

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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August Special Issue "By Sister for Sisters"

We have had a number of requests for additional copies of the above issue. It includes

- *Practical Matters: Concerning Stay-at-home moms, Living within your means, Finding Faith in Kosovo, an Inspiring Sister*
- *Bible Study: Single women, Walking with God, Hanna, Birthing a New Creation*
- *Medical: Resuscitation, A battle with cancer*
- *Relationships: Girl Talk, Help-meets, Virtuous women and mighty men, Everlasting relationships.*

We do have extra copies of this issue, and will send them upon request to: Brian McDonald, (bmcdonald@mcdonald-printing.com). Single issues \$1 each + shipping: multiple copies will be advised.

Editorial

Strong's Concordance — Its Use and Abuse

Introduction

Of all the Bible study aids, a Strong's Concordance is the most used and the most widely available. My ecclesia keeps a dozen or so, to use particularly when we conduct our Bible Seminars, for they are used as part of its section on study tools. Its use is quite valuable in illuminating the various ways in which the same Hebrew or Greek words are used in the Bible, and the passages in which they occur. Many Christadelphians use these tools in the preparation of their talks, and I have heard several in which the vast majority of the exposition was based upon "and the Greek means", citing the dictionary definitions supplied by Strong's. Sometimes these are helpful: sometimes they lead to conclusions and comments that are, frankly, either unhelpful or just plain incorrect. Just because one English word is used to translate several Hebrew words does not mean all these Hebrew words are cognate, or related to each other. Combine this with the many of the old English words used in the King James Version, and the problem is compounded.

Perhaps the strangest exposition I heard was based on Psa 7:9, which reads in the KJV "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins". It takes an English scholar (or a student of the KJV) to know that "reins" in this connection has nothing to do with a horse, but is the old English for kidneys, which is the meaning Strong's gives us. And its most common use is indeed in connection with sacrifice. So one can disappear in the direction of the Old Testament sacrifices, which in fact have nothing to do with it in this context. More correctly you can simply note that all modern translations use "hearts and minds", translating the Hebrew idiom into English. (You could point out some of the similar uses of the idiom, of course.)

Examples of use

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for **doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:16-17).*

There are two ways of analyzing this passage, without consulting any commentary. One can use Strong's concordance, perhaps a Greek or Hebrew dictionary, and the Bible, and then attempt to plumb the depths of the Greek for yourself. This can be illustrated as in the words in bold above:

The Scripture is profitable for:

- a) Doctrine — *didaskalia* — the substance of what ought to be taught, rather than the act of teaching: the basic facts about belief and behavior, not only about belief.

- b) Reproof — *elegchos* — the full showing up of something. Heb 11:1 uses it to define faith: basic ideas are to demonstrate, to convict. Even in English “proof” is part of “reproof”. The idea is of proving, or showing clearly just what we have done. By precept and example Scripture certainly does this (Heb 4:12).
- c) Correction — the word has the idea of setting something right: we arrive at this by breaking the Greek word *epanorthosis* into its two parts and looking up “*orthosis*”, when incidentally we shall almost see the word “orthopaedic” — walking uprightly.
- d) Instruction — *paideia* — is basically the pedagogue, the slave who used to accompany the pupil to make sure they learned their lessons.
- e) Righteousness — *dikaiosune* — really has the idea of standing out from the world — of being ethically separate, of being right in God’s eyes.

And the result is a man completely qualified for good work of every kind. So the Scriptures are profitable to show the way — expose our error — put us right — keep us right — and get us there. Each word has its own special meaning. None is there to make just a pleasing sound.

But perhaps the lesson from this is that you can also get a good sense of the meaning by looking at the various translations¹. Perhaps I can cite the NIV², which reads: *“It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right.”*

Some problems

Strong’s is NOT a Dictionary

Strong’s is primarily a concordance, not a dictionary. A dictionary defines words. A concordance acts like an index.

While Strong’s does provide a short gloss (English definition) of each Hebrew and Greek word it lists, its function is primarily to show all occurrences of that word in the Bible, not exhaustively define it. There are several problems with using Strong’s as a dictionary:

- Many words in both Hebrew and Greek mean different things in different contexts, and sometimes between different authors. Even though the ultimate author of the Bible is God, He “breathed out” his message to different writers, each with their own style.
- There is often no easy correspondence between words in different languages. Many Hebrew words, such as the word for atonement, *kopher*, have many shades of meaning in Hebrew which are difficult to translate into English.
- Just because the root of a word means one thing, does not mean the actual word is easily related to the root. This presupposes that every word actually has a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In this view, meaning is determined by etymology; that is, by the root or roots of a word. How many times have we been told that because the verbal cognate of ἀποστολος (apostolos, apostle) is ἀποστέλλω (apostellō, I send), the true meaning of “apostle” is “one who is sent”? In relation to the general use of “apostle” in

the NT we must say that the word does begin to become a term meaning “to send forth to service in the Kingdom of God with full authority (grounded in God).” As such, although perhaps the root meaning is embedded, the ideas of service in the Kingdom of God, and authority in the name of Jesus must be emphasized.

Strong’s is sometimes in error

It is my habit whenever an author claims “The Hebrew (or Greek) means . . . , I will look up his statement, not in Strong’s, but in a dictionary. I happen to use a couple of modern works: “The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament”, and “The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.” (I find the more common “Vine’s” neither comprehensive nor always accurate.) Usually, I make no changes: but quite a few times I have felt compelled to change what was written.

I give one example, which I first heard from my father many years ago. The statement is made that the word for “pitch” in Gen 6:14 (“Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch”). Consulting Strong’s, you find the first word “pitch” is H3722, and you find it is used commonly for Atonement. So here pitch = atonement — and so the analogies begin.

However, if you consult any modern translation, you get something like “..,and cover it inside and out with pitch.” Here the word translated “cover” is the Hebrew word H3722, so that makes a little sense. But if you look up the second pitch, you get H3724, which, according to Strong’s, is elsewhere used for a ransom or a redemption price. However, a modern dictionary (or any modern commentary) tells you that this second word is unique in the Old Testament, and is in fact the same word as used in the for pitch in the ancient Gilgamesh epic about a tremendous flood. So there is absolutely no relation between “pitch” and “atonement”, although it seems likely that the Hebrew word used for cover became associated with the idea of “covering” one’s sin.

Conclusion

Personally, I have a fundamental rule in using Strong’s concordance to assist in understanding a passage. I might look up the Hebrew or Greek word, to see where else it is used. (Any the modern electronic Bibles make this trivial to do.) But if the alternative translations even begin to make sense, I will consult one or more modern translations. If none of these support what you might think, I would myself not even begin to consider it. Just because a word is used in a different way elsewhere, does not give you the license to use it here!

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. If you have an electronic Bible like E-sword, click on the verse and then click “compare”. It will bring up all your translations at once — quite useful.
2. NlRV = New International Readers Version: renders the NIV into simpler English.

Exhortation

Remember the Sabbath

In the Law of Moses, the Sabbath is consistently described as a day wherein the faithful will do no work at all: they will not carry any burden; they must not go out even to gather food; they were not to allow any one in their households, even their animals, to do any work; they were not so much as to light a fire on the Sabbath day.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exod 20:8-11).¹

Of all the commandments, this one stands out as the one most directly marking Israel as the people of God. It is stated in these terms: this is what I did on the seventh day, so this is what you, my people, must do. In the direct commandments found within the books of Moses, all the emphasis is on what the faithful Israelite must NOT do: any kind of work. It is not at all clear what they were expected to do on that day.

Now, I personally have no problem taking a day off work every week. In fact, I'll gladly take two! But while the Sabbath is described as a day of rest, it is clearly not the kind of day we are used to having on weekends. This was to be a holy day: this was not a day of amusements or luxuries or home projects. So what were they supposed to do?

The prophets give some insight into God's thinking about the Sabbath. In Isaiah God explains what he is looking for:

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isa 58:13-14).

Again the emphasis is on what the people should NOT do: their own ways, their own pleasure, their own words.

This is if anything more restrictive than the original requirement: no work. But in addition there are these positive requirements: call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day honorable, delight yourself in the LORD. The day is not just a day of no work: it is a day of delighting in the LORD, and therefore of considering his

ways, his work and his words. In the Psalms we have further indication of this same approach.

(A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day.) "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night, On an instrument of ten strings, On the lute, And on the harp, With harmonious sound. For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands" (Psa 92:1-4).

So, in this Sabbath-day psalm, the singer exults in the works of God, rather than in his own works. This seems to be the spirit of the day: leave off from your own works; think about and delight in God's works.

Challenge: why don't you keep the Sabbath?

Most of us will have had some interaction with a friend or acquaintance who belongs to some group that meets on Saturdays or otherwise holds that the Sabbath must be honored today. Many of us will have faced the question: why do Christadelphians not keep the Sabbath?

It is probably worth asking what this question means: does it just mean why don't we hold our assemblies on Saturday? Or, does it mean we should keep the Sabbath in its Old Testament purity? Because, if it's to be the latter, we would not be able to assemble on the Sabbath day: if even lighting a fire is prohibited on the Sabbath, surely operating heavy equipment — driving a car — would be considered work!

The standard line among Catholics is that the Sabbath has been moved from Saturday to Sunday. The evidence for this is weak: it is apparent that the saints' assemblies met on the first day of the week, but there is nothing to suggest they considered the first day to be a Sabbath. But even if we were to adopt that approach, we don't actually keep Sunday as the Sabbath either.

But this is not an obscure commandment: it is one of the ten, written in stone by the finger of God; it is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament and in the New. And we don't do it. The question is reasonable: why don't we keep the Sabbath? It's not enough to say that there is no Sabbath commandment under Christ. The way Jesus worked is, he transformed commandments; he did not abolish commandments. Look through everything Jesus said: at no point does he tell his disciples "I don't want you to keep this or that old commandment."

So we need to be thinking not about the Sabbath abolished in Christ, but the Sabbath transformed. In any case we have pretty clear indication from the New Testament that the Sabbath, observed as a day without work of any kind, is not required of Christians. Paul comments on the relationship of the baptized believer to the old law:

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Col 2:16 -17).

And again in Romans Paul makes it clear that the Sabbath observance is to be considered a matter of personal conscience. So how is possible that, as Paul says, “to the Lord he does not observe it?” It is pretty clear that in the Old Testament, honoring the Lord meant observing the Sabbath day in the way he commanded. But how can you honor the Lord by NOT keeping the Sabbath? Here’s a clue: in the passage we read in Rom 14:5 it says, “another esteems every day.” This would seem to be the challenge, then: can you spend every day not following your own ways, not seeking your own pleasure, not speaking your own words?

What Jesus had to say about Sabbath

The Lord Jesus faced a lot of opposition because of the work he did on the Sabbath day. In John 5 we read of the incident at the pool Bethesda. Jesus there healed a man on the Sabbath day and incurred the fury of the religious leaders.

“And therefore the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father works until now, and I work” (John 5:16-17).

This is a marvelous defense: Jesus simply restates the premise of the Sabbath law; but in so doing he upends the ages-old reasoning! Remember the way that law was explained:

“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exod 20:11).

So Israel was commanded to rest on the Sabbath because that’s what God did; Jesus explained that he did God’s work on the Sabbath because that’s what God does. In effect Jesus’ defense transforms the Sabbath from a day of contemplating and appreciating God’s work to a day of participating in that work. It is no longer to be seen as a day of complete inaction; instead, he makes it a day of godly action.

And that godly action can take a surprising breadth. In Matt 12 we read about Jesus’ disciples laboring to feed themselves. The Pharisees charge them with violating the Sabbath law, and Jesus defends them with a very bold assertion. What we must not miss here is the Lord’s assertion that his disciples are in a position greater than the priests in the temple. And, he says, this has good precedent in the life of David: when David ran from the murderous presence of Saul, those who came with him were allowed on the Sabbath day to participate in the priestly meal of the showbread. If the companions of David were accorded an honor reserved for priests, how much more worthy are the disciples of Messiah, David’s heir and Lord?

Having claimed a priestly status for his disciples, he points out that the priests are required under the law to do the same kind of work on the Sabbath day as they do any other day, and more of it.

Moreover, he, the Messiah, is greater than the temple: so their service to him is more holy than the priests’ service that is exempted from the Sabbath law. It is an astonishingly bold defense, all hanging on the identity of Jesus himself, which of course the Pharisees did not recognize.

And to top it all off, he asserts that he has the unique right to define the Sabbath law because he himself is Lord of the Sabbath. This is a very bold assertion, pointing to God's day of rest, not as a thing of the past, but as the kingdom age in which he will reign as Lord and King.

We see the same line of reasoning in Heb 4:1-10. The reference to resting time is not that spoken of in Gen 2 but in the Psalms, where God himself speaks of his rest as a future time, saying: "*I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest*" (Psa 95:11). And this is a different kind of rest, as shows up in the choice of words. In Genesis the word for rest is Shabbat, the rest that comes when you stop working.

In Psa 95 the word for rest is *menucha*, the rest of being at peace in your own home. The law of the Sabbath as implemented under Moses explicitly looked back to the Shabbat rest in Gen 2; under Christ it looks forward to the *menucha* rest in the resurrection.

The character of our service to Christ

So let us now briefly consider the character of our service to Christ. If our work in his service is greater than the labor of the priests in the temple, what must be our attitude towards that work?

There are examples in the Old Testament that inform us what God wants from his priests. He wants reverent and clear-headed service, in contrast to that of Nadab and Abihu. He wants cheerful and enthusiastic service, in contrast to the weariness of heart Malachi describes. And he wants this reverent and cheerful service every day: we are meant to take rest every day from our own works, in order to participate properly in the holy work of God. This is a challenge, then: who can rest from his own works continually?

Practicality: what of the slave?

"Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col 3:22-24).

In the first century the community of the saints included not a few slaves, some even slaves of unbelievers. Consider, then, the position of a disciple who is a slave to a pagan master. Will that master allow his slave to rest on the Sabbath?

What then: would the slave, laboring on the Sabbath in obedience to his master, be guilty of violating God's law? But he is justified by Christ, if he like the Lord is busy with God's work. Therefore Paul commands, "*whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord*". Your obedience to even a pagan master is transformed by your cheerful and careful approach to the job, and your awareness of Christ's presence.

It is God who set you in your position, so do your work for him. By this command, even the slave in a pagan household is raised to the level of the priests in the temple; even the most menial and humble work is supervised by the great Master, who rewards his servants richly.

This is the practical outworking of Jesus' new law of the Sabbath; and I personally find it a very difficult law to keep — especially when my boss comes around with that one more thing he wants done by the end of the day! But the law of God is not a collection of unconnected rules, rather a statement of God's will for us: this is the kind of people he will make us to be, conformed to the image of his own son Jesus. And as the Sabbath did for the Jews, this law will clearly mark us out as Christ's people: we do the works of God on every day, because that's what he does.

So we come to our remembrance of the Lord. As we observed earlier, our understanding of the Sabbath law is absolutely dependent on the identity of Jesus our Lord as Messiah. And in this we remember him who gave his life, working in reverence and devotion for our salvation.

“He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” And to this day he labors together with our Father on our behalf, to bring us with him into his rest.

Jim Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. All references are from the NKJV.

Is Sunday the Day of Rest?

Then what about Sunday? Is it right to substitute this day for Saturday as the day of rest? . . . if we look at the writings of ecclesiastical historians of the second and third centuries after Christ, we find that they testify that the practice of Christian believers meeting on the first day, instead of the seventh, was universally observed. So again we must go to the Bible to determine if there was a Scriptural basis for this change and we discover the Bible to be completely silent regarding the transfer of Sabbath observance to Sunday. On the other hand the apostle Paul says “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom 14:5). He says further “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (Col 2:16-17 NIV). The only law laid upon believers in this respect was to “forsake not the assembly of themselves together”, with no reference to any particular day.

So, for the Christian, there is no required Sabbath observance today, but there is the hope of that great anti-typical Sabbath Day of rest, which Jesus who is the Lord of the Sabbath, will inaugurate when he comes back to earth again. While Jesus remains away, every day should be patterned after the principles of the Sabbath day, in which all who call themselves Christian should rest or refrain from the works of the flesh and devote their lives to doing the will of Christ.

Paul Phillips (The Tidings , Dec 1960 p. 12)

Bible Study

The Way of Cain (2) Cain: Brute Beast

“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flocks. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor” (Gen 4:2-4 NIV).¹

“These men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish” (2 Pet 2:12)

Much has already transpired to set the stage for the drama that unfolds when Cain and Abel *“present offerings before the LORD”* (Gen 4:3): God’s promise of the Messiah has been communicated to Adam and Eve; Eve has born two sons, and she, on the basis of God’s promise, names her firstborn *“even Jehovah”*; consequently, Cain’s identity and sense of self has been affected; and, because the hope of a Messiah has been mistakenly placed upon Cain, Abel, as the second child, is regarded as an “afterthought.”

While silent about their youth, Gen 4:3 infers that both had reached maturity when they presented offerings to the Lord. This is indicated by the introductory phrase: *“In the course of time”* or *“At the end of days.”*²

Maturity is marked by developmental milestones: sexual maturity associated with marriage; independence, such as leaving home and/or self sufficiency; and moral responsibility (being accountable for one’s actions). There are several indications in Gen 4 that Cain and Abel had reached these developmental milestones.

For example, as farmer and shepherd respectively, Cain and Abel were able to sustain themselves independently of their parents: *“Abel kept flocks and Cain worked the soil”* (Gen 4:2). Cain had also reached sexual maturity. Gen 4:17 says that, *“he lay with his wife and she became pregnant.”* Presumably, Cain’s offering to the LORD, the murder of Abel, and his exile all occurred within a relatively short period of time. Thus, Cain may have been already married when he presented his offering,³ or at the very least he was ready to be married, which indicates that he was, at the time of his presentation of an offering to the LORD, sexually mature. There is no indication in the Bible that Abel was married, however supposing Levin’s hypothesis about Cain and Abel being twins is correct, then if Cain had reached sexual maturity, Abel had as well.

Finally, both brothers were capable of exercising the ability to make moral choices and accept responsibility for their actions, as indicated in Gen 4:6. In this first example, the bolded words indicate choice: *“The LORD said to Cain, ‘If you do what is **right**, will you not be accepted?’*” In this second example, the bolded words

indicate responsibility: “Then the LORD said to Cain, if you do what is right, will you not be accepted?”

The first example demonstrates that Cain had the ability to make a moral choice, while the second example illustrates Cain’s sole responsibility for that decision. From God’s perspective, neither Adam nor Eve was accountable for their son’s actions, for He says to Cain: “What have you done! ... Now you are under a curse and are driven from the ground” (Gen 4:10-11). Likewise, Abel demonstrated he was able to make moral decisions, by the fact that he did “what was right” (Gen 4:6) by offering an acceptable offering to the LORD.

Consequently, the introductory phrase in Gen 4:3, “In the course of time” or “At the end of days” is not merely a narrative convention that Genesis uses to convey the passing of an unspecified period of time, rather it refers to Cain and Abel’s physical and moral maturation. As such, a better interpretation of this introductory phrase might be: “When Cain and Abel had reached maturity...”

God’s dwelling place

From the exile of Adam and Eve to the promises made to Abraham, God’s presence did not dwell in any particular geographical place. That is to say, He was omnipresent, but His name was not attached to a specific location. Prior to Adam and Eve’s transgression, God dwelt with them in the Garden in a way that was clearly discernible, for Gen 3:8 says, “The man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”

After their expulsion from the Garden, God’s presence was, for a time, much less tangible. For example, although God spoke to Cain on at least two occasions, there is no indication as to *how* God spoke to him. Did He communicate with Cain as a voice from heaven, in a dream, or through the mouth of an angel? The answer to this question is found in examining *where* Cain and Abel presented their offerings.

The obvious but often overlooked place where Cain and Abel presented their offerings before the Lord was at the feet of the cherubim who guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden. To prevent humans from partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Life, which maintained life-everlasting, God placed⁴ cherubim at the “eastern”⁵ entrance of the Garden.

Whenever cherubim have appeared or manifested themselves, men felt as though they were in the presence of God. For example, Ezekiel noted that the noise of their wings was “as the voice of the Almighty” (1:24). The prophet also recognized that his vision of the cherubim represented the “glory of the LORD,” and out of respect for being in His presence, he “fell on his face” (v. 28).

Since the cherubim’s manifestations are God-like, and since there was no other place where God’s name dwelt upon the earth in the days of Cain and Abel, the entrance to the Garden of Eden was surely the place where Adam’s sons “presented their offerings to the LORD” (Gen 4:3).

The first of its kind

“In the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flocks (Gen 4:3).

Since there is no reference to either Cain or Abel having presented offerings to the LORD *prior* to this verse, Gen 4:3 was likely the first time either brother had made such an offering. An obvious question is, why now? Why had both brothers decided at this moment to make an offering to the LORD — especially since there is no indication that God had previously asked either of them to perform this act.

Since there’s no command to make an offering from God, we may safely conclude that Cain and Abel presented their offerings of their own free will. Moreover, Genesis clearly indicates that Cain was first to present his offering, which rules out the possibility that his was done out of competition with Abel or as an afterthought.

While it could be mere coincidence that the timing of their offerings coincided with Cain and Abel having reached maturity, it seems far more likely that their offerings were an attempt by the brothers to forge a new, *adult relationship* with their Creator.⁶ They were both self-sufficient, likely both sexually mature (i.e. could father children), and were at the age to understand and recognize moral responsibility. Like baptism, which is done at mature age, so too was the presentation of the offerings; it was a sort of proto-baptismal rite — signifying, to the LORD, that they understood that their nature is mortal; how their actions are related to sin and death; and, importantly, that the shedding of blood is required for the forgiveness of sin. At least that’s how Abel would have approached the offering; Cain’s motivation was very different.

Blood sacrifice

One view as to why Cain’s offering was rejected by God emphasizes the condition in which the offering was made — not the offering itself.

For example, Gen 4:3 says that Cain brought “*some*” of his harvest, while Abel’s offering is described as being taken from the “*fattest portions*” of his flocks. The descriptors seem to suggest that “*Abel brought the best that he had,*” while “*Cain brought whatever he had.*” (Levin p, 311). In other words, the quality of their offerings was indicative of their attitude. In this particular view, God cared less about the offerings and more about the spirit in which they were offered.

However, regardless of the condition of the harvest that Cain offered, or what his attitude was in presenting them, his offering was always going to be rejected, because plants do not contain blood, which God requires for the forgiveness of sin (*Heb 9:22*).

The Psalms and Isaiah can be cited to show that God, at a time thousands of years after establishing the Mosaic Law, no longer required/desired sacrifices (*Psa 50:9-10, 13-14; Isa 1:11*). However, Cain and Abel were but second generation humans and, as such, they were still in their spiritual infancy, requiring “*elementary truths*” (*Heb 5:12*). At this early stage in humankind’s spiritual development, God *did*

desire the “*blood of bulls and goats*,” as indicated by the sacrifice of animals God made on behalf of Adam and Eve in the Garden: “*The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them*” (Gen 3:21). The fig leaves, which Adam and Eve initially covered themselves with, were insufficient in removing sin. And even though their efforts to remove their shame/guilt were likely sincere, the covering of fig leaves was considered insufficient by the Lord. Instead, God clothed them in animal skins, which came as the result of the shedding of blood.

Thus, in spite of the attitude or spirit of the individual, *blood is essential*. As Harry Whittaker notes in *Genesis 1-2-3-4*, “The basic reason for rejection of Cain’s offering was that he failed to bring a blood sacrifice” (p. 123).

Two become one

Yet, it is difficult to imagine that God judged Cain’s offering solely on the basis of what was presented without taking into consideration his attitude. This is, however, not a case of either/or, because on closer examination, Genesis accommodates both points of view.

Looking closely at Gen 4:4, the wording is as follows: “*The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.*” Notice that the verse does not say that God “*looked upon Abel’s offering,*” but rather He looked upon Abel *and* his offering. Similarly, God did not reject “*Cain’s offering,*” but rather He rejected “*Cain and his offering.*”

Cain was not conscious of the particulars of God. He knew of God, he even feared Him enough to present Him with an offering, but since his pride blinded him to instruction, he was ignorant of what God desired concerning sacrifice. Ignorant of the fact that an offering *must contain blood*, and likely believing he could worship God in his own way, Cain offered fruits and vegetables that were in no way symbolic of something greater. As such, God rejected Cain’s offering on the basis that it was not a blood sacrifice.

Unlike his brother, Abel was conscious of the Almighty’s wishes and “*desired to do what was right*” (Gen 4:7). Thus, he sacrificed the first of his flocks, which represented a blood sacrifice. As such, God accepted Abel because his offering contained blood.

Spirit and attitude

Along with his offering, Cain *himself* was rejected, because he did not offer in the right spirit. He offered “*some*” of his harvest, a word indicating that there was nothing special or of importance to him with regard to the gifts he presented. To Cain, the fruit and vegetables were merely a product of his labor. That’s not to say that he held back the best for himself, as some have suggested, but rather one piece of produce was as significant or insignificant to him as the next.

In contrast, Abel offered in the right spirit, which is indicated by the phrases, “*fattest portions*” and “*first of his flocks.*” “*Fattest portions*” is indicative of the health of the animal. In Joseph’s dream (Gen 41), he saw seven cows “*sleek and fat,*” which was indicative of the seven prosperous years Egypt would have prior to a famine. He

also saw seven cows “*ugly and gaunt*,” which was indicative of the seven years of famine Egypt would suffer following seven years of plenty. This demonstrates that the Bible uses “fat” or “fattest portions” as indicative of “health” or “well-being.”

The “fattest portions” of Abel’s flocks was, therefore, the very best animals. Abel had specially separated the fat from the lean, and gave the healthiest to God, which illustrates the spirit in which he presented his offerings.

Similarly, the phrase, “first of the flocks,” demonstrates Abel’s attention to God’s wishes. He recognized that the first of living creatures are special to God;⁷ they are His, a fact that is repeatedly demonstrated throughout the Bible.⁸ Thus, in recognition of this fact, Abel specifically offered the “first” of his flocks to God, knowing that this would please Him.

Therefore, Cain was rejected because he had not honored God by heeding the LORD’s example in the Garden, when He offered a blood sacrifice on behalf of Cain’s parents. Cain’s offering, therefore, did not contain blood, which was required for the forgiveness of sins. His mistake was the result of not learning from God. His ignorance in spiritual wisdom was the result of his “great name” — *even Jehovah* — which elevated his pride and blinded him to instruction from others — including God. Thus, lacking wisdom, he was unable to discern between right and wrong; between vegetables, which do not contain blood, and animals, which do. Thus, both he and his offering were deemed unacceptable by the Lord, and both were rejected.

A creature of instinct

Cain’s unacceptable offering, presented in the wrong spirit, raises the question: How was it possible that he was ignorant of God’s requirements, but his brother, Abel, was not?

It is difficult to imagine that Adam and Eve had not shared, with their sons, the experience of their transgression in the Garden. Are we to also imagine that the promises made to Adam and Eve regarding their seed wasn’t passed onto their sons? These, of course, concerned the eventual restoration of the earth from their transgressions, and this was the foundation of Eve’s faith, and in turn led to her decision to name her son, “even Jehovah”. In fact, Abel’s offering — presented in the right spirit and containing the life-saving blood — demonstrates that Adam and Eve passed on what spiritual knowledge/wisdom they had learned about God to their sons.

Thus, Cain’s ignorance stems not from a lack of parental instruction, but rather from his own indifference or disregard concerning spiritual matters. The source of this attitude lies with Cain’s mistaken belief concerning his messianic name, “even Jehovah.”

As has been noted, Cain’s “great name” elevated his pride and blinded him to everything else, including spiritual wisdom. Without wisdom, he was like a creature of instinct; an animal. Animals act in their own self-interest, without discernment. As such, Peter calls a person who acts similarly a “*brute beast, a creature of*

instinct” (2Pet 2:12). The Psalmist makes the same correlation between ignorance and animals: “I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You [God]” (73:22); as does Isaiah: “They are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs” (63:16). In contrast, God reveres wisdom: “Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies and nothing you desire can compare with her” (Prov 8:11).

Cain’s mistaken belief that his name made him special blinded him to spiritual wisdom, which made him ignorant. In this capacity, he was like an animal; a “*brute beast; a creature of instinct,*” a “*dumb dog.*” No wonder, then, that he rejected God’s spiritual instruction (passed onto him from his parents), and made an unacceptable offering. And given what we’ve already learned about Cain, it’s also no wonder God rejected him and his offering.

Cain’s nature as a “brute beast” would also, later, impact his *reaction* to God’s chastisement — the LORD’s rejection of him and his offering — and result in the “instinctual” or emotionally-driven response he made in the wake of God’s decision. Peter’s description of the “beast” being “brutish” suggests a thoughtless, savagely violent creature; someone or something prone to violence. Is this not the creature that Cain eventually reveals himself to be?

Cherubim, those frightful, mystical creatures

The cherubim may have also been a factor in Cain’s ignorance of, or misconceptions about God.

Because Cain’s pride blinded him to spiritual wisdom, his understanding of God was limited to what he could physically see. At this time, God’s presence was physically manifested as the cherubim: those frightful, mystical creatures that guarded the entranceway to the Garden of Eden with the fiery sword that flashed every which way (Gen 3:24).

The cherubim’s function was to prevent Adam and his family from entering the Garden and eating of the Tree of Life, which would have allowed them to “*live forever*” (Gen. 3:22).⁹ By removing them from the Tree of Life and mercifully providing them with the blood of animals, God provided a new way for eternal life. Thus, the Tree of Life became irrelevant. Until it withered and died, as a result of the curse God brought upon the earth (Gen 3:17), or until it was destroyed in the Flood, the Tree of Life had to remain off-limits.

As guardians to the way to the Tree of Life, the cherubim were an enigma to behold, fearsome in appearance, since they were accompanied by, or wielded a flashing or fiery sword. Since this was all Cain saw, he approached the cherubim in fear, not awe.

This is because *awe* is something that requires respect and wisdom. As the Proverbs notes, “*The fear* (Heb: “respect”) *of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom* (9:10). Cain would not have been able to manifest “awe” since he did not respect God enough to learn from his ways — this resulted in a lack of spiritual wisdom. Thus, the only other emotion Cain would have manifested while in the presence of the

cherubim — the Lord — was fear; an emotion motivated solely by what he could see, hear, and feel. For Cain, the “fear” was driven by the fearsome nature of the cherubim and by the fiery sword that flashed every which way.

God: An unfair, angry, vengeful Deity?

As has been shown, Cain’s view of God was limited to what he could see, hear, and feel. This is confirmed by his belief that if he was removed from where God — as manifested as the cherubim — dwelt, he would be hidden from the LORD. For he says: “*Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence*” (Gen 4:14). As the guardians of the way to the Tree of Life, the cherubim were bound to a specific geographical location. Therefore, in considering his exile, Cain concluded that he would be hidden from the presence of God, because he was being banished from cherubim’s dwelling place. Thus, in Cain’s eyes, the cherubim were God.

As noted, the cherubim had a fearsome appearance. Moreover, their function was to prevent man from access to the Tree of Life. These combined factors may have given Cain — a man who limited himself to what he could only see, hear, and feel — the false impression that God was an unfair, angry, and vengeful deity.

By the time Cain had reached maturity, God’s curse upon the earth was already making life difficult. The curse – affecting the earth – would have particularly impacted Cain, since he was a farmer. Bent over, plucking roots and rocks from the soil, sowing seeds, and tending plants in the hot sun — might Cain, on more than one occasion, stood up and glanced longingly at the Garden of Eden and imagined how much easier life used to be before the fall? Might he have said to himself, “Why should I be punished along with my parents? Why should I be denied access to the Garden; that place where life is easy, and where life everlasting dwells? What have I done to deserve God’s wrath?”

It is likely that these questions surfaced, from time to time, in Cain’s thoughts and it may have produced in him the perception that God was an unfair, angry, and vengeful deity; a perception strengthened by the fearsome nature of the cherubim and the presence of the fiery/flashing sword. If this was indeed Cain’s perception, how might it have affected his decision to present an offering before the LORD?

It is possible — perhaps even probable — that one factor, which may have motivated Cain’s decision to present God/cherubim with an offering, was in the hope of *appeasing* what he perceived to be an *angry deity*. Obviously, this line of thinking failed, for his offering, made in ignorance, only made the Lord angry.

Therefore, we can see how pride blinded Cain to spiritual instruction/wisdom, without which he was unable to see beyond what was in front of his face — the cherubim. He therefore approached the cherubim with fear, not awe, perhaps even with the intent of assuaging the cherubim’s anger (their fearsome nature being perceived as such), in the hopes of obtaining an entrance to the Garden of Eden and a life free of the hard toil brought about by his parent’s transgression.

An elementary truth

While Cain was ignorant of spiritual matters, his brother was most certainly not. Abel demonstrated his attentiveness to the spiritual instruction he received from his parents by offering a sacrifice that he knew would please God.

As noted, the only sacrifice mentioned prior to Cain and Abel occurred when God slew animals to make clothes for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). It is fair to assume, therefore, that Abel's offering must have been modeled after the Lord's sacrifice in the Garden. Sacrifices at this time were not clearly delineated as being either sin offerings or thanksgiving offerings, since no such designation had as yet been prescribed by God. Therefore, while his offering was surely one of thanks, the blood component of his offering signified atonement, and harkened back to the sacrifice, for sin (as a covering), God had made on behalf of Adam and Eve.

Although Genesis does not actually state that Abel *slew* the firstborn of his flocks (as opposed to merely presenting God with a live animal or *offering*) he must have, since blood was a key component in God's sacrifice; it was the difference between the fig leaf coverings Adam and Eve made for themselves, and the animal skins God replaced them with. In doing so, God had taught Adam and Eve an elementary truth: blood was essential for forgiveness, for "*without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission for sin*" (Heb 9:22). That Abel's sacrifice included "firstborn" and were taken from among the "fattest portions," is further evidence that his offering was an atoning sacrifice, since these were key aspects of atoning sacrifices latter codified in the Mosaic Law (Exod 12:3-5; Lev 9:18-24 respectively).

Abel's offering was made on the basis of spiritual instruction he received from his parents and to which he took to heart. It involved blood, and given how closely it resembled the Mosaic atonement sacrifice, it must have been an atoning sacrifice.

Why Abel offered an atoning sacrifice is a bit of a mystery. Likely, it was made in recognition of sin and death, and the need for forgiveness. It was, as has been previously suggested, a sort of proto-baptismal rite; a way to show to God that he understood his mortal nature, that he recognized how actions lead to sin and death, and that the shedding of blood is required for the forgiveness of sin. This understanding and recognition could *only* come at a point of maturity. Thus, as has been shown, it coincided with self-sufficiency, sexual maturity, and recognition of moral responsibility.

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Notes:

1. All translations are from the NIV except where indicated.
2. Ellicott 1897:28.
3. Cain's wife must have been one of his sisters. Since this sister had not committed murder, it is odd that God would also banish her, unless she was already his wife. Although innocent of Abel's death, she was nevertheless bound to her husband and accompanied him into exile. Thus, Cain was likely already married before he was exiled.
4. How long the cherubim remained at the entrance to the Garden is unknown. The Garden, including the Tree of Life, may have eventually succumbed to the curse — thistles and thorns — that God pronounced upon the earth after Adam's transgression. In time, the Garden would have become overgrown and choked with weeds, which would have caused it to recede into the surrounding wilderness until it was no more. Another possibility is that the cherubim

- guarded the Garden until the Flood came, when the ensuing catastrophe destroyed it along with the Tree of Life. In the post-Flood world, the search to find the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life may have been the inspiration for Gilgamesh's quest (see *The Epic of Gilgamesh*).
- 5 Presumably, there was no access to the Garden of Eden from the north, south, or west. This is an important geographical feature for locating the Garden of Eden, which will be discussed later.
 - 6 This was the prime motivation. However, it is also likely that the timing of their offerings coincided with the results of their first labours as independents. Thus, when Cain's first harvest was gathered in and when Abel's flocks gave birth to firstlings they decided to use this occasion to present their respective gifts to God as symbols of their maturity. Cain's harvest was likely gathered in the summer/fall (times of harvest), while Abel's flocks likely gave birth in the spring (as per usual season for animals to birth). It is therefore possible that they did not present their offerings at the same exact moment. The Genesis account, which presents the story as though they had both presented their offerings at the same time, may have done so in its effort to be economical with regard to its narrative.
 - 7 I have presented a very simplified reason for why the "first" of living-things are significant to God.
 - 8 Deut 12:6, 17; Neh 10:36.
 - 9 God had already given a greater and more powerful means of hope, through the promise of the Messiah, His son, in Gen 3:15. Therefore, two forms of "hope" could not co-exist, i.e. you can't have a Tree of Life and Christ. Thus, until the former passed away, access to it had to be cut-off.



Youth Speaks

Jonathan the Faithful Prince: (6) Saul's Curse

The foolishness of Saul

In some sort of awkward show of righteousness, Saul had called Ahiah the priest to enquire whether or not his army should fight against the Philistines. God had clearly intervened and He had clearly blessed Israel's efforts, but the Israelite army waited, refraining from their attack while their king vainly sought to show his aptitude and faith.

Yet as Ahiah began to enquire of God, the noise in the camp of the Philistines became louder and louder. Eventually, it reached a point at which Saul recognized that the Philistine army was being obliterated and he and his army were doing nothing — still. Thus, he stopped the games that he was playing and told his army to advance upon the Philistines:

“And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture” (1Sam 14:20).

Saul and his men came to aide Jonathan and his armor bearer in the fight against the Philistines. As they arrived, they saw a brutal sight — the Philistines had massacred each other, and the massacre continued before their eyes. It was a remarkable victory. Yet not only so, the victory was made even more glorious by the effect which it had upon the Israelite warriors:

“Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven” (1Sam 14:21-23).

What a remarkable sight it would have been for Saul and his army — and especially Jonathan and his armor bearer — as they fought in the battle. Not only were the Philistines fighting against one another, but all of the men of Israel who had once been so demoralized and terrified by the Philistine war machine had joined the fight against the enemy! The phrase *“Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time”* (v. 21), seems to indicate that there were actually Israelites who had been so horrified by the Philistine invasion that they had surrendered to the Philistines and joined their side, becoming servants (cp. the LXX translation)! Yet at this time, when they saw the remarkable defeat of the Philistines, their faith was revitalized and they took up arms against their masters. They remembered the power of the Holy One of Israel and they stood again for their nation. The same

was said of the men who had hidden in mount Ephraim — those who had been so afraid that they had hidden in “*caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits*” (1Sam 13:6). As they saw the Philistines retreating, they too had their faith revitalized and they remembered the might of the God of Israel.

All of this happened through the faith and courage of one man who suggested to his armor bearer that they risk their lives to stand for their beliefs. As a result of their faith, God saved Israel on that day.

Everything would have seemed to have been better than Jonathan had ever expected. Not only had his courageous deed been able to push their Philistine masters out of the land of Israel, but it had even inspired many of those who had been filled with fear — it had reminded them of the power of their God and had given them strength to take up the sword and fight again for Israel. Yet there was only one defect that took away from this glorious assault on the Philistines, and this was something of which Jonathan was not yet aware. Before Saul had brought his troops into the battle, he had given them a charge:

“And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food” (1Sam 14:24).

In his zeal for his own name and in his desire to somehow make his mark upon this battle, Saul commanded the Israelites that they could not eat anything until the evening. It was a rash and foolish command — because of Saul’s words, none of the people ate anything all day, even while they chased the Philistines. After all of this pursuit, the men of Israel were exhausted and famished. The distance which these men ran — from Michmash to Ajalon (1Sam 14:31) — was about 15 miles. Imagine running and fighting for 15 miles, yet not being able to eat anything!

But the blemish in this victory was going to become even larger. Because of this curse, Saul’s own son was soon to be condemned. As the Israelite troops chased after the Philistines, they came to a forest in which honey could be found on the ground — and Jonathan, not knowing about his father’s oath, dipped his staff in the honey and tasted it. He broke the oath. Upon being told about what Saul had commanded — and realizing the curse’s impact upon his own life and the campaign against the Philistines, Jonathan spoke some of the only words that he would ever speak against his father:

“Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been not a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?” (1Sam 14:29-30).

The chase after the Philistines had been inhibited by Saul’s arrogance and desire to have control over his men. Jonathan rightly recognized that if just the little bit of honey had revitalized him, how much more would the troops have been reinvigorated if they could have eaten of the spoil which they had taken from

the Philistines? Yet they couldn't, because the king could only think of his own reputation — and in doing so, he only again reduced his standing in the eyes of both the people, and his son.

The blood

Soon after this dialogue between Jonathan and the people, evening came and the time of the oath passed. The people were free to satisfy their hunger — and thus Saul's oath led to an even greater problem than before:

“And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood”
(1Sam 14:32).

Not only had Saul's curse led to the people being faint and to a smaller slaughter of the Philistines, but it also resulted in the people sinning! Once the time of the oath had passed, the people *flew* upon the spoil and began to eat the animals without even cooking them. This was entirely contrary to God's commands, which forbade the people from eating anything with the blood. The blood was to be poured out before the consumption of the animal. In fact, the punishment for eating the blood of an animal was quite severe — those who ate the blood were either to be cut off (Lev 7:26-27) or even killed (Gen 9:4-5).

Because of Saul's rash oath, his army completely disregarded the commandment — they were famished, and they couldn't restrain themselves any longer. They were all eating of the blood. One disaster had followed the other, simply because Saul wasn't able to stop thinking about his reputation. He had first lost the kingdom and now he had just led his entire army into sin — and a dire sin. If only he could have refocused his mind and thought upon God's honor and God's glory! Then perhaps things could have been different.

Yet, for a brief moment, they were. Saul, in a quick flash of righteous indignation, saw the sins of the people, and commanded that a stone be rolled over to him so that he might drain the blood of the animals (1Sam 14:33-34). From then on, the people refrained from eating the blood. After that, Saul built an altar to God — the first altar which he had ever built. It was almost as though Saul had been able to take his mind off of his own name and set it on the Father's name, if ever so briefly.

Tragically, the moment wouldn't last.

Soon after building the altar, Saul was ready to continue pushing the people and keep pursuing the Philistines. At first, he hadn't allowed his men to eat, and the result was terrible, but now he also wasn't going to allow them to sleep — his name and his glory were too important! Once again, Saul had been blinded by his own ambition.

Though it be In Jonathan my son

“And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God” (1Sam 14:32).

It appears as though the men had wearily concluded that it was better not to put up a fight against their king. They agreed to go — but not wholeheartedly. Only if Saul forced them, then they would charge through the night. Nevertheless, this charge was not to take place. Just after the men had said their words, Ahiah the priest gave Saul a brief reminder — he had never finished enquiring of God, and now more than ever was a time when he needed to do so. If he was going to try to push his men past their limit, Saul needed to be certain that Yahweh was backing his efforts. Thus, Saul agreed and asked for God's direction — but the result was far from what he expected.

“And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day” (1Sam 14:37).

Asking counsel of God, Saul would have expected either a “yes” or a “no.” It's doubtful that he expected silence. Yet that was what he was given. He enquired of God, and he received no answer — hinting to him that something was wrong amidst the army of the Israelites. God had refused to answer them because of a sin that hung over the head of Israel. Saul recognized this and set himself the task of finding who had been the sinner — and as you read through Saul's words, pay close attention to who he mentions and what he suggests:

“And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day. For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him” (1Sam 14:38-39).

At the first indication that there was sin in the camp, Saul's mind jumped to a particular person — his son Jonathan. This was probably what Saul had hoped for earlier on, when he was first going to enquire of God. He wanted the enquiry to show that Jonathan had sinned and had wrongly gone behind his back and attacked the Philistine garrison. Now that he knew that there was someone who was a sinner in the camp, Saul clung to that hope. This was his opportunity to take the glory back and to show his true greatness. Thus, the first name that came out of his mouth and the first thing that he *offered* to do was to find the sinner, and even if it was Jonathan, he would *kill him*.

Saul's answer was just a little bit too quick to be natural and normal. What loving father would immediately offer up their son as a sinner so quickly and so willingly? There had to be something deeper going on in Saul's mind — and it was likely the same thing that went on in his mind when he later tried to kill another one of his potential challengers. Saul was viciously jealous for his own name — and anyone who challenged that name would be crushed. Quite possibly, Saul saw Jonathan as that challenger — consider the evidence:

- Jonathan had been the one who had originally slain the garrison of the Philistines (1Sam 13:3)
- Saul had been told that *his* kingdom would not continue and that God had chosen a man after His own heart who would be *captain* over His people (1Sam 13:14)

- Jonathan had gone behind his father's back and (in the eyes of the people) had been their deliverer, or captain (1Sam 14:45)
- Jonathan *was* a man after God's own heart — he was a man of powerful faith (1Sam 14:6)

It seems quite possible that at this point in time, Saul — who *must* have wondered who would be the man that would take over his kingdom — saw in his son a person who fit all of the qualifications which had been given by Samuel. To make the connection even greater, Samuel had specifically said that God had *commanded* him to be captain over His people (1Sam 13:14) — meaning that it was something which God had *already* done, and the incidents with Jonathan had already begun to take place. Because of this, Jonathan would have likely known that he wasn't the one, and he would have wondered what God planned for his life, but Saul wouldn't have known.

Thus, perhaps this was why Saul was a little too willing to offer to execute his firstborn son. This was the way that Saul dealt with those who tried to take his position as king — he simply tried to kill them. He did that over and over with David (1Sam 18:11; 19:1; 23:8). As well, Samuel was afraid that the same type of thing would happen to him when he went on his mission to anoint the next king (1Sam 16:1-2). Saul was more than ready to kill those who opposed his reign — and here it appears that he sought to do it with his son as well. Jonathan had challenged his preeminence to the throne and seemed like an almost certain candidate for the man who was to end Saul's kingdom. Therefore, Saul thought, perhaps there would be an opportunity now to put an end to that challenge.

Conclusion

Oh how far Saul had sunk! Through the repeated focus on *his* kingdom and *his* name, he had fallen over and over — to the point of losing that very kingdom and even turning upon his own son, his most faithful follower.

Yet isn't that exactly what our own pride does to us? Pride has no loyalty — it only loves those who exalt it and who continue to exalt it. As soon as that changes, any of the affection given by someone swollen by their pride seems to change as well.

As we've seen Saul's story, and as we continue to watch Saul's story through this series, may we heed the lesson. Our pride can lead to our ruin. Only once we learn humility will our God truly exalt us (Prov 15:33).

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Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org.

Please include your name, address, e-mail, and phone.

Submissions under 300 words are encouraged —

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History

Jim and Lizzie Cheetham: Part 5, Earthquakes and Divisions

While the Cheetham's difficult personal lives must have been a distraction at this time, James continued to lead the little Oakland ecclesia as Recording Brother and keep the brotherhood informed about what was happening there. He wrote to *The Christadelphian* magazine in 1903 saying, "Brother and sister Strickler [from Buffalo, New York] and son have lately visited San Francisco. Brother Strickler lectured on two consecutive Sunday nights (February 1st and 8th), the subjects being, "The World Approaching a Great Crisis" and "The End of the World's Crisis." Good audiences attended on both occasions, which must have been a source



After the 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco, many citizens were forced to live outside of their homes because it was considered unsafe to inhabit them. In this photo a group of Christadelphians are seen outside their temporary home, dubbed "Camp Necessity" including Sarah Cheetham, seated third from the right, and her two children Rosamond and Robbie.

of gratification to Brother Strickler as well as to ourselves. Brother Strickler was out chiefly for recreation, but he has contrived to cheer and encourage others at the same time. We are glad he has visited us; we were sorry to part, but it is only for a little while. The Lord will soon be here.¹ Allen (A.D.) Strickler was a leading American brother at the time and a book that he would write about 10 years later, called "Out of Darkness, Into Light", would later still become a flashpoint for the next division in around 1923. This would force James to once again painfully choose sides within the brotherhood. As he had done during the 1901 division, James decided to stay with those backed by *The Christadelphian* magazine while much of California switched to the new 'Berean' fellowship that sprang up partially as a reaction to Bro. Strickler's book.²

The Great Earthquake

Difficult events in the Cheetham's lives were not limited to ecclesial problems. On April 18, 1906 a great earthquake and subsequent fire struck the San Francisco area. No member of the Bay Area ecclesias was injured in the earthquake, but several lost their belongings. The Cheethams were forced to camp outside. They nicknamed their tent "Camp Necessity" and placed a stove inside for cooking their meals. James appears to have been in Stockton at the time or to have gone there soon after to find work as employment in the city came to a standstill after the quake. He sent a letter dated April 23rd, 1906 to Bro. C.C. Walker, editor of *The Christadelphian* magazine.

"Greeting in Christ Jesus our Lord. A terrible earthquake occurred here on Wednesday morning, April 18th, at 5.13 a.m., followed by a fierce fire, which has destroyed three-fourths of the city, and left over 300,000 people homeless, camping in Golden Gate Park, the Government reservation at the Presidio, in the streets, and all public squares. The fire swept the city from north to south about four miles, and east to west about two miles. We are thankful that God has, in His goodness, preserved us amidst all these dangers. The brethren and sisters here are all safe, though the place where we met (Oddfellows' Building) is totally destroyed, and all our Bibles, hymn books, and records of our meetings are destroyed, if not by fire, then they are buried underneath tons of brick. Public Buildings, City Hall, Free Library, Hall of Justice, Academy of Science, Hopkins Art Institute, are totally destroyed, and most of the schools and hospitals. Martial law exists. The Government has taken possession of stores, and are distributing food in different parts of the city. A great number of people lost their lives in the earthquake, and thousands of people were injured. Quite a number of persons have been killed by the soldiers for pillaging, and left lying in the streets — in some places as a warning to others. The city is in darkness at night; not a light or fire is allowed in any house or building. We have had a great many shocks since the one which wrecked the city. In some places the streets have been thrown up several feet high; and other portions have sunk several feet. One cannot fail to see what a mighty power was at work. The scenes which we have witnessed are indelibly impressed upon our memory. How few realize how weak and puny we are in the grip of such a mighty power, and how few recognize the hand of God at work, and what terrible judgments will eventually be poured out upon the nations.

"One can realize what the result will be when the prophecy spoken of in Zechariah 14 is fulfilled, when the Mount of Olives shall cleave in two... Our little company met together Sunday morning at Brother A. W. Baldwin's house, 4105, 21st Street, for breaking of bread, where we shall probably meet for a short time...The Roman Catholic churches and others have suffered severely. I am told in one place alone 75 priests were killed. Their fine edifices were totally demolished. It reminds us of what will befall Rome herself at the time appointed. Thank God there is

a glorious future beyond these things. Ere long the kingdom of God will be ushered in. “The night is far spent, and the day is at hand, when the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in his beams.” “Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning.” May it be ours to participate in that joy, and have bestowed upon us the glory and honour which Christ has promised to bestow upon all his faithful servants at his appearing and kingdom.

“With love and fraternal greeting from our small body here, I remain, your brother in the glorious hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, James Cheetham .”³

There was another victim of the 1906 earthquake. Like much of the city, the Cosmopolitan Hotel, where Bro. Roberts died in 1898, was destroyed by the earthquake and subsequent fire.⁴



A gathering of brothers and sisters at the McCarl’s cabin in Rock Ridge including James and Sarah Cheetham (far left), Bro. McCarl (seated behind post), Bro. Lyman Wade (standing. His son would later marry Rosamond Cheetham), Robbie Cheetham (young boy seated in the center), and Rosamond Cheetham (young girl behind post with bow in her hair).

Five years later, in 1911, James reported to *The Christadelphian* that Sister Bingley joined the Amended ecclesia in Oakland. That same year the ecclesia started having fraternal gatherings at Rock Ridge, a suburb of Oakland. This would continue for many years, with several of the brothers and sisters buying cabins in the Rock Ridge area. In 1912, James wrote to the magazine that a number of the members had purchased homes there. “. . . an out-door fraternal gathering was held at Rock Ridge, the home of ten of our brethren and sisters. About twenty brethren and sisters were present.”

About this time James wrote to *The Christadelphian* magazine about an event that he and other members of the Oakland ecclesia attended. “On Sunday evening,

July 23rd, several of our brethren and sisters went to the memorial services for Dr. [Theodore] Herzl, held in the Temple Beth Israel, San Francisco. Some interesting remarks were made by Dr. Rabbi Myers and Mr. Saper. The remarks were listened to with rapt attention by a fairly good audience, all at the close rising and singing the "Hatikvah," Zionist National Anthem. The services were held under the auspices of the Agudath Zion.⁵ Theodore Herzl is considered the father of modern Zionism, the movement for the development of a Jewish nation in Israel.

Like most Christadelphians, James was very interested in the return of the Jews to their land. He had placed a newspaper clipping about this subject in the pages of his copy of the book "Seasons of Comfort" by Bro. Robert Roberts that had been a gift to him when he left England in 1888. The article, written in July 1897 and entitled *To Establish a Jewish Kingdom* began "The representatives of the Baron Hirsch charities here seem to take very seriously the scheme of Dr. Theodore Herzl of Vienna for the formation of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. It is stated that the Hebrews are organizing in all parts of the world." The article went on to say, "If Turkey should refuse to give Palestine up, he says that the Ottoman Empire will surely disintegrate and the Jewish company obtain Palestine when the powers divide up the Turkish Empire territory." James would see this happen about 20 years later at the end of World War One. The most interesting part of the article is the statement by Herzl that "If it proves impossible to get Palestine he will turn to Argentina" as a homeland for the Jews. Obviously God had a different outcome in mind, as He had declared through several of the Old Testament prophets.

**TO ESTABLISH A
JEWISH KINGDOM.**

Formation of a Rich Company Which Is
Intended to Obtain Sovereignty
Over Palestine.

LONDON, July 30.—The representatives of the Baron Hirsch charities here seem to take very seriously the scheme of Dr. Theodore Hertzl of Vienna for the formation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine. It is stated that the Hebrews are organizing in all parts of the world. The Doctor intends first to send an exploring expedition to thoroughly overhaul the land from end to end, and to establish telephones, telegraphs and other modern scientific convenience before opening the territory to general settlement.

To obtain sovereignty over Palestine, he says, will be easy, as the Turks will be glad to let it go. He points to his decoration by the Turkish Government as evidence that it thinks favorably of his scheme. If Turkey should refuse to give Palestine up, he says that the Ottoman empire will surely disintegrate and the Jewish company can obtain Palestine when the powers divide up the Turkish empire territory. If it proves impossible to get Palestine he will turn to Argentine.

To confer on this point a congress will be held at Basle August 20th. The Doctor says there is no doubt that this congress will be the redeemer of the Hebrews. There is no intention to follow socialistic lines. He proposes a limited monarchy, like that of Great Britain. The capital of the Jewish company is to be \$250,000,000.

Caring for those in isolation

Despite the illness and unemployment they endured in their lives, James and Sarah's love for God and His people motivated them to devote their limited energy and money to serving God. James took on the thankless task of caring for those who were in isolation, and Sarah accompanied him in his labor of love. To fully appreciate what this sacrifice meant requires understanding the difficulties of traveling long distances in those days. James would have been somewhat used to making these uncomfortable journeys, though, because during the early 1900s, he would

often travel to Stockton to do odd jobs when he was out of work. He was there for two weeks in 1915 and seven weeks in 1916. Still, it would have been difficult for the couple to afford the time and money to make the 100 mile round trip journeys to Stockton to meet with the brothers and sisters there. His love and concern for his isolated brothers and sisters in Christ can be seen in his letter to *The Christadelphian* magazine in 1916. "I thought I would write a few lines that brethren and sisters might know there are a few earnest brethren and sisters scattered up and down the State, though in isolation, who would undoubtedly appreciate the company of any brother or sister who might be in the vicinity."



The Cheetham family around 1910: Rosamond, Sarah, Robert and James.

James also kept in touch with someone else who was in isolation. This brother, however, was not in isolation due to his physical distance from other Christadelphians, but because he was out of fellowship. R.C. Bingley did not join his wife when she became a member of James' ecclesia five years earlier. Now, nearly twenty years after Robert Roberts' falling asleep in San Francisco, Bro. Bingley joined him in the grave. "Brother R. C. Bingley (San Francisco) died on

March 8th in his 79th year. He was known to many of the older brethren of Dr. Thomas's and brother Roberts' time. He was out of fellowship with the [Central] Christadelphian body for a few years prior to his death. A few brethren and sisters were present at the funeral. He made the remark to me a few days before he died that *The Christadelphian* was the best paper published among the brethren, and that the Doctor was correct in what he said about Russia being King of the North, and was very much opposed to substitution views."⁶

James and Sarah made another visit to the brothers and sisters in Stockton in 1920 and he made it the theme of a letter to *The Christadelphian* that year. Note how he lists the "long" distances that had to be traveled, all of which would take less than an hour today. "Five of our meeting made a visit to Stockton, Cal. Sisters Chauncey, McCarty, Cheetham, Edith Cheetham and the writer. Arrangements were made to hold the meeting at sister Buckles's home, and have the brethren and sisters from Modesto and Turlock and Morada meet with us. The result was brother and sister Peterman came in from Morada, 8 miles; brother and sister T. Woolcock, from Turlock, 44 miles; and brother and sister J. M. Epperson, from Modesto, 30 miles, making in all, 12 brethren and sisters, besides five interested strangers. Brother T. Woolcock and brother Epperson gave us the words of exhortation. A very pleasant and profitable time was spent together. We hope to continue to keep

in touch as often as possible with the brethren and sisters who are in isolation. It shows what can be done when an effort is put forth.”

The gathering together for fellowship with isolated brethren was repeated later that same year. “...I am pleased to say another effort was made Sunday, September 5th, to co-operate with the brethren and sisters in isolation in Central California. To that end, a meeting for breaking of bread was arranged to be held at the home of sister Buckles, Stockton. Nine brethren and sisters from the Oakland meeting were present. Brother and sister Ben Epperson (Stirling City) and family; brother and sister J. Epperson (Modesto); brother and sister T. Woolcock (Turlock); and brother and sister Peterman (Morada); making 18 brethren and sisters, besides seven interested strangers. Brethren Baldwin (Oakland) and Woolcock spoke words of cheer and comfort. It was enjoyed by all present, and well worth the effort made in the long journeys of the brethren and sisters to meet together. After the meeting refreshments were provided out on the lawn. We all feel we have derived much benefit by getting together in this manner, and hope to do it as often as possible.”⁷ As often as possible appears to have been three years later. “...The last Sunday in May nine of our brethren and sisters visited Stockton and had meeting at sister Buckles’ home; also, on October 22nd, brother and sister Lees, brother and sister Bain, the writer and sister Cheetham, and sister Buckles from Stockton, journeyed to Turlock and had meeting with brother and sister T. Woolcock, who are in isolation. We try as much as as possible to meet with those in isolation once or twice a year.— JAMES CHEETHAM , Rec. Bro.”⁸

The Berean division and visit of C.C. Walker

Isolation was not the only problem that brothers and sisters faced in the early part of the twentieth century. Ideas of Christ dying as our substitute had plagued the body as far back as the 1870’s. In 1923 the ecclesias across North America were affected by a new division centered on the nature of Christ and how he related to his death. Those who separated from the Central Fellowship were known as Bereans. The division greatly affected California, and several cities such as Pomona, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara had a Central ecclesia and a Berean ecclesia. A number of well-known and respected brothers such as Henry Moore in Pomona, J.T. Irwin and Forrest Brinkerhoff in Los Angeles, John Seagoe in Santa Barbara and James Cheetham in Oakland remained with the Central Fellowship.

This was the second major division that James Cheetham would face since moving to America. Baptized in 1885, he was not yet a brother during the first major Christadelphian separation: the Renunciationist division in 1873. Renunciationism (also called the ‘Free Life’ theory) concerned the nature of Christ, his relation to Adam and humanity, and the nature of his sacrifice for sins. Those who held this belief ‘renounced’ their previous understanding that Jesus was born of Adam’s line. Instead of seeing Jesus as a representative, they proclaimed that Jesus had a ‘free life’ and that he gave this life as a substitute for sinners.⁹ This belief is also sometimes known as ‘clean flesh’. The Partial Inspiration division in 1884, which was still causing controversy when Robert Roberts visited San Francisco, occurred the year before James was baptized.

Bro. Roberts had borne the brunt of the first two divisions as the editor of *The Christadelphian* magazine, falling ill at the end of the Renunciationist controversy. Bro. Charles Curwin (C.C.) Walker, the next editor, faced similar trials during the Amended/Unamended and the Berean/Central divisions. “Although Walker had a gentle and moderate temperament, as often shown in his articles and editorials, he was unable to prevent a further separation of the influential Clapham meeting in South London, led by his former travelling companion to Palestine Frank Jannaway, and most of the remaining North American Christadelphians, into the Berean Christadelphian fellowship in 1923”.¹⁰

During a trip to California, Bro. Walker visited the Oakland ecclesia in 1927 on his way back from Yosemite National Park, arriving in San Francisco on August 26. The entire trip



Bro. C.C. Walker, Sis. McCarl, Sis. Sarah Cheetham, Bro. James Cheetham, Bro. Smith (from Los Angeles) and Bro. McCarl in front of their car on Skyline Boulevard in the Rockridge area, August, 1927.

was covered in detail in *The Christadelphian* magazine of 1927. Bro. Walker wrote in the magazine:

“This morning, on coming down to go out to the cafeteria for breakfast, we found brother Cheetham, of Oakland, waiting for us in the lounge of the hotel. It was twenty-nine years before this that he had written us from this city on the occasion of the death here of the late editor of this magazine. And it was longer still since I had met him as a comparatively young man at Sowerby Bridge, in Yorkshire. And now we are both “old and grey headed.”...But the hope of “renewed youth” remains in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a young man forever! There was something of a kindly providence in the way in which the late editor fell into the hands of friends here at the time of his death... Brother Cheetham wanted us to visit him at his home at Oakland across the bay, and we arranged to go over there in the afternoon.

“After breakfast we drove round the north of the city through the area that some twenty years ago had been devastated by earthquake and fire, of which, however, there were scarcely any evidences remaining. And then we went to the Golden Gate Park. This is quite an extensive area (about 1,000 acres) reclaimed from the sand-dunes by the sea on the southern headland of the Golden Gate and transformed by grassing and plant-



Bro. and Sis. Wade's home in San Luis Obispo, which is still standing today, as it looked when C.C. Walker visited in 1927. Sis. Wade was a close friend of Sis. Cheetham. Bro. and Sis. Wade's son had married Bro. and Sis. Cheetham's daughter.

were soon back at San Francisco and at rest in the hotel.”

The next day the visit continued. “Crossed over to Oakland this morning according to promise, and were met by brother and sister McCarl with another car, and repaired first to the City Hall for a view of the city from its tower. “The tallest building in California” naturally commands a striking view of the city (and other cities) and the beautiful bay. ...The drive along the “Sky-line Boulevard” was more to my taste, because there was more of nature in it. This is a fine road which traverses a mountain ridge to the end of Oakland, and commands fine views of the surrounding country. Returning to Oakland, and being unwilling, as a party of five persons, to impose upon the hospitality of the brethren here, we took leave of brother and sister McCarl and brother and sister Cheetham in the city, and making one call on a sister by the way returned to the ferry and were back in San Francisco for lunch. In the afternoon, we paid another visit to the Golden Gate Park and its fine picture gallery, aquarium, etc.”

After spending some time in San Francisco, the Walkers headed off toward Southern California. On the way they planned to stop and visit Bro. Lyman and Sis. Lillie Wade who were in the Unamended Fellowship and living in isolation in San Luis Obispo.

“... after a perfect run of perhaps some 70 miles further, we reached San Luis Obispo at about 5 p.m., found congenial quarters, and broke bread at the hotel. “As at other places

ing and irrigation into a perfect little paradise... We...drove quietly back to Oakland, and after getting some refreshment made our way to the outskirts to brother Cheetham's home, where we met brother and sister Cheetham, brother and sister McCarl and brother Caton. After some conversation, and seeing it was now too late to see any more of Oakland, we arranged to come over again next morning, and driving back to the ferry



Bro. and Sis. Cheetham, their daughter Rosamond, and two of the Cheetham's grandchildren around 1925.

meals were obtained outside the hotel. After tea we made our way round to Dr. Wade's and spent a pleasant evening in conversation, which would have been more pleasant still but for the tangle that has arisen over questions of fellowship. Sister Wade gave me a pamphlet she had written on the subject, and we returned presently to the hotel. 'On that night could not the king sleep,' so I read the pamphlet through in the middle of the night, and found myself in perfect agreement with it. Sister Wade said, truly enough, that it was unreasonable and unkind to require babes to form judgments upon certain writings which were scarcely intelligible to aged experts, or even to the writers themselves, and to disfellowship them if their judgments did not agree with those of their inquisitors! Still, there is the situation, and individuals have to adjust themselves to it painfully as best they can. The question of the resurrectional responsibility of willful rejecters of the Truth is one that produces disunion here. More than thirty years ago it did not trouble the brotherhood. But when the late brother J. J. Andrew, of London, forced the issue, strife and division ensued; and this embittered the last days of the late editor of this magazine [Bro. Roberts], who was torn to pieces between extremes of hypercriticism and latitudinarianism, but who faithfully upheld the Truth himself. The present editor expects to share the same experience to the end."¹¹

The later years

As often happens as people age, the final years of the Cheethams' lives were spent accommodating the issues that come with declining health. Sarah, who had struggled with many health problems during the years, eventually lost her hearing. In 1930 she spent some time staying at her daughter and son-in-law's home in Los Angeles.¹² Four years later, James and Sarah moved to Los Angeles, but returned to Oakland shortly after.¹³ While James had been by far the healthier of the two, he died ten years before Sarah. James' walk in Christ ended in Oakland on January 31, 1942, two weeks shy of his 75th birthday and less than a year short of the Cheethams' 50th wedding anniversary. His golden wedding anniversary was not the only event that James did not live to see. He had died six years too soon to witness the birth of the nation of Israel in 1948, a prophetic event that had so interested him in his earlier years.

James' death was a devastating blow to the Oakland ecclesia. The leadership that he brought to the small ecclesia is the main theme in a couple of articles about his falling asleep in Christ. One, written at the time of his death, spoke of his service to the ecclesia:

"The Oakland Christadelphian ecclesia has suffered a great loss in the death of its beloved brother James Cheetham, who passed away on Jan. 31, 1942, shortly before attaining his 75th year. He was one of the pioneers in the Truth in Oakland and S.F. where he lived for more than fifty years and had served as secretary of the Oakland Ecclesia for most of that time. He was baptized into Christ and united with the Christadelphian body in 1888, shortly before leaving Halifax, England, where he was born and ever

since has been a strong and faithful advocate of the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ as taught by that body. He will be greatly missed not only by his own ecclesia but by many throughout the fellowship as he was a most faithful attendant and earnest worker for the Truth. He was laid to rest in Mt. View Cemetery, Oakland, Feb. 3rd to await the call of the Master he had served so faithfully and long.”¹⁴

Another testament of James’ care for the Oakland ecclesia recalls the years of work he gave on behalf of his brothers and sisters in isolation. “A sad loss for this little Ecclesia came in 1942 with the death of Bro. James Cheetham, who had been Recording Brother for 40 years. He had shepherded this little flock carefully through all its “ups and downs”, caring especially for those in isolation in the outlying districts. He attended to his duties as presiding and exhorting brother diligently and was seldom absent, except when at other ecclesias, or on account of sickness. He was greatly missed for his care and devotion, and soundness in the faith.”¹⁵

While James was the one who was most well known in the ecclesias of California, Sarah also loved God deeply and put her trust in Him as is evidenced by various letters that she wrote. A good example is the letter she sent to sis. Lillie Wade concerning their children Howard and Rosamond’s relationship:

“I suppose you know we are seeing quite a lot of your son of late and that it is not Robert or I he visits, and no doubt you are anxious as I have been very much so. I should like to write you pages and pages but just cannot. However, I think Howard is just fine and Rosamond, well I think she is worthy of the best. She is so dear and sweet. I’ve wondered sometimes how she could have come to me. I’m sure you would love her if you knew her and so I shall just pray earnestly for our Father to guide them and leave them to work out their own destiny knowing that He will guide and guard them if they put their trust in Him. Goodbye my Sister. With kind regards to the Doctor [Bro. Wade, who was an M.D.] and love to you. Your sister in the one hope.”¹⁶



Sarah Cheetham, her granddaughter, great granddaughter, and daughter in the early 1940’s

Another example of Sarah’s spirituality is seen in the letter she sent to her daughter Rosamond during Rosamond’s first pregnancy: “Yes mother knows how weary the waiting is but it will soon be over now and happily we trust with a dear little babe of your own to love and care for and to love and comfort you as you did your mother and I hope and pray with our Heavenly Father’s loving care over you both...now my darling I must say good night and may our Heavenly Father bless you with His rich blessing

and health and you know you have the largest share of your own Mother's love. Father sends lov..."¹⁷

A final example is this letter also written to her daughter Rosamond a few months after James' death: "Dearest and Precious, With Loving greetings I send this. Read and dwell on this verse (The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms...Deut 33:27) and I will also and let us trust and believe and do our best. God our Father has promised that if we do that He will supply strength for every need. Now this, dearest girl of mine, is no more for you than for myself and others all who trust in Him. We have a fine example in our reading for today which I finished reading with my breakfast out on the porch...so we should realize we must take the good and the bad together, sunshine and rain and that was about my feelings after the readings when King Asa trusted wholly in God. He allowed or enabled him to overcome the hosts who outnumbered them but when he relied on other men then they fell before their enemies and then in Ezekiel we read of the life giving waters and in John we have comforting words of Jesus ending with 'These things I have spoken unto you that in me you might have **peace**. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' So why fret and worry instead of earnest prayer for guidance and trying all we can to find out the cause of sickness..."¹⁸

After James' death, Sarah struggled with her hearing loss and the challenge of living alone. She had become a widow during World War Two, at a time when California was considered a prime target for a Japanese military attack. At times, a blackout would be signaled by the wail of a neighborhood air raid siren. Unable to hear the alarm, Sarah became the target of resentment in her neighborhood when she left her lights on. This caused her to finally move to Los Angeles for good to live with her daughter and son-in-law.¹⁹ Ten years after James' death, Sarah joined him, asleep in the earth and waiting for Christ's return, in Los Angeles on December 9, 1952 at 84 years of age.

Sarah's many years in the truth had come to an end. So long ago she had given up the love she had for a young man because he would not accept the truth she believed with all her heart. As she later counseled her daughter to do, she had trusted in God to direct her life and took the good with the bad. In return, God had given Sarah a man that loved her, but more importantly He had given her a man who truly loved the truth and shared it with her for nearly 50 years. May we all make the same wise choice to put our lives in God's hands and accept His plans for us with the belief that He knows best.

Next month (God willing); Sad Demise of Bro. Roberts.

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*, 1903.
2. This is perhaps an oversimplification, as the Berean division started in the UK, where it was nominally over the issue of brethren serving a police constables. See Editorial in *The Tidings* for March, 2013 p 107.
3. *The Christadelphian*, 1906.
4. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cosmopolitan_Hotel_%28San_

- Francisco,_%3F-1906%29.
5. *The Christadelphian*, 1911.
 6. *The Christadelphian*, 1917. His death was also recorded as one of several Brethren who had died, in the *Fraternal Visitor* for 1917.
 7. *The Christadelphian*, 1920.
 8. *The Christadelphian*, 1923.
 9. *Sects and Society*, Bryon R. Wilson, University of California Press, 1961, page 242.
 10. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Curwen_Walker
 11. *The Christadelphian*, 1927.
 12. *The Christadelphian*, 1930.
 13. *The Christadelphian*, 1934.
 14. Obituary — date and source unknown — appears to be hand typed newsletter.
 15. *History of the Oakland, or Bay Area Ecclesia*, by Bro. Ishman.
 16. Personal letter from Sarah to Lillie Wade, March 5, 1921.
 17. Personal letter from Sarah to Rosamond Wade, shortly before October 10, 1923.
 18. Personal letter from Sarah to Rosamond Wade, October 21, 1942.
 19. Interview with Sis. Elsie Simmons (James and Sarah's granddaughter), April, 2010.



Aftermath of the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906

Reflections

How to Start a Civil War: How to Avoid a Civil War: How to End a Civil War

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (James 4:1).

There are important lessons we can take away from a few of the incidents in Israel’s history in the area of internal strife and wars, of which they had a few. We are going to zero in on three principles, one from each of the above topics. This is not intended to be exhaustive, there are many ways to start, avoid and end a civil war, but these points should prove useful.

“Wars” are easy to start, sometimes hard to avoid, and always difficult to end. Not just wars between the nations, but even the little wars we all get into. James said they come from within us and it is doubtful he was intending his remarks for just the heads of governments and the big wars we see going on around us. His audience was not Caesar. There are lessons here for us in our family, ecclesial and business lives.

How to start a civil war and how to avoid a civil war

Josh 22 gives us a good example of how to start a civil war. It is an easy chapter to read, and in it we will see an excellent example of how to start a civil war and how to avoid a civil war.

The chapter relates an incident that occurred shortly after the Israelites had entered the Promised Land. Just before crossing the Jordan (Num 32) the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh had asked and received permission to take their inheritance in land on the eastside of the Jordan River. They had agreed to send all their fighting men across the Jordan with the rest of their brethren, and help them conquer the land and secure their inheritance. With that understanding Moses gave them permission to settle on the land on the east side of the river. Now the time had come for the men to return to their lands and build up their homes. They had lived up to their agreement and discharged all their responsibilities. Joshua recites how they had honorably kept their word and so *“Joshua blessed them, and sent them away; and they went unto their tents” (Josh 22:6).*

So now we have a few of the tribes on the east side of the river and most of them on the west bank. Very soon the tribes on the west bank heard a report to the effect that the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh were building a huge altar on their eastern side of the river. Their reaction was swift and deadly serious: *“And when the children of Israel heard of it, they gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them” (Josh 22:12).* They were concerned both for the two and one half tribes on the eastern bank and for their own welfare because setting up a false idol would bring the swift and terrible judgments of God down

upon all their heads. All the tribes were worked up and ready for war. They had their weapons ready to hand from all their battles conquering the inhabitants in the land God had given them. Their goodbyes would have been said to their loved ones and in the heat of the moment war was a step away.

Fortunately they decided to send a selected group of brethren to first confront the eastern tribes and tell them to cease construction of the false idol. They made it clear that if they did not desist they would be bringing themselves and the entire nation curses and judgments, the same kind that God brought on Israel when they sinned with the Moabitish women in Peor, and 24,000 died in the plague. They also cited Achan's sin which not only cost the lives of Achan and his family, but also some of the soldiers. These were those who went up against the men of Ai, and were killed in the initial battle before it was known that Achan had taken some of the forbidden spoils of the battle at Jericho. Many innocent people suffered because of someone else's decisions to act sinfully. The sum of the message was: cease constructing the idolatrous altar or we will be at war. Our people are gathered and ready to fight. Feelings were running high and the confrontation was deadly serious.

Then the representatives of the two and one half tribes answered their brethren and it turned out that the whole matter was just a complete misunderstanding. Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh were not building an altar to an idol. In fact it was not an altar for sacrifices of any kind.

“Therefore we [the two and one half tribes] said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice: but that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings and sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD” (Josh 22:26-27).

They were building a memorial so that in time to come it would serve as a reminder that the tribes on the east bank and the tribes on the west bank were all under the same covenant with God, the same Law of Moses and the same religion. The relief felt by all parties must have been tremendous. The explanation “...pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land...”. The crisis was resolved.

How do you start a civil war?

Or in this case, how do you almost start a civil war? One way we can start a war or an argument is by jumping to conclusions. Sometimes we are too quick to take decisions. In some situations we are pre-disposed to think evil of someone and so we assume the worst. Sometimes we make statements that, in the light of the facts are clearly out of line but having gone out on a limb we will try to justify our mistake rather than disown it and cut the limb out from under us. Our rationale might sound like: “I may be wrong in this instance but there were many times in the past when you have done that same kind of thing”.

How do you avoid a civil war?

One way to prevent some of the “wars” we get into is to follow the example we just read about. The events described in Josh 22 provide a rare example of the very real threat of a war being avoided by not taking action without first making direct inquiry into all the circumstances. It is one thing to jump to conclusions. It can be disastrous when we jump into action without verifying for ourselves the relevant information leading to our conclusion. Someone accuses one of our children of something and most of us have a knee jerk reaction to rise to their defense. “Knee jerk” may be an apt description of these kinds of reactions at several levels. Some parents have a knee jerk reaction in the other direction. One woman who grew up in large family still remembered how their father would accept a neighbor’s accusation as given and punish accordingly. It did not seem fair to her because sometimes (although probably rarely) the child was innocent. But her father would react based on just the accusation and that memory stayed with her.

How we react to incidents that come up in our families, ecclesias and work environment is critical in avoiding strife in our own lives and inflicting or exacerbating strife and tension on those around us. Compromise is normally eschewed in religious controversy, where there is a built in tendency to elevate every issue to a “first principle” status. However, compromise resolved one of the first divisive issues to come up in the first early ecclesia, and with the express approval of God. No doubt those who felt: “...*That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses*” (Acts 15:5), they believed that the salvation of those Gentiles was at stake. After prayerful deliberation the decision was taken. The decision was a compromise. Most of the Law of Moses would not be required, including circumcision. But they would be asked to obey some of the laws. This decision was communicated to the brethren in writing and in person. “*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meat offered to idols, and from blood,, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well*” (Acts 15:28-29). Nothing more is said about this matter in Acts so it appears that the decision was accepted. (Although admittedly, much of the content in Paul’s later epistles indicate the controversy continued in one form or another.) However the principle illustrated, that compromise had been used to resolve divisive issues by our forefathers, and in this case with the approval of God. Would that we had the open and direct involvement of the Holy Spirit in our ecclesial issues today but we do not. Bro. Roberts notes this lack in “The Ecclesial Guide” Section 14 in the context of explaining why we need to take the responsibility for making decisions needful for the running of our ecclesias.

We have little to no control over the actions of others, and therefore minimal ability to prevent potentially upsetting incidents from occurring. But we can control our own reactions. It takes discipline. We will have to give account for our reactions in the not too distant future. Do we react to difficulties in positive ways carefully considered and designed to bring about profitable results, or do we react without due consideration, with little to no thought about whether or not our reactions will bring a benefit to all affected. “*Blessed are the peacemakers for they will see God.*”

How to end a civil war

Wars are easily started but hard to end. From time to time in our lives we all will find ourselves in an argument about something. They can start without warning and in some cases we will be unwilling participants. There is an example in 2Sam 2 of a civil war being ended in a unique way that may give us some guidance for our own lives.

The time is after the Philistine's defeat of Israel and the slaying of Saul and three of his sons including Jonathan. David inquires of the Lord and God tells him it is now time for him to go up to Judah. It is David's time. The promise and prophecies are now to come to pass and David will be king.

But not everyone agrees. There are still some of Saul's men who survived the battle with the Philistines and they are not willing to give up their place and station in the kingdom. Abner, the captain of Saul's host, rallied behind Ishbosheth, one of Saul's surviving sons, and set him up as a king. A civil war ensued and for two years Israel had two kings. The final battle that ended the war is recorded in 2Sam 2. Abner, the captain of Saul's (now Ishbosheth's) host with his army meets with Joab, the captain of David's host at the pool of Gibeon. *"Then Abner said to Joab, 'Let's have some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us.' 'All right, let them do it,' Joab said."* (NIV) The 24 men fought and each one killed his brother. They were all dead and the battle began. The battle was sore and Abner's men were losing badly. Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel in vs 23 but for the most part they were losing badly. At the end of the day the scattered remnants of Abner's men gathered themselves together and stood on the top of a hill.

"Abner called out to Joab 'Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their fellow Israelites?' Joab answered 'As surely as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would have continued pursuing them until morning.' So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the troops came to a halt; they no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore" (2Sam 2:26-28 NIV)

Here is an example of one very good way to end a civil war. Just stop fighting. At that particular point in time the same reasons that existed at the start of the conflict continued to exist. Abner's armies were rebels against God's anointed king. The death penalty was as justified in the afternoon as it was in the morning. Joab had lost men including his own brother Asahel. Joab had the enemy where they wanted them and were now in position to end the rebellion and the rebels once and for all.

There can come a point in a war, an argument, a controversy, when we need to take stock of where we are and decide whether or not to continue fighting. If we have not gained a complete victory, if we have not won all our points, are we at the point where we have adequate assurance that the majority of the reason we went to war have been sufficiently dealt with that we should end the war? That we should just stop fighting?

No doubt some of the men on both sides wanted to continue the conflict. They had suffered hurt, insults, wounds and the deaths of fellow soldiers that they

would have liked to avenge completely. We can find ourselves in situations where we still feel we are deserved an apology. Or there are still issues we would like to see clarified more to our satisfaction. But must we continue a conflict until every last issue is resolved to our complete satisfaction?

Actual war is life and death and here and now. One does not have the luxury of time. Unlike our more domestic conflicts that we can allow to drag on interminably, the need for decisions is urgent. Joab heard Abner and considered his question. What good would be accomplished by continuing the battle? The decision to end the battle then and there may appear arbitrary in the sense that most of the reasons that justified the war in the first place continued to be valid. Abner's host was still a bunch of rebels and their rebellion had cost everyone dearly. I did not read where Abner said he was sorry, did you? Abner and company were not taken prisoner. Joab and company did not get to march Abner's remnant through the streets of Jerusalem in a victory parade. It looks like each army turned around and went home. They just stopped fighting.

It was a good decision. For Joab's army the battle was at the point of diminishing returns. More fighting (more arguing in our typical situations) would be bound to cause more casualties. (More hard feelings etc.) It must have taken a lot for Abner to initiate the end of the war. It can take courage to stand up against continuing a dispute. No one likes to give up, especially if they feel they are in the right. And while some issues may be worth fighting over to the bitter end, most are not.

We may need to ask ourselves: Is it time to quit this argument? Have we gained the objective? Will continuing the strife produce more good than harm? If our position is in the ascendancy should we unilaterally declare peace even though there are still come issues unresolved? In other words, is this conflict at the point of diminishing returns: i.e. from this point forward the conflict will do more harm than good?

There is an old Yiddish proverb that speaks to this subject. "The worst peace is better than the best war". It probably does not apply to every possible situation but it is very good general advice.

Summary

- What is one way to start a civil war? Jump to conclusions.
- What is one way to avoid a civil war? Don't jump to conclusion.
- What is one way to end a civil war? Stop fighting.

Says easy, does hard. These principles won't solve all problems but they can solve some. They have worked in the past and can work today.

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

Once, George Washington was engaged in preparing armies for the conflict with France which seemed inevitable at the time. In that crisis he was visited by a [Quaker] deputation which said "The worst peace is better than the best war." After a few moments of silence Washington said: "... there is more truth in those words than most people are yet willing to admit" (New York Times April 3, 1898)



Bible Mission News

A Baptism in El Salvador



On Sunday, June 30, 2013 the brethren and sisters in El Salvador were blessed with a new baptism. Eva Gabriela García, 18, publicly proclaimed her decision to change the direction of her life and join the great family of the faith which is striving towards the kingdom of God. Sis. Gaby, as we call her affectionately, attends meetings with her family in their home town of Sonsonate in the western part of the country. She has been attending Sunday school practically from the day she was born. The youngest of four children, her parents and three older siblings already having been baptized, Gaby is the last member of the family to take this important step. She asked to study for baptism when she was 16, and so the ecclesia programmed a series of weekly private classes covering Bible history and teaching. Her thirst for knowledge and understanding made the two

years of instruction go by very quickly, and she found that even though she had been coming to meetings and classes all her life, she still had a lot to learn. When asked how she was contemplating this new stage in her life, Gaby replied with typical modesty, "I'll try to do my best; I still have a lot to learn."

The baptism was carried out in the San Salvador ecclesial hall during the quarterly fraternal gathering of the three ecclesias in the country. This was sent from the Sonsonate Ecclesia, El Salvador.

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



Jamaica — Education and Training Needs

One of the many challenges facing people in the world today is the lack of sufficient and quality education. In particular, this influences the literacy level of children and adults alike. This situation affects some of our brethren and sisters in a number of countries — even in so-called “first world” countries. The inability to read and write, plus dealing with the maths and sciences can hinder their opportunity to obtain and maintain reasonable employment, as well as serve as Sunday school teachers, perform “platform duties” and other ecclesial service that require reading and comprehension. The phrase, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” is real for some — they struggle to read and this can limit their understanding and knowledge of the Word.

Jamaica is one of a number of countries where the citizens and thus some brothers and sisters face these challenges. It is not part of the mandate of the Bible Missions to build schools or provide jobs. Our main purpose is to provide “meat which



Father's day youth presentation at May Pen on June 16th.

endureth unto everlasting life”. However, we can assist our brethren and sisters to access government programs that improve literacy and increase their employable skills. In some cases financial aid towards schooling costs (pencils, pens, composition books, back-packs, etc.) for children and adolescents of families with limited incomes, can

help ensure 5-day-a-week education. In Jamaica, there is a government assistance program in this area as well.

The CBMJ (Christadelphian Bible Mission Jamaica), besides helping with the matters referred to above, has become aware that some of the older widows in the ecclesias in Jamaica do not receive the government pension, and efforts are underway to try to help rectify this situation. In a few cases, natural family support is minimal, and thus the counsel found in 1Tim 5 and James 1 is our guide. The CBMC (Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada) provides many kinds of support to the Caribbean Ecclesias, together with much practical aid from CSTCF (Christadelphian Save the Children Fund), and encourages the CBMJ in their efforts to address these daily ministrations. In all this, we long for the return of our Lord, who in the Millennial Age will right the injustices of man and respond to the cry of the needy and widows.

The other on-going assistance provided by the CBMC is regular preaching and pastoral visits. During the month of June, Bro. Don Luff was on the Island to help co-ordinate activities mentioned in previous paragraphs with CBMJ officers, as well as meet with members in the Port Maria, Montego Bay, Argyle Mountain and May Pen areas for Breaking of Bread Services, Bible Classes and Bible Readings. On Sunday June 16th at the May Pen Ecclesia, there was a special presentation put together by the Sunday School scholars for Father's Day, which consisted of singing and cards for the fathers in attendance (photo included with this article). Several baptisms have also occurred this year in Jamaica and we appeal to our Heavenly Father to continue to strengthen the Jamaican Ecclesias.

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Córdoba — Home of the only Ecclesia in Argentina

Córdoba, the second largest city of Argentina is full of beautiful colonial Spanish buildings, a vibrant culture and home to the only ecclesia in this large country. This city is now my home for 2013, a city I chose to come back to after having visited it two years ago for a four-month Spanish Truth Core stint. Córdoba and the ecclesia here have captured my imagination and ever since I left in 2011, I have felt the compulsion to return.



**Bro. Bryden Melles, Sis. Milena Barboza,
Sis. Colleen Uiga and Sis. Jamie Cawston**

My first weekend here was in February, after having travelled down from Bolivia, with Sis. Jamie Cawston and Sis. Colleen Uiga (both from North America). It was the best weekend to start the year off, as we had planned it so that we could witness the baptism of Milena Barboza, the daughter and granddaughter of some of the brethren here in this ecclesia. Milena

is 18 years old and had just returned from a trip of six months travelling throughout Canada and the US, and had decided that she wanted to be a part of God's family. I really don't think there are many better ways to start off a year's mission work. Jamie and Colleen both knew Mile from her time in North America so it was touching that they were able to come and witness her baptism.

However, not only did Jamie and Colleen witness the event, but also four of her school friends and some of her extended family. It was a great opportunity to 'showcase' Christadelphians to all these people, almost all of whom had previously thought (and hopefully not now) that we were a weird cult. After talking to some of the guys afterwards, it was really encouraging to hear them say that we were a lot more 'normal' than they had previously thought (I hate to think what they had

initially thought of us — judging from their comments, better not to ask!), and that our religion wasn't as wacky as they'd first thought. Bro. Rubén, the father of Mile took the opportunity to explain what it meant to us to be baptised, and to briefly explain what our beliefs were, so that they were all aware of what kind of decision Mile was making.

The baptism was followed by an afternoon tea (although being Argentina, afternoon tea is at 6 pm) and then, when a few of the visitors had left, we had our breaking of bread.

It was a great start for a great year, and set it off on the right foot. The ecclesia here now has three regular members and one brother, Francisco, who is unable to leave his house very often as he's in his 90s. Sis. Mile is the youngest member here, with her father, Bro. Rubén and her grandmother, Sis. Julia making up the other two members. Sis. Mile is one of very few Latin Americans who is a third generation Christadelphian, a great achievement for this tiny group.

My work here is focusing on consolidating the small little ecclesia and taking classes both with the members of the ecclesia and those who are interested in our teachings. We have also started a regular Bible Class that occurs at the same time as the memorial meeting, where we are now covering Israel from Egypt through to the Wilderness Wanderings.

A month or so ago, we were also blessed with the visit of Bro. Herbert, a young brother from El Salvador and a good friend of mine. He wished to meet the brethren down here. He is one of the few Latin American brethren that the members here have met, as few brethren come through Argentina, and those who do are almost exclusively from western countries. His visit really had a big impact both on him and on the brethren. Here, El Salvador is the 'hub' of Christadelphians in Latin America and a place the brethren always look to, and have always wanted to visit. So, to meet a brother from El Salvador meant a lot to them, and to learn of a different culture that, although still part of Latin America, in many ways is totally different from Argentina. El Salvador demonstrates to the brethren here that with time, support and God's blessing, they too can end up having a large Christadelphian community, just as we do in our Western (so easily taken for granted) ecclesias. Rubén made sure Herbert tried his *asado*, the Argentine grill, complete with many cuts of meat — heart, kidney and a bit of intestine chucked in there too. I definitely recommend intestines: nice and crunchy on the outside and soft and gooey on the inside.

A couple of weeks ago there was a small Bible School in Bolivia, which I was fortunate enough to attend. It was great being able to see the local brethren again. It was the last weekend that Bro. Paul and Sis. Naomi Osborn were there and the new missionary couple, Bro. Shimon and Sis. Jo Spina had already arrived to take over. The group in Bolivia is a great bunch, and they're very enthusiastic, growing in spiritual maturity every time I see them. Just like the brethren in Córdoba, there is nothing more exciting than watching your brothers and sisters develop spiritual maturity (not to say anything of your **own** growth and learning from the experience).

Coming home from La Paz proved somewhat interesting — having your passport stolen while in transit in an airport in Chile provided a certain element of excitement, adrenaline and total and utter despair. There's nothing like an unexpected stopover for a few days in a random city (in this case it was Santiago, Chile) to keep you on your toes. But, you know, one must always look on the bright side — at least it was a capital city where New Zealand has an embassy, and not, say, Ushuaia, down in Tierra del Fuego. And one can say it's all part of the excitement of travelling!

I'm absolutely loving my time here in Córdoba and I would not change it for the world. While I have built a close relationship with all the brethren here and the interested friends, it's also a city that one falls in love with immediately. One can wander the streets and plazas on balmy nights, hearing guitars strummed, watching a couple dance tango, maybe a choral group here, and a band of *folclore* there. The people here are always interested to know what you believe, and there are interesting discussions to be had with almost anyone. Given the recent election of the new Pope, and the understandable fervour that has occurred in Argentina in response, these discussions are very frequent and always engaging.

The ecclesia here in Córdoba, like many other places around Latin America has little contact with the wider community, and they are so keen to know what the brotherhood is doing elsewhere, how we do things, and what it's like in ecclesias around the world. It amazes me just how much of our normal ecclesial life we take for granted.

Life may not be full of the luxuries that I had back in New Zealand, but I love every bit of it here. Maybe it's the vibrant discussions we have during our Bible classes, or the smell of *asado* cooking on Sunday afternoons, or the excitement when an interested friend finds the principle in the verse before you've had a chance to say anything, or all the young people that get out of their seats in the busses for the elderly, or the way that people share everything, whether it's food or time or their things. Whatever it is, I love being here, and I love this small ecclesia.



May God continue to bless this ecclesia, and I pray that they, like all other brethren in isolation continue to receive the support of the brotherhood elsewhere both in aid and in people, until Christ returns.

Brydyn Melles (New Zealand)

**Abby, Paul, Magaly, Brydyn,
Carla, Jaqueline, Freddy,
and Naomi**

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 commend to the Granite State Ecclesia by way of transfer our Sis. Michelle Brealt. We've been blessed to have several brothers come this summer and bring us the word of exhortation. We would like to thank our Bre. Steve Smith (Granite State, NH); Mark Vincent (Stirling, UK); Jason Dineen (Abington, MA); and Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ) for bringing us words of exhortation.

Bro. Mark O'Grady was one of the teachers at this year's Eastern Christadelphian Bible School and kindly consented to travel around New England the week after the school to bring words of encouragement and instruction to our local brethren. On behalf of the New England ecclesias, we'd like to thank Bro. Mark for his tireless efforts.

Jim Sullivan

BRANT COUNTY, ON

We are happy to welcome to our love and fellowship Bro. Ben Wilson as a member of the Brant County Ecclesia. He has been commended in love to our care from the Kemp's Creek, NSW, Australia Ecclesia. We look forward to working together with him as we await the soon return of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

We sorrow with Sis. Nicole Wisniewski and family in the death of her father, Bro. Rob Posey, Rogue River, OR; and also with Sis. Denise Kanno in the death of her sister. We report that Bro. Lloyd and Sis. Joan Newth have resigned from Brant County Ecclesia.

We thank many visiting local brethren for their assistance with exhortations and classes. We also especially thank Bro. Jim Styles, California, (accompanied by his wife, Sis. Sue) for his efforts with Brant County's first ever study week in April which was enjoyed by many from Southern Ontario. Of particular note, nine visitors attended the advertised public lecture during the week of activities.

David Wisniewski

KITCHENER WATERLOO, ON

Following their baptisms we are pleased to report that Bro. Andrew Webster and Sis. Viktoria Laki have been united in marriage. We pray that the Lord's blessing will be upon them in their walk together.

God willing in the middle of September we will continue our seminars in our hall. A number of interested friends from the previous series have indicated their desire to attend. The topic will be, "The Life of Christ".

Martin J Webster

LONDON, ON

We gain by transfer from the Detroit Livonia Ecclesia, Bro. George and Sis. Linda Vandenberg. Bro. George and Sis. Linda were former members of our ecclesia and

we are delighted to have them back in our midst. We regret that our Bro. Ryan Venus has tendered his resignation stating that his beliefs no longer align with the teachings of the Christadelphian Community. We earnestly pray that our brother might have a change of heart before the Lord's return.

We enjoyed a brief visit from Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, Aust.) who passed through London on his speaking tour during August. He gave a Bible class on, "They Shall Be All Taught of God." We thank Bro. Jim for his work on our behalf.

Ron Kidd

ABINGTON ECCLESIA JOINING THE CHRISTADELPHIAN COMMUNITY

Abington Ecclesia
32 School St. Pembroke Ma, 02359 USA

Loving Greetings in the Hope of Israel,

We announce with great joy that we are joining the Christadelphian community in fellowship. We have benefitted greatly from the numerous study days, Bible schools and CYC events sponsored by the Granite State NH, Cranston RI, Boston MA, Westerly RI, Wachusett MA, Worcester MA, and Meriden CT ecclesias. We have been warmly welcomed by all our brothers and sisters and we look forward to the continued enjoyment and spiritual enrichment of mutual fellowship.

Our Sunday morning brothers and sisters class (9:30 am) is currently studying Zechariah. Our Sunday school students are covering the Bible finger posts first principle topics. Our memorial meeting starts at 10:45 am. We hold public lectures every 2nd Sunday of the month at 1:30 pm, except for July and August. Our Wednesday night class (7:30pm) is held at brothers and sisters homes. We are currently studying Story of the Bible Vol. 7.

A very warm welcome is extended to all brothers and sisters of like precious faith, together with young people, to join us around God's Word. May our Lord and Master return soon and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

*Rec. Bro. Jason Dineen,
Jason.dineen@alumni.aiuonline.edu.*

Boston

The Boston Ecclesia rejoices at the decision of the Abington Ecclesia to join us in fellowship. We happily commend them to the worldwide community. Over the course of the last few years we have had numerous interactions and communications with the members of Abington and are well aware of their commitment to the truth concerning The Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. May the LORD be with us all as we walk together in faith.

*On behalf of the Boston Ecclesia, Your brother by Grace,
Jim Sullivan, Recording Brother*

(We also received confirming notes from the Cranston Ecclesia)

Editorial Note:

The Abington Ecclesia has always met of the basis of the BASE, but has been isolated from all other fellowships for many years. They have had many interactions lately with Central Ecclesias, particularly in New England, and we rejoice that they have joined the wider body in our combined walk towards the Kingdom.

Minute Meditation

Having Truth Decay?

Someone once asked a clever question: “Are you having truth decay? If so, then brush up on your Bible.”

Many people wonder, “What is the purpose of life? Why am I here? Is this all there is? What is truth and does it really matter?” The answers to all these questions and more are all to be found in one place, our Bible. In the past it was more common for people to have some awareness of Bible teachings, but nowadays the Bible has been banned in schools and eliminated from public life. As a consequence many don’t realize that it is the source of knowledge about the big issues of life, the truths that we all need to know. Our world is suffering from truth decay.

If we believe in the Bible, we still can have trouble with truth decay. Every one of us can get caught up in the busyness of everyday life and forget about the important issues. We can neglect reading the Bible. We can drift away from our beliefs. If we want to know about the best way to live our lives and keep on track, it is so important to read God’s word every day. It is sad that so many, not just in the world, but in the brotherhood of believers, are not finding time to read their Bibles.

If we are too busy to read God’s word every day, then we are just plain too busy. Surely out of the 24 hours the Lord gives us each day we can find the time to listen to Him. God caused the Bible to be written as a love letter to each of us, and He rightly expects us to read it. He tells us how we came to be, the good gifts He wants us to have, what expectations He has of us, how we can live happy and fulfilled lives and the extraordinary measures He has taken to provide us a way to eternal life.

No wonder David was called a man after God’s own heart; he declared, “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” When David said these words he did not have all the parts of the Bible we are blessed with today. Yet as busy as he was when king, or leading the army, or fleeing for his life from his enemy, King Saul, he still found time to meditate on the word of God.

We who want to live godly lives can actually be deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are doing all the right things. We may think we love God and may think that we are serving Him, but we need to have a close, hard look at what we truly love. There is more to it than just attending all the functions on Sundays and midweek. What we love is revealed by what we find time to do in our daily life. By our very actions we tell God how much we love Him. We may be fooling ourselves. How much time do we spend thinking about God, reading His word, caring for others and doing things just to please Him? When we have free time, what do we do with it? Do we turn to Bible reading and study, or do we turn to diversions such as computer activities, entertainment, or hobbies?

What often interferes with our free time is that we all have a lot of stuff, material goods, that need care. This in itself is not sin; but if our stuff takes up all our time

so that we do not have time to read God's word or do works of service for our God, then that is a problem. When Lot walked out of Sodom he had only the clothes on his back. When Noah and his wife left their home after living there 500 years, there no doubt was a lot of stuff of theirs left behind when they entered the Ark and God shut the door. They would never see that stuff again.

When the call comes that the Lord has come, we will need to walk away from all our stuff, never to see it again either. We have to make sure that all that stuff is not crowding God out of our lives so that we are not reading His word daily. The stuff might be our house, our car, our hobbies, our business, our computer or other things; whatever it is, we must not allow anything to take away the time we should be spending reading and studying and meditating on the word of God.

Not reading the Bible skews our understanding of God's ways and can actually be offensive to God. David's son, Solomon, one of the wisest men who ever lived, tells us, "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination," which can be interpreted to mean we should not even pray if we do not have time to listen to God. Have you ever met someone who does all the talking and never lets you get a word in edgewise? Some people are this way with God — they pray all the time but never listen to Him. Their actions speak out that they are not interested in God's point of view. Solomon's words imply that God may refuse to listen to us unless we also open His book and listen to Him.

If we want to avoid truth decay we must truly love the word of God and make sure we spend the time focusing on it and acting on it. We will find the time spent to be a blessing to us not only now, but in the age to come, and we will agree with the Psalmist when he says, "Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing causes them to stumble."

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.)**

OCTOBER 2013

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

11-13 Norfolk, VA CYC Weekend 2013. Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD) will be leading classes on the subject "Ruth: The Wild Olive Grafted In". Come join us for a great weekend of Bible study, praise, fellowship, food, and, of course, a lot of fun! Space is limited, register now! For further information and to register, go online to NorfolkCYC.com or contact Sis. Amy Lagasse at 757-222-6726 or amyandniq@hotmail.com.

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 Brantford, ON** Thanksgiving Gathering at the Copetown Community Centre. Our speaker will be Bro David Griffin (Kings Norton, UK). Theme “Beloved for the fathers’ sakes,” to include a presentation on Jewish Relief efforts in the UK. Registration 12:30pm, dinner provided. Contact Bro Dave and Sis Celia Hill, hillrock@rogers.com.
- 12-13 Calgary, AB** Thanksgiving Fraternal Weekend. Our speaker will be Bro. Tim Osborn (Vernon Okanagan, BC). Please contact Bro. Paul Aback by email pcaback@shaw.ca, or by phone 403-225-9670 if you plan to attend.
- 12-13 Sussex, NB** Study Weekend. The speaker will be Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC). His topic will be “Jesus, the Master Teacher”.
- 12 Vancouver, BC** Fraternal Gathering. The speaker will be Bro. Nathan Badger. His topic will be “Peter and his Epistles”.
- 19 New England Little Disciples** Youth Study Day at Barton Center, 60 Clara Barton Rd, North Oxford, Ma. 01537. A day of Bible study and activities for pre-K to 7th grade children. Workbooks available online www.nelittledisciples.com. Contact Sis. Tammy Rundle at nelittledisciples@hotmail.com or 781-829-4410 for registration.

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, TX), Theme: “Signs of John (Law and Grace in Miracles)”. Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at (219) 762-2704 or jkb8275@comcast.net.
- 8-10 Brothers’ Weekend** at New Hamburg, ON. Theme: Training to Join God’s Family Forever. Speaker: Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA). Please contact Bro. Nathan Badger at natejbadger@gmail.com or see our new website: www.christadelphianbroswknd.org.
- 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.
- 15-17 Austin Leander, TX** Fall Gathering at the HEB Camp near Leakey, TX. Our speaker will be Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD). His topic is “The Testing of Your Faith and the Challenge of James”. For registration contact Bro. Cliff and Sis. Maritta Terrell at mt-ct@swbell.net.
- 16 Mississauga West, ON.** Prophecy Day at Port Credit Secondary School, 70 Mineola Rd. E. Further details to follow. Contact Bro. Doug Jackson at djackson@bell.net.
- 29-Dec 1 Washington, DC** Family Bible study weekend at Camp Hashawha, 300 John Owings Rd, Westminster, MD 21158. Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA) will lead us in classes entitled “The Second Exodus and the Work of Elijah”. Classes begin at 8:45am. Fee is \$60. A deposit of \$30 is required with registration. Mail registrations only, deadline is Nov. 12th. Day attendees must pre-register and their fee is \$30. Mail registrations to: Bro. Ken Green, 14006 Barkham Court, Laurel, MD 20707. For forms or information, phone: 443-497-3497 or e-mail Bro. Ken at Hashawha@gmail.com, or see our website site www.christadelphians.net/adelphi/.

DECEMBER 2013

- 21-27 Ontario Winter Bible School** at The Best Western Highland Inn & Conference Center, Midland (ON). Speakers and subjects: Bro. Neville Clark (Tea Tree Gully, S. Australia): “Abraham & His Times”; Bro. David Nicholls (Gorseinon, South Wales, UK): “Under whose wings thou art come to Trust”; young people “Redemption in Christ”;

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and Bro. Tim Osborne (Okanagan, BC): "The Epistle of James, Reflections on the Lord's Ministry". Registration information and other details are available from our website www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com.

FEBRUARY 2014

23-28 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers this year will be Bro. Wilfred Alleyne (Birmingham, UK), and Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's word and enjoy fellowship. To register, contact Jeff Gelineau at register@christadelphianbibleschool.org, or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

JULY 2014

6-12 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School at Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX. The teachers will be Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Brisbane, AUS), Bro. Stephen Palmer (Mumbles, South Wales, UK), and Bro. Leen Ritmeyer (Cardiff, Museum Place, Wales, UK). Please mark your calendars now! More information will be posted on the website as it becomes available: www.swcbs.com.