel and we do hope that he will make the decision to follow in the footsteps of our Lord.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/C Publicity*

## **Visiting La Paz — A Unique Experience**

*Bro. Don Luff shares his experience in visiting La Paz.*

Visiting any ecclesia in Latin America is always enjoyable. Some countries have more challenges than others; some have more baptisms than others; some have their own ecclesial halls and others rent. One always feels welcomed. Visitors to the La Paz Ecclesia in Bolivia leave with the warmth of mutual fellowship, as well as the appeal from the regularly attending friends to come back soon. Each ecclesia has its unique circumstances. Helping to support the CBMA mission work in Bolivia is an exhilarating experience! La Paz is one of the few cities where a full-time missionary presence has been maintained in recent years. Although there have not been a large number of baptisms in this country, this is not an indication of the level of interest, nor of the attendance of contacts. There are always visitors at specially advertised lectures ranging from 15 to 40! On more than one occasion, Christadelphians have had to give up their chairs at the rented ecclesial meeting place, in order to allow visitors to be seated.

On the Thursday evenings first principle and expository studies have taken place for about five years. A group of “regulars”, varying weekly from 10 to 15, have listened to the Truth expounded, and have participated in candid, yet friendly discussion of many “wrested” Scriptures. Their knowledge which brings responsibility to commitment has been made very clear to them. Some are very close, but have not made the life-long decision yet!

During our recent visit October 25 to November 2, 2012, we were involved with a number of activities. On Sunday, October 28th the exhortation theme, was “Give us this day Our Daily Bread.” The Adult Sunday School class topic was “How to make Biblical Decisions” (and how to know when they are Biblical and not based on emotion).

Two lectures held Monday, October 27th and Tuesday, October 28 at 7:30 p.m. were advertised by means of newspaper ads, 3,000 handbills, a banner in front of the meeting room and postal invitations sent out to about 700 correspondence contacts in the area of La Paz. The subject for the Monday evening was “The Consequences of Idolatry for Humanity” and Tuesday the theme was “The Theology of Prosperity and the Purpose of the Tithe”. Visitors started arriving at 6:45 pm, although some are always late due to transportation delays and other circumstances. The first evening 18 visitors were in attendance and Tuesday there were 26 visitors present. Audience participation is welcomed with the Scripture readings, but questions and comments on the lecture are deferred until the formal talk was over. Almost



**Adult SS Class Sunday Oct 28 — Some of those in photo are Sis. Magaly front right, behind her is Luz who we did a review with, middle right Sis. Justina with headcovering, middle rear Victor Hugo (white jacket) who we did a review with, Bro. Paul Osborn to Victor Hugo's left and Bro. Freddie middle left of photo with glasses.**

all first time visitors and “regulars” stayed for refreshments — some until 10 pm. The questions can be quite varied, and nothing to do with the evening’s topic. A young couple attending for the first time, engaged to be married on December 13th, asked if they could speak to me in private — Oh! Oh! They had some general questions about marriage, then she asked me if it was better not to live with either of their parents after their marriage, as well as some other personal questions. That sure made for an interesting first time conversation! They said, they couldn’t ask the “pastor” at their church personal questions, because he wouldn’t listen!

Bro. Paul and Sis. Naomi Osborn from Canada are the missionary couple in La Paz, and live there with their four children — Abigail, Isaiah, Joshua and John. Sis. Gisela Larsen, Naomi’s mother from the Seattle Ecclesia, was also there during my visit. John Osborn was born on September 30 and Sis. Gisela’s assistance for two months at this busy time was very much appreciated!

We also scheduled two “reviews” with a man and a woman who have both been attending for several years. They have both expressed a desire to be baptized and it was agreed that we would get together and go over the essentials, since they are in the final stages of their baptismal studies. We were pleased with both reviews and we hope it will not be long before we hear good news from La Paz. We pray God will open the minds and hearts of so many people who attend in La Paz, so that they make their decision to follow Jesus — since by their attendance and the changes they have made, they are almost part of the family.

*Submitted by  
Sis. Jan Berneau,  
CBMA/CBMC  
Publicity*

**The “Idolatry” talk on  
October 29th.**



## Jamaican Fraternal Gathering — October 15, 2012

*Sister Gerzel Gordon of the May Pen Ecclesia shares her experience at the gathering.*

This year, the annual Heroes' Day Fraternal Gathering fell on October 15th. The venue was the Kingston Ecclesial Hall, an excellent place for having large gatherings, as it is spacious and well ventilated. It is always wonderful and encouraging when brothers, sisters, friends and young people meet together to exalt the name of the living God and to fellowship one with another. All ecclesias on the island were represented at the gathering. Over 85 persons were in attendance.



**Some of those in attendance in front of the entrance to the Hall. There were quite a few children and youths. Bro. Martin Shirley (Free Hill) front left and Sis. Dorothy Isaacs (Port Maria) next to him.**

The theme for the day was based on “Prophets”. Bro. L. Blair ably did the welcome hoping for a great time together. Bro. R. Arthurs gave an inspiring talk on “Prophecies from Isaiah, Fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ”. In his deliberations, Bro. M Gordon, interestingly emphasized the predictions Jesus made that the temple would be destroyed. This was indeed a sign of the “Last Days” — the coming day of the son of man. The encouragement is to stand firm and be watchful. God will make a way of escape for His chosen people.

The program for the day also included the following group discussion exercises:

**A. How should we respond to God’s prophets?** This was ably led and presented by Bro. M. Shirley. He pointed out that God holds us accountable to the words of the prophets and that these words are to be taken seriously as we meditate on them and come closer to God by doing His will.

**B. A True Prophet.** Bro. C Nesbeth was the presenter for this topic. He was quite excited in making his presentation. A true prophet is a messenger of God, an interpreter of God’s word or a seer.

**C. Role of Prophecies Today.** The third group was under the leadership of Bro. P Johnson. He refreshed our minds in pointing out that Prophecies declare God's will to us. When we consider the hand of God in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and so on, the doctrine of divine providence comes alive.

### **Exhortation**

After an enjoyable lunch break, it was time for the memorial meeting. There was much food for thought in Bro. K. Kinlocke's exhortation which was based on "Failing Strength". There is a time in a man's life when strength fails. A very strong man is bitten by a small mosquito and he gets sick and never recovers. The ship is so very powerful in the high seas, yet a simple mistake in its loading capacity can cause great problems at sea. It needs to be tied tightly to the buoy to prevent it from moving, otherwise there could be grave disaster. We are but frail creatures. We need to pray to God for daily strength so as to overcome our failings.

After singing hymns, Bro. D. Sinclair thanked everyone for coming out and making the day a great success. He wished us God's speed as we journeyed home and hoped that the inspiring lessons learned from the "Prophets" would strengthen our faith as we wait the return of Christ.

The day seemed too short. May the love we shared, the things we learned remain with us even when we are physically separated. One by one the vehicles left the compound. "When again?" we asked. Maybe, in the kingdom. It was surely a worthwhile gathering. Great thanks to God for making this Fraternal Gathering possible to serve as a source of strength in these days of peril and danger.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

## **A Visit to Lima, Santiago and Córdoba**

*In October and November of 2012 it was a pleasure for Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter to again visit our brethren and sisters in Peru, Chile and Argentina and offer talks and classes for the interested friends who study the Bible with us by correspondence.*

The six lectures given in each city were on straightforward first principles — the ones that usually are the hardest for new Bible students to grasp and accept. Each evening there were two talks on one theme: the first was "God is one, not three," the second night's topic was "The myth of the fallen angel," and the third, "Do we have an immortal soul? What happens when we die?" (going on to the hope of the resurrection). It was encouraging to see how little objection there was from those who attended. Apart from a couple of fervent believers in fallen angels or the immortal soul, virtually all nodded their heads throughout the talks and stayed for ages afterwards to chat. One of the advantages of mostly having postal students out to the talks is that they have already studied the Bible with us for some time and are acquainted with its basic teachings.

Over the last couple of years in Lima we have tried different locations for the lectures, after a number of contacts said they just did not go into the downtown area where we had been holding the talks. Apparently they didn't go to other parts of the city either, since they never did show up! So on this trip we went back to

our original location in what is basically a back-packers' hotel in the old centre of town and were pleased to get a total of 19 contacts out. One fellow who brought two friends said he had been reading the material on *labiblia.com* for years and loved it, though he had never requested the course. He received an invitation to the talks because we had gotten his email address from the website. One of his friends told us that he had never believed in the popular idea of the devil and was very pleased to find out he was on the right track! A huge amount of literature was taken.



**Breaking of bread in the home of Bro. Flavio and Sis. Gloria.**

ing for baptism. In all three locations we have a steady and promising group of students who are progressing nicely in their understanding of the Bible and their dedication to the things of God.

There is a real need for long-term missionary support in these new ecclesias to help them get on their feet. We hope that in 2013 there will be enough volunteers (and funds!) available to achieve this goal. God willing, a young brother from New Zealand, Brydyn Melles, plans to spend much of the year living and working in Córdoba, which will be a great help to the ecclesia and friends.

We pray God will bless this work and be with all our isolated brethren and sisters to guide them in his way as we await the return of Jesus and the Kingdom.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

**Brothers, sisters and friends in Córdoba, Argentina.**



## Addresses for Bequests and Donations

**Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA)** supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit [www.cbma.net](http://www.cbma.net) for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact [jeffandkellie@gelineau.org](mailto:jeffandkellie@gelineau.org)

**Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC)** supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit [www.cbma.net](http://www.cbma.net) for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations.

Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

**CBMA Overseas Book Service** welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.  
Phone: 818-842-2868  
[jberneau@earthlink.net](mailto:jberneau@earthlink.net)

**Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee** publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, [www.tidings.org](http://www.tidings.org)

**Christadelphian Tape Library.** Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.  
Phone: 732-381-4590  
Fax: 732-499-8415  
[christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net](mailto:christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net)

**Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation** provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

**Agape in Action** provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website [www.agapeinaction.com](http://www.agapeinaction.com)  
Email: [agapeinaction@rogers.com](mailto:agapeinaction@rogers.com)

**Christadelphian Save the Children Fund** provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.  
[www.christadelphianchildren.com](http://www.christadelphianchildren.com)

**Christadelphian Heritage College** c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

**Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH)** donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email [daconstiles@att.net](mailto:daconstiles@att.net)

**Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF)** provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

**Joy Fund, Inc.,** provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

**Spanish language literature** is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: [jdhunter@gte.net](mailto:jdhunter@gte.net)

**Christadelphian Care Line** fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

**Alcohol Help Line** fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

## News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;  
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

### **BEDFORD, NS**

Our ecclesia was blessed to hold its tenth annual fall study weekend September 16-17, 2012. We thank Bro. John Mannell (Toronto, ON) for leading our ecclesia and visitors from New Brunswick, New York and Jamaica in a study of Galatians.

Over the past several months we have welcomed a number of brothers and sisters around the emblems: Frank and Dorothy Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Philip and Janice Baines (Sussex, NB); Marilyn Creer (Hamilton Greenaway, ON); Steve Keating (Toronto East, ON); Margaret Jones (Sussex, NB); Josh and Amanda Robinson (Kitchener Waterloo, ON); Charlotte Smith (Redditch, UK); Clyde and Evelyn Snobelen (Victoria, BC); and Claudette White (South Ozone Park, NY). We have also enjoyed the fellowship of Sis. Kay Brown (Broughton, Jamaica), who stayed in Halifax for several weeks while undergoing treatment.

Sis. Jerusha Snobelen has commenced university studies in St. John's, Newfoundland and is currently benefiting from the fellowship of the brothers and sisters there. We thank Bre. Clyde Snobelen and Frank Abel for their exhortations. A new Bible Seminar series commenced in October with several visitors. We extend our sympathies to our Bro. Wayne Sampson, who has recently lost his mother.

Halifax is a growing and vibrant waterfront city of over 400,000 surrounded by beautiful country, forests and the ever-present ocean. Our ecclesia would welcome missionary spirits eager to help a small, but active ecclesia. Bro. Dale Crawford is now recording brother for our ecclesia. His contact details are in the ALS Diary and he can also be reached via: bedfordchristadelphians@gmail.com.

*Stephen D. Snobelen*

### **BRANTFORD, ON**

We are very happy that after both giving a good confession of their faith, ZACH MYERS and SION MYERS, the twin son and daughter of Bro. Paul and Sis. Melody Myers, were baptized on October 13, 2012. It is very encouraging to see two more of our young people demonstrate their desire to commit their lives to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are also very happy to report that after reading his Bible with Christadelphians for many years PHIL BARCLAY, the husband of Sis Judy Barclay, was also baptised upon the good confession of his faith on November 14, 2012. We pray our Heavenly Father will care for our Bro. Phil and Sis. Judy while they spend the winter in Florida and look forward to their return in the spring.

God willing our annual Brantford Junior CYC & Little Disciples Winter Gathering is to be held on February 9th, 2013, at Camp Trillium under the theme of Noah. Study workbooks will be available on-line at [www.brantfordcyc.com](http://www.brantfordcyc.com). To register please contact Sis. Carol Penny at [carol.penny@yahoo.ca](mailto:carol.penny@yahoo.ca) or 1-905-628-2241. Discounted rates for pre-registration are \$15.00 per person or \$50.00 per family.

*Daniel Billington*

## **ECHO LAKE, NJ**

Our Bro. Sam Taylor has been commended in love to the Paris Avenue, OH Ecclesia. We pray that our brother will be happy in his new ecclesial family.

We thank our Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) for his recent study weekend and exhortation.

Our Bro. Danny and Sis. Sylvia Jorgensen have now moved to China due to work and we shall miss their fellowship and contributions.

We express our heartfelt thanks to all of the brothers and sisters who have called from all parts of the world concerning the welfare of the brothers and sisters in our ecclesia after the recent hurricane and storm. At the submission of this magazine entry we have not heard of any fatalities. We will of course report to the brotherhood in due course as more information emerges or should an appeal be necessary.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord including: Margaret Ann Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, and David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Tom and Sally Davis, and Christy Stocks, (Pomona, CA); Cornelius Kellett (Washington DC); Varghese Kurian (living in isolation in Kollam, India); Matt Norton, and David Clark, (Lismore, Aust.); Gabrielle Davey and Loraine Houghton, (Cranston, RI); Steve and Mary Demarco, and Gary and Arlene Goodman (Honesdale, PA); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester, NY); Michael Nemet (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Bill and Pam Lam (Moorestown, NJ); and Jordan Anderson (Norfolk, VA).

*Stewart Marsden*

## **HONESDALE, PA**

We were very happy to have Bob and Bobby Faust visit our meeting on November 18, 2012, from the Moorestown, NJ Ecclesia. Bob gave us a wonderful exhortation.

*Stephen J. DeMarco*

## **KOUTS, IN**

We have been blessed by many visitors over the last several months, from Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, California and Canada. We especially thank Bre. Jon Fletcher (Kamloops, BC); John MacDougall (Verdugo Hills, CA) and Alton Stuchlich (Ann Arbor, MI) for their words of exhortation. We also thank Bro. Jim Styles for his classes and exhortation on, "Ecclesiastes" over our study weekend in November.

Bro. Tim and Sis. Christi Bryan and their two sons, T.J. and Joey, have transferred to the Livonia, MI Ecclesia, and Bro. Ron and Sis. Barbra Bryan transferred to the Troy, IL Ecclesia. We commend them to the care of their new ecclesia, and we will miss them. We are happy to receive by transfer Sis. Megan Cooper from the Missassauga West, ON Ecclesia.

We rejoice with Bro. Steve and Sis. Angie Mumaw at the birth of their daughter, Sloan; Bro. Aaron and Sis. Ann Riegle at the birth of their son, Caleb; Bro. Mike Wilson at the birth of his son, A.J.; and Sis. Heather Kehn at the birth of her son Samuel.

Bro. Jeff Smenyak is now serving as Recording Brother of the Kouts Ecclesia. His email address is: [jsmenyak@gmail.com](mailto:jsmenyak@gmail.com).

*Paul Wilson*

## SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

We are sad to report the recent loss of two members due to cancer. After a year-long struggle, Sis. Janeen Ameral fell asleep in the Lord on June 19, 2012, at the age of 57. Though she retained membership in the Mariposa Ecclesia in northern California, Sis. Janeen lived in San Diego and regularly attended our ecclesia. Our sister provided an uplifting example of faith throughout her life. Bro. Scott Koll fell asleep in the Lord on July 1, 2012, at age 69. Our prayers are with his wife, our Sis. Lydia during this difficult time. Bro. Scott's quiet devotion to the faith was encouraging to those who knew him. We shall miss them both, but are grateful they have been on the journey toward the kingdom with us. Each now awaits the resurrection call.

*Kent Ellis*

## SUSSEX, NB

We are very grateful to Bro. Bill Link Jr. (Baltimore, MD) for leading our very uplifting Thanksgiving study weekend on, "Proverbs—Guidelines for Godly Living". Visitors came from England, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Bro. John Mark Ghent (Toronto West, ON) will be the speaker for our study weekend April 27-28, 2013. Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON) will lead our Spring Youth Camp weekend May 17-19, 2013 on, "Elijah", and Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington DC) will be our speaker for the Thanksgiving study weekend October 12-13, 2013.

*Cliff Baines*

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## Some Rejecters

*You will find your objections to the Christadelphian's course on Responsibility, virtually met in the article appearing in this number entitled "True Principles and Uncertain Details." The article was written before we received your letter. We cannot but think that the exercise of reason ought to release you from the embarrassing position in which you have placed yourself. You cannot mean, without qualification, that the Scriptures teach the resurrection of rejecters of the Gospel, and that in this naked form, the proposition must be assented to before you will receive believers of the Gospel. The Scriptures teach the resurrection of some rejecters—not all. The question is, which? The benighted multitudes of Christendom are rejecters of the Gospel? You do not imagine they are to be raised; so with the Jews, Mahometans, and Chinese. The question is, why are they not to be raised, though rejecters of the Gospel? When this is answered, a principle comes into view that creates the uncertainty with which you are so impatient with regard to others. That borderland of uncertainty undoubtedly exists whether we recognize it or not. It is not the part of wise men to shut their eyes to the reasonable limitations of truth. But you misunderstand if you suppose the uncertainty has any reference to those who reject the Gospel, knowing it to be the Gospel, because of the human inconvenience of conforming to its demand. Preach "the wrath to come" as strenuously as you may, concerning this class; but bear with your brethren who cannot say in what particular cases this class is to be found, so long as they recognize the principle that the ground of responsibility is knowledge, and that "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).*

*Robert Roberts: The Christadelphian: 1898 p 203.*

# Minute Meditation

## Commitment

Pat Riley, a basketball coach famous for inspiring his teams to win, once said, “There are only two options regarding commitment. You’re either IN or you’re OUT. There is no such thing as a life in-between.”

In sports, commitment is the difference between success and failure, but the principle does not apply only to sports. One of the richest men in the world, Warren Buffett, became rich because of his commitment to make money through investing. Fritz Kreisler, thought to be one of the greatest violinists of all time, was famous for his striving for excellence, constantly playing the violin and composing for it. Joe Girard, known as the world’s greatest salesman, discovered that success comes from wanting success so much, that you are willing to work harder than everyone else and work constantly to achieve it.

If we consider our commitment to serving our Lord, there is no such thing as a life in-between. We are either committed to the Lord or we aren’t. If we are more interested in earning money or excelling at sport or music, or preoccupied with a hobby, we are not dedicating ourselves to our Lord. Jesus did not say that we should not serve God and mammon — he said we cannot.

If we spend our time pleasing ourselves or seeking man-made goals, we are not committing ourselves to serving our God. In the Psalms we are told, “Commit thy way unto the LORD; Trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass. “Solomon tells us “Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.”

What did Jesus mean when he said we must take up our cross and follow him? We have to give up what we want and be willing to endure hardship to do what Jesus wants. He is asking us to commit to serving him. From the Phillips translation, “If anyone comes to me without ‘hating’ his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine. The man who will not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps cannot be my disciple. If any of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t he first sit down and work out the cost of it, to see if he can afford to finish it? Otherwise, when he has laid the foundation and found himself unable to complete the building, everyone who sees it will begin to jeer at him, saying, ‘This is the man who started to build a tower but couldn’t finish it!... So it is with you; only the man who says good-bye to his possessions can be my disciple.”

Jesus makes it clear that to be his disciple requires total commitment. We are “out” — not his disciples — if we don’t “hate” everything else. The word “hate” does not have the usual sense of loathing, but means that the love we have for our parents, wife and family pales in comparison to the overwhelming love we have for Jesus. Our first priority, the love of our life, must be our love for our Lord. The promise Jesus gives is that by giving up our worldly goals and committing

ourselves to him, we will be granted life, eternal life in the kingdom. Jesus tells us, “For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake shall save it.” There is no in-between; if we are not in — striving to serve our God with all our being, we will find ourselves out — outside of the kingdom of God with no hope of eternal life.

Unfortunately there are many who go through life uncommitted. They are wishy-washy, bouncing back and forth from one thing to another. James tells us: “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” James also said: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”

Are we committed? To what? Not only do we need to be committed, but also it is important that we commit ourselves to the Lord. We are to seek first the kingdom of God. The promise of eternal life will not be given to those who do not seek it. Many people are committed, but to the wrong things. The Warren Buffetts, Fritz Kreislers and Joe Girards of our world are excellent examples of total commitment to goals that at best bring fame and fortune for a brief time

What are we doing to show our commitment? If we have trouble thinking of any good works we have done, have we done any? Nehemiah asked in prayer, “Remember me, O my God, for good.” What good are we doing that God can remember us for? Even though there is nothing impossible with God, it is still impossible for Him to remember our effort to serve Him if we make no effort. Our work of service to our God does not need to be spectacular or full of heroic feats, but we do have to do something. Jesus tells us, “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

How many elderly have we visited lately? How many widows have we helped? James tells us, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

Jesus gives us a picture of the judgment seat: “Then the King will say to those on his right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ ” We pray that we may hear those words spoken to us. But Jesus does not stop there; he explains, “For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ ”

Let us look at the examples of people who are highly committed and apply them to our walk to the kingdom. Let us be like Warren Buffett, but invest our time and

resources into helping the needy and sharing the gospel message. Let us continually strive to serve more perfectly like Fritz Kreisler practiced his violin, by studying the word, working to serve others, and seeking opportunities to serve. Finally, let us desire the Kingdom so much that we work harder and longer in our Lord's service, as dedicated to selling as Joe Girard is, but selling the good news of the gospel of Christ so that others can be saved.

Let us resolve to show the LORD our commitment to Him by the good deeds we are doing to serve Him and care for His other children. As Jesus said, "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

*Robert J. Lloyd*

## Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.  
Three months is preferable.)

### JANUARY 2013

**Dec 29-Jan 5 Texas Youth Conference** at T4C near Freestone, TX. The Texas Youth Conference is a Bible Study Conference for young Christadelphian adults who are between the ages of 17 and 35. Baptized members under the age of 17 may attend. For registration and other information please see our website at [www.texasyouthconference.com](http://www.texasyouthconference.com).

**5 Rogue Valley, OR** Study day with Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilton Brisbane, AUS) on the topic, "Gibeah of Saul". Contact Bro. Randy Yoshida, for more information at 541-479-5358.

### FEBRUARY 2013

**1-3 Ladore Youth Camp** in Waymart, PA. Christadelphian young people ages 13 and over are invited to spend a weekend of study and fellowship around the Word of God. Bro Steve Cheetham: "*Go in and possess the land*" — Lessons from the Judges". Register at [www.cyccamp.com](http://www.cyccamp.com) or email Bro. Ryan Mutter at [championvegetable@hotmail.com](mailto:championvegetable@hotmail.com).

**9 Brantford, ON** Annual Brantford Junior CYC & Little Disciples Winter Gathering at Camp Trillium under the theme of Noah. Study workbooks will be available on-line at [www.brantfordcyc.com](http://www.brantfordcyc.com). To register please contact Sis. Carol Penny at [carol.penny@yahoo.ca](mailto:carol.penny@yahoo.ca) or 1-905-628-2241. Discounted rates for pre-registration are \$15.00 per person or \$50.00 per family.

**24-Mar 1 Palm Springs Bible School.** The speakers will be Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales) and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at [register@christadelphianbibleschool.org](mailto:register@christadelphianbibleschool.org) or our website [www.californiabibleschool.org](http://www.californiabibleschool.org).

### MARCH 2013

**16-17 Echo Lake, NJ** Spring study weekend. Our speaker is Bro. Mike Robinson (Echo Lake, NJ): "Getting into the Psalms". Study will begin at 11:00am on Saturday.

**23-24 NYC Metro** Spring study weekend with Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI). Contact Bro. Gideon Drepaul at yerubbaal@yahoo.com.

**23-24 Victoria, BC** Spring study weekend. The speaker will be Bro. Andrew Bramhill.

**28-31 Victoria, BC** Pacific Northwest CYC Conference. Speaking will be Bro. Caleb Lawrence (Surrey, BC).

**29-31 Wichita Falls, TX** Spring Gathering at T4C Camp, Freestone, Texas. Class leader Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) his topic is "Valued of God — Study of the Life of Timothy". Please contact Bro. Larry Beutel lbeutel@alsco.com.

### **APRIL 2013**

**12-14 Boston, MA** New England Brothers Weekend with Bro. Dev Ramcharan at Camp Joslin, Charlton, MA. Contact Bro. Jim Harper and Bro. Jim Boyko newengbro@gmail.com 508-212-7190.

**20 Caring Network of Canada** is sponsoring a seminar on "Understanding Addictions" at the Toronto North Hall, 39 Knox Avenue, Toronto starting at 10am until 3pm with lunch provided. All are welcome to attend. The goal is to help our community be aware of the problems that face us as brothers, sisters and young people because of addiction and give loving support and spiritual encouragement.

**27-28 Sussex, NB Study weekend.** The speaker will be Bro. John Mark Ghent (Toronto West, ON).

### **MAY 2013**

**17-19 Sussex, NB Spring Youth Camp.** The speaker will be Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON) on "Elijah".

**18-19 Calgary, AB** Rolling Hills Study Weekend: A weekend of study, fellowship as well as assorted activities for children. Bro. Ron Ledbetter from Ontario will present "Samuel: A man prepared", (Lessons for families and ecclesias). And Sis. Cherri-Lynn will coordinate accommodation, children's activities and catering. Accommodation is available in homes and there is space for RV's and tents. Classes will be held at the Rolling Hills Community Hall. Register with dana.kohlman@grasslands.ab.ca, or 403-964-2562.

### **JUNE 2013**

**1-2 NYC Fraternal** with Bro. Nathan Badger. Contact Bro. Gideon Drepaul at yerubbaal@yahoo.com.

**23-29 Rocky Mountain Bible School** at Glenwood Springs, CO. Speaker will be Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The God of the Fallen", Bro. Gary Cousens (Cambridge, ON): "To Him that Overcometh —Overcoming Ourselves" and Bro. Tecwyn Morgan (Castle Bromwich, UK): "The Exodus Deliverance". Contact Info: www.denverchristadelphians.org.

### **JULY 2013**

**7-13 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School** at Schreiner College, Kerrville, TX. This years teachers will be Bro. Peter King (UK), Bro. Joseph Palmer (San Diego, CA), and Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton, ON). Please register with Bro. Shannon Strickland, 9305 Nancy Lane, Tomball, TX or Shannonjeh@att.net.

**13-20 Manitoulin Family Bible Camp.** Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA) and Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON). Registration will commence January 2013 God willing. A

## **The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)**

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discount for early registration will be available until May 31, 2013. See the website [www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com](http://www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com).

**21-27 Pacific Coast Christadelphian Bible School**, Idyllwild, California. Two of the speakers will be Bro. Ron Cowie (AUS) and Bro. Joseph Palmer (USA). The school offers a wonderful environment for the whole family to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. For further information, please contact Jeff Gelineau 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 Email: [mail@gelineau.org](mailto:mail@gelineau.org). Register at [www.californiabibleschool.org](http://www.californiabibleschool.org).

**27-Aug 3 Manitoulin Island Bible Camp**. The speakers will be Bro. Andrew Johnson (Kings Norton, Birmingham, UK): "Travelling with Jesus" and Bro. Mark Vincent (Stirling, Scotland, UK): "Leviticus — the Heart of the Law". More details on website [www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca](http://www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca). For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at [jabrowning@rogers.com](mailto:jabrowning@rogers.com) or 1-416-284-0290.

### **AUGUST 2013**

**24-30 31st Annual Vancouver Island Bible Camp**. Theme: "But the just shall live by his faith." Hab 2:4b. Scheduled speakers for the Adult and Teen Classes this year are Bro. David Green, Bro. Jim Harper and Bro. Jim Styles. Registrations and further information Sis. Karen Grover email: [karengrover@shaw.ca](mailto:karengrover@shaw.ca). Website: [www.vibiblecamp.com](http://www.vibiblecamp.com).

### **OCTOBER 2013**

**12-13 Sussex, NB Study weekend**. The speaker will be Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC).

### **NOVEMBER 2013**

**9 Victoria, BC** Fall study weekend. The speaker will be Bro. Chris Sales and his subject will be "Pictures of Redemption". Contact Clyde Snobelen at [victoria@csl.ca](mailto:victoria@csl.ca).