

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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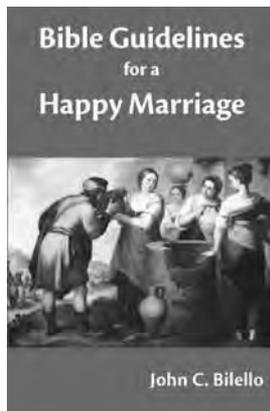
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See page 303 for ordering information.

Editorial

Suitable Occupations

“Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather” (1Cor 7:20-21).

“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2Thess 3:10).

A personal story

Mostly as a result of my high school education, I chose the engineering profession as a career which would be likely to provide for myself and any family that might ensue. With a few minor ups and downs, this has proven true. Along the way I have striven not to involve myself with the “Defense Industry”, despite some quite attractive offers. However, even this goal was, quite unknowingly, compromised early in my career. I was charged with developing a machine for producing hemispheres of a quite incredible accuracy, to approximately the wavelength of light. I succeeded, and was quite proud when the machine shipped. I thought it was for artificial knee joints, you see. However, I later found the destination was in fact Y12, which is a facility charged with producing atomic bombs. I rather suspect that the machine was intended to produce the cores of plutonium bombs. No wonder I was never asked to help install the equipment.

I would not willingly been involved if I had known, but later, even with the best intentions, I have gotten involved on several other occasions in machines or parts that have gone to the military of the USA, from the SR-71 spy plane to parts I believe ended up in nuclear submarines.

This anecdote is to illustrate that, even if we have chosen an occupation that we hope and expect will avoid any ethical dilemmas, the complexity of modern society renders this objective almost hopeless.

Practical applications

Many years ago, the following question was posed of Robert Roberts:

“A brother is agent for a bookselling firm, in whose service it is his duty to supply to canvassers (among other books), works of an orthodox religious character, such as Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress. A second brother is a deliverer in his employment, and has to carry books of the description mentioned, to such as subscribe for them. A third brother maintains that the first and second are following an occupation inconsistent with their profession as friends of Christ and agents of the truth; and refuses on this ground to hold fellowship with them. Are the two first-named brethren doing wrong?”¹

The answer Robert Roberts gave was quite simple: “We are at liberty to make honest contracts of service without being responsible for the use to which the product of our honest services may be turned by the evil world in which we live.” Thus I can look back at the various events of my life, and I believe and hope will be able to approach the Judgment Seat of Christ with at least not these among my many failures.

Thus a slave could with a clear conscience engage in activities that were commanded of him, that he would not ordinarily want to perform. We think of Cornelius, a just man, and one who feared God. Almost certainly unable to easily change his occupation, he clearly was focused on being just, not stressing over the way his occupation was unsuitable for a follower of Christ.

It is all too easy to develop a conscience which is over tender over the ends to which your labors are put. You can quit your occupation: but then you have to concern yourself with the other comment of Paul: “*if any would not work, neither should he eat.*” It is not normally the responsibility of the ecclesia to support a member if they decide personally that their current occupation is incompatible with what they perceive is their conscience.

Of course, there are certain occupations that are incompatible with the way of life of a Christian disciple. As Robert Roberts put it:

“Christendom resists evil; sues at law; resents injury, brandishes the constable’s truncheon, and fights in the army, even if the men it is called upon to shoot are fellow Christians. If pointed to the law of Christ, it shakes its head. It speaks of “duty to society,” the “protection of life and property,” and the certain chaos that would set in if the law of Christ were in force. In this, Christendom speaks as the world, and not as “the church,” because it is not the church, but the world.”²

Thus service in a police force, or the military, or related jobs, are all occupations we would encourage members to leave if they are baptized in while being employed in such pursuits. But even so, such individuals are given time to find alternative employment. It is interesting to note that at the height of the Berean controversy in the UK, there was a member of the disputing ecclesia who attended in his military uniform.³

Potentially troublesome areas of employment

Having considered some practical problems associated with some specific areas of employment, are there any occupations that are safe from potential conflict with our faith? The fundamental principles of our life are of course summarized in the words of Jesus: “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*” (Matt 22:37-39). We cannot, therefore, declare allegiance to any other authority, neither can we do harm to anyone, for this is incompatible with the unconditional love we should show to any we are associated with.

We should perhaps therefore avoid occupations that might place us into a situation where there could be, or is, a conflict between earning a living and serving our true master. Not that it is always easy to do so: but perhaps I might venture a list of some troublesome occupations, some that might present problems, and others that probably would rarely present problems. I might caution, however, that even the most seemingly mundane and “safe” jobs might and can present problems, as indicated below, while others seemingly risky might, if approached correctly, be trouble free.

Very Troublesome

- Policeman or soldier (See Clause 35 in footnote below!)
- An armed security or prison guard — not excluded by our statement of faith, but not to be encouraged
- A worker in a munitions factory, or one directly involved in making items whose only purpose is to take life
- A judge, or magistrate, or one whose occupation involves the punitive legal system

Might be Troublesome, but such are known among Christadelphians

- Lawyers, primarily those associated with areas remote from criminal law
- Unarmed security, such as “Mall cops”, or those who monitor building etc.
- Employment as a civilian worker by the defense industry

Should be safe — but not always

- Teacher, but some states (and countries) require instruction in areas that are troublesome, like human sexuality and evolution
- Health industry, but again there might be conflicts in the area of human sexuality
- Librarian — but what does one do when asked about books on homosexuality etc.?
- Salesperson, although such could well be asked to engage in unethical conduct
- Scientist or engineer, although such occupations often get involved in endeavors with perhaps unintended or undesirable outcomes
- Farmers, manual workers, or similar. Not likely to be troublesome, but it can be hard to support a family in such occupations

Of course, in our modern western society it is almost impossible to get a job on which one can support a family without a college education, which itself involves a whole set of potential problems. But such an education can also offer many benefits — but that topic is for another day.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*, Vol 9, p 139.
2. *Christendom Astray*, Logos Edition, P 433
3. The dispute in the UK was over whether a Christadelphian could join the police force, as reflected in the “Doctrine to be Rejected” # 35.—That we are at liberty to serve...as police constables.

Exhortation

Laying Down our Rights

Introduction

This morning I want to talk about something that makes big headlines these days. Things your coworkers and peers might be talking about, and maybe have had conversations with you about. It is a subject constantly being debated in the media. It is a subject that people feel very strongly about. The topic is, as you might have guessed from our title is “Rights”.

There are all kinds of different rights. To name a few, there are:

- gun ownership rights
- gay rights
- women’s right to choose
- animal rights
- free speech rights
- privacy rights

Rights are granted to the citizens of this country. The countries’ founders loved their rights so much that the constitution on which this country was founded was amended to explicitly declare a number of rights its citizens are granted. It doesn’t seem like such a bad thing on the surface — after all, what’s the harm in protecting what people perceive as basic freedoms? However, as we’ll see this morning, thinking in terms of rights is something we, as believers, should think carefully about.

So let’s look at it from another perspective. What happens if we look at rights as entitlements? I don’t think it’s as much of a stretch as you might think. Let us look at one example: a citizen of the United States has the right to free speech, which is something citizens expect and depend on in this country. In that sense they know they are *entitled* to free speech. However, when we frame it as a matter of entitlement, it takes on all sorts of connotations and we can actually see such issues of rights from a whole new perspective. After all, at their core, “rights” are a matter of what people think they are entitled to — this country has granted its citizens an immense privilege to enjoy these rights, or entitlements.

Rights we are owed

The founders of this country believed that our Creator endowed us with “certain unalienable rights”. In light of the fact that we can view “rights” as entitlements, do we accept that we were created with a sense of entitlement? Just what “rights” exactly were we supposedly endowed with? We read:

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed

them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so” (Gen 1:26-30).

With this passage, God endowed his creation with two privileges as far as I can see:

- Dominion of all the animals and plants and trees on the earth
- The ability to populate and fill the earth

And later, as Paul attests in Rom 1:23-24, the Creator allowed His creation to choose the god they would serve. Whether it be pagan gods, or the god sitting on the desk in our home-office, or the god perhaps hanging on the wall above the fireplace or sitting on the entertainment stand, or the gods pictured all over the magazines at the grocery store, or the gods sitting on the store shelves at your local electronics store, or whatever activity or cause to which your undying attention is devoted. These are the gods we can choose to serve.

Our Creator, of course, hoped we would choose Him to be our God. He wanted willing subjects that would serve with His son in the coming Kingdom. He did not want to conscript anyone into His service. He instead granted to us the choice of whom or what we serve.

In my mind, however, I wouldn't describe these privileges God granted us as rights. To me, calling them "rights" would create the association with entitlement, and the reality is, we are not entitled to them.

The one, true thing to which we are entitled — that we can expect to receive in this life — is death. From dust we were created and to dust will we return. Entitled to death though we may be, we have the privilege to choose whether or not it is our ultimate end, and the man who enabled this choice is the one who we are here to remember this morning.

Rights: a fleshly way of thinking

Whatever individual rights we, or the founders of this country, or anything else think we have or are entitled to as citizens of this county, we forfeited them when we chose to put on the name of Christ, and we forfeited them for good reason:

- 1) For one, we are to no longer identify with the country in which we reside. We are to be as strangers sojourning in a foreign land. We wait for a political order not yet established.
- 2) Secondly, arguments about these rights, as we already said, tend to keep everyone busy, taking focus away from what really is important.

The mind of the flesh wants to occupy itself constantly with matters of rights. It spends so much time talking about them, defending existing legislation that protect

these rights, or writing new legislation to protect or create new rights. Simply put, to think of things in terms of “rights” is a fleshly mode of thinking.

In Christ, even though we have certain liberties, we are not to preoccupy ourselves with these ultimately trivial matters of rights — our focus is to be on understanding Scripture and developing the mind of Christ. And isn't that why we're here this morning — to seek to understand Scripture and help us to develop the mind of Christ by remembering his life and sacrifice?

Examining our rights as disciples in Christ

In ecclesial life, we must be careful about using whatever rights we may think we have, whether in Christ or otherwise. The brethren at Corinth thought they had all sorts of rights. Paul had to write them a letter to correct their way of thinking. What were some of the rights they thought they had?

They thought they had...

- The right to choose which apostle they followed, that they could choose their own leader (1Cor 3:4-7)
- The right to slander Paul and speak evil against him, that they could speak however they wanted (1Cor 4:5)
- The right to be sexually immoral and to tolerate sexual immorality (1Cor 5:1)
- The right to take their brother to court (1Cor 6:1-8)

But when Paul wrote them to them, he told them they did not have...

- The right to choose their own leader (1Cor 1:13, 24). He says that Christ was not divided, therefore neither should be the body. All who are called are answerable to one leader and that is Christ. So we can't choose our own leader.
- The right to slander Paul and speak evil against him (1Cor 4:19-20). When he returns, Christ isn't going to recognize the speech of those who are arrogant, puffed up, or who have spoken things without regard to or consideration of heavenly principles. So we can't say whatever we want to say.
- The right to be sexually immoral and to tolerate sexual immorality (1Cor 5:1). Speaking of those engaged in sexual immorality, Paul says to remove the person from them, making the comparison of casting out a little leaven, lest it should leaven the whole lump. So we can't be sexually immoral and free with our bodies in that regard.
- The right to take their brother to court (1Cor 6:1-8). Paul doesn't mince words on this point, saying this is utterly a fault, that it is completely wrong for brethren to try each other in a court of law. So we don't have the right to take our brethren to court.

Are you starting to get the picture? Whatever rights we think we have, we probably don't.

Our rights' impact on brethren

1Cor 9 is an account of Paul surrendering his rights. Paul knew that under the Law of Moses he had rights. In fact, the law outlined all kinds of rights and he also knew there were liberties in Christ he could take advantage of. He even

made the case that because he was a sower of spiritual food, he was entitled to reap material benefit.

He could have gone the opposite direction and made that chapter a *declaration* of his rights, declaring what he was entitled to, being an apostle. But he went the other way. Precisely *because* he was in Christ, he did not make the chapter about affirming his rights. He chose not to exercise those rights — “*nevertheless*,” Paul says, “*we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.*” (1Cor 9:12, ESV) — this statement tells us the attitude Paul had toward his own rights. He viewed them as an obstacle to his brethren.

He even said as much when he cautioned the brethren of Corinth about eating meat sacrificed to idols (1Cor 8:9). It was something they had the right to do; they could eat the meat freely without sinning. But the risk in exercising this right was that it could become a stumbling block to brethren of lesser faith and understanding. And that’s the danger in expressing things in terms of it being a right of ours. It gives us a sense of being entitled, and feeling that we are entitled to something, can lead us to act without regard for others.

By way of example — we may feel we have the right:

- To watch movies or TV shows with no redeeming value
- To spend significant amounts of time in activities that provide no spiritual value
- To spend time with people of questionable moral character

It is within our freedom in Christ to do all of those things. But Paul writes,

“All things are lawful” but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor” (1Cor 10:23-24, ESV).

So we must weigh the benefit – or lack thereof – to our brethren when applying such liberties. Paul elaborates in Romans 14, exhorting us to “*decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother*” (vs. 13, ESV). In exercising a right we believe we have in Christ, we may be creating a problem for our brother.

We mentioned that Paul had all kinds of rights which he surrendered. Paul said that if anyone was entitled to confidence in the flesh because of the rights they had, it was him. He writes:

*“For we are the circumcision, which worship god in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. **But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my lord: for whom***

I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” (Phil 3:3-10).

He wasn't in it for the rights. If ever there was a believer who could take advantage of their rights, it would have been Paul. What I want to key in here is that Paul counted all these rights, all these privileges, as meaningless.

Christ and rights

Jesus was himself no stranger to the subject of rights. He was questioned by the men of his day who demanded to know by what power — or by what right — he had to teach and to heal (Matt 21:23).

They were incensed and perhaps felt as though Jesus, by preaching and performing miracles, was trampling on their rights and thus demanded of him what right he had to do so. But we know by what authority he had the right to teach and to heal. It was the same authority he could have appealed to the night before his crucifixion when a great multitude came with swords and clubs, led by the chief priests and elders.

It was fully within Jesus' rights as the son of God to summon to his aid more than 12 legions of angels (Matt 26:47, 53). If we think about the situation, if ever there was a time in Jesus' life for him to exercise his rights, it would have been at this moment. Here when he was to be unjustly seized and tried before a people that would not rest until he was dead.

- Jesus didn't summon more than 12 legions of angels that night
- He didn't exercise his right, he didn't make a stand

We will never be in the situation Christ was in that night. Our need for our Father's aid will never be greater than it was for Christ that night. How then can we ever find just cause to brandish our rights in our own lives?

This morning our exhortation is to lay down our rights as we follow the example of the one who for us laid down his rights — until he come whose right it is (Ezek 21:27).

Dan Langston (Moorestown, NJ)

It is true the lawmakers knew nothing about all this when they legislated for the exemption of "ministers of the gospel." Their ignorance does not invalidate our rights; it only confers upon others who are not ministers of the gospel a share in what really exclusively belongs to us, who are Brethren in Christ.

[John Thomas, writing in the The Ambassador, 1864, p 89, about his attempt to obtain exemption on the basis of our rights as ministers of the gospel.]

Youth Speaks

Jonathan the Faithful Prince: (4) A Failed Reign

Because of the faith of Jonathan and his armor bearer, everything was changed for Israel. Just hours before, they had hid themselves under rocks, in caves, in bushes, and behind anything that might conceal them from the Philistines. They trembled before their foe. Yet Jonathan's daring move had made all the difference. Because of him — and certainly the mighty power of God — Israel could defeat their enemies.

Yet in that victory there was something, or someone, who was conspicuously absent — and that person was Jonathan's father. He was the king. He was the general. He was the one who was supposed to go out before his people and fight their battles (1Sam 8:20). But where was he?

Throughout this story, it's almost as though the divine narrative seeks to specifically show the contrasts between Saul and Jonathan — and it is to these contrasts that we will now turn our attention in this article. Jonathan had won a brilliant victory through his faith, but all that Saul had done was create a failed reign.

Contrasts with Saul

Throughout all of this story and throughout all of the actions of Jonathan in this battle, Scripture paints a very sharp contrast between his way of thinking and that of his father. Over and over again, this is emphasized:

Jonathan is the one who first went out to smite the garrison of the Philistines, while Saul stayed back with his troops (1Sam 13:2-3).

Later, Jonathan went again to fight against the Philistines — but the record simply highlights Saul's inactivity beneath the pomegranate tree (1Sam 14:1-2).

Jonathan, when he asked his armor bearer for the final time if he was willing to fight against the garrison, expressed his confidence that God could save by many or by few (1Sam 14:6). On the other hand, Saul was overcome with fear when Samuel didn't come at the time expected and the people were "*scattered from him*" (1Sam 13:8). With his army dwindling, Saul didn't see any way for him to win.

While he was preparing for his attack, Jonathan communicated with God in prayer — trying to devise a sign so that he might know if God was with him (1Sam 14:8-10). Yet Saul — even though he had the priest with him and the priest had the ephod — had never yet tried to communicate with God (1Sam 14:3).

Even when Jonathan finally ran against the Philistines to destroy their garrison, Jonathan stated that his victory would not be for his glory, but for the glory of the people of God — for the glory of Israel (1Sam 14:12). For Jonathan, this wasn't a battle about his reputation or his honor. Saul was the complete opposite. After Jonathan slew the first garrison, Saul sent a message throughout all of the land of

Israel saying that “*Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines*” (1Sam 13:4). Saul took credit for something that he didn’t even do — specifically because he wanted the glory for his own name.

Repeatedly, the Scriptural record seeks to emphasize the difference between this father and son — a man who only placed faith in himself and his own abilities, and a man who had confidence in God and in His power to save. In one thing after the other, Jonathan serves as a good example while Saul is contrasted as a bad example. Yet there was one further contrast between the two men which powerfully demonstrates the importance of having a living faith like that of Jonathan. That contrast focuses on Saul’s hero — a man named Gideon.

Connections to Gideon

Gideon, one of the faithful judges before the time of Saul and Jonathan, appears to have been one of Saul’s major heroes. Throughout this account of the battle with the Philistines, and even throughout Saul’s earlier life, there are numerous connections between things that Saul did, and things which Gideon did. It was almost as though Saul admired Gideon so greatly, that Saul himself tried to pattern his own life after that of Gideon. Just note some of the similarities:

When Saul was first called to the kingship, his words to Samuel were “*Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?*” (1Sam 9:21). This was an extremely similar answer to that of Gideon after he had been called by the angel to lead God’s people: “*Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house*” (Jdgs 6:15).

Yet after these words of fear, the spirit of God came upon both of these men (Jdgs 6:34; 1Sam 10:10).

Later, in his battle against the Ammonites, Saul split his troops into three different groups (1Sam 11:11). This was the same thing that was done by Gideon in his battle against the Midianites (Jdgs 7:16).

After Gideon’s battle, the men of Israel wanted to make him their king — but Gideon turned their minds back to God (Jdgs 8:22-23). After this battle, the men of Israel did make Saul their king — but Saul still turned their minds back to God (1Sam 11:12-13).

In his first battle against the Philistines, Saul had a number of men at his disposal, but he dismissed all of them except for three thousand — exactly ten times the amount that Gideon had after he sent his men back to their homes (1Sam 13:2; Jdgs 7:7).

There were a number of different places where Saul had purposefully acted in a similar way to Gideon — he desired to be like him! Gideon was Saul’s hero. Thus, in this battle with the Philistines, Saul should have had the same focus and the same confidence — he should have set his mind upon God, just as he had done before in his battle with the Ammonites, and just as Gideon had done in his battle

against the Midianites. Even many of the circumstances were same between this battle and the battle fought by Gideon, showing that Yahweh had set things up for Saul so that he truly could be like his hero:

- When the Philistines amassed their troops to fight against Saul, they were like the *“sand which is on the sea shore in multitude”* (1Sam 13:5). In Gideon’s day, the enemy had the same type of numbers — *“as the sand by the sea side for multitude”* (Jdgs 7:12).
- Not only were the numbers the same, but just as Israel had hid from the Midianites in dens and caves (Jdgs 6:2), so it was at the time of Saul. His troops had run away to hide in caves and in pits (1Sam 13:6).
- Before they departed, there were a number of men in both Gideon’s army and Saul’s army who were trembling and full of fear (Jdgs 7:3; 1Sam 13:7-8).

The situations between Gideon’s battle against the Midianites and Saul’s battle against the Philistines were remarkably similar — and it seems almost as though God was testing Saul to see if he would remain faithful and remain like his hero in a similar circumstance. Sadly, Saul didn’t — and he failed horribly. In straying from the example of his hero, Saul sought to worship God in his own way, and because of that he lost the kingdom. After the events of this battle, Saul, despite his desire to be like Gideon, had fallen incredibly far from the one whom he sought to emulate.

However, in keeping with Scripture’s theme of highlighting the contrasts between Saul and Jonathan, where Saul had failed, Jonathan succeeded. All throughout his attack on the Philistine garrison, Jonathan walked in the footsteps of Gideon and through God, won a mighty victory. Just notice the connections between what Jonathan did and what Gideon did:

- Gideon proposed a sign to see if God was truly with him (Jdgs 6:36-40). Jonathan did the same (1Sam 14:8-10).
- Gideon fought against the vast army of the Midianites with only a small group of men (Jdgs 7:7). Jonathan fought against the vast army of the Philistines with only him and his armor bearer (1Sam 14:1).
- When Gideon fought against the Midianites, he told all his men to do what he did and to follow his example (Jdgs 7:17). This was the same thing that Jonathan said to his armor bearer — he told him to follow him (1Sam 14:12).
- Because of Gideon’s attack, the Midianite camp was put into confusion and every man attacked his fellow (Jdgs 7:22). This was the same thing that happened after Jonathan’s attack when Yahweh sent the earthquake (1Sam 14:16).
- Gideon knew that it was Yahweh who brought salvation through him (Jdgs 7:18). Jonathan knew the same thing (1Sam 14:12).

Throughout this entire battle, Saul had longed to be like Gideon. He wanted to be the great conqueror who delivered his people from the hands of their oppressors. He wanted to be the mighty warrior who rescued Israel. Yet sadly, Saul never became like Gideon. Instead, his lack of being as his hero is contrasted with the exactitude of the way in which Jonathan followed in Gideon’s steps.

Conclusion

Saul forgot the secret of Gideon's success. He forgot that when Gideon turned down the kingship and brought the peoples' minds back to God, that is what he needed to be doing constantly! He forgot that Gideon didn't fight against the Midianites for his own glory, but he fought for the glory of God — to show that God could save by many or by few. Saul had forgotten the lesson of humility.

Yet it was a lesson which his son Jonathan knew — and that truly is the focus of Jonathan's battle with the Philistines. Though he did great exploits amongst the enemies of Israel, Jonathan always remained humble. He stood up against the Philistines, not for his own name's sake, but for God's and so that he might inspire the rest of Israel to stand upon their faith and fight against the Philistines as well.

In this battle, his faith and his humility had the desired effect — as the earth shook and the swords of the Philistines turned upon one another, the men of Israel regained their confidence, and they came together to fight alongside Jonathan. The Philistines would be destroyed in a great slaughter, and they would be forced back into their own land — but the victory could have been even greater. Sadly, the rejected king — after the earthquake stopped and his army began to chase the enemy — continued to make rash decisions and never learned the lesson of worshipping God in the way in which He commands.

Thus, as his troops realized that their opportunity to overturn the hordes of the Philistines had come, Saul vainly told his men to stay with him and refrain from fighting, until he could number the people and know exactly who it was who had caused the disturbance in the Philistine camp. Even more, as his men went off to battle after the numbering, he put a curse on any man who ate any food that day — once again focusing upon himself.

If only Saul had learned what truly made Gideon successful, then perhaps he could have been like the man whom he revered. May this lesson sink deep into our hearts — and as we too strive to fulfill our goals and our dreams, may we learn from the mistake of Saul. As would later be recorded in the book of Proverbs, “*Before honor is humility*” (Prov 15:33). The sooner we learn to humble ourselves, the greater our hope that one day, when the Lord Jesus returns, we will be given that honor for which Saul so hopefully sought. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God — for as He has said, when we do so, we will be exalted in due time.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Israel is in an earthquake zone, being at the north end of the Great Rift Valley. Minor tremors occur frequently, most of them unnoticed by the populace, but recorded on delicate instruments. There are probably ten specific mentions of past earthquakes in the Bible, and about ten prophecies of a great earthquake that is yet to come. Zechariah's description suggests that it will be on a much vaster scale than anything in the past. [The Christadelphian, 1989, p 188]

Letters

Jonathan the Faithful Prince

To *The Christadelphian Tidings*:

I have always found the faith of Jonathan and his armor bearer in 1Sam 14 a great inspiration, so I enjoyed Bro Jason's article 'Jonathan the Faithful Prince' in the May 2013 'Tidings'. The Biblical record contains a number of small details early in the chapter that are powerful mediums revealing the problem. We are told that Saul was sitting under a tree, but the record specifically says "a pomegranate tree", which yields a fruit containing a multitudinous seed. The high priest had these decorating his robe as a witness that the one God was to be manifest in a multitude. Even now, Saul, the writer seems to say, the one God of Israel has a multitude of mighty ones to deliver those who fear Him. Unfortunately, Saul could not see the lesson Providence had given as he retreated into the tree's shade.

In giving Ahiah's genealogy the writer diverts from the lineal family line to mention that his father's brother was Ichabod ('*the glory is departed*' — lit. 'no glory' 1Sam 4:21). Surely the point is clear, Saul, your glory has departed — there was no glory under that tree despite the presence of king and priest, for by faith we have access to the grace that brings the hope of the "*glory of God*" (Rom 5:2).

Jonathan the faithful saw with clear spiritual vision. The Philistines were "uncircumcised" — verse 6, (as David testified as he met Goliath — 1Sam 17: 36) and therefore had no right to the land, for the covenant of circumcision was closely related to their inheritance of that land (Gen 17:8 ff).

The detail in nearly every verse of chapters 13 and 14 of 1 Samuel is full of meaning, and great testimony to the fact that "with God all things are possible" when faith reigns.

With much love in Christ Jesus,

Tim Galbraith (Hyderabad, India).

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

There's More Life in that Old OHP! The Shadow Play Revisited

Does your Sunday school have an overhead projector (OHP) tucked away somewhere? And are you wondering what to do for your next Sunday school program? Why not do a shadow play? Stretch a large flat bed sheet across the room to serve as a screen, get out the old OHP, and go to work.

An overhead projector makes a remarkably versatile light source for shadow plays. Here are some things you can do with it.

It is an all-purpose light source that can be turned on and off frequently or left on for a long time.

- a) The bulb is durable.
- b) It can illuminate a large rectangular area of the screen.
- c) It can provide white light or colored light for special effects. To change the color of the screen, simply place one or two layers of colored cellophane on the glass stage of the projector. Sheets of colored cellophane can be kept flat by mounting them in cardboard transparency frames.

Enhance the play with a variety of special effects.

- a) Use overhead transparencies during the play to provide titles for different scenes.
- b) Key Bible references for the audience to see narrative.
- c) Maps, time lines, etc.
- d) Props that enhance any scene. Draw the prop on a write-on transparency with a marking pen. Use other pens to give it color.
- e) Instant add-ons to any scene.
- f) Instant take-aways from any scene.
- g) Songs for audience sing-along.

Shapes and figures can be cut from oak tag or construction paper and placed on the projector stage to cast their own shadows. You have just increased the size of your Sunday school cast or made some instant props!

Ascending and descending effects and side-to-side movements can be produced by sliding opaque figures on the projector stage.

Perhaps the biggest drawback that comes with using an overhead projector in shadow plays is the “hot spot” that the light can produce in the center of the screen. The bulb is extremely bright. This may bother your audience a bit, so experiment with ways to reduce the effect. Here are some things to try.

- 1) Increase the distance between the projector and the screen.
- 2) Use the OHP in combination with other light sources (being careful not to produce unwanted shadows).
- 3) Use cellophane overlays to filter the light and soften it slightly.

And while you are being creative, why not enhance the shadow play with some colored pictures and photographs? This can be done with a data projector, or if you really want to go retro, dust off a 35-mm slide projector or an old 8-mm movie projector or get out the filmstrip projector that your Sunday school stored away with the OHP. All of these can provide impressive visual enhancements that can be managed from behind the screen.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)
sundayschool@tidings.org

History

Jim and Lizzie Cheetham: Part 3, Early Years of Marriage

While many things in the world have changed since the late 1800's, one thing is still very much the same. Just like today, young Christadelphians in the 19th century visited neighboring ecclesias, got to know each other, and fell in love. Bro. James (Jim) Cheetham and Sis. Sarah Elizabeth (Lizzie) Genders came to know each other this way in the Birmingham England area around 1888. By the time Jim left England for California in 1889, Lizzie had found a place in his heart. James and Sarah's long-distance romance eventually blossomed into marriage when Sarah came to San Francisco to be James' bride in 1892.



**Bro. James Cheetham
in the early years of his
marriage.**

The first ten years of the young couple's marriage would prove to be very eventful. There was Sarah's extended visit to England in 1896, Robert Roberts' death in San Francisco in 1898, the birth of three children (and loss of one) by 1900, and the Resurrectional Responsibility division in 1901.

During these early years of the Cheetham's marriage, the Truth in San Francisco seemed to be doing fairly well, measured by the activity of the ecclesia. James wrote to the Christadelphian, "We meet every Sunday, brother W. A. Clark lectures, after which we have the breaking of bread, in California Hall, Clay Street, Oakland. We do not have many strangers attend our

lectures, but it is gratifying to see there are a few more interested whom we hope to see embrace the glorious hope of eternal life."¹ But at the same time there was an issue plaguing the ecclesia that would come to the surface with Bro. Roberts visit. This issue was known in those days as "The Inspiration Question".

The Inspiration Question, also called the Jot and Title Controversy, was a very serious issue as it had caused a contentious split in the Christadelphian body in 1885. The disagreement centered on whether the entire Bible is wholly inspired. Those who promulgated the partial inspiration theory felt that some parts of the Bible "were not historically infallible", and that "inspiration attached only to those parts of the Bible which contained things which a man could not discover for himself."² Bro. Roberts vigorously attacked the new doctrine, and led a movement to separate from any who held the partial inspiration belief.³ The power and swiftness which he displayed in his fight against this belief caused offense among



**Sis. Sarah Elizabeth
Cheetham in the late 1800s.**

some in the brotherhood. A new Christadelphian fellowship, made up of those who did not agree with Bro. Roberts, the Fraternal Visitor Fellowship, sprang up from the division. Later, Sarah Cheetham's brother, John Genders, would join this fellowship and even become a contributor to the *Fraternal Visitor* magazine.

At the same time that the San Francisco ecclesia was wrestling with partial inspiration questions, Sarah Cheetham was struggling with issues of her own. She was having health problems and on top of that, or because of it, was deeply homesick. Her health issues and the possibility that she might return to England were mentioned in a letter to the Cheethams from an unknown writer in 1895. "...I have reason to believe that Sis. Cheetham is much improved in health. The reports I have received from time to time have been so discouraging... Kindly let me know by return if your condition is at all serious and if the last letter which I enclose from your brother John has much basis in fact and if you have sincerely thought of returning to the old country..."⁴

Based on a letter that James later wrote to Sarah, it appears that some of Sarah's health problems may have been a result of the birth of the couple's first child, Robert (Robbie) Walton Cheetham, which occurred on January 5, 1895 in San Francisco⁵. Not long after Robbie reached his first birthday, Sarah was so homesick she decided to make the trip to visit her family in England, taking him with her on the long and difficult journey. She would not return to San Francisco, and James, for nearly a year.

Sarah visits home

James was not able to go with Sarah on her visit to England, probably because he couldn't take the time off from work. James missed his family so much he considered joining Sarah in England and making that country the family's home, but he eventually decided that they should stay in San Francisco. He came to that conclusion based on the better financial prospects in California and the fact that their son was an American.

James' letters to Sarah while she was away from him make it obvious how difficult it was for him to be separated from the woman he loved and from his young son. In the first letter, written just three days into her journey, he poured out his heart to her, "My Dearest One, The Lord bless thee and keep thee and cause his face to shine upon thee...I have prayed for you since leaving here that you may be kept safe through your long journey and that you may arrive safely in dear old England. How anxious I am to know how you are getting along and the boy...it was so hard, so cruel to be separated from you last Sunday night. I just felt as if all the sunlight, all the happiness had gone out of my life...I know you took it very hard dearest when we parted at Oakland, I remember your sad face at the window [of the train], trying to bear up...I hope it will be for the best, your going home, and when I see you again I hope to see a complete change and see those roses back in your cheeks and full of life and sunshine and that we may be so happy together whether it is here or there God only knows at present... How I wish it had been possible for me to go with you, it is altogether too bad for you to undertake such a long journey alone..."⁶

Alone at home, James continued to work as a furniture finisher, taking on other similar jobs when his regular work slowed down. "...I have got lots of painting to do and enameling, besides 3 or 4 wagons to paint and another buggy for Mrs. Schott and 100 parlor suites to finish...Am sending a money order with this letter. I am sending you all my money, fully trusting you to use it to the best advantage, either to save some to come back here, or against I come home, which ever you think will be the best...So good night dear ones, wish I could just hug and kiss my dear ones, with love to all and my best and fondest love to my own dear little sweetheart from your loving husband, James Cheetham." ⁷

The time in England was helping Sarah recover. James mentioned this in a letter sent to her around Christmastime. "My Dear Little Wife, I received your letter and card and the beautiful Christmas present a few days ago. Words fail to express my thanks for your kind and loving letters and for your many expressions of love...honestly and candidly taking all things into consideration had you rather return to San Francisco or me return to you? Of course so long as I am in work and steady I will stay here all being well though business is rather quick in our department am very much pleased to hear you are improving and hope you will continue to do so..." ⁸



The Cheetham family about ten years after James and Sarah's marriage: James, Sarah, Rosamond, and Robbie. (clockwise)

James truly missed his wife and wanted her to take better care of herself when she returned to him. "I feel so tired of being alone just as much as you do being away from me, it seems so long since I kissed you goodbye, and oh how I miss your love and kind words and your loving welcome when I came home at night and leave in the mornings..." Do you really feel well and strong enough to undertake the long trip back here? ... say, when you come back I don't want you to be dressmaking all the evenings and sometimes nearly all night. You must keep better bed hours and go out with me some nights, now what does my love say to this? With love from all the bros. and sis., but most of all with lots of hugs and kisses from your dear loving husband." ⁹

Sarah returned home later that year and James wrote about it in a letter to the Christadelphian. "I am also pleased to report the return of my wife, sister Cheetham, from Birmingham, England, after a long visit. Brother J. W. Hoyle has removed from here, and is now meeting with the brethren and sisters in Stockton, Cal. There are about thirty-five brethren and sisters here and across the Bay in Oakland and Berkeley. We shall be pleased to see any brother or sister that may be passing through this way. The address of our meeting room is Fraternal Hall, Washington Street, No. 13th Street, Oakland, Cal,— Sunday, 11 a.m. . My address is, James Cheetham, 48, Oak Street, San Francisco, Cal. ¹⁰

The next few years

While the painful division and the shocking loss of a friend and brother in Christ were major events in the Cheetham's early married life, they weren't the only changes they had in their lives around this time. Two years after Bro. Roberts died, a new member came into the family when Edith Rosamond Cheetham was born in San Francisco on December 9, 1900. The very next year, the ecclesias went their separate ways based on the controversy that was discussed that evening with Bro. Roberts as well as the question over Resurrectional Responsibility.

(Note: the circumstances surrounding the death of Bro. Robert Roberts, with which Bro. Cheetham was deeply involved, will be dealt with in later articles in this series.)

In 1901 Bro. Bingley informed the *Fraternal Visitor* Magazine that he had begun a new ecclesia in San Francisco. "Yesterday was our first Sunday in our new location. So now we have two meetings, one in Oakland and one in this city. It is a handsome hall. We had a good attendance and feel much encouraged. My first discourse was 'Christendom Astray.' We have a large signboard and chalking the subject upon it attracted attention." R.C Bingley, who argued the inspiration question with Bro. Roberts in San Francisco in 1898 and who had a personal issue with him dating back several years would later write, "Since that trouble I have borne Bro. Roberts no feelings of resentment, and, apart from differences of opinion on disputed points agitating the brethren from time to time, amicable relations have existed and continued even up to the very last day of his life."¹¹

That same year, Bro. Cheetham wrote the following to the Christadelphian: "I am pleased to report that three more have decided to meet with us, heartily endorsing the stand we have taken and our basis of fellowship. They are brother and sister J. A. McCarl and sister Bothwell, of Oakland... I expect to report further additions to our small ecclesia shortly, which will be encouraging and cheering to us."¹² Later that year he wrote again: "I wish to say that we adopted the Birmingham Temperance Hall statement of faith, and heartily endorse the stand taken in regard to the Responsibility Question. Since my last communication, we have added two more to our number by removal — brother and sister Johnson, late of the Meriden ecclesia, Conn. — making our number ten. Their names are as follows: Brother and sister J. A. McCarl, sister Bothwell, brother and sister Johnson, brother and sister A. Baldwin, sister Slade, myself and sister Cheetham. We meet at our house for the breaking of bread; Sundays, 11 a.m. We are expecting to see brother Sulley here very soon, as I see from the Christadelphian he will leave here on May 30th for Australia." Bro. Henry Sulley was the author of the Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy and Assistant Editor of the Christadelphian Magazine. Twenty-five years later the magazine's Editor, Bro. Charles Curwin (C.C.) Walker would follow in Bro. Roberts' footsteps and visit the Cheethams and the other Christadelphians in San Francisco.

Brother and sister Sulley arrived in San Francisco in May of 1902. Bro. Sulley later wrote about his visit in the Christadelphian:

"At this place, brother Roberts closed his eyes in sleep nearly two-and-a-half years ago. His last effort for purity of doctrine was made here. It

has borne fruit, but he knoweth it not. The ultimate result will be seen in the day of Christ, before whose judgment-seat we must all appear. All questions will wear a different aspect then; for, however much we school ourselves to think of Jesus our Lord and his wishes, we can never realize now the burning question in all its fullness as it will force itself upon us in his presence — What will he think of me? It is well to keep that question constantly in our thoughts, as brother Roberts often exhorted us to do.

“It was a pleasure to meet with this little band for celebrating the Memorial Supper, which was done at the house of brother Cheetham. Twelve in all assembled. Sister Sulley and I were much impressed with the first hymn. Its sentiments were sweet and comforting to our souls. Sung without a musical instrument, and rendered with that individual expression which adds poetical rhythm to the cadence only to be detected when a small number sing in elastic unison, it was sweet. I thought of the singers of the age to come, when we hope to enter spheres of rapturous musical delights not conceivable in this age.”¹³

Over a hundred years later we still meet together each Sunday to celebrate the Memorial Supper, sing hymns and think about the age to come. Though in many ways they experienced a different world than the one we live in today, like them we still look back on the amazing sacrifice that was made for us and look forward expectantly to the glorious age that’s coming. No doubt it would have been nearly inconceivable to the Sulleys and the Cheethams that over one-hundred years later brothers and sisters would read about the memorial service held in the Cheetham’s home and still be awaiting the return of their lord. It probably would have been harder still to accept that they would join Bro. Roberts in falling asleep in Christ before his return. At the time the Sulleys met with them in their home, the Cheethams still had a number of years of mortality left and many years of service to their lord before they would sleep. In fact, Bro. James Cheetham would lead the Oakland ecclesia for another forty years before he would join Bro. Roberts in slumber.

To be continued...

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*, 1894, p88.
2. *Sects and Society*, Bryon R. Wilson, University of California Press, 1961, page 247.
3. Actually, it was to withdraw from those who would not agree to make this issue a cause of separation.
4. Personal letter from unknown writer, Feb. 12, 1895.
5. Personal letter from James to Sarah, April, 1897.
6. Personal letter from James to Sarah, June 10, 1896.
7. Personal letter from James to Sarah, July 13, 1896.
8. Personal letter from James to Sarah, December 15, 1896.
9. Personal letter from James to Sarah, April 1897.
10. *The Christadelphian*, p 93, 1898.
11. *The Fraternal Visitor*, November 1899.
12. *The Christadelphian*, 1901, p225.
13. *The Christadelphian*, 1902, p81.

Reflections

The Book of Mormon: (8) Why Should We Believe It?

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (for brevities sake termed Mormons in this series) claim the *Book of Mormon* is the inspired word of God: “*The Book of Mormon* is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible” (Introduction to the 2003 edition). And the title page of this edition reads: “*The Book of Mormon*, another testament of Jesus Christ”.

Is this claim true? The question is a reasonable one and should be positively addressed by any making such claims for a book that, if truly of God, would greatly impact our lives.

Testing a holy book for validity

We believe the Bible is the word of God. But are we right?

Historical accuracy a necessity

During the past 200 years, a great number of scholarly skeptics have rigorously denied the divine inspiration of Scripture. They have claimed it was simply a humanly contrived book full of preposterous myths and designed by religious people trying to delude others into following their own ideas of morality. Initially this school of skeptics scoffed at people being literate in ancient times, at the burning up of Sodom and Gomorrah, at the escape from Egypt of a slave nation, at the walls of Jericho falling down, at the existence of a king David, at the extent of Israel's kingdom under Solomon, at the titles of Roman authorities used in Acts, etc.

These skeptics were proven wrong, completely wrong, by archaeological finds that continue to be discovered. It was no doubt by the Divine hand that so many of the archaeological discoveries occurred in the late 1800's and early 1900's shortly after the skeptics produced their harshest criticisms.¹ To this day the discoveries continue.²

No archaeological evidence for the *Book of Mormon*

To prove the Bible is historically accurate, does not prove that it is divinely inspired. But the archaeological confirmation of the accuracy of the Bible stands in stark contrast to the total lack of such evidence in regard to the *Book of Mormon*. As we covered in “Problems with Mormon Archaeology” (*Tidings*, November, 2012), this is a major embarrassment to those believing that the *Book of Mormon* is part of the word of God. The book claims to cover a period from about 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. and presents supposedly significant activity in the Americas with massive building projects being completed, yet not a single verifiable trace has ever been found of any of it.

Furthermore there is the problem of the golden plates. While in this series, we have said little about the golden plates from which the *Book of Mormon* is said to

be translated,³ their absence is also a major barrier to our believing in the *Book of Mormon*. Their supposed discovery was less than 200 years ago (1827). In terms of books claiming divine inspiration, that is very current. To contend that the plates disappeared without a trace after they were supposedly translated and to contend that there were no drawings, clay impressions or even early lithographs of the plates renders virtually incomprehensible a belief in their reality.

Once again a stark contrast is seen to the Bible. There are fragments of New Testament manuscripts dating to c. 150 A.D. and of course the “Dead Sea Scrolls” provided copies of sections of the Old Testament dating to c. 70 B.C. There is no mystery about manuscripts of the Bible. Again, this does not prove that the Bible is the word of God but it certainly exposes the *Book of Mormon* as being shrouded in suspicions and doubt.

The key test — fulfilled prophecy

If a holy book is proven to be historically accurate (which cannot be said of the *Book of Mormon* but is true of the Bible), how are we supposed to know it is the inspired word of God? The fact it claims to be inspired is certainly not the proof we are looking for. There are several books which make this claim (e.g. the *Koran*) yet every one of these books which claim inspiration conflicts with the others, so only one can be right.

The Bible offers a test — we call it **fulfilled prophecy**.

“And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?” When a prophet [or a book] speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut 18:21-22).

Here is the challenge offered by the Bible. Accurately reveal the future, and we will know the book is inspired by God. Make a mistake in revealing the future and we will know the book is NOT the word of God.

The challenge is repeated in powerful terms by the prophet Isaiah: *“Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them [i.e. false prophets] bring them forth and shew us what shall happen: Let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods...” (Isa 41:21-23).*

Isaiah goes on to indicate the Jewish people will play a significant part in this divine proof: *“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” (Isa 43:10).*

We are accordingly directed to test Biblical prophecies of the future to determine if the book is divinely inspired. And our attention is particularly drawn to prophecies regarding the Jewish people. In fact we might say that fulfilled prophecies concerning the Jewish people are **God’s signature on Scripture**. We can also say

that if one of such prophecies is wrong, then the book **cannot** be trusted as being the word of God.

Here is where the *Book of Mormon* fails the vital test. As was noted in *The Tidings*, February, 2013, pgs. 79-80, the *Book of Mormon* predicts the Jewish people will return to Palestine in the latter days AFTER they have been converted to a true belief in God.

This is obviously INCORRECT. The Jews now living in Israel are less than 1% believers in Jesus as the Messiah. More than 40% are considered as secular, being agnostic or atheist.⁴ In fact, Zech 13:2-6 makes it abundantly clear that Jesus Christ must cleanse the land of false religions when he establishes himself as ruler of the land. Accordingly the *Book of Mormon* fails the vital test. It is thereby proven to be NOT the word of God.

Two proofs offered by the Book of Mormon

Try it, you'll like it!

Alma urges the people of his day to believe and apply his teachings. If they do, he assures them they will like the results:

“Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and **when you feel** these swelling motions, **ye will begin to say within yourselves** — It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me” (Alma 32:28 also 33:23 and 34:4).

In talking with Mormons today, the same reasoning is presented. When asked how we are to know the book is true, we are urged to believe the *Book of Mormon* and try it out. If we do, we'll find it satisfying to the heart and mind.

The flaw in this approach is immediately evident — human beings become the ultimate judge of what is truth. There are all kinds of humanistic philosophies which if believed and practiced are satisfying to human beings. Since humans have a natural inclination to satisfy the flesh, or to mystify religion or to exalt rules over principles, having some “religion” seem “delicious” to us is no proof that the religion is the truth of God.

Letting human beings be the ultimate judge of what is truth goes straight against Scripture: “*there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Prov 14:12).

Upon careful examination, the tenets of Mormonism are found to be surprisingly satisfying to the human mind. The rules and regulations require an external religious rigor similar to humanly created religious structures – the traditions of the Pharisees being the classic Biblical example. It's hierarchical structure and methods of control are duplicates of what one finds in humanly created societies and religions and even in successful business organizations.

“Try it you’ll like it” is thus seen to be no test of true religion.

Holy Spirit gifts

From the beginning of the *Book of Mormon*, dated about 592 B.C., to the end, dated about 400 A.D., the assertion is made that believers receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon true conversion. Here are some of the statements:

“And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost...I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men.⁵ For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever...If it so be that they repent and come unto him.” (1 Nephi 10:17-18 dated 592 B.C.).

“...yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word,⁶ behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; **and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels...**” (2 Nephi 31:13 545 B.C.).

“Yea, wo [sic] unto him that shall deny the revelations of the Lord, and that shall say the Lord no longer worketh by revelation, or by prophecy, or by gifts, or by tongues, or by healings, or by the power of the Holy Ghost!” (3 Nephi 29:6 A.D. 34). Note how serious it is put to deny the receipt of Holy Spirit gifts.

“And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues; Behold I say unto you, **he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ**; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them. For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever...” (Mormon 9:7-9 A.D. 400).

The implications of this assertion are most interesting. Every true Mormon must have a Holy Spirit gift. When asked “What gift do you have?” some have said “The gift of speaking in a foreign language”. When asked to elaborate, consistently the person had experienced exactly what our own missionaries have found. They studied hard for several months and finally there was a “Eureka” moment when things clicked into place, especially when it came to the language of Scripture. This is a long way from what the apostles experienced on the day of Pentecost when, suddenly, “*every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed...Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, etc.*” (Acts 2:6-12). The gift of tongues is the ability to instantly speak in a language that is totally foreign to the believer; no Mormon could be found who had such an experience.

“What about the gift of healings?” Again examples were cited that are not more than those experienced by persons who have strong personalities and create

powerful atmospheres.⁷ Examples cited have been tumors that recede over time, or psychosomatic ailments that are healed for a week but then come back. There are no instances of those born blind receiving sight (John 9:1), or those born lame instantly leaping in joy (Acts 3:2), or shriveled hands being instantly made whole (Mark 3:5), or leprosy being removed with a touch (Luke 5:13).

We would expect Joseph Smith to be one person who had a great endowment of Holy Spirit gifts. In fact if we computer-search the matter, we find a great deal of discussion about his “healings” and “prophecies”. What is interesting is that none of the “miracles” claimed for Smith are of the detailed, impossible to perform kind attributed to Christ and the apostles. Further the various “prophecies” are either incorrect or a reasonable estimation of current events (i.e. the civil war, the reaction to Mormons, etc.). There is nothing approaching the extraordinary prophecies in Scripture concerning the Jews — that they would be dispersed without a homeland (Deut 28:64-65), persecuted and reviled wherever they went (Deut 28:37), never cease to exist (Jer. 30:11) and eventually be re-gathered to their ancient home (Ezek 34:13; 38:8).

The practical evidence today is that the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the first-century completion of the New Testament. The failure of Mormons to prove possession of such powers is a striking witness against the authenticity of the *Book of Mormon*.

Continuing revelation

One of the features of the Holy Scriptures is the claim that, so far as its revelation is concerned, there should be no additions and no deletions. In fact a severe curse is pronounced against any who would presume to “*add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book*” (Rev 22:18-19).

The message is clear: no changes or alterations are acceptable after the Revelation given near the end of the first century A.D.

However, the belief in present possession of the Holy Spirit gift of divine revelation, has led to adjustments and changes in what was supposedly revealed on the golden plates from which the *Book of Mormon* was claimed to be translated. Following are some examples.

One wife, no concubines

Jacob 2:27 reads: “Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be **one wife**; and concubines he shall have none.”

Jacob 3:5 repeats the point: “...the Lamanites your brethren...have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our father⁸-that they should have save it were **one wife**, and concubines they should have none.”

Where does the polygamy come from? It doesn't come from the *Book of Mormon* because there is nowhere anything to contradict this very clear command to monogamy. Polygamy comes from the *Doctrines and Covenants*, which contains "Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, with some additions by his Successors in the Presidency of the Church"⁹. Section 132 verses 61 and 62 read:

"And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood — if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second... then he is justified... And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery..."

What happened to the purported divine command of monogamy in the *Book of Mormon*? It is negated by this progressive revelation.¹⁰

Dietary matters

When a Mormon was running for president of the United States, Mitt Romney, many were exposed to the dietary peculiarities of the Mormon religion. However, in reading the *Book of Mormon*, we find nothing said about abstinence from any food or drink. It speaks clearly that the Law of Moses ended with the death of Christ and drunkenness is forbidden, as in Scripture, but there is no ban on alcoholic beverages or those containing caffeine. Yet Mormons abstain from beverages containing either substance and from other food and drink items as well. Where are these guidelines coming from? They are based on *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 89 which is said to be the *Word of Wisdom* given to Joseph Smith in 1833. This "revelation" contains several rather ambiguous statements regarding dietary matters. The ambiguity is such that additional guidance must have been "received" in order to apply Section 89.

The end result of the whole idea of progressive revelation is to minimize the value of previous divine revelations. Whatever they contain can be overridden by new elements of God's will. In such a situation, where does the real power lie? In the hierarchy of the church which must determine which of the on-going revelations is the most important or valid.

Conclusion

Upon examination of the *Book of Mormon*, we find it thoroughly unattractive. It runs contrary to the Bible on many major teachings and it lacks any proof as being a revelation from God.

The unsubstantiated reporting of 1,000 years of history and the very obvious mistakes, as noted throughout this series, leave us dismayed as to its ability to be accepted by millions of people. Our only prayer can be that, since it does quote so much Scripture those who accept the teaching of the book will accept the rule of Christ when he returns. Even so come, Lord Jesus, to dispel the darkness that covers the mind of mankind.

Series concluded.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. See for example *The Archaeology of Palestine*, W.F. Albright, Pelican Books.
2. A Christadelphian couple, Bro. Leen and Sis. Kathleen Ritmeyer have done much work under the temple mount in Jerusalem and Bro. Leen is currently part of a team uncovering the ancient burned site of Sodom and Gomorrah.
3. See *The Tidings*, February, 2012, pg. 78.
4. Wikipedia on Israel.
5. This wording reflects the Trinitarian view that God will appear as Jesus.
6. Note the little “oops” here as this message is dated 550 B.C. years before Jesus was baptized.
7. Basically the same as seen on Pentecostal television.
8. The original Nephi who led his family out of Jerusalem and was father to the Lamanites and the Nephites.
9. Taken from the title page of the 1921 edition.
10. As a matter of interest, at the time of this “revelation” to Joseph Smith, he desired some women among his followers. Coincidence?

“And man created God....”, Part 2

Introduction

In the previous article (*Tidings*, June 2013) we introduced the moral dilemma illustrated by the situation of the man born blind in John 9. Jesus’ answer was that God had His own purpose in the man’s blindness. We will continue the issue, particularly the moral dilemma of the teeming multitudes who will live in hardship and die without any knowledge of the one true God.

The moral dilemma

We Christadelphians are not exempt from this issue. Our Christadelphian understanding is that the word of God teaches that there is no immortal soul. This eliminates the concern about eternal torments for those who die outside of Christ, but it still leaves us with a serious moral dilemma. We still have the challenge of reconciling our belief in a loving God who is the all-powerful creator and sustainer of this world, with the reality of billions of people who will live out their lives, many of them in terrible situations. They never have had the opportunity to hear about the possibility of salvation through belief and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, based on what we understand from the Bible, they will die and remain dead. It is far better than believing they will all go to hell when they die, and suffer eternal torments, but it does not answer our moral dilemma.

We understand that the first people in the history of the world had the kind of opportunity to know and serve God that we would wish for all mankind, and we know what happened. In this day and age we also understand much more about genetics and how terrible diseases and birth defects can be passed from mother to baby. It is very reasonable to suggest that by the time of the flood in Genesis, and the time of Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction, God knew that the people had so polluted their blood line that all their progeny were going to born into a horrible existence. He also knew, that even as you would put a suffering animal “to sleep”, so also that was going to be the kindest answer in the long run for those people. One again, that is just a possible explanation as to how human beings are being born into suffering in some cases, but not an answer to our question.

What do we know, and what do we not know, that might offer some solace in our mind and hearts when we consider this question? How can we as Bible believers reconcile the Scriptural teachings that God is all powerful and that He loves us, with the principle set forth in Acts that Jesus' name is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved? And while this question may not be an issue for most of us, it is a very real, serious issue for some very sincere people who believe in the Bible, and/or very much want to believe in the Bible. So much so, that some of these have felt compelled to take a "cafeteria" approach to what they will accept or reject in what they read or else adopt one of the other positions we set forth at the outset.

The following suggestion draws from what has been revealed, allows for the fact that we do not know everything, and seeks to avoid going too far in the direction of projecting what may be... to an assertion of what will be.

The power of God

The first time many of us seriously consider this question is when there is the tragic death of a child in our own family or in our ecclesial family. Then the child is very young and, of course, not baptized. Believe it or not, it is not uncommon in our community for someone to remind the parents that there is no hope for their deceased child. Sometimes our well intentioned zeal can really hurt. Sometimes the less said the better. We do well not to speak too positively when we speak about what God will, and will not do in a specific situation. It is also wrong and could be dangerously misleading to someone's salvation to cobble together some exceptional situations in the past from the word of God into a doctrinal conclusion. Balance and humility in all our reactions to these situations, both internally and externally, will serve us well.

By way of examples of exceptional manifestations of God's power and His love... consider the following: What do we say to the resurrections from the dead that are recorded in the Old Testament and the New Testament that fall completely outside the revealed plan of God?

- 1Kgs 17: 17-21. Elijah raises a widow's son from the dead.
- 2Kgs 4:18-37. Elisha raises the son of the Shunamite.
- 2Kgs 13:21. A dead man is restored to life upon being buried in a sepulcher that contained Elisha's bones and when his body touched the bones he came back to life.
- Luke 7:11-18. Jesus raises to life the son of a widow in Nain.
- Luke 8: 41-56. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter.
- John 11:38-44. Lazarus' resurrection.
- Matt 27: 52, 53. When Jesus died on the cross "*the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*"
- Acts 9:40. Peter raises Dorcas from the dead.
- Acts 20:6-12. Paul raises the boy who "*...fell down from the third loft, and was taken up for dead.*"

In all the above cases people were raised from the dead, continued their lives, and ultimately returned to the grave. During the rest of their lives did they not have free will? If their prior lives were sinful did they not have the opportunity to repent? Or vice versa, if they had led acceptable lives were they insulated from temptation and unable to fall from grace? No one would contend for those positions.

These incidents serve as examples of God using His power as He sees fit for the accomplishment of His purposes. They reveal the power of God. They do not reveal a plan of God. The exceptions cited do not establish the doctrine of a “second chance”, nor do they teach that salvation can be had in any other name than Jesus Christ. What they do teach us is that God is all powerful, He can raise the dead to life, and we cannot always understand, let alone anticipate, what He will do in specific situations.

The fact that God works in mysterious ways and that we cannot anticipate everything He will do in the future based on what we know about the past does not change our own responsibility. This is to make our decisions based on what we do know has been clearly revealed. We should not let what is not clear, cause us to reject what is clear. Our inability to answer every question we can raise should not become an excuse to fail to answer the questions that are specific to ourselves. We are responsible to learn God’s plan for man and to respond in faith, repentance and baptism and then allow Jesus to live in us.

Two further points

Two points in closing. The moral dilemma of the possibility of innocent people suffering with the guilty was brought home to Abraham in no uncertain terms. He was told by God’s angels that Sodom and Gomorrah were likely to be destroyed. His nephew Lot and his family lived there and would suffer whatever befell the city. His reaction to being told about the imminent possibility of Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed gives us good guidance. His heart was touched, he pleaded with God for His mercy, and he showed his fundamental faith and trust that God would ultimately do the right thing. Abraham asks the rhetorical question: “*shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” (Gen 18:25). This is the same faith he exhibited when asked to sacrifice Isaac. He was willing to obey because he accounted “*...that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure*” (Heb 11:19). Ultimately, God’s goodness and justice will manifest itself.

“*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” Of course He will. We can rest assured that in the Kingdom we will see the ultimate manifestation of the loving power of God, and all our questions will be answered in ways that satisfy all our concerns. Free will requires the temporary suspension of rewards and punishments. If God reacted instantly to our conduct, how could freedom of choice actually function? If every good deed was instantly rewarded and every sin immediately punished, how could humans truly be said to have freedom of choice? Instead of some people learning about God and developing a faith in Him, there would be two classes of people on the earth: obedient robots or dead rebels. Putting off a day of judgment provides opportunity for repentance and change, but it also provides time for people to continue sinning. To the degree their sin affects others around them

and in some cases their biological children, innocent people suffer. We know that some inherited conditions skip generations and some are passed on by the fathers and some by the mothers. We know a lot more about these things than they did when the disciples asked Jesus... *“Who sinned, this man or his father”*...but we do not know everything. And in fact we may learn in the not too distant future that we did not know very much at all about our own bodies. We may learn that the cumulative effect of generations of bad choices has had profoundly negative effects on our genes.

We can also be assured that some of the things God will do may be extremely exceptional. There may be people raised from the dead for His purposes and in His justice that we cannot begin to anticipate. And if there are, and if they then have the opportunity to learn about salvation through the name of Jesus Christ, and they exercise their free will in decisions to be baptized...how wonderful that will be.

The second point comes from an old brother's prayer many years ago at the end of the memorial service. The young exhorting brother had been a bit too extreme. Whether he had been too judgmental or too forgiving I can't remember. But I can't forget the old brother's prayer. He prayed: *“We seek neither to extend nor limit thy mercy, O God.”*

Good advice. Let the Judge of all the earth make the decisions. He will judge righteous judgment. And He may make what to us are exceptional decisions affecting the salvation of people. Witness the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible is the source of our belief in God and Jesus Christ. It stands alone in the world as having the divine stamp of approval in fulfilled prophecy. The witness of creation around us and the birth of a baby coupled with the revealed teachings of God and His Son convince us of the power and love of God. This we know. We do not know the answers to every question we can raise, whether it be regarding unexplainable human suffering or questions about how our own brain functions. We should not let what we do not know weaken our faith in what we do know. We have learned and experienced enough about God to know and trust that the *“judge of all the earth shall do right”* and if we remain faithful the day will come when we will know. *“For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known”* (1Cor 13:12).

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

A Heart of Compassion. Agape in Action — a Biblical Perspective

Compassion is a beautiful word that conveys a deep inward emotion of tender love and affection. Pharaoh's daughter had compassion on the babe that wept when she opened the basket. The Good Samaritan had compassion on the wounded traveler. And our Lord was moved with compassion on many occasions. His compassion was stirred by urgent needs (Matt 9:36-38; 14:14, 19-20; Luke 7:13) and by humble pleas for help (Matt 18:26-27; 20:30, 34; Mark 1:40-41; 9:24-25; Luke 15:20). In a world consumed with self, acts of compassion are few and far between. We can

easily find ourselves passing by those in need and turning a deaf ear towards a cry for help. Inaction is readily justified and excuses are never hard to find. However, being moved with compassion is a necessary and distinguishing trait of a true follower of the Lord. Peter commands us to have compassion toward one another (1Pet 3:8-9) and Paul exhorts us to “*put on tender mercies and kindness*” (Col 3:12-13, NKJV). However, the most powerful and direct words are recorded in 1 John:

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him” (1John 3:17-19, NKJV).

God’s concern for the poor

Though we often forget poverty and oppression, it is clear from the Bible that they are always on God’s mind. While many show disdain for the poor today, God is mindful of them. There’s sometimes a suspicion that their condition is their own fault, that they’re simply lazy or inferior. Others are more kindhearted, but prefer not to look at the poor too closely; they keep a safe distance. God has a special concern and care for the poor and oppressed, and so should we. There are many verses speaking to this, here are a few of them:

“The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, Their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them” (Isa 41:17).

“For He will deliver the needy when he cries, The poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, And will save the souls of the needy” (Psa 72:12-13).

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God” (Lev 23:22).

“A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, Is God in His holy habitation” (Psa 68:5).

See also — Lev 25:35; Deut 14:28-29; 1Sam 2:8; Psa 10:14,17,18; 14:6; 72:4; 113:7; 140:12; Prov 23:10-11; Isa 25:4; Jer 49:11

Being moved with compassion and responding in a practical way to the needs of our family in Christ is a defining characteristic of those who are “of the truth”. It’s a wonderful responsibility and privilege of every brother and sister who “has this world’s goods”.

When it comes to focusing our response efforts, the Scriptures call us to the most vulnerable: the poor, oppressed, widows, orphans, and strangers. The emphasis on poverty and justice throughout Scripture is striking. I read of one individual who cut out every verse in the Bible referring to poverty and justice, and by the time

he was done, his Bible barely held together. The point is clear. Ignore this theme and we have a gaping hole in our gospel. With over 2,000 verses speaking to these issues of poverty and justice, it's impossible to minimize their importance. James describes visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction as pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27). Our Lord, when speaking of the judgment, focuses our attention on the very practical aspects of putting love into action by ministering to *"the least of these my brethren"* with food, shelter, clothing and comfort (Matt 25:34-40). There's nothing peripheral or optional about putting our love into action. It's a fundamental first principle of our living faith.

One of my favorite verses on this subject is found in Jeremiah:

"Shall you reign because you enclose yourself in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, And do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; Then it was well. Was not this knowing Me? says the LORD" (Jer 22:15-16).

God's commands concerning the poor

These verses highlight some specific commands from Old and New Testaments on serving the poor. The message here is really very simple – help the needy. It's not hard to understand; it's just hard to do. And the message is continuous. It's in the Law of Moses; it's in the Prophets and Psalms; it's in the Gospels; it's in the Epistles. We have plenty of excuses, but very few reasons why we can't go out and feed the hungry. The justifications for inaction belong to our sinful human nature, not to God.

"If there is among you a poor man of your brethren... you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs" (Deut 15:7-11).

"Open your mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy" (Prov 31:9).

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isa 58:6-7).

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

See also — Deut 26:12-13; Jer 22:3; Matt 5:42; Luke 12:33-34

Jeremiah, when speaking to Jehoaahaz, refers to the righteous reign of his father Josiah who judged the cause of the poor and needy. At the end of the verse we read this incredible statement: *"... was not this to know Me? says the LORD"*. Judging the

cause of the poor and needy is bound up in the very character of the Father. It is to **know** Him. And because it is part of His character, it comes as no surprise that this theme features so prominently throughout the pages of Scripture.

In our own ecclesias and communities there are many who need our love and care. Some may be poor physically or poor in spirit. Others may simply be needy. And as the gospel message continues to grow in very poor communities around the world, so too do the opportunities for us to put our love into action in practical ways. The CBM (Christadelphian Bible Mission) is very aware and responsive to the needs of our brothers and sisters and through the welfare fund provides practical support to the most needy brothers and sisters. Food aid provided during droughts is one example of the many ways the CBM welfare fund supports our brothers and sisters. Agape in Action works with the CBM to help support these acute needs. The cooperation and coordination between the CBM and Agape in Action ensures a fast and comprehensive response. Agape in Action also focuses on addressing the root cause of many problems by helping brothers and sisters and young people break out of the cycle of poverty. There is no shortage of work to be done.

The needs of our brothers and sisters and their families are very raw and very real. We are used to seeing the haunting pictures in the World Vision commercials.

Blessings on those who serve the poor

Serving the poor may be the right thing to do; but the Bible also associates it with special reward. There verses look at the benefits promised to those who serve the poor. We are asked to go way past our comfort level in giving. God doesn't want to hear excuses. He specifically commands us to help the stranger, the alien, the sojourner. Can you give too much? We believe in moderation in all things. Unfortunately, we get this idea from the Greeks, not the Bible. The Scriptures call for immoderate giving.

“He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor” (Prov 22:9).

“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren... You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand” (Deut 15:7, 10).

“He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given” (Prov 19:17).

“If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (Isa 58:10-11).

See also — Psa 112:9; Jer 7:5-7; Jer 22:16; Matt 19:21; Luke 6:38; 12:42-44; 14:13-14

The gaunt faces, the sad eyes and the children with bloated stomachs. They are heartbreaking images. However, nothing hits home harder than knowing that we have brothers and sisters struggling with the same terrible challenges as those on the TV commercials. No longer are these images simply of people living in distant lands; they are our very own brothers and sisters. What affects them affects us all. It's the personal stories and experiences that change us the most. For me it's walking with a sister to the fresh graves of her husband and son who had recently died from drinking contaminated water. It's visiting a widow in her small crumbling mud hut. It's helplessly watching as a baby gasps for each and every breath as she clings to life on a hospital bed. It's feeling the tight grasp of a child who is desperate for love and affection and looking into those pleading, piercing brown eyes. Each experience breaks my heart. However, broken hearts aren't much good unless they are moved to respond. We need to be moved with compassion. We need to love in deed and in truth. We need to do something. Thanks to God, there has been a remarkable response. Brethren and sisters, young people and children have responded to these needs with genuine compassion and care. 2012 was a busy year for Agape in Action, for which we give thanks and praise to our Father in Heaven. We saw our second cohort of young people graduate from the Atashinda program, find employment and start giving back by caring for the needy in their home ecclesias and communities. We rejoiced at the baptisms of many young people. The primary schools and children's homes shone as lights in their communities. The micro-loan pilot programs exceeded everyone's expectations. Rainwater tanks were installed at ecclesial halls throughout the driest regions in Kenya. Hundreds of mosquito nets and hygiene kits were distributed. Agape in

Consequences of not serving the poor

As there are blessings for those who serve the poor, there are consequences for those who oppress them or who simply ignore them. Those in Israel, who did not plead the cause of the orphan and defend the rights of the poor, were labeled as 'wicked' and punished by God. Those who accumulated wealth without regard for the needy incited God's wrath. Pleading the cause of the poor, being their advocate and defender, is simply something a righteous person does.

"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard" (Prov 21:13).

"He who gives to the poor will not lack, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses" (Prov 28:27).

"The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy... Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads, says the Lord GOD" (Ezek 22:29-31).

See also Isa 10:1-3; Jer 5:28; Ezek 16:49; Mal 3:5; Luke 6:24; James 5:2-5

Action teams shared joy and fellowship with families in Kenya and India as they labored together strengthening one another in the love of Christ. The widows program, the nutrition drink program and the child sponsorship program were expanded into new areas. It is with great joy that we can report that there are more than 2,300 orphaned or unwanted children being supported in Christadelphian homes in Africa and Asia. We are so thankful for God's blessings, for the faithful brothers and sisters in the field who tirelessly coordinate the activities, and for the unrelenting support of so many. From the volunteers who entered data or sent emails, to the children who sold baked goods or donated their birthday money, everyone did their part. The collective response has been tremendous. Your kind words of encouragement have inspired us and buoyed our spirits when the work has seemed heavy. Thank you.

God willing, 2013 will be another exciting year for Agape in Action and we pray (and ask you to pray) for God's continued blessing on the work. In January, the doors of the Agape in Action Academy were opened for the very first time. Bright young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are coming to learn. And they are learning much more than a school curriculum. The gospel is being preached and a solid spiritual foundation is being laid for a new generation. It is our prayer that when these students graduate and go back to their home ecclesias, they will 'set the world afire' with their enthusiasm for the gospel and put their love into action as they reach out and help those around them. With God's blessing, we will see new projects implemented and existing projects expanded as we strive to reach more of our brothers and sisters living in extreme poverty. We will continue to work



Lacking food, clothes, education, love. Two of the many children in Kenya living in extreme poverty and waiting for sponsorship through Agape in Action's child sponsorship program.

closely with the CBM and local ecclesias to focus our assistance on those who are most in need. And we will continue to ensure that all of our activities support not only the physical needs, but the spiritual needs of those being helped. If we fail to provide spiritual support and share the gospel through our activities, we have failed in the most important things of all.

There is much to do. At times it can feel like we're trying to empty the ocean with an eyedropper. However, God has not asked us to solve the problem of poverty or even try. In Deut 15:11 He says to His people, "...the poor will never cease from the land". And yet, the very next words are "...therefore I command you, saying, you shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy". Our response is a personal one. One that is motivated by love, compassion and a deep appreciation of what our Father and His Son have done for us. It is an outworking of our faith and love. The more we are focused on the life to come, the less concerned we are with accumulating and hanging onto the material riches of this life. The good news is that our Lord Jesus Christ will solve the problem. With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth (Isa 11:4). He shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth (Jer 23:5). As we wait for that great day, let us put our love into action. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

James Flint (Cambridge, ON)



One of the wonderful Christadelphian couples who have opened their hearts and homes to orphaned children, as supported through Agape in Action

Why does God let Children Suffer?

Thank you for your question. The problem of suffering is perhaps one of the most difficult questions that a Christian has to face, as it cuts to the core of our understanding of God and His purpose. Whilst some skeptics use it as an argument for atheism, I do not think this argument has the power to undermine the strong arguments for God's existence. It does, however, warn us against naive understandings of God.

Before I begin to attempt an answer to this question it is important to distinguish two separate ways one might approach this problem. One is the intellectual perspective, i.e. how is suffering consistent with the existence of a loving God? The other is the emotional response to some particular instance of suffering. This second perspective is not one I can answer here, indeed it would be patronizing to do so. Whilst an intellectual understanding of suffering might help someone put their personal suffering in a larger philosophical context, it will not remove their suffering or restore someone they've lost. Here I will only attempt to give some reflections on the intellectual problem of suffering.

The focus on child suffering is significant. One might ask why there is any suffering, whether experienced by a child or by an adult. I suspect there are two reasons why people often focus on the suffering of children. Firstly, it does seem unfair that some live to eighty or ninety in relative comfort, whilst some children die very young. We might feel, if not okay, at least less bad about someone dying at eighty or ninety. But if a child dies there is so much that they haven't yet experienced or enjoyed — this seems terribly unfair.

Secondly, we generally regard children as innocents. Even childish naughtiness is dwarfed by all the awful things adults get up to. So again, it seems unjust that innocents should suffer. The focus on child suffering takes us to the very heart of the general problem of suffering. We might accept some suffering that does us good in the long run (like going to the dentist); we might accept suffering that befalls wicked people (like criminal punishment); we might accept some suffering, as long as it is balanced out by a lot more joy. But we find it hard to accept suffering that seems pointless and random. If a child dies in an accident or has some horrible disease, there seems no rhyme or reason to that. How can a loving God allow that?

The first thing to consider is that we do not know all the purposes of God. We cannot know them because His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways. We cannot know therefore that any particular instance of suffering is pointless. It is important not to misunderstand this idea. If a child dies it is glib, patronizing and even hurtful to say "well, God moves in mysterious ways". And one might justly ask "what way justifies the death of this child?". The point is not that we should just accept suffering and not ask questions, but we do need consider that just because something appears pointless to us now does not mean that it is pointless in the grand purpose of God.

The second thing to consider is in what way do we expect God to prevent child suffering, particularly if we are inclined to accept some adult suffering. If a falling

rock hits an adult they will die. If a falling rock hits a child they will die. Do we expect children to be immune to accident and disease until, say, their 18th birthday? How could you arrange such a world, and make the laws of nature behave in such a strange way? Could gravity not act on loose rocks above children? I do not mean these remarks to be flippant. I am simply asking the question: Is it possible to conceive of a world where adults suffering but children do not?

Now you might say, “I accept that the laws of nature mean that falling rocks will kill anybody unfortunate enough to be in their path but God could still intervene if he wanted to”. This is true, but let us understand what this entails. If we think that God should intervene to prevent the deaths of children then we commit to the view that every time a rock falls it will fall to the ground, except when there is a child in the way. In these cases, God would intervene to move the rock. Let us consider the implications of that. Firstly, the laws of nature would no longer be active, at least not in any consistent way. The law of gravity, for instance, would be a universal natural law except when it entailed the death of a child then it would fail. But not just the law of gravity — all the laws of nature would have to bend to prevent child suffering. Also these crazy laws might have unintended consequences. An avalanche headed towards a single child would automatically be diverted into some other course, perhaps into an adult (or even a village full of adults). My point is that to prevent all child-suffering would require that the laws of nature no longer function and that human free-will should no longer be operative.

The final consequence of God intervening to prevent all child suffering would be that His existence would never be in doubt. If anyone said “I don’t believe in God” then all that would be required would be for me to put a child in danger and watch as the child is miraculously saved. Now if God wants to His existence to be less than obvious, that is, if He wants people to come to Him through faith and love not through compulsion, then He cannot act in this way. His interventions have to be less regular to allow people to deny His existence, if they choose to.

There is one last point. We have seen that if we want to preserve the laws of nature and free-will then child suffering cannot be universally prevented. But this is only true if suffering exists at all. So one might ask: Why did God create a world in which suffering exists? But that world you are describing is the Kingdom of God and if the world were already like that there would be no need for the Kingdom of God to come. But the Kingdom hasn’t yet come and we are reminded by the suffering around us that we need the Kingdom, when there will be no suffering. That Kingdom cannot exist whilst there are still people who are intent on doing wicked things.

The Bible says that God subjected the world to futility (Rom 8:20) whilst there is wickedness on the earth. But there will come a day when God will judge the wicked and create “a new heavens and a new earth” for the righteous.

From Bible Q (Shortened):
<http://bibleq.net> — A Christadelphian resource



Bible Mission News

Ash Wednesday Fraternal Gathering Round Hill, Jamaica

Ash Wednesday, the 13th of February 2013, we made our long journey across the island to Round Hill. The ride through the lovely hillside was an enjoyable one. As we drew closer to our destination, the air became fresh and cool. We were on a wonderful mission. 138 brothers, sisters, young people and kids from all ecclesias in Jamaica were coming together to praise and worship the Lord God. Come let us magnify the Lord for He is worthy to be praised.

Round Hill is a very productive farming community in the parish of St. Elizabeth. It stands just below 2000ft above sea level. It suffers severely from every natural crisis, whether it is hurricane or drought. So the theme, "Christ for Crisis", was especially appropriate. The Fraternal Gathering here was indeed a very pleasurable and joyful occasion. The renewing of acquaintance with brothers, sisters, friends and young people was amazing. It's always a joy seeing them. Many of whom have been with us since they were toddlers.



Group photos taken on steps going down from road level to Round Hill Hall (entrance) — it is built into the side of a hill, overlooking a beautiful view of the agricultural bread-basket valley of Jamaica.

Welcome

Bro. Leecroft Blair efficiently welcomed everyone and looked forward to an informative and inspiring study of God's word. Bro. Davion Sinclair was quite sure of the message he wanted to deliver to us, so he animated the congregation with an excellent talk on crisis we face inwardly and outwardly.

Crises we face inwardly and outwardly

Crisis is a serious, decisive, crucial time, stage or event. It's a crucial situation where outcome decides whether there will be bad consequences. He reinforced the fact that believers should not ask, "Why crisis?"; but how to deal with it as it's an inevitable part of life. God uses crises to help Christians bear fruits — James 1:2-4. It's a pruning agent, as the purging of silver into gold. Crisis is not a pleasant word. It brings grief. But with Christ in our hearts we gain renewed strength to deal positively with our trials. Job is a wonderful example of courage and faith in God. We may not be as strong as Job. God will not give us more than we can bear. Pain strengthens us along the way. Bro. Davion drew reference to a taxi driver being invited several times to visit a church yet refused to do so — no time for God. However, the day the passenger held him at gun point, he yelled out for God's mercy. We must have confidence in time of crisis.

What makes Christ the solution?

Bro. Patrick Johnson profoundly reminded us that Abraham back in the Old Testament was willing to sacrifice his son as commanded by God. In this the Gospel message was spoken before Christ was born. Man is so filled with wickedness that the law had to be given. Christ played the part of a mediator — 1Tim 2:5. God made His word perfect and gave them to man to choose. The first Adam strayed and sin entered the world. It germinated and festered and brought death. We are saved or condemned according to our actions. The only way to find the path back to God is through Christ Jesus — Matt 11:7-10. He came to unite Jews and Gentiles through the spreading of love.

John was sent to prepare the true light in the world. Let us be careful less we hear the word of God and not take heed. Our gravitation should be towards the kingdom. The opportunity is there, full and free — to go to God on your knees. As much as crisis is so burdensome don't despair, stay the course. The struggle might seem too odious, but Christ our Saviour and leader overcame, so he will see us through — Rev 22:12. Life is not just waiting for the storm to pass, but learning to dance in the rain.

Group Discussions

Inward Crisis

Bro. Keith Kinlocke comfortably noted that in Rom 7:7-25, Paul speaks of spiritual and carnal warfare and the decisions we have to take. In this group, two persons gave touching testimonies of a severe inner crisis that they encountered recently. These were trying times for them but the spiritual benefit gained was remarkable. They held on to absolute trust in God. They continued in prayer and resisted the

trend to give up. These, along with the overwhelming support from the brotherhood, families and friends brought them hope and courage. Through prayer and encouragement fear was transformed into faith.

How do we deal with an outward crisis ?

In his presentation, Bro. Chris Nesbeth truly showed that in times of crisis communication is of great importance. Inner crisis is reflected on the outside. We were all created in the image of God, so there are no boundaries in helping one another. It might not be a believer but help should be given when needed. The Samaritan was there for the stranger in need. We are to relate to others, so we can offer support. Money might help but doesn't really solve the crisis. A kind word, a pleasant smile, caring, and sharing one another's burdens are extremely helpful in time of trouble. In every crisis prayer is the answer. Crisis is a worldwide thing. Millions of people are dying from starvation when Europe alone spends about two billion dollars on cigarettes. This could go a far way in helping to alleviate the starvation problem in Africa.

How do we stand in the crisis?

Bro. Martin Shirley emphatically encouraged us to stand fast in the liberty where with Christ has made us free and that in a believer's life, things happen according to God's will. Crisis brings great benefit to us. God is pleased with us when our response to crisis is one of complete faithfulness and not sorrowing and complaining. When our backs are against the wall — turn to God in prayer. Jesus calls all who labor and are heavy laden to come unto him and he will give them rest — Matt 11:28-30.

Encouragement to us

In an article in the *Christadelphian Tidings*, Bro. George Booker, wrote that *gaman* is a Japanese word with no English equivalent, but may be summarized in one phrase: acceptance, patience, courtesy, quietness and so on, in the face of great suffering/crisis. Our world today is one of uncertainty. It is but for the grace of God that we breathe this very moment. Brothers and sisters held on to this fact of life and when the crisis comes we will be delivered. Bro. George quoted three lines from the poet D.H. Lawrence to bring out the concept of *gaman*. "I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself. A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough without ever having felt sorry for itself. It's the trust in God that says 'Whatever happens to me, Lord, I trust in you. I do not fear failure, abandonment, illness or death, because I know that you are with me.'"

Memorial Service

Bro. Ray Arthurs, who was down to exhort at the memorial service, fell ill and was, unfortunately, unable to attend the gathering. The crisis was quickly solved. In preparing our hearts for the bread and wine, Bro. Melvin Gordon candidly exhorted us. Suffering is to feel pain or distress, to sustain loss, injury or detriment or to undergo punishment.

We are transformed by suffering — For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all — 2Cor 4:17. It is the fire of suffering that brings forth gold of Godliness. God uses circumstances to develop characters, so that we can become more like Jesus. Life is a series of problems. Every time you solve one, another is waiting to take its place. Peter encourages us when he says “Don’t be bewildered or surprised...”, 1Pet 4: 12. See what the Lord is saying to us and try to amend our ways. Only in suffering will we truly know Jesus. We learn things about God in suffering that we can’t learn in any other way. God could have kept Joseph out of jail and all the patriarchs from their horrible experiences — but He didn’t. The result being that all these people drew nearer to God. You’ll never know that God is all you need until God is all you’ve got. It is vital that you stay focussed on God’s plan, not on your pain or problem. That is how Jesus endured the pain on the cross. None of us ever suffer physically for Jesus, but he did for us. So we rejoice and give thanks in all circumstances. Be patient and persistent. Don’t give up — grow up!

Farewell

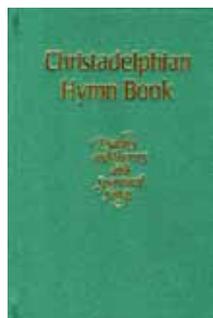
The day was far spent. Night was drawing nigh. Bro. Marlon Jackson released, with joy, his loving appreciation for the overwhelming support of all the ecclesias. He asked us to exchange phone numbers, so that we could continue to be a good source of strength and support to one another. The Recording brother remarked that we do well to consider more gatherings like this. His word of encouragement, “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*” (Rom 8:28). The closing prayer put our journey in the hands of God our merciful father. We sadly parted but wished that all of us will be in the kingdom.

Surely, it was a day well spent. We give God the glory.

Sis. Gerzel Gordon, May Pen Ecclesia

What if?

There are a lot of things we just take for granted in most of our home ecclesias.



What if you don't have a hymnbook to sing from on Sunday and there aren't any that you can borrow?

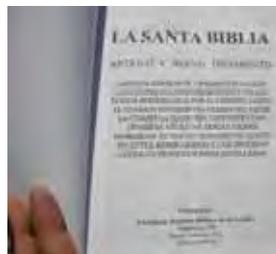
What if you couldn't actually read your hymnbook because it's a 40 year old handwritten version?





What if there weren't any Christadelphian material for you to read in your own language?

What if you had an interested friend but you didn't have a Christadelphian Instructor or a Bible to help them in their language?



What if you could never afford to go to a Bible School and there was only one of the following activities you could afford to go to? We forget how many choices we have in North America and how blessed we are by the times we can grow in the Truth and experience fellowship.

- Sunday School Campouts and Activities
- CYC Activities — some monthly and at least one to two Conferences
- Kids Camp
- Mid-Atlantic Bible School
- Southwest Bible School
- Eastern Bible School
- Midwest Bible School
- Winfield Bible School
- Idyllwild Bible School
- Rocky Mountain Bible School

These and many other projects are called Works of Faith. They are projects or needs that we are not able to cover within our usual budget — but that doesn't make the need any less. These projects are suitable for a Sunday School, a CYC, an ecclesia or individuals to be involved in or adopt as a fundraiser.

In 2013, part of the Truth Corps program required a Work of Faith, and God Willing, the Truth Corps will be involved in a preaching campaign this summer in Ocotlan, near Guadalajara. The funding has been raised for this project. We also have a new request for a chain saw in Guyana to help clear more land at the farm in Plegt Anker and plant citrus trees. We have many additional projects, both large and small that need funding.

Visit CBMA.net for a full listing of these projects and please consider getting involved and helping with one or more of them. The website also shows those projects that have been funded recently and some of the ways that was accomplished. Or, contact Sis. Jan Berneau at jberneau@earthlink.net for additional information of any of the projects.

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Have you read these *Tidings* books?

Bible and Science: Design vs. Chance

by John C. Bilello
The concept that the Universe, and all that is in it, came about by chance is counter to Bible teaching. God is the author of both the Bible and nature. \$13.34 US (Hardcover, 254 pages, 2005)

Essays to Believers

by Don Styles
A set of essays on practical Christian living and is suitable for individual meditation as well as group Bible study. \$8.00 US (208 pages, 2007)

My Journey in Faith

by Ronald P. Hicks
A brother shares his life experience in the Truth with Christadelphians around the world, and the joy of mission work. **Special price \$5.00 US** (372 pages, 2010)

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis

by David P. Levin
Forty-nine studies offer fresh insights into early Genesis by examining the text and structure of chapters 1 to 5. \$12.00 US (364 pages, 2011)

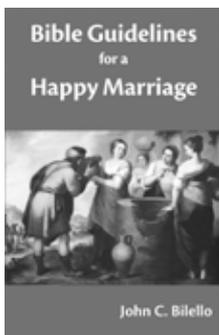
The Whole Armor of God

by Ryan Mutter
This story takes place nearly 3,000 years ago, but the spiritual challenges are familiar to today's young people. \$6.00 US (110 pages, 2011)

Understanding the Bible

by A.D. Norris
A classic Christadelphian book useful in preaching work, and especially suitable for those who want to learn to read the Bible effectively. \$5.00 US (152 pages, 2007)

Our New Books!

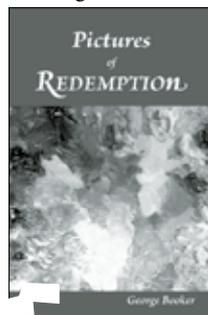


Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage (Soft Cover)

by John C. Bilello
Sound, proactive, Biblical advice on how to build and maintain a happy marriage. \$6.00 US (Softcover, 127 pages, 2013)

Pictures of Redemption

by George Booker
Explores parables, analogies and figures of speech used in the Scriptures to illustrate the many facets of redemption. **Softcover \$6.00 US** (192 pages, 2012)



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News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.
Word files or e-mail in text-only format are preferred.)

BOSTON, MA

We would like to thank our Bro. Mark Whittaker (Crewe, UK) for leading our Twenty-first Annual Spring Study Weekend. Bro. Mark had a busy weekend, leading a CYC class on Friday evening, studies on the theme, "Exhortations from the Revelation" on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, and finally leaving us with a word of exhortation at the Sunday Memorial service.

We would also like to thank our Bre. Trevor Bingham (Mississauga West, ON) and Jay Gehrig (Southern New Hampshire, NH) for bringing us words of exhortation this spring.

The Boston Ecclesia is happy to announce that we have accepted Sis. Mia Crandall into fellowship. We are also happy to announce the birth in March 2013, of Grace Dineen, the daughter of our Bro. Nathan and Sis. Charlene Dineen.

Jim Sullivan

KAMLOOPS, BC

Our small ecclesia of twenty members and nine children has been a lamp stand in Kamloops for thirty-one years now. We greatly acknowledge the hand of our heavenly father working with us from year to year.

We have had the loving support of many visiting speakers and families from near and far, which has been a recognized blessing among us all. Particularly, we would like to thank Bro. Rafeek Soolaman for his ministrations at our spring fraternal in March 2013. Other visiting speakers this year included: Bre.: Collin Hollamby (Wakerie, South Aust.); Joshua Bartholomew, Graeme Osborn, Stephen Bartholomew, and Jed Dillingham (Okanagan Central, BC); Don Zantingh, David Zantingh and Ken Loveridge (Vernon, BC); Jonathan Lawrence (Prince George, BC); and Clement Hart (Maple Ridge, BC). We also appreciate Bro. Skip Bartholomew's efforts in visiting our ecclesia for a monthly Bible class series on God manifestation.

This year we were excited to have Bro. Nathanael and Sis. Nicole Massey, along with their daughter, Anna, transfer back to Kamloops from the Prince George Ecclesia. We are pleased to announce their second child, Isaiah, was born in January 2013. We were also blessed with the birth of Matthias Daniel Winter on October 23, 2012, to Bro. Chris and Sis. Naomi Winter. We pray that our ecclesia will be a positive support for them as they raise a Godly seed.

Our ecclesia has focused on positive preaching efforts this year, beginning an "According to the Bible" series of lectures. These lectures focus on the exciting times we live in, the coming kingdom, and the first principles of Scripture. Furthermore, in the summer we held a Bible reading program in a local park next to where we meet every Sunday morning. During this program, we read through the life of Christ based on Matthew's gospel.

We pray that God will continue his many blessings on our ecclesia and our world wide community. We enjoyed our fraternal gathering March 2-3, 2013, with Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON), and look forward to our vacation Bible school with Truth Corps this summer in July, if our Lord remains away.

Bev Ruddock

KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ON

We are delighted to report the baptism of ANDREW WILLIAM WEBSTER and VIKTORIA KATALIN LAKI on May 5, 2013. Many visitors from neighbouring ecclesias joined us on this very happy occasion. Sis. Viktoria is from Hungary and during an extended stay in Canada has found and come to joyfully accept the gospel of salvation.

Martin J Webster

NORTH COUNTY SAN LUIS OBISCO, CA

We rejoice and are very pleased to report the baptisms of RANDY AND SANDRA CROUSE who were received into fellowship in January 2013, when Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) was our visiting speaker. Randy was raised in the Pomona Sunday school, and they both have been attending and studying with us over the past few years. They were very helpful, behind the scenes, with the Cambria Ladies Weekend from 2008 to 2012.

Also, our Sis. Jeanne Smith, of the Wade family, endured a horrific house fire, escaping only with her life. She is temporarily staying with her mother, Marion Sell, and sometimes with the Crouse's until she can establish a permanent address. Jeanne lost her husband, Bro. Neal, who passed away in August 2011, after a long struggle with illness. He had a double-lung transplant in 2010, and unfortunately he suffered rejection of the transplant suddenly. He had been very ill, and on oxygen for over 10 years. Please remember her in your prayers.

We have also received transfers from the Pomona, CA Ecclesia including: Sis. Annette DeHoog, and Sis. Tammy Haringa. Both live in isolation, in Bakersfield CA., and in Prosser, WA.

We are sending our newsletter to several who are interested, and also isolation materials to many who cannot be with us on a regular basis. We continue to meet in homes, and we attend the San Luis Obispo, CA Ecclesia when possible.

Roger Crouse

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

June 23, 2013, marks the start of our Sunday summer schedule, with Memorial service at 10 am. Lord willing, on September 8, 2013, we resume our regular schedule with 9:30 Sunday school and 11 am Memorial service.

We rejoice with Bro. and Sis. Curtin in the birth of their new baby girl, Brooklyn May, born on April 3, 2013. We will greatly miss Bro. Ben and Sis. Mallory and daughters who have relocated to the Adelaide, Aust. area for Ben's employment. We're thankful for the time they've been with us, and rejoice with them in this new chapter of their lives. We ask the Father to bless them in every way in their new home, and commend them to the ecclesia they ultimately join.

Kent Ellis

Minute Meditation

Do Good

The apostle Paul tells us, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” The virtue of doing good to others is a divine principle that is recognized worldwide even by those who may not understand other Biblical truths. For example, the Dalai Lama said, “Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can’t help them, at least don’t hurt them.” Mahatma Gandhi taught, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Many Christians and non-Christians would agree with Martin Luther King, Jr.’s conclusion, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

The error that many make is not recognizing that our purpose in life should be God centered rather than people centered, as we see in Solomon’s words, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Jesus explains to those who asked him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

However, as followers of Christ, we recognize that an important part of our service to God includes doing good to others. After Jesus explains that the first commandment is to love and serve our God with all our heart, soul and mind, he continues, “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Loving our neighbor implies doing good to him, as Augustine explains, “What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.” In Jesus’ words, “Do for others what you want them to do for you.” We are to be good to those outside our circle of friends, as Jesus explains, “And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.” We even are to reach out to our enemies as Jesus tells us, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”

The problem we face is we get busy in our own personal duties and needs and we can forget about the needs of others. Also, there are an overwhelming number of opportunities to do good, and we don’t know where to begin. We cannot fill all the needs. From the panhandlers on the sidewalk, to the homeless at the shelter, to the starving in Africa, to the war refugees in camps, we are unable to supply the needs of so many needy. Sometimes it seems easier to just turn away from it all and do nothing. Is not knowing where to begin or the seeming hopelessness of making a difference an excuse to do nothing?

Paul’s words help give us guidance to what we should do. First of all, he says, “As we have opportunity,” and also, “especially unto them who are of the household of

faith.” We should start with those in our ecclesia. When we wake up in the morning do we think about what good we can do today to help someone we know? It need not be spectacular, just a kind act of encouragement — a get-well card to a brother or sister who is ill, a helping hand to someone infirm, a visit to the lonely. Jesus explains, “whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” We need to be thinking about what we can do to help our fellow brethren and sisters.

We are also to help others — even enemies. To whom do we reach out when the need is so great? We can look at the example of the apostles and Christ. The lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple was known to all those who entered the temple that way, yet Peter and John did not give him money. Jesus and his apostles did help the poor because Judas Iscariot complained when a good source of revenue was not added to the fund, yet they did not resolve the problem of poverty, and, in fact, Jesus tells them, “For the poor you will always have with you.” There were many impotent at the pool of Bethesda, but Jesus healed only one — the man who had been lame 38 years. We cannot help everyone, but that is no excuse to help no one.

Ronald Reagan once said, “We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.” As we have opportunity, as Paul explains, we should reach out to help. We can make a difference to someone. We can provide a food snack to a homeless person we encounter. We can support a child in a Christadelphian orphanage; we may not be able to supply the entire orphanage, or all orphanages, but we can help at least one child. When we hear of a need, a neighbor who has lost a job, a family bereaved of a member, we can send over a meal. We need to be open to the needs of others and be willing to help.

Another lesson we learn from Jesus is that food is temporal but salvation is eternal. Jesus did not feed every hungry person in his day, but he did feed the 5000 and 4000 who came to hear him. Not every unhealthy person was healed, and often some demonstration of faith was required. Other miracles, such as the raising of the son of the widow of Nain, were performed because of Jesus’ compassion for those in need. We learn that while focusing on helping believers or those seeking to believe is a major objective, we also should show compassion to those who cross our path. Our priority should be to help others to gain the greatest gift, the gift of salvation, by assisting with their physical as well as spiritual needs, but we should not ignore a pressing need in those we encounter.

God is looking for people to reward with eternal life and a place in the Kingdom, people who are obedient to His commandments and who develop the character of Christ. An important part of Christ’s character is the compassion he showed to others, despite how he was treated. Peter tells us how Jesus “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” Then, later, “Who, when he (Jesus) was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously:”

Let us follow the words of Christ when he tells us, “Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for those that mistreat you and persecute you: That

you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes his sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and rains upon the just and the unjust. God is good to all His children. He is not willing that any should perish but that all might come to repentance.” May we strive to develop a Christ-like spirit of compassion and to be good to God’s children, as we have opportunity, especially those of the household of faith.

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.)

JULY 2013

7-14 Toronto East, ON Prepare to Preach 2013. Are you prepared to Preach? P2P (Prepare to Preach) 2013 offers a variety of activities, and presentations from experienced missionaries and representations from various Christadelphian organizations to encourage, enable and empower missionary work at home and abroad. Contact Info: www.christadelphians.ca/torontoeast/p2p.

7-13 Southwest Bible School at Schreiner College, Kerrville, TX. Speakers Bro. Peter King (UK): “Joshua: The Servant of the Lord,” teens: “Gems in Dusty Corners”; Bro. Joseph Palmer (San Diego County, CA): “Philippians,” teens: “What Does Jesus Christ Have to Do With Me?”; and Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON): “To Be Spiritually Minded is Life and Peace,” teens: “Our Spiritual Exodus.” Register with Bro. Shannon Strickland, 9305 Nancy Ln., Tomball, TX or shannonjeh@att.net www.swcbs.com.

13-20 Manitoulin Family Bible Camp. Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA) Adults/Teens: “Family Life Lessons from Genesis”; and Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON) Adults: “Peter’s Epistles: Trials Within, Trials Without,” Teens: “Far Above Rubies — Women of Virtue.” See the web site: www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com.

20-28 Midwest Bible School at Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers are Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): “Straight and Narrow Steps”; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): “Proverbs”; Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas, TX): “Parables of the Kingdom.” Registration contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Dr., Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, e-mail: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

21-27 Pacific Coast Bible School, Idyllwild, California. Two of the speakers will be Bro. Ron Cowie (Wilston, Brisbane, Australia) and Bro. Joseph Palmer (San Diego County, CA). For further information, please contact Jeff Gelineau 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065. E-mail: mail@gelineau.org. Register at 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. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or 416-284-0290.

27-Aug 4 Eastern Bible School at Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: “Surviving Perilous Times.” Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor MI): “Hezekiah and Israel: The

Odd Couple" (adults) and "Miracles" (teens); Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford ON): "Surviving Perilous Times" (adults) and "The Wise Shall Understand" (teens); Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand): "Treasure in Earthen Vessels" (adults) and "In The Beginning" (teens). Contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at 18 Sibley St., Auburn, MA 01501 or cindynevers@verizon.net.

28-Aug 3 Rogue River Bible School. Topics and teachers are: Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "Night Visions of Zechariah" (Zechariah 1-7); Bro. Stephen Bartholomew (Vernon Okanagan, BC): "Moses, the Servant of God"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "Two Men Went into the Temple to Pray" (Isaiah 6). Contact Bro. Randy Yoshida for further information, yoshidafamily@clearwire.net. For registration, contact Sis. Pat Posey, robandpatposey@gmail.com.

AUGUST 2013

10-16 Whatshan Lake Bible School held at the Whatshan Lake Retreat near Vernon, BC. Speakers are Bro. Ken Styles: "Prophecies of the Last Days"; Bro. Stephen Whitehouse: "The Rise and Fall of King Saul"; Bro. Carl Perry: "Be Ye Perfect." Register online at <http://wlbs.okanaganchristadelphians.org>. Contact: Bro. Skip Bartholomew 250-503-0191.

17 Hamilton Greenaway, ON Ecclesial 90th Anniversary Open House. We invite all Brethren and Sisters to come and help us celebrate 90 years of continued service to our Father in our Hall in Hamilton. Details coming.

17-23 Winfield Bible School, Winfield, BC. The theme will be "Be of Good Cheer, I Have Overcome the World." Speakers are Bro. Jason Hensley; Bro. Gary Cousens: "To Him That Overcometh — Overcoming Ourselves"; Bro. Dafydd Jenkins: "Both Lord and Christ — The Gospel of Luke." Contact Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 or donzantingh@hotmail.com or Bro. Harold Cawston 250-478-0343 or hjcawston@gmail.com.

17-24 Manitoulin Youth Conference at Manitoulin Bible Camp, Manitoulin Island, ON. Speaker: Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilton, Brisbane, Australia): "Genesis." Register online at www.youthconference.com.

19-24 Niagara Falls Bible School will be held at Lakefield College this year. The school is located east of Toronto near Peterborough, ON on a beautiful lakeside campus. Information is available at www.nfcb.com. For further information contact Bruce or Barbara Abel at 519 925-5208 or bnb63abel@hotmail.ca.

24-30 31st Annual Vancouver Island Bible Camp. Theme: "But the just shall live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). Speakers are Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): adults "Training to Become Equal to the Angels," and teens "James: Becoming Doers of the Word"; Bro. David Green (Sussex, NB): adults "The Spirit of the Lord," and teens "How Small is Your God?"; and Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): adults "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord," and teens "What Would You Do?." Registration info contact Sis. Karen Grover e-mail: karengrover@shaw.ca. Website: www.vibiblecamp.com.

SEPTEMBER 2013

7 Hamilton Greenaway, ON Fraternal Gathering, Wildwood Ranch at 2:00 pm. The speaker is Bro. Jon Tarry (Orangeville, ON) and his theme is "Pray and Do Not Faint". Bring your own picnic dinner. Contact 905-877-6852 or Bro. Robert Webb 905-296-6908 robert@rgwsalescanada.com.

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8-13 Adult Study Week: The Bible School with a Difference! Location: Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. Topic of Study: "The Book of Proverbs — Wisdom for Disciples". For information about the workbook or to register please contact Rick and Elaine Sales (ersales@xplornet.com) 519-925- 6847 or Martin and Lois Webster (mjwebster@execulink.com) 519-442-0544.

14-15 Paris Avenue, OH Fall Study Weekend with Bro. Stan Isbell (Houston North, TX). Contact Bro. Everett Muniz at 330-497-2811 or everettmuniz@gmail.com.

29 Honesdale, PA The Honesdale Christadelphian Ecclesia is celebrating the 50th anniversary of our chapel. Join us at our 10:00 am service followed by light refreshments. RSVP to Stephen J. DeMarco at 607-797-7991.

OCTOBER 2013

5 Grants Pass, OR Study day. The speaker will be Bro. Joseph Palmer (San Diego, CA). His topic is "The Man Moses".

12-13 Atlanta, GA Weekend gathering. The theme is "Galatians reflected in the modern Ecclesia". The five sessions of, new and thoughtful contents, will be locally presented.

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

12 Vancouver, BC Fraternal Gathering. The speaker will be Bro. Nathan Badger.

NOVEMBER 2013

2-3 Kouts, IN Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Road beginning at 10:00 A.M. Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas Ecclesia), Theme: "Signs of John (Law and Grace in Miracles)". Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at (219) 762-2704 or jkb8275@comcast.net.

9 Victoria, BC Fall Study Weekend. The speaker will be Bro. Chris Sales and his subject will be "Pictures of Redemption." Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csl.ca.